

University of Tartu
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

MA thesis

Alice Lõhmus

**What is the impact of the Kurdish factor on securitization of the Turkish
domestic politics and foreign affairs?**

Supervisor: Stefano Braghiroli, PhD

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Abstract

This Master's thesis looks at what is the impact of the Kurdish factor on securitization of the Turkish domestic politics and foreign affairs. This is done by combining the Copenhagen School theory and Paris School theory by blending the elements of the speech act with the practical discourse. The aim of this thesis is to look at both internal and external dimension of Turkey's policy regarding the Kurdish issue and link it with the interview discourse. The methodology of this master's thesis is discourse analysis by analyzing the media, the Hurriyet Daily News, the two political parties' websites and political speeches as a primary source. As a supplementary source, interviews were conducted with two political parties, the AKP and the HDP as well as with the civil society to analyze the official discourse that emerged from the media and compare the analysis with the interview results. The main analysis is put on the securitization point and the events that followed the extensive securitization in the Turkish case. The concluding remarks will determine whether the public has accepted the official discourse and how this is reflected in the media as well as what emerged from the unofficial interviews.

Keywords: Turkey, Kurds, securitization, Copenhagen School theory, Paris school.

List of abbreviations

AKP - Justice and Development Party

CHP - Republican People's Party

DBP - Democratic Regions Party

HDK - People's Democratic Congress

HDP - People's Democratic Party

ISIL - Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

KCK - Kurdistan Communities Union

KRG - Kurdistan Regional Government

MIT - National Intelligence Organization

MHP - Nationalist Movement Party

PKK - Kurdistan Workers' Party

PYD - Democratic Unity Party

SGDF - Federation of Socialist Youth Associations

YDG-H - Patriotic Revolutionary Youth-Movement (PKK's youth branch)

YPG - Popular Protection Units

1. Introduction

This Master's thesis concentrates on the Kurdish issue in Turkey and conceptualizes why the Turkish state, mainly the AKP government, has played a card of securitizing and de-securitizing with respect to the Kurdish issue in Turkey. This involves the period of early 2013 when the Kurdish-Turkish peace process began and stalled soon after and also beyond the snap elections in Turkey in November 2015. In late 2012, the peace process was started between the PKK and the Turkish intelligence forces that was later made public. Although it was welcomed by the Kurdish side, it created some tensions among Turkish nationalists. Some political tension erupted already in October 2014, when the Turkish government was unwilling to let the Peshmerga forces to cross its border to Kobane, a Syrian town that was under the siege of ISIL. This caused a great mistrust among Turkey's Kurdish population and several protests were held across Turkey. Although Turkey recalculated its decision and opened its borders for the Iraqi Peshmerga forces to cross the Turkish-Syrian border in order to fight ISIL in Kobane, this left a scar to the relations between Turkey's Kurdish population and the government. Ever since, this relationship has been fragile. However, no one expected what came next in several events during 2015.

Even before the Kobane events, the framework for the peace process did not develop as it was first thought and when the Dolmabahçe agreement between the AKP and the PKK, which was mediated by the HDP, came to the point where it was suppose to be made public in February 2015, a kind of political turmoil started to erupt that left many questions unanswered. One might argue that this was something to do with the way of the upcoming elections in June 2015, however, the discourse that already emerged in February 2015 paved a way for an interesting outline that paved the way for a successful securitization that was partly linked to President Erdoğan's personal aims in terms of his political career.

The symbolic triggering effect after the de-securitization period was the suicide attack in Suruc in July 2015 in the Southeast of Turkey and the killing of the two policemen that the PKK at first did not take the responsibility, but then all of a sudden did. This has also created questions whether it was actually the PKK who did it, or its affiliated groups. However, there are many factors that evolved before this and afterwards that have played a big role in terms of Turkish domestic and foreign

politics with respect to the Kurdish issue.

There are not only internal dimensions that play a role in Turkish politics when it comes to recognizing the rights of Kurds but also external factors that have play a bigger role in every day politics in recent months. In this regard, mostly the Syrian civil war will be focused on this thesis and the PYD's attempts to link different cantons close to Turkish border, which Turkey considers a threat to its unity and national integrity. Turkey claims that the PYD is directly linked to PKK and this means that the PKK is getting more leverage close to Turkish border. It seems that the real threat for Turkey is the PKK, rather than the PYD, who has made smart moves in regard of not making any direct attacks to Turkey. The official discourse by the government officials that has emerged in regards of internal and external politics will be analyzed further with respect to the media. This often differs quite significantly in regards to the discourse that emerged from the interviews when this is put to the securitization framework. It seems that the public has slightly different approach towards the government then the discourse that evolves from the interviews. This will be analyzed in the final section in terms of the Copenhagen School theory and the Paris School theory.

2. Theoretical framework

In this section, I will briefly analyze the historical background of the Kurdish issue as well as the theoretical framework. This will be done by combining the elements from the Copenhagen School theory and the Paris School theory with respect to the Kurdish issue.

2.1 Discourse and Copenhagen school

Securitization theory is constantly evolving and an increasing number of security threats seem to appear daily in the public space. For instance, these threats now also involve increased cyber attacks and Internet crimes to state bodies as well as threats to health. In this chapter, I will focus on Copenhagen school theory (discourse analysis) and Paris school theory (practical discourse). In order to explain the security sector in Turkey's context, I will focus on the military sector of the Copenhagen school theory.

Securitization theory was developed by the researchers formed in Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, which later became known as the Copenhagen school. The school originally consisted of Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, who all firstly co-authored *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (1998). This book was built on Waever's earlier essay, '*Securitization and Desecuritization*' (1995), and Waever *et al.*'s *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (1993). The first book played an important role in the early development of critical security studies. Firstly, securitization theory aimed to broaden security sectors to move out of the traditional political and military sectors and introduced five sectors: military, environmental, economic, societal and political security. Secondly, it provided a 'constructivist operational method' for understanding and analyzing how and when issues become security issues (Buzan *et al.* 1998:vii). The book attempts to use securitization to retain some traditional aspects of security and to avoid the concept becoming too broad. Therefore, the first book by these co-authors attempts to define security in opposition to the political, basing security on what differentiates it and securitization from the political and politization (Buzan *et al.* 1998:5). For threats to be considered valid security issues they have to meet the criteria, which differentiates it

from the political: 'they have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind' (1998:5).

Securitization refers to the process through which an issue is labeled as a 'security' issue by usually an elite actor. This moves the issue out of the normal political sphere into the security sphere. Moreover, labeling something as 'security' issue affects policy and as such 'security' is a 'speech act' (Wæver 1995:55). For the Copenhagen school (CPH), security issues are not objective and external but rather 'determined by actors' and 'intersubjective and socially constructed' (Buzan et al.1998:31).

Securitization and de-securitization

The Copenhagen school defines security linking it to power politics, which is ultimately about 'survival' (Buzan et al.1998:21). This makes security threats different to threats that are more broad, they pose an 'existential threat' to a particular referent object by threatening its very existence (Buzan et al.1998:21). The referent object (something being under threat), was traditionally equated with the state, but this was changed by adding different sections mentioned above. Securitization is the discursive process through which 'an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority and by labeling it as security an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means (Buzan et al.1998:26). Moreover, security is a 'speech act', 'the utterance itself is the act' (Wæver 1995:55) – by speaking 'security' the securitizing actor moves the issue out of regular politics and into the security sphere, thus legitimizing the use of extraordinary measures to deal with the threat when the securitizing move is successful.

For instance, this could be further analyzed by opinion polls. However, it does not matter whether or not the threat is 'real' – securitizing an issue has nothing to do with the 'reality' of the threat but of the use of discourse to define it as such and this is always a 'political choice' (Buzan et al.1998:29). According to Wæver (1995:54), 'something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so'. Actors in a position of power are more likely to be successful in securitizing by virtue of the added legitimacy of their position, but this does not guarantee that the audience will accept the securitizing move (Buzan et al. 1998:31).

According to Wæver (1995:65), issues become addressed in certain ways

once they are securitized: with ,threat‘, ,defence‘ and often state-centred solutions. Moreover, if people accept that the label of ,security‘ changes the status of certain issues, securitized issues become too important to be discussed within open debate and usual political procedure, instead, they should be prioritized over other issues by the state’s leaders or governing elite (Buzan et al.1998:29). The governing AK Party in Turkey is a good example in this regard since the party politics is done from the top-down level, rather than bottom-up. There is a clear hierarchical structure in the party, which makes party bureaucrats or non deputy members hesitant to even talk about the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Since only the party elite, Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Interior Minister) are ,allowed‘ or more willing to speak on the domestic Kurdish issue, looking at the Copenhagen School is preferred. What is also interesting in Turkish case, is the fact that the President, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan should be officially not linked to the AK Party, however, in Turkey this is not the case and the President is the most vocal when it comes to the Kurdish issue and supporting AK Party politics. Interestingly, the President seems to take a so-called low-profile when it comes to making an official stance after several bombings in Turkey starting from 10.10.15 in Ankara, when the President, vocal condemning the attacks done by Kurdish-affiliated groups, remained mostly silent after attacks against the HDP headquarters or the October bombings.

The role of the audience is important for the Copenhagen school’s framework – the issue becomes securitized once the audience accepts a securitizing move to be valid. In Turkey’s case, this can be done by looking at the opinion polls or looking at the results of the last election in November 2015 which changed the campaign discourse and therefore also the election results completely. In theory securitization can ‘never only be imposed’ (Buzan et al. 1998:25). Furthermore, if the securitization move has not been accepted to a point where emergency measures are possible, it remains a securitizing move but not a successful securitization (Buzan et al.1998:25). For the Copenhagen school theory, it is important that it is not the word ‘security’ itself that is necessary, but the designation of an issue as an existential threat that is in need of emergency measures and the audience accepting that designation – sometimes the word ‘security’ is used outside of this logic and some issues are securitized to a point where ‘security’ and priority are always implicit and do not have to be articulated as securitization has become more institutionalized, such as ‘defence’, which always implies priority and security (Buzan et al.1998:27). In Turkey’s case,

there has been a clear securitization of the Kurdish issue starting from July 2015, with implications linked to the June 7th, 2015 elections and issues related to Kobani and the affects of the Syrian civil war to Turkish domestic and foreign politics.

Securitized issues are recognized by a specific rhetorical structure that stresses urgency, survival and 'priority of action' (Buzan et al.1998:26). The scholars of CPH school suggest that securitization should be studied by looking at discourse and political constellations: When does an argument with this particular rhetorical and semiotical structure achieve sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of certain rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed? (Buzan et al.1998:25). This is the question with the current situation going on in the Southeast regarding curfews, anti-terror laws and measures taken against the PKK. However, there are usually civilians being affected by these policies the most: some without water or electricity for several months, businesses and schools being closed in the area and people being fled to other cities due to curfews and ongoing clashes between the PKK and Turkey's military forces. However, the Turkish mainstream society has accepted these measures and speech acts by the political elite that is now being treated with extraordinary measures after the official collapse of the peace process in July 2015. Although the governing party tells otherwise, society regarding the ongoing conflict and political situation is polarized and the measures taken in the Southeast seem often far away from the mainstream society. The Southeast is mainly populated with Kurds and is economically not so well off – seems something that is far away from the everyday life. However, due to the ongoing clashes, the TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Falcons) have promised to bring the war from the Southeast to bigger cities as it is already seen in the capital of Turkey, Ankara.

There are three important conditions that make successful securitization more likely: the speech act itself following the 'grammar of security' emphasizing priority, urgency and survival; the securitizing actor being in a 'position of authority' to maximize audience acceptance; and the features of portrayed 'threat/s' (Buzan et al.1998:33). In Turkey, over 50% of voters supported President Erdogan in 2014 presidential elections, which generally makes over half of the population to support the governing party and its policies too and makes a rhetoric of a securitizing act more feasible to be accepted by the public. Securitization theory distinguished security and securitization against regular politics and politicization and presented a scale for identifying the status of issues, ranging from non-politicized to securitized

(Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 Issue scale, derived from (Buzan et al.1998:23)

Securitization frames issues as exceptional politics or above normal politics and decision making processes, justifying 'actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure' (Buzan et al.1998:24). For this reason, 'security should be seen as negative and as a failure to deal with issues as normal politics' (Buzan et al.1998:29). That is why, the CPH school developed the concept of de-securitization, the process which occurs when issues are moved out of the security sphere and back into the political sphere. Because of the negative connotation that comes with security, de-securitization is presented as 'the optimal long-range option', but securitization is not ruled out (Buzan 1998:29). Moreover, de-securitization should be the aim, shifting issues back into regular politics. This de-securitization process can be looked in the light of returning to the negotiation table in late 2012 and successfully announcing it in 2013, after which there was 2 years of peace with no major clashes occurring between the PKK and the military forces. However, this situation has now changed dramatically.

'Defence' and 'the state' still remain central to the concept of 'security' in International Relations and securitizing an issue 'evokes an image of threat-defence', allocating to the state an important role in addressing it' (Waever 1995:47 cited in Shepherd 2013:55). Although security is seen as a negative concept and as a failure of regular politics, it also has advantages – securitizing an issue tends to give it extra priority, in terms of allocating extra attention by key policy-makers and also extra funds (Buzan et al.1998:29). For instance, the fight against the PKK is a top priority

for the government, at least in the official discourse. Fight against Daesh on the other hand, does not get as much attention, debate or media broadcasting as much as the Kurdish issue and the fight against the PKK. Also, spending on defence industry in Turkey has risen due to the ongoing clashes, that emphasizes the role of the defence in the country.

Sectors of security

The sectoral approach to security was initially explored in *People, States and Fear* (Buzan 1991) and further developed in *Security* (Buzan et al.1998). Under this approach, the security concept was broadened beyond the traditional political-military understanding to include other sectors below which recognizes new types of threats. However, in because of the long history of Turkey's military relations in politics and non-Western approach, I will mainly focus on political and military sectors of security and prove throughout the thesis that the Copenhagen School theory fits well to Turkey's case regarding the Kurdish issue, although the theory is often criticized of being too Western-oriented. While each sector has 'distinctive security dynamics', all the threats considered concern existential threat – threats to the survival the referent object, though the state is privileged overall by the Copenhagen school (Buzan et al.1998).

The environmental sector

Although the environmental sector is often ignored by traditional security approaches, it focuses on threats against the local, national, regional, global environment or ecosystems, but in many cases concern for the environment is linked to preserving existing levels of civilization (Buzan et al.1998:75). Threats include environmental threats not directly linked to human activity such as earthquakes and volcanic activity and threats more linked to human activity, such as greenhouse and gas emissions. Securitizing moves occur on every level, from local to global, although the global level is focused on most.

The economic sector

According to Buzan et al. (1998:100), the economic sector is 'rich in referent objects' from the global market to states, classes and individuals with much overlap, and securitizing actors are often varied, located on both local and global levels. Most

popular example in this sector is the 2007 global financial crisis, which has been securitized on many levels by a range of actors and is said to be threatening the existential survival of referent objects from the global economy to individual livelihoods. Economic activity sometimes also triggers security and survival issues in the other sectors, creating a ‘spillover effect’ (Buzan et al.1998:116).

Societal sector

For the Copenhagen school, the societal sector is about identity and the security of identity, and ‘societal insecurity exists when communities of whatever kind define a development or potentiality as a threat to their survival as a community’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 119). As such, the referent objects in the societal sector are communities, which self-identify as communities based on a sense of shared identity. The relevant types of threats depend on how the identity is constructed and what it depends on to survive, a shared language, culture or religion (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 124). Also, migration and immigration could be considered threats.

Political sector

The political security sector focuses on non-military threats to state sovereignty, though it can also include other unit-level actors such as the EU, stateless groups and transnational movements able to get ‘supreme allegiance’ from its members, such as the Catholic church (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 145). It can also include the UN as a system-level referent object. The sector has a lot of overlap with other sectors, as according to Buzan *et al.* all security is to some extent political (1998: 141). Securitizing actors tend to be state leaders or unit leaders as well as international mass media or NGOs. Here, the main object to be securitized is the state’s sovereignty.

Military sector in Turkey’s context

In regards to this thesis, the military sector is to be focused on and it is the one in which the securitization process is most likely to be very institutionalized. It is worth noting that, contrary to the traditionalist approach, not everything in the military sector is necessarily about security. Furthermore, for some states, military functions are not necessarily security issues. For instance, many European states used to historically, and also now, face little in the way of existential military threats.

Rather, they maintain substantial armed forces and often use these forces in a way that has more to do with political and economic relations than with military ones. For states living in security communities, substantial parts of their military activities may fall into the political rather than the security sphere (Buzan et al.1998:49). However, for the Turkish state, these military activities are often clearly strategic, deep-interest based and does not necessarily always have to do with economic or political relations.

In the military sector, the state is still the most important, but not the only referent object, and the ruling elites of states are the most important, but not the only, securitizing actors. This is to do with the fact that the states usually command greater military resources than other actors and also governing elites have evolved legally and politically as the prime claimants of the legitimate right to use force both inside and outside their domain (Buzan et al.1998:49).

The modern state is defined by the idea of sovereignty – the claim of right to self-government over a specified territory and its population. Because force is effective as a way of acquiring and controlling territory, the fundamentally territorial nature of the state underpins the traditional primacy of its concern with the use of force (Buzan et al.1998:49). Military security matters arise mainly out of the internal and external processes by which human communities establish and maintain (or fail to maintain) machineries of government. In practice, the military security agenda evolves mostly around the ability of governments to maintain themselves against internal and external military threats, but it can also involve the use of military power to defend states or governments against nonmilitary threats to their existence (Buzan et al.1998:50). In Turkey's case, this could be seen as a rival ideology such as what the governing party, the AKP, considers the leftists' ideas of the HDP and also migration. However, the PKK militants are the main threat for the government.

Although the political and military sectors are conceptually distinct, the partial interchangeability of force and consent in the process of government links them together. Like the state itself, this linkage must face in two directions: inward, into the domestic construction and life of the state, and outward, to its position in and relation to the other members of the international system. In Turkey's case, this will be looked through mainly Syria and relations and with Iraqi autonomous Kurdish region. Threats against which military responses may be effective can arise both inside and outside the state. The securitization of such threats may reflect a genuine fear of attack, a desire by ruling elites to consolidate their domestic and international

legitimacy, or both. In Turkey, threats come from both the ISIL's side and from the outlawed Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK). However, from the surface, more attention and efforts is paid towards the PKK and its elimination, although the attacks from the ISIL controlled territory in Syria has increased recently, especially in Kilis, close to the Syrian border. Moreover, this is clearly linked to the desire of the governing AKP to consolidate their legitimacy and stay in power. This will be elaborated on in later chapters.

Among the principal domestic functions of government are the maintenance of civil order, peace, administration and law. The maintenance of the territorial integrity of the state might be added, but territory is not always securitized. When the perceived threat is internal, military security is primarily about the ability of the ruling elite to maintain civil peace, territorial integrity and also, the machinery of government in the face of challenges from its citizens (Ayoob 1995 cited in Buzan et al. 1998:50). Typical forms of these challenges are militant separatist, revolutionary, terrorist, or criminal organizations, although some governments also securitize unarmed challengers to their authority or jurisdiction in order to use force against them (Buzan et al.1998:51).

Because of the relatively open nature of securitization theory as an analytical framework, the theory has been interpreted in many different ways and it is therefore sometimes accused of being too one sided. Some scholars have argued that in the CPH school's focus on security speech acts, securitization theory should not be limited to focusing on securitizing speech acts, but should also look at physical action, images and other forms of visual representation (Shepherd 2013:55). This is why it is beneficial to also look at the Paris school and analyze the practical discourse to capture several aspects of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Some authors, like Balzacq, have argued that the role of the audience in securitization should be paid more attention to, as audience acceptance is necessary for securitization to be successful. Also, the context and timing of securitization has been emphasized and needs to be focused on more. In Turkey's case timing is crucial to securitization of its domestic and foreign politics in regards of the Kurdish issue. Securitization theory has also been accused of being too Western-centric and problematic when it comes to studying non-Western states (Wikinson 2007 cited in Shepherd 2013:55). Securitization is constantly evolving and it is often thought to move into the direction of critical security studies rather than a constructivist approach that aims to be compatible with

neorealism (Shepherd 2013:55). This is another reason, why looking at the Paris school would be beneficial when analyzing the Turkish case.

2.2 Non-discourse and the Paris School

According to Didier Bigo (2000:327), it would be useful not only to rely on the right definition of security and the diverse forms that it takes according to the 'sectors' like it does in the Copenhagen School, but on the securitization and insecurity practices, which run through the internal sphere as it does on the external sphere. The contemporary state is no longer only held responsible for assuring the institutional survival of the collectivity, it must also guarantee the personal survival of each of its members, regardless of where they are.

As war has been replaced by international police operations, operation for restoring peace, which mobilizes a different knowledge, the military can find themselves in situations of international collaboration where they have to take care of restoring peace, the same way as police, for instance. By doing this, internal security is transferred beyond the national borders (Bigo 2000:339). In regards to the situation in the Southeast of Turkey, there has been increased collaboration between the military, intelligence and police forces to capture the PKK militants. Also, the military has recently started bombing PKK's posts in Northern-Iraq, which also proves the institutionalization aspect and the Turkish military now being a so-called caretaker of restoring peace in the Southeast. It is interesting that in regards to the Turkish case, people have claimed that the police is more brutal to them than the military when it comes to curfews and other security measures taken in the region. That is why the Paris school might contribute to better frame multifaceted aspects of the phenomena.

Moreover, the Copenhagen School theory and its societal sector risks focusing the analysis on the person who is speaking, instead of analyzing conflicts which oppose several definitions of the same situation (Bigo 2000:346). By stressing only on language, this type of analysis excludes gestures, manoeuvres, the rituals of demonstration of force, which are fundamental in the economy of securitization. It is possible to securitize certain problems without speech and discourse. The practical work, discipline, and expertise are also important (Bigo 2000:347). With regards to the Turkish case, the practical manoeuvres also play a role in terms of securitizations, especially the ones that actually help the government to convince the public. This can

be seen through the actions of the PKK after the Suruç attacks.

A position of authority recognized by the group in one area of knowledge or another is necessary, especially in the domain of political professionals or that of the professionals who manage threats, in order to securitize a problem. Delivered by any citizen or by a militant or even a politician in an individual capacity, the securitization of an object has no force. It depends on the social position of those who produce these statements concerning insecurity as well as the recognition by the other social actors of their legitimacy to say what causes the particular fear. To question who produces the narratives on the threat makes it possible to analyze the standpoint of each actor of the field of security and to analyze the correspondence between this standpoint and the objective position of each one of these actors in this field (Bigo 2000:348).

According to Bigo (2006:7), it is important to differentiate between various parties' standpoints on how to prioritize threats. These threats may include terrorism, war, organized crime as well as migratory invasion. For instance, when President of the USA invokes a threat, he is only credible as long as he has not been contradicted by the intelligence community. If his claim turns out to be unfounded, the credibility of his refusal to reveal sources for his statement, based on reasons of national security, is put into question (Bigo 2006:9). Although the Turkish military was hesitant at first, the military seems to support the state elite in terms of the Kurdish issue and terrorism threat by the PKK's affiliated group.

The Paris School argues that intelligence and other actors also play a great role in securitization, not only the state itself and politicians. The security field encompasses public bureaucracies as well as private bureaucracies, businesses, political intermediaries and groupings that work to "develop a security-oriented mindset" in the public sphere (Bigo 2006:26). This is why the French School is useful to look into further. For Bigo, both internal and external security aspect is important as is the collaboration between agencies at the national and transnational level. According to Bigo (2011:389), the respective responsibilities of political professionals and the network of agencies coordinated by intelligence services have become blurred. That is especially in countries where government politicians were accused of mixing up intelligence in order to justify a decision to go to war (Bigo 2011:389). The Paris School is often referred to as being more institutionalized and related to domestic politics, especially when it comes to internal security, such as police, military and intelligence. In Turkish case, these institutions play a huge role in

domestic politics, as they are in practice based in the Southeast, while the main conflict takes place.

It is useful to combine these two theories, because Paris School gives a chance to relate practical measures such as curfews, anti-terrorism law and other security bills to the aftermath of the securitization act while still being closely linked with the speech act itself. The Copenhagen School still helps to understand the securitization act itself, which is done by political elites in Turkey, but the Paris School helps to understand it further and why certain acts were adopted. The Copenhagen School theory and the Paris School help to cover the Kurdish issue, both in terms of the practical and non-practical discourse and this will be elaborated more in the next chapters.

2.3 Short historical background

The fate of the widespread Kurdish population in the Middle East remains one of the major unresolved ethnic issues today. The ethnic Kurds make up to 23% of the population in Turkey. What makes the Kurdish issue complex, is the fact that the Kurds are very diverse in their language and in their views. They are divided between 4 different countries: Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq, all with different aims. Kurdish political factions fight for political power in different areas, which is especially seen in Syria and in Iraq. The Kurds in Turkey are spread all over the country, with the largest population in Istanbul and Izmir. However, the Kurdish population mostly focused on this thesis are the ones living in the Southeast of Turkey.

The majority of Turkish citizens and institutions have previously considered the ‚Kurdish Question‘ as a terrorism issue, in which the answer to this issue was to be found in the successful elimination of the separatist terrorist organization, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Turkey’s leaders have generally not wanted to face the root causes of terrorist activity because it would mean directly acknowledging existing of a big minority population and coming to terms with the possibility that the unifying policies that were part of the early Republic’s ideology – single nation, single language and centralized power, were probably not realistic regarding Turkey’s big Kurdish population (Aydinli and Ozcan 2011:441).

Early period

The Lausanne Treaty of 1923 made reference to Turkey’s non-Muslim Greek,

Armenian and Jewish minorities, but not to its Kurdish and other Muslim ethnic groups (Park 2005:16). The Caliphate was abolished in 1924 that had previously symbolized union of multi-ethnic authority. The Kemalist mission to create a centralized, secular and homogeneous Turkish nation-state faced resistance from religious conservatives as well as ethnic Kurds. This led to Kurdish ethno-religious rebellions between 1923-1938 (Saylan 2012:385). These rebellions against the young Republic created an image of Kurds as socially tribal, religiously fanatic, economically backward and a threat to the national integrity of the Republic of Turkey.

The Republic did not deny the existence of Kurds, but developed a discourse without using the word ‚Kurd‘ in the ethno-national sense (Yavuz 2001:8). Nationalism and secularism represented the core of the Kemalist ideology in Turkey and this was perceived as a threat to Kurdish identity. During the 1960s and 1970s, secularization and transformation of Kurdish identity took place within the broader leftist movement and the Kurdish nationalists started to challenge the Kemalist view. After the 1980 coup, the state identified Kurdish nationalism, along with radical Islam and the Left, as a division in society and banned all forms of cultural expression (Yavuz 2001:10). However, the coup had a strengthening and radicalization effect on the Kurdish identity, which the PKK took advantage of.

Until the 2000s, the Turkish state ignored the issue’s ethno-nationalist aspect and treated it as a problem of socio-economic backwardness that was rooted in feudalism, ignorance and poverty (Sarigil and Karakoc 2015:10). For example, former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit stated in 2005 that “Turkey does not have a Kurdish problem. There is a socio-economic underdevelopment in the region. By abusing this, several external actors such as neighbouring and some European countries have promoted Kurdish terrorism/separatism in the region to destabilize and divide the Turkish Republic” (Sarigil 2010:538 cited in Sarigil and Karakoc 2015:10).

Grievances

Previously, the Turkish state denied the existence of the Kurds as an ethnic group for many years and its policies were a primary factor in the radicalization of the Kurdish nationalism. This was mostly due to the 1982 Constitution, which made it illegal “to express any idea that could be interpreted by the authorities as amounting to a recognition of a separate Kurdish, ethnic identity” (Bengio 2011:621). Moreover, the Constitution forbade the use of the Kurdish language completely and later another

law banned the use of Kurdish for the dissemination of information.

After the European Union accepted Turkey as a candidate country for membership in 1999, Turkey initiated a reform process to meet EU requirements. For instance, since the early 2000s, Turkish governments have legalized publishing and broadcasting in Kurdish and learning the Kurdish language. They have also permitted parents to choose Kurdish names for their children, allowed political party campaigns in Kurdish, introduced elective Kurdish courses for secondary-level public schools, allowed defence in one's mother language during court trials, restored some Kurdish place names, removed the (Turkish) nationalist oath recited by students at schools and allowed education in one's mother language in private schools. Such reforms are important, given that Turkey denied even the existence of a distinct Kurdish ethnic identity until the early 1990s. However, at least half of Turkey's Kurds still think that the state discriminates against them (Karakoc and Sarigil 2015:24).

These grievances include: using mother languages in education and public life, introducing a decentralized local government structure, removing ethnic discriminatory bias from the constitution and laws, lowering the national election threshold for political parties and amending anti terrorism laws to decriminalize non-violent dissent (ICG cited in Afacan 2013:84). Despite the lifting of almost all restrictions on the Kurdish language and allowing Kurdish television, access to the Kurdish mother tongue in education in public schools is still an important issue (Ünal 2015:25). Kurds in the Southeast want to be able to be taught in Kurdish and use Kurdish language in local governments. However, the mainstream Turkish society seems not to be prepared for addressing these demands. Discrimination-based grievance seems to have positive impact on the secessionist attitudes: Kurds who perceive that the state does not treat them fairly are more likely to demand their autonomy or secession (Sarigil and Karakoc 2015:23).

