

Turkish Media, the Kurdish Question and the Peace

Process, 2009–2015

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Kurdish question has been a major challenge for Turkey. In the earlier period within modern Turkish history, the Kurds revolted many times, demanding their rights; but each time the state managed to suppress them violently. However, the armed wing of the Kurdish movement, the PKK, has fought against the state since 1984 and this conflict has been of great humanitarian and economic cost, both to Kurds and Turks. In order to end the four-decade-long conflict, the AKP government began a peace process with the PKK in 2009. That process ended in the middle of 2015, for reasons both internal and external. This thesis examines the representation of the Kurdish question during the period of the peace talks (2009 to 2015) in three Turkish newspapers of differing ideologies. I analyse some specific events, including the peace process itself, which occurred during this six-year period, in order to explore how Kemalist, leftist and Erdoganist newspapers presented the Kurdish question and – as I shall argue – reproduced the dominant discursive practises about the Kurds. My main method is Critical Discourse Analysis. With it, I try to show: the media discourse about the Kurds tended to fluctuate according to the state's somewhat variable political stance; for the most part, that discourse remained true to what did *not* change in the state's discourse, and, thus, that mostly the media discourse was one of terrorism and security. Hence, and despite some intermittent support for the peace process, most of the press failed to practice the persistent advocacy of peace that would be required for that journalism to count as 'peace journalism'. The thesis faults the press for that and traces the failure to compromising ownership of the media.

*This PhD dissertation is dedicated to grandfather, Mehmet Keleş,
and to my uncle, Henifi Keleş.*

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List of abbreviations

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party (currently the ruling party in Turkey)
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi / Peace and Democracy Party (the predecessor to the HDP / People's Democratic Party – <i>q.v.</i>)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party (the party found by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk)
DBP	Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi / Democratic Regions Party (formerly BDP – <i>q.v.</i>)
DTP	Demokratik Toplum Partisi / Democratic Society Party (outlawed by the Constitutional Court in 2009)
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi / People's Democratic Party (the first pro-Kurdish party with members elected to Parliament)
HEP	Halkın Emek Partisi / People's Labour Party
HPG	Hêzên Parastina Gel / People's Defence Force
KCK	Koma Civakên Kurdistan / Kurdish Communities Union (umbrella organization of which the PKK is the military wing)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi / Nationalist Movement Party
MIT	Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı / National Intelligence Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OHAL	Olağanüstü Hal / State of emergency
IS	Islamic State
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan / Kurdistan Workers' Party
PYD	Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat / Democratic Union Party

Introduction

The Turkish government, the AKP, tried to end the decades-long conflict in Turkey by initiating a peace process; that process lasted from 2009 until 2015. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul declared the ‘Kurdish opening’ (the peace process) in order to solve what they called ‘Turkey’s biggest problem’, which is to say, the Kurdish question. The state started the peace talks with the PKK. In March 2013, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, gave his endorsement to the peace process and ordered the PKK to withdraw from Turkey. However, the peace process came to an end in 2015, for reasons that in some cases were internal to the process and in some cases not. During the six-year period of the talks, they were represented in various ways by the government, the Kurds, the media and the public. The media becomes a significant source to analyse how the knowledge (and discourse of) about the peace and Kurdish question is reproduced by different actors. I shall analyse the reproduction of ‘the Kurdish question’ and dissemination of the state hegemony in the press by examining the representation of the peace process, the Rosboski massacre and Kobane protests in the ideologically different media outlets. I aim to give an insight into the dynamics of the Kurdish question and into how the media represented that question.

The media is a state apparatus that often reinforces the dominant hegemony of the ruling classes. For the media tends to use certain hegemonic discursive practices in order to discriminate, repress, distorts or eliminate the voice and image of the Others, such as ethnic groups. Therefore, the media plays a significant role in how societies are governed, ruled and led during times of peace and war. Indeed, and by such means, together with misrepresentation, distortion, hate speeches and war-

mongering language, often the media fuels ethnic conflicts with. Nevertheless, the media also can serve peace. It can help to prevent and resolve conflict by creating awareness and knowledge, and by promoting non-violent practices and transparent politics. Another way in which the media can serve peace is by helping people to face up to the past – to past atrocity, trauma and fears.

Turkey's Kurdish question developed in a four-decade ethnic conflict that started in 1984 when the PKK began a war against the state. The conflict has resulted in the death of thousands and the displacement of millions. It has traumatised and profoundly polarized society. From the early twentieth century until the 2000s the Turkish state had taken oppressive and violent measures against Kurds, and until the 1990s even denied the very existence of the Kurds as a people. The Kurds have resisted state suppression and fought for their political and cultural rights. It is the denial of those rights by the state that created the Kurdish question. Furthermore, in the official discourse that it constructed, the state defined the Kurds as backward, anti-modern and tribal; it did this in order to legitimize its policies. However, due to the increasingly massive humanitarian and economic cost of the conflict, and also to Turkey's EU accession process and the growing Kurdish political movement, the AKP came in 2009 to seek a negotiated resolution. During the negotiations, the Turkish state changed its stance significantly: it adopted moderate policies such as the creation in 2009 of *TRT Kurdî*, Turkey's first national television station broadcasting in Kurdish.

The peace process considerably changed the narrative of the Kurdish question in the discourse of the government as well as in the Turkish media. Indeed, in this period of the peace process the Turkish press tended to espouse the

government's line, though it did make some minor criticism of the state during the early period of the peace negotiations. The reason that the media embraced government discourse was that media owners benefitted from state 'mega-projects' such as the construction of bridges and airports. The press endorsed the government's newly moderate representation of the Kurdish actors, the PKK and HDP, but changed its discourse in line with government narrative when the talks became problematic. The positive representation of the peace process and Kurds in the press contributed to the resolution of the conflict during some periods of the peace talks. However, the misrepresentation and dehumanization of the Kurdish actors in the media accelerated the conflict and reinforced a biased image of the Kurds held by the public during the time the government had disputes with the Kurds.

The thesis seeks to explore how, in a period of changing state policy, press coverage of three events portrayed the Kurdish question. The first event of note is the massacre of 34 Kurdish villagers, also known as 'the Roboski massacre', by the state air force in 2011. The second event is the Kobane mass protests in Turkey in which the Kurds took to the street in 2014. The third and final event is the six-year peace process itself and its changing dynamics. The thesis challenges the media discourse of these three events in this period of six-year, in which the state discourse radically changed its presentation of the Kurds and peace became a hope articulated frequently in public discourse. To that end the thesis focuses upon three Turkish newspapers, each with its own ideology, in order to reveal how the representation of the Kurdish question, in those papers, was socially and historically constructed very largely in line with the state's official discourse. I restricted the research to three newspapers, and to a period in which the AKP changed the state's previously

Kemalist ideology – an ideology of nationalism, secularism, exclusion, assimilation – into an Islamist and Ottomanist ideology of the new Turkey. One of the newspapers at issue is *Hürriyet*. *Hürriyet* had Kemalist ideology, which consists of six-principles: republicanism, populism, nationalism, laicism, statism, and reformism. These six principles based upon the ideas the founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, used to represent the state official ideology. One of the other newspapers that I shall analyse is *Sabah*. *Sabah* espoused the government's versions of nationalism and Islamism. The third newspaper is *Birgün*, which espoused the views of the Turkish left.

To analyse media discourse my research addresses the following questions.

1. How is the Kurdish question constructed and represented across the newspapers with their different ideological stances, from left-wing to right-wing ones?
2. To what extent does the press adopt the state official ideology in representing the Kurdish political movements and actors during the peace process?
3. How are the peace process, the Roboski massacre and the Kobane protests represented in the media discourse?
4. Does the media misrepresent and indeed fail to represent Kurdishness? If so, how?

By trying to answer these questions, the thesis aims to fill a gap in existing research. For, as yet, there are few treatments of how the media represented the Kurdish question and, more particularly, how it represented the peace process and the

significant events of the period. Critical approaches to the state's discourse about the Kurds are rare in Turkish academia because of state censorship and because the field is dominated by Turkish scholars sympathetic to the state. The academic studies of the Kurds tend to focus upon the state discourse in various sources including the state reports, laws and policies about the Kurds such as Yegen (1999) and Besikci (1991), but very few analyse the media discourse about the Kurds. Researchers who investigate the Kurdish question as played out in the media usually tend to analyse either a single newspaper or else two papers that are conceived of as standing in simple opposition to each other. By contrast, this thesis shows that three newspapers, occupying a range of ideological positions (leftist, conservative and Kemalist) reproduce the dominant ideology and sense of superiority of Turks over the Kurds. By analysing three significant events that occurred during moment of dislocations in Turkish politics, I aim to reveal a set of implicit meanings embedded in discursive practices in the coverage of the Kemalist and Islamist and alternative leftist media. This study reveals that the denialist discourse of the state is embedded in Turkish newspapers, even partially in the left-leaning one. Another potential contribution of this research is that, by focusing on the media coverage, I can investigate how the state discourse, the national ideology and the media representation imitate, reproduce and feed upon each other. I focus upon three distinct events and in so doing consider the Kurdish political actors and the armed movement (PKK) as well as Kurdish civilians and the activities of the latter. By so doing I shall be better placed to observe certain discursive practices and patterns of the state regarding the Kurdish question and thus to provide a more comprehensive account of how state hegemony affected and was mediated via the press.

Treating a wider range of newspaper and/or covering a more extended period of time might provide a broader account of media representation of the Kurdish question. However, analysing many themes to do with the Kurdish question in many newspapers and over a long period would yield too general and too shallow an account. Thus, I restrict attention to a six-year period covering analysis of three events in order to avoid reductionisms. Another way in which this thesis is original is that, for each of the events that it treats, it gives a *critical* account of all three events before it embarks upon an analysis of the media representation of the events. To provide such a critical account, I use sources that do not take the official narrative at face value. Those sources comprise academic papers (by authors such as Bozarslan, Gunes and Göçek) and news and human rights reports. In that way, this thesis aims to destabilize the twisted representation of these events given by the state and by the media. It emphasises a counter-discourse of the events in order to challenge the distorted media representation of, for instance, the Roboski massacre – which the media, repeating the official account, represented as an accident while the facts indicate otherwise. The thesis investigates each case differently – though in each case in relation to the peace process – in order to understand whether the media was trying to contribute to the peace by presenting the Kurds via impartial, unbiased and humanized coverage. Before the peace talks started in 2009, the mainstream media associated the Kurdish politics with terrorism and backwardness; this research reveals to what extent the media maintains that same discriminatory discourse. Furthermore, this thesis means its account of the peace process to contribute to the field of peace journalism. For, I aim to show the following. To an extent and for a period, the Turkish media supported the peace process, but the political ideology of the media made it unable to practice peace journalism. Peace journalism means more

than supporting the peace only for certain period. It means to advocate peace-making wholeheartedly and continuously.

Beyond its specific Turkish context, this thesis gives us a hint about the reproduction of power relations through alliances among the political actors, institutions and states. Regardless of conflictual relations and ideological oppositions between the parties, they agree upon certain discourses because of the political and economic interests of the elites. For instance, Navaro-Yashin (2002) states that, regardless of the political identity and differences, newly emerged Islamists and secularists strive to integrate Turkey into free market of commodities and goods. In the same line, established elites of both camps are often remaking new relations based on their class interests and influencing the public opinion via the mainstream media they own. The global media moguls, media tycoons, and political elites monopolized media everywhere and propagate their own economic interests and investments throughout media with populist discourses that undermines democracy, human rights and freedom of speech. The far-right, authoritarian Hungarian leader, Viktor Orban, with allies seized the most of media outlets and disseminate a discriminatory discourse, similar to Trump's narrative, against the minorities, left, refugees and LGBTQ groups. These neoliberal and nationalist leaders, from Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil to Victor Orban and Boris Johson, adopt conservative ideologies and manage to get their anti-refugee, anti-migrant, and anti-left discourses heard through media, which they reach effortlessly because of their elite networks and media owners. Thus, analysis of Turkish media discourse, ideology and ownership structure provides a context to understand recent political trajectories in other countries.

Order and content of the study

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter treats three stages of Kurdish question: the time of the great Kurdish rebellions (1920-1938); the state's 'oppressive stability'¹ (persistent oppression) over the Kurds (1938-1960); and the emergence of the Kurdish socialist movements (1960-1984). Throughout that first chapter, I focus upon the formation of the Turkish state discourse (TSD) about the Kurds. The TSD emerged during this period, of the 1920s and 1930s, mainly as the consequence of the violent suppression of the rebellions and the subsequent enforced assimilative practices and policies. I explain Kurdish identity and the formation of Kurdish nationalist movements in Turkish context. The chapter analyses how the state silenced the Kurds and denied Kurdish cultural and political rights. The violent suppression of Kurdish demands for self-determination as well as of their fundamental cultural rights led to the birth of the Kurdish question and the emergence of Kurdish armed and political movements.

Chapter two treats the emergence of the PKK during the 1970s as an armed Marxist-Leninist organization that aimed to liberate the Kurds by giving them an independent state. It considers how from 1984 onwards the PKK dominated the other Kurdish movements and fought against the state, and describes the catastrophic consequences of this ethnic conflict. Around 50, 000 people lost their lives, three to four million Kurds were displaced, and millions of dollars were spent on the war. A further aim of the chapter is to explore the emergence of a Kurdish

¹ 'Oppressive stability' is a technical term I use throughout the thesis. This term refers to the Turkish state's persistent oppression of the Kurds from 1938 to 1984. In this period the state oppression kept the Kurds under control and prevented any attempt at a new rebellion. Thus, the state's constant oppression created a relatively stable period in the Kurdish region. The term also can be interpreted as the 'state's persistent oppression'.

counter-discourse and how the state's discourse managed nonetheless to remain dominant. Chapter two gives an account of historical period, in which the Kurdish community has experienced grave traumas and loss, and provides an insight into how the media discourse was shaped by the conflict.

Chapter three is more theoretical than the previous two chapters. It discusses the notion of discourse and the notion of ideology and uses those notions to analyse the Turkish media. Related concepts such as those of representation and hegemony will be introduced in that chapter too – all of them in the service of understanding the Kurdish question. Taking advantage of all these concepts, I investigate the process of meaning- making and production of certain representations to maintain the interests of ruling classes and legitimize their ideas. This chapter elucidates how the Turkish press represents the Kurds via certain biased discursive practices that accord with the state discourse. I elaborate upon the political economy of the Turkish media to clarify why and how the Turkish media owners rely upon state business. In doing so, I provide the political and historical context of the Turkish media

Chapter four elaborates upon my research methods and data and how I analyse the data. This thesis is qualitative research that employs textual analysis to investigate the Kurdish question in the ideological representation of the press by analysing the textual data. To anticipate: the research relies upon a data corpus collected in Istanbul from various sources; the digital archives of three newspapers and some archives supplied by academics; and also, the paper versions of newspaper, obtained from Atatürk Library. I use Python and NVivo software programs for data analysis and collection. Also, for the textual analysis, I employ the

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. I do so, in particular, in order to uncover hidden ideological messages in texts in specific contexts. Despite this use of CDA, I shall take care to situate the events that I analyse within their historical context.

Chapter five is the first empirical chapter. It analyses the press representation of the Roboski massacre in which thirty-four Kurdish villagers were killed by the Turkish air strikes near the Turkey-Iraq border towards the end of 2011. The chapter concentrates upon how the media misrepresented the massacre. I try to show that the Kemalist paper *Hürriyet* and the pro-government *Sabah* adopted the state discourse, which denied the state's liability, while reporting the views of the state officers as facts and excluding voices from the victims' side. Regardless of their ideological differences, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* blamed the victims by presenting them as criminals and sometimes even as supporters of terrorism and exonerated the state by claiming that the massacre was an accident. In addition, the chapter treats the discourse of the leftist *Birgün*, which reported accounts by survivors and witnesses and held the AKP government responsible for the massacre. However, *Birgün* failed to provide the historical context, in that it ignored the ethnic motivation behind the airstrike, namely, the hostility towards the Kurds. Thus, the discourses and counter-discourse in the press failed to provide a proper challenge to the state discourse of the denial in the massacre – not even during the period of the peace negotiations.

Chapter six explains the mode of representation with which the media introduced the Kobane protests to the public during the period, in which the state and PKK were official negotiating the peace. Towards the end of 2014, the Islamic State (IS) laid siege to the Kurdish town of Kobane, that town being across Turkey's

border in Syria'. The Kurds in Turkey took to the streets in order to push the government to act against IS and to open Turkey's borders to the Kurdish fighters. As the chapter explains, the Kobane protests became a significant challenge to the peace talks because they resulted in the death of many demonstrators. The chapter explains also how the mainstream press swiftly reinstated the state's previous discourse of terrorism and security. For, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* represented the protestors as vandals, criminals and terrorists, returning the state official discourse of the 1990s. By contrast, *Birgün* depicted the protestors as activists opposing attacks upon the Kurds by Islamic State, while presenting the Kurdish protestors as the victims of the police and paramilitary groups. Thus, the chapter demonstrates how the contesting discourses defined the Kurdish agencies very differently: on the one hand, as criminals threatening the state's security; on the other hand, as activists who were in solidarity with the Kurds in Kobane.

The last substantial chapter, chapter seven, analyses the peace process, in order to reveal how the press represented those talks. In this final chapter, I explore the disputes, challenges and hopes in the press coverage of the peace process. I investigate the peace-oriented and war-oriented media practices to see if the press supports the peace process. I explain how, when disputes arose within the peace talks, the media discourse changed in line with the state discourse. Accordingly, in certain periods, the coverage in all the newspapers under consideration tended towards supporting peace. However, the pro-government *Sabah* and the Kemalist *Hürriyet* cannot be counted as practising peace journalism, because they explicitly embraced the government discourse. On the other hand, left-leaning *Birgün* did practice peace-oriented journalism, somewhat, for *Birgün* accused the government of deceiving the Kurds and of not being in earnest about peace. The leftist press

promoted peace more than the conservative press. The conservative newspapers oscillated between peace-oriented and conflict-oriented journalism and the cause of this was their strict adherence to the government's fluctuating politics towards the Kurds and peace.

In the conclusion to the thesis, I summarise the main findings and situate them with their political and historical context. Additionally, I urge the importance of peace journalism for attempts to resolve conflict and make some suggestions for future research about the resolution of the Kurdish question, and about the relation between the media and peace.

1 1920–1984: from the great rebellions to socialist Kurdish movements

1.1 The Kurds in Turkey

This chapter treats the emergence of the Kurdish question in modern Turkey in 1920 to 1984. The chapter provides a brief historical account of Kurdish identity and history as well as of the perception of the Kurds by the Turkish republic, which was founded in 1923 after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Further, I elaborate upon the major Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s. Those rebellions challenged state authority and sought either an independent Kurdistan or else Kurdish autonomy in Turkey. I examine also the discourse of the Turkish state (or TSD: ‘Turkish state discourse’) insofar as it applies to the violent and assimilationist suppression of these rebellions. After discussing the suppression of those Kurdish insurgences by the state, I consider how state oppression between 1938 and 1960 silenced the Kurds. Furthermore, I explain the emergence of Kurdish left-wing movements between 1960 and 1984, and also explain the emergence of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and its strategy of armed rebellion. Thus, by giving a critical account of Kurdish history, it will become possible to understand the media discourse of the Kurdish question and the relation of that discourse to the discourse of the state.

1.1.1 The nation without a state

Debates about the origin of the Kurdish identity and about their land started with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century. At issue centrally was whether Kurdistan should be independent or else divided. The treaty of Qaşr-e Shīrīn between the Ottomans and Safavids (Persians) in 1639, the Sykes-

Picot Agreement between the United Kingdom and France in 1916, and lastly the Treaty of Lausanne between the British, their allies, and the Turkish Republic in 1923, had ended Kurdish self-governance and apportioned Kurdish land (Beşikçi, 1991; Nezan, 1980; Romano, 2006; Van Bruinessen, 1992). Imperial politics in the Middle East scattered the Kurds into the four countries of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In these new states, the official discourses reconstructed the identity of the Kurds in accordance with the colonial perspectives. The official narratives recognised no Kurdish identity but rather designated the Kurds as Arabs, Turks, Persians (Beşikçi, 1991; Nezan, 1980; Yadirgi, 2017; Yeğen & Yeğen, 2007). After the foundation of modern Turkey in 1923, the Turkish official narrative produced the myth that Kurds were ‘Mountain Turks,’ a term attributed by some to the sound ‘kart-kurt.’ That story has it that, as Kurds trod upon the frozen surface of the snow, they produce the ‘kart-kurt’ sound. That idea is used to class the Kurds as a specific ethnic group, albeit one that essentially is but one of various Turkish sub-groups; the narrative at issue claims the Kurds as a part of ancient Turkic identity. However, recent anthropology shows that, on the contrary, the Kurds are culturally, linguistically and ethnically different from their neighbours, notwithstanding various similarities (Bruinessen, 1992; Izady, 2000; White, 2000).

Kurds and pro-Kurdish scholars did counter the colonialist official account – with their own myths. For instance, David McDowall (2004) maintains that ‘the Kurds are descended from children hidden in the mountains to escape Zahhak, a child-eating giant, linking them mystically with “the mountain”’ (2004:4). Similar myths have become romantic inspirations for the Kurdish nationalists; there is a motto that the Kurds have no friends but the mountains of Kurdistan. Even though it existed as a province in the Ottoman Empire, ‘Kurdistan’ is a term with no official

recognition, and that it is risky to use, in present-day Turkey. It remains the case that the term ‘Kurdistan’ was first used by the Seljuqs in the twelfth century to denote the geographic area inhabited by the Kurds (McDowall, 2004). Mehrdad Izady (1992:3) elaborates as follows:

Kurdistan or the land of the Kurds is a strategic area located in the geographic heart of the Middle East. Today it comprises important parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Azerbaijan. Since it was, and still is, denied independence, most scholars describe Kurdistan as the area in which Kurds constitute an ethnic majority.

However, and as said, the existence of Kurdistan became a contentious issue and its existence is denied or remined conflictual in almost equal measure by Turkey and by other states in the Middle East. During the collapse of the Ottoman Empire most Kurds sided with the Turks in the latter’s quest to create an independent Turkey (Heper, 2007), although some Kurdish nobles and intellectuals did try – and fail – to create a separate state for the Kurds. That independent state (Turkey) was supposed to have provided for an equal coexistence of the Kurds and Turks. However, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the new Kemalist Turkish Republic refused the Kurdish demands by attempting to construct a homogenised Turkish nation – via assimilation, suppression and coercion.² Since then, Eastern Anatolia and South-eastern Turkey, also known as Northern or Turkish Kurdistan, have become a battleground for colonial politics and resistance to it. After the state suppressed Kurds in the 1920s and 1930s, the Kurdish provinces, as new colonies of the state,

² Kemalism, as the body of Turkish state ideology, comprises the ideas and politics of the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The followers of this ideology are the ‘Kemalists’. I discuss the state ideology without often using the name Kemalism in the thesis, For more on Kemalism, see:Çelik, 2000; Demrtaş Bagdonas, 2008; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008.

became abundant sources of cheap-labour, natural resources (such as water, petrol and oil), and agricultural products for the Turkish state (Beşikçi, 1991; McDowall, 2004; Nezan, 1980). The renowned Turkish scholar, Ismail Besikci, claims that the Kurdish region has experienced a fate even worse than that of being a colony, in that the existence of the Kurds as such, along with their culture, was denied by the Turkish state. As chapter 2 will explain: regardless of a long struggle and attempts to achieve peace, Kurds in Turkey continue to remain without any political status, such as self-governance or federalism.

1.1.2 Population, language and religion

The Kurds constitute quite a diverse group in terms of population, language, and religion. The Kurds comprise one of the largest nations in the world to lack a nation-state, with the estimated global population between 35 to 40 million (Çiçek, 2017; Gunes, 2019; Sezgin & Wall, 2005). The number of Kurds is a contentious issue because there is no census data and the states shared the Kurdish land tend to downplay the numbers. The scholars working on the Kurds provide a more accurate number than state estimations. McDowall (2004) estimates that the number of Kurds in the Middle East is between 24 and 27 million and that most of them live in Turkey and have a high rate of reproductive – almost twice that of the Turks. Also, some Kurds have migrated to Europe, North America and Australia – and they have done so mostly because of the oppression and the wars during the second half of the twentieth century in Iraq, Iran and Turkey. The Kurdish diaspora was, then, a consequence of Turkish politics, but later Kurds abroad criticised the state's official discourse and contributed to Kurdish nationalism. For instance, there was a wave of Kurdish immigration to Germany and other Europe countries during the 1960s for economic reasons. The thriving Kurdish diaspora has become fervent critics of

Turkey around the globe with increasing numbers. Sheyholislami (2011:73) gives numerical details of the Kurdish diaspora:

The size of Kurdish diasporas in the early 2000s has been estimated at more than 1, 300,000: about 900,000 in Europe (Germany alone is home to about 500,000 Kurds), about 200,000 in Central Asia (for example, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, et cetera), about 130, 000 in Caucasasia (i.e., Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), about 85,000 in Lebanon, and about 28, 000 in North America and Oceania.

Recent researches indicate that the Kurdish diaspora comprises several million, and approximately 30 million Kurds living in the Middle East and half of them are living in Turkey (Al, 2016). The Kurds constitute the second largest ethnic groups in Turkey, with millions of them being internal immigrants to Turkey's Western cities, such as Istanbul and Izmir. Those Kurds moved for economic reasons, in the 1950s, but also, in the 1990s, because of the war between the PKK and the Turkish state. The Kurdish migration, particularly the portion that was forced, created an urban Kurdish political movement with its own brand of Kurdish nationalism as opposed to the Turkish nationalism. The scattering of the Kurdish population across different continents has carried the Kurdish question into the transnational political sphere and provided the Kurdish struggle with political and economic support.

Not only the Kurds but also their language is the object of suppression and denial. The Kurdish language is an Indo-European language that has some distinct dialects and sub-dialects. Hassanpour enumerates the main dialects: 'Kurmanji (also called Northern Kurmanji or Northern Kurdish), Sorani (also called Southern Kurmanji or Central Kurdish), Zazaki/Dimli and Hawrami/Gorani, and Kirmashani (Southern Kurdistan)' (Sheyholislami, 2011:60). Some 60 to 65 per cent of Kurds speak Kurmanji, making it the most common dialect spoken by the Kurds. The

second most spoken dialect is Zazaki, spoken by approximately one million Kurds in Turkey (*idem*). The division of Kurdish land, together with the prohibition upon use of the mother tongue, prevented the formation of a standard Kurdish dialect and impeded the transmission of Kurdish culture, which led to the suppression of the Kurdish collective memory. All of these restricted the articulation of Kurdish identity. Turkish ideology, with its myth of one nation, one flag, one state, prohibited the use of Kurdish in public and in education. This was central to the Turkish state's project, in the 1920s through to the 2000s, of 'Turkifying' the Kurds through coercion and oppressive politics and is encapsulated in the motto, 'Citizens speak Turkish!' (Aslan, 2015; Bozarslan, 2003; Bruinessen, 1992; Bulut, 2005; Romano, 2006; Sheyholislami, 2010; Uçarlar, 2009). The Turkish state had to change its suppressive policies towards the Kurdish language because of relations with the European Union after 1999. Moreover, it took moderate further steps in that direction during the recently failed peace process of 2009-2015, such as opening some Kurdish language courses in universities. Still, and as I discuss in chapters 2 and 7, the state made no radical change in its policy towards Kurdish language. For instance, it did not allow the Kurds to have their mother language included in public education.

Kurdish geography is part of Mesopotamia and Anatolia and accommodates several religions: Christianity; Judaism; Manichaeism; Zoroastrianism; and Islam. The overwhelming majority of the Kurdish population, nearly 75 per cent, is Sunni Muslim and Alawites (or Qizilbash) minority, the latter having close relations with Shi'i Islam, Zoroastrianism and with Turkoman shamanism (McDowall, 2004). The Kurds also practice further faiths. Apart from Islam and Alawism, another group, is Kurdish Yezidis/Yazidis, who mostly live in Iraqi Kurdistan and recently faced

Islamic State (IS) persecution. The Yezidi faith resembles paganism and Zoroasterism. The religious diversity in Kurdish provinces of Turkey has been reduced over time because the interpretation of Sunni Turkish Islam that is embedded in state policies aggravated the freedom of religion and caused Kurdish Yezidis, Christian Assyrians and Armenians and other religious minorities to be deported (Bruinessen, 1992; Göçek, 2015; McDowall, 2004). It is true that until the 1950s the Turkish state had promoted secularism intensely. Yet, in alliance with Kurdish 'feudal' lords, the state ousted religious minorities in Kurdish regions such as the Assyrian.

The Turkish state politicizes religion, by making use of the concept of Muslim brotherhood ('ummah'), and attempts to silence Kurdish secular movements. To that end, the state from the 1960s onwards has supported those religious groups and local tariqas, such as Hezbollah and Naqshbandi, in order to suppress Kurdish demands. For instance, right-wing politicians in association with religious groups attacked the Kurdish leftist groups and accused them of being communists and atheists. In the highly conservative and religious state of Turkey, those accusations are still commonly used against Kurdish left-wing dissidents. Even though Turkey is a member of the NATO and closest ally of the US and Israel, Turkey still promulgates the idea that the Kurdish movements are targeting the unity of ummah/Islam and serving for imperial powers such as the US. As I discuss further in my analytical chapters 6 and 7, Sunni-Islam was a useful instrument for Turkish governments, such as the ones led by the AKP, to legitimize the colonial order of the Kurdish provinces and to suppress Kurdish politics (Kurt, 2017, 2018). Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, and the pro-state actors use Sunni-Islam to prevent them from

developing a unified ethnic identity as well as to discredit secular Kurdish political movements.

1.2 The great rebellions in the New Republic of Turkey (1923–38)

The emergence in the Middle East of the international state system after War World I worked against Kurdish efforts to build a nation state. After the First World War, Eastern and Western Imperialism drew the borders of the Middle East. The victorious Allies of the First World War signed the Treaty of Sévres with the Ottomans to establish Armenia and Kurdistan in the southeast of Turkey in 1920. However, the Treaty of Sévres was never accepted because the Turkish Independence War ended in victory in partnership with the most of Kurds (White, 2000). The Treaty of Sévres did not survive long; it was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which permanently established the current international borders of modern Turkey and left the Kurds stateless. During the 1920s, the Kemalist Turkey via the nationalist ideology adopted coercive assimilation and Turkification of the Kurds. To oppose this, the Kurds revolted against the state; there were many local and some significant rebellions, many seeking an independent Kurdish state. The following sections provide a detailed analysis of these rebellions.

1.2.1 The Koçgiri rebellion (1920–1921)

During the period of the Middle East in which the borders were changing, and new nation-states were being established, nationalism swiftly rose among Kurdish notables, students and intellectuals, due to the nation-building projects in Europe (Sheyholislami, 2011). Rising Turkish nationalism and increasing Armenians political activities in the twentieth century in Istanbul triggered the emergence of Kurdish nationalist sentiment among Kurdish elites and Kurdish students

(Bozarslan, 2003). Despite some attempts to cooperate with Britain and other international actors in the pursuit of an independent Kurdistan – such an attempt occurring, for instance, during the Koçgiri rebellion (Orhan, 2012) – for the most part the Kurds cooperated with the Turks during the First World War and during the Turkish Independence War of 1919–1922. Three months after Treaty of Sévres, a rebellion started in the Kurdish (Alevi) Dersim region (Dersim being ‘Tunceli’ in Turkish). It started under the leadership of Nuri Dersimi, a Kurdish Alevi, as a representative of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kürt teali cemiyeti) in November 1920.

A scholar of earlier Kurdish studies, Robert Olson states that the motivation behind the rebellion was to fulfil the Treaty of Sevres by ‘implement[ing] Article 62 and 64 of the Treaty which had allowed for the possibility of autonomy of Kurdistan’ (Olson & Rumbold, 1989:41). The leading figure of the rebellion, the aforementioned Dersimi, aimed to get Sunni and Alevi Kurds to cooperate beyond sectarian politics among the Kurds in order to fight the Kemalists government (*idem*). Leading Kurdish scholar Hamit Bozarslan (2003) states that at the beginning of revolt the Kurdish leaders formed the ‘Provisional Kurdish Government’ to call upon the Kurds to join the armies of Kurdistan in fighting against the ‘Mongols’ (Turks). Furthermore, the rebellion aimed the preservation of autonomous Kurdish Alevism at local level with fewer aspirations for an independent state (Bozarslan, 2003). However, Olson & Rumbold (1989) claim that after the Kurds took control of the Dersim region from the Turkish army, they demanded an independent or else an autonomous Kurdistan from the Kemalist regime of Turkey, who rejected this demand but offered them some privileges.

In the late 1920s, the rebel leaders put their demands to the Kemalist government: all Kurdish prisoners in Kurdish provinces should be released; the government should accept the Kurdish autonomy; and Turkish officials and military forces must leave the Kurdish region (McDowall, 2004; Olson & Rumbold, 1989; Romano, 2006). While the government was negotiating with rebels, it was simultaneously transporting major army forces to the region. Although the rebellion had some small victories, in April 1921 in Koçgiri Turkish troops crushed it, killing the leaders of the revolt and also some civilians; and the troops looted and burned one hundred and thirty-two villages, displacing thousands of people (Hür, 2013). Kurdish scholarship attributes the rebellion's failure to various factors. Those factors include: the Sunni-Alawi division among the Kurds; the Kurd's lack of organisation; meagre support from the Kurdish bourgeoisie and from international actors; and allegiance to tribalism rather than to Kurdish nationalism (Bozarslan, 2003; McDowall, 2004; Olson & Rumbold, 1989; Orhan, 2012; Romano, 2006). Furthermore, Atatürk's promises of a common state for the Turks and Kurds during the War of Independence dissuaded many Kurds from supporting these kinds of revolts. The failure of such rebellions is explained by a letter by Mustafa Kemal to the Kurdish notable Cemilpasazade in 1919:

Kurds and Turks are true brothers [*Oz kardes*, i.e. children of the same father and mother]. Our existence requires Kurds, Turks and all Muslim elements (anasir-ethnic component of the state) should work together to defend our independence and prevent the partition of the fatherland, (Quoted in Mango:1999:6)

The state promised the Kurds that they would have equal rights with the Turks and it was also the case that Kurds did not provide satisfactory support for the Koçgiri revolt; they did not do so because they thought the Turks would keep their promises.

However, once the Turks had failed to keep their promises – promises about Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood and equal rights in a common state - the Kurds started to organize another revolt against the state under the leadership of Sheikh Said in 1925.

Now I turn my attention to one of the major Kurdish revolts. This revolt named after its leader, Sheikh Said, and it took place in the early period of the Turkish Republic.

1.2.2 The Sheikh Said rebellion

Two years after the suppression of the Koçgiri rebellion, under the leadership of M. Kemal Atatürk, the Turks, with Kurdish support, won the War of Independence by defeating the Armenian, Greek, French and British forces in 1922. Subsequently, M. Kemal Atatürk and his supporters, also known as Kemalists, abolished the Ottoman Empire and founded the modern Republic of Turkey in 1923 with Treaty of Lausanne. The treaty made no mention of the Kurds.³ The Kemalist republic swiftly began upon Westernization, secularization, and homogenization of the country. In pursuit of those goals, the new regime shut down Kurdish publications, associations and *madrasahs* in 1924 (Bayrak, 1993; Nezan, 1980; Romano, 2006). Additionally, the state banned the use of Kurdish in public, exiled Kurdish intellectuals and expropriated Kurdish land for Turkish settlers (Romano, 2006; Van Bruinessen, 1992). These new coercive policies of damaged relations with the Kurds and galvanised the opposition of Kurdish nationalists and Kurdish

³ As explained throughout the thesis, Kemalism was the state official ideology based on the ideas of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey as explained further in the thesis.

leaders to the state (Özoğlu, 2004). The Kurds felt betrayed: the Kemalists had forgotten the promises they had made during the War of Independence – a war that had been won overwhelmingly, but only with the support of the Kurds. Thus, the Kurds found an organization called Azadi (Freedom in Kurdish) under the guidance of prominent Kurds such as Khalid Beg and Yusuf Ziya Beg in Erzurum in 1923. These Kurds aimed to fight for an independent state. Azadi was one of the first and most effective Kurdish organizations fighting for the rights of the Kurds. In 1924, the Azadi association held its first congress. In attendance were many Kurdish ‘Aghas’, religious leaders and intellectuals. The members elected a charismatic, popular and religious figure, Sheikh Said, as the leader of association. The Congress made and declared some vital decisions: the revolt would be both planned and begun in May of 1925, with foreign support sought from Britain and Russia, and then, once the uprising had begun, the independence of Kurdistan would be announced (Bruinessen, 1992).

The Azadi organization, aimed to use Sheikh Said’s wealth and charisma to mobilise the religious, gain the support of various Kurdish tribes, and even to get the support of the exiled Ottoman family and religious Turks (Bruinessen, 1992; White, 2000). While the Kemalist regime increased the pressure on the Kurds, miscommunication between the members of the Azadi caused panicking and some of its leaders took actions in Baytushabab, a Kurdish town, on the mistaken assumption that an uprising had begun already. The state immediately took action and executed numerous rebels. However, the state failed to completely crush this Kurdish uprising; some of the leaders of the uprising were able to escape by crossing into Iraq and Syria. These prominent figures, such as Ihsan Nuri, went on to lead the Ararat uprising in 1927. When the Turks learned about the plan of Sheikh Said, Said

hastened to organize the Kurds in Diyarbakir and Elazig regions. The fighting between Turkish gendarmerie and Kurds began on 8th of February 1925. That was earlier than planned – it was before the rebels had finished organizing the Kurdish tribes. Sheikh Said and some 15,000 fighters took control of many places and laid siege to Diyarbakir but three months after the rebellion had started it was violently crushed by 52,000 Turkish troops (McDowall, 2004). The Kemalist forces hanged Sheki Said and the leading figures and arrested 7000 people and the military campaign caused more than 10,000 casualties. The state exiled the families of rebels, and looted and demolished 18,000 houses, having declared martial law in the area of the rebellion (Aras, 2014; McDowall, 2004; Olson, 2000). These violent practices towards the Kurds began to construct the Turkish state discourse (TSD). The violence itself became a discursive practice imposed on the Kurds. The state's legitimization of the violence towards the Kurds and state's understating of the rebellions were also contributing to the state discourse.

The revolt failed but it remained as a traumatic experience for the Kurdish nationalists. Major causes of the failure of the revolt include: the absence of a strong Kurdish bourgeoisie and middle class; the premature start of the revolt; the lack of international support and a lack of heavy weapons; and tribal and sectarian divisions between the Sunni and Alawi tribes (Bozarslan, 2003; Bruinessen, 1992; Olson, 2000; Orhan, 2012; Romano, 2006). The sectarian and tribal allegiances comprised one of the main causes of the failure of all the Kurdish uprisings. For instance, in the Sheikh Said rebellion two Kurdish Alawi tribes, the Khurmak and the Lawlan, sided with the state and fought against the Sunni Jibran tribe. The Jibran tribe was one of the strongest Kurdish tribes that supported the revolt.

The TSD about the Kurds was considerably shaped during this revolt, and it presented the rebellion as an uncivilized, anti-modern and backward movement against a civilized Turkish nation (Yegen, 1999). This representation of the Kurdish activities, also embedded in Turkish media as explained in chapter 3, constructed the Kurds as primitive, as bandits and backward by adopting a negative and orientalist discourse towards the Kurds. Turkish scholars, such as Ugur Mumcu and Yasar Kalafat, neglected the Kurdish nationalist aspiration of the revolt and adopted official accounts according to which an anti-democratic, anti-republican and backward reactionary movement was aiming to restore the Caliphate (Olson, 2000). This way of understating the rebellions constructed the Turkish historical narrative and continued to define the subsequent Kurdish rebellions in the same way – in order to justify the state atrocities and suppression of the Kurds. Therefore, the TSD had become the discursive practice in language, such as the state historical narrative, and also it also articulated through the violent suppressive practices of the state against the Kurds. However, the Kurds reject the state's accounts of the events on the grounds that in this matter the TSD distorts the reality. Surely it is undeniable that the state misrepresented the reasons for all these Kurdish rebellions. For instance, the state's historical narrative presented the Sheikh Said rebellion as a reactionary, purely religious rebellion aimed at restoring a religious order. However, Bozarslan (2003) holds that the nationalist sentiment of the revolt outweighed its religious motivation. Bozarslan quotes a letter by Sheikh Said that questions the Turkish state's narrative:

Under the pretext of religion and the Caliphate, the Turks and the Ottomans have for over 400 years been pushing us gradually towards slavery, darkness, ignorance and destruction [. .] It is better to die for liberty than to live in slavery. It is obvious that the

Turks are oppressive and vile towards the Kurds. They do not honour their promises. We must give them such a lesson that the entire world understands their hypocrisy, their bloodshed and their barbarism. (2003:14-15)

Moreover, scholars point out that the Azadi movement, which had organised the revolt, was seeking to establish an independent state and that, therefore, the revolt served the nationality purpose of the Azadi movement, contrary to the state's claim that the rebellion sought to restore a religious order in Turkey (Bayrak, 1993; Bruinessen, 1992; Olson, 2000). The Azadi movement wanted Sheikh Said as its leader, the better to organise the masses under, so to speak, a religious disguise; that guise would help to mobilize the Sunni Kurds and to unite the deeply divided Kurdish tribes. The revolt had been partly more nationalist than religious. Despite the fact that the Sheikh Said revolt failed, it gave birth to a new Kurdish movement, called 'Khoybun. This movement prepared the Kurds for the well-organized Ararat revolt.

1.2.3 The Ararat revolt

After the suppression of the Sheikh Said revolt in 1925, the Turkish state intensified its strict both assimilation policies and its practice of coercion, to pacify rebellious Kurdish tribes and establish the state authority to some extent. Fearing falling victim to a similar genocide to the one that the state had inflicted upon the Armenian people in 1915, the Kurds led many local uprisings in the Kurdish region. Nonetheless, the state managed to take back control – by committing massacres (Aslan, 2015; McDowall, 2004). Indeed although these post-Said local rebellions posed no serious threat, the state formulated the Eastern Reform Plan (Sark Islahat Planı) whereby they deported thousands of Kurds to the Western provinces of

Turkey and, also, prohibited Kurdish language (Bulut, 2005; McDowall, 2004; Uçarlar, 2009).

In the meantime, the Kurds organized a well-planned revolt against the state in 1927 in Ağrı, a Kurdish city close to Armenia. The exiled Kurdish elites and intellectuals, together with Kurdish tribal leaders, formed the Kurdish National League called *Khoybun* (Independence) under the leadership of Ihsan Nuri Pasa, a former Ottoman general, and Jaladat Badr Khan, a Kurdish leader, in 1927. In comparison to Sheikh Said revolt, Khoybun was an undiluted nationalist association. Ihsan Nuri Pasa and well-trained forces started a new revolt against the Turkish state for an independent Kurdistan in Ağrı province, around the region of Mount Ararat between 1927 and 1930. Uniting the Kurdish tribes and fugitives, Pasha together with someone called Ibrahim Pasha Haski Tello took control of the region and founded the Republic of Ararat, which soon attracted significant support from the wider Kurdish populace and did pose a serious threat to the state (McDowall, 2004; Nezan, 1980; White, 2000). The leaders of the rebellion took the lessons from the tactical mistakes and failure of Sheikh Said revolt. Thus, the Khoybun, not only organized in Turkey, but also beyond its borders with branches in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, US, Iraq and Iran in order to provide financial support and weapons for the rebels (White, 2000). It sought military training from Italian and American experts, as well as ammunition from the Iranians, and the support of French mandate in Syria, and the Armenian Dashnak Party (McDowall, 2004; Nezan, 1980; Yavuz, 2001). However, those international actors stopped aiding the Kurds because the Turkish government reached agreements with the international powers. For instance, after reaching an agreement with Turkey, Iran closed its border to Kurdish forces and then allowed the Turks to enter Iran in order to encircle the Kurdish rebels

(Nezan, 1980). Besides, Dashnak Armenians were not able to provide resources anymore since they had no bases any longer in the region in 1930 (*idem*). Meanwhile, the Turkish state mobilized 66,000 soldiers and 100 aircraft bringing the revolt under control in 1930 and suppressing it entirely in 1932 (Olson, 2000). The newly developed Turkish Air Force played a crucial role in defeating the Kurds even though the Kurds did inflict one major loss upon the air force when they brought down twelve aircrafts (Hür, 2009). During the conflict, the Turkish state executed 15,000 rebels and civilians, destroyed 203 villages together with their animals, and terrorized the Kurdish region (Aslan, 2015; Olson, 2000; Hür, 2009).

Moreover, the official discourse criminalized the Kurds and continued to construct the dominant discourse as legitimate means of sustaining the state hegemony in the Kurdish region. The Turkish state indiscriminately presented the Kurdish forces and civilians as backwards bandits in order to legitimize the massacres of the civilians. These killing policies were the concrete dimension of the state discourse. The state enacted a new law (Law No:1850) that decriminalised the massacres and atrocities of 1930 (Nezan, 1980) and granted immunity to the perpetrators of, for example, the Roboski massacre (see chapter 5). Furthermore, as explained in chapter 3, the Turkish press mirrored the state discourse and endorsed the state crimes of this period. For instance, the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper reported the state's victory in the following chauvinistic way: The 'bandits were compelled to seek mercy from the instruments of death uncoiling [unwinding] from the sky [the aircraft/ "Iron Eagles"]' (Olson, 2000:81). Following the failure of the uprising, some leading figures of the rebellion managed to escape to Iran but the rest, if not killed, were the subjects of new suppression, assimilation and forced exile into the West of Turkey. Afterwards, the state consolidated its power in the region and

intensified Turkish nationalism more than ever within schools, the media and daily life. However, these oppressive policies together with the Ararat revolt triggered another uprising in 1937-38 in the constantly rebellious and unstable Kurdish region of Dersim.

1.2.4 The Dersim rebellion

Dersim (currently known as Tunceli) is a region dominated by Zaza-speaking Kurdish Alawites. It was regarded as an unruly internal territory by the newly found Sunni Turkish Republic and Ottoman Empire. Both Turkey and Ottoman were nonetheless unable to reinstate their authority over this mountainous geography despite repeated efforts. Dersim continued to have this reputation during the time of the Kurdish rebellions. A year after the Sheikh Said revolt in 1926, a report of the Ministry of Interior for the Turkish parliament revealed the state's perception of Dersim: 'Dersim is an abscess on the Turkish Republic and it must be removed, for the sake of the country's well-being' (White, 2000:79). The report suggested taking 'stern measures' against the Kurds and restoring the state's authority in the rebellious Kurdish region, a region that state discourse began to designate as 'the East' in preference to the original Kurdish names (*idem*). This discourse of the East, as I shall explain further in the thesis, accorded with the Orientalist dichotomy of the superior West (the Turk) versus the inferior East (the Kurds). This official discourse described the Kurdish resistance and rebellion as a problem caused by backwards Easterners. It did so in order to legitimize the violence of civilized the Turks against the 'barbaric' Kurds; such a rationale was used in the case of the Dersim massacre of 1937-1938.

In 1934, before the start of the Dersim rebellion, the state enacted a new law called *Iskan Kanunu* (Law No:2510) to bring Turkish-speaking settlers to the Kurdish regions and to relocate the Kurdish population to the other parts of Turkey, all in order to prevent uprisings and to assimilate the Kurds (Beşikçi, 1990; Uçarlar, 2009). The new law aimed also at reshaping the social and ethnic structure of the region by forcing Kurdish nomadic tribes to settle in the different towns in Western Turkey. It also sought to establish the state's authority through centralization, taxation and educational institution, such as building numerous boarding schools to accelerate the assimilation. As a result of this displacement, the number of Kurdish settlers in the Western part of Turkey reached from 5,074 households to 25,831 households during the 1930s while their remained properties were confiscated and given to the pro-state peasants and settlers in Kurdish region (Aslan, 2015; Bulut, 2013). These policies of forced deportation and displacement date back to the deportation of the Armenians from Anatolia in 1915 and continued in the banishing millions of the Kurds in the 1990s (as discussed in chapter 2). Despite the massive exile of the Kurds, the Dersim region remained a problem for the state, for three reasons: firstly, the region had Kurdish nationalist aspirations; secondly, the Kurdish tribes refused to pay tax and to provide soldiers for military recruitment; lastly, the Kurds rejected the state's demand that they disarm. (Orhan, 2012.)

Meanwhile, in 1935 the Turkish government changed the name 'Dersim' to 'Tunceli' and declared the Tunceli Law. That law set up a military administration under the control of the general inspector Abdullah Alpdoğan to disarm the tribes and establish government authority by means of violence. The Kurds denied the state's claim to sovereignty over the region and state executed some representatives of the Dersim tribes to intimidate the Kurds. Following this, the Kurds retaliated by

forming a new rebellion under the leadership of the Alawi cleric Seyid Riza and attacked the state in April 1937 (Aslan, 2015; McDowall, 2004). Against this attack, the army mobilised 50,000 troops and used the Air Force extensively to suppress the rebellion. The Air Force had advanced weapons while the Kurds in 1937-38 were battling the state with guerrilla tactics and rifles (Bulut, 2013; McDowall, 2004; Olson, 2000). The state surrounded the region and executed the leader of the rebellion, Seyit Riza, along with his son and other rebels in 1937. In fact, Seyit Riza and his fellows were not captured. Rather, the state deceived them. It told them that their demands were accepted and they should lay down their arms and negotiate a peace (Paşa, 1991); but once they came down from the mountains, they were executed. Immediately before the execution, Seyit Riza made a memorable statement on behalf of the Kurdish nationalists: 'I am 75 years old, I am becoming a martyr, I am joining the Kurdistan martyrs, and Kurdish youth will get the revenge. Down with oppressors! Down with the fickle and liars!' (White, 2000:83).

Despite the fact that state crushed the revolt, the state did not hesitate to launch another military operation that indiscriminately exterminated the remaining fighters, killed civilian tribespeople and destroyed their houses and livestock; the campaign became ethnic cleansing (Beşikçi, 1991; Bruinessen, 1994; Olson, 2000; Paşa, 1991; White, 2000). Besides the massacre, the state was deporting the Kurds aimed to depopulate the entire region. The numbers of casualties are uncertain. According to the official records, the state executed 13,000 (Aslan, 2015) but McDowall (2004) estimates that the Turkish state exterminated around 40,000 Kurds during this campaign. Turkish sociologist Ismail Beşikçi (1990) argues that it was not a massacre but an act of genocide that aimed to destroy the Kurds. Other scholars such as Bulut (2013) and Bruinessen (1994) propose that it was an

‘ethnocide’. Bruinessen (1994:6) explains that idea: ‘There was, however, in the Dersim campaign, a deliberate intent to destroy rebels and potential rebels, and this was part of a general policy directed toward the Kurds as such. But this policy is more appropriately termed an ethnocide, the destruction of Kurdish ethnic identity’. Accordingly, the state politics in Dersim aimed purposefully to destroy the Kurdish identity rather than just suppress the rebellion.

The official state discourse about the Kurds became more rigid during the period of, and because of, the revolt. The discourse dehumanized the Kurdish community and thereby legitimized the indiscriminate massacre of civilians, militias and indeed animals. State reports did not acknowledge the Kurdish identity of the Dersim people but instead insisted that they were, only, bandits (Baran, 2014; Bulut, 2013). By using the narrative of banditry, outlaws and backwardness, the Turkish state normalized its crimes against. Numerous scholars explained how the state exterminated the women and children hiding in caves on mountains (Aslan, 2015; Beşikçi, 1990; Bulut, 2013; McDowall, 2004; Romano, 2002). According to van Bruinessen, the state mapped out the caves and carried out destructive violence against the civilians. Van Bruinessen quoted Nuri Dersimi in order to delineate that point:

Thousands of these women and children perished because the army bricked up the entrances of the caves. These caves are marked with numbers on the military maps of the area. At the entrances of other caves, the military lit fires to cause those inside to suffocate. Those who tried to escape from the caves were finished off with bayonets. A large proportion of the women and girls of the Kureyshian and Bakhtiyar [two rebel tribes] threw themselves from high cliffs into the Munzur and Parchik ravines, in order not to fall into the Turks' hands. (Bruinessen, 1994:4)

This extermination traumatised the Kurds, inflicted unhealable wounds in the Kurdish collective memory, and numbed and silenced the Kurdish political consciousness for a lengthy period. After the Dersim rebellion, the state adopted policies of intimidation, deportation and assimilation. Those policies put a stop to the Kurdish revolts and thwarted the dream of self-governance. Yet, the state was unable to uproot nationalism among the Kurds.

On the other hand, the Dersim massacre and rebellion did contribute to the state's official ideology and that ideology's narrative of the victory against the 'bandits.' Like the Armenian genocide, the Dersim massacre became a state crime that incorporated fear and triumphalism into the Turkish psyche. The Turkish identity partly was built upon the denial of such crime and the denial became a tradition which prevents the state to face its past crimes, condemn the perpetrators and make reconciliation. Moreover, while the rebellion failed – because of sectarian, tribal divisions among the Kurds as well as a lack of advanced armour and of international support – the Turkish state came up with a new discourse that defined the Kurds as 'Mountain Turks' (Beşikçi, 1991; Yegen, 1999), as discussed earlier in this chapter. The state's violent suppression of the Dersim revolt rendered the region

stable because of the state's persistent oppression until the emergence of the PKK in 1984. But the violent suppression and the massacre in Dersim reinvigorated the Kurdish political movement and its armed struggle from the 1980s to the present day.

In the following section, I discuss the state oppressive stability of the Kurdish region and the emergence of the Kurdish organizations decades after the Dersim rebellion.

1.3 The oppressive stability of the Turkish State (1938–84)⁴

1.3.1 The state immobilizes the Kurds (1938–60)

Having experienced massacre, trauma and exile after the failure of their major rebellions, the Kurds were left hopeless and silent and under newly intensive state surveillance. Ramazan Aras describes the impact of the disproportionate state violence upon the Kurdish society and its nationalist movements, as follows. '[T]he violent suppression of the Kurdish rebellions in the period of 1925 and 1938 shattered the Kurdish nationalist movement and traumatized the Kurdish community as the survivors tried to cope with the physical and psychological impact of those catastrophes and their painful memories' (2014:62). The state managed to silence Kurdish society with two methods: expelling or executing Kurdish ruling figures, and carrying the assimilative politics with establishing new institutions in the region such as boarding schools. This social engineering whereby the Kurds were

⁴ The 'oppressive stability' is a technical term I used throughout the thesis. This term refers to Turkish state's persistent oppression over the Kurds from 1938 to 1984. In this period the state oppression kept the Kurds under the control and prevented any attempt for a new rebellion. Thus, the state constant oppression had had a relatively stable period in Kurdish region. The term also can be interpreted as the 'state's persistent oppression.'