There are certain other demands in different scales from the PKK's side, some of which include Öcalan's release from prison into a form of house arrest, abolishment of the Provisional Village Guard System, abolishment of the Turkish Counterterrorism Law and related amendments to recognize non-violent Kurdish dissent, namely the KCK as a political entity. However, most of these bargaining items entail a new Constitution establishing instituted power sharing with a new state structure that would grant political authority to local governance bodies. This is because 1982 Constitution forbids any amendment to the state's regime and

administrative structure (Ünal 2015:25).

PKK

The PKK was officially established in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan to ‘set up a democratic and united Kurdistan in Southeastern Turkey to be governed along Marxist-Leninist lines’ and sought to ‘monopolize the Kurdish nationalist struggle’ (Cagaptay 2007:2 cited in Paffenholz 2010:155). The PKK has been conflicting with Turkey since 1984. After the emergence of the PKK, successive Turkish governments reduced the Kurdish question to a security issue and initiated talks focused on a terror problem instead. In response to the PKK’s terror from below, the state developed ways to create a terror from above campaign that led to legitimizing torture, kidnapping, disappearances, unaccounted murders and forced migration as counter-terror measures (Ensaroglu 2013:8).

The end of the first confrontation phase between the PKK and the state became in 1990s when Öcalan’s announced in a press conference in 1993 that ‘after 9 years of war (since 1984), time has come for non armed political means...’ (Öcalan cited in Ünal 2015:6). However, violent tactics from the PKK did not end. In September 1998, Turkish armed force was deployed on the Syrian border, and threatened invasion, if Syria did not end sheltering Öcalan on its territory. On October 9, 1998, Öcalan left Syria for Europe and was captured in Kenya in February 1999 (Bacik and Coskun 2011:251). Although Öcalan has been prisoned since then, he has had an enormous impact on the Kurdish peace process that started in 2013 and while he has changed his views towards more democracy, the other PKK’s faction in Qandil Mountain seem to have a more aggressive approach.

Relations with Syria and Iraq

Historically, Syria has been supporting the PKK and has played the PKK card against Turkey. This is also seen in the ongoing Syrian civil war, where the Syrian regime granted autonomy and more rights to its Kurdish population in Northern Syria, which Turkey perceives as a security threat. The main concern for Turkey in Syria is the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which was established in 2003 as an offshoot of the PKK. Its armed wing is the People’s Protection Unit (YPG). The PYD has coordinated with both Syrian rebels and Assad’s regime troops in different parts of Syria as to further its own interests. The Kurdish factions in Northern Syria have been

gaining more territory by the Turkish-Syrian border, which Turkey sees as a threat to its integral security and an effect to its Kurdish population. This is also due to the PYD's links with the PKK, that has a long history already in Turkey.

In Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, the leading party is the PDK, whose leader is Massoud Barzani. PDK has control over one faction of the Peshmerga, the military forces in the region. Barzani is an ally of the West and has a close relationship with Ankara due its economic partnership. Lately, it seems that the Kurdish Autonomous Region in Iraq is the only friend of Turkey in the region. Previously Turkey saw the Kurdish Autonomous Region as a threat to Turkish security, just as it sees the PYD. However, this view has changed towards a good partnership. This is a discourse that Turkey's Kurds now use in regards to the PYD in Northern-Syria.

Previous peace initiatives

President Turgut Özal's 1991 promise to resolve the Kurdish question marked the first effort to address this issue. This process was followed by later Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel and his deputy Erdal İnönü, which led to the Turkish government first attempt to set up a dialogue process in 1993 and PKK's first unilateral ceasefire in 1993 (Ünal 2015:6). 40 days after President Özal's death, a PKK death squad killed 33 soldiers in Bingöl, which ended the first period of ceasefire (Ensaroglu 2013:11).

In 1996 and 1997, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan voiced his intention to resolve the Kurdish issue while Mesut Yılmaz pointed out that the government was compelled to address the Kurdish question as part of its EU membership bid by stating that 'the road to the EU goes through Diyarbakır' (Enseroglu 2013:11). Although the PKK declared unilateral ceasefires on several occasions and resolved to withdraw from Turkey, successive governments failed to capture these opportunities due to pursuing unilateral winning strategies and was not inclined to seek a negotiated resolution. For instance, a 1999 military operation targeted PKK militants who followed Abdullah Öcalan's orders to withdraw from Turkey and killed 300-500 PKK militants (Ünal 2015:11). This event continues to motivate the PKK's efforts to secure legal reassurance and this has also led to distrust that the PKK showed towards the government after the Suruc attacks in July 2015. However, the PKK also acts pragmatically and only withdrew to guarantee Öcalan's survival. Gradually, the PKK shifted to more of a social and political confrontation to put pressure on the Turkish

government.

The Kurdish issue started to get more attention when the AKP got into power in 2002, which seemed to move the Kurdish issue from a military to a peaceful solution. By doing this, AKP sought to calm down the Kurds who had helped it reach power, to allure other Kurds away from the Kurdish parties, to weaken the Turkish military and to enhance Turkey's prospects for accession to the EU. Furthermore, in one of his conciliatory moves then Prime Minister Erdogan made a visit to Diyarbakır in 2005, where he announced that Turkey needed to accept the mistakes it had made in the past. He stated that 'the Kurdish problem is everyone's problem. It is my problem too' (Bengio 2011:622).

Recognizing the heavy toll of the stalemate during 2003-2007, Turkey secretly made its first solid attempt at resolution in the history of the conflict. Starting in 2007, top-level MIT (National Intelligence Organization) officials agreed on the general framework of a resolution through backchannel talks with prisoned Öcalan on Imrali Island, and afterwards started meetings in Oslo with a PKK delegation. The Turkish government officially made the 'Kurdish Opening' intention public in the summer of 2009 after the PKK's unilateral ceasefire. This was to enlarge the rights of Kurds in the areas of education, media and culture. The ultimate goal was to disarm the PKK and resolve the Kurdish question. Specific points of discussions are not known, except the confessed stalemate and a strong will by the Turkish government to resolve the conflict, according to the minutes of the Oslo gathering that were leaked to the media (Ünal 2015:14). However, the PKK attack on Silvan, Diyarbakır and the recurrence of violence interrupted the Oslo talks as sound recordings from one of the meetings was leaked and this led to distrust between the parties (Ensaroglu 2013:13).

However, the mainstream Turkish society was not yet ready for the resolution attempt and this was seen during the return from Iraq of pre-designated 'Peace Group' of 34 PKK members, known as the Habur incident. On October 18th 2009, this peace group was welcomed by a big crowd at the Habur border gate and welcoming celebrations were perceived as the PKK's victory parade rather than a 'return to home' from the mountains (Ünal 2015:15). This provoked a negative reaction from the Turkish society. After this, the AKP accused the PKK of spoiling, misusing and exploiting the peace process.

Now, the PKK and its Kurdish allies in Iraq and Syria are hostile to the Islamic State, and so is Turkey. But the Turkish government remains wary of any

cooperation with Kurdish fighters against the militants, for fear that Kurdish forces in Syria and Iraq will unite with the PKK against Turkey.

AKP

AKP's government has not always seen the Kurdish issue as a security threat. When the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) government took office in 2002, Turkish policy gradually switched from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency, in which the political, social and economic aspects of the PKK issue were given deeper consideration. Although most reforms emerged from Turkey's efforts to become a full member of the EU, these policies were highly related to the Kurdish issue since most of the grievances of the PKK and Kurds more broadly were directly related to the quality of democracy in Turkey (Ünal 2015:2).

Although the AKP recognizes the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group worthy of respect, especially as they are fellow Muslims, the party has been slow to address the national dimension of the problem, preferring to focus on socioeconomic and security factors rather than language rights and giving power to local authorities, which would need changing of the Constitution (Updegraff 2012:124).

2013 peace process

The latest process began in late 2012 but was announced in 2013 Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakir Province in a direct message by pro-Kurdish BDP party members. Abdullah Öcalan called upon militants to substitute arms with democratic politics in their struggle for the Kurdish rights. In response, the leaders of the PKK in Northern Iraq called for a withdrawal from Turkey as part of the three-stage road map (Keyman and Gumuscu 2014:109). During Newroz, Öcalan's speech was announced: 'We have now reached a point where guns must go silent and ideas and politics must speak. We will unite in the face of those who try to split us. From now on, a new period begins when politics, not guns, will come to the fore. It is now time for armed elements to withdraw outside the country' (Ensaroglu 2013:15). Couple of days later, the PKK declared ceasefire. Withdrawal started in spring 2013 but stopped later, after about 20 percent of the forces were withdrawn because the PKK objected to the government's inaction toward certain reforms and continuation of the PKK's umbrella organization's KCK (Union of Kurdistan Communities) arrests (Ünal 2015:18). By September 2013, there were more signs that the peace process had

slowed down. President Erdogan accused the PKK of ‘not keeping its promises’ and said that only 20 percent of the PKK militants in Turkey had moved back over the border, most of them simply being children, invalids, and elderly people.

Overall, the peace process was largely formulated through three phases: withdrawal of the PKK forces from Turkish soils, democratic reforms to satisfy the demands and grievances of Turkey’s Kurdish citizens and integration of PKK members in civilian life following disarmament (Afacan 2013:84). Although the PKK’s leader Öcalan initiated a roadmap for peace and the negotiation talks, the AKP officials have emphasized that the democratic reforms in order to give more language rights to the Kurds were not their ‘response’ to Öcalan (Kurban 2013:2).

Signs of threats to the peace process

According to Verda Özer (Hurriyet 2016), officials point at three points that led to the breakdown of the peace process. Firstly, riots in Kobane, which took place in October 6-7, 2014. Kurds were demanding that Turkey had to do more to protect the Kurdish Syrian town of Kobani from the *Daesh*’s militants (Deutsche Welle 07.10.2014). Although the Turkish government was reluctant at first, it allowed the Kurdish Peshmerga fighters to pass its borders to Syria later on. During the *Daesh*’s offensive against the town of Kobani in Syria, the conflict started to move from peace towards instability. These protests led the government to implement a new security law in February 2015. But by this time, many of the Kurds were already disappointed in the government and this led the AKP to lose many of the Kurdish votes in June 2015.

According to the government, the second breaking point is the aftermath of Dolmabahçe Palace meeting between government representatives and the HDP on February 28th, 2015. At the Dolmabahçe meeting, Öcalan’s encouraged the PKK to held a congress to end the 40-year armed conflict in a letter that was read out, along with a 10-point declaration. Officials claim that the HDP took a negative stance following that declaration, by presenting the mentioned points in the declaration as pre-conditions for disarmament.

Thirdly, government officials point at the election campaign of the HDP prior to the general elections on June 7, 2015. They claim that the HDP caused provocation by harshly targeting President Erdoğan in the run up to elections (Verda Özer 2016). In June 2015, parliamentary elections saw the Kurdish-linked HDP party gain more

than 10 percent of the national vote and surpassing the country's electoral threshold for the first time. This denied the AKP a single-party government for the first time in 13 years (Noah Blaser 2015).

The triggering effect of the securitization of the Kurdish issue happened in July 2015, when a bombing suspected to be the work of *Daesh* killed 33 pro-Kurdish activists in a town along the Turkish-Syrian border. Accusing Turkey's government of covertly aiding the bombers, the PKK murdered two policemen in retaliation, ending two years of ceasefire and entering into a new wave of violence. During November 2015 elections, 1 million fewer people voted for the HDP. The HDP's national vote share dropped from 13.1 percent in June to 10.3 percent in November. Since then, the government has announced curfews in several majority-Kurdish cities and boasted of increasing its campaign against the PKK. Even before the election, in late October, the armed forces launched strikes against PYD in Syria (Noah Blaser 2015).

On 10.10.2015 more than hundred people were killed at a peace rally in Ankara by suicide bombers. It was the worst terrorist attack ever recorded on Turkish soil. Moreover, after the Ankara attacks, the Turkish government started bombing the targets of PKK in Northern Iraq. Ever since, the conflict has been escalating further with curfews, arrests and evacuations from the towns in Southeast. There have been evidence that the PKK is trying to put pressure on locals in its bid to found so called 'liberated zones' in eastern and southeastern Turkey (Hurriyet 24.12.2015). Previously, clashes between the military and the PKK took place in rural areas and in the mountains but now the escalating conflict is taking place in cities of the Southeast.

Turkey has recently severed ties with its Western allies over their refusal to recognize the PYD and the YPG as terrorist organizations. Turkey considers the PYD a terrorist organization and an extension of the PKK. Turkey has been bombing YPG targets in the Azez town of Northern Syria since February 13th, after the group seized the Menagh air base north of Aleppo (Hurriyet 18.02.16).

Situation in the Southeast

A significant challenge about the current phase of the conflict is the PKK's new strategy, which has now shifted from the rural guerilla attacks to urban cities. Never before has the conflict taken place so intensively in cities where thousands of people in the Southeast have been escaped as well as schools and businesses have closed. The PKK has switched from physical realm to human realm as part of its

adaptation to Turkish Army's new COIN strategy (technology based toward better surveillance, monitoring, detection and engagement) that brought a deterrent impact to PKK's flexibility, mobility and attacks in rural areas. The PKK has been successful in hiding amongst civilians within counties where predominantly pro-PKK Kurdish civilians live. In these areas, the PKK started to employ the autonomous, self-administred controlled area concept where they hallowed fosses to physically block security force entrance to consolidate their physical and psychological impact on civilians. As a result, curfews in certain Southeastern provinces were declared and Turkish military have been conducting strict security operations reminding of the early 1990s in the region (Ünal 2015:23). According to security analyst Metin Gürcan, "There is no way Ankara can achieve 'victory' in towns like Silvan or Cizre. Youth will continue to join the PKK, and the barricades will go up the moment the police and military leave" (Noah Blaser 13.11.15).

The curfews have been going on for more than 3 months in six of Sur's neighborhoods and their overall population has dropped to just 2000 from around 24,000. Moreover, Sur has now security checkpoints every 20 meters on main access roads (Zeynep Bilgehan 22.02.16). The security situation in the Southeastern districts does not seem to end any time soon. As the weather gets warmer, the PKK militants get more mobile and this will probably escalate the conflict further in the upcoming months.

Syrian civil war and the PYD

Kurds are estimated to form at least 15% of Syria's population of approximately 23 million. The PKK founded its Syrian offshoot, PYD (Democratic Union Party) in 2003 to maintain power in Kurdish areas and survive its political crisis. Externally, the Syrian civil war has had the highest potential to complicate the PKK and a broader Kurdish issue in Turkey (Orhan 2014:33). Moreover, after the Syrian rebellion broke out, the PKK armed peasants belonging to its social base formed a militia force to protect PYD's political autonomy. The YPG (People's Protection Units) was founded in 2012. The Syrian insurgency made ,the Kurdish issue more transborder, complex, overlapping and interlinked between countries' (Park cited in Orhan 2014:35).

The AKP government returned to the use of security measures to solve the Kurdish problem in 2011. The Arab uprisings disturbed Turkey's zero-problems with

neighbours policy since Turkey reacted fiercely to Assad's violent repression of the Syrian opposition, which ended up in receiving support from the Turkish government. In response to this support, Assad retaliated with renewed support to the PKK in its fight against Turkey and allowed for greater autonomy for Kurds in Northern Syria. Turkey grew wary of Damascus' plans to grant citizenship to the Kurdish minority in Syria and increased their cultural rights in exchange for their support for the Assad's regime. Ankara feared that these measures could lead to the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish establishment in Northern. They also feared that Northern Syria would eventually turn into a safe haven for the PKK for attacks against the Turkish territory, since there had been allegations that Syria was back in contact with the Syrian contingent of the PKK (Demirtas-Bagdonas 2014:142).

Emergence of an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria next to the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq would be the realization of a dream for Kurds (Keyman and Gumuscu 2014:107). Turkey's complex transformation has made its domestic and international politics interdependent with each other and in the light of this, no other issue explains this interdependence more than the Kurdish issue (Keyman and Gumuscu 2014: 96). There is a generational gap between the Kurdish oppositions. Most of the Syrian Kurdish parties are founded upon the legacy of the Barzani movement. However, the PYD is an organization closely linked with the PKK and the struggle between the Kurdish parties over power and territory is obvious (Orhan 2014:35).

Having lost about 40,000 lives and nearly 400 billion dollars since 1984, Turkey has recently attempted to resolve its three-decade conflict with the PKK. According to analysts, to minimize the PKK's violent armed power, without upsetting moderate Kurds within or outside Turkey, the key effort is to remove the PKK's safe haven in Northern Iraq. As long as the armed PKK maintains a safe haven close to Turkish territory, it will continue to securitize and radicalize the peace process and meeting the Kurdish demands in the Southeast of Turkey (Aydinli and Ozcan 2011:450). Sometimes, conflict can be seen as an opportunity for social change. Regarding the current situation in the Southeast, the more the state uses oppressive measures, the more nationalistic views the Kurds pursue. Moreover, it might seem that if the AKP would resume back to the peace process, this would be regarded as a victory for the Kurds.

3. Methodology, actors, factors, and timeline

For my theoretical part, I will be using the Copenhagen School theory and Paris School theory, which can be characterized by combining discursive and non-discursive measures of security studies. For the Copenhagen School theory, I will be concentrating on the official discourse in English by high-rank politicians of Turkey. For the practical discourse, I will look at the actions that have been taken after the public in Turkey has accepted the speech acts, be it justifications for de-securitization or securitization of the Kurdish issue in domestic politics and foreign affairs dimensions. My aim is to analyze the media reporting on speeches by high rank politicians and political debates by combining speech act and practical discourse. Combining these two perspectives while analyzing speech acts and applying discourse analysis would be the main part of my research. This would be done by conducting interviews as supplementary sources to the material that portrays the speech acts and securitization of the Kurdish issue.

As my timeframe is to do from the early 2013 regarding the peace process between the PKK and the Turkish state till 2016, these interviews would help to analyze why in certain periods the Kurdish issue in Turkey has been securitized, while in other periods this has not been the case and has shown de-securitization dimensions. I will use the interviews by mapping how the securitization of the Kurdish issue is framed by political and non-political actors and how much this depends on partisan and goes beyond partisan factors.

3.1. Analysis of speech acts

When it comes to my analysis it will include two successive steps. First, I will attempt to capture the official discourse framing the trends of de-securitization (2013 peace process) and securitization (after the bombing attack in Suruc in July 2015). To this end, I will rely on the analysis of media, political speeches by high rank politicians and political debates from 2013 to 2016, which will be my primary sources.

Regarding the media, I am mostly relying on Hurriyet Daily News because it is more in depth than other English sources available in Turkey and it portrays different opinions in Turkish society and combines political neutrality and pluralism, especially in regards with foreign affairs. Hurriyet newspaper is important to have a

more neutral perspective on the domestic and foreign politics of Turkey. Turkish society is very polarized when it comes to its domestic politics and foreign affairs, having a somewhat neutral background is essential when analyzing official statements in Turkish media.

In regards to selection of the articles, the date is taken into consideration, mostly from the start of the peace process in March 2013 till the most recent events regarding the end of the curfews and government's new decision regarding lifting of the immunities of mostly pro-Kurdish HDP parliament members in May 2016. Emphasis will be put on to the events which contributed or somewhat led to the ending of the peace process in July 2015 and also the political debate during and after the elections in June and in November 2015. The position of the politician and other relevant agencies were taken into account when analyzing the articles. Emphasis was put on the President's, Prime Minister's, Deputy Prime Minister's and HDP's co-chairs' official statements and statements found in the media.

Additional media sources would be also considered, if deemed relevant. I would also analyze both the official AKP, HDP English websites, if found useful. Also, transcripts of the parliamentary speeches available in English as well as political speeches by the Turkish President, Prime Minister and other top level politicians from both the AKP and HDP political parties. Speech acts will be combined with practical analysis from different websites and I will analyze each security related situation separately. For instance, top-politicians' opinions regarding the collapse of the peace process and the current security situation in the Southeast regarding the curfews. Speech acts will then be analyzed through combining the Copenhagen School theory (discourse analysis) and Paris School (practical discourse).

This is also necessary due to the fact that speeches in English can be slightly different from the meaning of Turkish and deeper analysis is needed. The timeline that I am analyzing in from the start of the official peace process in 2013 until early 2016. The conflict between the Turkish security forces and the PKK in the Southeast has been escalating since the Suruç bombings in July 2015. Externally, the Syrian civil war and the Kurdish factions' gaining of control in Syria have played an important role in the Turkish domestic politics regarding its own Kurdish population and this will also be looked into more deeply.

Although discourse analysis on the current Kurdish issue in Turkey can be challenging at times, the fact that this issue is very polarized and often banned or

monitored in the media, makes the discourse analysis suitable and relevant type of methodology to use in Turkey's case. The media in Turkey is heavily controlled and after recent bomb attacks in Turkey, media ban is a common security measure taken by the government. Moreover, foreign and even local media are heavily monitored, especially when reporters travel to the Southeast and write about the situation there. This was harder during the times when the security measures and curfews were at its highest point and it is still challenging regarding the broad anti-terrorism law which also tried to include academics and journalists. Portraying an objective picture regarding the peace process and securitization point is also challenging at times due to the AKP's discourse that is mostly seen on the media in regards of the nationalist discourse. Therefore, analyzing HDP's website and political statements is also beneficial.

3.2 Analysis of interviews: Framing political and non-political actors

Second, I will also be conducting expert interviews to deepen the research further and use the interviews as a discursive and non-discursive verifier of my findings based on the analysis of the trends of de-securitization and securitization emerged from the first step, described above. Expert interviews would be supplementary sources to the material that portrays speech acts. These would be done through interviewing political and non-political actors. Although there is plenty of literature regarding the earlier period of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, there is not enough literature regarding the latest developments as the security situation in Turkey is constantly changing and the political debate in Turkey is heavily polarized.

Addressing representatives of non-political actors and civil society would be useful to rebalance the possible bias of covering only the political actors' views. Therefore, conducting interviews with people from different areas and views is helpful. By doing this, I would have two checks for securitization. Firstly, given by the political actors on what is the Kurdish issue debate about as well as the dimensions that can be securitized in the light of discourse and non-discourse elements. Secondly, non-political actors could show that the evidence that is part of the political debate could also be targeted by different kind of audience and show whether this audience has accepted the speech act done by political actors or not. Therefore, talking to NGOs and civil society experts would be useful for this.

The framework of the interviews was open. I interviewed 27 people in total: 5

from Justice and Development Party (AKP), 8 from People's Democratic Party (HDP) and its sub-groups and 14 people from civil society including professors, security analysts, opposition members and NGOs. Most of the people chosen for the interviews came through contacts as it is a well-known practice in Turkey, especially when it comes to the deputies.

Finding people from political parties, especially AKP, was extremely difficult due to the collapse of the peace process, ongoing conflict and security measures taken in the Southeast, different terrorist attacks in Ankara, and sensitivity of the Kurdish issue in Turkey during the current research period which made finding interviewees who are willing to talk difficult. When some questions are asked from the AKP, their answers are often not clear enough to answer the questions asked, although the outline of the questions were made as neutral as possible. I received several comments such as being linked to spying for a foreign country against Turkey by both the political figures and some civil society members. I was also accused of taking too soft stance against the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the HDP and therefore supporting terrorism and the Kurdish factions in the conflict.

My main aim was to be as objective regarding the ongoing conflict as possible and include all sides. Most of my interviews with AKP and HDP deputies were conducted in the Grand National Assembly, some in AKP and HDP headquarters in Ankara. To get the side of the people most affected from the conflict in the Southeast, I visited Diyarbakır after the main curfews were ended in Sur district, however there are still 5 areas under curfews that were prohibited to enter by the security forces. Although most people encouraged me not to visit this area, the situation portrayed by the media is much different than what is seen in reality and most of the Turkish people were not willing to go or have never been to Diyarbakır, the largest Kurdish-populated city in the region, often referred to as the capital of the would-be Kurdistan.

As mentioned, finding members from the AKP was the most difficult part of interviews, however, this was mostly needed to get their stance on the conflict as for the interviews to be as objective as possible. Regarding AKP, all the interviewees were found through contacts and if there were no contacts, certain deputies were not willing to meet me. Also, several AKP members postponed the interviews or cancelled with very short notice before the appointed time. People close to the AKP are afraid of their answers not being on the same level with the top-level politicians and are vary of their identities and answers that they are afraid, can be regarded as

ambiguous. Therefore, names will not be mentioned, when asked by the interviewees and answers were only written down, when recording was not permitted. Also, some interviews were made in Turkish, therefore there might be some variance with direct quotes that might be missed in translation or portrays a different tone to the issue when it is in Turkish. However, interviews are translated as close as possible to the original quotes.

All deputies from both parties were willing for their names to be used in the thesis, however AKP youth members were more cautious due to their families' professions and security reasons. As expected, the Kurdish side was the most vocal one in promoting their cause and getting international attention and support towards ending the conflict. For me, the most interesting views came from interviewing the civil society and Kurdish issue expert, whose discourse differ widely what is seen in the media and portrayed by political parties. However, the civil society was surprisingly cautious about being anonymous who are needed the most to be as a third eye of the peace process and the Kurdish issue overall.

Interviewees, whose names can be mentioned in this thesis, included people from AKP's side such as Assembly deputy Mr. Yasin Aktay and a previous deputy and a member of the Committee of Wise Men Mr. Abdurrahman Kurt. From the HDP' side spokesman Mr. Ayhan Bilgen and deputy Mr. Mithat Sancar. Civil society included names such as previous foreign minister Mr. Yaşar Yakış, Sur Municipality, Human Rights Association, PKK expert Mr. Ali Nihat Özcan, terrorism expert Mr. Ersel Aydın, Kurdish expert Mr. Mesut Yeğen and former deputy of Workers' Party of Turkey Mr. Tarık Ziya Ekinci. Many experts also wished to stay anonymous due to their positions and due to issues of academic freedom being under threat in Turkey when mentioning names.

Foci of interviews

Discourse (<i>Copenhagen School</i>)	Non-discourse (<i>French School</i>)
References to speech act	Practices
References to official statements	Norms
Government positions	Manoeuvres
Political parties	Rituals of demonstration of force
Importance of language	Importance of borders and intelligence
Collective approach	More personal approach
Reliance more on external factors	Both internal and external factors important

In the light of this table, I have developed a conceptual framework which will be applied to the questions and methods used for the interviews that can be used as a verification to the material that portrays the speech act and securitization of the Kurdish factor. This table represents a tentative summary of the potential foci to be addressed in the interviews; they might be amended and be adapted in the light of the results of the analysis of the trends of de-securitization and securitization emerged from the first step. My questions include general topics regarding the political mode in the country, previous peace process as well as the current situation in the Southeast and the status of Kurds both in Turkey and in Syria in general. I have also touched the issue of the Kurdish enclaves in Northern Syria and what impact this has had on the Kurdish issue in Turkey as well as the impact of the presidential system on the Kurdish issue.

4. Assessing the trends of securitization and de-securitization

In this chapter I will analyze the domestic dimension as well as the external dimension with regards to the official discourse found in the media and link it with the Kurdish issue in terms of securitization. The resolution process started with the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's letter that was read out loud during 2013 Newruz celebrations in Diyarbakır, announcing his message that "The era of armed struggle has ended." (Hurriyet 29.07.2015). This process has now come to a serious standstill. Suruç massacre occurred on 20th July 2015. Couple of days after this, the PKK or its affiliated groups executed two policemen in two different cities and Turkey organized air operations both against Qandil, the mountainous area across the border where guerilla headquarters are based, and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) targets in Syria. All this has lead Turkey to a kind of state of war in which the conflict is now being brought to the cities with civilians being the most affected.

4.1 Domestic dimension

2013 peace process and de-securitization

A government-led initiative dubbed the "resolution process" by government officials began in late 2012. Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK, who is serving a life sentence in İmralı Island Prison in the Marmara Sea after he was captured by Turkish security forces in Kenya in 1999, played a central role in the government-led peace process aimed at ending the three-decade long conflict between Turkey's security forces and PKK militants since at least late 2012. Back then, Abdullah Öcalan had been in dialogue with state officials, the HDP, and its predecessor the BDP (Hurriyet 29.01.2016). Now, this peace process is stalled and does not look promising in the near future.

In October 2013, Kurdish militants were considering whether to maintain their cease-fire after noting that a much-anticipated democratization package failed to address their expectations, while giving the government three demands to advance the peace process. "The package disappointed democratic forces, especially the Kurds. It is clear that the package did not meet Kurdish demands," the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), the urban wing of the PKK, said in a statement, warning the government about a possible suspension of a cease-fire that was declared in March 2013 during Newroz celebrations (Hurriyet 10.10.2013). The KCK said in October

2013 that three demands should be met to advance the peace process: the recognition of Kurdish identity in the Constitution, the recognition of democratic autonomy and the recognition of the right to mother-tongue education. “Should the Turkish state and government fail to change their present attitude toward the Kurdish issue and do what is necessary for the solution of the problem, our movement will re-evaluate the state of affairs and take steps to build a free and democratic life with its own will and method in line with its theoretical line and paradigm” (10.10.2013).

The democratization package announced on 30.09.2013 was seen as an opportunity to regain momentum in the peace process, which was stalled after the PKK announced the withdrawal of militants from Turkish soil in May 2013. Lawmakers of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) slammed the package. Co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş said that the peace process had come to a “de facto end” due to its shortcomings: “the package has nothing to do with the process. There is no dialogue, the government has de facto ended the process” (Hurriyet 10.10.2013). Kurds criticized the democratization package for only providing provisions for mother-tongue education in private schools and only promising to change the names of towns and villages – but not provinces as well – back to their originals in terms of measures addressed at Kurds. At the same time, the student oath, which is heavy in its promotion of Turkishness, was also removed as part as a move to satisfy Kurdish demands (Hurriyet 10.10.2013).

There was a fragile ground for the peace process to be sustainable from the start since it was almost done without legal framework regarding the withdrawal of the PKK militants. Moreover, there has always been mistrust between the PKK and the state based on the previous efforts of militants’ withdrawal and efforts for peace, which made this process fragile too.

Selahattin Demirtaş has stated that “the period from 2013 until today has been the preparation era for the Dolmabahçe Agreement; it was its prelude” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015). Moreover, HDP and the Kurdish factions have always put emphasis that there should be a legal law made which would guarantee withdrawal of PKK militants from Turkey. Till now, this has not been put into place and this is also an important downfall of the of the peace process issue. “At the outset of the İmralı talks which I also participated in, Öcalan thought the withdrawal should be very quick. He said: “This business should not be prolonged. We have made an agreement with the state and they will make the law on the withdrawal. We should make the withdrawal

rapidly so that there will not be any provocations. We made a deal with the state delegation. The law will be issued very soon, in no time.”...” Withdrawal means that these people will pass through cities, villages and towns to reach other places. Well, what will the security forces that see these people do? What will the judge, prosecutor, district governor or governor do? Will they look the other way; what will happen if they don’t? What if they are questioned in the future, saying, “Armed people passed right in front of you; why did you not intervene?” Exactly for these reasons there should be a law covering the withdrawal. And the state promised that it would make the law” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

“I am sharing all the details so that our people know. After speaking with Justice Minister Ergin, we went to Kandil...Upon this, (senior PKK commander) Murat Karayılan said: “We have decided to withdraw. As soon as the law is out, we will start withdrawing and complete it in the fastest way possible.” In the following period, Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin worked hard and exerted intense efforts to pass the law, but it was blocked by then-Prime Minister Erdoğan. He said, “There is no law or anything.” Upon this, a crisis erupted. We went back to Kandil; the state delegation went to İmralı. Mr. Öcalan explained the risks of withdrawal without a legal framework, but we later understood that this law would not pass. Upon this, in the next meeting, Abdullah Öcalan, said: “We could not make them comprehend the significance of this law even though they made a pledge. I, nevertheless, want the withdrawal to happen.” Later, Erdoğan said, “Let them bury their weapons and withdraw.” But there is no law or anything. Who will bury the weapons where? How will they bury them? With this crisis, the withdrawal went on for 45 days. As a matter of fact, according to the agreement, the law would have been out immediately and the entire withdrawal would have been completed within 45 days” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015). ...”It was only a couple of days into the start of the withdrawal that government spokesman Bülent Arınç, said during a press conference: “They can go to hell. Let them withdraw as far as they want.” This statement had a shocking effect in Kandil. I personally witnessed this because at those times I too was frequenting the mountains” (Hurriyet 28.07.2016).

HDP and the Kurdish factions blame the government for intensively building dams and police stations in the Southeast, while withdrawing of militants were going on without the official legal framework and therefore creating more tension. “Yes, the prime minister does not understand this; I want to explain. What they are building is

not for the purposes of irrigation or energy. It is a military dam. It is a dam built to obstruct guerillas from passing through mountains and prairies; they fill up the low lands with water. The military roads built at the top of the mountain; they are not double highways” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015). It was brought up like this, particularly with the building of concrete roads on mountain summits for military vehicles to pass through the border zone. Kandil interpreted it as, “We are withdrawing but if the state is building those, then they have no intention of peace. We will withdraw and they will start the war.” These debates prompted “the withdrawal should be slowed down” discussions at Kandil. We conveyed this situation directly to the government. The Gezi Park resistance coincided with this period. The reaction of the government against the youth at the Gezi further increased the distrust on the Kurdish side (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

The period from 2013 onwards can be regarded as a period of de-securitization. Regarding the Dolmabahçe Agreement, steps were made that were suppose to help pave the way towards peaceful and sustainable Kurdish solution. For instance, the agreement outlined the definition and content of democratic politics: the definition of the national and local dimensions of a democratic solution. Legal and democratic warranties of free citizenship. Relations between state and society, and how these issues will be institutionalized. The socio-economic dimensions of the resolution process. Handling democracy-security ties during the resolution process in a manner that will sustain both public order and freedoms. Legal solutions and warranties for policies on women, culture and ecology. Developing a pluralist democracy to define the concept of identity. Defining the concepts of a democratic republic, a common homeland and a nation with democratic criteria, and granting these a legal and constitutional warranty within the pluralist democratic system (Hurriyet 28.02.2015). However, this has all been stalled and the future of Turkey regarding any democratic rights for also academics and journalists, Kurdish factions aside, does not look too promising.

Dolmabahce agreement

Dolmabahçe Agreement is a document outlining a 10-item list of priorities for the resolution of the Kurdish issue published on February 28th, 2015. With the document, the jailed leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, urged the PKK to hold a congress in spring 2015 to discuss

disarmament in Turkey. Abdullah Öcalan issued his first call on the PKK to declare a cease-fire in 2013, while a joint press conference between the government and the HDP was held at Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul on February 28th, 2015. Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan and HDP deputy Sırrı Süreyya Önder read their statements, while Önder listed 10 articles, which summarized Öcalan's priorities, mentioned above (Hurriyet 20.07.2015). "This is a historic declaration of will to replace armed struggle with democratic politics," the HDP's Sırrı Süreyya Önder quoted the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. He had also called for a "reinforced cease-fire" during the press conference in Dolmabahçe Palace (Hurriyet 28.02.2015).

The agreement and the discourse that has emerged from it in the media between two opposition parties has been quite controversial and this has had an enormous impact on the Kurdish issue and the ending of the peace process both in the media and in later interview analysis. The president went as far as saying that he was not even present or had no idea what the Dolmabahçe Agreement was about and this caused a war of words in the media. However, Cumhuriyet Newspaper has provided details suggesting that President Erdoğan was actually closely involved in the Dolmabahçe meeting.

In July 2015, president Erdoğan stated that "I do not recognize the phrase 'Dolmabahçe Agreement.' There is a government. So there is a political party with its grassroots (from the PKK). If there is a step to take for the future of our country, this should be made in parliament. There cannot be an agreement with a political party that is being supported by a terrorist organization" (Hurriyet 20.07.2016).

It is interesting that the president's statement about not agreeing or approving the Dolmabahçe Agreement came after the June 2015 elections when HDP already passed the electoral threshold for the first time. However, till this time, this issue has not been taken to the parliament, because the main discourse that emerges from the AKP's side is that "we do not negotiate with terrorists". However, in Turkey, the term "terrorist" has a very wide connotation – although it is mainly regarded to PKK, this is also sometimes applied to HDP and other opposition parties, as well as academics and journalists who are often accused of supporting terrorism (Kurdish factions) in their statements.

HDP's deputy Pervin Buldan stated after the president's announcement that "I consider Mr. President's statement as unfortunate," arguing that Erdoğan's approach was related to the HDP's success in the June 7 parliamentary election because the

success hampered Erdoğan's aspiration to transform Turkey's parliamentary system into a presidential one (Hurriyet 20.07.2016). The AKP lost its parliamentary majority as the HDP passed the 10 percent threshold and the AKP dropped to fewer than 276 seats in parliament, the number needed for a legislative majority. The AKP had aimed for 330 seats, which was needed in order to change the constitution without input from other parties and thus pave the way for a new presidential system equipped with more power and fewer checks and balances (Hurriyet 20.07.2016). However, this changed with the snap-elections in November 2015.

HDP's co-leader Selahattin Demirtaş has said in regards to reaching the Dolmabahçe Agreement that "we met for that agreement; everything was prepared because actually the major portion of the withdrawal had been completed...a very small group of PKK members had remained inside Turkey. The government knows this very well. They did not make an issue of the remaining (fighters) because the major portion of the withdrawal was completed. And talks continued. The government, at that point, did not say, "I will not negotiate until the withdrawal is 100 percent complete. Delegations went back and forth to İmralı" (Hurriyet 28.07.2015). Moreover, "the state delegation which also included the national intelligence (MIT) said: "We have made a deal but the politicians have other concerns, we were not able to convince them". "But on every matter, Öcalan said they had agreed upon on İmralı; we confirmed that with Ankara afterward. We informed Kandil of them. The HDP delegation exerted countless efforts to build confidence in Ankara, Kandil and İmralı" (Demirtaş cited in Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

According to Demirtaş, in February 2015, "our İmralı delegation called me to say a text that had been agreed upon had been prepared for submission to the government. They sent it to me as well. I approved it. Then this text went to the government; they reviewed it. They told us it was unacceptable and suggested another text. However, in that text, there were only the government's wishes and expectations. And it was not the text discussed on İmralı" ... "It was very different. The text we prepared contained the chapters needed for talks as well as a call for disarmament. In theirs, there was only a call for disarmament; no talks. I told them exactly this: "We also want the PKK to lay down their arms, but it won't happen with this method. It should not happen by deceiving the PKK or Öcalan. Let us not build distrust"... "Upon this, we sent our delegation to Kandil to convey the government's text. Kandil said, "No, this is not what was discussed on İmralı. We also have the

minutes. If such a call is made, we would not abide by it.” Our delegation told all of this to the government. We said: “Let us prepare a text which everybody would accept.” Upon this, our delegation and the state delegation went to İmralı together”. (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

Regarding these two different texts and the final agreement “Öcalan suggested the agreement text announced at Dolmabahçe on February 28th. Upon this, government authorities met with the president”, according to HDP’s co-leader Demirtaş. It was decided that the publication of the event would be done at Dolmabahçe. All of this prolonged the announcement for 22 days. Because this text crisis took that long. Now the president or the prime minister are saying, “Öcalan made a call to lay down arms, but the HDP prevented it.” They base their argument on references to this text crisis” ...” They refer to the part where we did not accept their text. As a matter of fact, actually, at that point, it was essentially demanded that we deceive Öcalan and the PKK. We told them, “If we do that, the process will be damaged to a huge extent, and we will have to start all over again. This is what really angered the AKP” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

Despite all this tension, announcement on the Dolmabahçe Agreement was still made. According to Demirtaş, “at every step, including the seating chart – everything was approved by the president”...”Then he said the following anyway: “This is an announcement we have been waiting for a long time. It is late but a reason to rejoice.” In other words, his initial statement was not like “I do not accept this.” This always went unnoticed. What he did not like in the initial statement was the statement I made; otherwise, he did not express any problems with the agreement. He did not say the picture was wrong or that the agreement was wrong” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

HDP and its sub-groups mostly link the president’s disagreement with the Dolmabahçe agreement with the electoral votes and HDP’s increasing popularity. According to Selahattin Demirtaş, “he (president Erdoğan) saw during the time between this initial statement and the “I do not approve” statement that the votes of the AKP had not increased, actually they dropped but HDP’s votes were increasing. Survey companies provided this information”...” We learned it from inside, from inside the AKP. The president said exactly this: “Why are we engaged in this if there is no benefit in it for us?”...And growls started to be heard inside the AKP, but they are centered on the president. It is not reflected much outside, but our delegations are

in contact with each other. The deal was that the agreement would go into effect and then a convention on laying down arms would be held. Their expectation, on the other hand, evolved into ideas that Kandil would hold the convention immediately and announce disarmament”...” A big table was to be set up on İmralı. Our delegation, the state delegation and observers were to talk and discuss and, on the same day, Öcalan was going to call for disarmament. İmralı said OK to this. All of this was going to be conducted exactly one week after the Dolmabahçe agreement. We filed our applications to go to İmralı, for the observers to go to İmralı, but the government side started telling us that there was a problem”...”We later understood that Erdoğan had said there could not be a monitoring delegation or something. As a matter of fact, even the names had been clarified. Immediately after this, anyway, the president answered a planted question, saying, “I do not approve of the Dolmabahçe agreement.” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

“As part of the state delegation, we were holding constant talks with the Office of the Undersecretary of MİT and the Undersecretariat of Public Order and Security. They made pledges as the state delegation, and the government made confirmations, but everything was rejected all of a sudden. This is exactly what happened...” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

According to Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan, “‘Dolmabahçe’ was not a negotiation, but a meeting. No agreement was reached either. Öcalan has presented his will for the PKK to lay down its arms and he declared this. The HDP announced this too and some articles were announced.”...”“Intelligence organizations have always held meetings (with Öcalan). But at the moment, meetings are out of the question. Meetings (with Öcalan) took place on İmralı when the MHP was in power too ... Intelligence services can hold meetings even with the devil if necessary” (Hurriyet 29.01.2016). Although both sides, the AKP and HDP, talk about the agreement differs in regards to both of their interest, one thing is clear – if the agreement would have been accepted, there would have been some kind of legal frameworks that could frame the situation now, that has been escalating since July 2015.

June 2015 elections

The HDP performed strongly in June elections, winning 80 seats in parliament to deprive Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development's Party of an outright majority

for the first time since it came to power in 2002. The AK party then failed to form a coalition in months of talks that made president Erdoğan - who had been hoping for a large majority to push through reforms to boost his powers - to call for new elections to be held on November 1, 2015. HDP gained historical 13.2% of votes and passed the electoral threshold of 10%. However, the HDP dropped to 10.7% amid renewed clashes between Turkish security forces and the PKK.

Regarding some KCK's negative comments about electoral success of HDP, Selahatin Demirtaş stated in July 2015 that "there are no personal problems between Kandil and me. But we do not think the same on every matter. We do not have to. I am the co-chair of the HDP, they are the KCK co-chairs. Of course, the KCK is a huge effective movement in the Middle East, Iran, Iraq and Syria. It is natural for them to interpret political developments in Turkey. They are their ideas; not orders for us" (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

During the election campaign, Prime Minister Davutoğlu called the opposition party HDP as "a gang of violence, a gang of terror" and President Erdoğan have said it was "propped up by terrorists" (Zeynep Gambetti 2015). The accusations came at a time when the HDP was preparing to compete in general elections. In May 2015, 56 attacks on HDP offices were reported throughout Turkey. Therefore, before the June 2015 elections, in which the HDP passed the threshold, the AKP was already preparing for a so-called fight against terrorism. However, it is argued that a similar preemptive logic was not applied to ISIS since the AKP had rejected a parliamentary motion to launch an investigation into the activities carried out by ISIS in Turkey, who were linked to the attacks in Diyarbakir, Suruc and Ankara (Zeynep Gambetti 2015).

Already a day after HDP passed the electoral threshold, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan commented that "the HDP can only make the movie of the peace process from now on. The peace does not come by saying 'peace, peace.' If they got 13 percent of the votes, then they should call on Kandil and make the PKK lay (down) arms" (Hurriyet 08.06.2015). It is interesting that ever since HDP passed the threshold, AKP always mentioned HDP in regards to the peace process and that it should talk to the commanders in Qandil mountains and make pressure to PKK. However, after the November 2015 elections, AKP has out-ruled any involvement of both the PKK and HDP in the peace negotiations.

During coalition talks after June elections, Prime Minister Davutoğlu told

HDP that “disarmament will happen in Turkey one way or another. Let’s together make this happen. You make a call and then let all arms in Turkey be handed over” (Hurriyet 15.07.2015). HDP’s co-leader Demirtaş commented that “the way to stop the PKK from being a threat is through negotiations”...”It’s not up to a call, but I am making a call here: The PKK must absolutely lay down arms against Turkey” (Hurriyet 15.07.2015).

Davutoğlu described Demirtaş’s call as “right” and “good,” arguing that it reflected the grassroots’ will as well. Moreover, Davutoğlu quoted Demirtaş as saying, “As democracy grows, arms should gradually decrease to a minimum and then to zero” (Hurriyet 15.07.2015). However, President Erdoğan has always been more critical regarding disarmament and peace negotiations than the Prime Minister. Two days after HDP officials called the PKK to disarm and cease armed conflict against Turkey, the President stated that “the (PKK’s) extension in parliament should do its part as we still receive news of deaths from the southeastern region in our country. Some terrorists groups can still open fire at minibuses and we face attempts of bombing an important dam in the region” (Hurriyet 17.07.2015).

Moreover, deputy Prime Minister Akdoğan stated that “...there is currently intensification of the need and demands for security of the people in the region. We have to intensify our struggle against elements that threaten our people’s comfort and security as well as their rights and freedoms. This is the requirement of being a state”...”Getting sufficient votes takes you nowhere in the peace process. It is the existence of the AKP that can advance the peace process. The peace process exists only with the AKP” (Hurriyet 17.07.2015).

President Erdoğan also said in July 2015 that he could not forget the Oct. 6 and 7, 2014, incidents - a week of protests which erupted over the Turkish government’s perceived inaction toward the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants’ siege of Kobane, which left 50 people dead and scores injured. The Kurds in Turkey demanded Turkish government to take action and let the Peshmerga forces of Iraq cross Turkey’s border to Syria. The government was against it, but changed its mind due to both internal and external pressure. These events also created tension between the Kurds in the Southeast and the government’s inaction. President Erdoğan has commented on the events: “Who can make an explanation to the incidents on Oct. 6, 7 and 8? It is clear who made the call (for people to take to the streets),” implying the HDP called on people to protest the Turkish military’s

perceived inaction toward the siege of Kobane, which caused the deaths of dozens of people in a police crackdown (Hurriyet 17.07.2015).

Suruç bombing

Suruç bombing and the events that followed afterwards had a symbolic meaning in regards to the securitization point of the conflict. The Suruç suicide bombing was made by a 20-year old Turkish man linked to ISIL close to Turkey-Syria border on July 20th, 2015 that killed 34 people. At least 300 members of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF) were staying at the Amara Culture Center as part of a summer expedition to help rebuild Kobane, which lies directly across the Turkey-Syria border from Suruç, at the time of the explosion. The culture center is run by the Suruç Municipality under the control of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and it frequently hosts visiting journalists and volunteers who work with refugees from Kobane, which had previously been under attack from ISIL militants (Hurriyet 25.05.2016). After the attack, the PKK accused the government of collaborating with ISIL and resumed attacks on the security forces after observing a two and half years of ceasefire.

The Suruç bombing increased mistrust, frustration among Kurdish population in the Southeast against the government who did not protect its Kurdish population despite the warnings against imminent terrorist threats in the area and during that period, which was made public later. This mistrust later increased with Ankara bombings on the 10th October 2015, which was again done by ISIL affiliated groups linked to the Suruç suicide bombers. Now, there were some measures taken against the police officers of the region for not reacting with caution to these terrorism threats but this might have come too late and it seems to be rather symbolic to satisfy the Kurdish population that some measures were taken by the government to find people who did not do their jobs at the right time.

Now, Suruç police chief Mehmet Yapalı is accused of "misconduct" for reportedly neglecting to put in place additional security measures around Onbirsan Street, where the attack took place on 20.07.2015, despite receiving prior authorization for additional checks and a warning from the Şanlıurfa police of an "imminent" and "regrettable" incident in the district. According to the indictment prepared by the public prosecutor's office in Suruç, the district criminal court of peace decided to introduce intercepting searches in a number of streets and avenues,

including the site of the explosion, between July 8 and Aug. 8, 2015 (Hurriyet 25.05.2016).

Moreover, the court cited “the designation of all types of weapons, explosives and prohibited materials,” in addition to the preservation of national security, public order and peoples’ rights and liberties in introducing the additional security measures. The indictment also included a document entitled “Reinforcement”, issued by the Şanlıurfa police on July 17, 2015, demanding the introduction of additional security measures from July 19 onwards against an imminent attack (Hurriyet 25.05.2016).

Escalation point

The point in which the government first, and then the PKK ended the peace process, was after the PKK had accused government of collaborating with ISIL and not giving enough protection to its Kurdish citizens referring to the Suruç attacks on July 20th. On July 22, after some confusion, the PKK had claimed responsibility of shooting dead two Turkish police at home while they were sleeping, which marked an upsurge in violence in Turkey’s southeast, was followed by kidnappings and attacks by the PKK (Hurriyet 25.07.2015). The result of all this is the conflict is now being transferred to the cities, not only in the Southeast, but with PKK’s affiliated groups also making attacks in Turkey’s cities in the West.

The AKP links the killing of two policemen in Diyarbakır and Adıyaman after the Suruc attacks by the PKK to the end of the peace process. When asked why these two policemen were killed, HDP’s Selahattin Demirtaş has stated that, “war and combat have a domestic logic that we civilians do not grasp. If we do not interfere with the domestic logic of war, which looks painful and meaningless to us, then we will not be able to stop the deaths. As a person involved in civilian politics, I cannot answers the question why they were killed. They should not have been killed. Nobody should be killed. In our domestic logic, in our civilian political world, you cannot explain such a thing. I do not find a motive or justification” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

Heavy security discourse started after the ending of the peace process. Prime Minister Davutoğlu stated that “these terrorists must be wiped out from the mountains; whatever happens they must be wiped out”... “The mountains of this country must not be handed over to terrorists. Every effort will be undertaken”...”If someone wants to push Turkey into a ring of fire, let it be known that the greatest

strength is our unity around the security of our nation" (Aljazeera 08.09.2015). Moreover, the Prime Minister vowed that Turkey's 1st November 2015 snap elections would be held under "democratic conditions" and urged the country's political forces to stand "shoulder to shoulder" in a show of unity (Aljazeera 08.09.2015).

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said that it is "not possible to continue the peace process with those who threaten our national unity and brotherhood" (BBC 28.07.2015). Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan commented that "the state didn't give up (on the peace process). The terror organization and its stakeholders betrayed the process" (Hurriyet 28.01.2016).

After killing of the two policemen by PKK or its affiliated groups, the president said that the PKK has exploited the constructive approach displayed by the government-led resolution process aimed at ending the three-decade long conflict between Turkey's security forces and the PKK militants, in which during nationwide operation in which 297 people, including 37 foreigners, had been detained. President Erdoğan also recalled the Oct. 6-7, 2014 demonstrations by Kurdish citizens against Ankara's perceived inaction toward Syrian Kurds besieged by jihadists in the Syrian border town of Kobane which he dubbed as "a process of sadness."

"At the last stage, this matter has gone rampant," Erdoğan said. "Developments in northern Syria and structures there required Turkey to take a much different step," while calling the July 24 dawn raids as "a first step"... This is not an operation limited to only tonight and it will continue in a determined way in the coming processes too", while also underlining that "terrorist" groups must lay down arms or face consequences (Hurriyet 24.07.2015).

After killing of the two policemen, the Prime Minister said that "the process that we have been continuing under titles such as the solution process or the national unity and brotherhood process is historic and strategic"... "It is time (for the HDP) to decide. Will they choose weapons or democracy?" (Hurriyet 25.07.2015). The HDP answered to these comments by stating that "The AKP government, state institutions and the army have unfortunately taken steps that aborted the solution and peace process, as well as the effective ceasefire"... "A plan to win back a single party majority again by creating a nationalist and militarist climate, making an impression of engaging in a comprehensive struggle against terrorism is a plan to burn the country" (Hurriyet 25.07.2015).

Moreover, on July 25, 2015 the Turkish military carried out airstrikes and

shelling against targets controlled by ISIL jihadists in Syria and embarked on a new air campaign to bombard camps of the PKK militants in northern Iraq (Hurriyet 24.07.2015). After this, the PKK had said its truce with the Turkish government had lost all meaning. The Prime Minister added that "these operations are not 'one-point operations' and will continue as long as there is a threat against Turkey" (Hurriyet 25.07.2015).

While simultaneously bombing ISIL posts in Syria after criticism from NATO allies for not doing enough against ISIL, and PKK posts in neighboring Iraq as a new strategy of the government, the PKK spokesman in Iraq, Bakhtiar Dogan, announced that "we are still committed to the directives of our leader Öcalan... but it seems Erdoğan wants to drag us back into war"... "When things reach this level and when all of our areas are bombed, I think by then the ceasefire has no meaning anymore" (Hurriyet 25.07.2015). On July 27, 2015, HDP's co-leader Demirtaş also announced that "a temporary government with its temporary prime minister is dragging the country step-by-step into a civil war, regional war. Turkey has already been bogged down the Middle East quagmire because of wrong policies in Syria" (Hurriyet 27.07.2015). Moreover, the government strongly slammed the HDP for not condemning the PKK's recent terror acts, with accusations that it relied on the terror organization.

Since the aftermath of the Suruç attack and the killing of two policemen, violence has erupted fast in Turkey's Southeast with a spillover to other cities. In July 2015, as well as ISIL and the PKK, the arrest operations also targeted suspected members of the PKK's youth wing, The Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H), and the Marxist Revolutionary People's Liberation Party Front (DHKP-C) (Hurriyet 25.07.2015). As the operations in the Southeast increased, Selahattin Demirtaş announced that, these operations were designed to let the AKP re-gain its one-party government that it lost in the June polls. "The AKP, as a ruling party already knee-deep in corruption, has begun wrathfully seeking ways to become the government once again," accusing the government of being responsible for the deaths caused by recent terror acts (Hurriyet 27.07.2015). Furthermore, Demirtaş vowed his HDP would continue to work for November 2015 elections to avoid the AKP stirring up more trouble in Turkey, stressing, "peace was just a move ahead. There was only step left," in reference to the halted Kurdish peace process (Hurriyet 27.07.2015).

Although after the collapse of the peace process, AKP officially said that the

government would go back to the peace process only if PKK left their arms, this discourse has changed. Now, the government has ruled out any negotiations with the PKK and its main discourse in the media is “we do not negotiate with terrorists”. HDP’s co-leader Selahattin Demirtaş has urged both parties to calm down: “PKK weapons must be instantly silenced; their hands have to be taken away from triggers”... “The government should also state that operations against them would be stopped, and it must open a dialogue with an approach that would not include death”... “If the government succeeds in frightening us with threats, then society as a whole will be intimidated” (Aljazeera 10.08.2015).

Prime Minister Davutoğlu has answered to the military attacks against PKK to be linked to HDP and elections by saying that “in any democratic society, all political leaders have to make a choice: either democracy or terror; either peace or violence. Now the HDP has a dilemma here. They are not rejecting the PKK’s terrorist activities. They are not condemning them” (Hurriyet 28.07.2016).

Davutoğlu said after increase of violence that it is evident that three terror organizations, the PKK, ISIL and the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), have launched a simultaneous terrorist campaign against Turkey. “As they stood against us, the people asked, ‘Where is the state?’ We had to show that the state is present and we did it,” adding if the government had not responded, Turkey would find itself in a bigger mess, more violent than last year’s Kobane uprisings that claimed the lives of 50 people (Hurriyet 02.08.2015). Since these events, there has been an increasing polarization in the society and this has escalated further during several terrorist attacks in Turkey since the Suruç bombings by both the PKK’s affiliated groups and ISIL.

Ankara attacks

On October 10th, 2015, one of the deadliest bomb attacks during the peace march in Ankara in the history of the Turkish Republic shook the lives of people in Turkey and abroad. The Ankara attack left at least 100 people dead and around 245 people wounded (Aljazeera 29.10.2015). The peace march was organized by several labor unions and political parties and it was an attempt to rally for the peace in order to express discontent about the fighting and the security measures taken in the Southeast as well as hoping to put pressure on the government to stop cracking down on the opposition. The HDP was the primary, but not the only target of the bombing

as liberals, members of the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), labor unions and socialist youth organizations had also taken part in the rally (Göksel and Tekdemir 2015).

Interestingly, president Erdoğan, whose speeches usually dominate Turkish media, did not rush to make a public appearance straight after the Ankara bombing. A sole statement released from his Presidential Palace stated, "Like other acts of terror, the attack at the Ankara Train Station is taking aim at our unity, brotherhood and future" (Yvo Fitzherbert 2015). Moreover, after the attacks, the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's statement that the attack was likely perpetrated by an alliance between Daesh and militants from the PKK, despite the fact the two organizations are enemies ideologically and are also fighting each other in Syria caused tension in the society.

President Erdoğan stated on 22nd of October that "the Ankara bombing is a collective terrorist act, in which Daesh, the PKK, the Mukhabarat [Syria's military intelligence] and the PYD in northern Syria each played a role" (Hurriyet 22.10.2015). As a common discourse, the Prime Minister Davutoğlu also alleged that the Ankara bombing had been carried out to prevent the AKP from regaining an absolute majority in the upcoming vote. "We are the real victims" (Spiegel 21.10.2015).