‘Turkified’, ‘civilized’ and ‘disciplined’ the Kurds was carried out, in part, via education: in the boarding schools and in the newly founded People’s Houses (*Halkevleri*), Kurds were taught Turkish and Turkish history. Moreover, building schools, bridges and making roads for the mountainous Kurdish region was a part of the project to establish authority and disseminate state ideology (Beşikçi, 1991; Nezan, 1980). The state occasionally continued to use violent methods to intimidate the Kurds during this. For instance, so as to ensure the sovereignty of the state over the Kurdish region, the General Mustafa Muğlalı ordered the execution of thirty-three Kurds without trial for allegedly smuggling goods from Iran in 1943 into Van, a Kurdish province near Iran (Aslan, 2015; Neşe, 2008). This massacre was known also as the ‘Thirty-Three Bullet Incident’. It made a deep impression upon the collective memory of the Kurds (Neşe, 2008), just as the Roboski massacre had traumatized the Kurdish political identity. (On Roboski, see chapter 5.) Another instance of the death penalty being used to discipline and intimidate Kurds occurred in Diyarbakir. In 1945, the state learned of a meeting of Kurdish leaders, considered that meeting suspicious and dangerous, and then traced the participants and arrested one hundred and twenty Kurdish chiefs in Diyarbakir. All of those chiefs were then hanged (McDowall, 2004). It is worth noting the following. The executions and oppressive policies of this period of 1923 to 1950 were carried out by the state under the one-party rule of the Republican People’s Party (RPP), a party founded by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) with the aim of establishing his Kemalist ideology as the official ideology of state.

Even when Turkey started slowly to move from single-to multi-party rule, as part of an effort to democratize country, the state continued to exclude Kurds and to ignore their rights. The multi-party period began in 1946 when the RPP allowed the

establishment of the Democratic Party (DP). DP went on to win the general election of 1950. The government formed by the DP moderated the state's suppression of the Kurds and cooperated with many exiled Kurdish landholders, sheikhs and elites (Aras, 2014; Aslan, 2015). During the DP's rule (1950-60) many exiled Kurdish leaders returned to their homes and became parliament members of relatively liberal DP. It was during this period that modern Kurdish nationalism began to emerge - for the following reasons: the migration of the Kurds to urban places; harsh state politics towards the Kurds; and the newly emerging associations of the Kurdish students in big cities, associations that provided a forum for the discussion of the underdevelopment of the Kurdish region (Aslan, 2015; McDowall, 2004). The moderate period of the 1950s created opportunities for the oppressed. More: the 'flood gates were opened to many pent-up feeling repressed under the Kemalist system, and it was inevitable that the new Democratic Party should become in part for those who wanted revenge' (McDowall, 2004:398). Even though the state restricted what the Kurds could do, they managed significantly improve their political organizations. So, in this decade, a radical shift in Turkish politics opened more space for the Kurds but the recognition of the Kurdish rights did not really come any closer. Yet, the Kurds went through a silent transition in this period that prepared them for a stronger push for Kurdish nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s.

The DP's soft approach towards the Kurds gradually changed to the state towards the end of the 1950s, the DP began to perceive the activities of the Kurdish intellectuals as threats. Regardless of the DP's moderate relations with the Kurdish landlords the earlier of the 1950s, an event called as 'the 49'ers incident' (*49'ler olayı*) demonstrated that the DP was willing to continue oppressive politics towards the Kurdish intellectual and students. For instance, upon the killing of some

Turkomans by the Kurds in Iraq in 1959, an MP from RPP demanded that the executive of the DP take revenge upon the Turkish Kurds, saying: ‘Kurds killed our brothers [Turkomans], come let us kill as many Kurds as they killed Turkomans’ (McDowall, 2004:405). To protest this call for revenge by the MP, eighty Kurdish students and activists released a statement that condemned such provocation. Following this, the government arrested fifty Kurdish intellectuals, one of whom died in custody, and the DP wanted to hang the remaining forty-nine in order to punish Kurdish nationalists but could not carry the execution because of international pressure (Gunes, 2013b; McDowall, 2004). While the trial continued for those arrested intellectuals, the military coup of 1960 toppled and hanged the Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, and released the arrested Kurds a year later. Following the period of military rule, the Kurdish nationalism was breaking the silence and flourishing in Turkey as explained in the following section.

1.3.2 From silence to resurgence (1960–84)

Positioning itself as the guard and representative of the Turkish Republic, the Kemalist Turkish military banned the moderate and liberal Islamist DP and hanged its top three figures on charges of treason right after the military coup of 1960. Amid this political turmoil, the military wrote a new constitution, which granted individuals more rights, such as the right to protest and to strike, and opened noticeable space for the emergence of new political movements. The political atmosphere led to the rise and collaboration of left-wing Kurdish and Turkish youth associations and these associations shaped the future left-wing Kurdish nationalism (Aras, 2014; Yegen, 2016b). The Kurdish students were establishing their associations and developing close relations with Marxist students and trade unions. Traditional Kurdish leaders had organized the earlier great Kurdish rebellions.

However, in the 1960s, the Kurds began to embrace leftist ideology, which would later ‘provide the foundation for the emergence of a non-traditional Kurdish intellectual and revolutionary elite’ (Romano, 2006:41). State policies of assimilation, Westernization and displacement created conditions in which the urbanized and educated Kurdish elites and students transformed the collective bitterness, trauma and discrimination of Kurdish community into new left-leaning nationalist aspirations from the 1960s onwards (Bozarslan, 2008.; Gunes, 2013b; Yegen, 2016b). The Kurdish nationalism was driven not only by secular, left-wing politics but also by the struggles undertaken by a traditionalist Kurdish leader, Mullah Mustafa Barzani, against Iraq and in pursuit of an autonomous Kurdistan. However, the Mullah had less effect upon Kurdish left-leaning movements, which considered him too traditional.

In the 1960s, the Kurds were able to invest in the cultural and social fields. A weak regulatory regime policy allowed the production and circulation of Kurdish literature, poetry, magazines and newspapers. This proliferation of political and cultural publications was consolidating the emerging Kurdish nationalism and making the Kurdish political agencies visible and legitimate to engage in politics. In order to demand greater cultural and political rights for the Kurds and in order also to tackle the social and economic inequality in the Kurdish region, the Kurds allied with the newly founded Turkish socialist party, the Workers Party of Turkey (TIP). With the support of the Kurds, the TIP won 15 seats in the parliament in the general election in 1965. The TIP organized the so-called Eastern Meetings (the name refers to the Kurdish region) and organised protests against injustice and underdevelopment in the Kurdish region. However: as the 1970s approached, the Kurdish demands ‘were articulated *differentially* [. . .] in the late 1960s, the discourse

of the organic intellectuals and the political activists took on a more radical character challenging Kemalism and the state's official discourse on Kurdish identity' (Gunes, 2013:64). The TIP prioritized a socialist revolution and ignored the right of self-determination for the Kurds. Now, because the TIP considered the Kurdish question to have arisen as a consequence of the state's discriminatory economic, social and cultural politics, it claimed that the question would be solved via (after) a socialist revolution. However, the Kurdish nationalists' demands for independence caused an ideological split between the Kurds and the TIP, the latter being a patron of the Kurdish movement (Van Bruinessen, 1992; Yegen, 2016b). Soon after this ideological separation between Kurds and socialist Turks, the Supreme Court banned the TIP, after the military coup in 1971, because of its a decade long collaboration with the Kurdish movements (Yegen, 2016b).

In 1969 Kurdish students and activists established a new organization, separate from the TIP, called the Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Centres (DDKO). The DDKO focused upon the expression and origin of Kurdish ethnic identity and used Kurdish myths to agitate for national liberation (Beşikçi, 1991; White, 2000). When the Turkish military initiated another coup in 1971 with the aim of ending the political and economic turmoil, including the conflict between left and right-wing students, it closed almost all left-wing Turkish and Kurdish associations, including the DDKO. However, the restrictions proved to be ineffective: numerous Marxist and nationalist Kurdish movements were formed during the 1970s. Cengiz Gunes (2013) articulates this futile military effort by claiming that the Marxist ideology was 'highly suitable for the articulation of Kurdish national demands as it was able to reflect the demands of the Kurdish masses, which consisted of peasants and the newly emerging working class' (2013:80). As discussed in chapter 2, the Kurdish

elites and students founded many socialist associations with many which espoused a modern version of ethnic nationalism. The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) is one such group.

Despite the diverse political space where the Turkish and Kurdish left-wing movements flourished during the 1960s and particularly 1970s, the state was still carrying out suppressive politics towards the Kurdish politicians and civilians. Immediately after the military coup in 1960, and aiming to intimidate and represses the Kurdish movements, the Turkish state imprisoned 485 Kurdish public figures for a long time in a military camp in Sivas (Yegen, 2016a). State repression and violence doubled during the 1970s when the state-backed right-wing groups waged the war against the left-wing students, communist and Kurdish activists. Turkish nationalist groups, mainly under the leadership of a group called 'The Grey Wolves', were carrying out executions and deadly attacks against socialist Turkish-Kurdish youth upon the pretext of protecting the country against the communist threat. Meanwhile, Turkish nationalists opened more fronts by committed serious crimes against Kurdish Alevi in Anatolian provinces such as in Malatya and Maras. According to the official record, in 1978 they massacred 109 Kurdish Alevi, destroyed 500 houses and shops in Maras (McDowall, 2004). The state has a long tradition of protecting murderers and denying their crimes and atrocities against Armenian and Kurds. Thus, the state protected the perpetrators and denied the involvement of state-backed right-wing groups in the Maras massacre. In this political chaos, economic crisis, and daily clashes between left and right groups during the 1970s provided the desired and convenient excuses for the army to carry out another military coup in 1980. The military junta banned political parties, arrested and tortured thousands of people as well as implemented several death

penalties. In particular, the Turkish military tortured, murdered and insulted countless Kurdish activities in a notorious prison in Diyarbakir (Aras, 2014; Bozarslan, 2000; Gunes, 2013a; Romano, 2006). All of this hastened the emergence of the PKK as an armed group, which occurred in 1984. The PKK, as the last Kurdish rebellion and transnational movement, is discussed in chapter 2.

1.4 Conclusion to the chapter

Middle Eastern Kurds had enjoyed independence or autonomy until the twentieth century. However, towards the end of that century, the Kurds started to face discrimination and violence. This was because in the Middle East nationalist and centralizing politics had begun to emerge. With the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish land was divided along lines drawn by imperial powers. This created the Turkish Republic, which contained both Turks and Kurds. It was not long, though, until the Turkish Republic denied and suppressed Kurdish identity. Between 1920 and 1938 there occurred a series of rebellions: Kocgiri; Sheikh Said; Ararat; Dersim. Some of these rebellions had strong aspirations for an independent Kurdish state. The state put down the rebellions with considerable violence and afterwards committed massacres against civilians. These failed insurrections formed a collective Kurdish memory and fermented a new – less feudal, less tribal – Kurdish nationalism.

Once the earlier Kurdish revolts had been crushed, the state restored oppressive politics in the region. It did so through massacres, and it constructed the state official discourse of ‘the Kurdish question’ in response to the Kurdish rebellions that the state sought to narrate as backward, anti-modern, uncivilized and the result of religious tribalism. Displacement, exile and massacre traumatised

Kurdish society and endured the state's oppressive stability (the state's persistent oppression) until the 1960s.

The new constitution that was established after the military coup in 1960 opened a political space within which Kurdish students and urbanized elites to cooperate with Turkish left-wing politics until the 1970s. The Kurdish associations allied with the Turkish Left and articulated Kurdish demands via socialist ideology. However, in the 1970s, the Kurdish movements expressed radical demands such as a demand for self-determination and those demands caused a split with the Left. During the chaotic period of the 1970s, many Kurdish organisations were formed, some of them socialist, and all of which sought an independent Kurdish state. Although the coup of 1980 did away with many of those groups, the Marxist PKK survived and even thrived and launched a war against the state. During the whole period of 1920-1984, the Kurds experienced massacres and traumas that would invigorate subsequent Kurdish national movements. At the same time, the state sustained oppressive stability in the Kurdish region via long-standing suppression and violence and thereby it produced an official and historical narrative of the Kurdish question.

Now I move on the second phase of Kurdish history, a phase in which the PKK's rebellion changed the direction of Kurdish politics permanently.

2 The revival of Kurdish nationalism

Building upon extant critical accounts of Kurdish history, this chapter focuses upon the leftist Kurdish political movement and its development into an armed struggle in contemporary Turkey. Those critical accounts owe to researchers that challenge the state's official narrative of Kurdish matters. Within such accounts I draw especially upon critical works by Aslan, Beşikçi, Bozarslan, Gunes, Marcus, McDowall, Yegen and Zeydanlıoğlu. While the history of Kurdish mobilization up until the 1980s was discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on specifically the events in the post-1980 era and the emergence of the PKK, the armed Kurdish rebel group. Before the 1980s, there were numerous Kurdish nationalist movements with aspirations for an independent Kurdistan. Yet, these political movements were crushed under the military junta during the 1980s. And the vacuum that they created was filled by the PKK, which evaded government repression by mobilizing transnationally and by conducting its operations from sanctuaries located in Syria and Lebanon (Gunes 2018). During the 1980s the PKK established itself as the dominant actor of the Kurdish political scene, eliminating its rivals and placed itself as the main representative of the Kurds. Consequently, the Kurdish question in Turkey has turned into a low-intensity civil war under the leadership of the PKK and its leader Abdullah Ocalan (Gunes 2013).

In this chapter, I analyse Kurdish history in the post-1980 era by looking at three major events that changed the course of that history. First, I consider the PKK's long-standing armed conflict with Turkey – a conflict that started in 1984. Second, I treat the capture and imprisonment of the PKK's leader Abdullah Ocalan. And third, I analyse the peace negotiations between the PKK and the government of

Turkey.⁵ However, before I proceed to treat the emergence of the PKK, I will discuss briefly the concept of the nation and make mention of theories of nationalism. I shall do those things because the intellectual roots and the aspirations of the Kurdish political movement and of the armed struggle can be traced back to the very idea of nationalism.

The former Kurdish rebellions failed because of their organizational structure that did not have all necessary elements to build a nation as discussed in chapter 1, but the recent Kurdish nationalism is a modern and has almost all criteria to build a modern nation. Thus, I decided to focus on the theory of nationalism in a context where the Kurdish movements and the armed struggle mobilized the Kurdish society with nationalist and socialist ideologies. The Kurdish rebellions in the earlier period of Turkey had nationalist, religious and tribal elements but after the 1970s the Kurdish movements and the PKK organized with sheer nationalist aspirations. During the 1980s and 1990s, the PKK was able to resurrect Kurdish nationalism through a nationalist and Marxist ideology. Hence, to examine the last Kurdish rebellion of the PKK in Turkey, one must tackle theories of nationalism.

2.1 Nations and nationalism

Conceptually, nationalism is a modern ideology produced to build a nation and a nation-state. The elements required to create and sustain nationalism include standardised education, a common language and a shared culture. These elements

⁵ The peace process has been called many different names, such as ‘the solution process’, ‘the democratic initiative’, ‘the opening process’, and ‘the brotherhood project’, by different actors or the same actors in different time periods. In this paper, I prefer the term ‘peace process’, on the basis that this is the term preferred by the Kurdish political actors.

are required to build a nation-state within a territory with predetermined borders. Hobsbawm (1990) describes the nation-state and nationalism as parts of an 'invented tradition' and he proposes that a group of people needs three things in order to become a nation-state and achieve nationhood: first, considerable length and contemporary common past; second, a deeply-rooted national elite class with knowledge of literacy and organization, and third is the ability to conquer. According to him, all nationalist movements fulfilling these three criteria will achieve their own nation-state complete with ample borders defined that by their power and ability to conquer.

Much is required if a nation-building process is to succeed in creating a new common identity. To understand the complicated process of nation-building, we can turn to a seminal work by Anthony Smith. He argues in his *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (1986) that the *ethnies* (ethnics), which is the human population based on shared culture, history, geography and myths, built nations. Smith (*idem*) proclaims that an *ethnie* is a non-national smaller group that can transform itself into a nation by reshaping its organizational structure. This transition, from an *ethnie* to a nation, requires that the former follow activities and criteria such as: moving from a passive community to an active one; having a universally recognized homeland; turning persons into citizens by re-educating them with certain symbols, and controlling economic sources so as to benefit the members of the nation. Smith's theory is concerned mainly with a modern notion of nationalism, a nationalism that – according to his account – owes its existence to those *ethnies* that proved

bureaucratically strong enough to develop into a further, more complex form of bureaucratic incorporation, the nation.⁶

The discussion of the definition and identity of the nation becomes crucial during the process of constructing and homogenizing communities, because nation building takes a long time. For instance, the state recently recognized the identity of the Kurds, but Turkey's constitution still considers the Kurdish region part of the Turkish nation. Here, then, the nation-building process continues to shape the national identity of the Kurds and Turks. Ozkirimli (2010) in his book the *Theories of Nationalism* elaborates upon the questions about national identity and the elements of the national identity that constitute a nation and nationalism. Ozkirimli draws upon the aforementioned theory of Smith's about the roots of the national communities. According to him, one needs six indicators to define a community as a nation: 'a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of a common culture, an association with a specific homeland, a sense of solidarity sectors of population' (2010:150). In this regard, nation-building is a construction of collective memory for certain communities that have similarities and differences. The nation-building process occurs via the homogenization of different ethnic groups and the transformation of these ethnic groups into a new nation within a territory. To mark this territory, the nationalist actors draw borders for the new motherland, whose patriotic children are supposed to be as peas in a pod. Nation building has to do not only with a

⁶ Furthermore, Smith (1986) states that the core elements of the nation, the ethnic elements, were richly matured by the fourteenth century; the emergence of modern nations are deeply indebted to the blossoming of England, Spain and France because these countries held significant economic and military power to shape nation-building process.

homogenization but also with a refashioning, remapping of geography that takes little notice of the existing inhabitants. Samson (2013) argues the nation-building process also involves the commandeering and exploitation of land, as in the case of the US, Canada and Brazil.⁷

Ernest Gellner gives more credit to culture for the political unity of a nation. He argues (1997) that ethnicity can roughly be identified as shared culture requiring almost everyone to be part of a political unit that consists of the same shared culture. He points out that the slogan ‘one culture one state’ (1997:45) is a kernel of nation-building. We saw in chapter 1 that the Turkish state did indeed adopt a discourse of ‘one nation, one flag, one state and one language’. In nation-building, political actors use the dominant culture to assimilate the other cultures for the sake of sameness and homogeneity of the nation to be built. In the same way, for Gellner (1997, 1999), the notion of nation is mainly constructed with a standard high culture that imposed on society over a long period of time. For instance, it has taken a thousand years for the French to generate a modern nation with its homogeneous culture and there is no way to accelerate the achievement of such homogeneity except ethnic cleansing (Gellner, 1997). The Armenian genocide and massacring of Kurds are the consequences and examples of swift nation-building in Turkey.

In a modern nation, the people have in common with each other a sense of belonging to the motherland (or fatherland, or country) without having to know each other and without having to be kin. The motherland represents the nation as an ‘imagined community’ by making an abstract connection between the members

⁷ Regarding this point, the exploitation of natural resources of the Kurdish region for the state and privileged Turks is discussed in this chapter and chapter 1.

(Anderson, 2006). In his book the 'Imagined Communities', Anderson holds that a sense of fraternity persuades the masses to sacrifice themselves for the nation and binds the individuals together in a single national consciousness (Anderson, 2006; Ozkirimli, 2010). The birth and rise of nations and of nationalism have strong relations with the development of capitalism throughout the history of the West. Anderson (2006) proposes that print capitalism had become highly effective in the sixteenth century and constructed a national consciousness via the following measures: first, 'printed-languages...created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars...second, print capitalism gave a new fixity to language...third, print capitalism, created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars' (1994:94). In the 16th century the inevitable progress of print technology backed by print capitalism (and printing technology) destroyed the monopoly of clerical class over literacy and printed language (text). This enabled communication among various ethnic groups in Europe. Hence, as Anderson (2006) argues that all this process led to the emergence of the 'imagined' communities, the modern nations. The nation is imagined in that it connects members of the community with the image of their communion and comradeship regardless of their not knowing or seeing one another (Ozkirimli, 2010).

I claim that the nation-states and nationalist ideologies alike are the outcomes of economic and political ideologies constructed by social engineers. The social engineering project chooses events and myths from the past in order to construct the nation, which is supposed to be unique and superior to other groups in culture, psychical appearance and history. These supposedly unique entities are used to dominate, exclude and assimilate other ethnic groups in order to create a

homogenous community. After all of this process, i.e. once the nation-state is established, then, as Max Weber put it, the state claims a monopoly of the legitimate use of force. The state holds the monopoly of the legitimate use of force in order to maintain the dominant hegemony within a given territory. The history of nation-building and nationalism is the history of violence that always breeds counter-violence. For instance, Turkish national-building projects led to the emergence of the Kurdish national struggle as in the case of the PKK.

While considering nation and nationalism within Eurocentric perspective, one also must mention both concepts in colonial and post-colonial context. Unlike Anderson's elements, the print capitalism and prevalent education, to form a nation, Sumich (2012) claims that the Frelimo movement of Mozambique, without widespread education and print capitalism, attempted to build the nation without a mythical past and primordial unity. Frelimo, skipping primordial bond and shared past, focuses on future to form a modern nation and unite diverse people based on 'shared progress' in Mozambique (Sumich, 2012:147). Similarly, Chipkin (2007) argues that the African people identity, more specifically South African nationalism, came into being by their struggle against colonialism. Chipkin defined 'the people', or as the nation in Western tradition, as 'a collectivity organised in pursuit of a political end' (2007:2). Unlike the mythical past and education, Chipkin, similar to the Frelimo, argues that the nation 'is a political community whose form is given in relation to the pursuit of democracy and freedom' (2007:2). Morier-Genoud (2012) argues that nationalism and anticolonialism are linked to each other, and nationalism is a reaction to colonialism. Criticizing European-centric strict formulas of the formation of a nation, Morier-Genoud (2012) claims that there is not straight path to build a nation as this process is long and contingent. Not every previously colonized

nation state embraced the discourse of anti-colonial struggle to enhance nation building project as in the case of Iraq of post-British period. For instance, Davis (2005) contends that the Iraqi nationalist vision, unlike the pan-Arabist nationalism using the discourse of the Arab nation as the victim of colonial past (i.e., Ottoman and British), deployed elitist and Western oriented discourse, abandoning the issue of collective memory. This vision and Iraqi state benefited from mass psychology and cultural hegemony, using monuments, cultural magazines and publications, to build the nation (Ibid.).

The national liberations and ant-colonialism and nation formation went hand in hand in the context of African countries. Revolutionary Amílcar Cabral, deploying a Marxist, nationalist pan-Africanist discourse, ended Portuguese colonialism in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde by leading an armed struggle. As observed in the case of Kurds, Cabral (1974;1979) argues that the colonialist powers' approach towards the ethnic groups creates conflictual politics; they divide people, provoke the ethnic groups against each other in order maintain the colonial order. To bolster their imperial rule, they destroy the cultural, social and political identity of the Africans, while strengthening the ruling elite groups who collaborated with them (ibid.). According to Cabral, it is necessary to study the experience of other national liberations and formations, including the Westerns, but each country should develop its own liberation strategy according to its own specific conditions. For Cabral (1973;1974;1979), achieving an armed liberation and forming a state, the struggle should have certain futures such as criticism and self-criticism, literacy work, practice of democracy, training peasants and workers cadre and creation of health care and schooling. The PKK, as it defined itself as ant-colonial struggle, claims to have many of these futures on its agenda in order to shape the society.

2.2 The PKK: violent opposition (1984–99)

2.2.1 The Emergence of the PKK

The Turkey's constitution of 1961 relaxed restrictions on assembly, allowed the establishment of cultural and political associations, and legitimised trade unions. The constitutional change was enabling the Kurds to articulate their demands and publish magazines in a political arena that had become less constrained. As noted in chapter 1, in the 1960s Kurdish students and intellectuals had cooperated with the radical left in the form of Turkish youth organizations, unions and political parties (Özcan, 2006). The new degree of freedom encouraged Kurdish organic intellectuals to fight for the cultural, political and linguistic rights of Kurds (Gunes, 2013). However, towards the end of the 1960s, the radicalization of the Kurdish socialist and demands for self-determination on the part of the Kurds caused a division between the Turkish and Kurdish left, endangering the unity that had existed hitherto in the form of the Turkish socialist party, the TİP. The Turkish socialists did not prioritize the Kurdish question. They condescended towards Kurdish activists. They tended to ignore Kurdish demands for cultural rights and self-determination. For instance, left-wing Turkish intellectuals and journalists, such as Ugur Mumcu, labelled the Kurdish demands as racism and as the chauvinism of a minority (Beşikçi, 1991).

The Easterner Revolutionary Cultural Centres (DDKO), effective Kurdish socialist groups, separated from the TİP to lead the Kurdish movement in 1969. The DDKO agitated for Kurdish cultural rights and organized conferences on the economic underdevelopment of the Kurdish region. However, after the military coup in 1971, the liberal landscape of political opportunities shrunk and the DDKO

became one of the groups to be outlawed. Even though radical Kurdish groups criticized the DDKO by claiming that it ‘was too timid in its veiled calls for Kurdish cultural rights’ (Marcus, 2007:34), the DDKO remained a strong indication of and aspiration for forthcoming Kurdish radicalism (White, 2000).

While the political groups were suppressed harshly in the 1971 coup, the conflict between right and left-wing groups reignited when the army left the government to the civilians. This conflict between the left and the right had many causalities, especially from the mid ‘70s onwards. In this chaotic political atmosphere, Kurdish political groups began to fragment. For instance, some of them changed their orientation from socialism to Kurdish nationalism and hence started to frame the Kurdish cause as an anti-colonial struggle. The proliferation of new radical Kurdish movements, each with its own proposed answer to the Kurdish question, led to a polarization of Kurdish organizations. Nezan (1980) notes that during that period, Turkish Kurdistan was perceived as a colony and the Kurds wanted to liberate themselves from the Turkish suppression. In the same way, Kurdish intellectuals and organizations started to discuss concepts such as national liberation, oppression, and colonial exploitation, while sympathizing with Algerian, Vietnamese, Palestinian and other national liberation movements fighting against imperial states that exploited them.

Furthermore, the political scene of the 1970s led to the formation of many Kurdish radical groups that did consider that the Kurdish region was an inter-state colony. Many of these movements did not manage to survive; their cadres were killed or fled to Europe, due to state’s oppression both before and after the military coup in 1980. However, one of those organizations, nationalist and socialist Ankara

Democratic Higher Education Association (ADYÖD) grew quickly during the 1970s (Gunes, 2013; Marcus, 2007; Özcan, 2006). Rather than fleeing to Europe, in 1975 the ADYÖD moved its cadres to the Kurdish region in order to organize the Kurds and recruit new members from oppressed Kurdish classes. The group gained popularity and using violence against feudal and other Kurdish groups, in an attempt to dominate the region. It was famously known as ‘Apocular’, meaning the followers of Abdullah Öcalan (nicknamed ‘Apo’). On 27 November 1978 the group changed its name and declared the formation of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in the Kurdish city, Urfa, to establish Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan. The PKK has become the articulation of militarist-nationalist Kurdish movement that continues to exist until the present day as a transnational rebel group in the Middle East.

2.2.2 The ideology and objectives of the PKK

Unlike other Kurdish political groups, the PKK, as an armed group, managed to survive until the present because it has acted pragmatically to change and update its goals and ideology according to the political change in the world. Inspired by the intellectual atmosphere of the 1970s, the PKK argued that Kurdistan was occupied by colonial powers that massacred its people and misappropriated its natural resources. According to the PKK, the state and Turkish bourgeoisie collaborated with Kurdish feudal lords to steal the natural resources of the Kurdish region in order to satisfy the needs of colonizers (Gunes, 2013; Orhan, 2016). As explained in chapter 1, the state did not invest in the Kurdish region apart from building few industrial complexes that shipped raw materials to the western part of Turkey (Beşikçi, 1991; Nezan, 1980). The PKK took this exploitation of Kurdish land by the state as another reason – alongside the oppression, violence and massacres (on all of which see chapter 1) – as another reason to fight the state. For Öcalan, the

leader of the PKK, the only solution was an armed socialist struggle against a Turkish colonization that coupled imperialism with capitalism (Marcus, 2007). Accordingly, Marxist PKK advocated armed struggle as the only route to victory and to national liberation for the Kurds.

The ideology and objectives of the PKK were to a great extent a reaction to the Turkish state's oppressive policies towards the Kurds but were inspired also by the intellectual atmosphere of the 1970s. The strict ideology promulgated by the state caused an emergence of an 'official, monolithic, absolute Turkish identity' that was created by either suppressing or ignoring multiple identities' (Kadioğlu, 1996:192). The Kurds, particularly peasants and lower classes, had faced overwhelming racism and intolerance under these strict policies of the state and its collaborators, Kurdish landlords and sheikhs. In this hostile environment, the PKK seized its opportunity: it recruited its cadres from lower classes in cities and in the countryside; and it spread its operations to neighbouring countries (Özcan, 2006). Yet, the PKK's first cadre consisted of the nationalist students and the members of the youth organizations. The state's policies of suppressing and silencing Kurds allowed the PKK to mobilize the Kurds under the banner of the right of self-determination. Under these circumstances, the PKK offered the vision of an independent socialist Kurdistan led by the working-class, a vision that went beyond sectarian, tribal and religious politics (J. Jongerden, 2015; Marcus, 2007; Romano, 2006). Consequently, the PKK adopted a discourse that that promised – and continues to promise – an independent, socialist Kurdistan. As a result, the PKK did manage to mobilize many Kurds and to ignite one of the most significant revolts in the history of the Kurds and of the Middle East. Yet, depending on the geopolitical

conditions and the PKK's varying ability to read them, the PKK's demand came to shift from independence to democratic autonomy in recent years (Gunes 2018).

2.2.3 The war between the PKK and the Turkish state

Before waging a war against the government of Turkey in 1984, the PKK had first targeted what it had considered as its rivals, the state-backed Kurdish landlords (*aghas*) and tribal leaders in the Kurdish region in 1978-1980. It did so in order to monopolize the Kurdish resistance and become the only Kurdish actor. The PKK accused Kurdish tribes, particularly the 'Suleymanlar' and 'Bucak' tribes, of being collaborators with the state and intense conflict between the two sides had caused high casualties. The PKK consolidated its hegemony by waging a war on the landlords. Those landlords had considerable power over Kurds, because the landlords had close relations with the state and with extreme rightist parties (Marcus, 2007). When the PKK decisively targeted the landowners that abused the Kurdish lower classes, the Kurds support the PKK significantly by joining its ranks (McDowall, 2004; Özcan, 2006; Romano, 2006). While the PKK was flourishing in the Kurdish region towards the end of the 1970s, Turkey was experiencing political and economic instability due to the violent clashes between left-wing and right-wing groups. The army aggravated the political unrest and led another military coup on 12 September 1980. The new military regime terrorized the society with executions, torture and the imprisonment under martial law. Before the 1980 military coup, the main PKK cadres managed to slip into Syria where they received support from the Syrian government. As a result, the PKK could train its soldiers and escape the military junta's repression. However: after the military coup, the state imprisoned and tortured thousands of Kurdish political activists (including some followers of the PKK). For that reason, the Diyarbakir Prison became infamous. In the

Diyarbakir Prison, some PKK members held out against the torture, some were executed by the state, some committed suicide by self-immolation, the latter acts intended to draw attention to the injustice (Gunes, 2013; Marcus, 2007). The state executions of the Kurdish civilians, as well as political activists in prisons, led to strong Kurdish public support for the PKK. As Ramazan Aras (2014:72) notes, ‘the PKK was born out of the trauma and suffering of inmates at the Amed/Diyarbakir prison.’

During the military junta regime (1980-1983) thousands of people were arrested, tortured, stripped of citizenship⁸ and Kurds in particular were targeted and convicted on terrorism charges. Beside suppressing Kurdish activists, the state officially banned the use of the Kurdish language with Law No. 2932 in 1983 (Uçarlar, 2009). Afterwards, denouncing the state policies, for the first time the PKK attacked the Turkish army and killed eleven members of the state forces in August 1984 (Marcus, 2007; Özcan, 2006). The PKK used hit-and-run guerrilla tactics in order to intensify its war against the state and against feudal leaders. The Turkish government responded with harsh counter-insurgency methods that endangered the lives of civilians. Ordinary Kurdish citizens were perceived as potential ‘terrorist sympathizers’ by the state and there were grave human rights abuses in the Kurdish inhabited regions. In 1985 the state passed a new law to recruit and arm Kurdish villagers. These villagers were called ‘village guards’ and they fought the PKK. This village guard system was inspired by the Kurdish Hamidiye cavalry that was

⁸ See, the military indictment after the coup in details: Online at <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/12-eylul-iddianamesinin-tam-metni-19651524>. Accessed 07.04.2016.

founded in 1890 by the Ottoman in order to suppress the Armenians.⁹ Like the Hamidiye cavalry, the tribes who chose to be a part of the village guard system started to abuse, dispossess and dislocate other, rival Kurdish tribes and other minorities, namely Alevies, Yezidies and Assyrians. According to the report of the Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (GÖÇ-DER) (2013), the number of village guards was 71,000 in 2009 and the report states that the village guards violated human rights: they are implicated in hundreds of unsolved murders, rapes, arson attacks, smugglings and many other illegal activities in Turkish Kurdistan. Despite subsequent political changes, the village guard system persists into the present day and continues to commit abuses. However, not every tribe or group volunteered to be part of a system that abused their neighbours. The state pressured the Kurdish villages to be part of the village guard system while the PKK insisted that they should reject the state offer. When some tribes and villagers rejected the system, they faced state violence. On the other hand, when they did accept the offer (perhaps feeling that they had little choice), the PKK declared them traitors and attacked them, killing many (Marcus, 2007). The PKK defined its struggle with the narrative of resistance against the colonialism and underdevelopment. In a manner quite opposed to this narrative, the state discourse defined the Kurdish political activists as separatist, traitors and as pawns of the imperialism. In this period, the state produced the official discourse through

⁹ Hamidiye Cavalry found by the ottomans in 1890 to recruit the Kurds to fight against Armenians and Arabs while keeping the borders safe from any attacks. For more information, see, Janet Klein (2011) *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*.

practices of violence (torture, displacement and killing) along with discriminatory political and economic policies against the Kurds.

Moreover, despite some failed attempts at negotiation, the PKK and its offshoots carried out its own operations in the Kurdish region against the state until 1999 when Öcalan was captured. Human rights organizations and reports by the Turkish state assert that attacks by the PKK against civilians the families of village guards caused hundreds of deaths. The PKK claims the most of the attacks against civilians were by state's death squads (Gunes, 2013; Phillips, 2015). As explained throughout this thesis, in pursuit of its goal of destroying the PKK and its sympathisers, the state made use of clandestine, deep-state organisations such as the JITEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Anti-Terror), which was involved in thousands of extrajudicial killings of Kurdish politicians and civilians during the 1990s (Aras, 2014; Marcus, 2007; Söyler, 2013, 2015). However, the state denied the very existence of these organisations. The state used intimidation measures such as special paramilitary units to spread fear and create paranoia among the Kurdish society. All of this was intended to crush Kurdish identity and to restore order and the state's territorial integrity (Gourlay, 2018).

Moreover, the declaration of OHAL (in English: Governorship of the Region under Emergency Rule) in 1987 led to the Kurdish region being administered under martial law. In the 1990s and under that regime the state continued to intimidate, criminalise and execute civilians, on the pretext of combatting terrorism. According to the Human Rights Watch report (1993), the state operations caused torture, long-

term imprisonment and deaths of thousands.¹⁰ The state-backed death squads killed more than 1,500 Kurdish political activists and caused disappearance of hundreds of Kurdish civilians between 1989 and 1996 (Phillips, 2015).

Alongside the suppression aimed at isolating the PKK, the state started a forced displacement policy evacuated Kurdish villages then burned them down more than 3000 villages (Geerse, 2010; Jongerden, 2018; Protner, 2018, Aras 2014). The villagers had to move into large cities and formed new ghettos, which further complicated the Kurdish question. The forced displacement of three to three-and-a-half million Kurds (Phillips, 2015) created a high rate of unemployment, economic problems and housing issues. In cities such as Diyarbakir, the population doubled after the village evacuations. The evacuation and mass displacement of the population transformed the Kurdish region into a purely military zone. Rather than eliminating the PKK, all these policies resulted in the radicalization of a Kurdish youth that cannot integrate in cities and suffered from unemployment, poverty and racism. The Kurdish youth began to organize themselves around their ethnic identity because of discrimination they faced in these cities. The state's counter-insurgency measures failed and in addition, have traumatized younger generation and made them even more hostile towards the state. In similarly counter-productive fashion, the state's policies made Turks hostile towards Kurds, by presenting the latter for the former as criminals.

¹⁰ For human rights violations the report provided more details: Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Watch (1993) '*The Kurds of Turkey: Killings, Disappearances and Torture*'. Washington DC. Human Rights Watch Press.

2.3 Political invention alongside armed struggle: the 1990s

The Turkish state's official discourse had denied Kurdish identity and framed the Kurds struggle as tribalism, banditry and a result of regional backwardness. The state continuously used violence, suppression and assimilation as its means of solving the Kurdish question (Bozarslan, 2014; Ünver, 2015). However, Kurdish mass mobilization and the high cost of the war forced the state to recognize the existence of a Kurdish question. Accordingly, at the beginning of the 1990s, the state made a radical shift on the Kurdish question; it moved from a strategy of denial to a strategy of recognition (Yeğen, 2011). During the 1990s, and alongside the PKK, socialist Kurdish political groups began to grow and mobilize the Kurds. Due to Turkey's ten percent election threshold, the Kurdish political parties cooperated with the Turkish political parties in order to enter the Turkish parliament. The first legal Kurdish party of this period, the People's Labour Party (HEP), was founded in 1990 by Kurdish intellectuals and politicians seeking a political solution for the Kurdish question. The PKK initially was not supportive of the HEP but then allowed them to organize in the Kurdish region. Soon afterwards the party received much attention from Kurdish students and Kurdish activists and became the main political front in Kurdish resistance (Marcus, 2007). One year after the founding of the HEP, it allied itself with the leftist Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) in the national election of 1991 and won eighteen seats in the parliament. Although the party was soon banned, for a while the Kurds were able, legally, to mobilize and organise for a political resistance. The formation of the HEP, support from the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, the emergence of pro-Kurdish media- in the form of the weekly *Ülke* (*The Country*), the daily *Özgür Gündem* (*Free Agenda*) and the 'Med TV' television station – all this strengthened Kurdish political mobilization (Yeğen, 2016).

Meanwhile, Turkish politics was moved slightly in the Kurds' direction when in 1991 the liberal president, Turgut Ozal, lifted the ban on speaking Kurdish in public and even mooted a general amnesty for the PKK. In the same period, Prime Minister S. Demirel announced that Turkey acknowledged the 'Kurdish reality'. The PKK was also going through a transition in the 1990s, in that it by moderating its call for an independent socialist state (Marcus, 2007; Özcan, 2006). The demise of the Soviet Union led the PKK to revise its strict Marxist politics and start to seek a political method of resolution. In the early months of 1993, the PKK announced a unilateral ceasefire. Nevertheless, the unexpected death of President Ozal in April and the executions of thirty-three unarmed soldiers by the PKK during at a roadblock in Bingöl ended the ceasefire in 1993 (Gunes, 2013). The subsequent government of Tansu Ciller was militaristic and the war intensified, with over 3000 battle-related deaths in a year, the highest annual casualty figure in the history of the Kurdish conflict. The state increased counterinsurgency measures such as extrajudicial killings. Although the PKK declared another unilateral ceasefire in 1995 it was not reciprocated and hence did not last long. During the mid-1990s the state was relying on military measures and the paramilitary organization JITEM, which was backed by a clandestine coalition of the right-wing and nationalist mafia.¹¹ Upon the requests of Kurdish public and of human rights organizations, three years later the PKK announced another unilateral ceasefire on World Peace Day in 1998. But once again this initiation failed because the state continued with

¹¹ Turkish historian Ayşe Hür sheds more light on JITEM and its executions during 1990s: see Hür A., 23,08,2015, Devletin karanlık yüzü: JİTEM/ The Dark Side of the State: JITEM, Online at <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/ayse-hur/devletin-karanlik-yuzu-jitem-1420112/>. Accessed: 01.03.2016.

military methods and imprisoned the leader of the PKK, Öcalan, via a plot in 1999 (Orhan, 2016; Özcan, 2006).

The establishment of HEP in the 1990s was highly important because for the first time Kurdish cultural and identity rights were discussed in the parliament. However, the antagonism and hostility of the system to the first legal Kurdish party resulted in the imprisonment of HEP's deputies and forced the closure of the party (Watts, 2006). The Kurdish politicians had established another party, the DEP (the Democratic Party) too, but soon state intolerance did away with party too. The Kurdish political parties were banned, and MPs were imprisoned by the state because of alleged connections with the 'separatist' PKK. Besides the closures, the state's death squads, such as JITEM, killed 50 members of DEP and HEP, including high-ranking cadre leaders such as Vedat Aydin, between 1991 and 1994 (Gunes, 2013). The criminalization and exclusion of Kurdish politics continued with the consecutive closing down of Kurdish parties such as HADEP (the People's Democratic Party) and DEHAP (the Democratic People's Party),¹² as will be explained later in section 2.5.

On the other hand, the politicization and consolidation of the Kurdish movement continued to increase in Turkey and, also, in Europe – where the Kurdish diaspora made the struggle international. In Turkey and Europe alike, Kurdish music, culture and language have become a political discourse of resistance and of

¹² The state closed down numerous parties because of defending Kurdish politicians.

Detailed list of Kurdish parties and their members' executions provided summary: Online at <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/117387-1990dan-bugune-hepten-dtpye-kurtlerin-zorlu-siyaset-mucadelesi>. Accessed: 01.03.2016.

the revival of Kurdish identity (Demir, 2017; Uçarlar, 2009). Kurdish media outlets, in the diaspora and in Turkey, began to report more accurately about the conflict and thereby destabilized the state's presentation of events (Ayata, 2011; Coban, 2013; Keles, 2015). Kurdish newspapers such as the *Azadiya Welat* (Freedom for the Homeland) created national consciousness of the Kurds and transformed Kurdishness into, as Anderson (2006) would phrase it, an 'imagined community'. The politicization of the Kurds continued over the course of 1990s in order to have a non-violent solution to the Kurdish question. However, the state had taken suppressive, violent measures against the Kurdish political actors and intellectuals. For instance, the state's clandestine organization JITEM assassinated the leading Kurdish journalist and intellectual Musa Anter in 1992. Now I move on to discuss the fate of the Kurdish movement after the imprisonment of the PKK leader, Öcalan, in 1999.

2.4 The imprisonment of Öcalan and its aftermath

2.4.1 The capture of Öcalan

The imprisonment of Öcalan marked a turning point in the history of Kurdish conflict. It transformed the PKK's discourse, aims and ideology. Turkey threatened the Syrian government not to shelter Öcalan, who had been living in Syria over two decades. Unlike the Turkish government's previous threats and blackmails, this time Turkey issued a serious ultimatum threatening Syria with war and Syria had to expel Öcalan in 1998 (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011). After leaving Syria, Öcalan went to Russia and then, in order to declare a ceasefire and to work upon a democratic solution to the Kurdish question, to Italy (White, 2000). At that time, there was significant support for Öcalan across Europe, due to lobbying by the Kurdish

diaspora for Öcalan and to Turkey's bad relations with its neighbouring countries. As Amberin Zaman from the *Voice of America* reported, the Italian media, especially, 'Lionized Öcalan as a freedom fighter' (White, 2000:182). However, even if there was a positive image of Öcalan in Italy, Italy forced Öcalan to leave the country because the US and NATO, as allies of Turkey, put pressure on Italy not to accept Öcalan's asylum application (Gunes, 2013; Gunter, 2000; McDowall, 2004; Özcan, 2006). After his asylum request was rejected by other European countries including Holland and Switzerland, Öcalan had to fly to Nairobi, Kenya where he was captured and handed to the Turkish intelligence service with the help of CIA on 15 February 1999 (Gunes, 2013; Marcus, 2007; McDowall, 2004). The US supported Turkey in capturing the leader of the PKK in order to have access to Turkey military bases for the forthcoming invasion of Iraq (Gunter, 2000).

When returned to Turkey, Öcalan was put in trial and he faced indictments of treason and was accused of being responsible for the death of thousands of people. He was sentenced to death but Turkey commuted this to a life sentence because of international pressure and the possibility that the conflict could turn into a large-scale civil war (Gunter, 2000; Romano, 2002). After the 1999 court judgement, decision in 1999, Öcalan was put into solitary confinement on İmarali Island in the Marmara Sea. There he started to re-evaluate the ideology of the PKK, away from the goal of an Kurdistan and towards democratic autonomy (Yegen, 2016). During the trial, Öcalan had stated that he would like to work for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit, announced that the state might reconsider its politics towards Kurds if the PKK would lay down its arms (Gunter, 2000). These statements Ecevit signalled upcoming changes regarding the position of both the state and PKK on the Kurdish question.

Meanwhile, Turkey expected that the imprisonment of Öcalan would finish the PKK by demoralizing its members and consequently leading them to surrender to the state. Yet, the PKK reaffirmed their loyalty to Öcalan. At the same time, Kurds around the world organized mass protests to condemn Öcalan's capture of by Turkey and the cooperation of other states in that capture. A prominent scholar of the Kurdish Conflict, Aliza Marcus, argues that, 'Öcalan in captivity became a symbol of the Kurdish nation—oppressed, imprisoned, used, and then discarded by nations with other interests at heart' (2007:280). During 1999 Kurdish mass demonstrations against his capture did take place all over Europe and also in North America as well as in Turkey. The demonstrations turned violent in many places. For instance, three Kurds were shot dead when the Kurds marched to the Israeli Embassy in Germany to protest the role of Israel in capturing Öcalan (Gunes, 2013). Protesting the plot against Öcalan, 75 self-immolation cases occurred between October 1998 and February 1999 but later Öcalan himself asked the Kurds to calm down and to practice non-violent protest (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011; Marcus, 2007; White, 2000). We see that the capture of Öcalan was a traumatic experience for the PKK but that it was not able to eradicate the PKK or the Öcalan's authority over the Kurdish movement. On the contrary, Kurds mobilised around Öcalan's imprisonment, and his situation created conditions in which Öcalan could revise his ideology and develop the idea of democratic autonomy for the Kurds, which in turn would allow for a peaceful solution negotiated with the state.

2.4.2 The change in the PKK's discourse and structure

After Öcalan left Syria in 1998, the PKK went through a radical change in its politics and discourse. The direction of these shifts was indicated by Öcalan in 1998 when he declared the unilateral ceasefire in 1998. Öcalan argued that he, as the

chairman of the PKK, had moved to Europe in 1999 to advocate a democratic solution for the Kurdish question – in contrast to the state's persistence in military, violent methods (Öcalan, 2009). The following demands, proposed by Öcalan in 1998, detail the PKK's ideological transition:

the end of (Turkish) military operations against Kurdish villages; the return of forcibly displaced Kurdish refugees to their villages; the abolition of the 'village guard system'; autonomy for the Kurdish region within Turkey's existing borders; the granting to the Kurdish people of all democratic rights enjoyed by Turks; official recognition of Kurdish identity, language and culture; and freedom of religion and pluralism. (Romano, 2006:145-6)

The demands show clearly that the PKK was positioning itself as a non-separatist movement by giving up the dream of an independent state. In 1999 months after the capture of Öcalan, the PKK declared another unilateral ceasefire, upon the request of Öcalan, that lasted for five years. Following the ceasefire, the PKK withdrew to Iraqi Kurdistan and sent some of its guerrillas, who laid down the arms, to Turkey in order to show the PKK's support for a negotiated, peaceful solution (Orhan, 2016; Romano, 2006). Moreover, Öcalan had developed new politics and concepts to change the trajectory of Kurdish struggle towards not just regional autonomy but a radically democratic society. He proposed 'Democratic Confederalism'¹³ as a radical rethinking of democracy that could answer the Kurdish question (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011; Ocalan, 2011; Yegen, 2016). According to Öcalan, achieving democratic confederalism means a democratic struggle for the coexistence of ethnic and religious groups with equal cultural, political, and educational rights, and equal

¹³ For more information about the concept of democratic confederalism, see Ocalan A (2011) *Democratic Confederalism*. London. Transmedia Publishing Ltd.

representation. Inspired by the ideas of American anarchist and libertarian socialist Murray Bookchin, democratic confederalism is about: the co-existence of different groups; a non-national society without borders; equal participation of different individual and genders in administration; and grass-roots democracy (Ocalan, 2011). According to Öcalan, this model is the most feasible model for governing ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse groups in Turkey and the Middle East.

The PKK changed in line with Öcalan's ideological evolution. It expanded its organizational structure by establishing sister parties in different countries in the Middle East under different names and with different missions, those missions having to do not only with Turkey but also with Turkey's neighbours Syria, Iraq and Iran. For instance, the PKK founded People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria to fight against Islamic State as well as for Kurdish rights. In 2002, the PKK established KADEK,¹⁴ which later replaced it with Kongra-Gel,¹⁵ in order to internalize the democracy and decentralize the Kurdish movement via the participation of more civilians and politicians in decision-making processes (Gunes, 2013). The evolution of the PKK continued with the establishment of a political unit, the KKK/KCK, and military unit, the HPG, to put democratic confederalism into practice.¹⁶ All of these small units of the PKK aimed to fight for the Kurdish rights in different places and at different ways. Meanwhile, the PKK established a female unit of guerrilla forces, the YJA- STAR, in an attempt to achieve gender equality in

¹⁴ 'KADEK' stands for The Congress for Democracy and Freedom in Kurdistan.

¹⁵ Kongra-Gel: People's Congress of Kurdistan.

¹⁶ KKK: The Council of Association of Kurdistan). Later, the KKK was replaced by the KCK: The Council of Communities of Kurdistan/ Democratic Communities of Kurdistan.

both administration and military roles.¹⁷ All of these various groups, each with a specific mission, try to reshape Kurdish society in accordance with democratic confederalism, which resembles radical democracy (Tekdemir, 2016; Tezcür, 2010; Yegen, 2016). Meanwhile, the continuing conflict between the state and PKK has had traumatic and deadly consequences for both Turks and Kurds. Regardless of numerous bilateral ceasefires and the peace process, the death toll has risen to 50,000 people along with millions of displaced people since 1984 (Tas, 2016). This high humanitarian and economic cost would soon lead to a development, the peace talks, as discussed in section 2.6. Now I turn to the emergence of recent Kurdish political parties, which I discussed throughout the thesis.

2.5 An account of recent Kurdish political parties¹⁸

The formation of Kurdish political parties, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, aimed to open a political space within which a non-violent Kurdish opposition could challenge the state's discourses and systematic imprisonment, torture and executions. As discussed before, Kurdish political parties such as HEP and DEP were closed by the state and their members were arrested, tortured and persecuted by the state (ŞUR, 2016; Watts, 2006). The Kurdish political parties of the time shared the same fate as their predecessors. After the closure of HEP and DEP, in 1994 the HADEP (People's Democracy Party) was founded to promote Kurdish political demands and cultural rights. The HADEP like the other Kurdish parties could not escape from the ban. Even though the HADEP won thirty-seven

¹⁷ YJA- STAR: Free Women's Units.

¹⁸ I consider only the active and effective Kurdish political parties because the ones that have emerged recently have no significant support from the Kurds.

municipalities, including six metropolitans, in the local election of 1999, the Constitutional Court shut down the on charges of terrorism. Then, as a survival mechanism, the Kurds adopted a policy of always having a backup political party with a different name. If Turkey bans one, they can use the other one. When the state closed the HADEP, the Kurds activated the backup party, the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP). Both parties had similar demands: democratization and reconciliation; general amnesty for political prisoners; and cultural and political rights allowing a Kurdish identity (Gunes, 2013). However, the Kurdish parties were not able to enter the parliament unless they formed a coalition because of the ten per cent electoral threshold. While the Constitutional Court was considering mounting a political operation against the DEHAP, the party merged with a new party, the Democratic Society Party (DTP), established in 2005. The DTP's leftist program, which had a special emphasis on Kurdish rights and environmental issues, brought victory in the general and local election, in which the DTP secured twenty-two seats in the parliament in 2007 and won 100 municipalities in local elections of 2009. While the Kurdish political movements were growing stronger, the conflict between the state and PKK was intensifying: politicians of neither side were able to stop the war. The conflict increased Turkish nationalism and triggered the state's decision to close down the DTP and bar several Kurdish MPs from politics (Kirişçi, 2011).

Furthermore, before the DTP was outlawed, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was founded in 2008, which changed its name as the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) in 2014. The DBP aimed to mainly focus on Kurdish region. The DBP received the support of most of the Kurds and won 101 municipalities in a local election in 2014. Meanwhile, in line with Öcalan's vision of democratic Turkey, another Kurdish party, the People's Democratic Party (HDP), was founded in 2012.

While the BDP seeks to put democratic autonomy into practice in Kurdish region, the HDP aims to democratize all regions of Turkey. Besides advocating the recognition of Kurdish identity and being the representative of radical democracy in Turkey, the HDP fights for democratization and decentralization of power in Turkey (Çiçek, 2017; Tekdemir, 2016). Running on a platform of radical democracy, the HDP passed the 10 percent electoral threshold with 13.1% of the vote and won 80 representatives in the parliament not only from Kurdish region but also the Western part of Turkey in general election in June 2015. The HDP embraced the inclusiveness of radical democracy by having MPs from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds: Armenians, Assyrians, and Arabs. Moreover, the HDP has equal gender representation in Turkey. This is because of gender equality policies fielding a man and a woman as candidates for shared city mayorships. The HPD's innovations brought it success, but the success did not last long. Unhappy with the election result and with losing the parliamentary majority, the ruling AKP forced a snap general election on 1 November 2015. In this sudden election, the HDP lost twenty-one of its eighty seats because of political pressure the state brought to bear and because the state intimidated and imprisoned Kurdish politicians. After the peace process had ended earlier in 2015, the pressure upon the HDP and upon its sister party the DBP had mounted (as explained in chapter 7). After the long negotiation between the Kurds and the Turks, the state reverted to its traditional violent and oppressive measures against the Kurdish politicians: it imprisoned the MPs of the HDP, including those who had been the party's co-chairs since 2016, and it replaced almost all Kurdish mayors with its own placemen (trustees).

Apart from challenging the state's policies towards the Kurds, the HDP was proposing a highly democratic party programme of recognising the rights of other

ethnic and religious minorities as well as the rights of LGBT community. In this way, the HDP challenged the gendered discourse of the state, which can be summarised as one state, one nation, one flag and lastly one gender (Burç, 2018). Lastly, the Kurdish parties that are active today, namely the DBP and HDP, propose the democratic autonomy, referring to an alternative governance to the centralist and authoritarian nation-state (Leezenberg, 2016), as a political mean to end the war.¹⁹ I briefly introduced the main Kurdish political parties as I discussed them also throughout the thesis. Now, I am going to discuss the peace process as the rupture point in the state discourse.

2.6 The frozen peace process²⁰

In this section, I will provide a brief account of the peace process. (My main account of it is in chapter 7.) In this period during which the peace talks were taking place, namely 2009 to 2015, the Turkish political arena experienced a shift to do with democracy, human rights and recognition of Kurdish identity. The process of the accession of Turkey to the European Union (EU) started in 1999 and this change forced the state to develop a diplomatic approach towards the Kurdish question. In

¹⁹ HDP cadres are mainly Kurdish and Turkish socialists. They aim to solve not only Kurdish question but to bring solutions for political and economic problems of Turkey. For more information, see HDP party program online at <http://www.hdp.org.tr/parti/parti-programi/8>. Accessed 10.04.2016.

²⁰ The ‘frozen peace process’ refers to Erdogan’s speech in which he declared he put the “‘democratic initiative’ [the peace process] in the fridge” online at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-we-instructed-governors-not-to-carry-out-military-operations-amid-pkk-dialogue.aspx?pageID=238&nID=88617&NewsCatID=338> accessed 10.04.2016.

the hope of gaining full membership of the EU, the state adopted the ‘harmonization packages’ proposed by the EU. The intent of those ‘packages’ was to accelerate the democratization of the country in certain areas such as human rights, the rights of minorities, and linguistic freedom in broadcasting (Kısacık, 2014).

Meanwhile, the AKP (the Justice and Development Party) came to power in 2002 and started to rule the country as a conservative Islamist party. A speech at Diyarbakir in 2005 by the Prime Minister and leader of the AKP, Erdogan, paved the way for the peace process (Köse, 2017). The Kemalist state establishment had been hostile towards the Kurds and towards devout Muslim Turks. This establishment held power with the support of the Kemalist Turkish army. However, once the AKP came to power, it started to embrace the idea of EU membership and the meeting of democratic criteria of the EU, in order to get rid of the hegemony of Kemalists and the army. By winning many elections the AKP managed to suppress the Kemalists and also to a great extent the army. Additionally, the AKP continued to welcome the EU’s reform packages. Those packages required the following measures in support of the rights of minorities: lifting the state of emergency (OHAL) that had obtained in the Kurdish region since 2002; providing a legal basis for using Kurdish in private education; and authorizing the use of languages other than Turkish in broadcasts. This latter measure led to the establishment in 2009 of the state-sponsored Kurdish channel TRT6/TRT KURDI (Aslan, 2015; Bahceli & Noel, 2011; Kısacık, 2014; Yeğen, 2015). During the first few years of the AKP, the government had adopted a notably liberal, moderate discourse towards the Kurds. In 2005 Prime Minister Erdogan stated that: ‘the PKK problem’ (as he termed it) could not be solved by military methods, that Turkey will face its past mistakes, and that ‘we’ would not

retreat from the democratization process (Phillips, 2015:130). This signalled a forthcoming change in Turkish politics.

Moreover, Ünver (2010) argues that the AKP declared the ‘Kurdish opening’ (the peace process) in order to pursue the EU membership and get Kurdish votes despite the AKP had the fear of losing votes of Turkish nationalists. We should remember that the state named the peace process ‘the Kurdish opening’ but later changed this name a few times so as to avoid criticism from the nationalists. (See my chapter 7 for details.). The Interior Minister, Besir Atalay, declared the Kurdish opening to solve Kurdish question on July 31, 2009. In 2009 the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and the PKK held numerous secret meetings with each other in Oslo. The head of MIT, Hakan Fidan stated that there was an agreement to negotiate the conflict resolution with political means in Oslo meetings but the leaking of the records of the Oslo talks hindered progress (Kadioğlu, 2018). On the other hand: the heavy economic and humanitarian burden of the conflict, the AKP’s ambition for more power and for Kurdish votes, and Kurdish resistance – all this pushed the government to continue negotiating with the Kurds. Therefore, the government allowed a group of Kurdish MPs to meet Öcalan on Imrali Island so as to discuss a political solution of the Kurdish question. The turning point was in 2013, when the government officially declared the peace talks with the PKK. On 21 March and in celebration of the Kurdish spring festival (called ‘Newroz’) that was taking place in Diyarbakir, a letter from Öcalan announced that the government was entering a truce. For its part, and at Öcalan’s request, the PKK announced a ceasefire and started withdrawing from Turkey.

Despite various challenges, some major and some minor, the peace process continued until the middle of 2015. During the peace talks, the state made some large mistakes such as the closure of the Kurdish DTP party, the killing of 34 Kurdish villages in the Roboski massacre and the execution of tens of Kurdish civilians in the Kobane protests in 2014. (All of this was, discussed in chapter 5 and 6.). In the same period the PKK carried out attacks against the state and tried to govern the Kurdish region as if the state did not exist. The AKP and state, the HDP, PKK and Öcalan have become the main actors of the peace talks yet they failed to carry out the peace project. Even though there were some changes in favour of the Kurds, the state's discriminatory policies continued during the peace talks because the government continued the ban upon education in the mother tongue (Kurdish) and did not abolish the paramilitary village guard system. Furthermore, the state refused to take responsibility for its past crimes and for recent atrocities against the Kurds (Arakon, 2015; Çelikkan, 2015; Kentel, 2015). For instance, the government took stern measures and used the discourse of security and terrorism against the Kurdish protestors in 2014 (Algan, 2019; Arsan, 2014; Gurses, 2018; İnceoğlu, 2015; Martin, 2018; Rumelili & Çelik, 2017). Both sides contributed to strategic mistakes that caused the peace process to fail. The PKK monopolized the peace process on the Kurdish side and reduced the HDP's rôle in peace-making. Meanwhile, the AKP jailed 7,000 Kurdish politicians and activists on terrorism charges (Aslan, 2015). The latter point suggests that the government was aiming at marginalising pro-Kurdish politics in Turkey and at disarming the PKK as much as it aimed at a conclusive peace (Bezci, 2015; Çiçek, 2017; Kurt, 2018; Tekdemir, 2016). When the AKP started to lose power and began to consider the Kurdish autonomy in Syria as a threat to state integrity, it ended the peace process – on the

pretext of the suspicious deaths of two police officers in the Kurdish town of Ceylanpinar in 2015. And in the following years, the government continued its policies of suppression by criminalizing and imprisoning the very Kurds who had spent six years negotiating the peace.²¹ I will discuss the peace process in more detail in chapter 7.

2.7 Conclusion to the chapter

Kurdish nationalism revived itself and divided into political movements and an armed struggle after the 1980s. The heritage of the socialist youth organizations of the 1960s and 1970s had a great impact upon the Kurdish political movements and the armed struggle. In 1984 the Marxist-Leninist PKK mobilized the Kurds and launched a war against the state in pursuit of an independent Kurdistan. The state's longstanding violence and coercion against the Kurds led Kurds to gather around the PKK. Notwithstanding the occasional ceasefires and the recent peace talks, this decades-long conflict has resulted in deaths of 50,000 people and the mass displacement and traumatization of millions of people in Turkey. The state defined the Kurdish political movements and the PKK as separatist, traitors and threats to the integrity of the state, whereas these actors designated the state as colonial and backward. Since 1984, the PKK and PKK-backed Kurdish political movements have formed the body of Kurdish struggle. In the meantime, Kurdish culture, music and languages flourished and transformed the Kurdish masses into active political agencies. These developments contributed to the construction of Kurdishness and

²¹ As the scope the thesis is 2009 until 2015, I do not cover events from 2015 onwards.

accelerated the nation-building process of the Kurds towards an imagined community.

At the same time, as legal Kurdish political parties emerged in the 1990s, the PKK revised its ideology and proposed a Kurdish autonomy by announcing ceasefires. The PKK and Kurdish political movements shifted their discourse when the state imprisoned Öcalan in 1999. Since then the Kurds have demanded the recognition of Kurdish identity and democratic federalism for the Kurds. Although the state closed numerous Kurdish political parties and carried on with oppressive politics, in 2009 the AKP government initiated the peace process and introduced some cultural rights but ended it in 2015 because of changing political dynamics in Turkey, namely, when the government began losing power and considering Kurdish autonomy in Syria a threat to the integrity of Turkey. At that point, in a move reminiscent of the old Kemalist state, the government adopted a discourse of terrorism and security and thereby defined the Kurdish political agencies as separatist terrorists.

3 Ideology, discourse and the Turkish media

This chapter develops the theoretical framework for the thesis. To that end, it considers the meaning, representation and the construction of the Kurdish question in the Turkish context. Ideology is a medium agency to make sense of this world (Eagleton, 1991) it should be discussed in order to understand power relations and their roles in defining identity and subject position of the Kurds in Turkish media. Hegemony and its production of consent and obedience through institutions (Gramsci, 1971) sustains the dominance of ruling groups with moral and intellectual guidance rather than coercion. Both notions afford insight into how the ruling entities, such as the Turkish state, maintain their order of superiority. Another key term, 'discourse' is discussed to comprehend the way the power functions. The notion of discourse develops a holistic view to understand the process of knowledge production through language within a context that shapes meanings and practices for individuals (Foucault, 1969; Purvis & Hunt, 1993). Also, this chapter explains the role of language and representation in constituting discourse. Lastly, it discusses the Turkish media's political economy and its history as well as the biased representation of the Kurdish question by the press.

3.1 What is ideology?

3.1.1 An introduction to ideology

The notion of ideology makes it possible to understand how reality is produced to sustain dominant power relations. Despite various understanding of ideology and ideological theories, I attempt to provide a particular understanding of the concept of ideology in order to understand the construction and representation of

Kurdish image produced by Turkish media. ‘Ideology’ is a contentious term that has multiple definitions. Oxford English Online²² dictionary indicates that the word ‘ideology’, dates back to eighteenth century and means a set of beliefs or ideas shared by a group. Another common meaning of ideology, referring to genealogy of the word, is that it is the science of ideas and thoughts.

Ideology has quite extensive definitions and areas of use as the word used in reference to numerous ideas, discourses and definitions. To understand the common usage of ideology from politics to issues of identity, one must consider different interpretations of the word. Terry Eagleton (1991:1-2) compiles some common definitions of ideology in use as followed at length:

- (a) the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life; [. .]
- (d) false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power; (e) systematically distorted communication; (f) that which offers a position for a subject; (g) forms of thought motivated whereby social interests; [. .] (i) socially necessary illusion; u) the conjuncture of discourse and power; (k) the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world; [. .] (m) the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality; (o) the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure.

All these definitions of ideology are strongly related to political agencies, their identity and expression, regardless of their positive or negative connotations. Ideology is a mediator, between individuals and realities, constructed throughout institutions, imagination and power relations. Thus, ideology has negative and positive senses, particularly in the western Marxist tradition, which provides a framework for this research in investigating Turkish media’s ideology.

²² <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ideology>. Accessed:20.08.2018.

Marx uses 'ideology' in different senses in different periods – as Larrain suggests; at first, Marx defines ideology as 'referring to a kind of distorted thought', then as 'the totality of forms of social consciousness' (Yegen, 1994:17). Both definitions are explaining negative and positive conceptions of ideology. While the positive conception of ideology generates social consciousness, such as creating class consciousness for the working class. The negative one produces, in Marx's famous phrase, the 'false consciousness' that consists in a distorted view of and by the working class. Thus, Marx and orthodox Marxists generally tend to be critical of what the term 'ideology', since they use the word to name something that legitimizes and naturalizes the dominance of a social group.

Furthermore, Hunt & Purvis clarify the negative concept of ideology as 'the notion of misconception, misperception or misrecognition or incomplete knowledge of social reality' (1993:478). It reproduces a form of consciousness or a way of understanding/interpreting the world that is based on unequal social relations. On the other hand, a positive sense of 'ideology' can be used to fight against dominant ideology and produce forms of resistance, such as the forming of class consciousness. In this regard ideology is a negative phenomenon when it produces power relations that favour dominant groups; otherwise, it is something positive that builds a collective consciousness so as to stand up against the oppression of disadvantaged and subordinated groups.

Classical Marxism tends to conceive ideology as an expression and reproduction of power relations. Ideology as classical Marxism conceives it relations reproduces power relations – either openly or in a more hidden manner in order to sustain interests and exploitive politics of dominant groups. Dominant beliefs and

ideas comprise an ideology as a tool to mislead oppressed and lower classes or hide the real relations producing the domination of the lower classes. Marx's text *The German Ideology* (1970) examines material conditions and relations of production, explaining the process of producing thoughts and also ideology. Marx and Engels delineate this point:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has the control at the same time over the means of mental production [. . .] The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. (1970:64).

Scholars widely endorse this negative understanding of ideology. This definition reveals how the ruling ideas are produced for and by powerful groups to construct a dominant ideology as universal reality to be imposed on lower classes. For instance, Turkish nationalist and political elites used the ideas of Mustafa Kemal – ‘Kemalism’ – as a social glue to create a homogenised secular nation (Çetin & Zafer M Cetin, 2004; Demrtaş Bagdonas, 2008; Zürcher, 2017). As the set of ruling ideas, the Kemalist ideology of the state has significantly contributed to the economic, cultural and social capital of Turks but also excluded different religious and ethnic groups such as Kurds. Thus, it has positioned Turks and their ideas as the ruling structure while positioning other persons and other ideas as second-class, as subordinate.

Ideology is a means of communication expressed through language and practices in daily life. All ideologies claimed to be objective and logical

explanations that shed light on fundamental issues such as economy and politics in a public space where everyone disseminates and reproduces ideas for the common good. John B. Thompson in his famous book *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* proposes that ideology allows the circulation and communication only of certain ideas (1984). Moreover, ideology with censoring filters excludes some particular ideas to be part of the public discussion. He postulates more about ideology, as follows: ‘It not only “expresses” but also “represses”, excluding certain issues from the discussion and creating a “public consciousness”’ (Thompson, 1984:85). Moreover, ideological intervention and restrictions of public sphere caused the lack of diversity and reduction of ideas of minorities. The nation-states with their dominant ideologies monopolize the discussions of public issues adopt the narrations that exclude critical approaches and the arguments of less powerful agents and groups. For instance, Turkish state monopolizes the range of discussion of Kurdish question in Turkish media as explained further in this chapter.

Contrary to classic Marxist approaches to ideology, Alvin Gouldner (1976) develops an eclectic perspectives on ideology by claiming that ideologies are not sheer illusion or distortion. Unlike common beliefs about ideology, he claims that ideologies ‘are not merely the false consciousness condemned by their critics nor the emancipated rationality that their adherents like to believe. Rather, ideology is both: false consciousness and rational discourse’ (1976:38). This ‘rational discourse’ is produced mostly through written texts such as newspapers, and ideology is disseminated via a standard structure and linguistic method with modern printing technology. This standardization-oriented character of ideology produces totalitarian ideologies such as nationalism or fascism, and circulates them widely and easily

through unified and standard national education system and media. As Gouldner (1976:100) expresses the idea:

Ideologies serve to mobilize ‘social movements’ within publics through the mediation of newspapers and other media [. . .] News generates ideology-centred social identities which, in turn, are now media-constructed and defined. Thus, social movements in the modern world are both ideology- and news-constructed.

The production of ideology through the press and its ideological effects on mobilising social groups help dominant groups since the means of production, the printing technology, is, to large extent, under the control of the powerful group. For instance, in Turkey, big conglomerates that are allied with the government own most of the press and most of the press technology; thereby they circulate the nationalist ideology and promote the policies of the state.

3.1.2 Althusser and ideological state apparatus

Althusser is concerned to define the notion of ideology and to determine the role it plays in people’s lives. Against claims that ideology is an illusion or false consciousness, Althusser considers ideology as something that shapes people’s ‘lived experience’ and defines it as something tangible that ‘represents individuals’ imaginary relation to their real condition of existence’ (2014:181). ‘Ideological state apparatuses’ (ISAs) such as the family, education, religion, the legal system and the media produce such ideology not by coercion but by consent (Althusser, 2014). The ideological state apparatuses generally produce and represent imaginary pictures of real conditions of production in society in order to prevent lower classes from seeing the true conditions that keep them subordinated. For instance, media generates ‘an

imaginary picture of the real condition of capitalism for their audiences thereby hiding the true nature of their exploitation’(Williams, 2003:148).

Althusser holds further that ISAs produce knowledge and meaning via representational practices to domesticate, discipline and educate individuals, who will take this knowledge for granted as the only truth. For instance, a journalist educated in the standardized nation state educational system of Turkey might not think critically about his discourse and depict the Kurdish protester as the enemy of the state or Syrian refugees as real reason of unemployment and economic crisis in Turkey. Hence, ideology determines personal and collective discourses. In this regard, Stuart Hall defines ideology as ‘the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works’ (Hall & Morley, 1993:496). For instance, and as this chapter will go on to explore, Turkish media used certain nicknames for the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, such as ‘baby-killer’ or ‘Terrorist-in-chief’. This ideological discourse, as I will explain below, prevented the Turks seeing the reality that the Kurdish leader is a key figure in the conflict resolution. Since they refused to negotiate with ‘Kurdish terrorists’ and ‘baby-killers’ the Kurdish question remained unsolved, putting a major burden on Turkey.

According to Althusser, ideologies work to connect individuals to ‘reality’ and turn them into concrete subjects: ‘I would suggest; all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects...’(Althusser, 1971:190). Hence, on this view, ideology functions through subjects produced by ‘hailing’ or ‘interpellation’, which are ideological discourses. In other words, and as Larrarín put it, ‘it is not the

subject produces ideas, but it is rather an ideology that produces (interpellates) the subjects' (in Yegen, 1994:27). It is important to note that when ideology turns individuals into subjects, it really fixes their position and identity within a specific discourse. Therefore, it would not be wrong to assert that ideology through ISAs produces a fixed framework of understanding and representation of certain things, such as production and representation of fixed terms and discourses for unprivileged groups as a working class, black people, Asians and the Kurds.

3.2 Hegemony and the manufacture of consent

The Italian Marxist Antoni Gramsci developed the theory of hegemony. He extends and complicates the concept of ideology while refusing to consider individuals as passive subjects determined by dominant ideology. Gramscian hegemony is something that to win the consent of subordinate classes to legitimize and maintain the existing unequal social order. The hegemony, the dominance of one group over another, functions through political struggle and negotiation to persuaded masses rather than using coercion. Strinati unpacks the ideas as follows. 'Subordinate groups accept the ideas, values and leadership of the dominant group not because they are physically or mentally induced to do so, nor because they [are] ideologically indoctrinated, but because they have reason for their own' (Williams, 2003:150).

The capitalist system is sustained in two ways: first, coercive power (referring to use of violent state institutions and state forces) in moments of crisis, and second, consensual power, whereby individuals voluntarily accept the viewpoint of the dominant group as their own (Gramsci, 1971). To put the idea of hegemonic discourse in another way: the dominant group maintains its dominance not through

coercion but by creating a consensus. Gramsci, at this point, proposes that the civil institutions that comprise the state – institutions such as the aforementioned education, religion, and media – ‘induce consent to the dominant order through establishing the hegemony, or ideological dominance, of a distinctive type of social order’ (Durham & Kellner, 2001: xv). Similarly, hegemonic discourse produces particular knowledge and meaning through language for subordinate groups in order to have intellectual and moral leadership. Communities and states institute the hegemony of males and races via the systematizing of male dominance or the privileging of certain ethnic groups over others (*ibid.*). For instance, largely it is by dint of mainstream media – specifically, by its constant reiteration of the point that capitalism is the best system for everyone – that people acquiesce in rule by small groups.

On the other hand, hegemony must fight continually to sustain its existence; that is, it also generates *resistance*, counter-hegemony. According to Laclau & Mouffe (1985), daily life sees a constant struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony through certain discourse. Since hegemony is spread and produced through discourse, language plays a significant role in identifying, naming or ‘hailing’ individuals, whose positions and identities become flexible and fluid because of counter-hegemonic resistance. For instance, and as I will discuss in chapter 7, during the peace process in Turkey, where the Kurds destabilised the state hegemony, the media in many cases depicted the leader of the PKK as peace-making actor instead of the baby-killer. In this way, hegemony challenges the fixed ideology with hegemonic discourses that are constantly articulated by powerful agencies, groups and institutions. Unlike strict ideologies, hegemonies and counter-hegemonies negotiate within agonistic relations for dominance (Howarth, 2010;

Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Thus, this seems to explain why the media moderated their discourse and policies towards the Kurds during the peace talks.

Furthermore, media, as a civil institution, produces and disseminates hegemonic discourses largely by use of language. The media, as a strong institution strongly associated with nation-states, consequently functions to provide knowledge through discourses that sustain the hegemony of the states. To clarify the point, Gramsci specifies that:

Every state is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. (1992:258)

The media plays a crucial role in producing particular cultural (intellectual) and moral leadership for the sake of hegemony of ruling class and nation-state. Stuart Hall *et al* (2013) assert that representation and interpretation of events in the media manipulates public opinion and wins the consent of the public in order to establish a more repressive state control, which matches with ruling elites' interests and policies. Chomsky and Herman (2008) argue that media, owned by big corporations, in line with state, controls what people see, hear and read; it fabricates news contents with elite propaganda to manufacture consent among the people to further the corporate agenda. According to Hall *et al.* (2013), the media reports the significant events but under a certain interpretation. For instance, as I will explain in chapter 5, the media reported the killing of thirty-four Kurdish villagers by the Turkish Air Force but also asserted that the villagers were smugglers and that they were mistaken for the PKK. Both excuses aimed to provide a hegemonic framework exonerating the state.

3.3 Discourse: power & the constitution of subjects & of meaning

There is much discussion of the genealogy and best definition of the concept of discourse. Therefore, my attempt to delineate the concept of discourse should be understood with reference to Turkish media discourse, a discourse that develops tight relations with the state official discourse on certain matters. The concept of discourse, despite being related to ideology, is distinguished from ideology as the concept of discourse deepens and broadens understanding of relations of power. Discourse, unlike ideology, does not have negative connotations but is rather a concept that remains neutral; hence, it provides a more fruitful analysis of power relations, of questions of identity and politics. It is more liberated from criticisms of being subjective, which mainly posed towards ideology. Moreover, discourse avoids ideological reductionism and it can be, as it is in Foucault, a replacement for the notion of ideology (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). According to Foucault, discourse is about the production of knowledge via language; hence it refers to constituting meaning for particular things and the world, in which world these generated meanings at a given historical moment shape and affect what we do (practice) and think (imagine) (Hall, 2013). Discourse as a system of representation, which rests on the ground of language and practice, ‘defines and produces of the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about’ (*ibid.*: 29). Discourse does not merely consist of representations – texts and speech – but includes also actions, signs, colours and so forth.

Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) traced the production of knowledge, the production of meaning and meaningful practices not only through language but also through discourse. Language is a discursive practice and a component of discourse, but one cannot reduce discourse to only language. Yet, one

can surely say discourse covers every linguistic practice, i.e. speech and text. According to Foucault, the meaning of things originating from knowledge is discourse, in which we produce representation. Discourse is not identical to a task that connects ‘words and things’ but it is a ‘practice task’, as:

A task that consists of not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe. (Foucault 1972:49)

Discourse, in Foucauldian sense, is not concerned with the existence of things but concerned with the source, direction and an ontology of meaning that divulges where meaning comes from, and then it focuses how we speak, think, identify the objects of knowledge, the knowledge that constitutes meaning and representation. It is explicitly expressed in Foucault’s work (*idem*); there is nothing meaningful outside discourse. Therefore, any sign which implies a meaning is a discursive practice.

Making meaning becomes one of the key bedrocks of discourse and power. Knowledge as a key element of discourse has close relations with power as it becomes a legitimate and ostensibly truthful form of understanding objects or an identity. For instance, madness in the Foucauldian sense works for power, which imposes itself on human subjects in the body of law or nation-state. To put it more simply, knowledge becomes a universal true discourse that seeks to control and dominate others in many discursive practices. Hall takes this point further: ‘Knowledge linked to power not only assume the authority of “the truth” but has the

power to make itself true' (2013:33). In the realm of governmentality, this knowledge in the form power is applied to reality, where it becomes oppression, coercion and absolute rule. For instance, in a nation-state, a dominant discourse subjugates other ethnic minorities and makes itself a true and legitimate agency by endlessly producing its discourse through bureaucracy and institutions. Knowledge and power through discursive practices produce meaning for the sake of what they want to control and represent. In this regard, the political actors can change their vocabulary and rhetorical strategies during major political and social events to in order to make quick progress towards their goals (Torfing, 2005; Žižek, 2006). For instance, the Turkish government partially abandoned discriminatory language towards the Kurds in some periods of the peace process (as I shall discuss in chapter 7).

Discourse is fundamental to all social relations, in which meaning constituted through discursive context. Purvis and Hunt highlight what we might call the societal edge of discourse, as follows:

Discourse is constitutive of social relations in that all knowledge, all talk, all argument takes place within a discursive context through which experience comes to have, not only meaning for its participants but shared and communicable meaning within social relations. (1993:492)

Discourse as 'communicable meaning' needs totality and determination over the meaning of objects or subjects in order to create a consensus in society. However, totality in relation to defining the meaning of objects and identities is never fully completed; hence, identity is never fixed because of perpetual change in social relations and positions of political agencies. Here when claiming the identity is never fixed, I also must make one point clear when referring to the Kurds and Turks

as if they are two distinct fixed identities; the Kurds and Turks are heterogeneous groups with similar and different interests. Both ethnic communities have conservative, leftist, religious and liberal groups where they similar ones becomes allies for the same cause, for instance, Islamist Kurdish Huda-Par party often sides with AKP government on many fronts while leftist HDP sides with secular Turkish RPP. However, when the rights and demands of Kurds, such as linguistic and self-governance rights, are in question Turkish politics and community overwhelmingly united around Turkish identity, which refuses such rights. In this case, most Turks and Kurds tend to have two different monolithic discourses that define their identity as Turks or Kurds. The Turkish identity becomes a discourse that deprives the Kurds from their fundamental rights.

Discourse consists of a verbal and non-verbal system of signs, in which relations of these both elements – verbal and non-verbal – construct a temporary totality in a moment of exchange of signs or communication. To understand construction of totality in the process of determining discourse and its meaning, Laclau & Mouffe (1987:82) provide a strategic account:

Let us suppose that I am building a wall with another bricklayer. At a certain moment I ask my workmate to pass me a brick and then I add it to the wall. The first act—asking for the brick—is linguistic; the second—adding the brick to the wall—is extralinguistic. Do I exhaust the reality of both acts by drawing the distinction between them in terms of the linguistic/extralinguistic opposition? Evidently not, because, despite their differentiation in those terms, the two actions share something that allows them to be compared, namely the fact that they are both parts of a total operation which is the building of the wall. So, then, how could we characterize this totality of which asking for a brick and positioning it are, both, partial

moments? Obviously, if this totality includes both linguistic and non-linguistic elements, it cannot itself be either linguistic or extra linguistic; it has to be prior to this distinction. This totality which includes within itself the linguistic and the non-linguistic, is what we call discourse. In a moment we will justify this denomination; but what must be clear from the start is that by discourse we do not mean a combination of speech and writing, but rather that speech and writing are themselves but internal components of discursive totalities.

This indicates that nothing occurs outside of discourse. Laclau & Mouffe argue that an object can exist independently from discourse, but it becomes a commodity only within the defined relational system, as in the example of a diamond (*idem*). A diamond is merely a physical entity, but it can become an object of pleasure and of aesthetic appreciation, and, eventually, a commodity within the determined system of social relations. Hence, as in the work of Laclau and Mouffe, we can suggest that the question of identity in discourse becomes radically contingent. Thus, Kurdish (political) identity became contingent in the moments of crisis and peace within the last few years; it did so by oscillating between terrorist and citizen in the state discursive practices. Laclau and Mouffe elucidate this point further by maintaining that ‘every identity or discursive object is constituted in the context of action’ and that every linguistic or non-linguistic action has meaning practices in discourse (1987:83).

In the works of post-Marxist Laclau and Mouffe, the construction and articulation of meaning or an identity is a significant element for social change and politics. Torfin summarizes that approach: ‘discourse is constructed in and through hegemonic struggles that aim to establish a political and moral-intellectual leadership through the articulation of meaning and identity’ (2005:15). This

articulated meaning and identity leads to the construction of power relations and therefore to hegemony within discourse practices. As an element determining identity and meaning, discourse might be comprehended via its pragmatic function in a political and social system. It could be described in relation to its producer, for instance, via answers to the following questions: what does discourse do, for whom does it work, how does it define subjects and things? Here is a concrete example, the orientalist discourse of the Turkish state situates the Turks as morally and socially superior by reproducing myths, heroic images and stories from victorious past. For instance, it narrates the myth that wherever Turks live they establish their own state because they refuse to be subordinate. Another example of this superiority discourse is the trope that one Turk is worth the entire world. Such narratives do not only attempt to define who the Turks are, but, also, explicitly and implicitly suggest that the Turks are real owners and only rulers of Turkey whilst also minimizing the role of the Kurds and other groups in the formation of the state (Gunes, 2013; Yeğen, 2011; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008). These discourses are constantly produced and circulated daily in schools and media. In this way, the superiority of Turkish identity becomes the hegemonic discourse to sustain power relations, favouring the Turks. Here it might be worth mentioning that the idea of the state and the state discourse encompass many elements, instead of consisting of a homogenous unit. Abrahamson (2017) argues that, unlike European-centric understating of state as a centralized and homogenous political unit with monopoly of violence, there are territorial big states and state-like territorial political authorities. He claims state does consist of a harmonically united political body but assembles of conflictual and cooperating institutions and actors (Ibid.). In this context, we might consider the conflictual relation between Turkish army and governments and their fluctuating discourse

about the Kurds. Even though, political actors and institutions overwhelmingly have a common discourse about the Kurds, there have been some slightly different and moderate discourses. Yet, these discourses were never able to dominate Turkish public sphere. Navaro-Yashin (2002) focuses on the reproduction of the Turkish state and politics in public life. She claims the state and politics are re-created and sustained through practices of public life, and of fantasising and fetishizing. She maintains that civil society in Turkey is not challenging the state politics, claiming that dominant ideology and power is produced throughout bureaucratic practices of statesmen, journalist, mafia dealers and politicians (Idem). Thus, to some extent, we understand why a singular dominant discourse represents the state, the assemblages of multi-actors. In some cases, the actors from Turkish sides temporarily have adopted different discourses and political practices. For instance, as discussed in chapter 5,6, and 7, socialist groups, such as *Birgun*'s readers, considers supporting Kurdish cause as long as it is about cultural rights, or Kemalists, to some extent, support HDP for its secular discourse as opposed AKP's Islamist imagination. Or the AKP sides with Kurdish Islamist party, HÜDAPAR, in many cases to challenge the authority of the HDP in the Kurdish region, as explained in chapter 7. Except from some radical socialist groups, the discourses of all different actors often overlap with one another when the issue of an independent Kurdish state on the table as in the case of Rojava or Iraqi Kurdistan.

In sum, discourse is a system of representation (Hall, 2013), which consists of verbal and non-verbal signs, such as image, text, drawing and other mechanisms of signs that determine meaning and identity within power relations. Moreover, 'discourse is defined here as an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced

and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices' (Hajer, 2005:300). Discourse is vital for producing power relations in a social and political context, as well as maintaining established hegemonic struggle for control of more power.

I proceed now to how representation and language socially construct reality and identity.

3.4 Language and representation

Language is a medium between a subject and an object that provides the meaning of things; therefore, it is a form of communication within a social context. In general, language is defined as a system of signs that consists of verbal and non-verbal signs, such as texts, images, sounds and gestures. In other words, language consists of a system of signs, in which representation, as a link between existing concepts and language, works to produce knowledge and meaning (Hall, 2013; Hall et al, 2005). This concept of language as a system of signs was developed by Saussure, whose work belongs to semiology, meaning the study of signs. For Saussure, signs are comprised by two elements: first is the form 'the actual word, image, photo etc.', which Saussure calls 'the signified' and the second is 'the idea or concept' in our mind that the form corresponds with, which Saussure calls 'the signifier' (Hall, 2013:16). The relation between signifier and signified constitute the meaning within a cultural framework. Hall claims that this relation is not universally and permanently fixed, but instead fixed only through our linguistic and cultural codes, which render a representation of things. For Saussure, this relation between signifier and signified is absolutely arbitrary (Storey, 2009). For instance, the word 'dog', as a signifier, does not have any real relationship with the four-legged animal, the signified. The word, 'dog' as the signifier, could refer to another signified such

as a camel. The signs do not have fixed meanings; meanings are the results of diverse political and cultural agreements (Hall, 2013; Storey, 2009). For instance, the word 'East', in the Turkish oriental imagination, and particularly within a political context, refers to an underdeveloped region, to ethnic conflict and to Kurdish separatism (Gurses, 2018; Yegen, 1999; Zeydanlioğlu, 2006). On the other hands, the Kurds would not understand the word 'East' in that way. For the Kurds, 'East' refers to a place where there is home and conflict. In this sense, the use of words (e.g. 'East') images, phrases and sentences regarding Kurdish question in both media and public discourse have fixed meanings, or stereotypes in the Turkish political context. While there might not be a real relationship between the Kurds and these words, in Turkish politics and media these words are about constructing the 'real' image of the Kurds as a practice of misrepresentation.

Language and representation are inseparable elements for communication in terms of making and sharing meanings. Language builds meaning and makes dialogue possible among participants; this dialogue then constitutes a custom of shared understandings to interpret the world since language functions as a representational system to express one's feelings, thoughts and concepts to people with signs and symbols (Hall, 2013). Thus, representation plays the dominant role in creating meaning and in then circulating this meaning as a medium for the transmission and reproduction of a discourse that being the culture and politics of representor. And language works through representation either to establish the dominance of powerful actors or to create resistance against the dominant people by the subordinate groups.

Representation is not merely a natural depiction of something but is a more complicated historical account of things, such as the Kurdish question. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, representation is ‘the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way’; ‘To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to place a likeness of it before us in our mind or in the senses’ (In Hall 2013:2). To explain things in our mind we need words to explain, hence, representation is a reflection of actual and abstract objects in minds. Stuart Hall sheds some light on this definition of representation:

Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of object, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people events. (2013:3)

Representation is constructed through verbal, non-verbal and visual language to communicate ideas and feelings with other members of society. Furthermore, representation is not a transparent and simple process of mirroring reality. Poole (2009:23) states that, ‘There is always a mediating effect whereby an event is filtered through interpretive frameworks and acquires ideological significance’; because of that, representation cannot be purely objectives and refrain from biases. Specifically, representation of the Others in media, cinema, literature and television becomes biased and distorted because of the power relations as in the case of the Kurdish identity as discussed further in this chapter.

In his influential book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1977) takes historical texts produced by the Westerners and analyses them – their figures of speech, choice of words, narratives, setting, and historical circumstances – so as to try to show that

those texts misrepresent Arabs and Muslims as irrational, backward, uncivilized, and sometimes dangerous. He demonstrates how European-centric scholars have imagined and represented the 'East' as mystical, unchanging, emotional, primitive and irrational place in their general discourse. In this way, Orientalism tried to justifying colonialism on the ground that the Orient could not govern itself (*idem*). Similarly, and as will be maintained throughout this the present work, the Turkish state and media have adopted an Oriental discourse towards the Kurds. For instance: Demir & Zeydanlioğlu (2010:7), through analysis of the high-circulation Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet*, reveal that the newspaper represented Iraqi Kurds as plotters, looters, tribal, backwards, and dangerous threats to the civilized, modern Turkey.

Moreover, representation, as an expression of meanings and culture, determines politics, subjects, identity and economic policies. Representation, particularly in media and media texts, is not impartial but instead is loaded with cultural and political biases towards the Others such as ethnic and religious minorities. Fürsich (2010:115) argues that representations are 'constructed images that carry ideological connotations' and, accordingly, that 'since representation can produce shared cultural meanings, problematic (that is, limited) representations can have negative consequences for political and social decision-making and can be implicated in sustaining social and political inequalities.' For instance, negative and biased representation of immigrants in their host countries leads to discriminative politics against immigrants. By the same token, misrepresentation of the 'West' in Occidentalism and of the 'East' in Orientalism causes cultural and political discrimination and repression in different places.

Regarding the question of identity in politics, the stories of those who cannot represent their identity are diminished and twisted in the narrative of their oppressors. As an African proverb has it: 'Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter'. Accordingly, the Kurdish voice is suppressed in Turkish media and historiography: instead of the Kurds representing themselves, the Turks represent them. When one cannot represent, cannot talk, write or get one's voice heard because of a historical condition such as colonialism, then the colonizer has situated itself as narrator for its subjects. Hence, colonizers substitute the self-images of the oppressed with his own political and cultural phantasies rather than providing a fair representation of oppressed. Representation is determined through the eye, mind and vision of the narrator, so it tells more about the identity of the narrator than about those narrated. Frantz Fanon in his works on colonialism deals with the question of identity and representation. He points out that 'what is called the black soul is a white man's artefact' (Bhabha, 1994:44), and this conception of the black soul' corresponds to colonial relations and phantasies. This implies that, as Bhabha claims, 'the question of identification is never the affirmation of the pre-given identity...It is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in that assuming image' (1994:45). In this sense, representation should be considered with such questions as, 'Who represents whom, and in relation to what?' And more, the representation should be analysed in terms of what it excludes and includes because representation, with the help of language, might be a means of political exclusion and repression and misrepresentation of the Others. Especially the newspaper texts of mainstream Turkish media, owned corporations, should be closely scrutinized in order to understand the exclusion and underrepresentation of the Others.

3.5 The Turkish media scene

3.5.1 Historical context: the political economy of the Turkish press

At first glance the landscape of Turkish media is vibrant and diverse. There are 3,100 newspapers, including 180 national papers, 23 national and 222 local and regional television channels, 2000 national and local radio stations, and hundreds of news websites (Tunç, 2015; Yesil, 2014). Yet, the freedom of the press is in grave danger because of state intervention and state-backed monopolization of the media ownership (Alankuş, 2009; Hacısabanoglu, 2015). The relationship between the state and media has always been both close and contentious. In the earlier period (1923-1950) of Turkish republic, the newspapers and other media outlets were under the control of the one-party state and propagated the Kemalist state ideology; there was no press freedom (Zürcher, 2017; Kaya & Çakmur, 2010). With Turkey's transition to a multi-party system, the Democratic Party (DP) came to power in 1950 and led the emergence of a new press as opposed to the dominant press that was allied with the Kemalist ideology. Developing ties with the West after the Second World War, the DP had more tolerance than earlier Kemalist party, the RPP, for press freedom. The discourse of the press became more diverse in the earlier period of the DP, which tolerated the Kemalist, liberal and Islamist voices in the media. Until the mid of the 1950s the press had enjoyed some degree of freedom. However, as the 1960s approached, the DP, now in government, shut down opposition newspapers (Topuz, 2003). In 1960, the military coup toppled the DP, and removed restrictions on the press via a new constitution. As explained in chapter 2, this new political environment was free and created democratic freedom and rights, including the right to broadcast and publish about diverse social and political issues. Nevertheless, following the military coups in 1971 and 1980, the state destroyed press freedom by

regulating it strictly (Topuz, 2003). Beside the political restrictions, the Turkish media always faced the dilemma of whether to curb objective reporting for the sake of national security (Gecer, 2014). The media prioritized the state's interests, by reporting events through nationalist lens (Nohl, 2011). We see then that throughout all of Turkey's recent history the press has been partisan and adopted the politics of powerful elites, such as military juntas, governments and the state, in order to maintain the dominant hegemony.

From the late 1980s until 2000s, the Turkish media landscape has extended and diversified because of the transformation in the communication infrastructure (R. R. Kaya et al., 2010). Adopting the latest neoliberal politics in the 1980s, the liberalization and privatization of the economy changed Turkish media after President Turgut Özal legalised private television in 1993. However, the print media, in the form of such papers as *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* and *Milliyet*, did not lose its readership and revenue; rather, intense campaigns of promotions increased their joint circulation to some four million daily (Kaya et al., 2010). During the vulnerable financial situation of the print press during the 1990s, the Turkish tycoons and large corporations' owners, who have investments in various industrial sectors such as banking, started to invest in media industry (Kaya, 2009; Topuz, 2003). On the other hand, the traditional media owners began investing in areas outside media sectors (Baybars-Hawks & Akser, 2012; Kaya, 2009; Topuz, 2003; Ünan, 2015). This change in the press ownership was the start of the commercialization and 'conglomeration' of the media at the hands of a few big groups such as Dogan Group during the 1990s and 2000s. The monopolization of the media stifled alternative newspapers – the ones with critical and alternative views –which could not compete with the big conglomerates. This silenced Turkish

dissidents, minorities and the Kurdish press. The silencing restricted the Turkish media and the change of ownership was undemocratic insofar as transnational interests – and global media monopoly – were now in charge of the media (Sahin & Aksoy, 1993).

During the period (2002-2015) of the AKP government, the conservative media flourished whereas media that was less conservative (more secular) suffered severe restrictions. Replacing authoritarian secularism with authoritarian Islamist conservatism, the AKP supported the Islamist newspapers while marginalizing and silencing dissident secular media through huge taxes, accreditation discrimination and judicial suppression (Özcan, 2015). The AKP started to implement neoliberal policies but dissents and those parts of the media that were apt to take a critical stance opposed those policies. To suppress the media criticisms of those policies, the AKP has restricted media freedom by using censorship, conglomerate pressure, online banishments and surveillance defamation towards the media (Baybars-Hawks & Akser, 2012). Following these severe measures, the government shut down numerous Kurdish media outlets, temporarily banned Twitter and YouTube, and blocked Wikipedia because it considered all these to be threats to national security. Seeking to gain power by using the media to shape public opinion, the government changed the structure of media ownership. The pro-AKP conglomerate groups received a major political and financial support of the government, then bought the media outlets from secular Kemalist media groups (Arsan, 2013, 2014; Hawks, 2013; Özcan, 2015; Yesil, 2014).

The Media Ownership Monitor Turkey (2015) provides the details of 10 top widely-circulated newspapers – see Figure 3.1.²³



Figure 3.1 The ownership of the most high-circulated newspapers (2015)

As I explain in chapter 4, *Sabah* and *Hurriyet* are indirectly linked to the government because of their owners' investments outside of the media sector. By 2018 most of the media is owned by about six large corporations, namely: Doğan, Doğuş, Zirve, Ciner, Kalyon, Albayrak. The owners of these groups have investments in the state-subsidized large projects in the fields of construction, energy as well as in banking and tourism. For instance: the Kalyoncu Group, the owner of the daily newspaper *Sabah*, and the Doğan Group, the owner of *Hurriyet*, were chosen over other bidders by the AKP to build Marmaray underground tunnel, Istanbul's third airport as well as highways, power plants and dams (Tunç, 2015). Turkish media has never been able to be much critical of the state, except a few left-leaning outlets. For, much of that media stands as a client towards the establishment.

²³ For more information about Turkey's media ownership network, see: <https://turkey.momrsf.org/en/findings/political-affiliations/>. Accessed: 22.09.2018

Before they were seized by pro-AKP conglomerates, *Sabah*, *Aksam*, *Start*, *Milliyet* and *Vatan* were very critical of AKP politics; after the buyout, they adhered to the government propaganda, censoring the opposition parties (Cagaptay, 2017).

After the government intervention in changing media ownership structure, the newspapers adopted ideologically biased and uncritical stance towards the social issues and democratic rights. The media is the guarantor of democracy, human rights and source of the truth for the public; hence, it should inform, enlightens and educates the public for a civil discourse concerning social issues. For instance, as discussed in chapter 7, media plays a central role in peace-making by giving voice to the suppressed, promoting non-violent discourses and challenging the power relations (Galtung, 2003; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Verdoolaege, 2005). However, during the AKP rule, and because of growing monopoly, competition for advertising and a desire to promulgate dominant values, the media did not discuss social-political issues but instead focused upon sex, health, lifestyle and sport (Hacisabanoglu, 2015). Apart from the leftist outlets such as *Birgün* and *Evrensel*, media in both the Islamist and Kemalist camps reduced editorial freedom and censored the coverage of political issues that had to do with state integrity, such as the Kurdish question. Furthermore, after the failed military coup attempt in July 2016, the government has jailed hundreds of journalists and closed many newspapers, particularly the ones which belonged to the religious Gulen movement that was presumed to be behind the attempted coup. According to an Amnesty International report (2019), the 2016 state of emergency made Turkey the biggest jailer of journalists in the world, with up to 123 journalists being prosecuted on terrorism charges. Following intense crackdown on the media, Amnesty reports that 170 media outlets were shut down, leaving 2.500 journalists and media workers

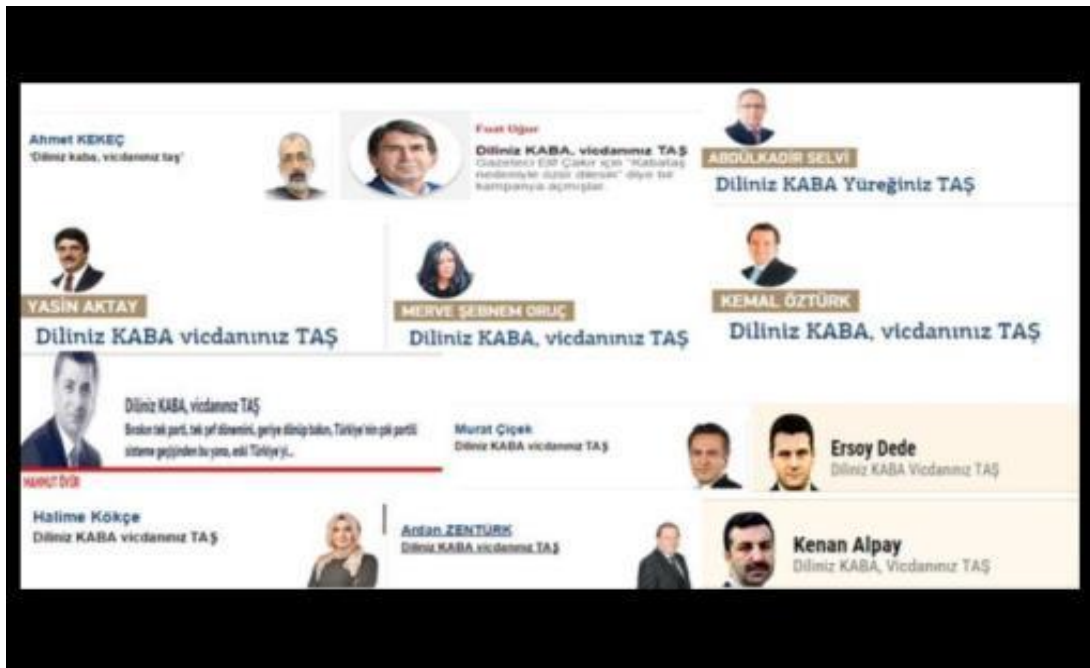
unemployed.²⁴ The government consolidated its dominance over the media discourse by accusing the dissident newspapers of treason and terrorism, as in the case of Kurdish newspapers closed by the government. Media diversity reduced still further when the Dogan media company, which owned numerous television channels, radio stations and newspapers including *Hurriyet*, was bought by the pro-AKP Demiroren holding in 2018. Consequently, the government gained nearly absolute control over the Turkish media.

The commercialization of Turkish media and conglomerate media ownership during the AKP rule, has undermined the autonomy of dissidents and critical columnists in Turkish newspapers, many lost their jobs. For instance, left-wing liberal columnists such as Hasan Cemal (from *Milliyet*) and Mehmet Altan (from *Star*) were dismissed from the mainstream newspapers. Although both columnists, and many other liberal journalists, supported the AKP at the beginning against the established Kemalist elites and Turkish Army, they were eventually fired because of their criticisms of the AKP. The reason behind the firing those influential journalists was that army-backed Kemalist authoritarianism was replaced with AKP's political Islamist. However, there several liberal and formerly leftist, and columnists are still employed by the pro-AKP media. Giving the government's repressive policies, these columnists legitimizes their positions with some major arguments that the AKP is fighting the army's military interventions and hostile imperial powers. The latter argument even used by some Kemalist columnists to legitimize the AKP. The

²⁴ For more information on the Turkish media recent landscape, see 'Turkey: Amnesty International's brief on the human rights situation', 2019. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/9747/2019/en/?fbclid=IwAR1Xh622lDttzoVLQm8D8W8FxYvp2taasabVFkNSdAnGp6g_j3Jm4LQfvV4

influential columnists and editors often have close personal contacts with the media owners and political leaders, whom they directly take instructions from for the selections of the headlines and stories (Arsan, 2013, 2014; Hawks, 2013; Keles, 2014; Yesil, 2014). For instance, Figure 3.2. shows fourteen columnists from different newspapers, such as *Star*, *Yeni Akit*, *Türkiye*, *Yeni Şafa*, had the same title on the same day.

Figure 3.2: All titles are ‘Your language is rude; your conscience is inhumane (the exact word is stone for inhumane)’ 5 Marc 2015.²⁵



All these columnists of pro-government were condemning dissidents with same title, which was originating from Erdoğan's speech. They condemned people who did not believe that protestors of the Gezi movement attacked a veiled woman. The same

²⁵ For more information, see: <http://bianet.org/bianet/diger/162801-14-yazarin-kabatas-basligi-diliniz-kaba-vicdaniniz-tas>. Accessed: 05.10.2019.

titles at the same day indicated that these columnists most likely had their instructions from government. The leading columnists often directly involved with the headings and stories, influencing the editorial process. In recent years, Erdogan has taken many journalists into his plane while visiting other countries.

Figure 3.3. Shows Erdogan with many columnists, from *Sabah* to *Hürriyet*, on the plane form an international visit.



As it seen here, this close relations with journalists continue to exist and dominate newspapers' headlines through the discourse of these columnists, reporters from different newspapers. Recently, the former press advisory of Erdogan, Kemal Öztürk, revealed that many journalists and newspapers were sending the headlines for his conformation before to print them.²⁶ Although Öztürk claimed that he was not taking any part in editorial choices, such as finding headlines, slogans and ideas,

²⁶ See: <https://www.independentturkish.com/node/92636/haber/kemal-%C3%B6zt%C3%BCrk-erdo%C4%9Fan%C4%B1n-dan%C4%B1%C5%9Fman%C4%B1yken-ben-istemedi-gazete-man%C5%9Fetleri-bana>. Accessed: 12.11.2019.

Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3. indicate otherwise. As Navaro-Yashin (2002) explained further in section 3.5.2., Turkish media has deployed a conservative narrative of pro-state actors (no matter how those actors have different ideological affiliations) towards the Kurdish question. For instance, despite the fact that *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* were ideologically different, they often run similar headlines based on Erdogan's speeches since, as Tunç (2015) and Yesil (2014) reveal, the government threatened Doğan Group, *Hürriyet*'s owner, with 2.2 million dollars tax fine.

3.5.2 Representation of the Kurdish question in the Turkish press

Turkish media had relentlessly acclaimed the state's violent military campaigns against the Kurds during the 1920s and 1930s and accommodated the state denial of Kurdish existence from the foundation of the republic until 1990s. The Turkish press reported the Mount Ararat rebellion (1927-1930) in a militarized discourse of the state. For instance, a pro-Kemalist secular newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, on 13 July 1930 declared that 'our iron eagles' [Turkish aircraft] crushed the Mount Ararat, stating that 'the bandits were compelled to seek mercy from the instruments of death uncoiling from the sky' (Olson, 2000:84). The newspaper depicted the rebels as bandits and praised the military campaign regardless of the mass killing of Kurdish civilians as in the case of Zeylan (*Zilan*) massacre, as Figure 3.1 shows below.²⁷

²⁷ Available at: <https://kurdistantribune.com/zilan-valley-massacre-july-13-1930/>. Accessed 20.05.2018.

Figure 3.1: *Cumhuriyet*'s headline, 'Cleansing started, the ones at Zeylan valley were completely annihilated' (13.06.1930)



Faik Bulut (2005) adds that the newspapers were only reporting the earlier Kurdish rebellions with the permission and narrative of the state. The newspapers embraced fundamentally racist discourse legitimizing the suppression and massacres following Sheikh Said, Mount Ararat and Dersim Rebellion. Similar to contentious the press coverage of Mount Ararat rebellion in Figure 3.1, once again the press advocated 'cleansing' of Dersim from the 'bandits', 'backwards' and 'anti-modern' Kurds (Bulut, 2005b; Olson, 2000). The dehumanization of Kurdish insurgents in the press led the Turkish public to remain silent for state excessive violence imposed on 'bandits.' This perception of the Kurds resembles the colonial perception of indigenous people around the world and it legitimizes the colonizers' oppression of over the colonized. The Turkish press became an ideological apparatus to sustain the state hegemony through distortion of facts and the misrepresentation of Kurdish rebels. The Turkish press had an ideological connection to the state by way of the MPs belong to the single-party, the RPP (CHP). Those members included Yunus

Nadi, founder of the Cumhuriyet newspaper, the voice of Kemalist state elites. Baran (2014) maintains that the press not only distorted the facts about the Dersim rebellion but, also, planned and provoked the state massacres of ‘ill-natured’ Kurds. For instance, the media glorified the role of Sabiha Gökçen – the world’s first female fighter pilot – in the annihilation of Kurdish Alevies in Derdim in 1937-1938 (Bulut, 2005b; Olson, 2000). The press had adopted the state’s denialist and oppressive policies, reproducing the state’s line that the Kurdish rights were threats to the integrity of Turkey until the 1990s.

Turkish press started to associate the Kurdish political identity with ‘terrorism’ once the state acknowledged the existence of the Kurds in the 1990s. The newspapers, in support of the state’s policies, have targeted Kurdish civil movements and associated them with the PKK, aiming to suppress demands for Kurdish rights made by non-violent actors. Asserting a link between the political movements, on the one hand, and the armed PKK, on the other, facilitated the crushing of Kurdish civic movements by the state and prevented the development of strong Kurdish political movements. This dual attack – the media offensive Kurdish political movements and the state’s punishment of those movements – consolidated the PKK’s position as the dominant actor in the Kurdish question. The press presented the PKK and the Kurdish politicians as separatist terrorists, as domestic enemies of the state, as the pawns of imperialism and traitors, backed by Armenians, Russians, Americans and Europeans (Bulut, 2005a; Keleş, 2014; Sezgin & Wall, 2005; Somer, 2005). Bulut (2005b) argues that a Kurdish phobia spanned the political spectrum, demonizing Kurdish political activism and criminalizing Kurdish cultural and political initiatives. The newspapers carried smear campaigns against public figures such as Yasar Kemal and Musa Anter who contested the dominant

discourse. The most striking example of such smears occurred in 1999 when renowned singer Ahmet Kaya declared that he would like to sing in Kurdish at an event organized by the Magazine Journalists Association. After his speech, most of the artists, writers and journalists protested him by singing the Turkish national anthem while some threw knives and forks at his table. The next day the Turkish press began a political lynching. Most notable here were the actions of *Hürriyet*, which presented him as a terrorist-sympathiser, a separatist and a disgrace (see the headline in appendixes).

Figure 3.4. headline of *Hürriyet*: ‘An inglorious man!’ (20 July 1999)



Kaya had to leave Turkey and was never able to return. He died in Paris in exile a few years later. A similar media lynching was carried against the prominent Kurdish human rights lawyer, Tahir Elci, when in an interview with CNN Turk in 2015 he said that the PKK was not a terrorist organization. He was accused of making terrorist propaganda by the media and Turkish authority. A few months after the

interview and lynching campaign he was assassinated in Diyarbakir.²⁸ Navaro-Yashin (2002) gives a striking example of Turkish press when a young man tried to pull down the Turkish flag from the pole during a public meeting of Kurdish party, HADEP, in 1995. She notes that Turkish media organs, such as *Hurriyet* and *SHOWTV*, launched the ‘flag campaign’ demanding citizens to hang Turkish flags on their windows, and that campaigns received major supports from the citizens against ‘those who want to divide the country’ (2002:128). She argues that media, as part of civil society, and its collaboration with the people indicates the public support for established state order against demands of Kurds.