Moreover, HDP's co-leader Demirtaş stated that "The AKP started out as a people's party, but these days Erdoğan is fighting the people out of fear of losing power"... "We Kurds are the real enemy of the government, not IS," adding that the president will even risk war to remain in power. "Erdoğan has created a climate of fear and loathing" (Spiegel 21.10.2015). There are constant attacks carried out by ISIL affiliated groups and also Turkish nationalists towards HDP offices throughout Turkey.

The way the government reacted after the attacks made people more anxious and discontented. For instance, the Minister of Interior stated, while smiling at the cameras, that there was no security deficit regarding Ankara attacks (Umut Ozkirimli 2015). It is surprising, how political connotation the reactions took after the Ankara attacks. Rather than standing as a united society, looking for someone to blame became a common discourse and was transferred to the election campaign for the November 2015 elections. It became a regular discourse that the AKP supporters used social media for blaming the opposition, mostly the HDP which lost several of its

members in the blasts, for the attacks, even before being able to give a precise number of the victims (Umut Ozkirimli 2015).

As it was seen after the November 2015 elections, the AKP used the domestic political situation and unfortunately the stability card after the Ankara attacks in terms of their own interest and it was successful – the AKP government won back its majority and people accepted their discourse in which the aftermath of the Suruç attack was securitized. On the other hand, after the Ankara bombing, the HDP leadership decided to stop organizing election rallies due to concerns over the persistence of physical harassment, death threats and lack of help from state authorities (Göksel and Tekdemir 2015).

November 2015 elections

It is interesting that even in July 2015, after the events of Suruç, Selahattin Demirtaş was already referring to the would-be success of AKP in the next elections: “It is the manipulations of AKP that did it. None of the deaths are the HDP’s responsibility. A chaotic atmosphere was desired while early elections were approaching, so that the people would say it is only the AKP that is able to provide stability and security” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015). The end of the peaceful atmosphere due to the breakdown of the peace process and increased terror activities in the Southeast of Turkey caused the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) to lose around 1 million votes in the elections in November (Daily Sabah 18.11.2015).

Although, President Erdoğan closed all attempts to the resumption of negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question, the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu suggested the possibility of returning to the table if the PKK would lay down its weapons. However, as it is now seen, Davutoğlu was forced to resign due to different viewpoints of President Erdoğan, both in terms of peace process and foreign politics.

The main election campaign discourse for AKP before the November 2015 elections was stability, which also made a lot of people who voted for HDP in June, switch to AKP in a bid for the AKP to end the violence. Prime minister Davutoğlu stated several times that "AK Party's government will bring stability to the country"...”I'm sure this time our people will vote for the continuation of political stability ,and that political stability can be achieved only by AK Party” (Aljazeera 01.11.2015).

However, after the AKP gained its majority, the situation in the Southeast went only worse with increased security measures taken that had never been seen before. President Erdoğan stated right after the elections that “the national will has been manifested as of Nov. 1st in favor of stability and those short-term developments told the national will ‘There is no other way than the national will,’ and displayed the making of such a decision,” urging the nation to be united in the face of “great plots” that are being set up in the entire country. “I always said something; I said ‘one nation,’ ‘one flag,’ ‘one homeland’ and ‘one state.’ These four titles are virtually sine qua non for us. We need to enrich these four titles and respond to those plots via claiming these” (Hurriyet 02.11.2015).

Returning to the peace process

After the collapse of the peace process, Turkey’s Southeast has seen some of its worst fighting since the height of the conflict between Turkey’s security forces and the PKK since the 1990s. President Erdoğan has ruled out any return to negotiations and has vowed to crush the militant group. Thousands of people, including hundreds of civilians, have been killed in the violence since July 2015 (Hurriyet 19.05.2016).

According to Selahattin Demirtaş, “the PKK acts should stop. The state’s operations should stop. A Kurdish mother voted for us and also for peace. She will ask me, “We voted for you. My child is on the mountain. Bombs should not be dropped on them at midnight. You are able to talk to Ankara. Go and fix this.” Is she right? She is” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

Regarding the role of jailed Abdullah Öcalan Demirtaş thinks that “He should conduct the negotiations...It is up to Kandil anyway to make the final disarmament decision. Öcalan is the only one at the position to make the call. He is saying the same thing anyway. However, disarmament calls during a negotiation process not including Öcalan will not be functional. Kandil should be approaching issues more from Turkey’s democratic politics” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

Regarding HDP’s relationship with PKK, Selahattin Demirtaş has said that “We are a different organization; the PKK is a different one. We have no superior-inferior relationship with the PKK, nor do we have any ties to act together. We have become a facilitator during the reconciliation process. We became mediators from time to time; sometimes we have become crisis solvers”... “There are many things he (Öcalan) can do in terms of peace. But now, meetings with Öcalan have been ended.

Why is he in isolation for four months? I think they want to treat Öcalan as a hostage and Kandil and Öcalan do not accept this. I can see this” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

According to the Chief of General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar, “Developments in the world, instability in our region, along with uncertainties and conflicts, and the actions of terrorist organizations in our country, especially the PKK separatist terrorist organization, has led to the increase of security needs” (Hurriyet 19.08.2015). “Our fight against terror will continue until the PKK lays down arms, until the disarmament”...”The precondition in the struggle against terror is “not having talks anymore, but the PKK should lay down arms,” according to Minister of Science, Industry and Technology Fikri Işık (Hurriyet 09.08.2015).

According to HDP’s co-leader Selahattin Demirtaş, “the entire Turkey pays for the price for war; whichever side the dead comes from. We should make an immediate call to both combatting sides. We want to force both sides because the right of peace is a human right. The media should not go back to its factory settings of war. They should criticize our shortcomings but they should not give up on the language of peace. Our statements should not be interpreted as protecting the PKK or slamming the government. We need support. We know that many people inside the AKP also want peace. They should raise their voices also” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

It is interesting that while previously, the AKP was saying that peace process will be resumed only if the PKK laid down its arms, this has changed in a way that the government will not negotiate at all at the moment. However, there is some discourse been said that while the government cannot negotiate and will not, the national intelligence can and might already be doing secret negotiations. In time of writing this thesis, there have been several announcements of PKK’s surrender, which might lead to some kind of new state affairs in recent months.

Practical measures: curfews

Curfews established in the different areas of Southeast Turkey has been the most debatable security measure established by the government in this ongoing conflict. At first, Diyarbakır’s Sur district turned into intensive clashes between the PKK and security forces with a first curfew in effect from December 2nd 2015. The territory of the curfews in force was in 11 different neighborhoods of Sur district and it was expanded to the remaining four neighborhoods of the district from 03.02.2016, covering the entire neighborhood of Sur (Bianet 03.02.2016). The curfew declared

has been announced on the official website of sub-Governorship as follows: “Curfew has been declared by our sub-Governorship in Camii Kebir, Camii Nebi, İskenderpaşa and Melikahmet neighborhoods as of February 3, 2016 Wednesday 12 p.m. until further notice to provide security of life and property of our citizens while carrying out works on closing the ditches and disposing bomb set-ups” (Bianet 03.02.2016).

These ditches and bomb set-ups mostly refer to the PKK’s and its youth branch Patriotic Revolutionary Youth-Movement (YDG-H) work. The main difference between these curfews the ones during the 1990s state of emergency is that never before have the conflict been going on in the cities, with the civilians being trapped between the PKK and the state forces. However, it is interesting that while civilians have been losing their homes and family members, the support of PKK has been growing, which the state usually does not portray.

According to president Erdoğan, “at the moment, the course of events are good in developments in the southeast. Citizens want their security to be ensured. Sure, difficulties are being experienced and there are martyrs who are losing their lives. Our hearts are sinking. But following these difficulties, serenity will come to the region. We are getting the terrorist organization to pay a heavy price and they will continue paying” (Hurriyet 02.02.2016).

On March 2nd 2016, Diyarbakır Governorship announced that Sur district was closed off for every entrance except for persons residing in Sur before the march against curfews for the following reasons: “Protecting basic characteristics of the republic, not restricting the indivisible integrity of the state, its people and the rights and freedoms of others, protecting national security, preventing crimes and protecting others rights and freedoms” (Bianet 02.03.2016). HDP’s co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş had stated that “everybody should march to Sur at 4 p.m. on Wednesday (March 2) until barricades are removed and the bans are lifted in Sur” (Bianet 02.03.2016). However, these statements led Demirtaş to be accused of terrorism charges and lifting of immunities once again. As of May 2016, most of the curfews in Sur have been lifted, however, 5 districts have still remained.

According to HDP’s co-leaders, „the military operations launched over the past year under the pretext of “war on terror” have turned into a targeted persecution of Kurds and destruction of their habitat. With the declaration of indefinite curfews and sieges in the Kurdish-populated cities and towns since July 2015, in explicit violation of both Turkey’s Constitution and administrative law and the international

conventions on human rights and armed conflict, the Erdoğan regime has turned the entire region into an open armed conflict zone” (HDP 23.05.2016).

“Up to the present, indefinite and round-the-clock curfews are announced sixty-five times, which stretches from one day to a couple of months, in 7 cities and 22 towns whose population is around 1.7 million, and these towns are among those recorded the highest rate of vote for the HDP. Continuous military and police operations complement the curfews, which are executed without giving any notification to the local people and who are deprived of basic goods and services, such as food, shelter and medicine. These operations comprise arbitrary and indiscriminate shelling of residential areas, which makes no distinction between civilians and armed militants” (HDP 23.05.2016).

According to HDP’s records, “more than 550 civilians, including local activists, women, children and older men and women are killed by the special paramilitary forces, 350 thousand people are displaced, and the cultural and commercial centres in the region, namely Sur (Diyarbakır), Cizre, Nusaybin and Silopi, as well as the surrounding residential areas are razed to the ground” (HDP 23.05.2016)

There is an emotional debate by both parties about the amount of civilian victims and people being trapped in basements under shelling from both the PKK and the military forces and further damage due to rules of curfews. During the times of intensive curfews in Sur, not the media but the HDP website and human rights organizations published emotional reports on civilian victims of the conflict in the Southeast. According to HDP’s deputy Sibel Yiğitalp, “we have reports that more than two hundred people have been trapped in the basements of residential buildings where they had moved to take shelter in the first place. We have confirmed information that almost all of these people are civilian residents and at least twenty of them are children”...” We urge you (international organizations) to please take action to urge the Turkish Government to lift the curfew in the Sur district, even if temporarily, in order for enabling the safe transfer of the trapped civilians out of the conflict zone” (HDP 25.02.2016).

However, the government is arguing that the PKK and its sub-groups have not let ambulances go to these areas where people are trapped and in need of help. According to Davutoğlu, “Nobody can claim that Turkey broke the law while fighting against terror”... “We fight against terror and we would take all kinds of measures to

rush any wounded person to hospital, no matter whether (he or she) is a terrorist”...“Make a call saying, ‘While we speak here at the parliament of a democratic country, you cannot jeopardize lives of paramedic workers and patients there by setting barricades, digging holes and firing 20 rockets in one day at the Cizre Public Hospital’...”“We will do what is required. Both in terms of health services and in fight against terror, we will do what is required. All of these districts, cities and centers of population of ours will be cleaned of this terror trouble” (Hurriyet 29.01.2016).

President Erdoğan has said that all political attempts to end the three-decade-long conflict between Turkey’s security forces and the PKK are now things of the past, vowing that ongoing joint military-police operations are the only way to “root the terrorist organization out of Turkey and the region.”...”We cannot stop ongoing grievances without rooting out the terror organization, which is operating only to kill ... along with its all figures and supporters, from the region and our country”...”If you are looking for a resolution, here is the resolution. When we root out the terror organization, without its smallest trace remaining, from these territories, then we will have put the resolution into practice”...”The point at which we have arrived is in the open. We have suffered many losses due to terrorism. More than 40,000 of our people have unfortunately been victims of terror in these lands for 35 years”...”We said we put the Resolution Process ‘in the refrigerator.’ Now is the period of operations. What will happen during this period of operations? This issue will be resolved. This issue will end because nobody has the right to target the serenity of the nation” (Hurriyet 19.04.2016).

While the government adopted a terror discourse, the HDP is emphasizing the civilian perspective for the government to end the curfews and security measures taken in the Southeast. However, this discourse seems not to be taking anyone further, especially when Davutoğlu has now been forced to resign. He was in a sense the only hope for the Kurdish factions regarding the peace process, for being more sensitive than Erdoğan’s hard line approach, especially regarding domestic politics.

New Action Plan

Prime Minister Davutoğlu unveiled the “action plan” in February 2016 aimed at “repairing” eastern and southeastern Turkey, which has been traumatized by months of ongoing conflict between security forces and militants of the PKK.

According to Davutoğlu, “nobody should worry. No matter where it is – whether it is the Diyarbakir Bazaar, Mardin or Silopi - we will compensate the losses of all of our citizens due to terror. These (militants) have started a fire, but God willing we will grow a rose garden at the site of the fire”...”During this period, as was the case in the past, we will unite nation’s conscience and wisdom with the state’s reason. All differences between the nation and the state will be entirely eliminated and we will have an understanding of uniting and integrating the nation with a human-oriented state, instead of an understanding of disruptive nationalism”...“We are going to bind all the wounds. We who have welcomed two and a half million Syrians are perfectly capable of offering all our help to our fellow citizens” (Hurriyet 06.02.2016).

“Whoever tries to launch terrorist actions, they will be averted and stopped, regardless of whether they exploit the feelings of our pious Sunni citizens as Daesh does, or exploit Kurds as the PKK does, or exploit Alevi citizens as the DHKP-C (the outlawed Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party–Front) does. The terrorists and the people will be differentiated, the people will be treated with compassion and the terrorists will be treated with power,” according to Davutoğlu (Hurriyet 06.02.2016).

Even before the Action Plan was announced, Turkish armed forces paid attention to civilians on the media when the government was not so vocal about it in public. According to Chief of Turkish General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar, “the TSK is very sensitive and careful on the issue of not causing any civilian damages. This sensitivity is more than not shooting at areas where civilians are near a target, by also taking measures to prevent such situations”...”We aim to prevent damage but we also cover the damages if any are done. We have done this when terror incidents were not on the agenda. Now we continue to do the same with much sensitivity” (Hurriyet 30.10.2015).

Interestingly, Prime Minister Davutoğlu has made a controversial statement in the media that “We will reconstruct Diyarbakır’s Sur so beautifully that it will become a tourist attraction with its architectural texture” (Hurriyet 01.02.2016). Moreover, according to the Prime Minister, the devastated Sur district of Diyarbakir will be rebuilt “just like Toledo,” a UNESCO World Heritage Site that was renovated after it endured a siege during the Spanish Civil War (Hurriyet 01.02.2016). This statement has caused uproar between politicians and accusations that the Action Plan does not include any real psychological treatment.

According to HDP, „the AKP Government’s declaration of an “urban

transformation project” and “emergency expropriation” of the private property and heritage sites belonging to the Armenian and Assyrian minorities in Sur, as well as similar measures in other sieged towns, attest to the demographic engineering strategy of the Erdoğan’s regime. These measures were taken without any consultations with the local population or their representatives, and the local authorities elected by the population were explicitly excluded from any contact with the central government, as they were branded as terrorists by Mr. Erdoğan himself” (HDP 23.05.2016).

Anti-terrorism law

The anti-terrorism law in Turkey is very broad and also refers to even journalists and academics. President Erdoğan’s aim is to make it even more broader which has got much criticism from the EU and is directly linked to the visa-free procedure, if Turkey does not amend its law.

On 10th of May 2016, Democratic Regions Party (DBP) co-chair Kamuran Yüksek was arrested on charge of “being a member of a terrorist organization” (Bianet 13.05.2016). A police search was carried out in his apartment and nothing significant had been found in the search except some books. Photograph of Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, hanging on the wall in Yüksek’s working room and office in his apartment, also some CDs and a bag had been seized (Bianet 13.05.2016). His attorneys have said that the press statements reflected on the media was the reason for custody which shows the fragile freedom of speech in Turkey, especially when it comes to opposition parties. It is interesting that this recent development is also mostly silenced in the media and the situation regarding the conflict in the Southeast and Turkey’s media restriction is often left unnoticed.

The EU says that Turkey must narrow its definition of terrorist crimes, which leads to extensive application of the law against intellectuals and critics of President Erdoğan, including journalists and academics. However, Turkey has repeatedly declined to do so, saying the law is crucial in its fight with jihadists from ISIL and militants of the PKK (Hurriyet 20.05.2016). Moreover, Turkey says that it cannot change its anti-terror law while fighting both the PKK and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIL) at the same time.

According to HDP co-leaders’ letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon “...the government has been using a relentless “national security” and “anti-terror” discourse to criminalize and repress any opposition against its militarist

policies within and outside the country. “The prosecution of 1128 Academics for Peace with the charge of “supporting terrorism”, who, after years of supporting the government’s initiative of peaceful solution, criticized the government’s war policies against the Kurds, is only one example of the state-security witch-hunt that democratic peace activists are subjected to in the country today. The Erdoğan regime defines this familiar authoritarian state security logic in which there are no checks and balances and politics is replaced by “security operations” against the political parties, NGOs, media corporations, universities and business enterprises as New Turkey” (HDP 23.05.2016).“...the Erdoğan regime punishes any reporting or criticism of the escalation of war in the Kurdish region as “terrorist propaganda”, arbitrarily and violently detaining and imprisoning activists and journalists, and criminalizes criticisms of its Syrian policy as act of “treason” or “spying” (HDP 23.05.2016). For instance, a prominent lawyer in Diyarbakir, Tahir Elci, was charged with "promoting terrorism" after saying on CNN Turk that "PKK is not terrorist group". Rather, Elci described the PKK, as an "armed political organization with large support" (Aljazeera 20.10.2015).

In January 2016, Turkish police detained at least 18 academics who signed a petition calling for an end to military operations in southeastern Anatolia, while more than 130 academics are facing criminal charges. This came days after President Erdoğan blamed the signatories for making “terrorist propaganda”. “Those who do not want to take part in politics in parliament should dig trenches or go to the mountains”...“Our nation should see who is who. Being a professor does not make someone an intellectual. These are the darkest of people. They are cruel people, because those who ally with cruelty are themselves cruel” (Hurriyet 15.01.2016). Moreover, Prime Minister Davutoğlu has said that the academic petition is an incitement of terrorism.

Security Law

The government-led controversial Homeland Security Bill, which grants more powers to the police and governors, went into force in April 2015 despite objection from opposition parties. This was initially designed to control Gezi-like protests, but is also used in the Southeast. This bill has been extremely controversial in regards of making public protests.

According to Zeynep Gambetti (2015), the equation “PKK=terrorist=HDP”

has been constantly repeated into the general public's mind since March 2015, when President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan began to publicly criticize the peace negotiations between the government and the HDP. In April 2015, AKP's parliamentary majority voted for a security bill that allowed for strip searches and 48-hour detention periods. It also gave license to the police to use firearms and to 'remove' protestors during demonstrations to unspecified locations that are not necessarily the police station. This security bill virtually turned every public protest into an 'act of terrorism' in Turkey (Zeynep Gambetti 2015).

After the Suruç attacks, President Erdoğan reacted widely to the protestees who were wearing masks who escorted the victims of the attacks. "After the Homeland Security Bill was adopted, there are still those who march with guns in their hands and masks on their faces even in Istanbul"... "If he is walking comfortably here, then it means that we have a security weakness"... "Those whose faces are covered cannot march. This is supported by laws. Then, required steps will be taken" (Hurriyet 24.07.2015). Prime Minister Davutoğlu supported the president by saying that "Our instructions to our police are open...In Turkey, a democratic country, everybody has the right to hold demonstrations at permitted venues. But nobody has the freedom to hold guns or cover his face in any demonstration. Now, the importance of measures we took as part of the Homeland Security Law is once more being understood" (Hurriyet 24.07.2015).

Media ban

The discourse about terrorism is one of a kind in Turkey and as a general rule, after recent bomb attacks in Turkey, media ban is usually declared. What is unique in Turkey's case, is the fact that even before anyone has claimed responsibility of bombing attacks, the government and politicians often seem to frame a certain kind of picture in the media while not relying on facts. For instance, after the Ankara bombings on October 10th 2015, Prime Minister Davutoğlu said that while no one had claimed responsibility for the bombings, groups including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the far-left Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) were capable of carrying out such an attack (Aljazeera 11.10.2015).

After the October bombings, the government announced a ban on reporting and investigating the suspects of the Ankara attacks until all suspects were arrested by

the state. Furthermore, the state-run media continued to report that the PKK may have still been behind the bombing, in a co-ordinated attack with ISIS. However, the brutal reaction of the state forces to the bombing, such as the police, along with the ban on reporting, created suspicions among the public about the possible relations from the state side with the perpetrators of the attack who were ISIS-affiliated jihadists of Turkish origin (Yvo Fitzherbert 2015).

After the Ankara attacks in October 2015, a temporary broadcasting ban was announced but after that it was extended. Government spokesperson said the order covered images showing the moment of the blast and bloody images or those “that create a feeling of panic” (Independent 10.10.2015). But five days after the incident, the government imposed a total media ban on the Ankara attack and prohibited ‘all kinds of news, interviews, criticism and similar publications in print, visual, social media and all kinds of media on the Internet’ (Hurriyet 16.10.2015). This upset many people in the society in terms of media rights and having knowledge of what was really going on.

Lifting of immunities

Already in July 2015 after the Suruc attacks and killing of the two policemen, the AKP heightened its security discourse against the HDP that actually had no direct involvement with any of these incidents. When thinking back now, it is seen how the AKP was relating its discourse to the future election campaign in a bid to gain majority government which in the end was successful. Erdoğan stated that parliament must strip the immunity from prosecution of Peoples’ Democratic Party HDP lawmakers and make them “pay the price” for links to “terrorist groups” as the government increased its attacks on the Kurdish movement (Hurriyet 28.07.2015). However, the president claimed he rejected the closing of any political party, suggesting that politicians should be the object of the cases, not legal entities.

According to a co-deputy leader of the party, Meral Daniş Beştaş, the HDP regards the issue as “the coup agenda of the ruling party,” rather than an issue related to immunities. “The lawmakers will vote on for either ‘democracy or fascism,’ and they will decide on either ‘democracy or one-man rule.’ According to the internal regulations of the parliament, this proposal is meant to be the ‘self-abolishment of the parliament.’ Those who will say ‘yes’ to the proposal also recognize our righteousness but they say ‘the order comes from high places.’ We will see to what

extent they will obey the order” (Hurriyet 17.05.2016).

It is now clear that the lifting of the immunities from the parliament members have been approved and it is yet to be seen where this head. It will pave the way for the prosecution of 138 lawmakers on 667 different dossiers. The leaders of the three oppositional parties all have dossiers against them, with HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş facing 75 cases, CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu 41 and MHP head Devlet Bahçeli 9. Some HDP lawmakers could be arrested as they are facing terror-related charges (Hurriyet 20.05.2016). This is most likely to happen.

Political ground

The ground for political debate is fragile in Turkey and so far there is also no sign of any kind of mediator to be involved as the Kurdish issue is considered to be a domestic issue by the government. According to the Prime Minister, “nobody should expect from us to address the terror organization who have arms and blood on their hands as an interlocutor. From now on, we have a single interlocutor; that is our nation and each individual of our nation” (Hurriyet 05.04.2016).

Turkey is trying to push through with a presidential system at it will probably be successful sooner or later. However, it is yet to be seen if it will have a direct effect regarding the peace process as well. “The most important thing we have to do today is to turn this de facto situation into a legal one and thus end the confusion. The way to do is with a new constitution and the presidential system within it,” the new Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım stated at AKP’s convention on May 22 (Hurriyet 22.05.2016). President Erdoğan has stated that “we must remove this duality. Otherwise, regardless of how much you like each other or how long you have worked together in the past, there may be problems” (Hurriyet 04.12.2015). According to President, “my legal ties with my party might have been cut on Aug. 27, 2014, when I was elected as the president. But my bonds of love with my party have never been cut and will never been cut”...“I believe this weird rule that obliged the president to cut ties with the political cadres will be soon removed in this new era as part of efforts to renew the constitution and governance system” (Hurriyet 22.05.2016). According to HDP’s co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ, “they (government) are opening the door to a very big war and chaos in the region. If a big war emerges, it will be easier for him (Erdoğan) to become an executive president by becoming chief commander through a declaration of mobilization and martial law. As he could not become president

through the democratic will of people, he wants to become president through war. He is chasing his ambition of becoming president by becoming the chief commander” (Hurriyet 16.02.2016).

The problem for Turkey is that it is not only fighting the PKK, but also ISIL, which has been active in recent months with its attacks on Turkey. President Erdoğan has commented on the recent terrorism attacks in Turkey that “of course we know very well the fact that terror organizations conduct attacks to enslave our country to their own bloody agenda and to drag our nation to intimidation”. Moreover, the president vowed that the country would overcome terror by “developing new strategies” and through “the unity and solidarity of the nation”...“We will surely overcome this terrorism as a state and nation,” calling on the nation to “mobilize” in line with the spirit of past glories of Turkish history (Hurriyet 21.03.2016).

The new Prime Minister, who was appointed to the office on AKP’s convention on 22nd of May 2016, Binali Yıldırım also addressed the ongoing fight against terrorism. “This is a matter of the country. Our determination in the fight against terror will continue in the same way. We have lived in this country for a thousand years in unity and as brothers, and we will continue to live like this”...“I declare from here: These operations will continue until life and property security as well as their comfort of our people living in this region will be provided”...“The operations will continue until attacks targeting civilians and security personnel will cease. They will continue non-stop until the terror organization PKK, which has blood on its hands, ends its armed attacks. My people should feel comfortable. We will remove this terror trouble from Turkey’s agenda” (Hurriyet 22.05.2016).

The state forces portraying the ongoing war as successful. According to military sources, a total of 4949 PKK militants have been killed in operations conducted inside and outside Turkey since July 24, 2015. A total of 2583 PKK militants were killed in operations conducted inside the country between July 24, 2015 and May 23, 2016 while 109 militants were injured. Some 731 PKK militants were captured while another 214 surrendered to the security forces (Hurriyet 24.05.2016).

According to HDP, a blind eye has been turned to the conflict and human rights violations in Turkey. HDP’s deputy, Ertuğrul Kürkçü stated to the international community: “I call on the Assembly to keep an eye on what is going on in Turkey. Actually, the western world, including the United States and European countries, has

turned a blind eye to what is going on in Turkey, in return for simple material gains, using the Incirlik air base and keeping Turkey as a block against the influx of refugees in Europe. A blind eye is turned to the atrocities and violations of human rights” (HDP 26.01.2016).

Turkey is right now in one of its worse political crisis since the 1990s and many people, be it academics or journalists, live in constant fear what happens next. It is clear that domestic politics regarding the Kurdish issue is a weak spot for Turkey, however this discontent has also seen in its foreign politics. According to opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, an opposition politician who leads Turkey’s main secular party, placed blame for the violence on the government’s “involvement in Middle Eastern affairs” (Tim Arango 2015).

Although the main discourse from the Turkish president still seems to be that “it is not possible to carry on the peace process with those who target our national unity and brotherhood”, this has already spilled over to its neighboring countries that are facing instability (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

4.2 Foreign affairs dimension

Turkey’s relationship with the KRG

Ankara’s policy ‘zero problems with neighbours’ seems lately to only somehow work with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and specifically with its’ president, Massoud Barzani. Although this policy may assist Turkey in increasing its influence over the future of Iraq and in energy politics, it is less likely to help Turkey in its internal struggle with its Kurdish minority, or in countering the Kurdish aspirations in Syria (Gallia Lindenstrauss 2016).

Relations soured between Turkey and Iraqi federal government in December 2015, when Turkey deployed around 600-1200 troops and dozens of tanks in Bashiqa, 15 km northwest of Mosul. According to Turkey, the troops were deployed to train local volunteer Sunni militia forces for the planned liberation of Mosul from Daesh. However, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi rejected the Turkish claims. He accused Turkey of failing to respect Iraqi sovereignty, and demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Turkish forces from Iraqi territory. While Turkey has said the deployment was routine and necessary to protect the trainers, Baghdad has argued it was unauthorized and protested to the United Nations Security Council to make Turkey take out forces from Iraq. After this, Turkey rearranged the number of troops

in Bashiqa and the additional security elements left the camp on December 14, 2015 (Hurriyet 27.12.2015)

During the visit to Ankara in December 2015, KRG president Massoud Barzani backed the Turkish troop presence and was supportive of Ankara's argument, Barzani defended the legitimacy and necessity of the troops for the training of local militias and the liberation of Mosul from Daesh. Although the economic and diplomatic relationship between Turkey and the KRG is good, these relations had a setback in 2014, when Turkey did not come to help the KRG while Erbil was under the threat of Daesh.

However, good relations between the KRG and Turkey can be explained by the fact that the Kurdish Autonomous Region of Northern Iraq is not receiving its share of the budget from Baghdad and the fall in the price of oil, together with the burden of providing for more than 1.8 million internally displaced people and refugees from Iraq and Syria have further added to Erbil's difficulties. KRG is proceeding with its energy exports through Turkey with the Turkish government paying the cheap price. Massoud Barzani, who is known to have long been thinking whether to declare Kurdish independence, recently voiced that he thinks Turkey would not object to Kurdish independence and KRG flags have already been officially displayed in Ankara during Barzani's visits (Gallia Lindenstrauss 2016).

Turkey has warned that the Kurds crossing the Euphrates and joining the Kurdish cantons of Rojava (Western Kurdistan) into one contiguous region constitutes a "red line," implying that Turkey would act militarily in that case. During the earlier stages of the civil war in Syria, Turkey was hoping that Barzani would have some influence among the Syrian Kurds and help neutralize the dominance of the PYD, but this has not happened. The PYD has gained enough international support due to its fight against *Daesh*, both from the USA and Russia. Turkey might still be hopeful that its positive relations with Barzani will help it to neutralize support for PKK among the Kurds in Turkey, as in the past there were Turkish attempts made to persuade Barzani to establish a moderate Kurdish party in Turkey in an effort to minimize the PKK's influence (Gallia Lindenstrauss 2016).

After the collapse of the peace process in July 2015, and Turkey's bombings in Northern Iraq last year, the KRG called the PKK to leave from the Qandil Mountains. However, the KRG is most likely not going to take action against PKK, both because it would not be feasible in military terms and because it would face

strong domestic public opposition inside the KRG (Gallia Lindenstrauss 2016).

Turkey's and Kurdish Autonomous Region's in Northern-Iraq are mostly based of cooperation on energy, trade and economy. President Erdoğan has stated that "KRG and Iraq are important for Turkey and we will hence continue to strengthen our friendly relations. Moreover, we will continue to provide assistance especially on countering terrorism" (Hurriyet 27.12.2015).

Regarding the peace process in Turkey, Barzani has said that "in the end this process should continue, because the problems should be resolved peacefully. I think there is a need for sufficient time for this"... "Turkey and the KRG will always need each other as two neighbors"... "Sometimes problems occur for the Kurdistan region. Turkey can play a role for the resolution of these problems. Sometimes the opposite can take place. We always need each other" (Hurriyet 10.12.2015). Turkey would probably like the KRG to have more power in the region, especially when it comes to Northern-Syria and the territories controlled by the PYD. However, this is very unlikely in the future as the KRG and the PYD have totally different ideologies.

The relationship between Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq has always been questionable and interest based. After the Turkish government started airstrikes in July 2015 to ISIL and PKK posts simultaneously, Prime Minister Davutoğlu said that Massoud Barzani had expressed his "solidarity" with the operation. "Mr. Barzani expressed his solidarity with Turkey again, noting that Turkey's operations against ISIL and the PKK are both justified," adding the Kurdish leader also reiterated that he was ready to "contribute to all kinds of cooperation in the fight against terrorism" (Hurriyet 25.07.2015). However, Barzani had released a statement after Prime Minister Davutoğlu's speech, saying that he had "expressed his displeasure with the dangerous level the situation has reached" (Hurriyet 25.07.2015).

After the attacks on PKK posts in Northern Iraq, a statement from the office of Kurdish Regional Government President Massoud Barzani said that the PKK "should withdraw its fighters from the Kurdish region to ensure the civilians of Kurdistan don't become victim of that fighting and conflict" (Hurriyet 01.08.2015). On July 31st 2015, the KRG accused the PKK of attacking an oil pipeline in northern Iraq. The Kurdish government had been selling oil directly to Turkey in a move that sparked tensions between the regional government in Erbil and the federal government in Baghdad (Hurriyet 01.08.2015).

Regarding Syria, according to Masoud Barzani, the head of autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq has said that “any support to the PYD means support for the PKK”... “They are exactly one and the same thing”... “The PKK should leave Sinjar, and we want them to leave Sinjar peacefully — not by force” (Hurriyet 23.03.2016).

ISIL

With the agreement on July 22, 2015 between USA and Turkey, Turkey declared its strategic choice to stick with the US-led anti-ISIL coalition. However, the developments of the next few days indicated that the Turkish government had also other reasons to sign. The Turkish air force bombarded PKK strongholds in Iraqi Kurdistan a day after the limited assault on ISIL. This was in retaliation for the murders of policemen after the Suruç attacks for which the PKK assumed responsibility. After that, President Erdoğan declared that the "resolution process" with the Kurdish political movement being nulled (Aljazeera 04.08.2015).

Demirtaş has said that “...Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, everyone, has waged a proxy war (in Syria). Previously, it was Jabhat al-Nusra. These groups emerged from the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which all Western countries, and especially Turkey, have backed as a so-called moderate opposition. It has been claimed several times that Turkey has considerably supported and used ISIL. Moreover, the ISIL assaults on the Kurds have served both Turkey and Assad’s interests, so Ankara and Damascus have remained silent on the issue” (Al-Monitor 04.01.2016).

Describing ISIL as a threat against humanity and regional countries, Davutoğlu has said that “this organization ... is a bigger threat to Muslims than Christians. It’s a threat against humanity. We have repeated this hundreds of thousands of time but there are those who are still trying to portray us with (ISIL) as part of an international conspiracy” (Hurriyet 02.08.2015). He added no one can show documents proving Turkish support of any ISIL leader because no such thing exists. Responding to questions about Turkey’s relations with ISIL, president Erdoğan has said that “the portrayal of Turkey as a country that helps Daesh is – excuse me if this will sound harsh – despicable” ... “No other country in the world is fighting Daesh in the same way as Turkey. No country has (experienced as many losses as) Turkey in the fight against Daesh” (Hurriyet 11.05.2016). On May 17 2016, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu told his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that he

would resign if Moscow could show any evidence that Turkey has been aiding ISIL: “I am ready to resign if you have any evidence that Turkey is helping Daesh” (Hurriyet 19.05.2016).

Honorary HDP President Ertuğrul Kürkçü claimed that the latest operations and security measures were not related to the fight against ISIL but an attempt by the AKP to “prepare the ground for early elections.” He has stressed that the Kurds were the only ground force fighting ISIL and the major secular power in the Middle East. “The major contribution for the fight against ISIL has been provided by PYD forces, the brethren of the Turkey’s PKK guerrillas in Syria. And they have become the principle savior of the Yazidi people to save from massacres of the IS in the Shengal Mountains. Therefore, what the Kurds are doing in Syria and what their brethren in Turkey are assisting them to do is bring an end to IS atrocities” (Hurriyet 28.07.2015).

Kurds‘ relations with Russia

After Turkey shoot down of the Russian war plane in November, Kurds in Turkey as well as in Syria started to increase their relationship with Russia as a way of pragmatic politics. The PYD even opened its office in Moscow. The Turkish government, including the Prime Minister and the President, has accused HDP of „treason“, after Selahattin Demirtaş visited Russia.

According to Demirtaş, “no doubt, Russia has certain calculations and policies regarding the Middle East, Syria and Turkey. Yet, we do not have any outlook that would make us a tool of those policies, nor has Russia exhibited an approach to that effect. During our meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov specifically indicated that they did not see us as a “Kurdish card” in Syria, Iraq and Turkey. In any case, it’s out of the question for the HDP to enter into any relationship against Turkey. The prime minister and the government are criticizing the HDP’s diplomatic activities in a very emotional and childish manner through a policy aimed for domestic consumption” (Al-Monitor 04.01.2016). Moreover, for the co-chair, “the Russian plane was not shot down under some parliamentary decision also approved by the HDP. The AKP made this decision alone, and the president and the prime minister even said they regretted it. They made some statements aimed at backpedaling. The HDP would be equally declared a traitor today if it went to Greece, Armenia or Iran or makes contact with Damascus or Baghdad. There is no neighboring country

left with which Turkey remains on good terms” (Al-Monitor 04.01.2016). It could be said that the Kurds’ increased relations with Russia is pragmatic politics and necessary for both. However, Russia would most likely choose Turkey in the end and it costs too much for Russia to lose Turkey over Kurds.

PYD in Syria

Turkey has long been trying to convince its allies to label the PYD as a terrorist organization, however, the question remains whether it will change something in real life. The Turkish President has commented that „just as how the PKK is accepted as a terror organization in the EU and in the U.S., the PYD and the YPG need to be declared as a terror organization, too, because these are also terror organizations like Daesh and al-Qaeda” (Hurriyet 02.02.2016). However, the People’s Protection Units (YPG), the PYD’s militia force, has captured large areas of northeastern Syria from ISIL, and has been the most effective partner on the ground for a U.S.-led air campaign against the jihadists.

“Turkey is in a position to protect its national security. Turkey’s national security does not start from its border gate,” according to Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan (Hurriyet 02.03.2016). Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has said that U.S. and Russian weapons are ending up in the hands of the PKK. He also rejected the idea of any form of Kurdish self-rule in Turkey in an address in Ankara (Hurriyet 16.03.2016).

According to Demirtaş, “the freedom drive and the victories against IS under the leadership of the (Kurdish) Democratic Union Party (in Syria) are making Turkey anxious. Turkey sees the existence of a Kurdish entity there (in Syria) as a future threat. Kurdish empowerment in Turkey is similarly perceived as a threat. So, a campaign of obstruction and repression is being waged against the Kurds in both Rojava and Turkey as part of the same plan. They used IS as a military force against the Kurds, but when they saw this was not very efficient, they put the army and the police directly into action in Turkey. A direct Turkish military intervention in Rojava is not possible at present, but they are seeking to keep the Kurdish movement busy inside Turkey and prevent the Kurds from focusing their attention and force on Rojava. We cannot say, however, that the war in Turkey is being waged only because of Rojava and the war in Rojava only because of Turkey. The two are mutually related” (Al-Monitor 04.01.2016).

According to Turkish security sources, “We are aware of their (PYD) desires and attempts to establish a Kurdish corridor along the Turkish border by entering the Azaz-Jarablus line. We have declared so many times that Turkey will never accept this” (Hurriyet 07.01.2016). Moreover, the Syrian Democratic Forces (QSD), a coalition composed of Kurds, Turkmens, Christians and Arabs, succeeded in seizing control of the strategically important Teshrin Dam on the Euphrates River, but Turkish government has complained that 85 percent of the coalition consists of PYD members.

However, according to AKP’s parliament deputy Talip Küçükcan, “The main target of Turkey's operations in Syria is ISIL, not the PYD at all. That does not mean that Turkey supports the PYD's activities and plans for the future in its immediate borders. For Turkey, both are terror-related organizations and the PYD is just an extension of the PKK. Turkey's support for the Kurdish people in Syria was evident when Turkey opened its border to the Kurdish Peshmerga to enter Syria to defend Kobane” (Aljazeera 06.08.2015).

Ahmet Davutoğlu has stated that “could the Syria problem be resolved in an equation where Turkey is not present? Would a plan work in Syria despite Turkey? Had such a plan worked, al-Assad would still have the full control of the country today. Such a plan would not work because Turkey can never leave the fate of its 911-kilometer-long border to any country’s decision. We have made it clear to the U.S. and to Russia” (Hurriyet, 27.10.2015). “As I have said, the link between the YPG and the PKK is obvious. If the YPG threatens our security then we will do what is necessary,” Davutoğlu has stated (Hurriyet 12.02.2016).

Turkey has ruled out a planned move by Syrian Kurds to declare a federal system in the Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Syria, arguing that such a move would not have “any validity”...“Syria’s national unity and territorial integrity is the basis” a Turkish Foreign Ministry official has said, after Idris Nassan, an official in the foreign affairs directorate of Kobane, one of three autonomous areas set up by Kurdish groups two years ago, told Reuters that they would make the announcement on March 16 (Hurriyet 16.03.2016). However, some autonomous cantons have already been declared but linking them might be more difficult.

Prime Minister Davutoğlu has said that “we will take every necessary step to ensure an environment that guarantees Turkey’s security; an environment without Daesh, the Syrian regime, or the PYD” (Hurriyet 14.02.2016). Regarding the attempts

of a cease-fire in Syria, Turkey has its own ideas, how this should be done. But for them, the PYD should not be included in any case. Davutoğlu has said that “for us, the YPG is a terror organization just like Daesh and al-Nusra. The deal did not designate the YPG as a terrorist organization. That should have been done. But it should be known that this cease-fire deal is valid for Syria,” suggesting that Turkey would not comply with the cease-fire “when it (was) threatened”... “When Turkey’s security is at stake, Turkey will not get permission from or ask permission from anyone. We will do what is necessary because from that moment onwards, it will not be a Syrian issue but an issue for Turkey. Therefore, I openly make a call from here: the YPG and PKK elements should not continue their attitude of supporting terror in Turkey by saying ‘There is cease-fire here (in Syria), so Turkey won’t do anything to us. The truce is valid for Syria. The only place which will decide on the security measures Turkey will take is Ankara’ (Hurriyet 25.02.2016).

Politics at home

In February 2015, HDP’s co-leader Demirtaş stated that “we see that ISIL has gradually started to threaten Turkey, and I think it will henceforth pose an even greater threat to Turkey”... “Turkey should realize how important it is to cooperate with democratic powers in the region, particularly the PYD, in the fight against ISIL and against its mentality” (Hurriyet 23.02.2015).

It is clear that the Syrian civil war has spilled over to Turkey. The government at first tried to take a stance that it is pursuing for a safe-zone for the Syrian refugees in Northern-Syria. The anti-ISIL coalition did not agree with this as Turkey had a hidden agenda in regards to the Syrian Kurds and the PYD getting more territory close to Turkey’s border. This would also mean that the PKK with its direct links with the PYD, would have more power in Syria and this is a direct threat to Turkey.

Selahattin Demirtaş claimed before the November 2015 elections that “we are face to face with deaths and war, with this bitter truth every day. This doesn’t seem sufficient; the government must not be satisfied with that,” adding the government wanted to “make the situation convenient to virtually declare war” on the Syrian Kurdish region (Hurriyet 27.10.2015).

“Davutoğlu is making proud statements that there have been attacks and interventions directed there (the Syrian Kurdish region) on the eve of the elections. I want to state that it is a shame,” Demirtaş said, referring to a statement by Davutoğlu

late on October 26th, when the prime minister said that Turkey had struck Kurdish militia fighters in Syria twice after they defied Ankara's warning not to cross west of the Euphrates River (Hurriyet 27.10.2015). Moreover, "while the PYD hasn't made any threats against Turkey and while the Syrian Kurds have been extending their hands of fraternity and peace to Turkey, Davutoğlu's consideration of the PYD as a threat instead of considering ISIL as a threat there is a shame for him," according to HDP's co-chair (Hurriyet 28.10.2015).

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has argued that he has never made a statement "legitimatizing" the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, in reply to the HDP co-leader Selahattin Demirtaş's comments. Instead, he attacked Demirtaş for "defending" the PKK. Moreover, "the one who needs to be ashamed is Demirtaş...who is even now defending the PKK, which launched terrorist activities" (Hurriyet 28.10.2015). On October 27th, upon an announcement by Prime Minister Davutoğlu that Turkey had struck Kurdish militia fighters in Syria twice after they defied Ankara's warning not to cross west of the Euphrates River, Demirtaş said the government "apparently" wasn't satisfied with ongoing conflict in the country and seemed eager to declare war against the Syrian Kurdish region (Hurriyet 28.10.2015).

On February 2014, Turkish forces started to shell YPD's posts also in Syria. Turkish Prime Minister commented that that the shelling had taken place under "the rules of engagement against forces that represented a threat in Azaz and the surrounding area" (Reuters 14.02.2016). According to Davutoğlu, "we have said 'the PYD will not pass to the west of the Euphrates. We'll hit them if they do.' And we did hit them twice. A Syrian helicopter was downed last year. An unmanned aerial vehicle was hit as well. It's not possible to do anything in Syria despite Turkey" (Hurriyet 27.10.2015).

Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan has expressed concerns that Turkey cannot just watch what is going on in Syria and needs to step in. "If you don't (do what's necessary) then you won't be able to have a say in who is going to be your neighbor in the future. If this is the PKK, Daesh, or the (Syrian) regime, they all cause problem and risks for Turkey," Akdoğan said. Moreover, the PYD's ambition to link its Afrin canton with its cantons east of the Euphrates River has been declared a "red line" by the Turkish government, which threatened to act if it observed such moves. Turkey twice hit PYD elements trying to cross the river in earlier months"...We retaliated in kind yesterday (Feb. 13), in line with our rules of engagement. This was

done for a reason. Turkey is not a country that will watch everything from the sidelines. It's a country that can assess its own security and interests" (Hurriyet 14.02.2016).

According to the Prime Minister, "I see three main differences in our fight against terrorism now and in the past. First of all, it's the first time that both Iraq and Syria cannot control their borders. In the past, we could divert our focus to only the Iraqi border when there was a threat". The second difference is that Turkey is now fighting not only against the PKK but also ISIL, Davutoğlu said, in addition to the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), which recently resumed its acts inside the country. "Now 10 different terror organizations meet in the Kandil Mountains and declare war against Turkey" (Hurriyet 28.03.2016).

For Demirtaş, "the Kurds have become a political power and a political actor in the broader Middle East, and they will increasingly use this power toward liberation and sovereignty building. I say this in Turkey as well. In other words, developing strategic relations with the Kurds should become a goal for regional and international powers, because the Kurds and Kurdistan will be realities of the Middle East in the coming century" (Al-Monitor 04.01.2016)

The HDP has constantly called for international community to be more vocal on the Kurdish issue. "The international community should call on both the Turkish government and the PKK for a ceasefire and a return to healthy negotiations, and they must make this call repeatedly"... "Turkey's domestic peace is not an issue for Turkey alone. It is directly related to the resolution of the Syrian conflict and to the migration problem in Europe" (Reuters 28.01.2016). However, president Erdoğan has said that Turkey, the U.S. and other international allies "had to work together and jointly for the protection of the territorial integrity of Syria and for the establishment of a long-lasting peace"... "I'm not in the position to allow the handing over of some parts of Syria to some terrorist organizations. Should that mistake ever be made, I would always be reminded about it" (Hurriyet 01.04.2016).

It is argued that Turkey also tries to protect its Turkmen population in Syria who are also threatened by the PYD. The PYD has been accused of making a sort of ethnic cleansing in the region and is not welcoming to anyone not supporting them, according to the government. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has called for the implementation of a "real political transition" to a "pluralist new Syria," amid reports of a new constitution being drafted for Syria. "You (Turkmen in Syria)

represent the will of the Syrian Turkmen. Our aim is that our Turkmen brothers, who are an indispensable component of Syria, have their say in the administration of the country”. Çavuşoğlu also said that he would never forget “the victims of the Syrian regime, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),” recalling that Turkey was sheltering more than 3 million refugees fleeing war in Syria and Iraq, including 300,000 Turkmen (Hurriyet 26.05.2016)”.

There are currently discussions regarding a new Constitution in Syria. The new charter gives Syrian Kurds the constitutional right to use the Kurdish language in their towns and villages, providing that it is placed “on equal footing with the Arabic language” (Hurriyet 26.05.2016). Moreover, there are discussions, in which Kurds in Syria would gain more political rights that Kurds in Turkey do not have – this makes Turkey even more vocal and cautious of future developments. “The new charter also empowers Syrian districts with a strong de-centralized system of government, greatly reducing the authority of Damascus”... “In theory, this means that in addition to choosing their own language, these districts can now elect their own governor, rather than have him or her appointed by Damascus officialdom (Hurriyet 26.05.2016). The HDP is also demanding for more de-centralization and that the governors would be elected not appointed by the central government. When the Kurds in Syria will have these rights, this might cause more tension in the near future among Turkish Kurds, unless all the curfews are ended and stability guaranteed in the Southeast.

What now?

In official HDP’s letter to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Co-Chairs Ms. Figen Yüksekdağ and Mr. Selahattin Demirtaş state that “Mr. Erdoğan’s interventionist sectarian foreign policy aggravated the Syrian crisis from the very beginning, gradually expanding the Syrian war into Turkey’s territory and the conflict in Turkey into Syria. The regional conflict the Erdoğan regime fomented took a dramatic turn in April 2015, when Mr Erdoğan abruptly ended the peace process with the Kurdish movement that had been initiated in March 2013 to develop a sustainable peaceful solution for the Kurdish conflict in Turkey” (HDP 23.05.2016).

Both AKP and the HDP blame each other even for the politics that is carried outside of Turkey, but this is understandable. Turkey’s politics towards the PYD is closely linked with its domestic politics regarding the PKK. Although sometimes this is somehow hidden to portray a better picture. However, there is no doubt that

Turkish domestic politics with Kurds has had an enormous impact on its foreign politics in Syria too, especially after the symbolic securitization point after Suruç attack. It is also interesting that while addressing domestic politics, it is president Erdoğan who does the talking but in regards to foreign politics, Prime Minister Davutoğlu is more vocal. However, this can be explained by the power struggle and a more soft stance of Davutoğlu in regards to the peace process regarding its own Kurdish population. Also, the security officials could be said to be more vocal regarding the PYD and Syria's civil war rather than addressing the domestic politics.

5. Interview analysis

5.1 Interview results of AKP

Language rights

According to AKP's youth member, "right now it is unnecessary to give language rights" to the Kurdish population...I think Constitution should change but citizenship should stay the same... In Istanbul, there are 3 million Kurds, we can be united. We have common history with Kurdish people. Educational rights are fine, more cultural identity are fine but no different citizenship, no federation...it is unacceptable for Turkey...it might happen in some years but not right now" (AKP_2). "Even if they (*Kurds*) become a separate country...they will want something from Istanbul or Ankara...they will not stop. Idea of Kurdish issue is a little bit racist actually because of PKK. PKK also does not allow other Kurdish factions to emerge"(AKP_2).

When asked about the language rights and decentralization in Turkey from the Grand National Assembly member, the AKP's deputy stated that "do you think Kurdish society is ready for this? We changed the system as AKP...we changed the paradigm rather than small changes...the paradigm was based on assimilation, on ignoring and denying of existence of Kurds in Turkey" (AKP_4). "What we did is not only for Kurds, it is for all the society in Turkey...freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of identity of ethnic existence...we brought all these freedoms to the system. But PKK is still living in the 1980s and Cold War era, it did not adjust to these changes and it tries to organize some discourses...what we did was even out of the expectations of Kurds in general. We also brought the Kurdish education, educating in Kurdish is also free and encouraged" ... "But they could not find enough people for these classes. The elites of Kurdish political movement who are attached to HDP and PKK are sending their kids to English speaking schools ... they do not want to send their children to Kurdish teaching schools, that is a reality and a fact. They try to organize poor people to be carriers of their power and hegemony. They want all these poor people to be their (*HDP*) subordinates. This is an ideological provocation...if people want this, we have no problem with this...we should evaluate it in an objective way. I do not think that ordinary Kurdish people want this...they

want to be richer, higher in economy, education. In order to do this, they should be integrated to the Turkish system”...”If the Kurds express their free will (*of these rights*), not by the arms of PKK, this is welcomed” (AKP_4). According to previous AKP’s deputy and a member of Wise Men Committee, ”Turkish society is ready because we already have a TV channel...about education in mother tongue – it was not a problem for Turkish society but for Kurdish society. I think Kurdish society was not ready to take mother tongue education to the region because yes, it is a problem to ban it – they can choose Kurdish language but from the beginning to the end to university this is a problem with the Constitution – AKP cannot change constitution on its own – its not the problem of Turkish society being ready or not” (AKP_5).

“The demands of Turkish society basically concerns the equality of provinces. There is no evidence to argue the inequalities among the rights of local municipalities, and also Turkey has already strengthened the local municipalities by the reforms in last 10-15 years. Thus there is no different condition for the municipalities in the Southeast. As far as I guess, your question is a result of the confusion of the demands of the people in Southeast with the demands of the terrorist organization. As you know, Turkish state made reforms on the protection of freedoms on the basis of equal citizenship. There reforms eliminated all the bans concerning freedoms including the usage of mother tongues. This subject is irrelevant with the improvement of the services of the local municipalities to the people” (AKP_6).

“For solving the Kurdish issue, this government has done all the things that they can. It is not something about the rights” (AKP_5). Problem is about ideology—they are against AKP because AKP is a religious party. Ideologically they are closer to CHP, which is really fascist if you compare with AKP...CHP is the mother of all problems in Turkey” (AKP_5).

Regarding the political situation in Turkey, according to AKP’s youth member, “Selahattin Demirtaş is near to the mountains (*Qandil*), near to the PKK...but there are some different ideas in HDP too”. Some people think different in HDP but since the Demirtaş is near to PKK, right now HDP is with the mountains, with the guerillas, with the terrorists” (AKP_2). “Kurdish people are more conservative than Turkish people but their political party is Marxist”...their party’s election promise was that if they win elections, they (*HDP*) will close the Diyanet (*Presidency of Religious Affairs*).

HDP’s closure might happen not because of government but President

Erdoğan” (AKP_2). The first group who founded AKP were reasonable, pragmatic people...right now it changed to one person...I cannot say Erdoğan is a dictator, but like a dictator” (AKP_2). At first, AKP was a liberal party, now it is an Islamist party...there are a lot of fractions in AKP too (AKP_2). According to AKP's youth member, “HDP has manipulated Kurdish belief about imams and religion”...Ahmet Davutoğlu stated in Diyarbakir that we gave 5 million dollars to municipality, it is much but we helped them to enhance their situation...they gave the money to PKK to fight against Turkey” (AKP_3). “Demirtaş is like a big brother, Erdoğan a father figure...this is politics...I think Demirtaş is a funny guy” (AKP_2).

“Some aspects are negative to our political system – some sort of clientalism, when we are asked for a favor...we try to produce some possibilities but you cannot change the culture in one day” (AKP_4). According to previous AKP's deputy, PKK thought that society was ready to struggle with armed forces with them (*PKK*) because of the “votes HDP had taken” but this was just to go under negotiations for peace...”The Kurdish society is not willing to separate from Turkey – about 60% of Kurdish society is living in the West part of Turkey. We do not look like Iranian Kurds, Iraqi Kurds or Syrian Kurds because this land is the main land of Kurdish society in which they have lived for 100 years...in really hard times the state was burning Kurdish villages and that time we grow hate against Turkish soldiers and state, but also at that time we did not want to separate from Turkey because we moved our house from Diyarbakir to Adana, to Izmir, to West part of Turkey. The problem is that Turkish society is not ‘Türkieli’ they are just ‘Türk’. You can see that in really hard times Kurdish society is moving to the West but they are still giving their votes to HDP - this means that they want their own rights but they don't want to be separated. PKK read this situation wrongly and they thought that they have peoples' support” (AKP_5). Regarding the presidential system, “Erdoğan can do anything he wants. Erdoğan wanted to end the conflict, he started the Kurdish peace process in 2009...most nationalists criticized his policy but most Kurds voted AKP rather than HDP until 7th June elections” (AKP_3).

Securitization

According to AKP youth member, “after Kobane, most Kurds started to believe that we are not Muslim, we are Kurdish...AKP supports Islamic unity...AKP

rulers believe that Turks and Kurds are equal, Turks are not superior people” (AKP_3). “Kurds are very sensitive about it (*peace process*) after the Kobane issue” (AKP_3). “Most Kurds believe that ending of the peace process was linked to elections in June 2015 – I do not agree with that...the government started war after killing of the two policemen and after Suruc when the government realized that it did not know about PKK’s actions” (AKP_3). “After Kobane incident, PKK killed at least 50 people in the Southeast, conservative Kurds, because Demirtaş called people to uprising against ISIS. Most people killed by PKK youth members were religious and AKP supporters but government did not do anything about these atrocities. I criticized it...when PKK started to attack opponent Kurdish people, government should have ended the peace process because of PKK’s manipulations” (AKP_3). “Syrian conditions poisoned the negotiations between PKK and AKP – cause of the conflict was a crime in front of Kurdish society but they try to blame AKP about not going to negotiation table” (AKP_5).

Peace process

According to AKP’s member of parliament, “before the resolution process when we were fighting PKK, we were losing the Kurdish society and the PKK was gaining the Kurdish society...now the opposite is taking place – as long as we are fighting PKK now, PKK has lost its all reasons among the Kurds because they realize that PKK is not seeking for the benefit of Kurdish society but their own benefits that are marketed to some warlord centers and the Kurdish society now is very much disappointed in PKK because they fought for HDP, whose campaign was led by PKK itself” (AKP_4). “PKK is more professional than ISIS, they fight better. PKK is a bigger problem than ISIS for Turkey” (AKP_2). According to a close member to the AKP, “I don’t think it will be possible to return to negotiation table anytime soon. In case it is returned, the government has taken many steps and it has popular support from the public. But next peace process will be under different circumstances. The government is the one to decide to go for further peace process. Prerequisite for new negotiation is that PKK has to lay its arms down completely. Also, a significant number of Kurds support government today” (AKP_1). “There is no peace process because of Syria’s issue...some nationalist people, like MHP...they say that peace process encouraged Kurds to fight against us. Right now government is thinking the same way” (AKP_2). Some people in AK Party think that it was very bad thing to do this, but I think it was

necessary to negotiate with Kurds previously (AKP_2).