The Turkish press has extensively presented the ‘Kurdish question’ with nationalist discourse, reproducing the prejudice and stereotypes against the Kurds. Secular and Islamist newspapers are equally resistant to the basic rights of the Kurds – rights such as education in Kurdish – because both parties are strictly nationalist (Gurses, 2018). The espoused nationalism of the media mirrored the narrative of the Turkish army – a narrative that indiscriminately defined all Kurdish demands for rights as terrorism and presented all Kurdish politicians, even MPs, as associated with the PKK (Arsan, 2013; Gecer, 2014; Sezgin & Wall, 2005). The Turkish state told the media which words to use when reporting the Kurdish question; see table 3.1, which I draw upon the work of Gecer (2014:120).

²⁸For more information about Tahir Elci’s lynching, see:<https://www.balkanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Turkey/Turkey-the-killing-of-lawyer-Tahir-Elci-166058>. Accessed:20.01.2019.

Table 3.1: The list of words dictated to the media outlets by Turkish army

What not to say	Photo of the list in Turkish: left side means ‘What not to say’, the right ‘what to say’	What to say
PKK leader		Head of the separatists
APO (nickname of Abdullah Öcalan)		The terrorist Öcalan
PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party)		Bloodstained terror organisation
Organisation headquarters		Terrorist nest
Revolt, uprising		Terrorist attempt
Commander		An officer
Burned villages		Villages abandoned by the people
Kurdish MP		Member of the organisation
Low-intensity war		Struggle against terrorism
Kurdish State		The organisation in North Iraq
Kurd		Turkish citizen
Person with Kurdish origins		Our citizen, who is named Kurd by the separatists [PKK]

This discourse of security and terrorism, with its sensationalism and denialism, was prevalent during the 1990s and the early 2000s. When the AKP initiated the peace talks with Kurds, the media noticeably moderated its discourse. However, when the government had disputes with the Kurds during the peace talks and afterwards, when the peace process ended in 2015, the media retrieved earlier discriminatory discourse against the Kurds. This discourse of the media in recent years continues to criminalize the ‘Other’ and Turkish media particularly uses a war-mongering

language to demonize the Kurds (Algan, 2019; Arsan, 2014; İnceoğlu, 2015). Regardless of a partially unified and fixed discourse towards the Kurds, from time to time, Turkish newspapers have covered Kurdish question with conflictual and different discourses. For instance, when the Constitutional Court of Turkey, which was one of the main elements of established Kemalist order, banned the Kurdish political party, the DTP, not only leftist newspapers, but also some pro-government newspapers criticized the decision. *Sabah*'s headline on 12 December 2009 was bold, 'banning pro-peace ones, freeing pro-war ones' (in Turkish: Güvercine yasak, şahine özgürlük), while another pro-government newspaper, *Star*, run similar headline as, 'DTP shut down, the politics lost', on the same day.²⁹ Unlike Kemalist newspapers, these both pro-government newspapers, similar to leftist ones, did not endorse the ban on Kurdish political party. However, it is worth note that the government was fighting the Kemalists to take control of the Constitutional Court back in 2009. Thus, the pro-government *Star and Sabah* had been critical of many state institutions and their decisions towards the Kurds.

3.6 Conclusion to the chapter

Ideology is distorted and constructed representation of reality in Marxist sense. It is about connecting individuals, through their imaginary relations, to the real world. Ideology produces perception and knowledge for the masses in order to sustain the dominance of the ruling class. Ideology functions within and spreads through state apparatus such as media and education, legitimizing unequal power

²⁹ For headlines of all main newspapers on this matter, see: <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/118834-gazeteler-dtp-ye-kapatma-kararini-nasil-gordu>.

Accessed: 11.09.2019.

relations. The notion of hegemony is similar: it too is used to reveal power relations that produce inequality. While an ideology might adopt coercive measures to dominate persons, such as forcing Kurds to learn a Turkish-nationalist version of history (as discussed in chapter 1), hegemony mainly aims to win the consent of a subordinate class via the discourses circulated by civil institutions. In this way, the consent is manufactured between subordinate and dominant groups. According to this consensus the dominant groups will govern the subordinate ones. Media is a state ideological apparatus and a civil institution under the control of the sovereign state; as such, it works constantly to sustain the hegemon of the powerful actors as in the case of Turkish media.

As a tool at the disposal of hegemonic powers, language – a system of verbal and non-verbal signs – constructs meanings to rationalize the ideology and interests of ruling class. These meanings are communicated and shared thorough representation. Hence, representation is about the process of constructing reality through language, but it is not objectively mirroring reality because of the discourse of representing and mediating. Language and representation can be categorized as two elements under the umbrella of the concept of discourse in order to produce specific knowledge and identity. Although discourse is subject to change – because of the constant hegemonic struggle between adversaries - to a great extent it governs and determines the way one perceives and represents the world based on texts, speeches, policies and so forth. In this way, it provides a valuable analysis of power relations as in the case of political economy of the Turkish media structure. Turkish media has strictly followed the dominant discourse provided by the state. That discourse presents particular views of elites and pro-state actors concerning the fundamental social and political questions in Turkey, because the media has always

benefited from state subsidies. In Turkey, while the independent and dissident media faced the suppression, most of the media outlets propagated the government and state discourse in order to manufacture consent of the readers, and they do so because of their owners' investment in state business. For instance, by adopting the state's discourse, the Turkish press has continued the exclusion, criminalization and misrepresentation of Kurds that began with Oriental discursive practices, presenting the Kurds as backward and separatist. In this way, the press legitimizes and helps to maintain state policies.

4 Methodology

4.1 The method of the research

4.1.1 Introduction: defining the context

This is a qualitative study. It analyses textual data and investigates the ideological representation of the Kurdish question within texts and indeed outside texts. To those ends, I adopt the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. This chapter provides a fuller account of that method and discusses the data itself and the data collection. Moreover, the chapter briefly explains the analysis of the data. The last thing that this chapter does is to offer reflections upon the circumstances of my research. I begin, though, with some thoughts upon the notions of text and context.

4.1.2 Text and context

‘Text’, as I use the term, refers to various kinds of utterances that make communication possible. Unlike the traditional understanding of a text as a piece of writing, ‘the text’ as I use the term encompasses all images, all sentences and assembly of figures as the elements of the meaning-making process (Parker, 1999). Texts as communicative utterances must have certain features in order to exist; they should be coherent, informative, situational, intentional, acceptable and inter-textual (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). Texts are multifunctional products of writing and speaking as discursive practice (Barker & Dariusz, 2001), in which people are able to communicate by virtue of sharing common values and cultural codes. The common cultural codes and shared language make it possible to read, decode and interpret texts in certain contexts that unearth subtle meanings possessed by texts.

Norman Fairclough explains meticulously how to analyse discourse, text and context in his 'Language and Power' (2001). Fairclough holds that, when analysing how texts are produced, one must consider language and discourse as social practices. He maintains that researchers should analyse 'the relationship between text, processes [of text production] and their social conditions as well as the conditions of social structure and institutions (Fairclough, 2001:21). In Fairclough's version of CDA texts become significant when they are interacted, interpreted and contextualised. The CDA has three dimensions: description; interpretation and explanation, all of which aim to unpack true meaning that remains embedded in text (Fairclough, 1992). Since Fairclough provides an all-comprehensive three-dimensional critical approach, I shall adopt his model, for the most part, when I describe, interpret and explain the coverage of the Kurdish question in the mainstream Turkish media.

The figure below illustrates Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to discourse and (the core of the approach) text. A text can be deconstructed along these dimensions in order to analyse a discursive event, which is a moment – any moment – in which one uses language in order to communicate. The first stage, of description, treats the properties of texts. The second stage (dimension) of interpretation is interested in analysing the text and its interaction (with context) for making meanings; explanation as the third dimension is concerned with social context and interaction (Fairclough, 1992, 2001); here, social context and interaction intertwine in the process of production of discourse practice.

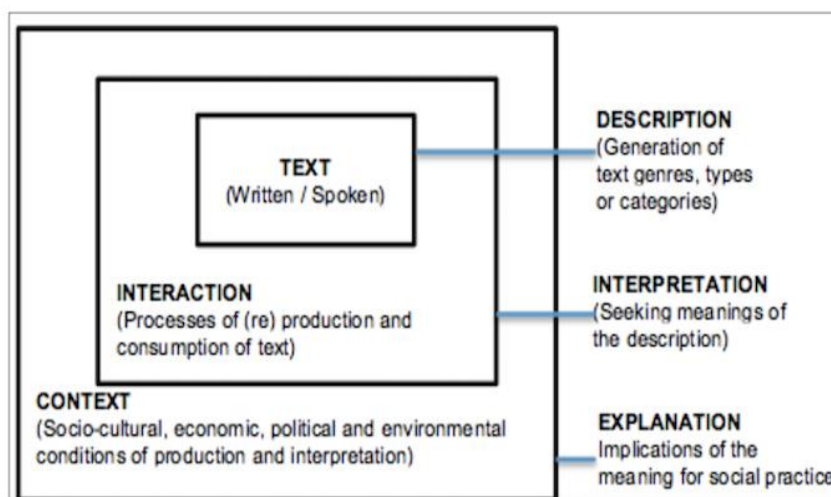


Figure 4.1. Discourse as text, interaction and context (Fairclough, 1992, 2001; Kabugo et al 2015)

Texts as constituents of discourse do not define the concept of discourse entirely. Discourse is a more complex process that extends to power relations, hegemony and ideology; it extends beyond the meaning and representation of text. Despite the fact that a text means a distinctive and specific understanding of discourse, consisting of many kinds of genres, discourse explains commonalities between types of structures and knowledge (Wodak, 2008). Representation, as discussed in chapter 3, is performed through texts, in which meaning-making begins to spread and reproduce hegemony and dominance in favour of its producers. We make take the example of a newspaper. Such a text is a communicative event requiring a close examination if we are to order to understand how it (re)produces relations of power. One should examine it firstly, via linguistic analysis, perhaps by focusing upon vocabulary, grammar, semantics and writing style, and, secondly, via analysis of its textual organization; in this second respect one could examine how the text achieves cohesion via structuring principles (Fairclough, 1995a). Since this current study adopts a qualitative textual analysis, I scrutinize media texts

(newspaper articles) within their historical context in which they were produced. That historical context determines messages in media texts. In treating my data, I made use further of the account of context provided by Wodak and Krzyżanowski (2008). They discuss the importance of the concept of context, which structured in four levels as quoted below:

- 1) the immediate, language or text internal co-text;
- 2) the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
- 3) the extralinguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames of a specific context of the situation (middle-range theories);
- 4) the boarder socio-political and historical context, to which the discursive practice is embedded in and related (macro thesis) (2008:13)

Fairclough (1995b) maintains that the analysts of media discourse should focus upon representations, identities and relations. So doing entails consideration of:

- particular representations and recontextualizations of social practice (ideational function) – perhaps carrying particular ideologies
- particular constructions of writer and reader identities [. .] in terms of what is highlighted
- a particular construction of the relationship between writer and reader ([. .] formal or informal, close or distant). (Fairclough 1995b:58)

These three principles of analysing text are used to explore the data corpus for this research. I shall provide further reasons for embracing Fairclough's approach later on in this chapter. According to Fairclough, text analysis needs a multisemiotic approach to scrutinize written texts, images and visual in the pages of newspapers

(*idem*). Context and intertextuality, which fundamentally link and relate texts to other texts, provide an extensive articulation of the process of meaning-making and of ideological messages in the text. As this study will treat various texts from various newspapers, it is necessary to consider that texts and their subjects are constructed in the space of interdiscursivity, which constitutes the meaning of texts based on different discourses of resistances, prejudices and knowledges (Morley, 2005). Textual analysis should not isolate texts from the historical conditions of their production and consumption (*idem*). For instance: to analyse a news article that is about the peace process in Turkey, it is necessary to investigate it in the context of all historical and political conditions of politics in Turkey.

This research scrutinizes newspaper articles to explore the representation of Turkish media of the Kurdish question. In the process of analysis, I aim to investigate texts by asking what texts includes and excludes in order to reveal explicit and implicit meanings in texts. Now, Mautner (2008:44) compiles a concise list of the key concepts for qualitative textual analysis of print media, as follows.

- Lexis (evaluative meaning); news actor labels; rhetorical use of figures; metaphors.
- Transitivity ('who does what to whom'; types of verbal processes, for example 'doing' versus 'happening').
- Modality (expressing certainty vs. vagueness; 'high' vs. low 'low' commitment [. .] modal verbs and modal adverbials).
- Source attribution and the presence of different 'voices' in the text.
- Textual coherence and cohesion.
- Argumentative devices establishing rapport between author and reader (e.g. rhetorical questions; appeals to common sense; discursive construction of 'we' groups).

- Nonverbal message components (e.g. photographs, charts [. .] font size and style).

These given elements of textual analysis explain how the print media produces representations. The idea that discourse is a form of representation that makes meaning and produces knowledge (Hall, 2013) is tightly linked to textual analysis but not reducible to it. Text coordinates with context: while text provides the content (for example, images and text narrowly defined) in the immediate situation, context pledges broader understanding of the text by alluding to historical and political conditions, in which texts are produced and consumed. A text produces sense and meaning in relation to the other texts (this is the phenomenon of intertextuality) and produces knowledge of the world (this is context) (van Dijk, 1991, 1995). Therefore, text and context are *conditio sine qua non* of CDA, in that they afford a broader framework of analysis.

I turn now to discuss Critical Discourse Analysis.

4.1.3 The ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ approach

Critical Discourse Analysis is a method of critical textual analysis. CDA is rooted in critical studies and was developed during the 1980s by researchers including Fairclough, Wodak and Van Dijk. CDA examines the use of language in specific contexts across a wide range of disciplines and in unequal power relations that interconnect specific use of language with ideologies. Wodak claims that primarily CDA analyses the manifestation in language of: ‘opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance’; discrimination; and power (2001:2). Language as a social practice (Fairclough, 2001) lies at the heart of CDA; CDA considers language a useful tool by which means the dominant ideology can

sustain unequal power relations. Language is a significant phenomenon for CDA due to language's relations with power. Eagleton tries to demonstrate that point via the language of fascism. The idioms and lexicon of fascism such as soil, blood and sacrifice are not neutral but ideological, since they further the political interests of powerful elites (Eagleton (1991). A language is an ideological tool for communicating certain meanings. Thus, CDA is not only merely a method for analysing text, discourse and language but also an approach to ideology and power relations as well as to semiotics, communication and media representation (Van Dijk, 1995; Fairclough, 2003). In order to analyse the language of texts, Fairclough (2001, 2003) focuses upon discourse in a broad sense since he maintains that language is a socially determined part of the discourse. Therefore, for Fairclough, CDA studies not only texts but also their process of production, interpretation, social and historical conditions, in which texts are consumed and reproduced by readers.

It is worth emphasising that, as discussed in chapter 3, I use the concept of discourse in the sense in which it is used in Foucauldian and Marxist theories. These theories acknowledge discourse as the history of knowledge production and practice. CDA seeks the genealogy of 'beliefs and practises and the structures and powerful actors that influence the adaptation and continuation of beliefs and practices' (Wall, Stahl, & Salam, 2015). This research adopts this understanding CDA to analyse the ways the newspapers define the object of knowledge that is at issue—the Kurds. It also examines how the media associated this knowledge with the state discourse and presented it in order to shape public opinion. Richardson (2007) asserts that contrary to the social-cognitive model of van Dijk, the social psychological approach of Wetherell and Potter, and the discourse-historic method of the Vienna school (Reisigl and Wodak), Fairclough's version of CDA is the most useful for analysing

newspaper discourse – because Fairclough places texts within their social and historical conditions, conditions within which the production and consumption of texts shape public perception. Although Fairclough's approach is the main of the method of this research, from time to time, I shall take advantage of the tools afforded by other versions of CDA.

One central use that I make of Fairclough's version of CDA is in my analysis of Turkish newspapers. Thereby, I hope to provide a lucid account of the media discourse and of media representation of the Kurdish question. Through that discourse the newspapers tend to denationalise Kurdish question with misrepresentation in agreement with state official discourse. Fairclough's approach (Fairclough, 1995b, 1995a, 2001, 2003) is a 'three-dimensional' framework designed to analyse newspapers and other types of texts. Texts have these dimensions, and one can analyse them serially. The first dimension is the one that he calls 'discourse-as-text'. Here the researcher does textual analysis by focusing upon verbal and visual texts (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). Fairclough (2001) maintains that the first dimension of discourse corresponds to a first stage in CDA, namely, a stage of description. In this first, descriptive stage, CDA concentrates upon 'linguistic' structures of the visual and verbal use of language and investigates vocabulary, grammar, textual structure and textual cohesion. The second dimension of Fairclough's approach (2001) treats discourse as a discursive practice, synonymously 'order of discourse'. The idea here is to treat discourse as something that is manufactured, disseminated and consumed. This dimension corresponds to the second, interpretative stage of CDA, which conceives a text as a 'product of a process of production and a resource in the process on interpretation' (*ibid.*:21). For instance, news reports, being texts, are produced, circulated and consumed by

human subjects in specific conditions. Here, the emphasis is less upon wording, grammar and textual structures, and more upon intertextuality, speech acts and coherence, those latter three elements being that which connects texts to their contexts (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). For instance, by considering selected (quoted) utterances by specific actors, or upon how newspaper uses active and passive grammatical moods, researchers can detect the discursive manufacturing of an ideology that serves some specific regime of truth in Foucauldian sense, as in the case of the rôle that the Turkish state ideology plays in the discourse of Turkish media. The third dimension, the last part of the 'three-dimensional' framework of CDA, is discourse as social or sociocultural practice. In investigate this side of discourse, one explains texts by considering the relationship between social context and interaction (Fairclough, 1995b, 2003). This three-dimensional framework (See Figure 1) tries to account for the production, dissemination and consumption of texts, all within their historical and social conditions. In the third dimension, Fairclough's CDA moves from sociolinguistics and semiotics to discourse representation, highlighting the role intertextuality in engendering new discourses in this stage. Blommaert and Bulcaen offer the following explanation of this dimension. 'The way in which discourse is being represented, respoken, or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power' (2000:449). According to Fairclough (1995a) this third dimension of discourse – the dimension of sociocultural practice – itself covers three areas: first, a political area; second, an economic area that has to do with power and ideology; third, a cultural area, which involves identity and value.

CDA is concerned with ‘the emergence, hegemony, recontextualization, and operationalization of discourses’ (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2010:1214). The discourses emerge and flourish as certain ways of representing and interpreting reality in certain ways, in which meanings constructed and construed. These particular discourses are circulated, acknowledged, and sustained by the powerful agencies; hence they accomplish a dominance over the other discourses and then become hegemonic (*idem*). For instance, the production of the nationalist discourse by the Turkish media has made this nationalist discourse hegemonic; and that discourse is in constant denial of the Armenian genocide (Göçek, 2015). Representation conveys and constructs meanings through images, sound and written language (Hall, 2013). Thus, it certainly matters in the Turkish newspapers who represents whom and in what specific context. In this way, the denial of Armenian genocide becomes the prevailing discourse in the press because the perpetrator, the state, silences the victims and narrates their stories according to the official ideology of the state. Representation is about the description, definition, depiction and symbolization of things (*idem*). Media representation does not mirror the reality it encompasses various stereotypes, racism, negative and positive representations. The representation of vulnerable groups and minorities in the mass media generally tends to be negative and biased (Fürsich, 2010). In this respect, Fairclough’s approach and particularly his version of CDA as applied to media analysis provides a fruitful means of investigating of representations of an oppressed group, the Kurds, in the discourse of Turkish press.

CDA defines discourses as modes of representation (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012), and reaches beyond texts and linguistics in order to question (1) the social process of selecting subjects of knowledge and (2) the production of

knowledge about these subjects. I use CDA, particularly Fairclough's approach, to investigate both the representation of the Kurdish question and the media discourse in its social and historical Turkish context. In this historical framework, I expose the discursive roots of misrepresentation, dominance and power in the media discourses and the interdiscursive and intertextual relations that those discourses bear to the state official discourses. To unearth the power relations and ideological uses of language that are at work in Turkish media, I use CDA to disclose linguistic 'naturalization', linguistic opacity, and the ideological aspects of texts production (as in Fairclough, 1995b). Media texts, such as news articles, often take it for granted that they mirror realities; nevertheless, Fairclough (1995b) maintains that these accounts of realities rely on the purposes, benefits and the social positions of those who manufacture them. According to Fairclough (1995b:104), an analysis of the representational process in newspaper texts will dwell upon [:]

What choices are made – what is included and what is excluded, what is implicit, what is explicit, what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded, what is thematized and what is unthematized, what process types and categories are drawn upon to represent events, and so on.

In other words, and as Fairclough says elsewhere, an analysis of 'communicative events' (*idem*:54) depends upon the context and the text that frames the sociocultural and discourse practice of media discourse. The CDA aims to uncover disguised and hidden ideological messages in media texts that produce hegemonic discourses over the marginalised and oppressed groups such as ethnic and religious minorities. Texts as forms of language play a central role in constituting hegemonic discourses while Fairclough focuses on decoding hegemonic struggle in the text by investigating text with some following terms: use of transitivity, active and passive voices,

nominalisation, lexicalisation, cohesion, and choices of mood, modality and polarity (Janks, 1997). These concepts, as discussed throughout the thesis and further in finding chapters, make hidden messages explicit and decode the ideological editorial choices behind media texts. For instance, using the passive voice, regarding the executions of the Kurds in Turkish media, hides the perpetrators, the state forces, and makes it vague for the readers to take a position against the state violence.

It is true that CDA has been criticised on several fronts. Anaïs (2013:124) argues that CDA uses an ‘impoverished’ concept of discourse that is also ‘too linguistic.’ Likewise, Anaïs (*idem*) suggests that CDA should benefit from the Foucauldian concept of genealogy. After all, CDA makes use of Foucault’s own notion of discourse. However, Morgan (2010) states that it is a difficult task for the CDA to analyse newspapers’ discourse with Foucauldian discourse because Foucauldian discourse is quite broad and complex. Some other criticisms concern the method. They charge that discourse analysis approaches lack a common method (*idem*). And this confused the inexperienced researchers because of similarities between the concepts of analysis in CDA. Discourse Analysis (DA) comprises various approaches to research rather than being a single specific approach. In order to have a specific approach, I employ Fairclough’s CDA approach for its advantages whilst acknowledging its drawbacks. Fairclough’s version of CDA, particularly for media discourse analysis, delivers valuable means to reveal the hegemonic struggle in the meaning-making process in the news reports (Fairclough, 1995b, 2013) while the struggle aims to establish the elites’ moral-intellectual and political dominance over the society (Theory, 2005). Although the CDA questions both texts and contexts when deconstructing and decoding meanings in texts, Breeze (2011) argues that CDA places texts insufficiently into their contexts being in a rush to engage the

text itself. In order to avoid the force of those criticisms, I shall consider not only the texts at issue but also context they were produced in, in the form of news articles to make power layers more transparent and visible by enunciating the socio-political conditions of Turkey.

The main reason for choosing CDA is that there are limited methods for textual analysis. An alternative to CDA is content analysis, a method of quantitative analysis that uses a large number of texts in order to disclose descriptive features of texts (Deacon et al. 2007). However, content analysis is not as a satisfactory method to analyse the constructed meanings and power relations embedded in texts. For instance, as Deacon et al. (*idem*) maintain, content analysis only responds to queries that the researcher poses and it does not provide an opportunity to delineate and cultivate new ideas and approaches to texts. Since content analysis is limited, I deploy CDA. The media analysis of CDA enables us to examine meticulously Turkish news – examine it as a form of discourse - because it explores certain aspects of news efficiently. It reflects on visual images, vocabulary, text structure (headline, editorial preferences) and polyphonic voices in texts (Fairclough, 1995b). News as a discourse conveyed through media representation determines what is heard and seen, privileging the producers' worldviews as common sense. Hartley (1982) maintains that 'social industries-like institutions' (newspapers) produces news (texts) that make audiences addicted to the use of certain codes and concepts, with which audiences construe the world. However, the content analysis does not cover such critical aspects about the structure and production of texts (data) because content analysis focuses on the quantitative structure of data. On the other hand, as a qualitative method, CDA asks detailed questions to investigate the production process of text and meaning, particularly when oppressed and marginal groups are in

question. In this context, I investigate the texts with various questions when texts are related to ethnicities, national identities and races by considering the following questions posed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001: xiii):

- How are persons named and referred to linguistically?
- What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?
- By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimate the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others?
- From what perspective or point of view are these namings, attributions and arguments expressed?
- Are the respective discriminating utterances articulated overtly, are they even intensified or are they mitigated?

These questions afford significant strategies for understanding Turkish news texts and the ideological positions of their producers. As I discussed text, context, and discourse in the context of CDA, Fairclough's CDA guides my research to track down representation of Kurdish question with chosen events in the discourse of Turkish newspapers.

4.2 The data and its collection

4.2.1 The scope of the data

Data and its collection are the foundations of any research project (Bryman, 2012). Primarily chosen material for qualitative text analysis constitutes the major point of the research by answering the questions posed by researchers (Deacon et al. 2007). To understand the media discourse about the Kurdish question, I had to decide what kind of data I should collect, so as to answer my research questions as

fully as possible. I have utilised the books, thesis, reports and various sources on the recent circumstances of the Kurdish question and the Turkish media in order to accurately select the right newspapers and events. To research professionally, Brennen (2013) states that ‘qualitative’ researchers work to collect all proofs that they can find and they want to immerse themselves in all significant materials relevant to the researches they are carrying out. In addition to, I started to examine, not only the recent history of Turkey, but also moments, relating to the Kurds, from the nineteenth century to the present time. These moments in Turkey’s politics throw light on the nature of the Kurdish question in Turkey.

I decided to narrow the chronological scope of my research to recent relevant political changes that have to do with the Kurdish question. Here is one reason for that choice. The open archives contain much material on recent developments whereas the archives about early Kurdish history such as the first rebellions remain inaccessible. Also, I had to focus upon a relatively short period for several reasons. I was conducting this research at a distance from the sources of data. There was the possibility of being monitored by the state upon the pretext of being a risk to state security and the longer the period at issue the more likely the suspicion. And I lacked access to relevant archives. Hence, the period of my research is 01.01.2009 to 31.12.2014. Still: as said, that period is a significant one; it covers some radical changes in the political scene in Turkey. For one thing, that period includes the negotiation process between the PKK and the state and also the period of the consolidation of the Islamist party –AKP. In this period, the AKP changed the state discourse by adopting conservative neo-Ottomanism and partially ignoring secular Kemalism. Once the time period was settled, I moved on doing research and readings the academic and non-academic works to find concise criteria for selecting

cases. Deacon (et al. 2007) indicate that the first step in the extensive study is to deeply read and analyse fundamental narratives assembled by other researchers. In this regard, I benefited from newspapers articles, books, column articles, and interviews with the experts, NGO reports, and all sorts of academic materials produced on the Kurds and Turkey.

Having read widely and consulted various people – academics and non-academics – expert on the Turkish media and Kurdish question, I selected certain events. Those events are ones of undoubted significance and which together comprise a sufficiently typical sample of Turkish media representation of the Kurdish question. Then, I contacted journalists together with, again, various academics and experts, in order to discuss the selected cases. Those discussions took place in the academic year 2016-2017. I met some of the discussants face to face, in Istanbul or in the UK. The remainder of the discussions took place via Skype and telephone. This process helped to draw boundaries of the research and choose the most relevant events for the research. Initially, I had planned to collect data covering not only various events of 2009-2015 but also various political parties and three (other) political actors. However, after collecting the requisite data, I realised that analysing all of that data was not a realistic goal for a single project. Also, the Eventful Approach, as explained further, made it easy to choose three major events for the research instead of numerous events.

4.2.2 The usefulness of the ‘Eventful Approach’

The so-called Eventful approach, developed by William H. Sewell, is designed to focus upon certain events (cases) in order thereby to have an efficient

way of exploring wider social changes.³⁰ According to Sewell, some events can contribute enormously to the transformation of society, since social life, after all, is ‘composed of countless happenings or encounters in which persons and groups of persons engage in social action’ (Sewell, 2005:100). Sewell defines a historic event as comprising a ‘relatively rare subclass of happenings’ (2005:110) that lead to a radical social change. One might argue that the significant events have the power to create dislocations and re-articulations in steady political discourses in a short period of time. If carefully applied, the Eventful approach allows one to use relatively few events as a kind of key to many other events. In an attempt at making good use of the theory I have chosen three major events occurring in Turkey in order to analyse their reflections in the media discourse. The media representation of these significant events can adequately provide the patterns and characteristics discourse of the Turkish media about the Kurdish question. Besides making use of Sewell’s the Eventful approach for selecting events, I benefited also from what Sewell calls ‘purposeful sampling’ when I was selecting the events and newspapers for this research. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to decide and determine which cases, events and data are the best for the study. The justification for such sampling is to choose rich cases (events) deserving in-depth enquiry because they offer meticulous insight for the study (Emmel, 2013). Also, as discussed already in this section, during the process of selecting the cases and newspapers, I consulted many scholars across a wide spectrum of expertise; in that way I hope to have avoided personal bias in my selection.

³⁰ For more information about the Eventful Approach, see: Sewell Jr, W.H., 2005. *Logics of History: Social theory and social transformation*. London: University of Chicago Press.

4.2.3 The events selected from the Turkish press

My analytical chapters discuss each case together with its historical context. Here, though, I provide a short account of what those events are and why they are suitable foci for my research.

Table 4.1: List of the cases/events and the periods to which they pertain

Case	Period
Peace process	01.01.2009 – 31.12.2014
Roboski massacre	28.12.2011 – 31.12.2014
Kobane protests	01.10.2014 – 31.12.2014

The peace process: I choose to analyse the conflict resolution process, which I mainly call the peace process, between the state, or more precisely the AKP government, and the PKK as well as the left-wing pro-Kurdish party, the HDP. This process, also known as the ‘Democratic initiative’ and as the ‘Kurdish opening’, started in 2009 and ended in the middle of 2015 as discussed in chapters 2 and 7. My treatment of those rather eventful six years will include an account of media representation – of how the media represented, the peace process, the HDP and the PKK and the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan – and an analysis of its effect upon public opinion.

The Roboski massacre: I select the Roboski massacre as the second event for study due to its deep effect upon the political psyche of the Kurds. On 28 December 2011, Turkish F-16 jets killed thirty-four Kurdish villagers who were crossing the border from Iraq into Turkey. Those villagers, nineteen of whom were children, were residents of the village of Roboski in the district of Uludere. They were carrying

(smuggling) petrol and cigarettes with mules and donkeys into Turkey, by night.³¹ Turkish army officers did give the order to the F-16s to bomb and shell the ‘target’, but the officers claimed, later, that they had mistaken the villagers for PKK fighters. Consequently, when the mainstream Turkish media started to report the bombing twelve hours later, they presented it as an accident. By that time news of the airstrike was spread across the Internet. The pro-government actors and newspapers referred consistently and deliberately to ‘the Uludere incident’ the better to reduce the massacre to a technical mistake so as, in turn, to disguise the tragedy and exonerate the perpetrator. Nevertheless, the Roboski massacre remained a frequent and controversial topic for the media and the public for the following year because it was a significant challenge to the peace process. For these reasons, the massacre affords a uniquely important opportunity for analysis of the media, and particularly of its representation of a political act as a merely humanitarian disaster.

The Kobane protests: The protests, known also as the protests of 6–7 October (‘6-7 Ekim olayları’ in Turkish), were the result of Turkey’s inaction about the siege of Kobane by the Islamic State (IS). Kobane is a Kurdish town in Syria that was under control of the Syrian Kurds. On the request of the HDP, thousands of Kurds took to the streets in Turkey to protest against government stance – or lack of it – towards IS. The protests began on 6 October 2014 and continued until 8 October. Initially the protests were mainly in Kurdish provinces, but gradually they spread across Turkey. It was not long before the protests descended into violence between

³¹ I try to avoid calling this trade ‘smuggling’, because these Kurdish villagers were merely trading with the Kurds on the other side of the border (as explained in chapter 5). However, for the sake of clarity in thesis sometimes I refer to the villagers as smugglers. While the Turkish state considers the Kurdish ‘smugglers’ as criminals, I do simply consider them as local people trading with one another.

the police and demonstrators. The state imposed curfews in the Kurdish south-eastern region, despite the curfews, the violence resulted in deaths of fifty people in less than two weeks until a call by the imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan ended the protests. During the demonstrations the media gave them much coverage and frequently reported opinions to the effect that the protests were ‘blocking’ the peace process. The coverage at issue deserves close attention because it allows one to examine how the Turkish press dealt with a potentially pivotal political moment. Prudently selected and meticulously analysed, a case can greatly illuminate a process of social transformation (Sewell, 2005). Thus, an analysis of the protests can provide a clear and holistic view of the representation of the Kurds and the Kurdish question.

4.2.4 The selection the newspapers

The reason that I will reveal the representation of the Kurdish question via the *press* is that the newspapers are the most frequent source of daily news and information for the public. The Turkish press has a powerful impact on public opinion on social issues. Many Turkish papers are owned by conglomerates that have close ties to various political and economic powers including, notably, the state and executive. For that reason, and as I explain in various later chapters, the mainstream Turkish press was intolerant of, biased towards and discriminatory against the Kurds (Algan, 2019; Bulut, 2005; Demir & Zeydanlioğlu, 2010; Şur, 2016; Yuksel-Pecen, 2018). Still, there were and are few newspapers that may be called ‘alternative’. These have lower circulations and adopt a relatively wide range of sometimes heterodox – often leftist – perspectives upon the Kurds.

The newspapers I chose for the research have differing political agendas, ideologies and affiliations. Each of the chosen papers has the highest circulation of any paper with its ideological bracket. Two papers, Kemalist *Hürriyet* and Political Islamist (Erdogansit) *Sabah*, tend to exclude, marginalise and misrepresent oppressed groups, especially the Kurds. The third newspaper that I chose is *Birgün*. That paper is more left-wing and reports upon such groups more neutrally and sympathetically.

Table 4. 2: Ideological affiliation and ownership of three newspapers, 2009-2015

Newspaper	Ownership	Ideological orientation	Relationship with government (AKP)	Total number of relevant articles ³²
<i>Hürriyet</i>	Doğan Group	Kemalist / mainstream / centre-right / relatively secular	Variable, from somewhat pro- to somewhat anti-government	4287
<i>Birgün</i>	Independent cooperative	Leftist / liberal democrat / secular	Conflictual	940
<i>Sabah</i>	Calik Group (2008-2013), Kalyon Group (2013-present)	Mainstream / centre-right / conservative / political Islamist	Pro-government / cooperates with government	1976

Hürriyet: *Hürriyet* (in Turkish, *Liberty*) is owned by the Doğan Holding conglomerate, which primarily operates in energy, trade, tourism, industry, media and is one of the largest conglomerates in Turkey. *Hürriyet* is Turkey's first

³² I analysed 7203 articles in total from these three newspapers.

commercial newspaper, founded in 1948, and it has the highest circulation numbers, selling more 300,000 copies daily.³³ It represents the views of the Kemalists, has a centre-right political stance, and adopts a superior and Oriental discourse on the Kurdish question and by dint of all that it aligns with the state (Demir & Zeydanlioğlu, 2010; Yuksel-Pecen, 2018; Yumul & Ozkirimli, 2000). Indeed with its well-known motto ‘Turkey belongs to Turks’ and with the Turkish flag and a picture of Atatürk on every front page, *Hürriyet* is the flagship of the secular state elite. *Hürriyet*’s owner, Aydın Dogan, owns many newspapers (*Fanatik*, *Posta*, *Radikal* and *Hürriyet Daily News*) and some popular television channels (Channel D and CNN Turk) and few radio channels and has invested in various sectors and state mega-projects. Dogan received major economic incentives and subsidies from the state and for that reason his media group has remained loyal to the discourse of the AKP government (Arsan, 2013; Keleş, 2014; Tunç, 2015; Yesil, 2014). However, and as shown in Table 4.2, *Hürriyet* conflicts somewhat with the AKP. For, *Hürriyet*, though in some respects the voice of the establishment, is Kemalist whereas the AKP is to a degree Islamist. This divergence has led to political and economic disagreement between the paper and the government. Nonetheless for the most part *Hürriyet* has taken the AKP’s line on the Kurds.³⁴

Sabah: *Sabah* is a conservative newspaper that may be called the flagship not of the secular elite but of the AKP. It has the second highest circulation, selling more

³³ For total circulation numbers of national daily newspapers in Turkey, see: <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj>. Accessed: 13 October 2017.

³⁴ As mentioned in chapter 3. *Hürriyet* was sold to another pro-AKP group, the Demiroren group. The chronological scope of my research excludes that later period of the paper.

than 300,000 copies daily.³⁵ *Sabah* is part of one of the largest media groups, namely the Turkuvaz Media group that in turn has been owned by the Kalyon Group (*Cemal Kalyoncu*) since 2013. Cemal Kalyoncu has subcontracted the state's large-scale projects, such as Istanbul New international airport and the Metrobus public transportation project in Istanbul, thanks to his close alliance with Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Tunç, 2015; Yesil, 2014). Previously *Sabah* was owned by Çalık Holding, another entity close to Erdogan. Berat Albayrak, the son-in-law of Erdoğan and Minister of Treasury and Finance of Turkey, was working as the CEO of Çalık Holding until late 2013. Even though the owners changed, *Sabah* went on to be the prominent representative of the AKP and to advocate its Islamist and neo-liberal politics in Turkey. As the owners of *Sabah* have a lion's share, so to speak, of state-subsidised business, such advocacy is to be expected. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, then, are mainstream newspapers that have somewhat different ideological orientations. While *Sabah* was the mouthpiece of the AKP, *Hürriyet*, as the representative of Kemalism, was slightly critical of AKP policies concerning the Kurdish question.

Birgün: The third newspaper is the critical and left-wing *Birgün*. It has a relatively low circulation in the low 10.000s,³⁶ although previously, between 2009 and 2005, it had a higher circulation rate of 30, 000. *Birgün* was founded in 2004 by various leftist corporations, trade unions and intellectuals. Unlike the other two newspapers, it is not owned by a conglomerate; therefore, it is inclined to challenge

³⁵ For total circulation numbers for the Turkish national dailies, see <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj>. Accessed: 13 October 2017.

³⁶ See: <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj>. Accessed 13 October 2017.

right-wing hegemony that is produced by the mainstream newspapers. Criticizing the mainstream press for favouring the interests of private companies and the policies of neoliberalism, *Birgün* defines itself as ‘the people’s newspaper’. It takes a leftist-critical perspective upon political, social and environmental issues and has much to say about gender inequality. (Ünan, 2015). Contrary to *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, *Birgün* severely criticises the AKP and the state on many fronts, including the Kurdish question. It has adopted a moderate representation of the Kurds by criticizing violent state policies. To disclose multiple aspects of the Turkish press, I disregard the binary opposition of two newspapers, and I choose three newspapers each with its own position on the ideological spectrum.

4.2.5 The selection of keywords

I collected data in the case of each of the events that I treat mainly by means of a Python software program and I stored the results in Excel spreadsheets. In order to collect the most relevant data regarding the cases, in each case I made a list of the keywords for a specific period. Although the scope of this research is 2009-2015, each of the events at issue brought its own narrower time-frame. For instance, the Kobane protests took place in the last months of 2014 and so those months form the main focus of my investigation of that event. Now, the press and the public use various names to refer to each of the events, names influenced by political stance. Therefore, in order to capture all of the data relevant to each event, I searched for all of the names used commonly to refer to it. My corpus comprised the digital archives of the newspapers as well as the public archives containing the paper versions of the newspapers.

Ultimately, I settled upon the following keywords.³⁷ These are the terms for which I searched my data-set using the aforementioned software. I list the terms by event. In the case of each event I give the period at issue. In the case of each term I give the Turkish in parentheses.

Case 1: the peace process; 2009–2015

- a) The peace process (*Barış Süreci*)
- b) The resolution process (*Çözüm Süreci*)
- c) The Kurdish initiative/opening (*Kürt açılımı*)
- d) The democratic initiative (*Demokratik açılım*)
- e) The unity and fraternity project (*Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Projesi*)

Case 2: the Roboski massacre; 2011–2015

- a) Roboski (which is the name of the village)
- b) Roboski incident (*Roboski olayı*)
- c) Uludere (the name of district)
- d) Uludere incident (*Uludere olayı*)

Case 3: the Kobani protests; 01/10/2014–31/12/2014

- a) Kobani protests (*Kobani protestlari*)
- b) Kobani incidents (*Kobani olaylari*)
- c) Kobane demonstrations (*Kobani eylemleri*)
- d) 6–7 October incidents (*6–7 Ekim olaylari*)

Now I move on the collection of data from these newspapers.

³⁷ I made a second list of keywords (see appendixes) and I used those keywords to search for relevant materials in my main data (data collected through the keywords in the first list).

4.2.6 The research process in Istanbul

I collected all my data from digital and physical archives in Istanbul. I worked, in June and July 2017, in the paper's headquarters in Istanbul. After contacting a senior manager in the archive department at *Sabah*, I was able to access their digital archives in the centre of *Sabah* in Istanbul. I gathered the data using the pre-prepared keywords from digital archives covering the years 2011 to 2014 inclusive. However, since the paper had not fully digitised its archives, I gathered the data of 2009 and 2010 from paper archive of the Atatürk Library (İBB Atatürk Kitaplığı). I scanned all the printed copies of the newspapers and took photographs of all the relevant articles. Additionally, I took photographs of some the front-page headlines pertaining to my three cases. In this way, I aimed to compare the news in digital data with news in the printed newspapers, and to have the data in two formats allowed me to check the reliability of the data.

Hürriyet granted me very limited access to its archives. Although they allowed me to examine and deploy my search terms upon their digital archive (an archive at the centre of the *Hürriyet* complex in Istanbul), they only provided very limited digital data such as a few headlines pertaining to my three events. The rest of the data for *Hürriyet* I collected via the digital archives of an academic in Bilgi University. The data for *Birgün* newspaper was gathered from the same source, although *Birgün* provided me with a full-year online subscription, which allowed me to verify the data that I had obtained from the academic. It is worth mentioning also that, unlike *Birgün*'s, the digital archives of both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* are not accessible through subscription to the public. I should add also when collecting data from these three newspapers I also collected all photographs and other images that were attached to data.

4.3 The analysis

I used analytical strategies additional to the aforementioned approaches in order to make sense of the data. I started to read the media materials, including news reports, columns and opinion pages. As the data is very large, I used the QSR NVivo program to search the keywords on the data. NVivo makes it possible to see which articles are about which events – for it analyses word frequency. Now, the order of events, the frequency of the representation and the particular words used are significant in CDA analysis (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). Useful tools provided by NVivo include word frequency analysis; ‘cluster analysis’; and the generation of ‘word clouds’. Those tools help to determine which articles are the most relevant ones. However, for a few sets of data, I was not able to use NVivo, the reason being that some news articles from *Sabah* are not in a text format amenable to keyword search. So, I analysed this data manually but on the same broad principle as employed by the software, namely, the use of keywords to find the articles most relevant to my several cases. Additionally, I used the Python program to locate the images and other photographs attached to the various pieces of text.

The articles selected by the foregoing method I read several times. I was then able to detect themes, patterns and repeated arguments in the press coverage. At this stage too NVivo helped. Coding of the data on NVivo to create certain themes can help the researcher to assess the data analysis quickly. Using NVivo made the analysis quick and accurate when it re-codes the relevant part of the news articles from the themes that emerged in the newspapers, such as ‘blaming the victim’ or ‘peace-making’. NVivo makes it possible to swiftly evaluate and compare the emerged themes with each other based on similar subjects and patterns. Before doing the data analysis, the coder requires to ‘read between the lines’ to unearth

concealed meaning in the sources (Deacon et al. 2007). Thus, in every event (case), I coded the data and categorized it based on certain themes in an attempt to reach a deep understanding of the patterns of discourse and representation of the Kurdish question. Then I read the coded data line by line for numerous times, and this way guided me to find similarities and differences in news discourses and to decode the concealed meaning, symbols and references in the newspaper.

4.4 Self-reflection upon the research process

Writing about an oppressed nation, such as the stateless Kurdish people, has its difficulties and risks. The writer might get into a trap of using sensationalist or polemical narrative. Alternatively he/she might embrace the discourse of a powerful actor, such as Turkish state. Linda T. Smith (2012), in her *Decolonising Methodologies*, states that writing is a dangerous act, and that unless we are critical towards our own writing, we might maintain and reproduce non-innocent discourses. For that reason, I shall attempt now, albeit at limited length, to reflect upon my research process.

Qualitative textual analysis via CDA is a liquid process of reading and interpreting the narration of these specifically chosen events in textual materials. Applying discourse analysis to contentious Kurdish question unavoidably obliges a reflexive account of the study. Particularly in the context of CDA, reflexivity entails critical investigation, by the researcher him- or herself, of the researcher's assumptions and the possible effects of those assumptions upon the research. The premise here is that a researcher's experience of fieldwork and theoretical framework 'shapes the process of data collection and analysis' (Tonkiss, 2004:260). I provide an account of what I experienced during the research. Thereby, readers will

know the context of this study and will have comprehensive approach towards my position. A researcher with Kurdish identity and who is critical of the ideology of the Turkish state takes risks in challenging the dominant discourse in Turkey and even in conducting research there. The state targets, criminalizes and sacks the academics who research the Kurdish question if they do not adopt the state discourse towards it. To give a clear example, in January 2016 more than a thousand academics signed a petition appealing to the state authorities to end the state of emergency and bring an end to the state violence in Kurdish regions, regions that at the time had been under the curfew for months. The attention of the media and of the government was caught immediately. Soon afterwards, public prosecutors opened investigations accusing the academics of spreading 'terrorist organisation propaganda'. The result was the suspension, detention and arrest of many academics (Baser et al, 2017). Such intolerance has taught me what I could face back in Turkey and made me reconsider my position as a researcher. The deployment of the hegemonic power of the state discourse against these academics demonstrates how the media discourse of the Kurdish question is shaped significantly by the state, particularly when the media targeted the academics by making false accusations of terrorism (for it was not only the public prosecutors who did this). Having witnessed that Turkish state took stern measures against the academics has created numerous personal and political concerns, which has impacted my PhD progress negatively. The state dismissed two of my siblings from their jobs because the state considers them to be threats to national security. Also, my journalist brother, working for Turkish and Kurdish left-leaning outlets, was imprisoned for eight months without trial on charges of terrorisms. When he was released in 2018, the state issued a further arrest warrant. At this point he escaped to Switzerland, where he was granted asylum just a

few months ago. This political criminalization of my family has impeded the process of my work and made me think I might face some political repercussions once I return to Turkey.

Coming from a Kurdish background and hence being familiar with the Kurdish question has brought advantages and disadvantages. Being a Kurd brings responsibilities and difficulties. The pro-Kurdish political actors and activists expect Kurdish individuals to openly manifest their Kurdishness by supporting the Kurdish struggle and the rights of the Kurds as well as to know Kurdish history. On the other hand, the state and pro-state nationalist actors expect Kurdish individuals to acknowledge the state discriminatory discourse by taking the discriminatory line that there is no Kurdish question. Thus, researchers are forced frequently to take a side and develop their arguments accordingly. But as a researcher, my purpose is to cross the boundaries imposed by both sides and to set aside expectations in order to open up space beyond the existing discourse about the Kurdish question by taking a critical approach. However, being Kurdish and knowing the context becomes an advantage when researching the Kurds. Being aware of my ethnic identity – partly precisely because of being subject to the state ideology – I have been acquainted with Kurdish question and its dynamics. Therefore, it has not been difficult to track down Kurdish history and to decide which events I should analyse for the thesis. The CDA approach highlights the importance of reflecting upon the research process because choosing and analysing a particular set of data relies on the judgment of the researcher. Thus, the reflective statements in this section can provide an account of how the experiences, biases and interests of the researchers affect the data analysis and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It is worth noting that I do not merely

identify myself with Kurdish ethnic identity but rather, among many other identities, I consider myself as a researcher working upon the Kurdish question.

It is worth to mention that before embarking upon the data collection, I faced serious, burgeoning difficulties. Having decided upon which events to research and which newspapers to use, in the summer of 2016, I went to Turkey firstly to collect data from national archives and subsequently to obtain permission from Ministry of National Education, the main sponsor of my PhD, to go to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, that latter institution having granted me a research fellowship for two academic terms. However, in 2016 the military coup attempt had postponed my collection of data, thereby extending my doctoral work by a year. On 15 July 2016, a *coup d'état* was attempted in Turkey, and the government accused US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, who is in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania, and his followers in the army, of being responsible for the attempted coup – and an attempt that resulted in the death of 241 Turkish citizens.³⁸ After the coup attempt, the government declared a state of emergency. At that point state institutions started to investigate their staff and other citizens. For instance, the Ministry of Education investigated students holding state funding, and removed the funding of more than two hundred students whom the government alleged to be affiliated with the Fetullah Gülen movement.³⁹ Since I have state funding, I also went through this – stressful – investigation process. Government decrees issued under the state of

³⁸ A report by Human Rights Watch provides detail about the attempted coup and its aftermath. See: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/turkey>. Accessed 10 November 2017.

³⁹ One may note that Fetullah Gülen movement has always been hostile towards the Kurds.

emergency dismissed thousands of academics (Baser et al, 2017) and purged civil servants. The waves of purges caused fear – fear of suspension and dismissal and of being labelled Gülenist. My work, for the moment, stopped.

A month after the coup attempt, I travelled to Turkey and contacted the institutions and archives that contained the data I needed. However, due to the state of emergency, state institutions imposed many restrictions upon access to the sources and archives, especially for ‘sensitive’ Kurdish material. When the state of emergency was declared, the Kurdish region was under curfew already, due to the intense conflict in the region between Kurdish militias and the state since the mid of 2015. A United Nations report (2017) indicates that in this conflict, apart from a heavy death toll among state officers and militias, 1, 200 civilians were killed by the police, thousands of houses were demolished, and 335,000 people displaced internally by the state. All of this, as well as the attempted coup, had made the state institutions more ‘sensitive’ about the Kurdish question and eventually those institutions rejected my request to access the data at their disposal. Also, in a formal meeting, state officials made it clear that students should not study Turkey or collect data from Turkey as they might give the data to foreign countries to use against Turkey. The newspapers were similarly reluctant to provide the data and my request for data was ignored. Meanwhile, the Ministry of National Education rejected the confirmation of my visit to the University of Michigan without providing a reason. Apparently, the decision was made in protest against the United States for harbouring the alleged mastermind of the coup, Fetullah Gülen. Another possible reason could be that I did not meet the government’s security requirement for travelling to the US. Despite two months of effort in Turkey I was able neither to collect the data nor to get permission to visit the US. Upon my return to the United

Kingdom I questioned my reasons for studying such a dangerous topic within a chaotic political atmosphere.

After waiting a long time, in May 2017 I was able to contact some institutions to seek help in accessing the archives that I needed. A week after I had sent these institutions the list of the newspapers and corpora, together with a document explaining my research topic and how I intended to use the data. Among the many institutions I had contact, only the Turkish Parliament archive section provided some data. That data consisted of thousands of pages. The corpus they had sent consisted of numerous newspaper archives in text format, although some data was omitted on purpose. It was impossible to analyse this data since its selection was biased and it was too vast, filled with irrelevant newspapers and subjects. Consequently, I had to plan another trip to Turkey to collect the data from three newspapers *Birgün*, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*. In June, in order to obtain the data, I went to Turkey and visited those newspapers' headquarters as well as many state archives. *Birgün*, which is a leftist newspaper, welcomed my inquiry and provided help to get the data from their online archives. However, due to a technical issue and their lack of information technology staff, I had to find an expert to extract this data from *Birgün*. By contrast, and to my surprise, *Hürriyet* was of little help to me. In response to my request to visit the newspaper, staff at *Hürriyet* directed me towards other, and non-digital archives. I did manage to reach the ombudsman of the newspaper and to get a reference from him which made a visit to *Hürriyet* possible. Nonetheless, and although the staff of the archive allowed me to search for the news articles, they made available only very limited data. They made it clear that it is not the newspaper's policy to share its materials with the public but only with those who have references from senior staff or the manager of the paper. I did succeed, as said

in (§4.2.5), collecting the rest of the *Hürriyet* data from the archive of an academic in a private university. The last newspaper, *Sabah*, surprised me by providing most of the data that I wanted from it. My success here may have owed to the persistence of my requests and the frequency of my visits to the headquarters of the newspaper in Istanbul. I was expecting that *Sabah* would be the most difficult paper to get data out from because I thought conservative *Sabah* would be strict about the data sharing. After I met the archive manager, everything went smoothly apart being asked a few times whether I worked for the UK government, an occupation not considered a good qualification at a pro-government newspaper. Being in the headquarters of these three newspapers, and having discussions with their journalists, helped me develop a sharper understanding of the ways in which those papers treated my three cases and the Kurdish question more generally.

During the data collection process, and more precisely while visiting the newspapers, people had probed my ethnic identity, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. That has been a significant challenge for me because having a Kurdish background and studying the Kurdish question made archive officers suspicious and brought my position towards the Kurdish question into discussion. For instance, in one of the newspaper headquarters, I was asked to express my opinion on who ended the peace process. The aim was to determine my politics – to learn whether I supported Kurdish politics. Here my access to data was at risk.

Before travelling to Turkey to collect the data and to do research in the archives, I had contacted many institutions in advance, but most of these institutions including libraries do not have complete hardcover archives for my cases, let alone digital archives. Besides that, my intention to collect data from the archives on the

Kurds made librarians and institutions hesitant and reluctant to provide help and information. Only a small number of private companies have digital archives and they require a great deal of money before they will provide data. The lack of digital archives and the difficulties imposed upon accessing any of the archives made me think that collective memory is being hidden and covered, but also that my research might contribute to exposing facts buried in those archives.

4.5 Conclusion to the chapter

I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse the dataset from three newspapers each with a high circulation rate. CDA has occasioned some worry because it does not offer very specific methodological strategies and approaches. To overcome these concerns, and besides making use of works that took other approaches – works by Wodak, Richardson, Van Dijk and others – I adopted principally one particular version of CDA, namely the approach advocated by Fairclough. I made use too of Hall's work on representation and discourse in order to have a better understating of these two concepts and their intermingled usage in the media studies. I have made use also of ideas of a more general nature: notions of ideology, discourse, hegemony and representation all of which have broadened my horizon and influenced my understanding of media texts. Additionally, I found that several works on the representation by the media of refugees, black people and the Muslims helped me to establish a frame for my analysis of the representation of the Kurds. Elgamri (2008) is one such study.

I tried also, when analysing the news source at issue, to take into account the effects of ideology, discourse and the hegemony of Turkish state. This strategy made the representation of Kurdish question in Turkish media transparent and it assisted

this research to unearth state dominance over the media discourse. To conduct research into this six-year period – a period that included many dynamics and changes in politics – has been challenging for me. Nevertheless, this research has changed my perception of the media role in negotiating of a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question. To conclude, this research has been a valuable experience to comprehend the dynamics and changes of the Kurdish question and the representation of those moments (changes and dynamics) in the Turkish media. It also explains how the media discourse is shaped by the state official discourse.