According to AKP's youth member, "In these times, PKK should not be included in the peace process...right now these are extraordinary times. We must talk with their party first, HDP...it should not be in the media, PKK should be included but not in the media...only with intelligence. Turkish society is against this...It is *real politics*, pragmatic politics...without PKK we cannot have a solution but not right now..." (AKP_2). "Abdullah Öcalan stated during Newroz celebrations in 2013 that we are Muslims...he had Islamic rhetorics in his statement but he is a communist leader, he does not believe in God. PKK manipulates with religion because otherwise most Kurds would not support them" (AKP_3). "Turkish mainstream society believes in Erdoğan because he is a charismatic leader...they believed in previous peace process and Erdoğan, who said he can solve it. But Erdoğan did lots of wrong things because PKK manipulated this peace process" (AKP_3). "I think government is making populism because killing PKK members can not end the conflict...most Kurds support PKK actions...killing terrorists can not end terror problem in Turkey but I think Kurdish problem is ending because we gave lots of rights to them...Kurds are equal to Turks"... "They can be candidate for presidential election, identity does not differ between Kurds and Turks. PKK should be included but PKK does not want to be included, they do not want peace in Turkey....they are working on Russia's or other interests who hates Turkey. Iran has always supported PKK because Iran's and Turkey's interests differ" (AKP_3). "After peace process, PKK will become more popular to the Kurdish youngsters" (AKP_2).

"We reject any contact with PKK...PKK is not honest, it has abused the good intention of Turkish government...we gave them very extensive chance but they used it to settle in violence, terror, not in investing in peace, promoting good life or good ground of the Kurdish society. They had much more chance to promote the lifestyle of Kurdish society, they could of invested in language, establish some schools...but they had no such idea. The PKK is not presenting the Kurds" (AKP_4). "At that time (last peace process), the government let them (*PKK*) to do lots of things that they should not have done in the region - they abused this process and they got too much" (AKP_5). Now they (*PKK*) want this again, it was a really big chance for them. They are trying to get back the advantages that they had but it is impossible and no one has trust in them" (AKP_5). "Öcalan promised to government that they will leave the arms and come to political arena but he couldn't keep his promise (AKP_5).

According to AKP's parliament deputy, "Turkish state intended to solve the problem of terrorism with the help of 'The Resolution Process'. While this strategy successfully went for the first two years, finding a base in Syria out of the civil war, PKK declared the "the beginning of war against Turkey" and made several attacks irrelevantly from Suruc bombings. Occupying a province in the border of Turkey in Northern Syria with the help of Assad Regime and benefitting this base gave PKK a chance of making attacks to Turkey. Thus, both the sources of the terrorism and ending the Resolution Process are strategies aiming a civil war with the help of the Syrian Regime. However, by eliminating the terrorism, the establishment of social peace with the help of civil society in South East seems possible"... since "The Resolution Process" which is rejected by the supporters of terrorism, it is not reasonable to discuss the possibility or feasibility of it again. However, Turkey will continue to do the best for establishing the social integration and the peace in South Eastern Turkey" (AKP_6).

3rd party involvement

"I don't think the government will accept the inclusion of third party to possible peace process. Most likely the government completely rejects that due to mass support it has now. What HDP thinks is now irrelevant. After June elections, the reason why HDP gained momentum is to reinforce and promote civil politics. But HDP did not take the opportunity. If HDP fulfill the role given by its voters, PKK's power and influence would be decrease. PKK's high level leaders stated many times that peace process would fall apart and they were preparing for war" (AKP_1). "I think it is our problem, they should not interfere our problems. It was Germany who gave weapons for PYD against ISIS. Sometimes, especially Germany, interferes in Turkey and European Union supports PKK" (AKP_2).

"HDP does what PKK wants them to. They have no political independence from PKK. After Suruc bombings PKK started to fight against Turkey, Selahattin Demirtaş could have ended this but did not do anything" (AKP_3). He also supports PKK's statements...most conservative people believe that HDP has no independence from Qandil"...If Demirtaş would of ended the conflict after Suruc, I think HDP could have had 20% in general elections but PKK have been losing voters (AKP_3). ...One of HDP's politician visited Ankara suicide bomber's funeral...this is absolutely wrong but we cannot do anything about it because when we arrest their

members, most Kurds start to think that our campaign is prevented from the government, and we should fight...this is why we cannot do anything against HDP...I think the immunities should be lifted of HDP because they have no political independence from PKK” (AKP_3).

According to AKP’s parliament deputy, HDP does not have any role as an intermediary in the peace process: “They are subordinated to Qandil, to PKK...they are commanded...all the members of HDP were appointed by Qandil, not elected” (AKP_4). “PKK warned people that if you do not vote for these appointed candidates, your cities will be like in Cizre, Nusaybin and Cizre voted for HDP and you see what happened there...Diyarbakir voted for HDP and you know what happened there...they came and created a sort of Syrian city” (AKP_4). “HDP has no role, HDP lost all hopes because they did not do anything to prevent building trenches...” (AKP_5). According to the politician, they (HDP) tried to do something but Qandil has too much power over them, he does not see HDP as any kind of mediator in the conflict. “I am Kurdish and my language was a little bit harder than AK Party in the Parliament”. This is sometimes confusing for the international community (AKP_5). “But can you trust them (*PKK*) if Barzani comes and says he can be the third eye? I was in Erbil three days ago and spoke with Mr. Barzani about negotiations and Barzani said that he has no trust in them (*PKK*) and the government has no trust in them either. The only way to turn back to the first time of the negotiations would be when Öcalan would call them to leave arms and return to political agenda” (AKP_5). Accordint to AKP’s deputy, “In Turkey, the concepts of Kurdish Question and the problem of terrorism are mostly confused with each other. This confusion sometimes originates from deliberate and sometimes from indeliberate mistakes. Turkey made a significant progress in the economic and cultural development of Kurds living in several parts throughout Turkey. The infrastructure investments, the projects for strengthening the agricultural economy all helps the transform the underdeveloped conditions of the Southeast. As well as attempting to remove the poverty in the region with the help of these social policies, Turkey supported the social development in this region with the investments in education, social security and social aid expenditures. In this frame, Turkey reflected a democratic sensitivity for the solution of problems of the people of the Southeastern region. PKK is definitely unhappy with all of these and they practice violence not only against the state also to the people of the region in order to block the integration of the region with the rest of the country. As a result,

there is no reason to discuss a type of negotiation or a negotiator” (AKP_6).

Action Plan

According to a close AKP member living in Diyarbakir, “...we have been experiencing a war for 40 years. What we see in Sur was the toughest one. What government will do is to compensate financially. Architecture of cities will change and it will affect the way we live. It is hard to provide psychological assistance by government directly. It is something that we should deal with on our own. I heard some sociologist and psychologists are hired but how they will treat 2 million people - I don't know” (AKP_1).

“Government has distributed more money to East provinces than to West provinces because government wants to end the conflict between PKK and Turkish state” (AKP_3). People who left their cities, do not want to go back...I hope they will integrate and this will happen (AKP_3). “We should help these people but the government has done a right thing regarding curfews because PKK wants people to go out and they start fighting against officials. Civilian death tolls must decrease” (AKP_3).

According to AKP's deputy, “Turkish armed forces came and distinguished between terrorists and civilians and they targeted terrorists only. By accident only one lady and one kid were killed out of all these 4 month operations” ...”They try to make children as their (*PKK's*) shields to force security forces to kill civilians. Security forces are not like they were in the 1990s - there is a paradigm change in the system – we are distinguishing between the Kurds and terrorists, Kurds are our first class citizens now, no one can say that Turkey is fighting against Kurds, we are very upset about these discourses...it is a propaganda machine of PKK. PKK has no respect for Kurdish society” (AKP_4)...”And they criticize Tayyip Erdoğan of being a dictator, it is ridiculous discourse – how can we use this language?” (AKP_4).

When the same question was asked from previous AKP deputy, long pause followed. “It is a new strategy of the government and the aim is that all civilians must be satisfied after these compensation” (AKP_5). “AKP can not finish killing, this is a guerilla war...there must be some killings in order to finish PKK. After curfews PKK is becoming more popular among younger Kurds” (AKP_2). According to AKP's youth member, “if the problem is about national security, the government should intervene...PKK kills lots of people, if you are a Kurd and do not support them, you

are finished” (AKP_2). “Turkish State openly announced that the cities, towns that the terrorist PKK destroyed, looted and attempted exterminated will be reconstructed. Furthermore, an intensive and inclusive social aid program is implemented for the people who run away the terrorism and oppression of PKK such as the aid for the payments of the rents and other basic needs” (AKP_6).

Syria and the PYD

“It is certain that Turkey see them as a threat”....”Because PKK stands benefit from the situation in Syria. In Syria PKK is struggling to achieve what it has been trying to achieve in Turkey. So it will not give up. Fractions in Syria sometimes declare autonomy but then take a step back. But without consent of Turkey it is not possible for them to be completely autonomous. The most modern Kurds among all Kurdish population are the Kurds in Turkey. Kurds in Turkey do not consider Syria and Iraq desirable place to live. For Turkish Kurds, it is İstanbul or Ankara attraction centers not Erbil or any other city. The only possibility for Turkish Kurds to be attracted by those regions is that if those region offer better economic and social opportunities than Turkey, then Kurds in Turkey may change their attitude” (AKP_1). “Turkey is the first country who recognized ISIS as a terrorist organization in 2007...we did not send any weapons to ISIS, only government and intelligence agencies might know” (AKP_2). “Previously we did not intervene in Iraq and Barzani took his rights...now Turkish government thinks that if we do not intervene in Syria, there will be another Kurdish government...it is threat to our land, national security” (AKP_2).

According to AKP’s youth member, “I think ending of the peace process comes from North Syria’s interests because PKK leaders think that USA and Russia support them...I also criticize AKP’s foreign policy...Turkish government have few friends in Middle-East, we have conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, some events in America” ...”We have no members in Middle-East now” (AKP_3). “PKK wants to establish authoritarian system in North-Syria...when PKK gets more power from North-Syria, it affects inside Turkey” (AKP_3).

AKP’s deputy stated during our interview that “Turkish Kurds are very happy to be citizens of Turkey because quality of Turkish citizenship cannot even be a dream of Syrian Kurds...Kurds of Turkey have experienced for the last month what does it mean to be under the hegemony of PYD or PKK when their houses were

destroyed, their houses were used as fronts by PKK to fight against Turkish government...all the bombs were put in their houses” (AKP_4). “Al-Assad is behind PYD it is the worst guy who made systematic discrimination against Kurds, the Kurds didn’t even have official identity. PYD was favored by Assad because they were part of Assad’s intelligence regime and now these parts of intelligence regime are employed to fight against Turkey to build a safe-zone for Assad’s regime” (AKP_4).

“PYD did a sort of ethnic cleansing in the region-they forced Arabs, and Kurds who are not obeying them and Turkmen 500,000-600,000 people flee. PYD is being showed in a good way now and it is supported by USA by the reason that they are fighting against Daesh, they are being sent weapons and these weapons are used against Turkey through PKK...”we do not see that they are fighting against Daesh very strongly, they fight against the Free Syrian Army who are the enemy of Daesh also and is much more prominent, they are fighting against the Free Syrian Army much more than they are fighting against Daesh...they are trying to keep al-Assad in power – this is another game” (AKP_4).

Regarding the question whether PYD is a threat to Turkey, the previous AKP’s deputy and a member of Wise Men Committee answered that “I don’t think so, Turkish society must be calm about this and must be kind to Kurdish society to see the actions of PYD but our government has done some mistakes too because they are afraid too much”...(AKP_5). “In Syria’s Rojava they (*PYD*) are behaving very bad to the Kurdish society they are kind of Marxist organization. Mr. Barzani said that they are sending them (Kurds in Syria) medicine and they are not giving this medicine to the people who are not in their (*PYD*) organization”...“In Syria, for me, a confederation of Iraqi Kurdistan must be independent and Syrian Kurdistan a confederal system must be related to Iraqi Kurdistan and these two sides must work together with Turkey. This is good for Turkish and Kurdish society” (AKP_5). The problem in Syria, in Rojava is that PYD is really oppressive organization and they are not letting democracy within Kurdish society...”...”Barzani is not a Marxist Kurd, Iraqi Kurds’ motivations are not Marxist but PYD are close to PKK” (AKP_5). According to AKP’s deputy, “As Turkey, we defend the union of Syria in a democratic regime instead of division. The huge problem in Syria by founding new, minor- ethnic dictatorships by dividing the country on the axis of ethnic and religious differentiations. Instead, there is a need for new, democratic political order based on individual rights and freedoms. It is hard to expect that Kurds in Turkey living in a

democratic environment that encompasses freedoms could show interest in authoritarian regime under the control of a terrorist organization” (AKP_6).

5.2 Interview results of HDP

Language rights

According to HDP’s deputy in parliament, “conflict increased nationalism in Turkish people. Therefore, due to drastic increase of nationalist feelings and reactions, progress on improvement of Kurdish rights such as language rights and power of local ministries have slowed down. There is still a chance to return to progressive process but it requires the government and all other parties to develop a more careful political language” (HDP_2). According to HDP’s member, “how Kurds govern and identify themselves are not mentioned in the Constitution or by any law. This problem includes language rights, local administrations, how they participate governance etc. We refer them as statue problem overall. There are close to 25 million Kurds living in Turkey and it is not acceptable that they have no say about how they should be governed” (HDP_3). According to HDP’s youth member, the biggest problem in the Southeast is that “young children do not know the language” (*Turkish*) and this is difficult, when they are sent to Turkish-medium public schools (HDP_5). “Some subjects about the Kurdish issue have become more popular. It was impossible to take them in our agenda before, it was impossible to even talk about these issues. Most striking example of this evolution is that the name of Öcalan has become more common, more normal and even more respectful according to the public opinion” ... “There has been evolution in terms of rights but it never had a big reaction from other parts of society – Kurdish media and language have become possible and the language has become more free. In last 15 years this has changed” (HDP_7).

“In general terms we can say that the mainstream society can be easily directed by administrative bodies of the state...When they say that we have to recognize these rights to the society, then the society can also be more reasonable. But they can also provoke the society” (HDP_7). Turkish government always see the Kurdish problem as a cultural problem”... “But without political status and official use of language in schools, municipalities – it is not a political rights but only cultural motive now. AKP and CHP always talk in this discourse. But we look at the language rights as a political problem because we want to have it officially. If you give people

their right of language, Kurdish deputy can talk in the Assembly also in Kurdish”...“We will resist and we will have struggle until its done. This is the history of all suppressed nations in the world – in the end its freedom or nothing” (HDP_8). “Autonomy is the first thing that we should talk before language and culture because when you rule yourself in the city you can also build some social centres etc. But when you are autonomous you will have a right to build this city. In Diyarbakir we have street names in Kurdish, but practically we already do this. For us autonomy is decentralization of power (HDP_8)” We only say that people should govern their city, now they only go to vote once in 5 years – it’s the only democratic mechanism in Turkey and because of that we have some governmental crisis in Turkey” (HDP_8).

When asked from the DBP, what would happen with the PKK after the peace process and when possible decentralization and if education in mother tongue will be granted, “the PKK can have a mission in Rojava revolution or in KRG (*Kurdish Regional Government*) or make a single army” (HDP_1)

Military

“After the government launched operations in last six months, Kurdish youth have become more pessimistic about the possibility to live together within Turkey. War fueled their desires to secede and be independent” (HDP_2). “There are Kurds in the army. But there are few Kurds in higher levels in army and those Kurds in the higher levels have not really concerns about Kurdish issues. We do not think the army really care about that. Many villages are emptied and people were forced to migrate to big cities in the past. It caused a trauma. But today not villages but cities are getting emptied. More people are forced to move and it causes more trauma. I heard that many young people from Sirnak have joined the PKK. Heavy vehicle and weapons are being used in city centers and it causes great deal of damage. That weakens Kurds’ willingness to live together because people are getting more radicalized. We as HDP come from a political heritage that struggles to live in peace together” (HDP_3). “I will never go to the military”...“Now the soldiers in Kurdish cities are special forces – this clash is really hard not like in 1990s. Young people do anything in order not to go to military service, many will fight as guerillas” (HDP_8).

Politics

According to HDP’s deputy, “Presidential system is negotiable. Some Kurds think that Presidential system and federation can go along and promote more

democracy in Turkey. But Tayyip Erdoğan wants to be one man and wants all powers on his hand. Moreover he does not want to give more power to local authorities. This system without sufficient check and balance may produce negative outcomes in the future” (HDP_2). According to HDP’s member, “ignoring Kurds or behaving like they don't exist is part of foundational code of the Republic. This is one of the reasons why negotiations deteriorated during peace process. Kurds in Rojava succeeded to gain important leverage on getting more statue in Syria after long fighting against ISIS. It led anti-Kurd reflexes of Turkish state to emerge and dominate. The State that accepted to be neighbor with ISIS could not accept to see Kurds as neighbor. Therefore it is not possible to say that presidential system will benefit all part of the society. Presidential system is being used in many parts of the world, including France and the US. But we don't know how it will be performed in Turkey and what will be the check and balance mechanism. We, Kurds especially have concerns that Erdoğan will use more violence” (HDP_3).

“Erdoğan is authoritarian. After first elections on 7th of June, AKP became furious about votes that HDP received. He has been putting intense pressure on HDP. Consequently HDP has been losing ground in politics” (HDP_2). “HDP is legal but PKK is an illegal organization. Kurdish movement including PKK has been struggling to establish an environment in which it is possible to live together in peace with rest of the society. HDP is consisted of different groups such as opposing parties, Kurds, other important political figures. The more HDP becomes stronger in political arena, the less need there will be for PKK. Aim of HDP is to politically succeed, gain rights and solve problems that caused the foundation and existence of PKK. If HDP becomes successful, there wont be any need for PKK because people will see that they can solve their problems in political arena and they wont need to go to mountains. The problem is they don't let HDP to perform and function legally. There have been many attacks on HDP offices and they were not investigated. The state narrows down the legal space in which HDP can perform. Thus, the PKK fight has been getting more popularity. After 7th of June elections, even though AKP was not able to get enough seats to change constitution, it got most of the votes and protect its position to dominate the state - then violence followed” (HDP_3).

According to HDP’s youth member, “people were afraid of state policies and that is why they voted for AKP” during second elections in November 2015 in hope to receive stability and for the government to end the security measures in the

Southeast (HDP_5). According to an activist of People's Democratic Congress (HDK), "HDP does not support PKK but if there would be no PKK, there would now not be HDP"... "Assimilated Kurds think that they are free – they do not even know their mother tongue"... "Sunni Islamist Kurds support AKP"... but even during elections "AKP killed people, people then wanted to vote AKP for the violence to stop" (HDP_6).

Securitization

"Deterioration of relations happened way before Suruc. Suruc was a breaking point. Right after Suruc there were grand scale aerial bombardment on Northern Iraq. It is not possible to carry out such bombing with a short term planning. After Kurds in Kobane were successful and HDP changed its position in the parliament and started to challenge AKP, AKP already decided to move away from the process. If Suruc did not occur, AKP would start the war anyway" (HDP_3). "There was a delegation sent to Imrali island, Qandil mountains and to the state faction by the HDP's delegation. Erdoğan controls AKP and its ideology. Erdoğan criticized Davutoğlu regarding returning back to the negotiation table, "he wants to create an enemy" (HDP_4). According to the HDP's official, "Davutoğlu has sensitivity to the issue" (HDP_4).

The securitization point of the conflict was not Suruc and this is not where the peace process ended, according to a Foreign Commission officer in HDP. It was the "National Council meeting on October 14th, 2014 when the peace process was decided to finish" (HDP_4). According to the official, there were a lot of "provocations" that led to the ending of the process finally. For instance, June 5th 2015 ISIL attacks in Diyarbakir that the "Turkey's state attacked with TOMAs. There was also July 20th, 2015 Suruc attacks by ISIS again. October 10th 2015 attack was "another provocation" against the PKK. According to him, it is still not clear who did it. According to an activist in HDK, "PKK did not kill these two policemen" and the government ended the peace process themselves, not the PKK (HDP_6).

Regarding Suruc attacks and killing of the two policemen being referred to as the point where peace collapsed, "This is the media and this is what people talk about but it is not like this" Because we (*HDP*) are in the assembly we know every AKP's plan...they have in mind that we should fight with Kurdish people, that we should suppress and clash them because they are getting more powerful...in municipality elections we have most of the municipalities in Kurdistan...if it goes like this in 10

years, we will have political advantage. Turkey cannot go to Syria because border is closed and people getting more stronger...Turkey had big plans of clashing people in Syria and Iraq and in Turkey...because of this it is not about killing of these two policemen in Suruc” (HDP_8). According the HDP deputy’s advisor, the ending of the peace process is related to grievances, not the events after Suruc bombing. “When you fight and make people feel that they are not secure in country, you will get more votes from Turkish people – it is like government with war...it is a big plan and strategy that AKP decided against Kurdish people. They bomb all Kurdish cities and areas and decided that we will end this resistance...like coup d’état (HDP_8).

Peace process

According to HDP’s Foreign Commission member, “history is very important” when looking at the Kurdish issue...Turkey’s national background created negative background” (HDP_4). In 1993, PKK and the state were in contact for the first time which ended with PKK’s one sided ceasefire...”Habor incident was the first time that PKK came back alive” and this created celebrations among Kurds and more support for PKK ... now, “Erdoğan could not take the risk and stopped the process” (HDP_4).

“In my opinion parties may come to a conclusion that fighting will not solve anything and they may decide to return negotiation table again. Herein there should be a third party not as just mediator or observer but also a power that has ability to convince AKP and PKK. It may be civil society organization or an NGO” (HDP_2).

“It is not possible not to include PKK in the process because he is direct party and just like anywhere around the world, you negotiate with whom you fight. In order to return the table, armed hostility should be ended. Because there are people dying regardless of where they come from and it is impossible to conduct a peace process in such environment. If operations are halted, and security forces are withdrawn from cities, negotiations can start. But in any case PKK should be involved. Other than PKK different actors such as states or parties or NGOs, civil society organizations can participate too” (HDP_3). “You cannot solve any problem without PKK” ...”HDP should have contact with PKK and government”...HDP is the main actor, not Europe...more local governments and local rights are needed”. “Autonomy should go to all regions” (HDP_6). “PKK should be included in the talks, peace process without PKK is impossible”...”Kurdish political representation has 3 piles: 1) HDP, 2) Öcalan

as an absolute fact, 3) administration of KCK (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan*) and Qandil” (HDP_7). “1) Öcalan will help to make both PKK and the Kurdish society to accept the peace process and he may help them to understand terms of any peace process”...It depends on the affect of Öcalan, if any case of deal, which is under the expectations of the society and PKK, if all demands which are subject of the deal are satisfied, it is the personal capabilities and position of Öcalan that makes both parties to accept the deal. 2) Second aspect is that without PKK it is impossible to provide demilitarization. 3) HDP can help both in the Assembly and in other areas of democratic movement...HDP can make this deal real. All these three aspects of Kurds have their own domains and functions” (HDP_7).

“This peace process is between PKK and government but now they ban the Constitution also – it is about the government, its not about only Kurdish peace process. Government is more totalitarian and central, as a tendency it will go like al-Assad, it will be more dictatorship. They also arrest CHP, academics, journalists it’s a general tendency of fascism” (HDP_8). Now the problem is that – South side of the Turkish border Kurdish border, Kurdish people - YPG take the border, they have 8% oil reserve in Syria, now they are strong and Kurdish people also live in the borderland in Turkey. Around 1 million people should migrate from their cities...what will they do in Istanbul, Izmir? At one point they will fight because they do not have nothing to lose...they lost their families and houses” (HDP_8).

According to an HDP official, during Newroz 2013 speech in Diyarbakir, solution to the Kurdish issue was offered and negotiated with President Erdoğan. For instance, they negotiated on “democratic autonomy, mother tongue, citizenship”...however, “peace process provided more support for HDP” (HDP_4). According to the official, “the state should make amendments on law system” and this would ease the PKK’s withdrawal in the future as well (HDP_4).

3rd party involvement

According to the Foreign Commission official in HDP, Turkey is scared of NGOs’ involvement in the peace process. The government wants “bandage but surgery is needed instead” (HDP_4). According to HDP’s deputy, “HDP has a key role in negotiations, especially between Qandil, Öcalan, civil society and the government”...“Intervention of official but not necessarily official committee to Kurdish issue in peace process is something I have always defended and it can be

both for monitoring or mediating purposes. We can observe many other examples, like Wise People Committees all around the world such as old presidents or nominees for Noble Prize. It can be a mixed committee – including official and unofficial members” (HDP_7). “HDP is bigger than Kurdish people, they try to make this problem more social in Turkish society. The role of HDP is to tell people in Turkey, to enlight people what Kurdish people want and how can we democratize Turkey” (HDP_8). It is hard to talk about the role of HDP in this process because now, one year before they negotiated with us (*HDP*) as an official party but now they say that all of you are terrorists ...discourse of terrorism is really important mechanism in Turkey”...when you say that as a woman you want your rights, they say that you are a terrorist and with Kurdish people. Turkish state always can successfully suppress other branches in society with this discourse of terrorism...they suppress all critics. “HDP always says that please let us to be negotiators but AKP and Erdoğan made their plans - they don’t negotiate with Kurds for a long time” (HDP_8). “Last 20 years we always call Europe and USA to come and be a third gaze in this peace process...in Syria they (*US and PKK*) are fighting together, in Turkey they say it is a terrorist organization.

Regarding increased connections between the HDP and Russia, “The reason why Europe is silent about what is going on is I believe the refugee negotiations with Turkey. Turkey has problems with everyone in the region. Therefore rapprochement between HDP and Russia is the consequence not the reason of the conflict” (HDP_2).

Curfews

“There is a pressure on politicians and public. Curfews will motivate more people to join PKK. Therefore curfew policy will backlash. Ordinary people are the ones who suffer from curfews the most” (HDP_2). “My observation is that younger generation is more radicalized and hard to negotiate. There are still people who are willing to live together. But the more war last, the more suffering people will have to endure, the more impossible it gets to live together” (HDP_3). “Hundreds of people have joined PKK because of curfews in Silopi” and this number is increasing everywhere (HDP_5). “Police is more aggressive than military” when it comes to curfews and other security measures taken in the Southeast (HDP_7). According to HDP’s deputy, “almost 1,5 million people have left their homes... it was a forced movement for them. It is not the same case as in 1990s because then people moved to

West but nowadays they prefer to stay in their hometowns and change neighborhoods” (HDP_6).

Action Plan

According to HDP’s member of parliament, rebuilding the Southeast, “this is not the cause of the problem but the consequence of it. Without removal of the causes of the problem, such reconstruction policies will not be fruitful. Because security has not been accomplished. There will be more clashes in upcoming months. There must be radical decisions to be taken to solve problems” (HDP_2). “What the government has been planning is solely security-oriented. Sur is historical place just like Cizre. Ignoring consent and approval of people in those areas and solving fundamental problems, not hearing people’s opinion show that this plan is only for security. Plan is not transparent. There are some rumors that some Syrian refugees will be settled there to change demographic structure. We cannot accept such undemocratic plan and we do not think it is applicable” (HDP_3). “Kurdish nationalism is rising” due to the conflict and the security measures taken in the Southeast. Youth is talking that violence is the only solution” (HDP_4).

“When they first declared curfews...there were no guns or barricades, only municipalities, social rights, social organizations as a union. They did the curfews, bombed the cities...they destruct after people try to defend their homes and life...during 3 months they do not have water or electricity and they cannot go buy food...and this is not about PKK, but only Kurdish people...after that they destruct the cities and many people go to other cities and now they officially took these lands and say that now these areas belong to the state, this is against the private property also...Its not about rebuilding, they make these people give their land to the state...these are really big areas” (HDP_8). “In media they say that we will rebuild the areas, but people lose everything...its about occupation. Turkish government reoccupies Kurdish areas” (HDP_8).

Syria

Regarding Syria, HDP’s deputy thinks that “all parties in Syria need to agree on a constitution during this transition process in Syria. It is Syria’s internal matter. Turkey should not intervene internal matters of Syria otherwise it will be affected negatively due to increase hostility emerges from parties in Syria” (HDP_2). “Turkey

has such fears but it needs to take demography into account. It will stand benefit from cooperating with Kurds. Conflict will lead to lose-lose situation for Turkey. Whereas cooperation will produce a win-win situation. Turkey will make profit if it cooperates” (HDP_2). “Turkey used to oppose Kurdish autonomy in Kurdish autonomy in Iraq as it is doing now against in Syria. But time showed that Iraqi Kurdistan became the closest partner in terms of trade. Then it is possible that other Kurdish fractions can involve similar peaceful cooperation in near future. PYD in Northern Syria represents not only Kurds but Arabs and Turks and other minorities. The model they defend is a good example for peace in Middle East” (HDP_3).

According to HDP’s Foreign Affairs Commission member, “PYD is a political party like HDP”, they are sister parties...However, “YPG is an armed group and is controlled by Syrian Free Assembly” (HDP_4). “Turkish state does not care about Kurdish will...every people should govern themselves” (HDP_4). However, HDP’s official agrees that Assad’s regime should change. Moreover, HDP’s Foreign Affairs Commission stated that “the Free Syrian Army wants radical Islam” that the Kurds do not...”we (HDP) provide stability in the region” (HDP_4). “Turkey’s Kurds do not want to unify with Syrian Kurds”, but they mostly have a lot of relatives in Syrian territories (HDP_5). “Kurdish issue has already an international dimension, especially regarding Syrian issue and Southern Kurdistan”...”Turkey’s Kurdish issue is not exceptional. That’s why all the regional powers and other powers are involved in the issue already” (HDP_7). According to HDP’s deputy, “it is very important and positive step to claim this Autonomous Region. HDP has always defended that there must be a democratic and federal Syria and Kurds must have the opportunity to have self-government within Syria“...”Academic approach of Davutoğlu defends de-facto integration in the Middle-East, such as Northern Syria and Southern Turkey as an example or a model which is similar to EU in the Middle-East. However, this integration model is more the one that is similar to Ottoman Empire and hegemony of Turkey. We defend that they (*government*) should leave this hegemonial approach and we can also support the idea of integration (HDP_7). According to HDP’s activist, “when the peace process ended it was about Syria. They got more empathy from US, they (*government*) don’t want that Kurdish people would have power in Middle-East, because of that they do not want PKK to get the weapons...they (*government*) ended the peace process and after that PKK came to Turkey again. During the peace process there was no arms resistance in the Southeast...PKK is

really sincere about that because they want to concentrate on Syria, not arms violence in Turkey” (HDP_8). “ISIS keeps attacking HDP because of Syria...Kurds are the only faction who can stop them” (HDP_8).

Foreign policy

When asked about the relationship between Turkey and Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern-Iraq, HDP always laughs in a humble way and according to one official, Turkey and KRG should provide transparent relationship” (HDP_4). According to HDP’s deputy, “Ironically, when South Kurdistan was founded as a federal region in Iraq, it was also seen a threat to integrity of Turkey but nowadays it is the only administration in the region that has good relations with Turkey” ... “HDP has good relations with Barzani and South Kurdistan. As HDP, we demand that Southern Kurdistan must consider that the approach of Turkish state does not contribute to peace and democracy” (HDP_7). Regarding the increased relationship between HDP and Russia, “this is pragmatic politics by HDP” (HDP_5).

5.3 Interview results of the civil society

Language rights

According to a former Worker’s Party Deputy, “after World War II, pluralist democracies have been becoming popular. In Turkey, Kurds started to lead such movements to succeed pluralist democracy. PKK was one of them. It was founded as Kurdistan Worker’s Party. There were also other parties such as Rızgari party, Kurdistan Socialist Party etc. They worked as illegal for some time, some of them became legal. They all wanted equal citizenship in Turkey. But dominant circles in Turkey and governments created obstacles by using media and press. They still defend one country one nation one flag ideology” (civil_society_12). According to an official in the Delegation of the EU to Turkey, demand for own languages is the „most neutral demand in the world“, but should not be done through violence (civil_society_4). „Human rights, not other nationality matter“ (civil_society_4). According to the official, there is prejudice in the society and „people listen to leaders not read and analyze“ about the issue themselves (civil_society_4). „Media has limited information“ regarding the Kurdish issue, the adequate information might only come through foreign media (civil_society_4). In Mardin University, there are

bachelors and master courses offered in Kurdish dialect, however, “demands of Kurds are much higher” (civil_society_5). Moreover, there is a possibility for elective courses as well, but these need to have at least ten people to operate. “If there are no jobs, people can go to mountains (*Qandil*). When people feel disrespected, they have to do something about that” (civil_society_9). “State control press and media to shape public opinion. Today AKP government keeps %90 of press and media under its control by using different ways. The reason of why Turkish society is reluctant or opposed to any policy to give autonomy to local administrations in the East and recognize language and cultural rights of Kurds is the anti-Kurdish policies the State conducts. Accusation of ethnic separatism and terrorism and continuous polarization inevitably cause hostility in Kurdish society and prevent Kurds from obtaining their democratic rights. If the state puts forward a policy that supports Kurdish rights, Kurdish demands will be met” (civil_society_14).

According to an official in the EU Delegation to Turkey, there are constant human rights violations going on in the Southeast. President Erdoğan has even threatened to take away citizenship from the people involved in terrorist activities in the Southeast. „There are 355,000 displaced people“ who have been forced to leave their homes due to ongoing conflict in the Southeast. Moreover, there is constant „expropriation in Sur district“ (civil_society_5). According to the official in the EU Delegation, some 3000 Turkish liras are paid to shopkeepers as compensation, taking into account the terror compensation law. For this law to be applied, the “house needs to be knocked down by PKK” (civil_society_5).

According to an academic and MHP’s deputy, “there is no healthy environment of discussion” in Turkey and the environment is “poisoned”, people look at the Kurdish questions and language rights in “emotional way” (civil_society_7). According to a security analyst and former Turkish army officer, Turkish society “cannot accept the language rights” in mother tongue (civil_society_6). Military is a national institution and a “new army model would be needed” if there would be multinational society. “Kurdish language is not ready for civil servants” (civil_society_6). Also Kurdish differs among itself – Zaza and Kurmanchi dialects are quite different (civil_society_6). “There is no education in mother tongue but rest is kind of fine”...”Turkish society maybe do not understand what is the discussion – it is mostly decided by elites rather than society” (civil_society_11). “Mother tongue means mother home”...”There has been 200 years of modernization in Turkey, but

society is not ready for language rights” (civil_society_7). On the other hand, “Kurdish language is not even used in advanced literature” (civil_society_7). According to a Kurdish expert, education in mother tongue is a “solid Turkish objection”. There are elective Kurdish courses already, but about “60%-70% Turkish people are against this right that has already been granted” (civil_society_8). “Kurdish issue often seen as terrorism and underdevelopment issue” (civil_society_9). “Kurds are looking for the minimum they can obtain... If Turkey could satisfy the mainstream Kurds I think the problem would be solved,” not the last Kurds who seeks independence (civil_society_12). According to an official in Mazlumder, “Turkish mainstream society is not ready to change this issue. Main principle of Islam is equality of brothers. When you create a nation and you say that Turks are superior, this means that non-Turks are secondaries” ... “Upper level of the society, the politicians are not ready to give a solution to the Kurds. Solution is to be ready to be equal, if you are not ready to be equal, you can not solve this problem. We need legal texts, otherwise we Kurds will be cheated again and we do not want to be cheated by anyone and we want to be written in a legal text” (civil_society_12).

Security laws

Regarding the new adjustments in the Security law in 2014, “taking security measures is necessary to a certain extent” (civil_society_1). However, after 2014 Diyarbakır events, some laws were changed to prevent these kinds of protests that are now being seen when dealing with the Kurdish issue in the Southeast. According to a political science professor, “Public order law” was established to suppress Gezi type further uprisings” (civil_society_8). Now this is more used in the Southeast where protests are mostly forbidden. According to the terrorism expert, the Security Law of 2014, was originally “for Gezi, but Kurdish parties say it is done to suppress the Kurdish potential. Now it is handy for the government to use it in the Southeast too (civil_society_11). According to a former deputy of Worker’s Party, “Kurdish problem is directly related to democratization of the country. It is insufficient democracy that is responsible that Kurds are deprived from their fundamental human rights. New Security Law, articles already added and will be added to anti-terror law, considering stating an opinion as an act of terror, leaving crimes committed by security forces out of prosecution; plans to revoke citizenship of people whom are perceived as supporter of terrorist organization are destroying relatively existed

democracy within the country. The more democracy fades away, the harder solution of Kurdish problem and recognition of Kurdish demands become. New Security Law is matter of impoundment of democracy. It is to leave citizens' rights to live on the hands of security forces" (civil_society_14).

Politics

Islamic Kurds are mostly AKP supporters, they "do not accept PKK and the Kurdish nation state" (civil_society_6). According to the former army officer, PKK is a Marxist organization and it has its own "militia and a front organization". It has "illegal and legal structure", the legal consisting of HDP (civil_society_6). According to the former army officer, HDP wants confederation and its second priority is independence. To remove legal immunity from HDP "would further damage government's popularity and prestige and this would "further increase tension"... "Government can not even stand legal pro-Kurdish party – they try to keep HDP out (*parliament*) and the first party to benefit from this is the AKP if HDP is not in the parliament" (civil_society_8). This would further help AKP to enhance seats. "If immunity is lifted, these people end up in jail. How can you have peace negotiations with jailed leaders? However, this might happen with PKK separately" (civil_society_9). Peace process initiative depends on "supreme leader". "Erdoğan decided to swallow MHP to kick them out of the parliament. He needs to play nationalist lines for Kurdish issue" ... "There is no clear secularist opposition in Turkey" (civil_society_9). According to a former Worker's Party deputy, "after elections in 7th of June, AKP start following new policy led by Tayyip Erdoğan which is to severe all relations with HDP, consider HDP as hostile party. In every congress or meeting the President speaks against HDP by saying that HDP is the extension and political representative of terrorist PKK etc. In such conjecture, HDP is inoperable. The same goes for PKK. The government claim to end HDP by fighting. PKK challenges and the war continue. Every day many people die. As far as I see PKK has major loses. According to numbers the government gave, around 6000 PKK were killed. There are also cities being destroyed. In such situation negotiation is not possible (civil_society_14).

Securitization

According to an official in the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), after the 7th

June, democracy becoming stronger was “only good for Kurds and the PKK”, which later led to further developments in terms of securitization. According to the DBP, “we are ready to discuss everything - decentralization, independence and power devolution” (HDP_1). “AKP wants weak HDP” to change the Constitution. “Violence was initiated by the government, not PKK” (civil_society_4). “Top language should change, but also the PKK’s language” (civil_society_5). According to an official in the EU Delegation, Turkey should take examples from Spain and its Constitution in order to solve the problem with PKK. According to the terrorism expert, “Suruc had a symbolic impact”...”They (PKK) shot people when sleeping, for instance...you don’t do that...that action meant something, its aim was to send a strong message” (civil_society_11). “PKK never takes responsibility...TAK does but TAK is PKK” (civil_society_11). According to the terrorism expert, PKK does not want to be blamed directly, but wants to send a strong message to the government. “Suruc was an excuse because even before, few officers were killed by the PKK and this did not produce any major problems. Developments which took place in Rojava changed the mindset of the Turkish state because together with Rojava the Turkish state realized that PKK has huge power and it was decided that Turkish state can not cope with this. They also realized that the peace process was working towards the HDP not AKP. It was state who decided to give an end to the peace process. In fact, Prime Minister said a few times that during these Kobani incidents the state started to question whether it should remain loyal to the peace process or not” (civil_society_10).

“Summer was a critical point because of 7th June elections – it helps to get out of the mess” and PKK was giving in this regard (civil_society_9). According to a former deputy of Worker’s Party, “bombing in Suruc has nothing to do with end of the process. The bombing was a tool to justify to end the process. They decided to end process after HDP decided to enter the elections as party. Previously they entered the parliament as independent deputies. So they decided to take the risk. Previously, all negotiations were carried out by independently elected deputies. Even though going to elections as a party was risky due to the fact that in case of not passing threshold all votes would be going to AKP. So, AKP suspect that HDP might pass threshold as a party and HDP indeed passed the threshold. HDP’s decision was the main motivation of AKP to end the process” (civil_society_14).

Dolmabahçe process should also be considered (civil_society_1). According to a former military officer, confederal system was discussed during the Dolmabahçe

meeting between government and PKK. The government understood that this is a benefit for PKK and makes itself “under the fire” (civil_society_6). The government understood that “voters would reject and AKP will collapse” (civil_society_6). Therefore, Erdogan denied the agreement and “AKP never accepted the result in June” (elections). Moreover, clashes in the Southeast started between June-November. According to the security analyst, Dolmabahçe agreement was rejected because of “Erdoğan’s career plans” and the “effect of the Kurdish issue” (civil_society_6). “Dolmabace process should have not been collapsed. If the cause of this trouble is PKK, you have to negotiate with it and Turkey was doing it before through Öcalan in a successful manner...Military solution proved to be insufficient. When you kill that many people and cause the loss of lives to the civilians, Turkish security people, and Kurdish militants – they are after all Turkish citizens, if they are involved in terrorist activities, it is because they want to attain their ideals – killing a human being is something very serious and it has to be taken seriously. If Dolmabahce process is resumed or were resumed before Sirnak, Cizre and Sur incidents took place, I think we could have avoided that many losses of lives in the civilian and in the military wing and among the terrorists.

Peace process

According to an official in the Delegation of the EU to Turkey, the „PKK is necessary“ together with Öcalan to be involved in the negotiation process. HDP is seen as a mediator and the AKP needs them in this. Also, international community has a role to play, but the European Union „have not been proactive“ in the Kurdish issue. „Violence comes back anyway. There is no way to solve the problem with guns. Violence always creates violence“ (civil_society_4). “PKK should be included in the peace process – Kurdish question may not be reduced to the PKK question or reduced to question of the armed struggle but I think the armed struggle is the most important component of the Kurdish question. Without having any negotiations with the PKK, it is impossible to solve the disarmament issue” (civil_society_10). According to Wise Men Committee member, “the peace what the government understood is different from the PKK. There is a failure in time process”. Moreover, it is necessary to include a third party to the process together with the involvement of the PKK to the negotiation table. The peace process should have three layers and include the following actors “1) the government and the PKK, 2) Öcalan, 3) Qandil

Command with Öcalan and the PKK” (civil_society_1). According to the law professor, Öcalan wants a domestic solution, while the PKK wants an international solution. For this international dimension, “Syria and Iraq are an advantage” for the PKK (civil_society_1). “PKK’s involvement depends on government’s policies” (civil_society_6). Moreover, government does not only have the PKK issue, but it is directly linked to domestic policy. The President’s “career plan depends on Kurdish issue” (civil_society_6). Kurdish issue is a “state policy and PKK rejects state model” - they affect each other (civil_society_6). Peace process is “politicized for another reason. President Erdogan wants to use this process of demonizing the Kurdish movement in order to turn the attention to the fact that it is only the AKP and a strong parliament who can solve this question. And it’s a pity” (civil_society_12). “Qandil is a main player” (civil_society_6). Moreover, according to the analyst, Qandil has appointed HDP’s parliament members and therefore HDP “never achieved independent policy of PKK” (civil_society_6). “Government needs to organize peace process. In 2013-2016, PKK killed many police but there was government’s commitment and peace process continued despite this”...”Government wanted support to presidential system – there is no point anymore” (civil_society_8). “There is not much will to remain in peace process”...” Davutoğlu would reinstate back to peace process” ... “When President Erdoğan said nothing to take, Davutoğlu agreed” (civil_society_8). According to a terrorism expert, “Without PKK there won’t be any solution” ... but “PKK is sticking to original purposes”...”PKK’s military wing thinks it is their opportunity but change is needed” (civil_society_11). It is important to pay attention to non-PKK supporting factions’ involvement, because “this is the most critical one” (civil_society_11). “Elements within PKK are like government’s, that feed and live off from conflict – conflict resolution might marginalize the PKK” (civil_society_9). “If HDP succeeds, PKK might undermine them” ... There may be “links between PKK and state segments – PKK in negotiation table might not be an answer” (civil_society_9). “How were such problems solved in the World? IRA and ETA, South Africa’s problems were solved. In Turkey, organization that carries out military fight has demands. If you have enough power, you can do what Sri Lankan government did which was to totally annihilate rebels by using military power but if you can. But Sri Lanka is the only example of getting success by using violence. In Turkey I think the only way should be peaceful one. PKK has thousands of members and sympathizers in prisons and mountains. They all have problems and without

solving those problems, there won't be any solution" (civil_society_14). According to the MHP deputy, "there are no documents about previous peace process" and this is also the reason of the peace process failure. "AKP concealed the agreement" and the Dolmabahçe was also "refused by president" (civil_society_7). "There should be some kind of backdoor diplomacy between the PKK and intelligence or secret service. Without having a kind of firm ground, Turkish public may not be persuaded to go back to the peace process. I don't think we would go back to the peace process in a short while" (civil_society_10). According to an official in the EU Delegation to Turkey, it is difficult for young people to "make peace" because they are getting more radicalized (civil_society_5).

3rd party involvement

Sur Municipality would welcome civilians and NGOs as a third eye in the negotiation table and overlooking the compensating of civilians. „Öcalan offered a third party in last peace process but the government did not accept. Yet there must be third party, a monitoring mechanism in next possible peace process" (civil_society_3). According to an official in the EU Delegation to Turkey, "Turks can solve the issue" ... "there is international demand" to solve the issue and Turkey should accept it (civil_society_4). According to an official in the EU Delegation, "the EU is saying as minimum as possible", referring to its policies regarding the new EU-Turkey refugee agreement (civil_society_5). "Armed issue should be assured with PKK, disarmament issue would be assured if certain demands of the Kurdish people popularized by the PKK are met. Rights issue and demands can be negotiated with HDP. If former process would not have collapsed, the HDP would have been a mediator. If the process would have been transferred to the Assembly, the HDP would have played a much more major role" (civil_society_10). "Turks are not ready for international community's involvement...there is mistrust about third party" (civil_society_11). This mistrust comes from the Ottoman times. "Even though there is parliamentary system in Turkey and theoretically prime minister should perform executive power yet it is exercised by President Erdoğan. We see that clearly in his statement regarding to post war solution. In 4 of April 2016 Mister prime minister responded to a question regarding to peace process by stating that if PKK returns to the May of 2013, it is possible to negotiate. Next day President Erdoğan stated that "there is nothing to negotiate. We will continue war on terror till last gun is silenced,

last terrorist is annihilated, and last threat is removed.” Prime Minister same day made a statement in AKP group meeting that no one should expect us to negotiate with terrorists. From now on we only address ourselves to our nation. We are determinant”. Only Erdoğan can decide to return the negotiation table. I think such possibility does not exist. Mister Erdoğan is eager to continue to fight till end” (civil_society_14). The Kurdish issue “needs to be solved internally” (civil_society_7). According to a political science professor, “any international involvement is considered as violation of Turkey’s integrity. There is little room for international involvement” (civil_society_9).

“Kurdish problem in Turkey is not only Turkey’s domestic problem but also a democracy and human rights problem concerning Middle East and the world. Turkey is the member of the Council of Europe and applicant of European Union. Therefore Turkey must follow values of those institutions. Also those institutions are responsible to call Turkey to respect democratic rights and liberties they are committed. Due to the fact that Kurdish demands are related to democracy and human rights, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and European Union have to defend Kurdish rights and freedom. They should offer supports to Turkey for finding solutions that fits universal norms. EU and especially France have significant contribution in solution of ETA problem of Spain. Moreover USA played an important role in solving IRA problem of UK. EU has responsibility to defend human rights and democracy in terms of Kurdish problem. It must warn and help Turkey on Kurdish problem. It is opportunistic behavior to be indifferent to Kurdish problem due to immigration triggered by Syrian civil war” (civil_society_14). According to an official in Mazlumder, “If any peace talks restart, it will be decided by Turkish government ...when they defeat PKK even in the cities, Turkish state is now more self-confident. They insist on total finishing (of PKK). In the near future they will not convince themselves to start negotiating because they saw that they were successful. I am not optimistic in short term” (civil_society_13).

„PKK issue will not be solved with security measures“. Also, the PKK cannot be successful by moving to the cities“ (civil_society_1). „Most victims see the state as primary responsible party for the war. Yet some others also think that if PKK did not bring war to the cities they would not be victims. But state is the one to solve this problem” (civil_society_3). “Urban warfare was a mistake from Kurds” ... “April and May are critical months for the process, August will show” where the situation is

heading (civil_society_5).

Curfews

“Kurds who are forced to leave their homes did not move to the non-Kurdish part of Turkey - they moved, but in and around Kurdistan. Integration is difficult to achieve through such moves but on the other hand, I don't know if the aim of the Turkish state is integration or to dissolve the PKK. Towns which are being bombed nowadays...there is a logic to that – these are the places where both PKK and HDP are quite strong and as to the curfew, I'm a bit confused with regards to the results. On one side, government achieved to defeat PKK in Sur, Nusaybin, Silopi but in Silopi PKK returned back again. Government said 5000 people have killed so far and this was unexpected. Both sides have had heavy losses and neither of the sides was expecting heavy losses” (civil_society_10). There is a need for “reformation in civil-military relations on Kurdish side” to have a meaningful partner.

“In operations conducted in the South East, army is mainly being used. It is authorized to use modern warfare vehicles and equipment such as tanks, planes, explosives etc. Operations carried out in the cities, such means of war cause destruction and damage. It should not be forgotten that corpse of an old women who went out to street during curfew was not allowed to be transported and corpse of little child who was shot when he was on balcony was kept in refrigerator for days because of curfew. Therefore it is not possible to believe in claim that security forces are conducting operation carefully. Watching videos and looking at pictures that show environment in Eastern cities are enough to understand current situation” (civil_society_14).

“Several applications have been made to European Human Rights Court and Turkish Constitutional court but both said that Turkey is right. This means that Europe is on the side of Turkey”...”European court is shutting its mouth not to say anything and Turkey's society thinks Turkey is right...”Silopi finished, Cizre finished, Silvan finished in a very short term Sur - finished. Probably Nusaybin and Yüksekova....they are preparing now, they are digging trenches. So, why PKK commanders they see that they are losing the war but they are insisting. I think that they are trying to reduce the fame of turkey in front of its citizens or Turkish Kurds ...you are criticizing Bashar al-Assad - now you are doing the same in Turkey...these words are now used by journalists. I was in in Cizre two days, no one knows how

many people died”...because they clean the areas (civil_society_13).

There are still five areas in Diyarbakır that are under curfews and the situation is devastating to the civilians living there due to the ongoing operations by the Turkish military forces against the Kurdish militants. According to the official in Sur Municipality, „there is no dialogue between Sur Municipality and the government“ when it comes to rebuilding the district and the area affected. However, what they do know is that the plan includes that people would sell their houses to the government for rebuilding purposes. Moreover, according to the official, Sur Municipality gets their info regarding the Action Plan from the press not through a direct dialogue. What they know from the media is the fact that there will be wide streets to be rebuild and the buildings will be rebuilt as close to the original as possible and at the same time „forcing people to sell these houses“ (civil_society_2). According to an official in the Human Rights Association, „people’s rights for education and to live are being violated in this war. People are being forced to migrate. This conflict can only be solved in the negotiation table by granting Kurds their natural rights”. According to the official in Sur Municipality, „negotiation table may help not to destroy other places“ in the area. However, „culture in the area will change if you force them to leave“. “Sur is an opportunity for a dialogue” to end the conflict due to the expropriations (civil_society_5). “How about those who are dead? Somebody has to be responsible for the damage, which is done for Turkey. If someone loses its son, it does not matter whether Sur or Turkey is safe, for the mother this does not mean anything – the son is gone” (civil_society_12).

Action Plan

The New Action Plan is a „big opportunity for government“ due to lots of victims and economical disadvantage, many people do not have accommodation. „This is an advantage for government to restore, but practice will be determined“ ... „During the 1990s, government did not consider social and psychological measures, now the policy is quite different – there are security measures but also restoration“ (civil_society_1). The New Action Plan is “more about buildings” (civil_society_7). “Sur district will be without Kurds and rich cultural heritage will disappear” (civil_society_9).

According to some speculations heard, the political science professor has mentioned that “Syrian refugees might be sent to Kurdish areas and they might be

given Turkish citizenship”...”This would increase AKP votes in Kurdish areas. Syrian refugees have 5 years to apply for citizenship” (civil_society_9). However, this policy is yet to be seen in the near future. According to a former Worker’s Party deputy, “It is not possible to draw a conclusion from this statement that a reconstruction based on Spanish model will be done. Turkey has no intention and capital to reconstruct damaged cities in South East. Have three thousands villages destroyed in 90’s rebuilt? No! They are in ruins. Compensations can be given to citizens whose houses are destroyed. But I don’t think this will be satisfactory and enough. Future of the citizens who are forced to leave their houses will be in accordance with the goals anticipated in 1925 East Reform plans. I don’t believe they will ever return to their homes” (civil_society_14).

According to an official in the EU Delegation to Turkey, „there is a generation of killed people“ in the Southeast. „They will come back for revenge (young people), older generation are more calm“ ... „Building up cities does not work, young people have different views“ (civil_society_4). They are more radicalized, not like older people. Moreover, if there would be a referendum for independence now in the Southeast of Turkey „90% would say independence“, 4-5 years ago this would have been 60% and is now different - this has changed due to AKP’s policy (civil_society_4). “Even if Sur is made like a Toledo like in Spain that the party claims – how about the my brother, my son who is killed – it is gone, you can not bring him back” (civil_society_12).

Presidential system

According to the law professor, it is difficult to get presidential system in Turkey, but 2019 elections will show. “People support PKK and the state cannot solve this problem by killing supporters and militants. During peace process that begun in 2013, there were no deaths. With the ending of Dolmabahce Accord, Erdoğan knew that he was not going to win the elections. He aimed to start the war in order to gain support. The war will continue till Erdoğan becomes president by establishing presidential system” (civil_society_3). There will “probably be another election to get rid of HDP” ...”HDP’s votes will go down if there will be election now, PKK has an upper hand in this” (civil_society_5). “Presidential system and Kurdish peace process are linked but this can be worse because as he becomes more powerful his mood changes, so I don’t expect that he will be a more peaceful guy when the presidential

system will be established. He is confident that he can rule the country if he can govern the conservative constituency” (civil_society_10). President Erdogan would “defend the country harsher than military...he does not want to share it with anyone” (civil_society_11).

According to a former Worker’s Party deputy, the president already has de facto powers of a president in a presidential system yet he wants to legalize it. After establishing the system, based on the constitution he wants to be absolute ruler of the country. He has Islamic references. In terms of this Islamic understanding, he is the representative of Neo-Ottoman movement. He may want to rule the country like a sultan after foundation of presidential system. He may grant pardon and want to be the one to solve Kurdish problems by reestablishing the negotiations. But it is all matter of personal behavior. AKP wants to eliminate HDP and get more Kurdish moves” (civil_society_14).

Syria and foreign policy

According to a law professor, there are two dimensions to the Kurdish issue in Turkey: internal and external. “In Syria, the government and the PKK did not know how to act” (civil_society_1). The PKK had de facto power in Syria, which the Turkish government did not accept. Also, internationally the PKK did not have any kind of ultimate agreement with the international community. „Turkey is different from Iraq and Syria“ - The PKK cannot get what they want and so will not the government, however, the peace process will start in the end (civil_society_1). “There is a connection between Russia’s and Syria’s intelligence and Öcalan” ...”Syria provided support for Öcalan” during the Cold War and Barzani was also active in Syria that time (civil_society_6). Moreover, “PKK created front organization among Syrian Kurds” (civil_society_6). During uprisings, PKK won never interest among Arabs. “PKK sent people who organized civilians” ...”PKK militia group was against Arabs and al-Assad”. “Northern-Syria is controlled by PKK affiliated groups”...”AKP was not really gaining anything, only the PKK-affiliated groups were” ...”There are about 20% Kurds whose relatives live in Syria and Iraq” The so called “Rojava revolution also includes West Kurdistan” and the Kurds in the Southeast of Turkey relate to that (civil_society_8). “The elite wants to revitalize Turkey like in old times” regarding the neighboring policies and policy in Syria (civil_society_11). According to a former diplomat, “Russians are very realistic

people. They know that Turkey without Erdoğan is more valuable for them than Kurds, because the way to reach the warm seas goes through Turkey and Turkey is sizeable country in the region so they will not give up friendship with turkey for the sake of pleasing the Kurds” (civil_society_12).

PKK’s only focus is on Kurdish issue, not Arabs or Al-Assad. “ISIL is a new opportunity for PKK”. It provides them new logistics and recruitment. ISIL attacks Kurds”, especially regarding yazidis and the Kobane incident. Moreover, “Barzani rejected yazidis” ...”PKK helped yazidis to fight against ISIL (civil_society_6). According to the terrorism expert, “PKK is a number one threat for Turkey, ISIS will come and go” (civil_society_11). Kobane had a symbolic meaning for PKK and it gave “psychological superiority and logistics” to PKK where it was fighting with ISIL (civil_society_6). “National Kurds joined PKK in Syria” and also many young Kurds joined ISIL (civil_society_6). They were fighting in Kobane against each other. “PKK attacked conservative Kurds in Turkey”, in Batman, for instance. They “carry way inside Turkey”, they “know who are sympathizers” (civil_society_6).

“Kurdish cantons in Northern Syrian are perceived as threat by Turkey. So Turkey gave support to jihadist groups” (civil_society_3). According to the MHP deputy, PYD’s declaration of Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern-Syria is a “threat to Turkey’s security” and it means “fragmentation of the Middle-East” – this could be “the beginning of chain reaction” (civil_society_7). “Weakness of central government in Damascus” is the “biggest mistake Turkey’s government committed” ...“Turkey did not think of territorial integrity of radicalized people”(civil_society_7). For MHP’s deputy, Syria is important for Turkey’s stability.