The next chapter is the first empirical chapter. It is about the Roboski massacre.

5 The Roboski massacre and *homo sacer*

This chapter is about the representation of the Roboski massacre. Specifically, the chapter considers how that massacre was represented by three high-circulated newspapers, each possessed of a different ideology. See Table 5.1. The table indicates the political affiliation and ownership of the newspapers and the number of articles that I analysed. The research aims to provide a critical analysis of the media discourse of this atrocity. It also examines to what extent the media internalizes the Turkish State Discourse (TSD) in presenting this massacre. In so doing I shall draw upon Stanley Cohen's concept of denial. I explain the massacre to see how the media presents the Roboski with imperative denial, rationalization, scapegoating, misrepresentation and victim-blaming in the context of denial. Also, I provide an account of the massacre that contests the dominant account of the state and of the mainstream media.

Table: 5.1: Ideological affiliation and ownership of three newspapers, 2009–2015⁴⁰

Newspaper	Ownership	Ideological orientation	Relationship with government (AKP)	The number of relevant articles
<i>Hürriyet</i>	Doğan Group	Kemalist / mainstream / centre-right / relatively Secular	In moderate conflict with / Somewhat pro-government	632
<i>Birgün</i>	Independent cooperation	Leftist / liberal Democrat / secular	Conflictual	294
<i>Sabah</i>	Calik Group (2008-2013), Kalyon Group (2013-present)	Mainstream / centre-right / conservative/ Political Islamist	Pro-government/ Cooperates with government	114

5.1 Roboski: a village at the end of the world

5.1.1 What happened in Roboski?

An American-made ‘Predator’ drone, controlled by Turkish intelligence, was flying over the border between Turkey and Iraq on the 28th of December 2011. It detected a group of people and some 50 mules, crossing the border into Turkey. Shortly afterwards the detection, Turkish F16 jets and artillery started to bomb the group between 21:39-22:24. This air assault near Roboski (in Turkish: Ortasu) and Bêcih (in Turkish: Gülyazı) villages in Uludere (*Qaliban* in Kurdish), the district of

⁴⁰ I insert this table at beginning of this chapter merely to provide some information about the newspapers; see chapter 3 for detail.

Şırnak Province, continued for forty-five minutes.⁴¹ Soon it was revealed that the travelling group comprised thirty-eight villagers who were making a round-trip from Iraq to Turkey, and that their mules carried sugar, cigarettes and gasoline. Following the attack upon the travelling band, it came to light that F16 had bombed thirty-eight Kurdish villagers, of whom thirty-four were massacred as the result of the strike. Nineteen victims out of thirty-four were teenagers who were engaged in smuggling in order to support their families and their own education.

‘Roboski’ is the Kurdish name of the village closest to the site of the killing. Those critical of the Turkish state speak of the airstrike as ‘the Roboski massacre’. Supporters of the state use descriptions such as, ‘Uludere airstrike’ and ‘Uludere incident’, thereby avoiding the use of the Kurdish name for the village. Turkey had banned Kurdish geographical names and replaced them with Turkish ones in order to assimilate and Turkify the Kurds (Al, 2015; Romano, 2006; Aslan, 2015). Before the borders were drawn between Iraqi and Turkey a century ago as explained in chapter 1, the Kurds cohabited with multiple ethnic and religious groups in the region. Without borders, the Kurds were living, trading and travelling until Kurdish land was bifurcated between Turkey and Iraq, where the Kurds found themselves exposed to the restrictions of the modern nation-states (Beşikçi, 1991). The formation of the new borders has turned the trading into smuggling and the traders into illegal smugglers, such as the villagers from Roboski. The borders left the Kurds stateless and defined them as Turks. And being stateless, in modern times, means exclusion

⁴¹ The naming of residential areas is significantly important since preferences of using of Kurdish or Turkish names are part of ideological discourse of the media. See further Bayram M (2016) Roboskî’nin Adı Robozik. *Bianet*. <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/182142-roboski-nin-adi-robozik>. Accessed:8 March 2018.

and absence of legal protection, and this often brings persecution (Bauman, 2006), as in the case of Roboski. The Turkish colonialism in Kurdish geography (Beşikçi, 1991; Dirlik, 2002) with new artificial borders have brought poverty, underdevelopment and deprivation of using natural resources for the Kurds. These conditions forced those villagers to cross the borders for the trading of inexpensive goods.

5.1.2 An ‘operational accident’⁴²

Before considering specific media outlets, it is worth giving an overview of how various sources reacted initially to the massacre in various sources. Turkish television, particularly news channels such NTV, CNN Turk and TRT withheld announcement about the strike for almost twelve hours. No news provider, except Kurdish press agencies, announced the airstrike on their websites until the government and the state officials started to give briefings. Turkish media conglomerates are closely connected to the state by state subsidies (Kaya, 2009; Tunç, 2015; see ch. 3 above); they reported the strike only after it had been acknowledged by the AKP government. The Dutch journalist, Frederike Geerdink,⁴³ who had followed the Kurdish question in Turkey for almost two decades, claims that major TV channels could not broadcast the massacre immediately because of pressure from Prime Minister Erdogan (Geerdink, 2015).

⁴² This heading is a quote from the Deputy Chair of AKP, Hüseyin Çelik.
<https://www.evrensel.net/haber/75865/celikin-roboski-celiskisi>. Accessed:20.08.2018

⁴³ Frederike Geerdink is a journalist and has done many researches on the conflict resolution and Kurdish question in Turkey. Her book on Roboski massacre provides extensive information.

Twelve hours after the bombardment, when the TV channels began to report the event, they preceded their reports with a short statement from the Turkish army: ‘An abnormal activity has been detected on the border that terrorists frequently use as a gateway. The decision was taken to hit the target which was then bombarded between 9:37 pm and 10:24 pm.’ The army claimed that the villagers were mistaken for the PKK. However, inhabitants of Roboski reported that, when they had contacted the army base during the attack, they had been told: ‘we’re just scaring them off’, not hitting them (Geerdink, 2015:12). The witness accounts from victims’ families show that the army already knew who the ‘targets’ were. The Deputy Chair of the AKP, Hüseyin Çelik, stated on 29 of December 2011 that the air strike was an ‘operational accident’. Contrary to Hüseyin Çelik, Erdogan legitimized the attack by saying ‘we have seen similar border activities where they [the PKK] were smuggling arms prior to massive terrorist raids’⁴⁴. On December 30, Erdogan congratulated the army for being ‘sensitive’ on the issue (*idem*). Once they had received new information from the strike scene, government officials began to claim that civilians were mistaken for the PKK. However, it is well known that smugglers do not cross the border without informing military officials first (Oral, 2015). Moreover, Eralp (2015) points out that some of the smugglers’ families belonged to the state-run village guard and that some army members were allowing smuggling in return to a share of the profits. Thus, the army knew that the victims were not PKK members, but rather villagers.

⁴⁴ Bianet (2012) <https://bianet.org/english/human-rights/143200-timeline-what-happened-in-roboski>. Accessed:01 March 2018. For a chronology of the Roboski massacre, see Bianet, which is an independent and well-known news website that publishes news in Turkish, Kurdish and English.

The headlines on 30 December 2011 in various newspapers⁴⁵ covered the massacre according to the newspapers' ideological affiliations. The headline of the conservative *Zaman*, the newspaper that belonged to Gulen movement, was: 'Fatal Intelligence'. The subheading was: "35 of our citizens at the border of North Iraq lost their lives'. The pro-AKP Islamist *Yeni Safak* had a similar headline. It read as follows: 'Fatal Mistake' (accompanied by, albeit in small font, the words: '35 people lost their lives'). The Kemalist-nationalist *Sözcü* newspaper gave a more extreme headline: 'They were carrying weapons'. All conservative newspapers ignored the responsibility of the army and complicity of the government. In contrast to the pro-AKP and Kemalist newspapers, the liberal *Taraf* newspaper condemned the airstrike. Its headline was: 'The state bombed its citizens: 35 dead'. Two left-leaning papers, *Birgün* and *Evrensel*, had headlines about the 'Uludere massacre'. However, the most radical headline was 'Genocide' – that from the pro-Kurdish newspaper, *Özgür Gündem*, the implication being that the AKP's policies towards the Kurds had become genocidal.⁴⁶ The subheading stated that the Turkish army had deliberately massacred thirty-five villagers, many were children. The way I conceive the massacre corresponds mainly to *Özgür Gündem*'s standpoint. *Özgür Gündem*'s discourse differs from the pro-state newspapers in that, for instance, the latter use the passive voice in such formulations as '35 people are dead' and '35 people lost their lives'. This peculiar use of language hides the perpetrators.

I proceed now to a discussion of Cohen's concept of denial.

⁴⁵ Apart from three newspapers I use for this research, I also briefly looked at few other influential newspapers' headlines to show how the press reports the massacre.

⁴⁶ *Özgür Gündem* was shut down on 16 August 2016 by Turkish court over the accusation of spreading the terrorist propaganda of the PKK.

5.1.3 Understanding the concept of denial

Stanley Cohen's works *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* attempts to explain how people deal with the pain and suffering of others when that pain and suffering owes to war, terrorism or genocide. He asserts that either people acknowledge or deny their responsibility. Denial is a common practice for states, institutions and the media. The denial, as an intentional and deliberate act, functions through disinformation, misinformation, cover-up, whitewash and propaganda to respond to the accusations about the atrocities, massacres and wrongdoings (Cohen, 2001). Cohen maintains that denial operates at three levels: personal, cultural and official. The official form of denial is the most organised form that is prevalent in undemocratic societies. This form of denial is total, in that the whole of the relevant government rhetoric consists of the denial of the events at issue. Such denials are disseminated through media propaganda.

Cohen's main interest is how information about crimes and suffering introduced to the public through media and official reports (Hamm, 2002). Cohen maintains that public knowledge of the events varies with the length of the conflict, the political situation and state's control over the mainstream media (*idem*). The media and way the media uses language can act to conceal facts that are known to witnesses, survivors and perpetrators. In this regard, Cohen, borrowing the term 'language rules [games]' from Arendt, explains how the Nazis were 'deporting' their victims to the 'work camps' – the extermination camps – by denial and euphemism that embedded in the official rhetoric (Cohen, 2001; Hamm, 2002). This simultaneous and continues denial of the killing was the justification for the perpetrators and bystanders.

Now I turn attention to the Turkish media discourse of the Roboski massacre.

5.2 ‘The state does not bomb its citizens’⁴⁷

5.2.1 Denying the crime: the airstrike as an ‘operational incident’⁴⁸

The title of this section, ‘The state does not bomb its citizens’ epitomizes the main discourse in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*. Both newspapers tend to present that the airstrike was an accident. They do so via their tone and their referencing and claiming that the state would not conduct such operation against its own citizens. The state’s denialist discourse is rooted in the tradition of the state’s narrative of the 1915 Armenian genocide (Göçek, 2015).

⁴⁷ This is the headline of *Hürriyet*, as given in Figure 1.

⁴⁸ Here are some short definitions of two controversial concepts that I discuss in this section:

Incident: An instance of something happening; an event or occurrence. Oxford Online dictionary: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/incident>.

Accident: An unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally, typically resulting in damage or injury. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/accident>.



Figure 1. *Hürriyet* headline (31.12.2011) quotes Erdoğan: ‘Does the state bomb its people?’

This *Hürriyet* headline appeared three days after the strike. The headline, ‘Does the state bomb its people?’ directly quotes Erdoğan, and continues to do so in the subtitle:

Our sorrow is enormous. No state bombs its people. In the past, this kind of thing might have happened but under our government, such a thing cannot happen. (31.12.2011)

Here we see *Hürriyet* embracing the official claim that the state cannot commit a crime against its own citizens, and bolstering this idea by citing Erdoğan’s speech rather than mentioning the accounts of the victims’ families and the survivors of the bombardment to provide the truth. Erdoğan’s refusal to take responsibility for his

government shows, as (Bakić-Hayden, 2016) would assert it, that he ignored the ‘presentness of the present’ in order to create an idealised history of his government. In the same way, the newspaper adopts Cohen’s ‘implicatory denial’ (2001), which is a part of the states’ official denial to justify the atrocities with excuses. Correspondingly, *Hürriyet* uses the discourse of ‘our’ citizens for the Kurdish victims despite the fact that the state’s legal and political discursive practices exclude the Kurdish identity (Aslan, 2015; Bayır, 2013; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008). *Hürriyet* purposefully fails to mention the economic reason for the border-crossing and ignores victims’ Kurdish identity. Van Dijk’s (1991) proclaims that the media fails to emphasize the social, political and economic backgrounds of conflicts when depicting minorities. For instance, the headline of *Hürriyet* (Figure 1) provides a picture of the coffins of the villagers, with an attached small note in the red circle: ‘Bitter convoy in Sirnak’. However, it refrains from enlightening the audiences with the whole story.

In the same way, *Sabah*, which is pro-AKP and conservative, presents the air-strike as an unwanted accident and claims that the existence of the PKK in the region is the reason for the airstrike. Thus, and despite their having somewhat different ideologies, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* constitute a power block, which, in Bhabha’s (1994) phrase, employs the ‘common narrative’ to reinforce the state position.

Figure 2, below, shows that *Sabah* reports the air-strike with a pretext so as to legitimize the attack.



Figure 2: *Sabah*'s headline: 'Gediktepe Syndrome hits the smuggler' (30.12.2011)⁴⁹

Sabah declares that the army bombed civilians because of previous PKK attacks and its headline continues to exonerate the Turkish air force from the assault:

The previous night, a group with mules infiltrated the border.
Knowing that previous attacks on Gediktepe and Daglica were
carried out with weapon-loaded mules, the army was on alert,
and then it bombed the group with F16. (30.12.2011)

Sabah deliberately mentions Gediktepe and Daglica, two headquarters of the army, which the PKK attacked years ago far from the bombardment scene, aiming to

⁴⁹ Gediktepe is the army's headquarters, which were attacked previously by the PKK. The newspaper wrote of a 'syndrome' in order that the public perceives the air-strike as a reaction to this syndrome. By linking it to a syndrome the 'newspaper' exonerated the airstrike.

convince the public that the airstrike was a precaution to prevent a possible incursion of the PKK. Like *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* uses this claim of the military sources to justify airstrike. This is another example of the ‘implicatory denial’ of Cohen (2001) to legitimize the killing. For instance, *Sabah* claims the civilians looked like PKK militias and it bases its arguments on unattributed sources. *Sabah*’s heading was, ‘They were shot because they were mistaken for terrorists’, the subheadings were: ‘It was commented that the experience of Gediktepe was a reason in the bombardment that killed 35 people’; ‘the executed ones were smugglers’ (30.12.2011). The discursive practices such as ‘the state does not commit a crime’ and ‘this air-strike was an accident’ imply that the state should not be blamed. The discourse of accident is part of whitewashing, misinformation and cover-up strategies of states to deny the facts (Cohen, 2001). This discourse was prevalent among Turkish newspapers, and Gecer (2014), whose doctoral thesis was about media, democracy and the Kurdish question, claims in his thesis that influential newspapers tend to legitimize the strike and blame the PKK. Although Gecer (*idem*) seems to be critical of media discourse, he ignores the fact that this denial on the part of the media owes to the AKP rhetoric.

The left-wing *Birgün* does not employ the discourse of accident but instead condemns the bombardment as a massacre. As *Birgün* is not a part of a state-allied conglomerate, it can adopt a more critical stance than do *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*.



Figure 3. *Birgün*'s headline: 'Uludere Massacre' (30.12.2011)

Birgün's headline openly reports the case as the 'Uludere massacre' with a dramatic image of the dead bodies covered with blankets. The subheading continues to elaborate on the details that other newspapers did not report:

The Turkish Army bombed 36 villagers, many of whom were between the ages of 15-20 [and they were] massacred close to Ortasu (Roboski) in Uludere, a district of Şırnak, while they [the villagers] were trying to cross the border. (30.12.2011)

Birgün does not refer to the massacre as an incident or an accident. Instead, the newspaper tends to associate it with previous cases, such as the Sivas massacre, in which Turkish deep state ('derin devlet' in Turkish) and Islamists burnt thirty-seven people in 1993 in Sivas.⁵⁰ Giving an example of how *Birgün* links the previous

⁵⁰ The Turkish deep state is discussed principally in chapter 2.

atrocities with Roboski, an author from *Birgün*, Onur Erdem, in his article, ‘Are we going to face our past?’ (30.08.2014) states that if Turkey had faced up to Sivas (Madimak), Dersim and other massacres then the Roboski massacre would not have happened. These kinds of examples can be multiplied but the tone of most articles become misleading as if the Roboski massacre is not an ethnicity-related issue but one of the various cases of injustice in Turkey. This discourse of equalizing the Roboski massacre with previous cases causes the objectivization of the Roboski massacre, in which discourse becomes natural and uncontested (Müller, 2010). This way of representing the massacre contributes to the state monolithic discourse to ‘de-ethnify’ the Kurdish question. Cohen (2001) argues that ‘partial acknowledgement’ contributes to the denial. In that type of case, narrators acknowledge some facts but avoid acknowledging the important details of crimes, in this way: *Birgün* partially acknowledged that a crime had been committed but denied and ignored the ethnic motivation behind the airstrike. Nevertheless, *Birgün* was the first newspaper to speak of the children massacred during the operation and use a Kurdish name of the region, albeit within parentheses. Contrary to *Birgün*, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* refrained from using Kurdish names and they excluded the ages of the child victims, in the latter way precluding public sympathy for those young victims. This representation of the villagers was constructed through ideologically produced texts. And all ideologically-produced texts exclude and include certain things (Fairclough, 1995; 2001; Huckin, 2002; Richardson, 2007). The governmental power to define the identity and representation of others is reproduced through national discourse (Sutherland, 2005) and circulated – mostly by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, partially by *Birgün*. For instance, *Hürriyet* and *Saba* have ideological differences but both concurred in using ‘Uludere’, the Turkish name, instead of the

Kurdish name ‘Roboski’. This choice indicates the fact that the media had internalized the state’s assimilative policy of Turkifying Kurdish names (Aslan, 2015; Gunes, 2013; Yegen, 1999). Drawing upon some researchers in CDA (Fairclough, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 1991), I take it that wording and metaphors, as means of representation, play a central role in constructing reality and meaning.

News articles from *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* call the massacre Uludere Incident. Nevertheless, this discourse sometimes fluctuates when some liberal authors in both newspapers take critical stances. A columnist with Kurdish root from *Sabah*, Mahmut Övür⁵¹, wrote: ‘The commanders should pay the price’ (30.12.2011) and he claimed this ‘atrocities’ will cause the biggest damage to AK Party (AKP) and hinder the progress in Turkey. The columnist asserts that the air-strike might be a conspiracy against the AKP, while not mentioning the pain and loss of the villagers. *Sabah* continued to circulate conspiracies for the entire four years of its coverage of the event. Yahya Bostan’s report in *Sabah* had the headline, ‘Uludere incident was a plot against Turkey’ (28.01.2012) and it had taken the (mis)information from the Prime Minister’s office. Achieving a ‘particular fixation of meaning’ around a floating signifier contributes to constructing a hegemonic discourse (Müller, 2010). However, *Sabah*’s claim that the massacre was a conspiracy against Turkey altered one the government came up with another account of the massacre. Then, *Sabah*

⁵¹ Mahmut Övür is a liberal conservative Kurd with a long journalism career in conservative and liberal outlets. Even though he advocates a political solution to the Kurdish questions, he often employs narratives of the pro-state agencies such as the AKP government, which he wished to be part of by nominating himself as a candidate in general election in 2015 but failed to be on its list.

immediately adopted the new narrative of the state. Thus, *Sabah* could not construct a hegemonic and partially fixed discourse about the massacre. For instance, an article from *Sabah* by Ersan Atar (08.01.2014) reports a military court decision under the heading ‘Inevitable mistake’, representing it as a final fact about the massacre.

There are differences in how *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* reported the event, one paper speaking of an accident and the other of a plot. *Hürriyet* was partially independent of the government. For that reason, its account was more consistent. A *Hürriyet*’s liberal columnist, Ismet Berkan⁵², criticised the allegations of the plot against Turkey and instead endorsed the discourse of the accident by saying: ‘There was no intention but rather a serious mistake’. However, he did admonish the authorities somewhat: ‘if we do not want to have such serious mistakes, we need to act with knowledge’ (03.01.2012). Likewise, Taha Akyol⁵³, conservative senior columnist in *Hürriyet*, implicitly acquitted the state by saying: ‘I believed, as explained before [by the state], this incident took place because the smugglers were

⁵² Ismet Berkan is a well-connected liberal elite journalist with a long working experience in liberal Radikal and Kemalist Cumhuriyet newspapers. Regardless of some moderate liberal discourse of some columnist of both newspapers, the editorial line in both newspapers remained oriental and elitist towards the Kurdish question. Even though Berkan is liberal regarding other issues, he, like many other Turkish liberal and leftists, has maintained the narrative of the Kemalist established order, in regard to Kurdish questions.

⁵³ Taha Akyol, an Abkhazian descent author with law background, was part of Nationalist Movement Party during the 1970s, then he slightly moderated his direction into liberal-conservative approach, which made it possible to work as a columnist and TV host in various media outlets such as Tercüman, Meydan, Milliyet and CNN Turk.

mistaken for the terrorists.’ Yet, Akyol concerned the ways pro-Kurdish actors perceived and compared the Roboski massacre with previous Kurdish massacres:

It is another thing to get agitated about Kurdish nationalism. Özgür Gündem newspaper [pro-Kurdish] cited this situation as a ‘physical genocide’ executed by the state over the Kurds. [. . .] Murat Karayılan said, ‘It is an attack on the Kurdish people [. . .] The massacre was carried out with a plan!’ [. . .] Karayılan’s real ‘strategic’ statement, which is described as ‘serxildan’ [revolt], is as follows: ‘If our people do not react, massacres like this will continue!’ No need to comment on what he called for [. . .]. (02.01.2012)

Özgür Gündem is a pro-Kurdish newspaper and Murat Karayılan is one of the top leaders of the PKK. The newspaper and Karayılan criticised the air-strike and called it an act of genocide against the Kurds. Akyol expectedly repudiates this discourse of massacre, claiming that such talk only agitates the Kurds, which, in turn, could lead to a Kurdish uprising against the state. Poole (2009) deconstructs biased media representation and argues that media ‘representation that appears to tell us more about the representors than the represented’ (2009:47). In this sense, Akyol’s column revealed more about his denial than about the massacre. Cohen (2001:9) claims that denial functions through (1) emotion ‘not feeling, not being disturbed’, and (2) morality ‘not recognizing wrongness or responsibility’. These two patterns of denial ran deep in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*. Another senior columnist in *Hürriyet*, Sedat Ergin, continued the denial, as follows:

Damage growing in Uludere [Roboski] disaster⁵⁴

This is an interesting example of how the government deals with the event that 34 of our citizens, who were mistakenly believed to be part of the PKK convoy, were killed while they were smuggling on the Iraqi border. Uludere continues to take hostage the country's agenda with newly developing dimensions. Whether it's the Wall Street Journal⁵⁵ or the government members, any new news that is affecting the debate on this subject confuses the people more and more. And the speculation surrounding Uludere is growing. After all, we find ourselves in a cloud of dust in which it is hard to discern what is right and wrong. (25.02.2012)

Ergin⁵⁶ had accepted already in his column that the attack was an accident (the idea being that the villagers were mistaken for the PKK). Yet, the columnist criticised the government, not for any complicity, but for not preventing the spread of differing accounts of the massacre. Even though the witnesses' testimonies indicate that the army deliberately targeted the victims (Geerdink, 2015; Oral, 2015), the author tells a half-truth and fails to identify the perpetrators. Sara Ahmed, in her book 'The Cultural Politics of Emotion' claims that knowing how the other feels will 'allow us to transform their pain into our sadness' (2014:31). However, above in the column, the pain of the victims' families is ignored, is politicized and the consequence of the massacre is rationalised; and there is no real trace of sadness about, or mourning of,

⁵⁴ This is title of Ergin's article. All titles of new items, column articles and opinion pieces are coded and written in bold throughout the thesis.

⁵⁵ Referring to Wall Street Journal report about different scenario of who provided the intelligence to the Turkish army for the air strike.

⁵⁶ Sedat Ergin is graduate of famous private high school, Robert College in Istanbul, and leading liberal journalist. He has worked many years for Kemalist Cumhuriyet and Hürriyet newspapers and state-run Turkish News Agency.

the victims. *Hürriyet*'s Ergin is feigning ignorance about the state's crime in Roboski. That is a strategic ignorance helps institutions and individuals to deny liability and responsibility for what happens after a crisis (McGoey, 2012).

5.2.2 Thirty-five dead, we are very sorry: the death and bare life of *Homo sacer*⁵⁷

The mainstream Turkish newspapers tended to normalize, routinize and rationalize the pain and suffering of the massacre. Press representation is not a mere re-presenting and mirroring an objective reality (Poole, 2010; Hall, 2013). In this representation, the massacre was filtered and constructed through the state ideology in the mainstream media, which is tightly allied with the state because of its owners are subcontractors of the state business (Bulut, 2013; R. R. Kaya, Çakmur, & Akmur, 2010; A Tunç, 2015; Yumul & Ozkirimli, 2000). *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* persistently used state-approved rhetoric in reporting the consequence of the airstrike, implying that there was no perpetrator. A day after the airstrike, *Hürriyet*'s front page ignored the massacre in the main headline but the paper did mention the event in a second headline: '35 dead, we are very sorry' (30.12.2011) with a small picture including two dead bodies wrapped on the back of mules with this caption: 'The bodies of the dead people taken to the district [hospital] on the back of mules'. The press ignored the massacre for twelve hours and failed to provide factual details, thereby categorizing the massacre as a normal and ordinary event unworthy of reporting. In this sense, as Baudrillard (1995) asserted the Gulf War, the Roboski massacre did not take place; the dead bodies and the tragic scene, far away from western Turkey, were a simulation in the press.

⁵⁷ The headline belonged to *Hürriyet* to announce the massacre (30.12.2011)

Hürriyet constantly avoided naming or placing the perpetrator in the scene, ignoring counter-narratives from the Kurdish side. A senior *Hürriyet* columnist, Rauf Tamer⁵⁸, went further in repudiating the discourse of massacre and genocide:

Say it to be free!

They [the Kurdish opposition] have seized such a pretext, of course, they will use it [. . . The Kurds] will consider the villagers, who lost their lives in Uludere, as the victims of a massacre, even genocide.

But, there are thousands of Kurds who were killed by the bullets of the terrorists [the PKK].⁵⁹ When someone asks what would happen to them [the dead], their answer is ready:

But this is warfare.

Do not say that.

Because if you say that, they [Turks] will also consider Uludere incident as part of ‘the state of war’ and get away with it.

(24.05.2012)

Tamer proposed that the Kurds should not consider as the event a massacre because they ignored the killing of thousands of the Kurds by the PKK. The article placed ‘Us’ (the Turks) versus ‘Them’ (the Kurds). This dichotomy is a prevalent discursive strategy in the Turkish media. Its goal is to justify the state hegemony and a banal

⁵⁸ Rauf Tamer (1937-, Sivas), nationalist Turkish journalist, has worked for Kemalist and nationalist outlets such as *Cumhuriyet*, *Tasvir*, *Tercüman*, *Sabah*, *Bugün* and *Posta*. He was dismissed from *Sabah* newspaper in 2000 because of taking one-million-dollar bribe so as to cover up corruption in Turkish banking system.

⁵⁹ All interpolations are mine.

nationalism, so as to maintain the subordination of the Kurds (Sezgin & Wall, 2005; Yumul & Ozkirimli, 2000). As it was common practice in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, Tamer tried rationalizing the killing of those villagers by calling it an ‘incident’. In this way, bystanders and perpetrators can normalize atrocities ‘in the sense of ‘get[ting] used to’ the most unimaginable horrors’ (Cohen, 2001:189). This way of framing the pain of others morally and emotionally numbs the public, i.e., Turkish society.

In contrast to *Birgün*, articles in *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* constantly presented the massacre as did Rauf Tamer in the column mentioned above, namely in such a manner as to devalue the lives of the Kurdish civilians and to set aside any consideration of seeking justice for the victims. The press’s devaluation recalls Giorgio Agamben’s concepts of *Homo sacer* and specifically ‘bare life’. ‘*Homo sacer*’ is a term of Roman law; the term was used to define someone who cannot rightly be sacrificed; yet, if one kills *Homo sacer* it was not considered murder and therefore the killer will not be executed (Agamben, 1998). *Homo sacer* as the bad and impure man is not considered a citizen. Unlike the life of a proper man, he has only bare life (*la nuda vita*) that is excluded from the purview of the juridical law of the sovereign power. *Homo sacer* can be killed with impunity. Compare the victims of Roboski: they have been accorded a status of less-than-citizens. The victims in Roboski became, retrospectively, bare lives exposed to violence and became vulnerable when the sovereign power (the state of exception) freeze all human rights and ends those bare lives. And the perpetrators of Roboski have yet to face justice.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ BBC Turkish summarises what happened in Roboski and after until the end of 2017, see: <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-42501681>. Accessed: 20 March 2018.

The military court had investigated the case when the civil court, in 2013, transferred the case to military court because of duty assignments. After years of gathering and working on the reports, the military prosecutors decided for *Nolle Prosequi*⁶¹ in Roboski in 2014. When the military court dropped the charges in Roboski massacre, the families of the victims took the decision to the European Court of Human Rights (EctHR) and are still waiting for a decision. The military court decision and the legal process for justice were neglected and uncovered in both mainstream newspapers apart from a few reports in *Birgün*.

Sabah's narrative of mourning for Roboski remained like *Hürriyet's* discourse, which is to say, as a way of disguising the killing's ethnic dimension. The politics of mourning is strongly linked to ethnic racial and class structure. Representation of a traumatic event reveals unspoken facts; as Edkins (2003:16) states, it creates a 'struggle over memory'. Some ways of remembering can be methods of forgetting and refusing (*idem*). In that sense, the media's use of tragic language to report Roboski excluded victims' ethnic identity and did so in order to avoid the Kurdish question. For the media, avoiding Kurdish question when reporting the massacre meant not to face the real reason of the massacre, the ethnic hatred towards the Kurds. One of the first news articles in *Sabah*, by Mujgan Halis, announced the airstrike by quoting one of the survivors and using this passively-voiced title: 'Horrible testimonial: everyone was shattered into pieces.' She continued to write in a passive voice that:

⁶¹ Söylemez A (2014) Nolle Prosequi in Roboski Massacre Case. <http://bianet.org/english/human-rights/152644-nolle-prosequi-in-roboski-massacre-case%20takipsilik%20karari%202014>. Accessed: 19 March 2018.

The assault [airstrike] against civilians resulted in the death of 38 persons in the village of Ortasu in Uludere. Their bodies will be buried today.
(30.12.2011)

While the dramatic title plays upon readers' emotions, the article used transitivity to create ambiguity for hiding the role of the government. For instance, Halis and reported the massacre moderately saying that it 'resulted in death'. Transitivity (such who does what to whom) and passive structure (Mautner, 2008) hide the active agencies doing things. Dabashi (2018) gives a similar example of the BBC and CNN using the passive voice and prevarication regarding the representation of Palestinians and compromising truth, for instance, the press reports that Palestinians have been killed or wounded during protests. The press uses sensationalist language about their executions but takes no responsibility for the cause of them. Lines of a similarly sensationalist nature were written by a senior columnist of *Sabah*, Nazlı Ilıcak⁶², under the title, 'Does the Uludere disaster have a background?' The first and key statement comes as '35 of our citizens lost their lives in consequence of deplorable incident' (31.12.2011). Citing pro-government agencies, she used the rhetoric of 'deplorable incident' and 'our citizens' with passive structure while did not question the external cause. That discourse of silence and absence, regarding the perpetrators, vindicates and perpetuates the motivation behind the massacre.

⁶² Nazlı Ilıcak is a prominent Turkish journalist and writer from conservative and influential family. Her father was a minister of a Turkish conservative party during the 1950s, and following her father, she too, became a parliament member on the list of another conservative party in 1999. Thanks to her family wealth and network, she finished her education in Turkish elite schools, such as, Istanbul Notre Dame de Sion French Private High School (1963), and in Europe. Then she has worked in many mainstream newspapers and TV channels until she was sent to prison in 2016 by a former ally, AKP, for defending The Gülen movement.

A dominant discourse with representational practices is produced through a process of naturalization, essentialization and binary opposition as discussed in chapter 3 (Fairclough, 2001: Hall, 2013). Normalization and routinization processes suggest that once quantification (numbers), images and facts are overexplained, they can create indifference, tolerance and acceptance of suffering (Cohen, 2001). When that happens, no response or action is needed vis-à-vis the suffering of others because society becomes familiar with sufferings over time (*idem*). *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* normalized and naturalized of the Roboski massacre in order to avoid the possible consequence of acknowledging it as a massacre. *Sabah*'s news article reported the first statements of the ministers to avoid defining it massacre:

The Ministers of the AK Party issued statements about the incident in which 35 people have lost their lives in Uludere, Sirnak [. . .]

Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc: If negligence and deliberateness are the reasons for the incident, the people in charge will suffer the consequences.

Minister of Justice Sadullah Ergin: It is true that this is a devastating incident. Both parties to the incident are sad.

Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock Mehmet Mehdi Eker: The death of our citizens in such a way upsets us. (31.12.2011).

The minister's sentimental discourse and rhetoric served the government's refusal of accountability. The word 'incident' ('Olay' in Turkish) means an event, occasion or occurrence and not necessarily one that is negatively regarded. It is frequently used in a neutral context in the newspapers, while the concept of the accident (*Kaza* in Turkish) refers to something deemed *bad*. Using 'incident' and 'accident' was the

part of normalization of the air-strike. And normalization is a form of denial of undesirable situations (Cohen, 2001).

Hürriyet and *Sabah* were diligent in turning the massacre into a mere ‘incident’. They did so through various linguistic techniques. Both newspapers, when mentioning exterminated people, used adjectives such as ‘dead’ (‘ölen’ in Turkish) and ‘died’ (‘ölmüş’, ‘ölü’ and ‘ölüm’ in Turkish). In *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, the act of death occurred in the past, and the cause of death (the airstrike) was not reported after a while. What happens here recalls the concept of textual silence, in which authors intentionally ‘omit information that is presumed to be already known or readily acceptable’ (Huckin, 2002:350). By restricting coverage to the victims, vagueness was created about the identity of the perpetrators; in that way power relations were concealed. However, the accounts that *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* gave of state officers was detailed and clear. The following part of the news article from *Hürriyet* provides a clear example of this. The article detailed how the people were protesting the district governor’s visit to Roboski village:

The district governor of Uludere, Naif Yavuz, was beaten by a group, while he was visiting the condolence tent [a place where people gathered to accept the visitors and accept condolence] for those, who lost their lives in the incident on the Iraqi border. In Gülyazı village [. .] the guards and villagers wanted to save the district governor from the hands of attackers. The attackers continued to throw rocks at governor Yavuz, who was trying to run away. Meanwhile, the district governor, Yavuz, rolled into 4-5 meters ditch while trying to escape. The attack continued even when he fallen down, then the villagers and guards took him from the ground and protected him. (31.12.2011)

According to Cohen, denial can use misinformation and manipulation so as to present perpetrators as the real victims. This article above used hyperbole to

represent the district governor as the victim of a protest by the Roboski people. By using the word ‘incident’ instead of ‘massacre’, the article became a long, dramatic tale of how the district governor was attacked by ‘provocateurs’. While the word ‘incident’ was used constantly to refer to the massacre by *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, those papers hardly ever used ‘killing’, ‘massacring’, ‘murdering’ or cognates to describe the victims.

Sabah normalized the killing of the victims by presenting it as a mere dying. *Sabah* quoted a villager from Roboski in the frontpage headline: ‘The state apology eases the pain’ and subheading went further:

The wise men of Ortasu village, who were grieving 35 deaths, sent a message; the state should not abandon us. The apology [of the state] will reduce the pain [of the villagers]. (01.01.2012)

The interviewer, Mûjgan Halis⁶³, never mentioned how or why those thirty-four civilians were killed. The article merely informed the public that those ‘wise men’ suffered from grieving; it did not mention injustice or a vicious execution by the state. These patterns of misrepresentation multiplied in both newspapers, their ideological differences – *Hürriyet*’s Kemalism and *Sabah*’s political Islamism – notwithstanding. I provide a content analysis in Figure 4 (in the appendix) by using Nvivo in order to show the most common 100 words used about Roboski massacre in four-years-worth of *Hürriyet* articles. The word frequency in word-cloud (Figure 4), which is shaped by my data, does not include words such as ‘death’, ‘killing’ and

⁶³ Mûjgan Halis is an experienced journalist with Kurdish origin, and she has a relatively moderate discourse towards the Kurdish question. She was later fired by *Sabah* in 2013 because of her interviews focusing on Kurdish question.

‘murder’ but it includes ‘incident’, ‘Erdogan’, ‘AKP’ and ‘terror’. This strategic silence and failure to represent the persecution that led to the loss of life is of a piece with the government discourse. That silence and that absence in the discourse created the politics of ideological selective forgetting of the state crime. For instance, the state used this concept of ideological selective forgetting when the army massacred 33 Kurdish villagers, the case is also known as the ‘33 Bullets Incident,’⁶⁴ in 1943 (Neşe, 2008). Also, the state used the same forgetting politics in denial of the Armenian genocide (Göçek, 2015). President Abdullah Gul gave a speech about the Roboski that was reported by *Sabah* with an image (see, Figure 5) of a poultry farm, depicting people in white coats together with slaughtered chickens hanging down from above. This coverage, which represents the murder of the thirty-four people with slaughtered chickens, is absurd and yet serves to normalize the massacre. Such normalization or routinization of killing in the press is tightly associated with Turkish State Discourse (TSD), a discourse used, also, to defend the killing Armenians as a normal act necessary for the building of modern Turkey.

Unlike *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* did not align with mainstream discourse. *Birgün* embraced a counter-discourse by calling the event a ‘massacre’ and by acknowledging that the state was the perpetrator. However, by ignoring the effect of state-sponsored ethnic hostility, *Birgün* normalized the massacre and represented it as a routine violation or abuse of human rights. This discourse seems to evoke the idea that such things often happen in Turkey – even though such state atrocities had occurred only in the Kurdish region. The Roboski massacre is an obstacle to peace-making in Turkey; but even so, the state naturalized the deaths and backed the

⁶⁴ This massacre is explained in a footnote below: see §5.3.1.

perpetrators (Kentel, 2015). *Birgün*, as a leftist-oriented newspaper (Keyman, 2010), contributed to the state's narrative of denial while at the same time partially acknowledging the state's excessive violence. The reason that *Birgün* embraced a liberal discourse about the Kurdish question was that *Birgün* was under the influence of Sevres Syndrome. This syndrome is the fear of losing Turkey or Turkey's destruction via division and separation (Gocek, 2008). For instance, Yilmaz Demir in *Birgün* discussed the importance of a symposium on Turkey's social and justice issues, and he emphasized three cases discussed in the symposium: the earthquake in Van; the Roboski massacre; and the Soma mine explosion. Demir claimed that, 'These three cases meet on the same ground, although, at first glance, they seem to be not related to one another' (28.09.2014). The common ground at issue, Demir claimed, is the suppression of and the injustice imposed upon disadvantaged groups by the state and government. Yet, the article failed to differentiate the Roboski massacre, which was a symptom of the animosity against the Kurds, from other natural disasters.

Another news report, by Özgürcan Yolcu in *Birgün*, discussed Roboski in comparison with other cases such as the public lynching of dissidents in Madimak Hotel. That lynching killed thirty-seven intellectuals, writers and musicians. The article deemed the state a 'murderer' and quoted some trade unions' slogans such as, 'Shoulder to shoulder against fascism' (02.07.2012). Once again, though, Roboski was presented as a non-ethnic issue. These patterns can be observed in numerous column and news articles in *Birgün*. Those articles tend to portray atrocities involves the Kurds as a consequence of the state's general authoritarianism. *Birgün*, in this sense, decontextualized the massacre and thereby to an extent naturalized and normalized it. This surreptitious or unconscious de-coupling of the Roboski

massacre from the Kurdish question contributes to sustaining the state discourse that Kurds and Turks are equal citizens, and that idea, in turn, supports the view that no Kurds have been deprived of their rights. Seemingly *Birgün*, along with other newspapers, and whether deliberately or not, fails to grasp that, as Sara Ahmed (2017) suggests, the violence is directed toward some bodies more than others. In this regard, *Birgün* becomes a liberal voice, as Malik (2002) says it takes up the notion of solidarity and community on behalf of the victims but is too afraid to see the real question of race and ethnicity.

5.3 An undesirable task: criticizing the government and state

5.3.1 Criticizing the government

Criticisms of the AKP government became an important theme in *Hürriyet* and *Birgün*, whilst the pro-government *Sabah* contained no criticism. *Birgün* blamed mainly the conservative AKP and its leadership rather than the Turkish army. *Birgün* reported that during the funeral ceremony of the victims ‘thousands shouted: Erdoğan the Killer’ (12.31.2011) and maintained that the public held Erdoğan responsible for the massacre. In *Birgün*, Melih Pekdemir⁶⁵’s column, under the title of ‘Recep Tayyip Muğlalı’, condemned the government: ‘So when the Kurds are in question, everyone in the hilltops comes from the same lineage’ (02.01.2012). The author went further by putting Erdoğan’s first names, which are Recep Tayyip, before the surname Muğlalı, the surname of Mustafa Muğlalı, a general convicted

⁶⁵ Melih Pekdemir (1953, Ordu) is a socialist journalist, author and activist, who was imprisoned after the military coup of 1980 for many years for his political activities.

for ordering the execution of thirty-three Kurds in 1943.⁶⁶ Pekdemir claimed that Erdogan and Muğlalı held the same politics about the Kurds. The word ‘lineage’ in the article means surname too in the Turkish context; that is why the author used the general’s surname for Erdogan to bolster his argument; names changed but the politics remained the same. Similarly, another of *Birgün*’s articles criticized the Turkish parliament’s report on Roboski and asked: ‘Where is the government’s responsibility?’ (27.12.2012) since the report ignored the role of AKP in the massacre.

Unlike *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, *Birgün* did give voice to dissidents’ some radical condemnations against the AKP. A cyber-attack upon some government websites by the group ‘RedHack’ was reported by *Birgün* under the rather defiant title, ‘RedHack hacked [state websites] for the mothers of Roboski: may our hearts shrivel if we forget Roboski’ (29.12.2014). Also, the paper quoted the following statement by RedHack.⁶⁷

We know the perpetrators of the Roboski massacre, we know the commanders, and we know the killers very well. During the 12-year AKP government, they turned the country into blood [. . .] (29.12.2014)

Those words epitomize *Birgün*’s approach to the Roboski massacre. In *Birgün*, few articles dealt with Roboski *per se*; the rest covered Roboski only alongside other

⁶⁶ Mustafa Muğlalı was the person who ordered extrajudicial execution 33 Kurdish villagers in Van, Turkey. This massacre is known as the ‘33 Bullets’ massacre. See: Özgen, H. Neşe: The ideology of selective forgetting: how a political massacre is remembered in Turkey: the “33 Bullets Incident”. In: Beller-Hann, Ildiko(Ed.): The past as a resource in the Turkic speaking world. Würzburg: Ergon Verl., 2008 (Istanbuler Texte und Studien 8).

⁶⁷ RedHack, being a group of socialist hackers, who fight against what they see as capitalism and unjust state institutions in Turkey.

atrocities occurred during the rule of the AKP. Left-leaning *Birgün* severely criticized the Islamist and anti-left AKP for the massacre as well as other policies.

On the contrary, *Sabah*, being pro-AKP, covered no criticisms of AKP. Indeed *Sabah* constantly changed its discourse to cover up for the government. At first, it tended to portray Roboski as an accident or mistake, but later the discourse shifted into calling it a conspiracy against Turkish democracy and the AKP. For instance, Ahmet Yildiz, in the opinion page and under the title of ‘Uludere disaster: A provocation against democracy’ (07.01.2012), declared that the airstrike was against Turkish democracy, and therefore, against the AKP government. Of the 114 articles of *Sabah*, only one, in a small caption, included a criticism of the government. This news article in question quoted Devlet Bahçeli, the head of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) with this title: ‘Reaction to Arınç’ (04.01.2012) under which Bahçeli condemned the AKP and its MP Bulent Arınç. Bahçeli criticized MP Bulent Arınç and the AKP not for their political responsibility in the massacre but because Arınç promised the Kurds some cultural rights when he was discussing the Roboski massacre. And the article quoted an aggressive question by Bahçeli against the AKP’s promise of the cultural rights: ‘how the AKP will defend one state, one language and one flag?’ and the article linked this criticism of the AKP indirectly to Roboski. Perhaps the main reason for having quoted Bahçeli is once again to defend the AKP and to seek Kurdish votes for the AKP. This partisan and state-dependent Turkish media does not challenge the state discourse and push the state for resolution of Kurdish question (Algan, 2019; İnceoğlu, 2015), just as in the case of the Roboski massacre.

On the other hand, in *Hürriyet*, and although some column articles criticised the AKP, news articles excluded such criticism, and in that latter regard, the paper echoed the conservative tone of *Sabah*. Of 485 news articles, only some 20 news, column and opinion articles of *Hürriyet* included moderate criticisms of the AKP. There were only three news reports, which included quotations from dissentients that mentioned criticism of Erdogan. One news article from *Hürriyet* quoted the following from Demirtaş, co-leader of the left-wing pro-Kurdish HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party): 'Will you [Erdogan] be able to be the president of the Roboski families...?' (13.07.2014). *Hürriyet's* owner had close political and economic ties with the AKP government, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4. Thus, the paper excluded the criticisms towards the AKP but this example and similar ones raised in a recent time when the AKP planned a referendum for having a presidential system, which was not welcomed by the Kemalist elites, whose viewpoints are represented by *Hürriyet*.

Contrary to the news articles, some columnists of *Hürriyet* moderately criticized the AKP because of the massacre. Yalçın Bayer in his column (26.05.2012) announced that:

It is not possible for the government to say, 'I have transferred my authorities to the soldiers, I am not responsible for their actions.' Whoever has the authority in the state administration is also responsible for this. It is not possible to ignore the political responsibility of the government in the case of Uludere. In other countries, governments are also taking political responsibility in similar situations. (26.05.2012)

This article was the only column article which explicitly asserted that the government has a responsibility in the massacre. However, *Hürriyet's* columnists

made many demands that the AKP reveal how the army obtained ‘misleading’ intelligence and decided that the villagers were ‘terrorists’. All those prevalent criticisms were adapted to suit the political agenda of the government. For instance, *Hürriyet*’s Mehmet Yılmaz’s provided a sample of this point in his article titled ‘Beşir Atalay’s Uludere [Roboski] confession!’:

The government has made so much effort to cover up this issue so far. The Turkish Grand National Assembly prevented the commission from reaching the truth. We know why they did it [. . .] They do not want to admit that this mistake [the massacre] is caused by the wrong intelligence given by the MIT [Turkish intelligence Agency], because they considered Hakan Fidan [the head of MIT] above blame. (16.04.2014)

The author blamed the AKP and the head of MIT but continued to say that the massacre was a mistake. The author, from Kemalist *Hürriyet*, criticized the AKP and MIT but excluded the army because AKP and MIT are conservative rivals of the Kemalist army and of *Hürriyet*. But he continued to call the Roboski massacre an accident because the Kurds are the common enemy of all of those. Many column articles in *Hürriyet* demanded that the AKP should investigate the case. That contrasts with *Sabah*’s political silence and approval of government politics. As explained throughout this thesis, the Turkish media adopted the state denialist discourse and sometimes even encouraged the state crimes as in the case of the coverage of the Dersim massacre in 1937-38 (Baran, 2014; Bulut, 2005). This uncritical or only slightly critical coverage of the Roboski massacre is a continuation of the systematic denial of previous crimes of the state.

5.3.2 Endless mourning⁶⁸

All three newspapers covered criticisms of the state and Turkish army (TSK) to some extent. *Hürriyet* is the voice of the Kemalism and Turkish bourgeoisie. That bourgeoisie erected itself upon state subsidies and the confiscation of the properties of Greeks and Armenians during the early period of Turkey (Kurt, 2017). Hence, *Hürriyet* sided continually with the army, the protector of Kemalism: of all three papers, it contained the least criticism of the army. However, occasionally some columnist in *Hürriyet* expressed disapproval of state violence against civilians. İsmet Berkan, the senior columnist of *Hürriyet*, lamented how no one was convicted for the Roboski airstrike and how human lives were not valued in Turkey:

If human life really mattered . .

I give Uludere [Roboski] as an example because it is the most relevant to the subject. If you are murdered by the state in this country, just bear in mind that the state is doing its best to cover up this murder. If not covering the murder they defer the trial, and protect its "servant" who is causing the death. For example, perhaps the state protects 98 perpetrators out of 100 from facing the consequence of the murder. Now, we see the same thing, [the government/state] is protecting perpetrators responsible for the deaths of the Gezi incidents [Gezi Protests] and Uludere. (30.07.2013)

The author blamed the state tradition of devaluing the citizens' lives, though his criticisms resembled *Birgün*'s views that deliberately ignored the ethnic motivation of the airstrike. Another columnist of *Hürriyet*, Yalçın Doğan⁶⁹, censured the state

⁶⁸ This was title of Gözde Bedeloğlu's column article in *Birgün* (30.11.2012).

⁶⁹ Yalçın Doğan (1945, Konya) is Turkish author and journalist, who worked for *Cumhuriyet*, *Sabah*, *Milliyet*, *Hürriyet* and state TV, TRT, for years.

under this title, ‘How much money are you worth?’(03.01.2012) and indicated that the insensitive claim of paying 22 thousand Turkish Lira (approximately £3700) compensation for each victim shows how life is regarded as cheap. Additionally, since *Hürriyet* had some liberal columnists, occasionally some column and sometimes some news articles referred to speeches by pro-Kurdish critical voices, which demanded justice and covered soft criticisms towards the state politics.

However, as a neo-conservative representative of the AKP, and in that regard unlike *Birgün* and *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* was especially critical of the army. Right after the airstrike, Mahmut Övür called for the resignations of the commanders under this title ‘The commanders should pay the price’ and continued:

It is understood that there is a dark power behind the attack...but now at this moment, it does not matter whether there is a dark power or not, and there cannot be an excuse for such a massacre ...giving an advice, the civil authority [the AKP] immediately should take action against those who are waiting in an ambush. (30.12.2011)

Mahmut Övür added that the AKP pledged to grant some rights to the Kurds, implying the army was accountable for ‘the mistake’ against the AKP in the article. He rationalized the attack by accusing a shadowy power. In *Sabah*, the news- and column-articles were rarely incompatible with each other. Most of the news articles declared that the strike was an accident or a plot, in which state and army were considered above the blame. Yet some columnists condemned the army. For

instance, *Sabah*'s columnist Sevilay Yükselir⁷⁰ denounced the army and tried to vindicate the government:

To me, the "Uludere" incident is a terrible murder that the TSK [Turkish Armed Forces] (no matter knowingly or unknowingly) has committed. And it is not possible to explain why and how this murder was done. However, due to this murder, it is unfair to criticize the government by saying [. .] now the weapons are targeted at civilians by the officials [i.e. by the state].
(06.01.2012)

This kind of criticism of the Kemalist army can occasionally be observed in *Sabah*'s columns— and the reason is that the AKP was trying to weaken and then take control of the army.

Contrary to *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* frequently condemned the state. Different than other newspapers, *Birgün* revealed the role of the illegal 'deep state' in the massacre. The 'deep state', also known as 'Ergenekon' and as 'JITEM' (see chapter 2), was carrying out illegal activities in the 1990s such as the extrajudicial killing of Kurds (Söyler, 2013; Bozarslan, 1999). One of the news reports in *Birgün* declared the Turkish army guilty with the following heading 'They killed first, and then offered condolences' (31.12.2011). The article referenced a speech by Demirtas, co-chair of HDP, that Turkish army massacred thirty-eight people in 'Kurdistan'. Regardless of *Birgün*'s some criticisms, the existence of Turkish Special Forces and the ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region mainly was remained undiscussed and unseen by all three newspapers. It is worth noting a significant absence of female

⁷⁰ Sevilay Yükselir (1973, Malatya) is journalist and TV host for liberal and conservative media groups, where she often promoted the peace process.

actors and a lack of women's voices in all newspapers. The newspapers reported and represented the massacre mainly through heteronormative discursive practices while left-leaning *Birgün* slightly voiced the views of women and NGOs that were critical of the government. Unlike other newspapers' silence, *Birgün* rarely questioned assimilative state discourse that associates Kurdishness with separatism (Ünver, 2015). One of the columnists in *Birgün* wrote a critical piece under the assertive title, 'Not Uludere anymore, absolutely Roboski' (22.12.2012). The columnist criticized the government on how they tried to ban usage of the name of Roboski:

Far from taking responsibility in the massacre, they [the AKP] try to ban its [Kurdish] name [referring to Roboski] [. . .] Not allowing the use of Roboski as a [Kurdish] name is part of the ongoing operation [process] of suppression and intimidation [of the AKP against the Kurds]. (22.12.2012)

The author explicitly blamed the state and AKP but his article drew no serious attention to the state's assimilative politics in the Kurdish region, such as replacing Kurdish names of cities with Turkish ones. *Birgün*, in both news and column articles, frequently criticized all state institutions. Gözde Bedeloğlu in her column summarized *Birgün*'s general criticism about how the 'Turkish Republic's warplanes massacred 34, many of whom were children.'

Endless mourning

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Interior and the Chief of the General Staff left the people of Roboski, whose sons, brothers and the spouses were dismembered, in deep sorrow. They chose those three monkeys; deaf, blind and dumb according to their hearts. They have become the cause of an unmitigated pain, endless mourning. (30.11.2012)

As observed above, the general tone of *Birgün*'s articles is such as to take a critical stance towards the government and the army but not to mention the victims' Kurdishness as the cause of the attack.

5.4 Blaming the victims

5.4.1 A deserved death

Concealed xenophobic discourse practices, in both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, defined the victims as dishonest smugglers who were making a lot of money. A passionate Kemalist and columnist, Yilmaz Özdil⁷¹, expressed his hatred in a sexist and racist article in *Hürriyet*.

Dear smuggler

The donkey bangs the horse. The mule is born [. .] smuggling is the mule, the fruit of forbidden love. It does not matter whoever and whichever bangs one another, and the result is mating of the state and smuggler [. . .] Each time it [the mule] can carry 140 of diesel or 400 packs of cigarettes. According to TÜİK [Turkish Statistical Institute], there are 50 thousand mules, 30 thousand of them are there [referring to Kurdish lands], count that! The romantic crew of booksy pups says 'the innocent villager, who has to put his life in danger for 50 liras' but that innocent one makes 15 thousand lire when he goes [to smuggling] twice a week! (06.01.2012)

Özdil's racism and sexist rhetoric legitimized the killing of the victims and ridiculed the people who had sympathy for the victims. He mentioned none of the political reasons for the underdevelopment of the Kurdish region and deplored the ostensible

⁷¹ Yilmaz Özdil (1965, Izmir) is a major advocate of Turkish nationalism and Kemalism with a long career of journalism in many mainstream Turkish newspapers, such as *Sabah*, *Star* and *Sözcü*.

fact that the smugglers were getting rich easily. The absence of guilt, shame and responsibility create the cultural, personal and official denials of the wrongdoings (Cohen, 2001). Yılmaz Özdil's article lacked all these elements, criminalizing even the teenage victims without sympathy and empathy. As explained in chapters 6 and 7, Barış Ünlü's approach, namely that of 'Turkishness contract', explains that one becomes a Turk with particular ways of seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing. These ways legitimize the state violent policies towards non-Turks (Ünlü, 2016). Yılmaz Özdil enthusiastically abided by the Turkishness contract with these ways of unseeing of the state atrocities in his column article.

Frequently *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* printed discourse similar to that of 'the Turkishness contract' by associating the victims and their families with criminal activities such as smuggling. Even though it is categorized only as smuggling, it is a form of trading – the only of making a living on the borders –with the Kurds from the other side of the border. Kentel (2015) claims that the nation-states divided the Kurdish land and they defined trade among the Kurds as an illegal activity, the smuggling. Drawing upon Foucauldian approach (Foucault, 1969), one can say the concept of smuggling is not just an already-said utterance it is a discursive practice, which is defined by its relations with the others (the Kurds), thereby establishing power relations in Kurdistan. The smuggling became an excuse to blame the victims. *Sabah's* columnist Engin Ardiç⁷² acquitted the AKP by claiming that the massacre was either a mistake or else a conspiracy by the counter-guerrillas in the

⁷² Engin Ardiç (1952, Trabzon) is a journalist and author that graduated from elite schools such as Galatasary Hight School and Bosphorus University. He has worked in various media outlets such as mainstream Turksih newspapers, Aksam and Star, and BCC.

army who opposed the AKP (29.12.2012). Furthermore, he added the following piece of sarcasm: ‘who is guilty [of the massacre]? Of course, my dear, the government is guilty’; and then he condemned the villagers: ‘The villagers are as pure as the driven snow while smuggling with their honour. This country has seen those who say, “I pimp women out with my honour”’ (29.12.2012). The article blamed the victims with sexist language and sexist metaphors, and with an appeal to the notion of honour, and alludes that the victims were guilty and responsible for their own deaths. In a similar manner, *Sabah* quoted an AKP minister – of Kurdish origins - with the subheading, ‘The state is the one damaged the most by this [the massacre]’. The accompanying report, by Hazal Ates, continued to quote the minister, as follows:

Even though, the terrorist organization [the PKK] is trying to take advantage of this, we suffered from this [the massacre] [. . .] Who suffered the most morally and materially?: The state and the AKP government. (03.01.2012)

The article constantly repeated the refrain that the state and the government suffered a great loss, while barely mentioning how, as it put it, the ‘poor people’, the villagers, ‘died’. The rhetoric of article reversed the perpetrators and the victims (Herman, 1997), with the real victims becoming the ones to blame for their deaths, which allegedly caused some unspecified ‘damage’ to the state.

The discourse of *Sabah* had remained unfixed during this period of 2011 to 2014. In 2011 and 2012, *Sabah* regularly blamed the victims, claiming that they were PKK collaborators, in order to legitimize the massacre and silence the public. The lack of editorial independence and the media’s criminalizing of Kurdish civilians via the discourse of terror prolonged the Kurdish issue and hindered peace

with the Kurds (Algan, 2019; Arsan, 2014; İnceoğlu, 2015). The reason why the media remained indifferent towards the suffering of the Kurds (Arsan, 2014) is that it acted pragmatically, i.e. in accordance with the state's discourse. For instance, a few days after the airstrike, *Sabah* announced in its main headline that, 'Four members of the family are in prison because of espionage' ⁷³ (03.01.2012). The accompanying story elaborated as follows.

While grieving the death of 35 villagers and smugglers in the airstrike operation, the new details about the relatives of the villagers resurfaced [. . .] Four people [relatives of the family] have been in jail for three years and waiting for trial since they had sold the state secrets to the intelligence service of the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan (KDP). (03.01.2012)

The article went on to describe how these four people sold state secrets to the intelligence service of Iraqi Kurdistan, and of how that latter, in turn, shared the secrets with the PKK. Then – the story said – the PKK used the information to ambush and 'martyr' sixteen soldiers. Even though the article stated that these four people had not been convicted, it tried to associate those four with the Roboski victims, implying that the victims could have collaborated with the PKK and KDP. Moreover, the reporter used the cliché of 'suffering the pain of' the Roboski victims in order to gain readers' sympathy and attention while blaming the victims' families as allies of the 'terrorists.' In this way, the newspaper internalized the narrative of the perpetrators and twisted facts. Judith Herman (1997) explains how perpetrators perverted truth.

⁷³ The headline refers to the family with surname of Encü, which carried by the majority of the victims.

In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator's first line of defense. If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credibility of his victim. If he cannot silence her absolutely, he tries to make sure that no one listens. To this end, he marshals an impressive array of arguments, from the most blatant denial to the most sophisticated and elegant rationalization. After every atrocity one can expect to hear the same predictable apologies: it never happened; the victim lies; the victim exaggerates; the victim brought it upon herself, and in any case, it is time to forget the past and move on. The more powerful the perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail. (1997:8)

In regard to Harman's point, *Sabah* quoted a powerful name, that of the deputy prime minister: 'The group was warned with signal rockets. Since the group did not stop, the bombardment started' (03.01.2012). However, both the testimony of the survivors and accounts from witnesses and the aforementioned human rights reports rejected this claim.⁷⁴ Despite overwhelming use of the official sources, only 5 out of 114 *Sabah* articles covered the accounts of the victims' families, and even then, they did in a sensationalist manner and with a selective quotation. However, a noticeable thing occurred in 2013 and 2014; *Sabah* shifted its discourse by representing the massacre as a conspiracy against the AKP and Peace talks. Thus, victim-blaming diminished, and the newspaper started to accuse the Fetullah Gulen

⁷⁴ Since the newspapers do not provide a complete and unbiased account of the massacre, human right advocates and the families of the victims created a website for an accurate account: <http://www.roboskider.org/>

See also Umit Kivanc's documentary, *Ağlama Anne, Güzel Yerdeyim* (in English: *Don't Cry Mom, I'm in a Nice Place*), 2012.

movement (FETO), which Turkey classifies a terrorist organization, of being responsible for conspiring against Turkey in Roboski.⁷⁵

Contrary to *Sabah*, *Birgün* refrained from blaming the victims. *Birgün*'s editors and reporters meticulously represented the massacre and considerably voiced the families of the victims. It condemned the state as a neo-liberal conservative power that partnered with the AKP. The Minister of Interior, İdris Naim Şahin, during a TV interview, accused the victims and pro-Kurdish politicians of being friends of terrorists. *Birgün* quoted him:

The BDP [Pro-Kurdish political party] is a part of this incident. It is the PKK terrorist organization that provided this illegal good to those people. The terrorist organization, KCK [Kurdistan Communities Union], is the one that gets the unearned income from smuggling. When looking at the big picture there is nothing to apologize for. We do not see the incident with a guilty conscience. Those young people should not have been there. BDP itself gives the order for smuggling. (24.05.2012)

Birgün vehemently denounced the statement with a sarcastic title: 'There was nothing to apologize for!' (24.05.2012). The Minister's statement sparked public outrage; therefore, the Kemalist *Hürriyet* and Erdoganist *Sabah* ignored his speech apart from few criticisms towards the speech of the Minister from *Hürriyet*.

Seemingly having internalized the slogan, 'Turkey belongs to Turks,' *Hürriyet* disproportionately provided space for the discriminatory narratives of Turkish nationalists. An excerpt from a speech by the head of the Nationalist Party (MHP), reported in *Hürriyet*, illustrates:

⁷⁵ Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization (FETO).

As the PKK recruits militias and young people, the suspicion of involvement of the PKK in organizing such activities [smuggling] should be clarified while considering that the majority of deaths is between 18-20, and 29 of them belong to the same family [. . .] The Turkish state has prudence, knowledge, virtue, and experience to distinguish the citizen from militants in the struggle against terrorism. It must be noted that overreacting towards the issue, defining this as a massacre, calls of mourning, accusing the state of bombing and shooting its citizens will be remembered as great irresponsibility, immorality and malicious intent. (31.12.2011)

Bahceli's malicious statement criminalized the villagers and those people who rejected the Bahceli's narrative that associating the villagers with the 'terrorist', the PKK. Overrepresentation of such biased and twisted narrative about the victims coheres with *Hürriyet*'s goal of misleading the public and affirming the superiority of Turks (Sezgin & Wall, 2005). Constantly mentioning (overlexicalization of) the PKK and terrorism, in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, as Fairclough (2001), Hartley (1982), Richardson (2007), and Way & Kaya (2016) would state, associated the victims with the PKK so as to discredit the villagers as criminals and legitimize the killing of them. A further consequence was that now identified as criminals, the villagers' fate appeared less tragic (cf. Butler, 2009).

5.4.2 Official scapegoating

Reporting of the massacre consistently blames the pro-Kurdish political movement and the PKK for causing the massacre and asserts that they benefited from it. This discourse fits Malik's (2002) analysis, which claims the media easily places the Black male presence into the troubled area as criminal. Thus, the Turkish government disseminated its discourse through media in order to evade its political responsibility and disconnect the pro-Kurdish BDP (Peace and Democracy Party)

from the villagers so that those two groups (BDP and villagers) cannot unite in challenging the dominant narrative. The Erdoganist *Sabah* regularly accused the BDP of taking advantage of the massacre by referring to Erdogan's speeches. *Sabah's* main headline quoted Erdogan's phrase, 'Democrat in Ankara, Fascist in Diyarbakir' (11.01.2012; see Figure 6 within my appendixes) with his angry face in the picture pointing at someone with his finger.⁷⁶ Erdogan with these words decried Selahttin Demirtas, a Kurdish leader and head of BDP, who was criticizing the Turkish Chief of General Staff for the latter's role in the Roboski massacre. Erdogan argued that Kurdish politicians accept 'the terrorist Apo [the leader of the PKK] as their leader and prophet', and continued:

Introducing Uludere incident as state terror is a great delirium. This upsetting incident is being used to start a deliberate smear campaign against our government. This smear campaign is targeting the brotherhood of Turkey. (11.01.2012)

Sabah widely circulated the AKP's accusations that Kurdish movements took advantage of the massacre. Another major headline, citing Erdogan, accused the BDP of 'abusing' the massacre: 'They are walking in the path of the Satan', the subtitle continued:

Erdogan hailed down the member of the BDP: The one, who classifies the deaths [by mentioning the killing of the villagers in Roboski], is following the path of Satan. (04.01.2012)

Regardless of Erdogan's demonization of the Kurdish politicians, the newspapers continued in the same article to report his words: 'Whoever says 35 Kurds were

⁷⁶ The appendixes are at the end of the thesis.

massacred in Uludere and defines the incident with an ethnic context' is racist and fascist (04.01.2012). The same report stated that Erdogan added that 'those racist and fascist' [the BDP's MPs] 'cannot go to the toilets without the permission of their masters' [the PKK and Öcalan]. In this way, *Sabah* bolstered the hegemonic discourse of the state by using Erdogan's statements to shape how its readers should perceive the massacre. Regardless of the peace negotiation between the state and the PKK during this period, I observed that the Kurdish politics were still depicted in negative ways, namely as scapegoats, by the conservative press. Benign neglect, strategic ignorance and official scapegoating are here the patterns of the dominant discourse that become prevalent in the press. In this way, and making use of Cohen's framework (2001), we can say that the media was denying the state responsibility and ignoring the condemnations.

Hürriyet and *Sabah* denationalized the Kurdish victims; both portrayed them as 'our' Turkish citizens. Therefore, both newspapers used the discourse of 'our citizens' in order to criticize the BDP, which was claiming that the airstrike was a continuation of a campaign of state violence against the Kurds only. In *Sabah*, senior columnist Nazli Ilicak, under the title, 'The method [politics] of the BDP' (13.01.2011), alleged that the BDP was abusing, exploiting the deaths and causing the postponement of the peace negotiation. Another columnist in *Sabah*, Hasan Celal Guzel who was a former minister in a conservative government, went further: 'The Uludere incident – for me, is the plot of the PKK, which provided a platform for the terrorists and its abettor [pro-Kurdish political movements]' (10.01.2012). The hostility against Kurds became a unified signifier, uniting Erdoganist and Kemalist newspapers. Like *Sabah*, *Hürriyet* also took a hostile position towards the Kurdish

actors. *Hürriyet*'s columnist, İsmet Berkan, vilified the BDP and PKK for, supposedly, exploiting the massacre:

Now this [massacre] becomes an opportunity for the PKK. Beware; the BDP has been there from the beginning. It is not a coincidence that the dead bodies were wrapped with the flags [referring to the colourful fabric as flags of the PKK]. Unfortunately, no one is representing the state to join the funeral, and the neighbouring gendarmerie unit also ignores the village. These both are creating a ground for [the PKK and BDP] to carry out a political and public relation campaign [against Turkey]. (03.01.2012)

Berkan criticized state officials explicitly, but not for their violence, but for allowing the BDP to be present, advocating the rights of the villagers. The floating signifier does not contain any fixed meaning (Müller, 2010); thus, the accusations levelled at the BDP were extensive in the dominant discourse. However, in the later stage of peace talks in 2013 onwards, accusations towards the BDP reduced because the government started to accuse the Gulen movement of the massacre. Even though the army deliberately bombed the civilians (Eralp, 2015; Geerdink, 2015; Oral, 2015), a senior columnist of *Hürriyet*, Taha Akyol's piece under the title of 'Mistaking shepherd for terrorists, mistaking terrorists for smugglers!' (19.04.2012) denied the truth, fervently vilifying the victims for resembling PKK militants, and condemning the PKK for making the villagers targets. Akyol in the article claimed that the army sometimes cannot identify real identities of the people on the ground, hence, it can make mistakes as it happened in Roboski. Also, the article implied that the attack would be normal if the villagers were members of the PKK. Akyol's article implicitly legitimized the use of such excessive violence against the PKK. However, even if the villagers had been PKK members, then, according to *jus in bello*, the

bombing would be a state crime since the Turkish Air Force violated an international law about *disproportionate* violence (Eralp, 2015).⁷⁷

Hürriyet often quoted Erdogan's speeches accusing Kurdish politicians. Here is an example:

The treacherous BDP

The judicial process of Uludere continues. Turkey is not a country, where the army admonishes the civilian authority [the AKP] [. .] and treacherous PKK and BDP martyr my soldiers and officers from behind [. .] for Uludere [. .] we said it was a mistake, how many times I will repeat that. Are we going to automate this [saying it was a mistake] [. .] We also know the BDP is exploiting this [Roboski] because it is controlled by the terrorist organization [the PKK]. (30.05.2012)

In another article, Erdogan took a more extreme view:

There is only one source that the BDP feeds on, which is the blood of my innocent Kurdish brothers...The terrorist organization is taking one side of the coffin to use the Uludere incident as provocative means for its own interest. The BDP grabbed the other side of the coffin and tugged it, in the same way, to provoke [the people]. (*Hürriyet* 11.01.2012)

Hürriyet reported Erdogan's speeches in full while ignoring the counter-arguments of the BDP. In this way, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* nullified the counter-discourse of the BDP – a discourse that sought justice for the victims – and reproduced Erdogan's views as facts. Consequently, Kemalist *Hürriyet* and Political Islamist *Sabah* took the same position that produced the state discourse and underrepresented the Kurds.

⁷⁷ *Jus in bello* is a notion from jurisprudence that international law applies to warfare and its use of violence. The notion goes back to the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, the leftist *Birgün* kept its distance from the government's accusations against the BDP and the PKK. Contrary to *Hürriyet and Sabah*, *Birgün* provided an extensive platform for the Kurds and made their voice heard for the Roboski massacre. I examine the 294 relevant articles in *Birgün* and none accused the BDP and PKK of exploiting the pain of Kurdish villagers. It is worth to note that pro-Kurdish party the BDP and PKK, to some extent, used the Roboski massacre to get more support of the public. However, the BDP and HDP failed to keep their promises of supporting the victims' families for their struggle to bring justice since both parties neglected the case and were unable to take it to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

5.5 Conclusion to the chapter

For this chapter, I analysed 1040 articles from the three newspapers. I scrutinized the most relevant ones in order to explain the media representation of the Roboski massacre in connection with the Kurdish question. I examined three newspapers across an ideological spectrum that is shown in Table 5.1. I analysed how the media identified the victims and identified the perpetrators. We saw that the Kemalist *Hürriyet* and Political Islamist *Sabah* adopted the state's official denial of responsibility for the killing of thirty-four Kurdish villagers. Both newspapers circulated the claims of that government as facts and excluded the voice of victims; instead, they claimed that the airstrike was a mistake and an accident or a conspiracy against Turkey and the AKP government. In order to absolve the government, centre-right newspapers denied that the army had deliberately targeted the civilians. Both newspapers tended to call the massacre the 'Uludere incident' or 'Uludere

accident', deliberately avoiding the use of the Kurdish name 'Roboski'; in so doing, they internalized the state's assimilationist politics.

For its part, *Birgün* frequently referred to the case as 'the Roboski' – or 'the Uludere' – 'massacre', thereby holding the government and state accountable for the massacre. Even though *Birgün* covered Kurdish voices fairly and censured the AKP, it disregarded the state's ethnic animosity as the motivation behind the airstrike. In that way, *Birgün* presented half-truths and was in accord with the official denials.

Both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* misrepresented the victims as criminal. Both newspapers denied condemning the perpetrators, blamed the victims as well as the BDP and PKK. This representation of the state's crime evokes Cohen's (2001:105) 'interpretive denial', which constructed what happened in Roboski as an accident and a conspiracy, rather than as a massacre carried out by the state. This form of official denial, which took place in the media, legitimized and normalized the massacre as an undesired consequence of a normal accident. However, the government changed its discourse in 2013 because of peace talks with the Kurds, maintaining the airstrike was a conspiracy against the state and AKP. Then, it began to accuse Gulen movement as the reason for this conspiracy when the AKP and Gulen movement relation deteriorated in 2013. Following this change in the government discourse, *Sabah* completely and *Hürriyet* noticeably shifted their discourse in accord with the government discourse and both started to blame the Gulen movement for the massacre. However, no apology or sense of guilt was forthcoming in *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, those lacks being a persistent consequence of the original denial. The naturalization and normalization of the massacre in both newspapers was produced via euphemism, dramatization, misinformation and

simplification. The Roboski massacre disappears from Turkish justice as a Kafkaesque death of the *Homo sacer*: no one has been convicted or held accountable so far. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* produced the state hegemonic discourse of denial with its victim-blaming, official scapegoating, strategic ignorance, manipulation. For its part, *Birgün* ignored the ethnic dimension of the massacre, thereby partially adopted the denialist discourse. However, it conspicuously criticized the government and held the AKP accountable for the massacre.

The next chapter discusses the Kobane protests, which occurred in Turkey towards the end of 2014 and which were against the Islamic State's attack upon a Kurdish town in Syria. I will analyse the media representation of the protests in relation to the peace process.

6 The Kobane protests: a challenge to the peace talks

6.1 A counter-narrative of the Kobane protests

In this chapter, I examine the mass protests of Kurds against the Islamic State (IS) attacks upon and besiegement of Kobane, a Kurdish town in Syria, just across the border from Turkey, in October 2014. The previous chapter focused upon the images of massacred Kurdish villagers. In this chapter, I turn my attention to press representation of the Kobane protests in the period in which state officially was negotiating with the PKK. I will briefly provide an alternative account of the protests. That account will make it possible to grasp the construction of the hegemonic representational practices of the media. Table 6.1 shows the numbers of articles of different newspapers I analysed (in total 1, 000 articles). It also summarises the political affiliation and ownership of the newspapers.

Table 6.1: Ideological affiliation and ownership of the newspapers (2009-2015)⁷⁸

Newspaper	Ownership	Ideological orientation	Relationship with government (AKP)	The relevant articles
<i>Hürriyet</i>	Doğan Group	Kemalist / mainstream / centre-right / relatively secular	In moderate conflict with / somewhat pro-government	555
<i>Birgün</i>	Independent cooperation	Leftist / liberal democrat / secular	Conflictual	137
<i>Sabah</i>	Calik Group (2008-2013), Kalyon Group (2013-present)	Mainstream / centre-right / conservative / political Islam	Pro-government / cooperates with government	308

⁷⁸ I put this table at beginning of this chapter just to provide the number of articles the newspapers had also to make it easy to track the ideological stance of these newspapers.

The Kobane protests, also known as ‘the 6-8 October incidents’, mainly took place upon those dates and upon the call of the HDP and the KCK for solidarity with the city of Kobane, which was under the threat of IS persecution (Coşkun, 2015).⁷⁹ The IS, after getting the control of several cities in Iraq and in war-torn Syria, launched an operation in September 2014 against the town of Kobane, in Syria, which was under the control of the Kurdish armed force, the People’s Protection Units (YPG), which is being considered a branch of the PKK by Turkey. The YPG, with aid of a US-led coalition that included France, Germany and the UK, managed to stop IS, though the battle lasted almost six months and caused the displacement of thousands of people and the destruction of the city. Table 6.1, below, shows some of the key actors that defended the town of Kobane on the ground and some political organizations that lobbied for international solidarity against the IS invasion.

⁷⁹ The KCK is a Kurdish political organization; see Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Key actors in the Kobane case

Group	Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK)	Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	People's Protection Units (YPG)	Democratic Union Party (PYD)	Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)
Type	Political organization	Armed militant group	Armed militant group	Political party	Political party
Location	Transnational	Turkey	Rojava, Northern Syria	Rojava, Northern Syria	Turkey
Relationship with Turkey	Hostile, in conflict with	In conflict with	In conflict with	In conflict with	Parliamentary representation
Relationship with the US	Neutral, no relationship	Designated as a terrorist organization	Cooperation on fighting IS	Cooperation on fighting IS	Neutral

While IS was advancing towards Kobane, capturing nearby villages and persecuting civilians, Turkey – as part of the anti-IS coalition – was reluctant to take action against IS because the fight against IS was being led by the YPG and by Democratic Union Party (PYD), is the latter being close ideologically to the PKK (Ekim, 2014). Turkey wanted to watch IS eliminating the PKK, YPG and PYD, and so did not act against IS, apart from opening its borders to the civilians fleeing IS. In order to try to change Turkey's stance, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets and turned their bodies into a political alliance with other bodies for solidarity for people of Kobane. Later, these protests turned Turkey towards favouring the Kurds in IS-besieged Kobane. The body can be used as a non-violent means of social change when it occupies the social space and demands justice. Occupying Tahrir Square in Egypt became a significant moment by bringing change with body politics, in which the demonstrators assembled, moved and spoke together with their bodies for social change (Butler, 2011). However, challenging social order and politics frequently come with a heavy price. Initially, peaceful Kobane demonstrations quickly spread over 40 cities and turned into violent clashes between the police, protestors, paramilitary rival groups and Turkish nationalists. The protests lasted more than one week and resulted in the deaths of more than 50 people, the arrest of hundreds of protestors, destruction of property and the announcement of curfews in the Kurdish cities.

During the peak time of peace negotiations between the state and the PKK, the *de facto* existence of the autonomous Kurdish region Rojava (also known as northern Syria) became a major concern for the Turkish state because it triggered the fear that Kurds from Turkey would demand autonomy too. Turkey wanted neither to have Kurdish autonomy in Syria nor to support the YPG, as this support would be

expected to strengthen the PKK, which Turkey wanted to weaken at the peace table. For this reason, Turkey stayed aloof in order to fight IS and initially refused to permit Kurdish fighters to cross the border in order to defend Kobane (Letsch and Traynor, 2014). This approach and Turkey's strategy of inaction frustrated Kurds and ignited protests across Turkey and Europe. After the escalation of the protests and the state violence towards protestors, the roles, identities and aims of the demonstrators became a topic discussed widely by the state, public and media. For Jasper (2014), protestors are the heroes of the modern age since they seek and accelerate social change. Similarly, and as explained further (see figure 11), pro-Kurdish accounts presented the Kobane protestors as activists and heroes who were tackling the state hegemony. However, not everyone agreed with the image of protestors presented by Jasper (2014) and pro-Kurdish accounts. The Turkish state and media rushed to define them as vandals.

Throughout the demonstrations, the police killed numerous civilians. The demonstrations had heavy humanitarian and indeed economic cost. Also, the 'clashes' between, mainly HDP supporters and the supporters of the Islamist 'Free Cause Party' (Hüda-Par) in the east, and Turkish nationalists in the west, caused the deaths of several people (Özpek, 2018). According to the Amnesty International report (2015), law enforcement did not comply with international human rights law and regulations. Targeting individuals with use of 'disproportionate violence' resulted in detentions and loss of lives, which in turn led to the spread and acceleration of mass protests across Kurdish region (*idem*). However, the uncritical use of the respective concepts of 'clash' and 'disproportionate violence' – by, for instance, Amnesty International – reveals that the state's hegemonic discourse could be imposed on the oppressed people everywhere. Such ideological language about

minorities and disadvantaged groups is used by many authoritarian and colonial states in order to maintain power relations. For instance, the word ‘clash’ concealed the attacks against the Kurds by the nationalist mobs. In a similar manner, Korn (2004) explains that the media in Israel intentionally uses the word ‘clash’ in order to construct Israeli attacks as if there are fights between two groups. Korn (2004:247) adds that the murder of unarmed Palestinians by Israel police was reported as ‘killed in clashes’ in the Israeli media to divert public attention from the root cause of the Palestinian protests, while the bodies of civilians were systematically targeted by the Israeli forces. Like the depiction by the Israeli media of the Palestinian demonstrators and their deaths, the Turkish media used such linguistic tactics to serve the powerful actors by obscuring the fact that the protestors were targeted and shot to death by those paramilitary groups and police. The imprisoned co-leader of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş, made the following claim about the use of excessive violence – in the form of live ammunition – against demonstrators: hitherto the peaceful demonstrations were manipulated and turned into violence by provocateurs (Bianet, 2018). According to Demirtaş’s account (Bianet, 2018)⁸⁰ the protests were peaceful until Erdogan stated that Kobane was about fall to the IS and the police subsequently killed a 25-year-old civilian in Varto, a Kurdish town in October 7. Demirtaş similarly added that the Minister of the Interior of that time, Efkan Ala, said ‘we cannot control some security forces targeting the civilians to cause a provocation’ (*idem*). Consequently, few days after the protests, Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, asked the

⁸⁰ Bianet (2018) 6-8 Ekim olayları: ‘Provokasyon Olduğu Gerçektir, Geri Kalan İllüzyondur’ <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/196083-6-8-ekim-olaylari-provokasyon-oldugu-gercektir-geri-kalan-illuzyondur>. Accessed:16.07.2018.

protestors to stop and stated that Kobane and the peace process were inseparable parts of a unit (Alpay & Tahmaz, 2015). Thus, upon the request of Öcalan, the demonstration came to the end.

Now I turn to my attention to media coverage of the protests.

6.2 Attention! Dark forces are on patrol! Call to 77 million: don't rise to the bait⁸¹

6.2.1 An ideological marriage between centre-right groups at the dawn of the protests: mass propaganda versus mass demonstrations

The protests in solidarity with Kobane began to form towards the end of the first week of October. Once the demonstrations had escalated and proliferated, mainstream newspapers started to endorse conspiracy theories against the protesters, designating them as domestic and foreign enemies. *Sabah*, the flagship of the government (as discussed in chapters 4 and 5), tended to ignore protests until they turned into violence. For the first time on October 9 the newspaper covered the protests in the front page by quoting state officials. See figure 7 below.

⁸¹ This was a headline in *Sabah*, 9 Oct. 2014.



Figure 7: *Sabah*'s headline; 'Attention! Dark forces (Hidden Hands) are on Duty [On patrol]! Call for 77 Million: Don't Rise to the Bait' (09.10.2014).

The subtitle to the *Sabah* headline was, 'Ankara is on alert...the foreign provocateurs are in the field, aiming to harm the peace' (09.10.2014). The report stated that the government would take measures against the 'provocateurs' and 'foreign spies', who were taking to the streets with excuses of protesting the attacks of IS in Kobane. According to the same news report, the government would prevent the conflict between the PKK and Islamist Huda-Par as well as thwart the activities of the PKK and foreign intelligence agencies, who were hoping for urban riots. However, under a subheading in smaller type there was a brief report to the effect that twenty-three people were dead. Protestors' bodies came to matter to *Sabah* only

when they were dead bodies, not when they talked, resisted and demonstrated.⁸² Although *Sabah* was being sympathetic to the peace process, it neglected ‘the body politics’ of the masses that were mobilising the Kurds and changing Turkey’s domestic and international politics. When pro-Kurdish political actors were unable to shape Turkey’s politics towards the IS’s siege of Kobane, then ordinary people took to the streets and occupied public spaces with their (living) bodies in order to change Turkish policies towards Kobane. Those bodies of the demonstrators, as non-violent means of communication, forced the state to open the borders to Kurdish fighters; yet the same consequential bodies were targeted and tortured by the state. In regard to the politicised body, Foucault emphasizes ‘body politics’ as a focal point in regard to power relations and dominations: ‘the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit songs’ (1997:25). In the case of Kobane protests, those protesting bodies became the central point of all the politics, resistance and torture in Turkey. However, the voices and activities on the streets were of almost no significance for *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*. Both newspapers remained silent because of being under the influence of the AKP’s rising authoritarianism. That authoritarianism made the AKP abandoning its displays of pluralism, silencing opposition, and condemning the media for attempting to criticize the government (Arsan, 2013). Since 2014, when the AKP had changed the law so as to gain the authority to ban or stop broadcasting in the name of national security, the media could not criticise the government (*idem*).

⁸² These examples of covering the death of protestors but not reporting the purposes of their protest and the causes of their death resembles – as Salih (2017) and Korn (2004) mention – the Israeli media coverage of targeted and unspoken dead bodies of Palestinians.

In order to produce conspiracy, and spread it, *Sabah* persistently presented the leader of the Gulen movement, a former ally of the AKP, as being behind Kobane protests. For example, *Sabah*'s M. Ali Berber⁸³ quoted Erdogan under the following headline.

Pennsylvania [Fetullah Gulen] is behind the protests

Kobane is an excuse to bring Turkey to heel...For that, they [the West] use the bloody organisations and networks of treason such as Pennsylvania.
(12.10.2014)

As discussed further, *Sabah* benefited from the government discourse about foreign enemies, which supposedly used their domestic pawns to wage a war on Turkey. From 2013 onwards, numerous articles in *Sabah* blamed the Gulen movement for orchestrating the protests. *Sabah* did so because criticizing the Gulen movement was no longer dangerous once Gulen's alliance with the AKP ended in 2013. (See previous chapters.)

Compared to *Sabah*, *Hürriyet*, a Kemalist newspaper with sympathetic tendencies towards the peace talks, presented the protestors with rather less reference to conspiracy. It reported upon the protests as potentially damaging to the peace process and to the economy. I shall discuss that reporting later in §6.5. Below the front page of *Hürriyet* (Figure 8.) with multiple pictures of destruction questioned the purpose of the protests, implying that no won anything.

⁸³ He graduated from private Koc University, an elite university belongs to Koc family in Turkey, and is now a press counsellor of Ministry of Treasury and Finance of Turkey.



Figure 8. *Hürriyet*'s headline: 'Who Won? (09.10.2014)

Hürriyet's subheadings communicated that, in the protests, nineteen people were killed, and hundreds injured, and that thousands of buildings, banks, public institutions and automobiles were set on fire by the protestors. During the preliminary stages of protests, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, despite their profound differences, used similar headlines to report the protests, namely, as a conspiracy against Turkey – and they did not report the views of the demonstrators. Unlike *Sabah*, *Hürriyet*'s columnists and opinion makers abstained from accusing and blaming someone directly, such as the Gulen movement and western countries. However, *Hürriyet*'s editorials embraced government discourse and sometimes even went so far as to speak of a hidden agenda and a plot against Turkey. For instance, *Hürriyet*'s Sinan Özmüş covered a statement of the Minister of Justice to the effect that the Kobane protest was one of the most treacherous acts against the stability of Turkey (16.11.2014). In the article, the Minister wrote in an accusatory way of

‘them’: the enemies who set up this plot against Turkey’s future. But the Minister hesitated to reveal the identity of this ‘they’, because he was engaging in a political manoeuvre in order to *produce* the necessary enemy or rather the appearance of such an enemy. Knowing the political context and Turkish national narrative, one can say without hesitation that the ‘them’ to which the minister referred comprised the Western countries; it was those countries he was blaming implicitly for this ‘plot’. Nevertheless, *Hürriyet* covered the case more rationally than *Sabah*. The latter’s reports spoke of the hidden agenda of the enemies against Turkey.

As in the case of the Roboski massacre, discussed in chapter 5, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* failed to cover the Kobane protests until they turned into violence. The same politics of censorship was in evidence in Turkish mainstream television channels during the Gezi Park protests in Taksim Square in 2013. In those protests, police waged a heavy offensive upon the demonstrators, using violence to suppress them. Turkish channels such as NTV and CNN Turk did not cover the Gezi Park events. Instead they showed food programs, CNN Turk (owned by the Dogan conglomerate as is *Hürriyet*) aired penguin documentaries, which led the public to ridicule CNN Turk and dub it ‘penguin media’. Turkish mainstream media, such as the outlets of the Dogan group, showed documentaries and entertainment programs rather than the demonstrations while the police used tear gas bombs to suppress the public. The media did so because the government had a major impact on editorial policies (Oktem, 2013). Kobane protests like Gezi the protests were reported by way of notion of conspiracy and of potential damage to public order. The Kobane protests were more significant because they were related to the Kurdish question. For this reason, the Kobane demonstrations were reported by the Turkish media in terms of separatism, terrorism and security (Yuksel-Pecen, 2018), as was certainly

the case in *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*. This approach by the Turkish media failed to treat the torture and the state's crime against protestors. The mainstream media unconditionally endorsed the government discourse and even went so far as to support violent measures against the Kurds – even during the peace negotiations (Alankuş, 2016; Algan, 2019). Similarly, Volcic and Dzihana (2011) stress the importance of the nature of news produced about conflict zones. Those authors discuss the reporting of war crime trials in the former Yugoslavia and explain that 'most media coverage tends to concentrate on reporting incidents rather than maximizing public understanding of the causes and contexts of such violent issues'; thus, such reporting does not contribute to conflict resolution (2011:31). The papers that I have been studying are cases in point. *Sabah* (continually) and *Hürriyet* (often) decontextualize and dehistoricize the protests, by separating them from a long tradition of Kurdish struggle, and reporting demonstrations with no relation to political memory of the Kurds. In this way, the discourse of those papers gets in the way of a solution to the problem.

Not all of the newspapers under consideration linked the Kobane protests with the Gezi movement within a negative context. Contrary to *Sabah*, *Birgün* portrayed both protest movements as rational resistance to government policy. For *Birgün*, the Kobane and the Gezi were not only demonstrating AKP's politics about the siege of Kobane and neo-liberal transformation of Gezi Park, respectively, but also were protesting the AKP's increasing authoritarianism at many levels. According to Gambetti (2014:94), the Occupy Gezi protest was not only about ecology and trees, but it was an empty signifier covering all kinds of dissatisfactions against the AKP's policies:

[The Occupy Gezi protest was [. .] against neoliberal greed, against rampant commodification, against denial of ethnic and religious identities (mainly of Kurds and Alawis), against nepotism and partisanship, against the censoring of the media, against police violence, against the use of the judiciary to criminalize all sorts of dissents [. .]

By the same token, the Kobane protests had become the voice of the Kurds who were frustrated and angered because the government was failing to take action for besieged Kobane and was intensifying security measures in Kurdish towns. One such measure was the construction of hundreds of Kalekols – fortified outposts – during the slow-moving peace process. The AKP took stern measures against the Kurdish protestors and constructed military bases at the same time, all because of its neoliberal, authoritarian and Islamist ideology. Göçek (2018) and Bozkurt (2013) argue that the AKP merged Islamism with nationalism and with neoliberalism in order to appeal to bourgeois and Conservative Turks. Thus, those do not vote for the AKP, including the most Kurds, have faced the dark side of the AKP and its neoliberal exclusion (Göçek, 2018). Regardless of neoliberal political suppression by the AKP, the protests marked significant changes in Turkey. The protests delivered two significant messages to the government in this period of peace talks: first, that the government should allow the Kurds to cross the border into Syria in order to save Kobane; second, that the Kurds were capable of organizing themselves and of holding their ground to show they were strong on the bargaining-table during the peace negotiations.

6.2.2 Hail to those who fight for peace⁸⁴

Contrary to the Kemalist *Hürriyet* and the politically Islamist *Sabah*, the left-wing *Birgün* challenged negative representation of the Kurds, and that negative representation was the product of the ideological marriage between political Islam and Kemalism. *Birgün* portrayed demonstrations positively and indeed showed great sympathy for the demonstrators. The mainstream media depicts protestors as irrationally gripped by frustration and anger (Edwards, 2014). By contrast, *Birgün* presented the protestors as conscious political agents demanding change. Accordingly, and unlike other newspapers, *Birgün* made no reference to conspiracies and indeed often condemned the AKP. The headline below illustrates the latter point:



Figure 9. *Birgün*'s headline: 'In Kobane IS, in Turkey, AKP' (08.10.2014)

⁸⁴ This slogan is from the banner held by the woman between two policemen – see Figure 9.

Figure 9 shows the headline and subheadings: ‘IS attacking Kobane while in Turkey the AKP is attacking the people, who [i.e. the people] are saying [to IS], ‘Don’t attack Kobane’ (08.10.2014). *Birgün* frequently reported upon the motivations of the protestors and considered the deaths of the protestors to be the consequence of police violence. While *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* news reports depicted the protests as plots that jeopardized Turkey’s integrity, *Birgün* adopted an affirmative discourse, whereby the protests challenged IS and AKP politics. Different again – radically different even – the pro-Kurdish newspaper, *Özgür Gündem* framed the Kobane demonstrations as riots (see Figure 11). The siege of Kobane led to the construction of a sense of group identity and solidarity among the Kurds who had a victory (Gourlay, 2018). We see here that the demonstrations were interpreted quite differently by the pro-Kurdish newspapers. For instance, *Özgür Gündem*’s headline, given in Figure 11 below, reads: ‘Riot for Kobane: The agenda and prohibitions of the AKP are under the feet of people’ (09.10.2014). The subheading also stated that the AKP was struggling to control the riot. The text claimed also that the police and IS’s sympathisers ‘Hizbul-Kontra’ (referring to the Islamist group Hüda-Par) murdered thirteen protesting citizens (09.10.2014). Considerably like *Birgün* in this respect, pro-Kurdish media outlets often portrayed the demonstrations as the continuing resistance of the Kurds to the AKP. Now a social movement consists of subjects who invest substantial energy in their cause, who organise in chaotic space, and who sometimes sacrifice their prosperity and lives for the movement (Klandermans, 1997). Here we have a way in which *Özgür Gündem* differed from mainstream Turkish newspapers: rather than report the demonstrations as abrupt expressions of discontent, as chaos and/or rebellion, it represented them as the consequence of an organized Kurdish tradition of resistance. Although *Özgür*

Gündem was closer ideologically to *Birgün* than to *Sabah*, it did, ironically enough, share some views with *Sabah*. See figure 11. Both newspapers considered demonstrations as part of a rebellion. *Özgür Gündem* viewed this rebellion as positive. *Sabah* considered it as negative – as a threat to Turkey’s integrity.

Furthermore, *Birgün* was inclined to present positive images of protestors rather than to spread the idea of conspiracy against Turkey. As the representative of Turkish left, it excluded the accounts offered by official statesmen and thereby avoiding depicting the protestors as traitors cooperating with ‘the enemy’. That unnamed enemy is typically the Western power in Turkish security discourse. From the foundation of the state to the present, the Turkish state’s fear and paranoia, as well as the admiration for the West, have become a useful tool for the state to thwart the voice of the dissidents in any given context, the dissidents being those considered to be either opponents of Western modernity or pro-Western separatists and traitors. While *Birgün* refrained from depicting the demonstrators as Western spies, *Hürriyet* occasionally and *Sabah* continually used that discourse of the state officials to delegitimise demonstrations. *Sabah* affords an example of the contrast at issue. *Sabah*’s reporter Mehmet Er quoted Erdogan:

Modern Lawrences [referring to T. E. Lawrence] are throwing the region into the fire and stirring up the region [. .] These kinds of Lawrences impersonate cleric, state official, journalist, writer and terrorist. (14.10.2014)

The article explicitly stated that the demonstrators were being manipulated. Indeed, it went further, saying that these ‘Lawrences’ were trapping Turkey. The article was referring to the role of Lawrence of Arabia at organizing Arab revolts against Ottoman. That portrayal of the demonstrators has been reversed by *Birgün* despite

some demonstrators' involvement in burning and damaging state estates. Erdogan's invocation of Lawrence was part of a strategy to criminalize the people who protested his authoritarian rule in Turkey. By mentioning Lawrence, he associated the Kurdish protestors with a figure from British imperialism in order to legitimize suppressive policies towards the Kurdish 'Lawrences'. In Turkish context, since Lawrence is constructed as the enemy who caused the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and calling the protestors Lawrence attempted to portray them as enemies who threatened Turkey's integrity.

6.3 The Kobane protests: jeopardizing vs safeguarding the peace process

6.3.1 Erdogan: they will pay a heavy price if they hinder the solution process⁸⁵

Hürriyet and *Sabah*, but not *Birgün*, focused upon the future of the peace process and expressed the worry that the protests would damage it. The peace negotiations were conducted with the PKK and began in 2009 albeit, officially, only at the start of 2013 (Ozkahraman, 2017; Özpek, 2018; see also chapters 2 and 5 above). While I will discuss the representation of the peace process itself in chapter 7, repeated references to that process by the media during the demonstration means that the theme is relevant to the current chapter as well. *Sabah* greatly stressed the importance of the continuing peace talks; that stance is in line with the government's discourse, the reason being the paper's financial implication with the state (Tunc,

⁸⁵ This title is based on Erdogan's speech, which is discussed in detail in this section. The 'solution process' refers to the peace process.

2015). *Sabah*'s prominent columnist Mehmet Barlas⁸⁶ wrote that the peace process is a watershed that would broaden the horizon of 'the New Turkey' (Erdogan's term). However, Barlas continued as follows.

[T]he White Turks [referring to Kemalists and Turkish elites], who have an obsessive hostility towards Erdogan and the AKP, want to 'sabotage the peace process' by manipulating the PKK to fuel the conflict. (09.10.2014)

The author is saying unambiguously that Kobane is an excuse to endanger the peace process by the saboteurs. Another senior *Sabah* columnist, Mahmut Ovrur, took a similar view.

There were several people rubbing their hands with glee in order to hinder the peace process. From liberal-leftists to Gulenists [F. Gulen supporters], someone has been doing their best to finish the peace process for months by writing, tweeting [against the process] and visiting the mountains [i.e. visiting the PKK]. (10.10.2014)

In accord with this narrative from the columnists, the editorial and opinion pieces in *Sabah* adopted even more aggressive discursive practices – by quoting, directly and indirectly, the government's top representatives. For instance, *Sabah* cited Erdogan's denunciations of the protestors, in the front-page, as words I have used in the title for this section: 'The ones who are striving to end the solution process [the peace process] will pay a heavy price for that' (05.10.2014). Considering the deaths caused

⁸⁶ Mehmet Barlas (1942, Gaziantep) is son of elite Turkish politician, Cemil Barlas a CHP MP. He graduated from Istanbul University with a law degree but later, thanks to family network, he began to work in several media outlets such as Cumhuriyet, Star, Zaman, Aksam, Yeni Safak and TRT. Adopting a conservative liberal stance, he often develops good relations with leading elite figures and politicians of Turkey such as Turgut Ozal (former president) and President Erdogan.

by the special police force in the Kurdish region, the discourse of ‘paying a price’ meant violent suppression of the demonstrators. The government threatened those protestors who aimed to lead a campaign for political awareness and solidarity with the people resisting IS in Kobane. The government failed to deal with the demonstrators via non-violent methods and stated that the demonstrators will pay heavy prices for their actions. Ahmed (2014) claims that non-white people and their bodies are always constructed as a threat in white social spaces. Similarly, Kurdish protestors on the street were constructed as objects of fear and perceived as threat to the integrity of Turkey by the state and media. The bodies of others – of black people, indigenous people or of refugees, constructed as objects of fear, anxiety and hatred in the Western public space – feed an economy of fear (Ahmed, 2014). The protesting Kurdish bodies have paid the aforementioned ‘heavy price’ with their lives because the state perceived them as separatists Kurds and as such a threat to security. Likewise, Zeydanlıoğlu (2008) states that anti-Kurdish national hysteria has always targeted the Kurds in moments of political crisis. He argues that there were twenty attempts to lynch Kurds and that these attempts were encouraged by Turkish journalist and politicians, the latter defining the actions as ‘reactions by concerned citizens’ (*ibid.*). Thus, the bodies of the Kurdish protestors became targets of hatred in the mainstream Turkish media.

The state’s traditional discourse aimed to ‘civilise’, ‘educate’, assimilate and discipline the Kurds and held that were they to resist then they should be dehumanized, criminalized and eliminated as in the case of extrajudicial killings and disappearances (Aras, 2014; Gunes, 2013; Orhan, 2016; Yegen, 1999). The state’s fear of and paranoia about the Kurds intended to legitimize all means of suppression and violence. Alongside coverage of the threat posed by the government, *Sabah*

presented the views of pro-state public opinion makers and the results of the polls about the public support for the peace talks. It did so in order to link the protests with anti-peace movements. For instance, following the mass protests, *Sabah*'s headline, namely 'The support for solution process [the peace process] is 55.4%' (24.10.2014), reinforced the government narrative and disparaged the demonstrations by implying that the citizens support the process regardless of the 'Kobane provocation'. In fact, the public supported the peace process but the paper used this argument to portray public opinion as opposed to the protestors. Unlike *Sabah*'s claims about the protests, and as Yuksel-Pecen (2018) points out, during the Kobane protests the AKP adopted the state's traditional discourse of terror and security towards the Kurds.

On the other hand, *Hürriyet*, as the voice of the institutional Kemalist status quo, lent moderate support to the peace process during the protests, while reinforcing the discourses of security and public order. According to Bulut (2005), the Turkish press, from towards the end of Ottoman Empire to the present day, has been Kurd-phobic because of Kurdish struggle. *Hürriyet*, as a strong element of Turkish press, adopted its stance towards the Kurds according to changing power relations in Turkish politics (*idem*). For this reason, *Hürriyet* presented the AKP as caring about the peace process in order to strengthen the discourse against the demonstrators, yet it did so slightly less than *Sabah*. *Hürriyet*'s correspondent Selçuk Şenyüz reported: Prime Minister Davutoglu said that the HDP is the cause of the protests and we [the AKP] will not sacrifice the 'solution process' [peace process] due to the vandalism [referring to the protests]. While the article omitted any countervailing views and the fact that the police killed demonstrators, it persistently cited accusations made by Davutoglu as facts:

If they [the HDP] care about the solution process, firstly they should do the necessary. HDP claims that the Kurds are being oppressed [by IS] but they are the ones who are truly oppressing the Kurds in Turkey. This suppression of the Kurds by the HDP is against humanity. (09.10.2014)

Hürriyet ran numerous similar stories to the effect that the Kobane protests were excuses for obstructing the peace process. It used government sources for those stories. The paper excluded the opinions and demands of the demonstrators, activists and HPD, but gave voice to pro-government institutions and NGOs. The following statement of the pro-government Memur-Sen (the Confederation of Public Servants Trade Unions) is an example of how *Hürriyet* bolstered the state argument.

We have understood that Kobane [saving the city] was not a real concern of those, who wanted to stir up the country and hinder the solution process. [They use] IS's attack upon Kobane as the pretext [to attack Turkey]. (29.11.2014)

Hürriyet's editorial articles often adopted the views of conservative NGOs as in this case. For the same reason, *Hürriyet's* columnist Taha Akyol condemned the protestors for burning public institutions and he rebuked the Kurdish politicians as follows: 'The problems in the solution process stem from the Kurdish nationalist movement's passion for violence' (09.10.2014). I observed that *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* equally blamed the Kurdish politicians for the demonstrations. The criminalization of Kurdish political actors became a common thing between the Roboski massacre, Gezi and Kobane protests in the mainstream media. Silence and misrepresentation of those critical moments dated back to the Roboski massacre, when Erdogan ordered the media to stop reporting this 'operational accident', on the basis that reporting it served the 'terrorists' (Kuymulu, 2013). Moreover, Alankuş (2016) states that mainstream Turkish media supported the military operations against the Kurds in the

1990s and that it supported the peace process for a very limited time. Once the government stopped the peace process, the press started to adopt its anti-peace narrative (*idem*). According to Barış Ünlü's 'Turkishness contract' idea, there is a strong correlation between Turkishness – to see or to fail to see things in the manner of a Turk – and silence about or denial of state violence against marginalized populations (Protner, 2018; Ünlü, 2016). The mainstream newspapers were silent about the deaths of protestors but supported the state's violent suppression of the protests.

6.3.2 The demonstrations are securing the peace

In marked contrast to *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* focused upon the reasons for the protests and did so with great sympathy for protestors and did not claim that the demonstrations were against the peace process. *Birgün* used various narratives from various sources to advocate peace. It criticised the government's view that the demonstrations threatened Turkey's integrity. *Birgün* did not censor the counter-discourse of the protestors and of Kurdish politicians, whereas *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* excluded Kurdish voices. Therefore, *Birgün* challenged the representation of the protestors as 'anti-peace' in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*. For instance, *Birgün* reported what the pro-Kurdish HDP stated, namely: 'Those opposing the peace process are provocateurs' (10.10.2014). The article criticized the violence of the police and of Hezbollah [the Free Cause Party] against demonstrators, and implied that Hezbollah and the police were provoking both the demonstrators and the state towards ending the peace process. A discussion of police knowledge by Della Porta & Reiter (1998) is helpful here: they state that police have quite limited knowledge of the motives of protestors; their knowledge and opinion of their duty is produced through the lenses of the institutional power. Turkish police look at social unrest through the eyes of the

nationalists. This owes, as Caglar (2004) indicates, to the methods of recruiting Turkish police; they are recruited through a discriminatory process that explicitly excludes Turkish citizens of Armenian, Greek or Jewish descent. Indeed, it has always been the case that Turkey's conservative politicians has favoured nationalist and right-wing police forces as useful tools to control the masses and left-wing dissidents. Police antipathy and violence towards the protests and social movements from Gezi to Kobane have become a significant issue in Turkey (Arat, 2013; Gambetti, 2014; Kuymulu, 2013). The police forces, with their nationalist ambition - which allow them to be part of security forces due to nepotism and the lack of meritocracy - have gone beyond the rule of law and inflicted massive violence upon the demonstrators, which in turn only ignited the protests further. *Birgün* did report, for the most part, that police violence, while *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* ignored it.

Furthermore, *Birgün* reported more counter-narratives of the dissidents. That narrative from the opposition parties destabilised the government's argument presented by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*. For instance, *Birgün* challenged the government discourse by giving voice to the co-chair of HDP:

The demonstrations, as convenient manoeuvres, saved both Kobane [city] and the peace process, which was facing an end. If IS had taken Kobane, the PKK and Mr. Öcalan would have announced the end of the peace process. More devastation was prevented [thanks to the protests]. (06.11.2014)

This article explained how the protests helped to sustain the peace process, and how, for the sake of the peace talks, Öcalan stopped further protests. Now, the humanization of dissidents, and the making of conflict transparent by voicing all parties is peace-oriented journalism in order to resolve conflict (Volcic & Dzihana,

2011). On that criterion, we can say that *Birgün* advocated peace-oriented journalism – because it brought truth to light about the protests.

6.4 Vandals vs. activists: protestors as floating signifiers in discursive conflicts

6.4.1 There is no port to which the barbarian will take my Kurdish brother⁸⁷

Under this subtitle, which is derived from Erdogan's speech, I focus upon the hegemonic discourse levelled against the people on the street. As discussed earlier in this section, Jasper (2014) identifies protestors as heroes changing the world for better. However, quite differently to that positive definition of protestors, the mainstream Turkish newspapers along with various other social actors defined the Kobane protestors in terms that accorded with the former's ideological stance. Disagreement on the part of the newspapers about the identity of the protestors by the newspapers, and the variety of epithets used to describe them –thugs, heroes, vandals, activists, terrorists – constructed the protestors as floating signifiers (§5.2, §5.4.2). A floating signifier such as race, skin colour or cultural classification is produced through language, and floating signifier, as a part of a meaning-making progress, consists of various definitions and remains unfixed due to changing power relations (Hall, 1996). It is constructed in the discursive practices of different actors and serves to define objects and subjects within an ideological frame. What make a concept a floating signifier are the different meanings attributed to it by different agents. The Kobane protestors were portrayed as barbarians and vandals in mainstream organs such as *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* (see Figure 10 for a demonstration of

⁸⁷ Erdogan's speech appeared in *Sabah* (13.10.2014).

the biases of those papers in), but as activists and heroes in the left-leaning *Birgün*. The protestors were not represented with a fixed discourse. Rather they were portrayed radically differently in different publications. This made of the protestors a floating signifier in the media representation.

Sabah represented the protestors as vandals that were backed by F. Gulen's cult and by some elements in the HDP and PKK. For example, *Sabah's* subheading on one front page, accompanied by an image of protestors standing next to fires, called the protestors 'the pawns' of dark forces, and it added that thirty people were dead, four lynched and two burned (10.10.2014). The same article claimed that on social media protestors identified those who disagreed with them as IS sympathisers, and then attacked them on the street. However, the same article neglected the fact that ultra-nationalists, the Grey Wolves, the IS sympathisers along with Hezbollah followers targeted the Kurdish protestors. While the article reported thirty deaths, almost all of whom were protestors, it did not mention the perpetrators, namely, police and IS supporters. The media protection of the perpetrators was the consequence of the Turkish state's tendency to use violence towards its subjects. This routinized and excessive use of violence by the state is a sign of the political and social failure of the ruling class (Öncü, 2003): it showed that the Turkish establishment did not know how to deal with the protests in a non-violent way.

The mainstream media depicted the cause and aim of the protestors with denigrations that were rooted in the state's official discourse as well as in the Turkish media's narrative of the Kurds. Yet, evidently, it is not only Turkish press that disparages the oppressed or ethnic or religious minorities. On a global level, the mainstream press adopts the prejudiced voice of experts drawn from the elite when

reporting issues related to ethnic minorities and race (Poole, 2009; van Dijk, 1991). Butler (2009) reveals that, because of the ‘war on terror’, the US media dehumanized Arabic people and subsequently ignored their pain and loss. In this way, the media decides whose life is worth grieving and mourning (*idem*). In a comparable manner, the Turkish government defined demonstrators as terrorists, vandals and barbarians. These discursive practices of Turkish government were mirrored by *Sabah*, which showed no sign of mourning for the deaths of the protestors. To illustrate that last point: Erdogan’s speech appeared in *Sabah* with this bold subheading: ‘The barbarian will not take my Kurdish brother to port [or a safe place]’ (13.10.2014). Similar media motives and representation of oppressed people can be observed in the United Kingdom. In 1985, when there were disturbances in predominantly Asian and West Indian neighbourhoods in several British cities, then, rather than focusing upon the causes, most media adopted the following stance (Van Dijk 1991:2):

The ‘riots’ were the criminal acts of black inner-city youths and a fundamental attack on the civil order. They should not be seen as caused by ethnic inequality, oppression, or discrimination nor as the expression of socio-economic frustration and rage.