According to the political science professor, YPG and PYD are “component of same movement” (civil_society_8). “Definitely, if I put myself in the shoes of the Turkish state but Syrian Kurds deserve what they want at the moment – they want to have a kind of federal Syria and this is a logical solution for the Kurdish question there. Turkish state thinks it’s a huge threat because if this happens then the whole Eastern and Southern borders of Turkey are going to be surrounded by so-called hostile powers –Armenia, Southern Kurdistan and then Western Kurdistan and this is unacceptable. This is why it is so difficult to return back to the peace process. If Turkey one day is persuaded by the US or PYD or PKK in Syria that Turkey would have a kind of road through Syria towards the Arab part of Syria and Iraq then I think a kind of consensus can be reached but without having this guarantee, Turkey would

insist on the armed struggle” (civil_society_10).

When asked from the former diplomat whether the PYD and YPG should be considered as terrorists, “They are terrorists. Being a terrorist or not is something to be relative - “Estonia has no reason to regard PYD as a threat, PYD so far avoided any action directed to Turkey’s security. They are trying to secure their own cause and promote their own cause in Syria. At present, PYD did not do anything directly directed to Turkey but do they have connections with PKK? Yes, when you enter any office of PYD, Öcalan’s picture is there and their internal relations are the same...”Turkey should try to solve the problem, for instance we insisted that the US consider them as terrorist organization. Even if Turkey succeeds in persuading the US to incorporate PYD’s name in the list of the terrorist organizations, it would not solve the problem - they would continue to help the PYD. We should not get entangled on putting them on the list of terrorist organizations. We have to corporate with them to attain our goals” (civil_society_12). “Turkey’s government made 7 million export but when it (*area controlled by Daesh*) was liberated by the PYD, they stopped to export anything. Still there is 92 km border governed by Daesh still but Turkish government never attacked this part, right now they say that they are attacking after the ceasefire, of course. This shows that Turkey is very anxious about unity of Northern Syria Kurds. What will change Turkey’s politicians is “what will happen in Syria, if the Syrian side of Kurdish society have a kind of autonomy etc., it will affect Turkish politicians’ behaviors” (civil_society_13).

According to the law professor, “Kurds in Syria are not democratic and they do not bare differences in the region”. Moreover, “Kurds in Syria cannot be successful without good relationship with Turkey”, because al-Assad would not recognize such autonomy (civil_society_1). Also, Syrian opposition and the PYD is in conflict as well as there is a war between the PYD and ISIL. “YPG did not shoot, even once” (civil_society_4). According to an official in the EU Delegation, the “peace process is linked to Syria – if Turkey is clever, it should cooperate with Syria not ISIS” (civil_society_5). Regarding Syria, “Turkey’s response is mostly fear...”Kurds used to be proud to be citizens of Turkey. Now, Cizre is like Homs. Turkey’s policy might lead to security threat (civil_society_9). “They are “not a threat to Turkey. What Turkey has to do is to sit with PYD and negotiate with them and even incorporate Iran and Russia in this cooperation and I will say even more extreme...involve Bashar al-Assad rather than fighting with

them... And tell them – “Look, I have legitimate interest in this area, I want to protect the security and interest of Turkmens and I do not want to be surrounded by Russian guided group in the South and perhaps I do not want to be cut off from the Sunni belt of Syria...” If Syria is split one day the splitting line will be as follows: There will be something which is called the useful Syria: which contains Damascus, Tartus, Aleppo and Latakia. If Syria is dismembered the Alevites will take this useful Syria, Kurds may take a belt in Northern part of Syria, Druze in the South they may also seek independence, at least Israel will encourage them to do so in order to create a belt between Israel and Syria – Druze belt may protect Israel from Syrian incursion. If this happens, the Kurds will have their either canton or federated state or their region. If canton of Afrin is linked to Kobane then Turkey will be surrounded. In the South, Turkey cannot disregard that there is a strong Kurdish minority in this ISIS controlled area but they are not a majority, they are a minority - majority are Arabs. In the negotiations, Turkey should say that they want protection of Turkmen and they do not want Kobane to be linked with Afrin cantons, this could be negotiated” (civil_society_12).

According to a former Worker’s Party member, “PYD and YPG are struggling solely to protect rights Kurds in Syria whom it represents and gain secure place in future of Syria’s security. They have no intention to found separate country. They follow policy in respect to territorial integrity of Syria. PYD has no hostile attitude toward Turkey and has never had. On contrary it is willing to cooperate with Turkey and see future in partnership with Turkey. It is wrong for Turkey to pursue hostile policy toward PYD. It is good for neither Turkey and Syria nor Kurds. Moreover it is a baseless policy that has no contribution to peace in Syria. Turkey giving up from this wrong policy will benefit everyone” (civil_society_14).

“There is tension between Barzani and PKK movement. Öcalan failed to organize the National Congress because of Barzani’s opposition” ...”But Peshmerga forces also fought against ISIS with YPG in Syria” (civil_society_8). Regarding the relationship with Iraqi Kurds, “Barzani is a political-military figure. Turkey’s Kurds are a bit divided because Turkey is democracy” ...”Turkish-Kurdish problem is dominated by armed group”(civil_society_11). According to the terrorism expert, this is more normal for Iraq and Syria, not so much in democracies, this does not work in Turkey.

5.4 Interview analysis

Common points

It is surprising that with the exception of Justice and Development Party's current or previous Turkish National Grand Assembly's deputies, everyone agrees that it is impossible to end the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish security forces by military means. All parties also agree that PKK should be directly involved in the negotiation table, with the exception of AKP_4 and AKP_5 who are AKP's current and previous Assembly's deputies. These deputies mostly talk in the lines of the AKP's public discourse and this is something usual – AKP tends to have a hierarchical system in their party and people are afraid and unwilling to talk about the Kurdish issue, especially when it comes to media or foreign people. Although AKP's deputies are fine with their full names and positions being used in the thesis, the same cannot be said by youth members of AKP due to their professions and other relations – their views also differ from general AKP's discourse on the Kurdish issue and domestic politics, the youth members are more open minded, but are cautious of criticizing the President, although Erdoğan should not be linked to any party politics. All the party members agreed that Turkey needs a charismatic leader that the current President is.

With regards of government's New Action Plan about rebuilding and compensating people affected by the conflict in the Southeast, it is interesting that even the AKP is not really aware of how this plan is going to work in practice – this refers to the top leadership of the party and the information lack from top to bottom politics. Although the AKP refers to rebuilding and restoring historical buildings, they are not sure how will this be done. AKP also agrees that some sort of psychological treatment should be given to the people, however these practices are not known how to be sufficient in reality. All other parties involved in the interviews agree as well that only rebuilding the houses and compensating people economically is not enough, some sort of psychological treatment or touch to the New Action Plan is needed, however, this is not widely known to the public, nor to the civilians affected by the conflict.

All parties also mostly agree that PYD's declaration of Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern Syria is regarded as a threat to Turkey's territorial integrity and security due to PYD's close links to PKK and therefore PKK is gaining more power

regionally close to the Turkish border. Everyone also agree that although Turkish domestic politics with regards to the Kurdish issue is linked to its foreign politics in Syria. According to an official in the EU Delegation, the “peace process is linked to Syria – if Turkey is clever, it should cooperate with Syria not ISIS” (civil_society_5). Several civil society experts agree with this statement. All parties tend to agree that Bashar al-Assad’s regime should change, also both HDP and AKP.

With regards to Turkey’s good relationship with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Massoud Barzani, interviewees tend to see it in a positive way. Although they did not want to elaborate on it further. Everyone agrees that Turkey used to be skeptical towards Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern-Iraq but now their relationship is economically evolving and Barzani supports Turkey in its fight against the PKK. Even the HDP regards this relationship in a positive way, although often mentions that this should be as transparent as possible and link their own cause to Turkey’s hesitations about Kurdish Autonomous Region in Iraq in the past and how it has developed towards being the only partner of Turkey in the Middle-East.

Discussing about the possibility of a presidential system and its links to the Kurdish solution process makes all parties cautious and even the AKP youth says that although they would prefer presidential system, this would not work in Turkey with President Erdoğan and his power. All parties agree that it is President’s personal qualities and ambitions that play a role in the peace process and people are cautious when commenting on the presidential system and the Kurdish issue. Everyone agrees that the situation does not look much better, if presidential system is guaranteed, it might make it even worse because of one man’s extensive power.

Different views

The main point where parties differ is with regards to the collapse of the peace process and the securitization point. AKP officially blames the PKK and links the collapse of the peace process to the killing of the two policemen by the PKK after the Suruc attack in July 2015. The actions of the PKK are also directly linked to the politics regarding Syria and the popularity of the PYD. The AKP never really mentioned the Dolmabahçe Agreement in the interviews, but their general discourse is in the lines of that “we already gave the PKK a chance, but they misused it”. Also, the AKP does not link the collapse of the peace process to the elections and the success of the HDP at all, unlike other parties.

However, the civil society sees the securitization mostly with regards to the Dolmabahçe Agreement. According to the law professor, events in Suruç and killing of the two policemen were not the main factors, but a “last throw” that led to the end of peace process. Events in Diyarbakır in 2014 regarding the Kobane protests and the Dolmabahçe should also be considered (civil_society_1). The AKP also links the collapse of the peace process with events in Syria where PYD and therefore the PKK are getting more control which is seen as a direct threat to Turkey’s security due to PYD’s links with the PKK. HDP also agrees mostly with the civil society that the ending of the peace process started already after President Erdoğan’s denial of the Dolmabahçe Agreement, but HDP also puts a lot of emphasis to its electoral win in June 2015 and to AKP’s anger to these results. Interviewees in the HDP sections often link the current politics and election results to the ongoing conflict.

Furthermore, HDP does not see the PYD as a threat to Turkey and often refers that Turkey should cooperate with PYD instead. “It is paranoid that PYD is a threat to Turkey” (HDP_7). Some civil society experts also agree that PYD is not a threat. According to the law professor, the PYD’s declaration of Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern Syria is “not a threat to Turkey”. The same situation was with the Kurdistan region in Northern-Iraq, which was thought to be a threat for Turkey, but was not in the end and is now one of the best partners in the region. The only worry for Turkey is that maybe Northern-Syria can be “controlled by the PKK” (civil_society_1).

Another interesting point is that HDP regards previous Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu as sensitive and a bit softer than his counterparts and therefore a beneficial figure for the peace process. With his resignation, HDP and the civil society are not hopeful for the peace process as now, everything will be done in lines of President Erdoğan. AKP does not see HDP as any kind of mediator as in previous process. For AKP, the Kurdish issue is rather a domestic issue and does not welcome any kind of international involvement either. HDP and the civil society welcome international mediators, although mostly admit that Turkey sees the Kurdish issue as a domestic issue. It seems that the biggest problem in the Kurdish issue is also the lack of transparency in both regards the previous peace process and current politics. Although the Wise Men Committee was established to overlook the disarmament and the peace process, a more neutral body involving all sides of the society is needed, not only the pro-government side. This could also help to build trust among parties involved. All

parties, except the AKP would like to have a mediator overlooking the peace process.

With regards to the PKK involvement in the peace process it seems that everyone knows that it is necessary to involve them but when it comes to AKP's public discourse, it is portrayed differently in the media. Although the AKP says that PKK has misused the process and its chance to be involved, its youth members agree that PKK should be involved in order to solve the Kurdish issue. Everyone knows how this issue should be solved, but to the public it is portrayed as something different.

The civil society and the HDP seem to agree on the point that Kurds in Turkey would not have the aspirations to unite with Northern-Syria's Kurdish Autonomous Region due to their differences politically and historically. "They are different, the leadership is different, they may unite ultimately but following the present policy, you don't dissuade the Turkish Kurds incorporating with Syrian Kurds and vice versa. If one day, Turkey's Kurds seek independence it would be because they do not like Turkey's policies towards Kurds. Turkey should endeavor more proudly as being citizen of Turkey but speaking Kurdish. This is the way" (civil_society_12).

Overall, the civil society sees the Kurdish issue in Turkey in regards with the bigger picture and they analyze in a more objectively. When it comes to AKP and HDP then they both blame each other in emotional terms, with AKP being more aggressive towards the HDP and HDP using a more polite tone when accusing AKP in ending the peace process.

Although the relationship between Turkey and Kurdish Autonomous Region in Iraq seem to be confusing, it makes people laugh in a humble way when asked about their relationship. It seems that HDP also does not oppose to it, but HDP's motives regarding Russia's cooperation do not portray clear answers either but some just agree that it is to do with pragmatic politics. However, some civil society members agree that this relationship is not deep and Russia cares about Turkey's friendship. But for Russia, this would be better without a strong leader like President Erdoğan. "To harm Erdoğan's position, they will do more to support the Kurdish cause than before (civil_society_12)"

AKP generally talks about the same things that is heard already in the media. HDP wants to make its cause public and they are very welcoming towards foreign media, academics, politicians. They are very open to talk about their cause. Of course, there might be some political agendas behind their openness but this is necessary to

make it hear for the wider public, especially if what the media portrays and the reality in the region differ and this is also seen when interviewing HDP politicians and sub-groups.

Also, it is interesting that the AKP never agrees with the question regarding the language rights, when asked about the education in mother tongue. It is true that AKP has given many rights to Kurds that they did not have with previous governments, but education in mother tongue and de-centralization seem to be the hardest line for AKP, compared to other parties. According to AKP's deputy, "we (AKP) have solved the Kurdish problem, we have no more Kurdish problem. It is just another issue...Kurdish people are free. Kurdish people in Turkey cannot find more free situation anywhere else. There is no polarization in Turkey, there is no anti-Kurdish social movement in Turkey" (AKP_4). While it is true that the Kurds are economically better off than other Kurds in the region, the part about polarization in the society is hardly true.

6. General discussion and concluding remarks

From the media analysis, it can be concluded that the AKP uses the security card in regards to the Kurdish issue very often. While the security discourse and claims of unity of the country were not so evident during the de-securitization period in 2013, this changed officially after killings of the two policemen in July 2015. However, from the media analysis it can be said that the security discourse already started during and after June 2015 elections, when the HDP passed the electoral threshold for the first time. The most interesting part is that the AKP was actually not even hiding that this was the case and this security and mainly, terrorism, discourse was already used before the elections to cause more tension. Of course, the terrorism and stability discourse was more obvious during November elections as this was the official AKP's election campaign – to vote for stability.

It could be said that although the killing of the two policemen after the Suruç attack, had a symbolic meaning, the securitization act itself was concluded with the elections in November 2015. This is where it was clear that the public had accepted the speech act by voting for AKP again. Even millions of people who previously had voted for HDP, switched for AKP in order for the curfews and security measures to end.

The Kurdish issue is clearly came out of normal politics and the security measures have been accepted by the public. However, this is questionable when analyzing the interviews conducted. The public accepted practical discourse, which has included the need for certain practical security measures. For instance, curfews in the Southeast, which actually seem so far away from the mainstream Turkish society, who mostly have never even been to the Southeast or the situation is too far from them. Moreover, although many of the Turkish society does not agree with the Security Bill that was adopted after Gezi protests, they do not seem to mind when it comes to the situation in the Southeast. Also, the anti-terrorism law has become into force after recent terrorism acts in Turkey and as more criticism rose from the civil society, be it the other 50% of the population, who did not vote for President Erdoğan in the last elections.

Regarding Turkey's approach towards the PYD, it is interesting that this started just 2 days before the November 2015 elections, when Turkey also started to attack both verbally and physically the PYD's posts in Syria. As it was seen from the

elections, the public also accepted that the PYD is a threat to Turkey's national security, unity and integrity as this was the common discourse that was often being securitized in the media. Also, regarding the Copenhagen School's political sector, it can be concluded that since the AKP saw that its power and regime was under threat, the security discourse was adopted and their regime was securitized as a referent object. By voting for AKP in November, this securitized referent object (the regime) was saved and therefore the securitization was again successful.

However, when the media analysis is compared with interviews, a double discourse emerges. None of the civil society members had accepted AKP's discourse and the securitization process in which Suruç attacks and the killings of the two policemen changed everything. For the civil society and the HDP, other events, such as the Dolmabahçe Agreement and the elections were more important when analyzing the conflict escalation. Regarding the PYD, the civil society and the HDP are more vocal when talking about the real issues behind Turkey's actions.

Regarding AKP, the discourse emerged from the interviews were similar to the one heard in the media, as people are very careful of what they were saying over the interviews and in AKP the top-down policy is clear – people do not want to be understood wrongly and different than their leaders say in public.

As mentioned, the most important practical discourse emerged from internal politics and established by the security forces are the curfews. Although life in Sur district of Diyarbakır in the Southeast of Turkey is seemingly stabilizing, questions arise how will the civilians be compensated from losses of their housing and family members according to the government's New Action Plan. When asked from most of the governing party members and what has emerged from the media analysis, the answer seems to be similar to the economic perspective of compensating civilians and building up the destroyed houses and roads, rather than reflecting the psychological treatment. However, even the governing party seems to not know how this will exactly be done and most refer to the fact that the New Action Plan is still too fresh for other party members to talk about it. Moreover, according to the results, the governing party seems to have an enormous info lack on this matter and were not willing to comment further on this issue, the same is also done in the media.

When it comes to certain topics like bringing war to the city, an official in the Sur Municipality has stated that municipalities have no right to say anything about these matters, but only political parties can operate on this – like the HDP. This kind

of so-called civilian discourse is highly missing from the media. When the state sources, like the government or military services talk in the media about the conflict in the Southeast, it mostly portrays the amount of PKK members and soldiers who have died. However, the HDP sources and the civil society that were interviewed, relate to the humanitarian perspective. This is especially true when looked at the reports of casualties from the HDP website, which is very vocal in the humanitarian issues.

In regards to the impact of the Kurdish factor on securitization of Turkish domestic politics and foreign affairs, it has been enormous, although sometimes kept silent from the public discourse. The Kurdish factor has had a clear impact on securitization of the domestic politics as well, as the Syrian civil war has spilled over to Turkey. Although the AKP also says that the PYD is a threat to Turkish security, national unity and integrity, this is only briefly elaborated on the media. It is sometimes left unnoticed on the media that the main factor behind securitization of Turkish foreign politics is the PKK and the issues that Turkey faces at home and its domestic security.

What is portrayed in the medias as official discourse only seem to work with the public and this is needed for the successful securitization – however, this does not work with the HDP and civil society that has emerged. As seen from the events that led to a successful securitization of the Kurdish issue in regards to the election results, the future will be very difficult for the people that are most affected by the conflict. The young Kurds in the Southeast are being more radicalized due to the curfews and other security measures and although it is easy to convince the Turkish mainstream society of extraordinary measures to be taken in the Southeast – it is very difficult to change the minds of these young Kurds. Changing this, will have a big impact on the future politics of Turkey, if even now, lifting of parliamentarians’ immunities, mostly Kurdish politicians, are creating tension.

The PKK is a threat to Turkey. However, ISIL is making attacks on Turkish soil and in public, does not seem to get as much attention as the PKK does. It seems that while, ISIL comes and goes, the PKK has a deeper impact on Turkish domestic and foreign politics and this needs to be eliminated. However, this will be impossible with many young Kurds being radicalized due to government’s security measures and the impact of the Kurdish factor on Turkish domestic and foreign politics is only increasing in the near future.

Recently, it seems that the AKP and the pro-government media have adopted a new tone in the media and when giving interviews compared to its previous approach. They deny the big support of PKK in the Southeast and the fact that it has actually been increasing during the curfews. They now emphasize the examples of many Kurds in the Southeast also being against the PKK. In regards to disputes between people in the village and the PKK, most recent bomb attack during a dispute in Diyarbakir in May 2016.

Although the main discourse in terms of the possibility of the future peace process is that “it is not possible to return to the peace process with those who target our national unity and brotherhood,” the Kurdish issue should be looked into deeper and analyzed in different levels to see what is behind it – mostly political career goals and more power.

There is an emotional debate by both parties about the amount of civilian victims and people being trapped in basements under shelling from both the PKK and the government forces and further damage due to rules of curfews. Although the information seen on media at times can be biased to one side of another, one thing is clear – the HDP and Kurdish activists, having closer look of the conflict in the Southeast have some detailed information from the civilians’ side that the official media from the government side never publishes or due to heavy monitoring is not allowed to publish. Moreover, both national and foreign journalists are restricted of what they publish about the Southeast, especially when the security measures were at its highest point. While the HDP and some human rights organizations publish reports on the conditions of civilians – this is almost non-existent when it comes to the pro-government media. Even the Hurriyet Daily News, which is analyzed in this thesis, is being closely monitored and often publishes articles related to the amount of Kurdish militants being captured rather the conditions of civilians. This all happens in a situation, in which newspapers that are critical to the government’s policies are being shut as well as journalists and academics being arrested due to their writings and criticism of government’s security measures.

The government is also acting based on its interests in terms of using the Kurdish card in the media for public support. For instance the Prime Minister has justified the AKP’s decision by saying that “launching operations on July 23 (last year) was a righteous decision”...”When you look at the amount of weapons seized, it is 11 tons in Sur alone,” he said, referring to the central Diyarbakir district. “It is

obvious why weapons have also been taken to Cizre and Silopi. They are there just to put Turkey in the wheel of fire” (Hurriyet 01.02.2016). Moreover, Prime Minister Davutoğlu has hailed “perfect harmony” between all security forces in conducting the operations, claiming that this is “the first time that the police and the army have conducted such operations without either side hiding anything from the other” (Hurriyet 01.02.2016). This also refers to the successful adoption of the Paris School theory in Turkish case in terms of close cooperation of internal security services in regards to the security measures taken.

In 2016 alone, Turkey has been hit already by four suicide bombings, most recently in Istanbul on March 19. Two of the bombings have been blamed on ISIL, while the other two have been claimed by Kurdish militants (Hurriyet 16.05.2016). Although ISIL is seen as a threat to Turkey, PKK and its affiliated groups will be the ones making the headlines in the media in terms of domestic politics and linking this to the pro-Kurdish HDP as well as hidden agendas regarding foreign affairs, be it in Northern-Iraq or Syria in terms of PYD.

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Appendix 1. Interview questions

1) According to the recent surveys, Turkish population is mostly against giving more language rights and more control to the local municipalities in the Southeast, what is your opinion about this? Is the Turkish mainstream society not ready for these rights?

Translation: Güncel anketlere göre, Türk toplumu, Güneydoğu'daki yerel yönetimlere daha fazla güç verilmesi ve de dil haklarının genişletilmesine karşı. Sizin bu konudaki görüşleriniz nelerdir? Genel Türk toplumu henüz bu hakların verilmesi için hazır değil mi?

2) What is your impression of the international community, should the Kurdish issue stay as state's domestic politics or would you welcome outside negotiators in the future peace process? Should the EU be more vocal in this issue?

Translation: Uluslararası toplum hakkındaki izlenimleriniz nelerdir? Sizde Kürt sorunu devletin bir iç politikası olarak mı kalmalı yoksa uluslararası arabulucular gelecekteki barış sürecine dahil olmalı mı? Avrupa Birliği bu sorun konusunda daha fazla aktif olmalı mı?

3) What have been the results of the new Security Law (2014) in the Southeast, has it led to more control measures being used in the Southeast?

Translation: 2014 yılında yürürlüğe giren Güvenlik Kanunu'nun şu ana kadarki sonuçları nelerdir? Kanun sizce askerin ve istihbaratın Güneydoğu'da düzenlemekte olduğu operasyonlarda kullanılan kontrol önlemlerini artırmış mıdır?

4) How is the recruitment system in the military, is the state managing well to improve the Eastern part to the national defense?

Translation: Ordudaki askerlik sistemi nasıl? Devlet doğuda milli savunmayı iyileştirmek için iyi bir yönetim sergiliyor mu?

5) Thinking of the past, how do you reconnect returning to the peace process today? What needs to be done in order for the parties to return to the negotiating table? Was the aftermath of the Suruc bombings a turning point that has changed the discourse towards the Southeast and the Kurdish issue in Turkey?

Translation:Geçmiş göz önünde bulundurursak, bugün çözüm sürecine dönmeyi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Tarafların tekrar masaya dönmesi için neler yapılmalıdır? Suruç patlaması sonrası sizce Güneydoğu ve Kürt sorununa karşı kullanılan söylemleri değiştirmişmidir?

6) What is your opinion on rebuilding the Southeast and compensating civilians?

Translation: Yeniden inşa ve sivilere tazminat konusunda sizin düşünceleriniz nelerdir? Hükümetin yeni imar planı hakkındaki tutumunuz nedir?

7) Future peace process – what about involvement of the PKK to the negotiating table? Would direct involvement of Abdullah Öcalan be a possibility? What is the role of the HDP in the negotiating table?

Translation: PKK'nın müzakere masasına dahil olması hakkında neler düşünüyorsunuz? Abdullah Öcalan'ın doğrudan dahil olması olası mıdır? HDP nin müzakere masasındaki rolü nedir?

8) How effective have the curfews been in the Southeast? What about the viewpoint of civilians, have their support for the PKK somehow risen?

Translation: Sokağa çıkma yasakları Güneydoğu'da ne kadar etkili? Sivillerin bu konuda görüşleri nelerdir? PKK'ya olan destek artmış mıdır?

9) What is your stance on Kurdish factions getting control of Northern Syria and military targeting YPG in Northern Syria? Will this have an affect on Turkish domestic politics regarding the Kurdish issue?

Translation: PYD/YPG'nin henüz Türkiye'ye doğrudan saldırısı olmuş mudur? Kuzey Suriye'de Kürt gruplarının kontrolü ele almasında ve ordunun YPG'yi hedef almasındaki görüşleriniz nelerdir? Bu durum Türk iç politikasında Kürt sorunu çerçevesinde ne gibi etkilere sebep olacaktır?

Kokkuvõte

Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks on uurida Türgi julgeolekustamist Kurdi probleemi näitel, vaadeldes seejuures nii Türgi sise- ja välispoliitikat. Selle raames kasutan julgeoleku diskursust kombineerides nii Kopenhaageni koolkonda kui ka Pariisi koolkonda. Minu metodoloogiliseks analüüsiks on diskursuse analüüs. Selle raames vaatlen Türgi meediat, peamiselt Hurriyet Daily News inglise keelset ajalehte ning nii AKP kui ka HDP ametlikke väljaandeid. Antud töö raames on tehtud ka 27 intervjuud nii AKP, HDP kui ka ekspertidega antud teemal, mis maalib teistsuguse pildi ametlikust diskursusest, mida Türgi ning vahel ka rahvusvaheline meedia kajastab.

Vaadates Türgi julgeolekustamist, on oluline selle poliitiline keskkond. Seda nii AKP kui ka HDP partei näitel, kes nii meedias kui ka avalikult üksteise vastu ründavat diskursust kasutavad. AKP on juba üle 13 aasta võimul olnud ning kuigi just tänu AKP-le on Kurdidel teatud õigused laienenud tänu 2013. aasta rahuprotsessile, on ka AKP just see, kes 2015. aasta juulis ametlikult rahuprotsessi lõpetas ja situatsiooni julgeolekustas. Arvatakse, et see võib olla seotud nii valimistega ning võimu kaotamisele kurdiparteile kuigi praeguse president Erdoğan'i personaalsed ambitsioonid.

Alates 2015. aastast on situatsioon Türgi lõunaosas, mis on peamiselt kurdidega asustatud, halvenenud. Pärast 20. juulil toimunud Suruci suitsiidipommi, mille eest võttis vastutuse ISIL, hakkas Türgi kurdi populatsioon valitsust süüdistama nende kaitsmata jätmises. Pärast seda tapsid väidetavalt PKK liikmed kaks politseinikku, mille tagajärjel kuulutas Türgi riik rahuprotsessi lõppenuks. Peale seda hakati laialdaselt kasutama julgeolekustamise diskursust ning novembri valmistega, kogus AKP endale taas võimu parlamendis.

Kuna situatsioon on järjest eskaleerunud, on see ka laienenud seoses PYD territoriaalsete võitudega ning autonoomia deklareerimisega. See Türgile ei meeldi, sest PYD on lähedalt seotud PKK organisatsiooniga, mõlemad on Türgi poolt nimetatud terroriorganisatsioonideks. PYD territoriaalsed võidud tähendavad, et ka PKK kogub Türgi piiri ääres võimu.

Antud töö analüüsib seda, mis sündmused viisid rahuprotsessi lõppemiseni ja kuidas see Türgi meedias edukalt julgeolekustati – seda tõestas ka AKP võit Novembris. Samas, näitavad AKP, HDP ja ekspertidega tehtud intervjuud seda, et intervjueeritavad ei ole AKP diskursust nõ. vastu võtnud ning intervjuud loovad teise pildi, pannes rõhku humanitaarsele poolele, mis ametlikus diskursuses puudub. Türgi meedia on väga monitooritud ning adekvaatse pildi maalimine kurdide olukorrast võib olla raske. Antud töö proovib seda muuta kombineerides nii kahte teooriat kui ka nii ametlikku ning mitteametlikku diskursust.

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