Sabah and *Hürriyet* neglected the dynamic of the demonstrations in the same sort of way shown above. *Sabah* represented the protestors with a criminalizing language, calling them barbarians, bandits and outlaws. This way of representing the Kurds stems from the state official discourse of the Kurdish question in the early period of the republic (see chapter 1 and 2). *Sabah*’s columnist, Okan Müderrisoğlu, stated that the central cadre of the PKK and HDP had not internalized the peace process, and that they did not want Hezbollah and its Free-Cause Party to exist in the Kurdish

region (09.10.2014). Furthermore, Müderrisoğlu referred to these ‘cadres’ of the HPD and PKK as ‘necrophiles’ who were responsible for the deaths by dint of not stopping the ‘vandals’ [the protestors].

The data indicates that even though *Hürriyet* embraced a relatively moderate attitude towards protestors, it still reinforced the image of activists as thugs, bandits and vandals. It did so covertly, by placing images of destruction and fighting next to stories about the protestors. All of this is reminiscent of the state’s earlier portrayal – up until the 1990s – of Kurds as backwards and bandits and separatists. (Yegen 1999; Zeydanlıoğlu 2008.) *Hürriyet*’s main headline, ‘What happened that night?’ (10.10.2014), with its picture of protestors around a fire, reported that HDP followers had set the Free-Cause Party’s associations alight. The story proceeded to state that this event caused clashes between the respective followers of each side and left ten dead by October 7. In both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, the protestors were portrayed as having no agency and as being manipulated by powers such as the PKK, the Gulen movement and Western countries. This approach reproduces the colonial discourse of the Western powers, a discourse that considered indigenous communities as childish, immature, inferior, unable to govern themselves (Fanon, 2001; Said, 2003). *Hürriyet*’s correspondent, Süleyman Elcin, explicitly referred to the protestors as terrorists (meaning the PKK). In order to reinforce his claim, he quoted the following words by Deputy Prime Minister Yalcin Akdoğan:

This [violence and attacks] is not done by uncontrolled groups. It was carried according to a plan. The terrorist [the PKK] organisation follows a strategy, aiming to banish the Kurds that do not fall under its ideology. They [protestors] intended to suppress and carry out political and societal cleansing. They aimed to build a homogenous structure, which should obey [the PKK], by expelling the Kurds that are not supporters of [the PKK]. (04.11.2014)

The article linked the demonstrators directly to the PKK and presented the radical Islamists as dissidents to the PKK. Further, the article distorted reality by claiming that the reason of the protests was to expel anti-PKK Kurds from the region. This narrative constructed this ‘opposition’ or ‘dissident’ radical Islamism, Kurdish Hezbollah, as a Kurdish alternative political movement. Yet, rather than being an opposition movement, the violent Kurdish Hezbollah was backed by the state (Kurt, 2017). The state supported that violent Islamist movement in fighting against the PKK.

In *Hürriyet* some senior columnists, such as the liberal-leftists Oral Calislar and Cengiz Candar, took a critical stance towards the Kobane protests. However, many of its column articles shared in the state discourse – in accordance with the paper’s editorial line. For instance, the senior columnist Akyol scolded the protestors in an article entitled, ‘Vandalism’;

They took to the streets and vandalised. They set everything on fire; buildings, bank branches, public transportation, stores, cars and the ambulances that provide health care services to Kobane town. 21 people lost their lives. This barbarity continued all day, no one from the BDP [another pro-Kurdish party] came out and said, ‘stay away from violence’. Quite the reverse, the MP of HDP, Ertuğrul Kürkçü, fuelled [the demonstrations] by saying ‘We took action against the jihadists’. (09.10.2014)

Akyol acknowledged the right to protest, but with this caveat: ‘But what they [the protestors] do is destruction, vandalism and barbarity’ (09.10.2014).



Figure 10. The use of the world ‘vandal’, as analysed by NVivo software.

Figure 10 shows how *Hürriyet* used the word ‘vandal’ (*vandallar*) in relation to the protestors. It shows how *Hürriyet* often constructed the demonstrators as ‘vandals’ and positioned them as terrorists who were threats to the public and to Turkey.

The dehumanization of the Kurdish protestors by such techniques as these reinforced the hatred towards the Kurds. Sarah Ahmed (2014) argues that the body of the Other becomes a source of fear and anxiety, which creates an economy of the fear that is exploitable by dominant groups. These elite groups sustain their power over the public by using this fear ‘economy’, which is produced through labelling, stigmatization and exclusion and by defining Others as threats. Ahmed (2014) writes of ‘the organization of hatred’ and maintains that it works by aligning some subjects against Others and that it does so by circulating some signs and words, such as ‘nigger’. The use of concepts such as *vandal* and *barbarian* not only labelled and stigmatized the Kurds but also strengthened and legitimized the violence inflicted upon the protestors – protestors constructed as the threat to the public within this politics and economy of fear. *Hürriyet* provided a sample in this regard as columnist Ayşe Baykal stated that:

The protests have been continuing for three days. Values [morality] are ruined.
The shops are looted. Above all people are dying. (09.09.2014)

The article emphasized both the economy and morality in the same way while it failed to clarify the identity of the ‘dead’ people and the values at issue. Her article ignored who were the perpetrators. McGoe (2012) states that ignorance as a useful means helps to consolidate the power of the institutions to deny liability in the moments of crises. The mainstream media, as in the *Hürriyet* column article by Ayşe Baykal, preferred this kind of ignorance of the police violence and its consequences. This preference for vagueness and strategic ignorance (McGoe, 2012) in the production of news concealed the negative roles of powerful actors in the crisis. The protestors, as floating signifiers, were constructed as barbarians and vandals, and once they were killed, then they were humanized as ‘dying’ people by Turkish mainstream press.

6.4.2 We will be Kurds in Kobane, Turks in Solingen, Arabs in Israel⁸⁸

Contrary to the dehumanisation and criminalization of the demonstrators by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* represented the demonstrators positively. CDA provides a better way of understanding text by focusing upon background of the story and upon historical and political context, textual coherence, source attribution, defining actors and their roles (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Davis, 2015; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Janks, 1997; Van Dijk, 1995). As discussed extensively in chapter 4, these principles and tools of CDA provided a significant opportunity to see to what extent *Birgün* differed from other newspapers in terms of providing plain language, context and criticisms. For instance, it was the only

⁸⁸ This was *Birgün*’s front-page headline of 09.10.2014.

newspaper that explicitly considered the death of protestors as the consequence of a coalition. *Birgün*'s columnist, Fatih Yasli⁸⁹, explained the coalition:

The new regime [AKP] has virtually rehearsed a civil war on Kobane protests in Turkey. With these protests, it gave a message to the Kurds and dissidents: paramilitary groups will be used against them along the state forces. In an implicit collation with IS, in the east, Hezbollah and the Grey Wolves [Turkish nationalists] in the west, took their places on the streets. They proved that they are the 'striking power' of the new regime (19.10.2014).

Fatih Yasli stated openly that the violence was perpetrated by those three actors as quoted above. Additionally, he continued to accuse the AKP to be in alliance with IS. Unlike *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* reported torture, lynching and detention of protestors. *Birgün* portrayed the protestors as citizens who took to streets out of solidarity with Kobane in order to protest against the AKP's policy toward IS. *Birgün* humanized the protestors and stated the diverse background of the protestors. For instance, Buse İlkin Yerli's article, entitled, 'The students are resisting against both police and IS' (15.10.2014) reported that students, along with trades unions, gathered to protest for Kobane and to fight against the violence of the AKP's police and IS sympathisers. Yerli's article acknowledged the cosmopolitan identities of the protestors and their demands. The mainstream newspapers reduced the diverse identities of the protestors to the single identity of provocateur. They did so in order to consolidate the position of the government discourse and to mislead

⁸⁹ Fatih Yasli (1979, Ankara) is a leftist author and academic with a PHD from Ankara University. He has written many books on the ideology conservative political parties, such as the AKP and MHP, by focusing on Turkish nationalism and conservatism and political Islam.

the public about demonstrators. On the other hand, *Birgün* defined the demonstrators as protestors, people, citizens and activists, and frequently criticising the Turkish media for representing them in a biased way. Here is an example of such criticism.

We will be Kurds in Kobane, Turks in Solingen, Arabs in Israel

Turkey's media deceptively reported what happened on the previous day [Kobane protests] in their headings and front pages. They announced the citizens, protesting the IS attacks, as 'the enemies of Turkey' [...] the newspapers, *Bugün*,⁹⁰ close to Gulen movement, had a similar narrative. *Bugün*, which said 'The fire of Kobane burnt Turkey', blamed the citizens, who were protesting the massacres, for allegedly causing the incidents. The newspaper presented the protestors, who were resisting the police violence, as 'terrorist' and 'provocateur' to its readers. (*Birgün*, 09.10.2014)

This article emphasised *Birgün*'s solidarity with demonstrators and with the Kurds of Kobane. *Birgün* criticized coverage of *Bugün*, the newspaper belonged to the Gulen movement, and questioned its democratic values. I here claim that the Kobane protests partially were some sort of riots, as given in Figure 11. The liberal Kurds and the Turkish left, including *Birgün*, rejected that explanation, for political reasons. When the police violence intensified against the protestors in the Kurdish region, the protestors started to block roads and to seize the streets, preventing activity of the state institutions, such as schools and banks. For instance, the front page of the pro-Kurdish *Özgür Gündem* presented the demand by the respective leaders of the KCK and the PKK that the 'riot of the people' (i.e. the protest) should continue until the Kurds were victorious. For that front page, see Figure 11 in

⁹⁰ *Bugün* was a newspaper that belonged to the Gulen movement and later it was shut down for this relation with Gulenist.

Appendixes. The Turkish left and some Kurds did not want to accept this as a riot. So doing would have endangered the peace negotiations with the state. Also, it would have prevented Turkey from opening the borders to those Kurdish fighters who wanted to go to Kobane to fight against IS. Laclau and Mouffe assert that in politics ‘so-called “representation” modifies the nature of what is represented’ (1985:58). If one represents something that is in the political arena, then one intentionally or unintentionally changes and even sometimes misrepresents that thing, for political reasons and because of the impossibility of representing one thing fully. In that way, the Kobane protests, to some extent, were strategically misrepresented by the pro-Kurdish HDP and by some other actors since those factions did not want to risk the peace process or jeopardise the aid to Kobane. Thus, *Birgün* preferred to present the Kobane protests only in the contexts of solidarity and of protesting against the AKP. It did not wish to consider the protests as having to do with Kurdish nationalism.

6.5 Concerns for the economy and for public order

6.5.1 There is no cash machine in the city

Another theme that appeared extensively across all Turkish newspapers during the protests, including *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, was worrying about the economy. The economic loss incurred by Turkey due to the war with the PKK has been an important argument (Çiçek, 2016; Gunes, 2013; Yegen, 1999), and in this time of peace talks protests were considered by the government as the tool of economic war on Turkey. As expected, the demonstrations caused enormous economic loss and the mainstream media constructed the protests as part of the economic war against Turkey as it did the same in the Gezi protests. The government considered the

Kobane protests, like the Gezi Park protests, as threats to its neoliberal political economy, which depended upon the construction business and the flow of the money from the Gulf countries such as Qatar. Moreover, privatization of public services and of state companies had made the economy fragile. The government adopted an authoritarian neoliberalism to maintain its neoliberal politics. It did so via monopolizing all decisions about the economy and by marginalizing dissidents (Tansel, 2019). Thus, the pro-AKP media, which comprised a media monopoly (Yesil, 2014), presented the Kobane protests as harmful to Turkey's economy. Two things characterise much of the newspaper reporting of the economy: an emphasis upon the economically burdensome cost of the protests; and the idea that economic investment in the Kurdish region was a sign of the government's goodwill (notwithstanding the mass demonstrations). According to *Sabah's* Betul Alakent, businessmen and NGOs condemned 'the chaos lobby' behind the protests and she emphasised that the 'economy of the region [Kurdish cities] [had] already suffered the loss of million liras' (09.10.2014). Alakent's article, entitled, 'Don't axe the [peace] process and the economy', continued to emphasize the importance of economic growth for the Kurdish region, calling on the protesters to end to the demonstrations. *Sabah* constantly placed the protests as opposed to the government's economic initiatives and investments in the Kurdish region. Here is an excerpt from a *Sabah* story that was written by Hazal Ates:

They were frightened of 14 billion [Turkish Lira] of investment

The backstage of Kobani incident is revealed to be 'provocation of the 6th region' [Kurdish region] [. .] The investment of the private sector for the region exceeds the average number in Turkey. [The Kurdish region] has received almost 14 billion liras subsidies for investment in two years. (14.10.2014)

Ates provided numerous technical details of the investments and alleged without any clear evidence that those investments were among the causes of the Kobane protests. And such was one of the government's arguments, circulated through the media to stop protests and blame demonstrators for incurring economic loss and threatening public order.

Hürriyet too professed great concern with the economic cost of the protests. Noyan Dogan⁹¹, a columnist in *Hürriyet*, accentuated the heavy economic loss in the following article:

Insurance stopped!

Insurance companies have stopped insurance sales, which include terror insurances, in areas where incidents have occurred because of Kobani protests. The insured ones will be paid for their damages, but new policies will not be made until the incidents [protests] are over...The economic cost of Kobani protests has become heavy, especially in the eastern [Kurdish] cities. Hundreds of workplaces, buildings and vehicles were burned, demolished and plundered. (13.10.2014)

While Dogan tried to report neutrally on the economic damage done by the attack upon state institutions in the Kurdish region, additionally he embraced the government counter-claim that the protestors were plundering. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* repeatedly emphasised how the Turkish lira had fallen and how gravely the tourism industry had suffered because of the protests. Burak Coşan, from *Hürriyet*, reported that Kobani protests caused Turkish currency to fall against other currencies and that this 'postponed' the visits of international tourists to Turkey (22.11.2014). Another

⁹¹ Noyan Dogan (1967) is an investigative journalist focusing on economy matters with a long career he made in the following newspapers: *Dünya*, *Referans* and *Radikal*.

Hürriyet article, by Eren Güler, and published during the peak point of the protests, had a noteworthy headline:

There is no cash machine in the city

The incidents in the Southeast [Kurdish region], causing the deaths of 35 people, are damaging to the regional economy. Along with the burned down municipal buildings, the state vehicles, schools and work machines, tradesmen are also experiencing very serious destruction. In Diyarbakir, where the most serious events occurred, approximately 600 private businesses damaged, while there was no functioning cash machine left. Also, there is a concern that ongoing incidents would prevent investments in Diyarbakir. (12.10.2014)

The author refrained from giving the reasons for the protests; he presented them only as ‘incidents’ and made little of the deaths of civilians. Furthermore, the tone of this article, together with its striking title, implicitly threatened the Kurds for the political consequences of continuing protests, namely, economic sanctions on Diyarbakir by the state. This blackmailing tone was used frequently by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* to reduce the aim of protests to the inflicting of economic damage. Since *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* were the voice of neoliberal politics, they both prioritized material cost versus human costs; thereby they overemphasised the economic cost but ignored the deaths of the protestors. Göçek (2018) claims that the AKP’s increased neoliberalism has had a destructive effect within contemporary Turkey, particularly upon social resistance movements, as in the case of violent suppression of the Gezi protests in 2013. Göçek argues that the neoliberal politics has had a major effect upon the Kurdish region: ‘[E]conomic investment dwindled while military presence and securitization escalated. Here was the dark side of neoliberalism, namely the violent exclusion of all those that did not fit its model of the ideal politically obedient, all-consuming citizen’ (2018:20). Göçek argues that the

AKP, in the second decade of the millennium, increased ‘securitization and violence’ so as to safeguard its market policies and the lives of its supporters; thus it maintained a hybrid form hegemony, produced by the intersection of political Islamism and neoliberalism. Therefore, the mainstream newspapers, namely *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, as the part of media at the disposal of the neoliberal elites, highlighted the concerns about the economy. The cash machine became more important than the lives of the protestors in the mainstream Turkish media.

6.5.2 Turning a blind eye to the economic cost of the protests

The *Birgün* newspaper emphasised always the humanitarian side of the protests. It tried to legitimize demonstrations. While the economy and public order were widely discussed in the dominant accounts, *Birgün* excluded the hegemonic discourse and chose not to mention the destruction and damage done to the public institutions by the protestors and counter-protestors. Only a few articles cited government officials referring to the economic loss. One of those infrequent *Birgün* articles, titled, ‘Erdoğan: the protests have nothing to do with Kobane!’ (09.10.2014), criticized the following statement made by Erdoğan: ‘the damage done to the private properties and public buildings [by the protests].’ The article neglected the details of Erdoğan’s statements in order not to be complicit in the government’s economic framing. While most of the Turkish media enthusiastically emphasised the economy and public order, in order to legitimize violent measures against the protestors, *Birgün* said nothing of these matters.

6.6 Conclusion to the chapter

For this chapter, I analysed 1, 000 articles to comprehend ideological representation of the protests for solidarity with Kurds in Kobane in different

newspapers. Although the representation of the protests changed in the editorial and column articles of *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* in some cases, the overall representation of the Kobane was produced in similar ways. The police violence and Turkey's inaction in Kobane frustrated the protestors and caused an escalation of the conflict during the peace talks with PKK. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* covered the swiftly spreading mass demonstrations with a discourse of security and terror, which was reminiscent of the state discourse about the Kurdish question during the 1990s, when the Kurdish question was perceived as separatist terrorism. *Hürriyet's* discourse was slightly more moderate than that of *Sabah* – because the latter had some liberal columnists and had relatively loose ties with the AKP. *Sabah*, strictly following the government accounts, reported the protests as a conspiracy against the unity of the Turkish state and against the AKP, implicating the West and the Gulen movement. While both *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* almost entirely excluded the voice and motivation of protestors and issues of Kurdish politics, *Hürriyet* engaged less in ideas of conspiracy. *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* embraced the government's neoliberal approach to the protests by highlighting their economic cost instead of the human cost, the latter being the lives of the protestors.

On the other hand, *Birgün*, the leftist newspaper, provided significant space for the protestors to get their voice heard, and showed sympathy for them while condemning the politics of the AKP. *Birgün* emphasised the violence of the police, of nationalist groups and the Islamist HÜDA-PAR against the demonstrators, to whom it gave their diverse identities – students, activists, politicians and NGO representatives. On the contrary, *Sabah* frequently portrayed the protestors as vandals, criminals and even terrorists, and ignored the violence done to them. *Hürriyet* followed these discursive practices of *Sabah*, yet to a lesser extent.

Regardless of their different ideologies, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* alike raised concerns about Turkey's economy and about tourism, as well as about the future of the peace process. Both newspapers, in a return to the state security discourse of the 1990s, demonized and criminalized the Kobane protests as vandalism and as insurgency against the state. *Birgün* rejected the claims in those newspapers, maintaining instead that the protestors were citizens and posed no threat to peace. Quite opposite to the sensationalism and dramatization of the death of villagers in the Roboski massacre by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, this time both papers overlooked the deaths of civilians and reported them only as numbers with no story. Different than both newspapers, *Birgün* emphasized the deaths of civilians by the state.

7 The anatomy of the peace process of 2009–2015

In this chapter, I focus on the peace talks between the state and PKK. Then I proceed to the media representation of the peace process. My analysis of that representation takes three stages. These stages are: disarmament and announcement of the peace talks; the threat and the risk to the peace process; and anti-peace and hate speeches against the peace talks. I will evaluate the Turkish media discourse about the peace talks and also the discourse of the journalism devoted to the talks. In so doing I make use, especially, of the ‘peace journalism approach’ developed by John Galtung and others.

John Galtung coined the term ‘peace journalism’ to analyse the transformation of conflicts by focusing on accuracy, fairness and balance in reporting (Galtung, 1969, 2003). The religious, ethnic and political conflicts everywhere cause atrocities and violence. The media introduces this violence to individuals. As Sontag (2003) argues, the pain of others and the consumption thereof becomes a part of our lives. The media normalizes the violence that it reports – normalizes it via sensationalism, hate speeches and discriminatory discourses (Filibeli & İnceoğlu, 2018). To tackle the reproduction of conflicts in the media, peace journalism uses non-violent approaches and creativity in reporting (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). It maps the connections between journalists and their sources, and between stories and consequences of their reporting (*idem*). In that way, peace journalism provides the background and context of conflicts. The media promotes peace-making by giving voices to all sides and offering creative ideas for conflict resolution (Alankuş, 2016; Çiftcioğlu, 2017; Galtung, 2003; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). I discuss the peace journalism more throughout the thesis in the context of

Turkish media. My main claim is that at no stage of the peace talks did the Turkish media fully live up to the ideal of peace journalism.

Now I move onto providing a brief an account of the peace process.

7.1 The roadmap of the peace process

I examine the peace process, which started in 2009 and ended in 2015, between the Turkish state and the Kurds and which had the aim of resolving the four-decade long violent conflict in Turkey. For this chapter, I analysed 5,163 articles in total from ideologically different three newspapers as shown in Table 7.1.⁹²

Table 7.1: Ideological affiliation and ownership of the newspapers (2009-2015)

Newspaper	Ownership	Ideological orientation	Relationship with government (AKP)	# of relevant articles
<i>Hürriyet</i>	Doğan Group	Kemalist / mainstream / centre-right / relatively secular	In moderate-conflict with / somewhat pro-government	3100
<i>Birgün</i>	Independent cooperation	Leftist / liberal democratic / secular	Conflictual	509
<i>Sabah</i>	Calik Group (2008-2013), Kalyon Group (2013-present)	Mainstream / centre-right / conservative / political Islam	Pro-government / cooperates with government	1554

⁹² As I explained in chapter 4, I used NVivo and Python programs to analyse these articles.

This chapter focuses on the recent talks that the AKP initiated with the PKK. Those talks started in 2009 and stalled or ended in the middle of 2015. My analysis covers six years of the negotiations talks: 2009 to 2015. This six-year period encompasses numerous historical moments and many actors. Hence Table 7.2 below provides an overview.

Table 7.2. Chronology of some key events in the peace process of 2009-2015⁹³

2009 President Abdullah Gül used the term ‘Kurdistan’. April: KCK operations; Gül said Kurdish question should be solved. May: the PKK extended its Unilateral Ceasefire; July: The Interior Minister announced ‘the Kurdish Opening’. October: the Habur meeting – 34 PKK members came to Turkey. December: Turkish Constitutional Court banned the pro-Kurdish DTP; the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) had meetings with the PKK in Oslo.

2010 January: Öcalan endorsed the Democratic Initiative; the Interior Minister announced the Human Rights package. February: Democratic Initiative meeting between Erdoğan and 62 public figures. March: MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli warns that the ‘Kurdish opening’ is a trap. March: the civil court issued arrest warrant for 13 former PKK members when they returned to Turkey. June: at Habur, the PKK announced the decision of a not fighting. August: Turkey voted yes with 57.88% for the constitutional referendum in September.

2011 February: Kurdish MP Aysel Tuğluk requested the house arrest of Öcalan in February. June: AKP wins the general election (with 46.66%) in June. September: the tape of the Oslo meeting between the PKK and MIT was leaked; MP Aysel Tuğluk asked for a fresh start for negotiations. December: the Roboski massacre.

2012 February: KCK operations continued; detention warrant issued for top MIT officers; Turkish parliament changed the law to protect MIT. September: the fight between the PKK and state restarted; the KCK demanded the resumption of negotiations. December: Erdoğan announced that the MIT would negotiate with Öcalan.

2013 January: Kurdish MPs met Öcalan; senior PKK figures were assassinated in Paris. March: Öcalan asked the PKK to declare a ceasefire. April: formation of the Wise Persons’ Commission; PKK withdraws from Turkey. May: Gezi protests. October: Erdoğan announced the ‘Democratization Package’.

⁹³ For detailed chronology of the peace process see the memory centre’s website, see: <https://hakikatadaletahafiza.org/en/chronology-of-peace-process-in-turkey/>. Accessed: 20 November 2018. Also see: (Alpay & Tahmaz, 2015; Özpek, 2018) for chronology and key events.

2014 January: HDP's 14th meeting with Öcalan. April: Minister of Justice said no home confinement for Öcalan. July: the HDP co-chair demanded education in Kurdish; all detainees in the KCK trial released. September: Deputy Prime Minister declared the foundation of the 'Solution Process Council'. October: Kobane Protests; Prime Minister Davutoğlu defined the process as 'national, local/domestic and unique'.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, in Turkey the Kurdish conflict has resulted in the deaths of more than 50, 000 people, in 10, 000 enforced disappearances and the displacements of millions of people (Çelik et al, 2015; Tas, 2016). Scholars might dispute the figures. After all, there is a lack of institutional data. Yet, it is clear that the heavy humanitarian as well as political and economic cost of the conflict, together with Turkey's attempt to accede to the EU and the growing Kurdish movement gave the AKP the political will to negotiate with the PKK for the peace.

The peace process began under the title, 'The Kurdish Opening' in 2009. Later, some synonyms – albeit ones with varying political connotations – appeared: 'the Kurdish initiative' (*Kürt açılımı*); 'Democratic Initiative' (*Demokratik açılım*); 'resolution process' or 'solution process' (*Çözüm süreci*); and 'Process of National Unity and Brotherhood' (*Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Süreci*). The government came to eschew 'Kurdish Opening' in favour of 'Process of National Unity and Brotherhood' in order to appeal to conservative Turks (as discussed further in this chapter and in chapter 5). The leftists preferred 'Kurdish opening' and 'peace process'. Islamists used 'Process of National Unity and Brotherhood' so as to avoid mentioning either the words, peace or Kurds. Following various scholars (Alpay & Tahmaz, 2015, Çiçek, 2017; Ozkahraman, 2017; Rumelili & Çelik, 2017; Tekdemir, 2016), I shall use the term 'peace process'.

The path to the peace process started with the government's political engagement and talks with the PKK in 2009, and this time period, which extended until 2012, became the first stage of the peace process. Following this period, the peace process began officially in Newroz 21 March in 2013, with Abdullah Öcalan's letter that called for the Kurds to embrace politics rather than violence and for the PKK to declare a ceasefire (Bezci, 2015; Çiçek, 2017; Yeğen, 2015). As Table 7.2 summarises the key points of the peace process, the AKP attempted to challenge some denialist politics of the Kemalist state. The government launched the state-sponsored Kurdish channel, TRT6/Kurdi and established Kurdish language departments in some universities, 2009-2014. In return, the PKK started a withdrawal from Turkey, announced ceasefires and released some Turkish soldiers from captivity. Now, in Northern Ireland and South Africa, the demilitarization of paramilitary groups and the creation of commissions for 'truth and reconciliation' facilitated the peace process (Arakon, 2015). In Turkey, the continued existence of the Kurdish paramilitary village guard system and the absence of any facing up to state atrocities (Arakon, 2015; Çelikkan, 2015; Sevimli, 2015) cast doubt upon the sincerity and will of the Turkish government to solve the Kurdish question.

The Kurds' central demands were for a new constitution recognizing Kurds as equal citizens; the removal of the barriers to Kurdish culture and language; the decentralization of power, which would grant them self-governance in the manner of democratic federalism (Bayır, 2013; Beşikçi, 1991; Jongerden, 2018; Şur, 2016; Yadirgi, 2017). However, and despite initially declaring support for social and cultural rights, the government, worried about its own survival, did not accede to these demands. Hence the peace process ended in the summer of 2015 (as discussed in chapter 2). Undoubtedly, insecurity and disagreement are inevitable in any peace-

making process, as Chantal Mouffe has suggested; it is the task of a democracy to convert the antagonism into agonism and to bargain with adversaries and in so doing there will be setbacks and problems (Rumelili & Çelik, 2017; Tekdemir, 2018). Nevertheless, the AKP's desire for more power and its unwillingness to risk losing the nationalists' vote worried it and made it antagonistic towards the Kurds during the leaking of the tapes of Oslo secret meetings, Habur incident and Kobane protests. All of this paved the way for the end of the peace process (Ozkahraman, 2017; Rumelili & Çelik, 2017; Tekdemir, 2016). The Gulen movement was another important factor preventing the peace talks (Yuksel-Pecen, 2018): that nationalist movement constantly demonised the PKK and Abdullah Ocalan. Also, and as I shall discuss, following the Kobane protests in 2014, the government intimidated the Kurdish politicians and adopted a discourse of security during the negotiations with the Kurds (Martin, 2018). Thereby the government criminalized those who advocated peace. That too contributed to the failure of the talks.

Further yet, and as I will argue, the AKP and PKK monopolized the peace talks and underestimated the contributions that could be made by civil society, by the HDP and by other pro-peace political actors from both the Turkish and the Kurdish sides. All this notwithstanding, the main reason for the end of the peace process was that the war in Syria, in which the Kurds established self-governance of Rojava and in which the PKK and PYD gained legitimacy in the West through their fight against IS (Islamic State). The government perceived this development as a threat to Turkey's territorial unity and this perception of the Kurds by the government fuelled the conflict with the Kurds. Also, the PKK misjudged its own strength and attempted for the urban warfare in 2015 but the state suppressed this attempt and nearly destroyed many Kurdish provinces. This strategy of the PKK and

the state suppression fuelled rather than quelled the conflict. Furthermore, another significant reason for the collapse of the talks was Turkey's Ottoman dream of becoming the hegemonic power (Cagaptay, 2017) in the Kurdish region and the Middle East, via aggression if necessary. One-party rule within Turkey was a prerequisite of realising that dream; and for that, in turn, the AKP needed the nationalist vote. However, that rule came to an end in the general election of 7th June 2015. At that point, the government resumed the discriminatory politics of the authoritarian Kemalist establishment against the Kurds and sacrificed the peace process in order to secure the nationalist vote. Now, after the government had reversed its stance on peace, the mainstream press ceased to support the peace process. Instead it adopted a conservative and nationalist discourse when reporting the process and the Kurdish actors therein.

I turn now to a fuller account of how the Turkish press represented the peace process.

7.2 Stage one: a farewell to arms

The negotiations that had begun in 2009 between the state, the PKK and Öcalan showed progress on 21st of March 2013, when Öcalan sent a letter to declare the peace process officially in the celebration of Newroz in Diyarbakir. Newroz, the beginning of Spring, in Kurdish history symbolises victory and resistance. Except for those that espoused an ultra-Turkish nationalism, most of the Turkish newspapers had welcomed the peace process. At various times and for several reasons they supported peace and insisted on the disarmament of the PKK. However, it is largely true to say that the Turkish media did not want to play a full role in conflict resolution. It only supported the peace in a certain period, namely that in which the

government was negotiating with the PKK; once the government ended those particular talks, the media resumed its former anti-peace discourse (Alankuş, 2016). Johan Galtung (1969, 2003) maintains that the peace journalism should prioritize the mentioning of conflict-preventive ideas, the role of peace initiatives, and invisible hatred and traumas of all adversaries. He argues that if, instead of presenting matters in a way likely to exacerbate conflict, the media focuses on empathy, creative ideas and non-violent methods, then it can end the conflict. The Turkish media adopted the government's newly liberal stance towards the Kurds and began to report the Kurdish political actors in a neutral way during the peace talks. However, this neutral and impartial coverage of the Kurds was a practice of liberal journalism rather than peace journalism.

Hürriyet's front page (see, Figure 7.1.) presents the official announcement of peace talks with the messages of the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. The main heading was a bold optimistic slogan, 'Farewell to Arms'.



Figure 7.1. *Hürriyet*'s 'Farewell to Arms' headline (22.03.2013).

Hürriyet, the Kemalist and nationalist newspaper, reported the demands of the imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan. Particularly, as giving in Figure 7.1., it emphasized Öcalan's messages that suited the dominant discourse, such as the withdrawal of the PKK and a commitment to the unity of Turkey. Strikingly, *Hürriyet* reported the ceasefire in Newroz and Öcalan's words with neutral language; it did not call Öcalan a 'terrorist' or 'baby killer' – terms used previously in the dominant narrative that it had reflected in its reporting. *Hürriyet*'s counterpart *Sözcü*, an ultra-Kemalist (i.e. strictly follows the state official ideology) and nationalist newspaper, was one of the few papers that opposed the peace. Thus, the headline shown in Figure 7.2, 'The government proudly presents: the APO [Öcalan] and PKK Show' (22.03.2013), denigrated the effort for the peace. Note also the subheading stated that the 'murderer [Öcalan] of our mehmetçik [soldiers]', with blood on his hands, has victory within his sights. Galtung (2003) calls this kind of presentation 'war-oriented', and more specifically 'elite-oriented' conflict journalism – a journalism that underlines the victory of 'Us' against the Other and the death of 'Our' elite males (soldiers) at the hand of the wrongdoers. For instance, *Sözcü*, in Figure 7.2, glorified the death of the soldiers by calling them *mehmetçik* (literally: 'little Mehments') which is an affectionate term used for Turkish Army members. Frequently, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* used this term of 'mehmetçik' to glorify the soldiers and their deaths. What the 'war-journalism' in Turkey purposefully ignored was the fact that the soldiers who lost their lives during this conflict were not only Turks but also the Kurds. Similarly to Galtung (2003), Lewis (2005) claims that the language the media uses to report wars produces the circumstances and stimulants for a

psychical rejoinder. That, as I will discuss further below, mediates, breeds and directs the violence towards the targeted groups or individuals. Death and violence in war are sensationalised by the media, in an appeal to emotions aimed at increasing sales (Seaton, 2005). *Sözcü*'s response to the official peace declaration was a warmongering narrative and in particular one that seemed aimed to stir up fear of secession, to assert the superiority of Turks, and to deplore negotiations with 'terrorists.' That fear about the division of Turkey and the profession of the superiority of the Turks were shared by Kemalist *Hürriyet*'s columnists at the beginning of the peace talks in 2009 as discussed further in section 7.4.

Although it made some harsh criticisms about the AKP's peace initiative, *Hürriyet* promoted the peace talks to a great extent. It did so, because of its close ties with a representative of Turkish bourgeoisie, namely, the TÜSİAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association), which profited from the subsidies the AKP gave (Tunç, 2015; Ünan, 2015; Yesil, 2014). *Hürriyet*'s columnist, Özgür Bolat, stated that under the Erdogan's leadership 'the Kurdish Opening will be the biggest social change after the Atatürk's reforms' (18.08.2009). Likewise, *Hürriyet*'s column and op-ed articles quoted the AKP and HDP on the peace process, which *Hürriyet* called the 'resolution process' in accordance with government discourse. Accordingly, *Hürriyet*'s reporter, Sefa Özkaya, used the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's preferred description of the peace process in this headline: 'National, local [domestic] and unique' (20.10.2014). This description of conflict resolution process was motto of the government and conservative newspapers. *Hürriyet* endorsed the peace talks though under some conditions and it did make some criticisms. Here is its columnist Rauf Tamer declaring his support for the peace talks after the PKK decided to extend the ceasefire in 2010:

The Inaction [ceasefire]

If the BDP [Kurdish political party] continues its positive attitudes [towards Turkey], the peace-making will be easier and the southeast [Kurdish region] will develop rapidly. Let's not return to the past. There is no cure for the past. But the future is in our hands. As a writer who has written the harshest criticism of the PKK and BDP, even I contain my anger (rage) [against the PKK and BDP] and think this opportunity we have got this time is probably quite important. (02.11.2010)

The author declared his support for the peace and unveiled hostile feelings and moral superiority of the Turks towards the Kurds in the rest of the article. Rumelili & Çelik (2017) state that the Turkish narrative of moral righteousness and superiority over 'criminal' Kurds such as the PKK contributed significantly to the failure of the peace process in 2015. Turkish Orientalists (Kemalists), because they comprise the state elite, can use their prejudiced discourse against the Others (the Kurds) (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008). And this perception of the Kurds in *Hürriyet*, as the prevalent narrative, had emerged in news production in relation to the peace process. *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* consolidated the government's narrative of peace under the name of the Unity and Fraternity Project (Turkish: 'Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Projesi'), in which not a peace between the equals but unification and a forgiving of the little brother (the Kurds) was articulated. As Kurt argues (2018), the AKP initiated the peace process not to solve Kurdish question but to adopt the religious narrative of unity and brotherhood and did so in order to eliminate the ethnopolitical dimension of the Kurdish question and of the actions of its actors such as the PKK. Drawing on the concept of unifying signifier by Bailey (2004), the government and mainstream media used the peace process as the unifying signifier to unite the nation under the roof of the AKP government. The AKP's Sunni-Islam brotherhood

ideology was one of the motivations behind initiating the peace talks. With this strategy the AKP aimed to consolidate its dominance over the Kurds. Thus, the pro-AKP *Sabah* together with other Islamist newspapers embraced the peace talks within this frame of brotherhood.

Sabah, strictly following the AKP politics, implemented the government narrative of the peace talks more eagerly than did *Hürriyet*. They both ran stories about the positive effects of the peace talks on the Kurdish region and the disarming and withdrawal of the PKK from Turkey appeared to be significant for both newspapers. *Sabah* had a headline (see Figure 7.3), similar to *Hürriyet*'s, that declared the official beginning of the peace talks. Accompanying a colourful picture from Newroz celebration from Diyarbakir, the front page gave Öcalan's message: 'Imrali [Öcalan] orders the PKK: Silence the guns and withdraw' (22.03.2013).



Figure 7.3. *Sabah*'s headline, 'The PKK is withdrawing' (22.03.2013).

As Arsan (2014) has claimed, and as my analysis of *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* suggests, most Turkish newspapers tended to avoid presenting the PKK as the enemy of Turks when reporting the withdrawal of the PKK at this period. They presented the peace process as a positive development to praise the government politics. *Sabah*'s senior columnist, Erdal Safak, declared the newspaper's motives for supporting the peace process, as follows.

We, as the *Sabah* family, are trying to contribute to this process so that Turkey's most painful and bloody issue in history should [be solved] and never resurfaced [. . .] As *Sabah* family, we are calling out for our young people not to miss this vital opportunity [peace] as we know that it is quite the right choice to contribute to the future through research and development centres rather than to die in mined lands and mountains...While supporting the process wholeheartedly, we will take all kinds of care to ensure that the steps we take and the headlines we have do not offend anyone [Turks] in society. (18.03.2013)

Despite its professed support for peace, the article cannot be categorized as an example of peace-oriented journalism. Lynch & McGoldrick (2005) claim that peace journalism, which is a form of social responsibility, emerges when reporters and editors decide what to report and how to report in the light of the possibility of non-violent solutions. In other words, peace journalism addresses the social questions underlying conflicts and encourages its consumers to examine the power-relations underlying conflicts. Regarding the peace journalism, Turkish newspapers had controversial practices. Quite like *Hürriyet*, Erdal Safak's article above as the manifestation of the attitude of *Sabah* covertly promised not to hurt the feelings of sovereign Turks. Safak called Turks 'anyone in society' and fell into the Oriental discourse of superiority when he called for 'the young people', i.e. the PKK

members, to join the civilized world rather than dying by land mines. Now, during times of conflict resolution, the media should oppose propaganda and promote the truth (Galtung, 2003; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Yet the state discourse of ‘uncivilized’ and ‘backward’ Kurds deeply embedded in Turkish media language and it resurfaced occasionally. Turkish media during the peace talks prioritized the state discourse of security and did not advocate the peace talks (Algan, 2019; Yuksel-Pecen, 2018). During the peace process, in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, this conservative narrative ignored the power relations, such as the legal and politic superiority of the government and provided support for peace in return for submission and obedience from Kurdish politicians and fighters. Both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* advocated, in line with the state’s demands, the demilitarization of the Kurdish region, yet they did not question the construction and fortification of the headquarters of the army nor the existence of the village guards, who as the armed local recruits committed countless crimes against Kurdish civilians as discussed in chapter 2. The exclusion of the concerns of the Kurds in favour, instead, of a presentation of the peace process through the lenses of the state had become the new strategy and that strategy contributed to the state’s domination of the Kurdish parties to the process. The media simply silenced the demands and criticisms of the Kurds; it imposed the state’s policies and visions of the peace upon the Kurds. It did employ the government’s discourse of peace, but only in order to discredit Kurdish criticism which challenged the government’s perception of the peace. The same conservative papers portrayed the Kurdish criticisms of the government as being anti-peace, so to speak, or as obstructive.

As I have shown in previous chapters, the representative of the Turkish left, *Birgün* always had different headlines than conservative *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*. However, for the first time, three of these newspapers almost produced a near-

identical headline, one with a special emphasis on Öcalan's order for the PKK to leave Turkey and withdraw into Iraqi Kurdistan (South Kurdistan), see Figure 7.4.



Figure 7.4. *BirGün*'s headline: 'The historic order from Öcalan: withdraw!' (22.03.2013)

Unlike the other two newspapers, *BirGün* discussed the cultural rights of Kurds, voiced the criticisms made by Kurds and promoted the cohabitation of the Kurds and Turks. Fikri Sağlar's⁹⁴ column summarised the stance that *BirGün* took initially.

Turkey must solve Kurdish question in the shortest time, otherwise, this will cause the dissolution of Turkey [. . .] The peace will be built by tolerating and internalizing democracy, and understanding, listening and accepting each other. For this reason, it is time to solve the problem with the dialogue around a table and leave the arms aside. (20.09.2012)

⁹⁴ Fikri Sağlar (Mersin, 1953) graduated from elite Galatay high school and Hacettepe University. Then, he became an MP for SHP and CHP for many years as well as Minister of Culture in the 1990s.

Although the article conveyed a positive view of peace, also, and like other newspapers, the article expressed the fear, held by Turkish nationalists, that Turkey might end up dissolved, like the Ottoman Empire. Even though *Birgün* is of the Turkish left, it is evident that it did not take into consideration any right of the Kurds to self-determination. As against the vision in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* of Turkish-Kurdish Sunni-Islamic brotherhood, *Birgün* offered solidarity and support for the peace project; and it did so on the basis of a sharing leftist ideology and secularism with Kurdish movements. However, its actions accorded with the dominant narrative of Turkish unity and territorial integrity, failing to mention or question anything about Kurdish independence or autonomy. The leftists, Kemalists and political Islamists agreed upon one thing: all three newspapers supported the peace talks and stipulated the same conditions for those talks, conditions that entailed the integrity of Turkey and left no room for any independent state. Now *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* – those two papers especially – ignored such aspects of the Kurdish question. *Birgün* spoke up about the Kurdish question and Kurdish rights but it purposefully ignored right of the self-determination for the Kurds. In this sense, *Birgün* contradicted its leftist ideology by adopting a liberal discourse and by ignoring Kurdish independence as a possible resolution of the conflict.

Further, and in contrast to *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* – and despite its partial support for the peace talks – *Birgün* repeatedly asserted that the AKP was insincere in its pursuit of peace. As *Birgün*'s senior columnist Kadir Cangizbay⁹⁵ concisely put it: 'The only goal of [the peace negotiations] is to get rid of other actors [the Kurdish

⁹⁵ Kadir Cangizbay (1947, Istanbul) is a leftist academic that graduated from elite French college of Turkey, Saint Joseph, and Hacettepe University with sociology degree.

politicians] and to dominate the Kurdish political space' (17.11.2012). Kurt (2018) makes the same claim that the government wants to be the only hegemonic power. The peace process ended in 2015 and most of the Kurdish actors were imprisoned upon the government's radical U-turn (Cagaptay, 2017; Çiçek, 2017; Özpek, 2018; Waldman & Caliskan, 2017). The shift in the AKP's politics proved *Birgün* prophetic. However, the change was no surprise to the Kurds – due to their earlier experience. Yet, they had no choice but to continue negotiating with the AKP for peace. Instead of underestimating the Kurdish actors' ability to negotiate with the AKP, *Birgün* should have attached the highest importance to the talks and endorsed them despite one of the parties being the AKP.

7.3 Stage two: the peace at risk

7.3.1 Negatives challenges to the peace process

7.3.1.1 The Kurds against the Kurdish Peace

The three newspapers expressed their concerns that some actors risked the peace process, presenting the challenges to the peace. The varying ideological affiliations of the newspapers meant that each paper perceived the impediments to peace in its own way. Often the agents and events that *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* presented as impediments to peace paralleled the state position, whereas to a considerable extent *Birgün* deployed the opposite arguments. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* alike often criticized the PKK, BDP and HDP, by scapegoating them as destabilizers of the peace process (See also chapter 6 on the Kobane protests.). For instance, those papers made much of the fact that those bodies welcomed thirty-four members of the

PKK into Turkey.⁹⁶ The AKP considered the people's celebration of the arrival of these thirty-four PKK members, who had laid down arms showing that they are ready for the peace, as the PKK's victory against the state and it indicted some of those PKK members for terrorism, thus government missed a great chance of using this case contribute to the peace process (Kentel, 2015). Whereas both the Turkish and the Kurdish sides failed manage this crisis and east the Turkish public reaction, the newspaper only blamed the 'weaker', the Kurdish actors, for risking the peace rather than the powerful government. The Kemalist *Hürriyet* moderately criticized some politics of Islamist AKP government during the peace process. However, it blamed the Kurdish side of not desiring the peace and risking it. *Hürriyet's* columnist Rauf Tamer summarised this stance:

The PKK members [in Kandil Mountain] are happy with their lives. They rule the roost. The Kurdish MPs [sent by the PKK] in Turkish parliament have great privileges; they slap the police, throw stones at soldiers and insult the state. The resolution process and the democratic rights of the Kurds do not concern them whatsoever. Contrarily, they want the peace process to fail so that their dukedom [control] maintains. Otherwise [the peace] will eliminate the reasons for their existence [. . . I]n a nutshell, they [the PKK and HDP] are fooling the Kurdish people. (20.09.2014)

The Kurdish actors within the peace negotiations were presented as a threat to the peace. This coverage divided the public by presenting an antagonistic image of the Kurds. The Turkish press, taking its cue from the government, continued to give a positive representation of 'us' (the state and government) and a negative representation of 'them' (the Kurds) (Arsan 2014; Oktar 2001; Yumul & Ozkirimli

⁹⁶ This is also known as the Habur Incident.

2000). This presentation discouraged the public from supporting peace with the Kurds, who supposedly were not really interested in peace-making. Structured around the cult of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and around Turkish nationalism, Kemalism, operating as the official ideology, has twisted the facts via certain discursive practices in order to sustain the state hegemonic dominance over the Kurds. For instance, and as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, the media has presented the earlier Kurdish rebellions as feudal, backwards reactions to modernity (See chapters 1 and 3) (Aras, 2014; Saraçoğlu, 2011; Yegen, 1999). In a similar manner, the dominant discourse was mirrored by the media during the peace talks because *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* have continued the state discourse to situate the Kurdish movements and leaders against the Kurdish people. Rather than blaming the Kurds for risking the peace, the media should question the state politics towards the Kurds. Kentel (2015) argues that making peace in the culture of war (in the case of Turkey) is challenging because the state uses a paternalistic and superior discourse to disregards the Kurds as an equal partner. He adds that the state considers the rights of the Kurds, such as education in their mother tongue and self-governance, as concessions to be bestowed on Kurds. Kentel maintains further that embracing of the authoritarian state method treating Kurds as a 'little brother' by the AKP put the peace process in danger. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* almost equally concealed the fact from the public that the government was the key the decision-maker in the peace process. Therefore, they ignored the fact that the government was more likely to risk an end to the peace process – in order to safeguard its own political future. They also excluded another fact that the Kurdish political actors needed the peace more than government and they would not risk the peace they wanted.

Moreover, *Sabah* criticised various actors for endangering the peace process. *Sabah* blamed nationalists, the foreign powers, i.e. the West, and the Gezi protests and the Gulen movement. In fact, *Sabah* started to level that accusation against the Gulen movement only in 2013; earlier, the government had got on well with the movement. Sometimes the coverage that a newspaper gave in one period contradicted the coverage that it gave in another. For instance, *Sabah* started to blame the Gulen movement,⁹⁷ which had been the ally of the government until 2013, for orchestrating events that negatively affected the peace negotiations – events such as the assassination of the three PKK members in Paris in 2013, the Roboski massacre and the Kobane protests. A senior columnist in *Sabah* M. Barlas gave an account of those who were against the peace:

The people for the status quo who think that they are dissidents

We might think those who targeted the pace are ‘dissidents’. But we should not overlook the fact that they are the defenders of the ‘official ideology’ and status quo, aiming to stop the change. Likewise, we should not forget that agitations and provocations against the ‘peace process’ do not only come from the organizations against the AK Party rule and the ones who have the ‘partition phobia’ [of Turkey] but also from the ones who benefit from the terror. (23.04.2013)

The article identified the Kemalists and nationalists as obstacles to the peace. Undoubtedly, the nationalists and Kemalists of the state establishment, as well as the

⁹⁷ *Sabah* started to blame the Gülen movement when that movement broke up with its former ally, the AKP. This separation happened because the voracious Gülen cult desired more power in Turkey in 2013. For more information on the transformation of the Gülen movement from a faith-based group into a terrorist organization in the perception of the AKP: , see: Taş (2018) ‘A history of Turkey’s AKP-Gülen conflict’.

media and public figures, were against the peace-making. An example is Devlet Bahçeli, the chairman of the Nationalist Movement Party, who often called the peace process ‘the treason process.’ Both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* refrained from posing any meaningful and challenging criticism to those opposing the peace and to the government politics, but both papers constantly condemned the PKK and HDP for the disagreements between the government and the Kurds.

7.3.1.2 *The government undermines the peace*

Contrary to *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* accused the government and Erdoğan of being the main barriers to the peace; and, after the official announcement of talks in 2013, *Birgün* gave space to those working for peace. There was a contraction in *Birgün* because it occasionally implied, particularly during the earlier period of the talks in 2009 and 2010, that the AKP would not secure peace. *Birgün* as the anti-AKP leftist newspaper did not trust the government goodwill of bringing the peace. However, once the peace process was officially declared in 2013, *Birgün* to some extent believed that there was a chance for peace but it presented the government as the obstacle to it. Galtung (2003) and Lynch & McGoldrick (2005) argue that peace journalism should give prominence to ordinary voices, to positive developments and to initiatives rather than merely report the disagreements in conflict process. In this regard, *Birgün*’s coverage could be partially categorized as peace journalism. For, the newspaper did present the Kurdish agencies as a force for the peace. However, on the whole, *Birgün* showed little faith in the peace process. *Birgün*’s columnist Kadir Cangızbay criticized the AKP’s aggression against the Kurds and argued that the process had come to be about making Erdoğan the only ruler of the country, as given below:

Erdoğan's responsibility for the spilt blood

One claims that the AKP took on the responsibility and political risk to stop the ongoing bloodshed [the conflict]. In fact, the AKP aimed to make Erdoğan the dictator of the fascism, which was brought to Turkey by the military coup of 12 September [1980] [...]. Today, Erdoğan's implicit and explicit manoeuvres, which steal everything from people to be one-man, are the main reasons for the ongoing bloodshed and war. (23.09.2012)

Birgün as a left-wing newspaper denounced conservative AKP politics and frequently accused the AKP of cheating the Kurds and of toying with them. Implicit in the Cangızbay article is the idea that Erdoğan needed Kurdish support in order to become sole ruler and that this is why he began the process, i.e. to get the Kurds on his side. With such arguments, *Birgün* adopted a superior tone towards the Kurds; it positioned itself as an astute observer able (unlike the Kurds themselves) to predict the AKP's tricks and insincerity. Such reporting contradicts the *Birgün's* pro-peace stance. As I discussed in chapter 2, the Turkish left and the Kurdish movement had united in the 1960s and early 1970s in support of a socialist revolution in Turkey but later they separated due to disagreement on the Kurdish question in the middle of the 1970s (Gunes, 2013; Yegen, 2016). The Turkish left claimed that only after a socialist revolution could the Kurdish question be solved, whereas the Kurds wanted to solve Kurdish question first. This argument of the Turkish left was present, covertly, in *Birgün*, in allusions to the idea that Kurds should prioritize an alliance with the Turkish leftists over peace talks with the AKP.

As Fanon (2001) and Said (1977) have argued, the colonizer or settler, in writing the self-certifyingly 'objective' history of the colonized, frequently adopts the lens and narrative of his mother country, thereby misrepresenting the colonized. Similarly, the identity, history and goals of indigenous peoples are labelled as

childish, immature and backward, in order that colonial powers can justify exploitation, enslavement and dispossession (Samson, 2017; Samson & Gigoux, 2017). Here we can return to *Birgün*'s colonial perception of Kurds, whereby Kurdish peacemakers were naïve in trying to negotiate with the conservative AKP. Despite some efforts to support the peace, such as giving voice to the Kurds, the paper incorporated elements of the anti-Kurdish hysteria of Kemalism (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008) - for example, by patronizing Kurdish political movements. That stance brought *Birgün* close to the narrative of the Kurdish question told by *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*: all three newspapers implicitly or explicitly considered the Kurdish question as the question of the underdevelopment, the security and the integrity of Turkey. Yet, *Birgün* did say, sometimes, that the state treated the Kurds unfairly.

7.3.2 Positive assessments

7.3.2.1 'What will we gain?' *The economy is booming*

Economic development emerged as a crucial theme in the media discourse. It did so in order to reinforce the argument that peace will bring economic stability to Turkey and to the Kurdish region. The elements of the Turkish media that adopted the state discourse had presented the Kurdish question as the problem of economic underdevelopment and regional poverty for decades (Baran, 2014; Beşikçi, 1990; Bulut, 2005; Yegen, 1999). Even though the media stated that the Kurdish region is underdeveloped, it did not mention the way in which the state created this underdevelopment to punish the Kurds with economy and poverty because of Kurdish resistance (See also chapter 2). However, by this stage mainstream newspapers were echoing and, in that way, sustaining the governmental discourse of

economic investments as a reason to support the peace talks. *Sabah's* news and column articles alike emphasized the positive effects of the peace process for the investment in Kurdish cities. *Sabah's* Ibrahim Acar made the point enthusiastically immediately after the official peace announcement:

Before the ink is dry: 250 billion investment⁹⁸

With the letter from Imrali [*Öcalan*] the possibility of silencing guns [the peace] raised, the bosses [businesspeople] pushed the button for the investments in the [Kurdish] region. 10 companies planned to make 250 billion Lira investments, which would produce jobs for thousands of people. (23.03.2013)

This seemingly exciting aspect of the peace was shared almost equally by *Hürriyet*. Here is the latter's M. Ali Birand⁹⁹:

What will we gain?

Turkey, in this peaceful environment, will use the billions of dollars, which previously was allocated to the fight against terrorism, to meet the needs of the community in order to increase prosperity and the rate of economic growth. (03.09.2009)

During the peace process, both newspapers reported constant statements from businessman and business association that indicated that the Kurdish region would

⁹⁸ At the time, 250 billion Turkish liras were equal to \$106 billion.

⁹⁹ Mehmet Ali Birand (1941-2013, Istanbul) was a half Kurdish journalist and writer with several books and documentaries on social and political issues in Turkey, including the Kurdish question. He graduated from Galatasaray high school and Istanbul University, after then He began to work for cent right Milliyet newspapers, in which he interviewed Abdullah Öcalan for the first time in Turkey. He advocated political solution to the Kurdish question.

be the centre of investment and the economy would boom. Gilboa (2009) states that a way in which the media help to promote conflict resolution is celebration of peace agreements and other positive events, thereby enlisting the support of audiences prone to believe that one side of the conflict was interested only in violence and suppression. McLaughlin & Baker (2010) call this ‘the propaganda of peace’. For instance, the media can highlight the importance and positive impacts of the peace on the economy even though there is not much evidence to support such claims. Sometimes *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* seem to conform to that idea: they conveyed to large Kurdish and Turkish audiences positive news about the investments and economy in Kurdish region – even though the promised investments would either be limited or reach only to entities that supported the state or that were large corporations. It is worth noting that PKK control of the Kurdish region made that region somewhat inaccessible to the large corporations, but also that, were the PKK to withdraw, the region would become available to the state-backed neoliberal market for mining, energy and the construction of dams. Unlike *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* refrained from making any relation between the peace process and ‘economic developments’ in Turkey. In fact, *Birgün* had very harsh criticisms about the neoliberal politics of the government.

7.3.2.2 *Stopping the death and facing the past*

The state’s war with the Kurds lasted four decades, leaving thousands of people dead, traumatised and missing as well as displacing millions of Kurds. With the beginning of the peace talks, the three newspapers insisted that the killing should stop, and that society should face its past. The media has an essential role in conflict prevention in informing the public, promoting negotiations, humanising actors,

highlighting the grievances of each side and the similarities of each side to the other (Arsan, 2014; Gilboa, 2009; J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Even though the newspapers did not adequately report and challenge the past atrocities of the state, they all jointly covered the importance of facing the past in peace-making. For instance, the newspapers used such injunctions as follows to support the peace talks: ‘the death should be stopped’; ‘Turkish-Kurdish youth should not die’; ‘this bloodshedding should stop’ and ‘mother should not cry’. The newspapers often repeated their calls for both sides to sustain the peace talks.

Furthermore, the newspapers started to discuss some of the state crimes and covered the stories related to the extrajudicial killings and forced displacements of the Kurds while *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* mostly excluded the criticism towards the state and its recent crimes during the AKP government. As mentioned in chapter 2, the state and paramilitary forces such as the village guards and JİTEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism) – the latter being considered by some a part of a clandestine Turkish deep state – intensified the war against the Kurds to in order to eliminate ‘terrorism’ and its sympathizers in the 1990s (Aras, 2014; Göksel, 2018; Romano, 2006; Söyler, 2013). As discussed throughout this thesis, the state’s strategy caused the death of thousands of people among the Kurdish civilians and the PKK militias and created a tortured and traumatized society (Aras, 2014; Geerse, 2010; Grabolle-Çeliker, 2013; Saraçoğlu, 2011; Van Bruinessen, 1999). The atrocities were for the first time seen and openly discussed in *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, while *Birgün* had criticized state atrocities for years.

There are media practices that are essential for reconciliation in conflict-affected societies. They are: writing about the past, acknowledging state crimes, and

promoting the quest for forgiveness. Sevimli (2015) notes that Argentina, El Salvador and Bosnia-Herzegovina carried out investigations of crimes committed by the state's officers, forces and institutions and argues that such processes managed to achieve some justice, which in turn facilitates reconciliation and peace settlements. However: as Sevimli notes also, Turkey protects, supports and promotes those involved in crimes against the Kurds. Regardless of this the six years of the peace negotiations, the state almost made no progress in the judicial process on extrajudicial killings and disappearances. Official apologies, truth commissions and 'centres of collective memory' form the backbone of peace settlements and dialogue. They bring justice to the victims and survivors, as one can see from South Africa and Northern Ireland. The lack of such institutions weakened the prospects of peace. The absent of such entities, like 'the truth commissions' or 'centres of collective memory', minimized role of the media in publicizing and circulating the notion of peace in Turkey. Nevertheless, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* covered some past atrocities in order to serve the peace by informing the public about the wrongdoing of the state.

The daily *Sabah* is a good illustration of this selective coverage that treated only the period preceding the AKP government. *Sabah* provided space, in editorials and column articles, for moderately critical, questioning perspectives upon the state's past crimes. The discussion included the crimes of the state up to the year 2000 under such categories, 'facing the past,' 'JİTEM's murders,' 'Extrajudicial killings and missing people,' 'the Deep state's crimes' and 'Returning the village', which explained the rights of the Kurdish villager to return to their state-evacuated villages in 1990s. *Sabah's* reporter Ecevit Kilic interviewed a human rights lawyer under a headline with large font, 'The JİTEM, which killed 5000 people, should be abolished' (26.01.2009); and the article maintained that the cadre of the JİTEM

should face the justice for its extrajudicial killings and the forced disappearances of the 1990s. Similarly, another reporter from *Sabah*, Pervin Metin, covered the traumas of the Dersim massacre of 1937-8: ‘Here is the truth about Dersim of 1938: 13160 deaths and 11818 exiled’ (19.11.2009). Through such criticisms *Sabah* brought state atrocities that had occurred in an earlier period into public discussion and indeed denounced previous governments. Yet, these criticisms remained superficial in tackling the state violence of the past and present in Turkey.

Similarly, but to a considerably lesser degree, *Hürriyet* urged reconciliation through a facing of Turkey’s past crimes. Yet, because of its biases, *Hürriyet* passed over atrocities committed by Kemalist governments. Or at least it did so in its editorials. Some liberal columnist did discuss some of the more recent wrongdoings. *Hürriyet*’s Fatih Çekirge raised the past crimes in order to achieve a better society.

Can we confront our past?

Yes, what happens if we confront our history? For instance, opening an exhibition about [the consequences of] 12 September 1980 military coup in the Ministry of Justice. Then I thought about forcing [prisoners] to eat faeces, then remembering the extrajudicial killings in Southeast [Kurdish region], executions and military coups and intervention [. . .] I value the peace process and [accept] the recommendation for establishing the truth commissions...Because confronting the past without fear means cleaning all scums, which look like a tumour, that is circling our past and future. (20.09.2014)

As *Hürriyet* is Kemalist and nationalist these criticisms of the state were too radical to be common. *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* tented to question the traumas and injustice in the past of Turkey, but their effort was too little. However, state connections (see chapter 3) meant that the mainstream of Turkish media little dared to unveil horrors

from the recent past. There is also the fact that the Turkish media is owned by the local bourgeoisie, which acquired its wealth by appropriating property from Armenian and Greeks and indeed by eliminating those people with the help of the state (Bilali, 2013; Göçek, 2015; Ü. Kurt, 2017). However, considering the lack of representation of the Kurds and of the Kurdish question in the media, the small steps taken by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* can be counted as a positive step. To some extent *Hürriyet* went against the state ideology of denial of past crimes. For, the paper had some liberal columnists who criticised some state policies and denounced past atrocities. For its part, *Birgün* focused upon recent history and criticized the current government's treatment of the Kurdish politicians. Occasionally too *Birgün* argued that (1) facing the past was the primary condition for making peace and (2) that the government was not willing to do that.

Now I move on to another theme, namely the representation of the 'Wise People's Community', that the press presented as a step towards the peace.

7.3.2.3 *The Wise People's Community: lobbying for peace*

The Wise People/Persons' Commission (WPC) consisted of 63 members representing seven regions of Turkey. It was formed by the AKP on 3 April 2013 to inform the public about, and to generate support for, the peace process. The press regularly covered the activities of the members of the WPC, who were academics, writers, journalists and public figures. The WPC, as an element of civil society, enlarged the space for discussion of hitherto politically- taboo issues, such as federalism and a general amnesty for the PKK. The commission with public diplomacy positively affected the political atmosphere and the discussion on the peace process (Kadioğlu, 2018; Köse, 2017). The AKP excluded representatives of

the views of opposition parties from the WPC. Still, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* endorsed the WPC and its activities. *Sabah* urged the importance of the WPC in explaining the peace process to the Turks, who needed to be convinced as they might not be happy with making peace with the ‘terrorists.’ Thus, the newspaper’s columnists recommended that the WPC should take the sensitive feelings of the Turks into consideration in a respectful manner. *Sabah*’s senior columnist Yavuz Donat gave advance advice to the members of the WPC, writing, in a column entitled, ‘The Peace’: ‘They should make no concessions about Turkishness, else we will have to assimilate in our own country’ (11.04.2013). It was implicit that the constitutions’ concept of citizenship, a concept that equated citizens with Turks, should not be changed, meaning that the Kurds should still be counted as Turks rather than be acknowledged as a separate ethnic group. In the same manner, *Hürriyet*’s renowned columnist Ertuğrul Özkök¹⁰⁰ endorsed the WPC’s ‘sincere contribution’ (25.04.2013) to the peace process, on the condition that its members voiced the concerns and demands of the people (Turks) - demands such as keeping the phrase ‘Turkish nation’ in the constitution. Özkök had in mind article 66 of the Turkish constitution: ‘Everyone who is bound to the Turkish State through the bond of citizenship is a Turk.’ *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* wanted this definition of citizenship to remain unchanged and that is what the Turks demanded from the WPC even though Kurds do not want to be defined as Turks. The mainstream newspapers expected that the WPC should propagate the dominant hegemony of the Turks. In fact, the ideal

¹⁰⁰ Ertuğrul Özkök (1947, Izmir) is a Turkish nationalist and Kemalist journalist, academic and author, who had close ties with former Turkish president, Bulent Ecevit. After He graduated from Ankara University, he has been working as journalist in mainstream media outlets, such as TRT.

mission of the WPC was to persuade conservative Turkish public about the demands of the Kurds. The WPC was supposed to justify some the demands and rights of the Kurds, such as necessary steps for the peace.

Like *Sabah*, *Hürriyet* focused upon the same positive roles of the WPC as did *Sabah*, although *Hürriyet* did maintain that the commission should distance itself from the AKP and avoid making empty promises. *Sabah* held that the WPC contributed to the peace by persuading the public, eliminating hesitations concerning the peace process, and mediating between people and state. *Sabah* followed the path of *Hürriyet* in ignoring the role of WPC in expressing demands and concerns of the Kurds even though the WPC had too little interest in this matter. Slightly different than *Sabah*, *Hürriyet* criticised the lack of diversity in the WPC. Both *Sabah* and the WPC were concerned with the presentation and perception of the peace process in the Turkish public sphere. Here I argue that some progressive and liberal members of the WPC to some extent brought the peace discussion into the Turkish bourgeoisie public sphere because of their reputation, network and class. However, neither the government nor the Turkish nationalists paid enough attention to the advice and reports made by those parties. There are some scholars, whom I agree with, claiming the WPC was not challenging the state discourse. For instance, Rumelili & Çelik (2017) argued that the WPC did not make a significant contribution to the peace and their meetings created hostile encounters rather than agonistic or more peaceful ones between the attendees. Those people attended the meetings who were articulating the dominant discourse of the state instead of having constructive dialogues (*idem*). Then, the WPC began to reproduce the moderate version of state ideology in many cases. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* as well as Turkish

public and state used the WPC meetings to impose state ideology on the Kurds once again.

On the other hand, *Birgün* preferred to give limited coverage of the WPC, together with some criticisms of it. Ünsal (2015) states that civil society and its actors should be free and not be aligned with political parties. The civil society should exaggerate its role and it must be specific and goal-oriented in order to mediate certain policies and demands between public and state for contributing to the peace in Turkey (*idem*). While the other newspapers overestimated the role of the WPC as part of civil society, *Birgün* remained critical towards it. *Birgün* criticized the AKP's 'pressure' on the WPC and the lack of diversity among the members of the commission and maintained that the government did not truly value the WPC members in that it not even read their reports let alone do what the reports advised. *Birgün* stated that the government knew already about the demands of the Kurds and about the objections of the Turks to those demands. Thus, *Birgün* claimed that the AKP exaggerated the role of the WPC. It seems that the AKP had created the WPC in order to avoid having to have at the peace talks any international mediators or foreign observers. An article in *Birgün*, by Berkant Gültekin, bore the assertive title, 'Davutoğlu [the Prime Minister] used (fooled) the WPC and did not even read their reports' (5.10.2014). The article argued that the government used the WPC merely for the sake of public relations. The Turkish academic İnceoğlu (2015) agrees with *Birgün* that Turkish media inflated the role of the ruling party and the WPC in the peace talks, and failed to mention the role of the Kurdish side in the peace-making. Although the WPC was a step towards peace, the media overrated the WPC's role and ignored the fact that it excluded Kurdish voices; therefore, neither the media coverage of the WPC nor the activities of the WPC itself much facilitated

the peace process. Thus the claim by Kadioğlu (2018) that although the WPC was an important agent in promoting the peace and overcoming the fear of the populace, the WPC had too small an effect upon decision-making –and this because the government did not intend to eradicate discriminatory policies regarding the Kurdish question.

7.4 Stage three: back to square one – the nationalist state discourse reloaded

7.4.1 Hate speech against the Kurds

When media adopts war-oriented journalism, it can easily polarize society and escalate conflict by spreading hate speech, war-mongering language, and the glorification of death and of violence (Galtung, 1969, 2003; A. M. and J. Lynch, 2000; Reisigl & Wodak, 1999) as in the case of the media in Rwanda and Bosnia. Turkish media coverage of the peace process frequently used discriminative and disparaging discourse against the Kurdish actors when there were crises during peace talks, such as during the Kobane protests (Yuksel-Pecen, 2018). As I discussed in chapter 6, due to the Kobane protests, the Kurdish protestors and peace negotiators were accused of treason and terrorism. The Kobane protests, as one of the turning points in the process, triggered the resurrection of nationalist discourse in the media. For instance, Yuksel-Pecen (2018:213) argues that Islamist *Yeni Safak* and Kemalist *Hürriyet* defined the Kobane protestors in similar narrative as the ‘supporters of the separatist terrorist organization [the PKK]’.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the Turkish press has a reputation for being racist, discriminatory and for spreading hate

¹⁰¹ *Yeni Şafak* is a conservative Islamist and pro-government Turkish daily newspaper.

speech about non-Muslims, Armenians, Jews and LGBT groups as well as the Kurds (Arsan, 2014; Aydın & Emrence, 2015; Bulut, 2005; Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2015; Gümüş & Dural, 2012; Ünan, 2015).¹⁰² For example, *Hürriyet*'s senior columnist Yılmaz Ozdil spread hatred against the head of Kurdish political party, Ahmet Türk, even when the latter was attacked by a nationalist in 2010:

The Fist

If shooting and killing the children [soldiers] of this country is accepted as a democratic right, then why is it racism to punch a leader of a party? [. . .] He who uses his fist as the sword of justice to smash Ahmet Türk, becomes the articulation of the feelings of many people in this country. Because this nonsensical opening [the peace process] legitimized the terrorists and made the bandits heroes. (14.04.2010)

Here Ozdil dehumanizes Kurdish politicians and the article legitimized hatred towards the Kurds. It implied that the Kurdish politicians defended killing Turkish soldiers by the PKK. Hate speech is different from discriminative and racist discourses because it encourages violence towards a targeted person based upon the victim's identity (Arsan, 2014; Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2015; Ünan, 2015). Hate speech resembling that of Ozdil's article – writing that encouraged violence against Kurds – was prevalent in the conservative Turkish press in moments of crises during the peace talks. Algan (2019) claims that the Turkish mainstream media does not differentiate civil Kurds from armed Kurds and that when covering the Turkish-

¹⁰² For more information about hate speech in Turkish media, see the monthly reports by the Hrant Dink Foundation. The foundation's website, which was found after the murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink by a Turkish nationalist in 2007, is: <<https://hrantdink.org/en/hdv-publications>>. See also Çavdar, A. and Yıldırım, A.B., 2010. *Nefret Suçları ve Nefret Söylemi/Hate Crimes and Hate Speech* (bilingual). İstanbul: Uluslararası Hrant Dink Vakfı.

Kurdish conflict, and especially when there were casualties, it labels all Kurds terrorists. Algan argues that this way of reporting makes the hate discourse ‘more palatable and even desirable’ (2019:131) towards the Kurds. The Turkish media reported the deaths of Kurdish militiamen as being consequences of the ‘operations’ against the ‘terrorist’ but it used mythical and heroic narrative for the deaths of soldiers (Alankuş, 2016). The hatred towards the Other causes feelings of animosity and resentment; this has had deadly results in Turkey. The most striking relevant sample of hateful discourse comprised the defamatory allegation targeting well-known Armenian Journalist Hrant Dink, who had stated that Turkey’s first female combat pilot, Sabiha Gokcen, was an Armenian orphan, not a Turk. The media started a lynching campaign and targeted Hrant Dink with hate speeches in 2004 until he was killed in 2007 by a Turkish nationalist, who appeared to have been trained by an alliance of Turkish deep state, police and gendarmerie intelligence offices for this purpose (Akçam, 2012; Çavdar & Yıldırım, 2010; Freely, 2007; Toruk, Şeker, & Sine, 2012; Ünan, 2015). Moreover, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* embraced discriminative discourses alongside hate speech so as to represent Kurdish actors as unreliable and dishonest. Whenever there was as much as a skirmish during in the peace process, both papers started to criminalize and dehumanize the actors as vandals, terrorists and racists. The Roboski massacre and the Kobane protests (discussed in chapters 5 and 6) afford examples.

In comparison to *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* was more moderate in its coverage of the Kurdish actors, at least generally. However, when there was civil disobedience, *Sabah* continued to reproduce state discourse by insulting the Kurdish activists as ‘terrorists.’ When state forces killed six Kurdish civilians during a protest in a Kurdish province, namely Agri, in 2015, *Sabah* reduced the various identities of the

Kurdish civilians involved to a single and sometimes inaccurate label by equating them with ‘anti-peace’ actor, the PKK, while it presented the AKP as influential and reliable members of the peace talks and, thus, as important for the peace (Way & Kaya, 2016). Figure 7.5 shows *Sabah*’s the main headline. That headline attributes to Öcalan the claim that the BDP and PKK ‘manipulated and deceived [Öcalan]’ (03.07.2012). The subheading of that article added that Öcalan himself was deceived by the Kurdish political party and by the PKK in that both those organisations had not kept Öcalan abreast of their politics and had failed to convey his messages to the public. The article went on to imply that the PKK and BDP were against the peace.

Apart from critical moments during this period such as Roboski and Kobane in which *Sabah* denied the state liability in the Roboski massacre as I discussed in chapter 5, *Sabah* accused Kurdish peace negotiators with serious allegations. It claims that ‘the radical wing’ of the PKK aligned with the Gulen movement, deep state and foreign power to finish the peace process and topple Erdogan. For instance, *Sabah* reported, in the main heading, that ‘The main goal [of leaking tapes of the state’s secret meeting with the PKK] was to end the resolution [the peace] process’ (09.02.2014). The article maintained that the Gulen movement and its dark allies in Turkey leaked the tapes of the secret Oslo meeting to end the peace process while it implied that the Gulen movement was also responsible for the Roboski massacre. It is probably true that the Gulen movement was behind numerous vicious attacks against Kurds, and that movement is known also for its hatred towards the PKK and Kurdish political parties. Moreover, *Sabah* misleadingly claimed that the Kurdish politicians blackmailed the state and they became the main problems in the peace process. For instance, Nebi Miş, in his column in *Sabah*, asserted that the main obstacle to peace was that the pro-Kurdish HPD was unable to deal with political

crises. He argued that some choices of HDP members, such as ‘sticking with archaic left-wing politics’ and ‘putting their future and interests before the peace process’, were further hindrances to the peace (04.10.2014). While state officers and governmental actors were immune from the smear campaign – from the hate speech and insults by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* – Kurdish politicians were targeted with constant denigrations and defamations. Attacking the Kurdish politicians had instigated the banning of several Kurdish political parties as well as other Kurdish actors in the previous two decades. Regardless of their different agendas, the newspapers were united in failing to balance the criticisms, question the power relations and challenge the state discourse for achieving the peace. On the other hand, and despite containing some criticisms of a liberal, moderate sort, *Birgün* neither targeted Kurdish politician nor campaigned against the Kurdish actors for their roles in the peace-making process. However, *Birgün* fiercely criticised Erdoğan and the AKP for proposing an opportunist, dishonest and disingenuous solution to Kurdish question.

7.4.2 The martyrdom of the Turks

As the voice of the state ideology, Kemalism, and the state establishment, *Hürriyet*, on numerous occasions, and particularly after the beginning of the process in 2009, lamented the very existence of the process, using such dismissive phrases as ‘there is no Kurdish question,’ ‘the PKK is the problem’ and ‘you cannot make peace with murderers’. In *Hürriyet*, these narratives opposed the peace process, as Rahmi Turan summarised the nationalist and Kemalist standpoint in his column:

They [the AKP] found a formula that we will all embrace each other! That is ludicrous! Who will we agree with, make peace with or embrace with? With the killers of thousands of innocents, with the traitors of our country or those who fight to divide our land? (20.08.2009)

In the same manner, another senior columnist of *Hürriyet*, Bekir Coskun, claimed that this ‘Kurdish opening’ (the peace process) ‘hurt the Kurds who loved their state regardless of being manipulated for thirty years’ (27.08.2009). Even though *Hürriyet* adjusted to the government discourse, Kemalist nationalism repeatedly emerged in *Hürriyet* to accommodate an anti-peace discourse. In this way, it tended to maintain the existing dominance over the Kurds.

Although *Sabah* praised the AKP’s politics and never opposed the peace talks, it saw the Kurdish question through the lenses of national security and terrorism. Therefore, it appeared to have anti-peace inclinations and those were visible in its coverage of both the Kobane protests and the Roboski massacres. The former Minister of Education, *Sabah*’s columnist Hasan Celal Güzel¹⁰³, denounced fiercely the Kurdish demands for peace and glorified the AKP’s rejection of those demands:

We will take no steps to hurt our martyrs!

The release or house arrest for the leader of the terrorists [Öcalan] were never considered; The bloody militants of the KCK terrorist organization were not released; the general amnesty was not brought forward, and the murderers were not allowed to walk around freely (08.12.2013).

Such antagonistic way of presenting the Kurdish actors by *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* only fuelled the conflict. The reason that both newspapers had to trivialize the peace process was the feeling of a loss of superiority and a fear of being made equal to the

¹⁰³ Hasan Celal Güzel (1945-2018) was a nationalist and Islamist author, journalist, academic and former MP and Minister. He had worked in many state institutions as well as newspapers such as Vatan and Radikal.

Kurds. Ünlü (2016) claims that people started to discuss and challenge the state official narrative of the Kurds in public and media when there was relatively positive transformation, such as ‘so-called’ peace process, in politics of Turkey. However, he adds that ‘this transformation has also evoked intense feelings of loss: loss of certainty, loss of comfort zones, loss of privilege, loss of relevance, loss of future expectations and loss of past narratives’ (2016:403). Ünlü takes it to be a consequence of this political, emotional and epistemological challenge (for such is how he conceives it), that, while a small number of Turks sincerely feel guilt and shame for such complicity and collusion, significant numbers of Turks prefer to escape from the guilt and shameful knowledge. This escape of the Turks led the exploitation and suppression of the Kurds by the state (*idem*). Moreover, the Turks ‘become even more nationalist and overtly racist’ (Ünlü, 2016:403) by deploying new strategies and narratives produced by the media, state and communities. That strategies and narrative were against the Kurdish movement and their demands. As I have mentioned in chapters 5 and 6, Ünlü calls this whole logic and process of reconstructing superiority and racism ‘the Turkishness Contract’. And both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* represented the Kurds according to that logic of Turkish superiority.

On the other hand, *Birgün* did not necessarily intend to impede the peace negotiations with palpably nationalist objections. Rather it embraced a liberal-leftist discourse that undermined debate about the peace – in the following way. Instead of stressing the importance of dialogue with the Kurds and questioning the nature and origin of Turkish nationalism and superiority in Turkish left-wing politics, *Birgün* covered the contentious dialogue between the AKP and Kurds as problematic and

futile. For instance, Enver Aysever¹⁰⁴ in *Birgün* indicated that the Kurdish politicians, who were ‘deluded’ by the AKP, adopted a nationalist discourse, and surrendered to Erdogan’s proposal of peace, because ‘the people of the region have been coerced into murder, ignorance and religious cults’ (28.07.2009). This narrative with its lack of faith in Kurds and peace process diminished the hope for peace and reproduced state discourse which defined Kurdish question as the ‘problem’ of backwardness and religiosity. This Oriental approach and the colonial gaze that directed at Kurdish politics and at the Kurdish region ignored the efforts that the Kurds were putting into the dialogue for the sake of peace. Besides, this gaze associated Kurdish politicians with ignorance and with religious cults (cults that, in the Kurdish region, the state supports so as to oppose the leftist part of the Kurdish movement).

7.5 Conclusion to the chapter

The AKP-initiated peace process aimed to end the four-decade conflict, in 2009-2015. The peace process covered a six-year period of the negotiations between the state and Kurds until the end of the process in summer of 2015. The government shifted its discourse radically towards suppressive policies and ended the peace negotiations in 2015. Major reasons for the failure of the process were the thriving Kurdish political movement in Turkey and the formation of a Kurdish semi-autonomous region (called ‘Rojava’) in northern Syria. The government misconstrued these both dynamics as threats to Turkey’s integrity. The AKP wanted to become the hegemonic actor in the Middle East, as the self-assigned heir of the

¹⁰⁴ Enver Aysever (1971, Istanbul) is a Turkish leftist columnist, author, academic and TV host. He received his sociology degree from Mimar Sinan University.

Ottoman Empire, and wished to put a stop to the loss of its power that had begun with the general election of 2015. Also, the PKK refused to withdraw its all members from Turkey, strengthening its presence in urban space, while the HDP were not able to develop more moderate relation with the AKP. The HDP's incompetence to take an active role in the negotiations allowed the PKK, a military power, to be the main representative of the Kurdish side in the fragile peace talks. These changing political trajectories and dynamics put an end to the process of conflict resolution. The press enthusiastically reported challenges, hopes, hates and developments in the peace process. For all their political differences, *Birgün*, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* each embraced the official announcement of the peace in 2013 by focusing, alike, upon certain themes such as demilitarization and withdrawal of the PKK, the confrontation of past atrocities. They also, to some extent, welcomed lifting ban on some minor cultural rights of the Kurds and the WPC's contribution for peace process as a civic actor. However, the approach of *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* was not that of critical peace journalism. That approach would have promoted the peace by voicing the demands of the Kurdish people, facilitating the expression of creative opinions for ending the conflict, and encouraging healthy discussion by challenging the official narrative of the Kurdish question. *Birgün* remained slightly critical towards the government politics and somewhat demanded that the Kurds should have cultural rights and equal citizenship. Nevertheless, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* were almost identical their endorsement of the peace talks. They only endorsed the government's rigid and conservative peace project, which was far way to meet the Kurdish demands.

On the other hand, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* used a conflict-oriented language that provoked conflict and accommodated the official discourse of the Kemalist state, a

discourse that misrepresented and denigrated Kurdish peacemakers during difficult moments in the peace process. Unlike both newspapers, *Birgün*'s coverage had a moderate stance towards the Kurds. It tended to refrain from blaming the Kurds explicitly, but it did regularly condescend to them for supposedly being manipulated by the AKP. Also, *Birgün* often censured the AKP for being unreliable partner for peace-making. Furthermore, during the peace process, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* presented disputes between the Kurds and the state, such as the Kobane protests and the Habur incident. And they reclaimed the nationalist official discourse and the racism that demonized and dehumanized the Kurdish political actors as terrorist, vandals, and secessionists. By dint of those discriminative discursive practices, both newspapers situated the Kurds as threats to Turkey's integrity. This war-oriented journalism, in the Kemalist *Hürriyet* and the Erdoganist *Sabah*, cynically misconstrued the Kurdish political actors as obstacles and hindrances to the peace. Both newspapers envisioned the process of resolving the conflict through the AKP's one-sided view of peace, rather than in a way that heeded all parties' demands. In this way, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, embracing discourse of security and terrorisms, used the AKP's ostensible peace project as a new means to monopolize and dominate the Kurdish political sphere and to tame Kurdish demands. However, unlike both those newspapers, but while sharing somewhat in their sense of Turkish superiority, *Birgün* adopted a fairly positive discourse about the peace, showing some sympathy towards the Kurds though failing to recognize the Kurds as independent, self-sufficient agents. *Birgün* constantly but implicitly constructed the Kurds as naïve – as manipulated by the AKP's tricks – and frequently presented the peace process as fake, insincere. Even though *Birgün* had some good grounds for doubting the sincerity of the government, its almost total lack of faith in the peace talks, and its representation

of the Kurds as childlike and naïve, do not amount to peace journalism. In short: being strictly pro- or anti-AKP, as well as being ideologically and economically reliant upon the state made, the Turkish newspapers were unable to produce a continually peace-oriented framework for the Kurdish question.

Conclusion

This thesis has performed a qualitative analysis of the representation of the Kurdish question in the Turkish press. My aim was to explore discursive patterns in the press representation of the Kurdish question during the peace talks between The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the state, between 2009 and 2015. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) revised what previously been the official discourse offered by the state; it did so by negotiating with the PKK, with the aim of ending a four-decade ethnic conflict. The peace talks faced significant challenges over the six years of their duration; I analysed some of the most significant cases to determine how the Kurdish question was represented by the Turkish press. To specify: I worked upon these three events that I consider as significant elements of Kurdish question: the Roboski massacre; the Kobane protests; and the peace process itself. These three events did prove significant enough to provide a satisfactory pattern of the media representation. I explored both media discourse and its relationship with the state discourse. In this way, I assessed to what extent the state discourse changed regarding the Kurds.

I addressed the following questions: how does the press represent the Kurdish question? To what extent do the newspapers with different ideological stances differ in representing the peace process, the Roboski massacre and Kobane protests? To what extent did the media and state discourses intersect each other when the Kurds are in question? How is the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of Kurdishness operating in the media discourse? I used NVivo and Python to analyse three events by way of more than seven thousand articles from three different newspapers. I selected newspapers that together spanned the

ideological spectrum: first, *Hürriyet*, centre-right and Kemalist and thus, by dint of the latter, secular and nationalist and slightly opposed to the government; second, *Sabah*, pro-government and politically Islamist; third, *Birgün*, left-wing and in conflict with the government. In this concluding part, I summarised my main findings and my contributions to the field, and I discussed potential future research into the Kurdish question and into the role of the media in peace-making.

In this thesis I have tried to show that the media adopted the state's discourse of denial concerning the Kurdish question. The media's denialist discourse is part of the Turkish state official discourse. This official discourse emerged in order to legitimize the violent suppression of the major Kurdish rebellions, such as the Ararat revolt (1927-1930) and the Dersim revolt (1937-1938), and it represented the Kurds as uncivilized, tribal, backward, anti-modern (Yegen, 1999). In 2011 the Turkish state massacred thirty-four Kurdish civilians from the village of Roboski on the border of Turkey-Iraq. The media remained silent and ignored the massacre of those villagers. In particular, Turkish mainstream newspapers endorsed the narrative of the government by denying the state responsibility of the atrocity. The voice of conservatism, *Sabah*, reproduced the official accounts and claimed the massacre was an accident. Relying upon the government as its source and ignoring accounts given by the Roboski families, *Sabah* perpetuated the denial of government complicity and stated that the PKK and the Gulen movement were behind the massacre. Similarly, the Kemalist *Hürriyet* upheld the government's denial and the government's claim that the massacre had been an accident. Cohen (2001) argues that states use misinformation, disinformation and manipulation to maximize the deniability of their atrocities. Regardless of the ideological differences between *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, they both aimed to exonerate the state. On the other hand,

leftist *Birgün* condemned the government and held it responsible for the massacre. Even though *Birgün* criticized the state violence and gave space to denunciations of the perpetrators by the families of the Roboski victims, *Birgün* remained to some extent within the denialist fold. For, the massacre had aimed to discipline and punish the Kurds, and the motivation behind the massacre was ethnic hostility towards the Kurds – and all this *Birgün* failed to mention.

This thesis has articulated how the Turkish press misrepresented Kurdish political actors and even Kurdish civilians. The politically Islamist and Kemalist-nationalist newspapers blamed the victims for the Roboski massacre. Yet, the Roboski massacre occurred within a political climate, in which hopes for a resolution of the conflict were rising. Even though both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* reported upon the victims – with some sensationalist and dramatic stories – often those papers misrepresented the victims by portraying them, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, as criminals and greedy smugglers. While both newspapers failed to name the state as the perpetrator, they linked the victims with ‘terror’ – in the form of the PKK – in an attempt to legitimize the airstrike. In so doing, both newspapers endorsed government discourse. The Kurdish question became a unifying signifier for ideologically divergent newspaper because of their common anti-Kurdish stance. For instance, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* published some hateful speeches targeted at the victims. *Hürriyet* contained more hate speech than *Sabah* and indeed the *Hürriyet*’s discriminatory Kemalist roots led it to endorse such speech to a greater extent than *Sabah* did. By contrast, *Birgün* represented the victims with empathy and in a respectful manner. The Roboski massacre was lost to Turkish justice as a Kafkaesque death of the *Homo sacer* since no one has been convicted and held accountable for the massacre until the present day. In accord with

the interests of the state *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* ceased to cover the massacre one year after it had taken place. Yet, year after year, *Birgün* continued to report upon the pain and suffering caused by the massacre. Both *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* scapegoated the Kurds themselves for the massacre. Instead of reporting its real cause, they blamed the HPD and the PKK. The government produced this official scapegoating to deny complicity and escape criticism. Except for the leftist newspaper, the majority of the conservative press, including *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, embraced the government's scapegoating. The conservative Turkish press normalized and naturalized the massacre via simplification, dramatization and euphemism. This strategy of normalization of state atrocities by the press has its origin in the tradition of the Turkish press of endorsing the state's violent suppression of the Kurds. Bulut (2005) and Olson (2000) argue that the Turkish press encouraged and advocated violent suppression by the state as early as the 1920s and the 1930s, when it blamed Kurds for the Dersim and Mount Ararat rebellions. I claim that the mainstream Turkish media is still advocating the state's violent policies, albeit covertly.

Furthermore, in this research, I contributed to existing literature about the media representation of Kurdish activists. The Kobane protests are a case in point. In 2014, the Kurds took to the streets demanding that the government allow Kurdish fighters to enter the city of Kobane, which was under attack by Islamic State. The protests became a major challenge to the peace process. The demonstrations continued for ten days and almost fifty civilians were killed by nationalist lynching mobs and by state forces. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* ignored the protests until the protests turned violent. Both newspapers immediately adopted the discourse of terror and security vis-à-vis the demonstrations. This shift in discourse occurred even though it was the climactic period of the peace talks. This discourse of terror was the main

element of the state's official ideology about the Kurdish question until the 2000s. Rather than reporting on the main reasons for the protests, *Sabah* adverted to 'dark forces' behind the protests. For, according to *Sabah*, the Gulen movement and the West was behind this 'conspiracy' against the unity of Turkey. Similarly, *Hürriyet* ignored the demonstrations' motivations, excluded the testimony of the Kurdish protestors and implied that the protestors were being manipulated. Both newspapers constructed the protestors as being without agency and instead as being deceived and manipulated. Contrary to *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, the leftist *Birgün* did cover the main reasons for the demonstrations and gave voice to the protestors. *Birgün* explicitly stated that the protests were against the AKP, against IS and against the police violence.

Another point worth mentioning is that each of the three newspapers took a line upon whether the Kobane protests were jeopardizing or alternatively safeguarding the peace process. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* claimed that the protests were threatening the continuation of the peace process. Both newspapers reported Erdogan's statement that the protestors will 'pay a heavy price' if they harm the peace process. That price was the executions of numerous protestors by the state forces as well as by some other radical Islamist and nationalist groups. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* argued that the HDP manipulated the protestors and threatened the peace process. *Sabah* went further. It claimed that the 'white Turks' (the Turkish elites and Kemalists), the Gulen movement and some senior members of the PKK were using the demonstrations to fuel the conflict. Regardless of their ideological differences, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* represented the protests as provocations to the Turkish state. Ignoring facts or pretending ignorance of them can be a strategy aimed at reinforcing the hegemony of certain powers and institutions, the idea being to deny liability and

disavow the consequences of any crises that those powers or institutions create. We can consider such strategies as further ways of excluding particular opinions and views. It was for that reason – to that end – that *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* preferred strategic ignorance about the role of the government. On the other hand, the anti-AKP *Birgün* reported the demonstrations with great support and sympathy. Unlike *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, for *Birgün*, the demonstrations were safeguarding the peace. While *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* used government sources to define the protests as anti-peace, *Birgün* represented them as activists and also covered the views of the protestors, dissidents and pro-Kurdish HPD. *Birgün* argued that the protestors forced the government to open the border to Kurdish fighters, who crossed the Turkish border into Syria and prevented the fall of Kurdish town, Kobane, to IS. *Birgün* implied that the fall of Kobane would be disastrous for the peace process.

The Kobane protests became a major challenge to the politics of the Turkish state. The media accounts of the protests and protestors revealed how the media presented the Kurds during the time of the peace talks. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* dehumanized the Kurdish protestors by portraying them as ‘vandals’, ‘barbarians’ and ‘terrorists’ who were part of an insurgency against Turkey. This way of picturing the demonstrators invokes the state official discourse, as Yegen (1999) claims. It constructs the Kurds and Kurdish issues within a frame of backwardness, tribalism, anti-modernism and lack of civilization. Thus, the media’s definition of the protestors as uncivilized and as barbarians legitimized the state’s disproportionate use of violence towards the demonstrators. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* covered the deaths of protestors without mentioning the perpetrators. Neither paper covered the attempts by nationalists and Islamists to lynch protestors but both papers constantly said that the ‘provocateurs’, i.e. the protestors, were targeting citizens. The

criminalization of the protestors in the media was a reflection of the official narrative. Aşık (2018:2) argues that ‘representation is an imaginative field onto which individuals project themselves by attributing their varied concerns, meanings and values to the represented.’ Thus, the media representation embodied the values of the media and state rather than those of the protestors. However, once again *Birgün* challenged other newspapers. It argued that the protestors were civilians, students, activists who acted knowingly and of their own accord and who were showing solidarity with the people of Kobane and protesting against the AKP and IS-sympathisers on the streets of Turkey. Contrary to *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün* condemned the executions of the protestors by the police and by radical right-wing groups and indicated the government’s support for the perpetrators.

This thesis means to have contributed to showing how neoliberal perspectives in the Turkish media affected the representation of the Kurdish question. The mainstream Turkish media stressed and indeed exaggerated the economic cost of the protests, representing the demonstrations as part of an economic war against Turkey. Yet, the real causes of the harm done to Turkey’s fragile economy during the Kobane protests were the neoliberal economic policies of the AKP. Those policies included the privatization of public services and the sub-contracting of large state projects to pro-government groups. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* stated that the protests damaged Turkey’s economy and put at risk the government’s plan to invest in Kurdish cities. Both newspapers overrepresented the material cost of the protests while neglecting the human cost.

Each of *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* proclaimed that the protestors burned down and looted public institutions, shops and banks. Being parts of a media monopoly under

the control of the government's neoliberal policies, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* tended to ignore or else underestimate civilian deaths. This politics of exclusion is in line with the following argument that Göçek (2018) makes about Turkey's neoliberal policies. Göçek (2018:20) explains that the AKP: implemented a policy of 'securitization and violence' in the Kurdish region; excluded the Kurds; and acted only to protect (1) those that were loyal to it, (2) the neoliberal market. Thus, the Kobane protestors – the dissidents – were not worthy of protection. In contrast, *Birgün* ignored the economic cost of the protests; it never said that the protestors were harming the economy. Even though in some places the protestors did damage state institutions and private banks, *Birgün* tended not to report any such incidents. However, the mainstream Turkish press mirrored the government's discriminatory discourse towards the protestors, thereby maintaining the state's hegemony.

My findings show that conflict resolution in Turkey requires peace journalism on the part of the media. The press represented the peace process both positively and negatively, according to their ideological affiliation and the time period. The AKP government initiated the negotiation with the PKK in 2009 but terminated it in 2015. During those six years, there were many moments of crisis and conflict in which the government and media changed their discourses about the peace talks. Thus, there were several key news themes that appeared in the media discourse. The Kemalist *Hürriyet* and the Erdoganist *Sabah* each embraced the official announcement of the peace talks in 2013. Both *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* focused upon the disarmament of the PKK and on the PKK's withdrawal from Turkey's land. Both newspapers welcomed the demilitarization of the Kurdish regions. Also, both papers reduced their usage of discriminatory language about the Kurdish political actors: they stopped called the PKK militias 'terrorists' and ceased to call the leader

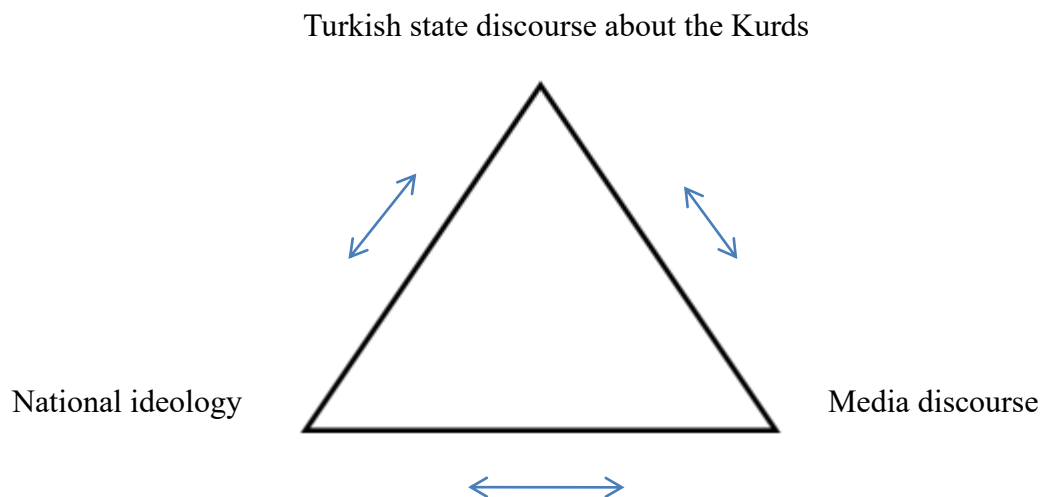
of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, ‘the-terrorist-in-chief’. During the peace talks, *Sabah* attempted to face up to the past atrocities of the state such as the Dersim massacre (1937-1938) but in deference to the government it refrained from making comments on the recent Roboski massacre. In some cases, *Hürriyet* criticized the state for past wrongdoings. In *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* alike, the editorial line was more conservative than the opinion pieces in regard to facing the past and other issues. Even though both newspapers promoted peace they were not genuinely practising peace journalism because their support was contingent upon the position at any one time taken by the government. For instance, at those moments when the government aborted the peace talks, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* ceased their support for peace. They cannot be placed in the category of peace journalism because peace journalism requires the continuous advocacy of peace and of non-violent, creative strategies for conflict resolution. Furthermore, *Birgün* had a somewhat contradictory approach towards the peace process. Even though *Birgün* supported the idea of peace with the Kurds more than did the other two newspapers, it implied continually that the AKP was dishonestly deceiving the Kurds. Yet, *Birgün* asserted the importance of the peace process and of granting cultural and political rights to the Kurds. Like *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, *Birgün*’s reporting of the peace talks included a call for the killings to stop and for the country to face the past by acknowledging the extrajudicial killings of the Kurds that had occurred in the 1990s. However, the criticism of past crimes of state remained superficial in all three newspapers. Internalizing the state-established ideology, all three newspapers stressed the idea that peace-making would consolidate the integrity and unity of Turkey, showing an imagination that excluding any self-determination of the Kurds.

An additional point is that the conservative newspapers emphasised there was a positive impact of the peace talks upon the economy. *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* adopted the government's discourse that peace would bring economic stability and investments to both Kurdish cities and Turkey. Both those newspapers referred constantly to statements by the government and by business associations according to which peace would make Turkey's flourish. The line taken by the newspapers about the investments aimed to persuade the public to welcome the peace talks with the PKK and the Kurds. Even though *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* made economic arguments in support of the peace, they expressed no reservations about the fact that after the withdrawal of the PKK the Kurdish region would be exposed to mining companies, energy companies and dam construction. Both papers adopted uncritically the government's narrative about investment, even though the state money would go (would continue to go) to certain privileged – pro-government – companies. Still, while *Sabah* gave extensive, endorsive coverage to government arguments about investment, *Hürriyet* did that to a lesser extent, being more opposed to the government than *Sabah*. For its part, *Birgün* covered nothing related to the positive or negative impact of the peace process on the economy although it did, constantly, criticise the general orientation of the government's economic policy.

Also, in this study, I demonstrated that the Turkish press practised *anti-peace* journalism by reinstating the state's established discriminatory discourse towards the Kurds. The media can promote and enhance peacebuilding by taking note of the pain of others, by circulating information in a responsible manner and by giving voice to both sides (Galtung, 1969; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). However, the Erdoganist *Sabah* and the Kemalist *Hürriyet* alike attacked Kurdish political parties, Kurdish activists and Kurdish peacemakers when conflicts broke out between the state and

Kurds during the six years of peace talks. Both newspapers used war-mongering language about, and disseminated hate speech towards, pro-Kurdish political parties and even – as in the case of the Kobane protestors – Kurdish activists. Unlike *Sabah*, some nationalist opinion pieces in *Hürriyet* rejected the peace process entirely and even considered it to be treason. Yet, both newspapers excluded the voices of Kurdish actors, ignoring their concerns, demands and views. Even though *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* were ideologically different there was little difference in how they misrepresented Kurdish actors as being separatists, vandals and even terrorists and thus as obstacles to peace. Yüksel-Pecen (2018) and Algan (2019) take a position similar to mine. They claim that at the end of 2014 the media reverted to the previous government discourse of terrorism and security and once again indulged in hate speech concerning the Kurdish question.

Figure 9.1. Ideological reproduction of the Kurdish question in the Turkish media



The diagram (Figure 9.1) presents the process whereby the discourse of the mainstream Turkish media is produced. The process is to be found – the diagram is applicable to – the peace process and my other events but also more generally. Even though there was a degree of moderation in (because of) the good periods of the

peace talk with the Kurds, *Sabah and Hürriyet*'s coverage of that process was produced according to this triangle of relations. The figure shows three factors, namely on the Turkish state discourse about the Kurds, national ideology and media discourse. These factors regularly and swiftly feed, change and shape each other; they do so due to the aforementioned strong patronage relations between the media owners and the government. Unlike *Sabah and Hürriyet*, *Birgün* neither carried hate speech towards the Kurds nor presented the Kurds as threats to the peace talks. However, *Birgün* often presented the peace process as insincere, as a piece of fakery, while portraying the Kurdish peacemakers as naïfs manipulated by the AKP. This condescension towards the Kurds and continually doubting of the process means that *Birgün*'s journalism can be categorised only partially as peace journalism. On the other hand, *Sabah and Hürriyet* did not practice peace journalism at all. So: nothing in the Turkish press, from left to right, fully practiced peace journalism with regards to the Kurdish question. I argued that although those newspapers supported the peace process at certain times and in certain ways, their journalism was not that of peace; peace journalism requires unconditional and continual advocacy of peace. The mainstream Turkish press did not practice peace journalism because the media tycoons subcontracted the state mega-projects.

More critical work – more work of an analytical, critical kind – remains to be done. I restricted my attention to the recent period of six-year of the peace talks; the strength of my research is that it investigates three events via ample textual and visual data comprising more than seven thousand articles. Detailed interviews with journalists from different newspapers would have contributed to a fuller investigation. However, such interviews were not possible when I was carrying out this research, because of the oppressive political environment and the dangerous

period that existed, in particular, after the attempted military coup of 2016. Similarly, a wider and deeper analysis of pro-AKP conservative, Islamist newspapers would make it clearer how the state ideology functions in the discourse of the Islamists, who are the new carriers and producers of this official ideology despite having been its victims previously. I intend to treat those conservative newspapers in future research, employing the same tools as in the present work.

The Kurdish question in the media does cry out for further analysis. I considered only events that are recent, but in the future, I intend to extend the scope of my research into an earlier period of Turkey. Such research is needed because there is little literature on this earlier period of the 1920s and 1930s, a period in which the great Kurdish rebellions had taken place. Knowing how the press represented those rebellions can provide a ground to compare earlier to later media representation. The state produced its official discourse of the Kurds in the 1920s and 1930s of Turkey. I intend to examine its first manifestations in the media in order to see how the media coverage of the Kurds today resembles the coverage of the 1920s and 1930s. In this way, I will be able to investigate further the extent to which the media reproduces the state discourse. Another piece of further research that I might undertake would be into the media's understanding and presentation of demands of the Kurdish cultural rights. One thing that such research could do would be explore how the media represented Kurdish demands for the use of Kurdish in education. The present research is limited in that it treats only three newspapers and a single six-year period. Those limitations were imposed by the lack of the digital archives and by severe problems in accessing the paper archives for the 'sensitive' purpose of analysing Kurdish question. However, were the political environment in

Turkey to relax, then future research could be rid of these obstacles and cover a greater number of years and a wider range of newspapers.

Apart from the Kurdish question, there are other issues I wish to analyse. In the age of neoliberal capitalism, the media is everywhere, shaping, leading and manipulating the post-truth society. In fact, the media can ‘troll’ the public. When the media, whether conventional or digital, circulates lies more quickly than truths, then people tend to vote or act against their interests and in such a way as to contribute to the hegemony of elites as in the case of Trump in the US and Brexit in the UK. For instance, the effect of the ‘Brexit’ process upon how the British media discusses education and in particular tertiary education deserves more scholarly attention and such work would be amenable to the methods that I have used. Having herein applied techniques of critical discourse analysis to specific media texts, I could use the same methods to investigate British newspapers, comparing different media outlets across a wide political spectrum. As an international student in the UK, I would like to undertake research into how high-circulation British newspapers frame discussions of foreign students and scholars and British educational policies in relation to Brexit. Since in the current research I have used NVivo and Python software programs for collecting and analysing large data sets, I would be able to use the software again to collect the data from digital archives. Also, I will use my method of thesis, CDA, to carry out this research.

To return to the topics of the present thesis: why one should care about the representation of the Kurdish question in the Turkish media? I suggest that the Kurdish question already extended beyond the border of Turkey and even beyond the Middle East, particularly after struggles had started, in Syria and elsewhere,

between the Kurds and IS. Nor are relations between Kurds and Turks unaffected by such developments in the Middle East. Turkey's respective relations with the West, the European Union, the US and NATO, makes Turkey's Kurdish question of Turkey part of international politics. This international dimension to the question is something else that makes further research desirable. The media reproduces and transforms knowledge about the conflict and about peace-making. In the same way, the Turkish media and international media play a significant role in conflict resolution in Turkey. The analysis of the Kurdish question and of how the Kurds figure in international and Turkish media requires future research; the field is understudied. The Kurdish question is the result of the partition of Kurdish land by the imperial powers (including Britain and France) at the beginning of the twentieth century. It would help to raise awareness of the plight and rights of the Kurds, were there to be more study of how the national and international media represents 'the Kurdish question'. Such awareness might forestall future atrocities of the likes of the Dersim massacre, the Halabja massacre and the more recent massacre by IS of Kurdish Yazidis in the Middle East. To understand how the media might contribute to the prevention of such massacres, we might think of the Western media's positive representation of the Kurdish struggle in Syria against IS. That representation created sympathy for the Kurdish fighters and legitimized their cause. If the currently hegemonic discourse about the Kurds in the Middle East and Turkey, a discourse of denial and violence, is to be challenged, then critical analysis of the media becomes indispensable and urgent.

Epilogue

These last words explain why I have emphasised on the Kurdish history in the first chapters of this thesis. Our knowledge of the 'Other' is often produced by and through the lenses of the hegemonic actors. In fact, the narrator frequently is the one that suppresses, governs and colonizes. Thus, we need to decolonize our knowledge about the 'Other'. Narrative of history has been an effective weapon in the hands of oppressor. Academics, students, journalists and activists should undertake the task of decolonizing knowledge, power, and the mind to challenge racism, colonialism and other forms of suppressions. Rewriting histories of communities (such as Kurds in Turkey or minorities around the world) and decolonization of knowledge are vital to tackle hegemonic discourses of the great powers.

As in the case of this thesis, rather than providing a more general context about Turkey and its history, I focused on the Kurdish history through historical narratives that are critical to the Turkish-centric historical accounts, which are dominant and prevalent. To place the critical accounts of Kurdish history at the centre, then comparing them with hegemonic state-centric narratives enables us to destabilize pro-state accounts of history. To give voice to critical narratives of history of the Kurds in Turkey politicizes the Kurdish subjects that have been depoliticized by pro-state official narratives. Thus, in first parts of thesis, I primarily discussed the Kurdish history, which is less known compare to Turkey's history, then I explained the foundation of Turkish state and its relation to Kurdish question.

The knowledge about the Kurds have habitually been produced by Turkish academics, researchers and pro-state conservative actors. Despite having different political stances and ideologies, these actors mainly attempt to dehistoricize and

depoliticize the Kurds in order to perpetuate narratives produced by the Turkish state. Turkish academia and pro-state actors produce and disseminate knowledge about the Kurds for the Turkish and Kurdish public with twisted accounts and colonial gaze. Even though, the Kurds try to destabilize this narrative, the support of institutions and the state for the production of this hegemonic knowledge maintains to dominant politics, particularly at the level of international politics wherein Turkey to a great extent manages to prevent international support for Kurds as in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan's independence referendum in 2017. Furthermore, both Turkish Kemalist and Turkish political Islamist, as main parties dominating Turkey's politics, have employed similar policies towards the Kurds as in the recent case of Turkey's war on Kurdish autonomy in Syria. Both parties, along many liberal, secular and leftist groups, have constructed the Kurdish self-administration as a danger to the integrity of Turkey, thus, legitimized the military intervention. In this regard, despite ideological differences in Turkish politics, most actors adopt similar approaches and discourses towards the Kurds.

Appendixes

The second list of keywords (in chapter 4): here is the second list including some keywords:

- a) Secret meetings between the state and the PKK in Oslo: Oslo proses (Oslo süreci), Oslo meetings (Oslo görüşmeleri)
- b) Imrali process referring to Turkey's meetings with Öcalan in 2013: Imrali process (İmralı Süreci)
- c) PKK (searched as it is written)
- d) Four pro-Kurdish political parties searched by their abbreviations: The Democratic Society Party (DTP); the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP); the Democratic Regions Party (DBP); the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)
- e) Abdullah Öcalan as the leader of the PKK
- f) Selahattin Demirtaş & Figen Yüksekdağ (co-chairs of HDP)

I used these keywords in the second list to analyse and code my data on NVivo. These keywords made it easy to spot the most important articles about these three events upon which I focused.



Figure 5 (in chapter 5): ‘We are researching the mistake in Uludere’, *Sabah* (06.01.2012). The picture shows the President Abdullah Gul; the text is from his speech about the Roboski massacre.



Figure 6 (in chapter 5): ‘Democrats in Ankara, Fascist in Diyarbakir’, *Sabah* (11.01.2012). Here Erdoğan criticises the MPs of the BDP.



Figure 11 (in chapter 6): 'Kobane riot: The agenda and prohibitions of the AKP are under the feet of the people' (*Özgür Gündem*, 09.10.2014).



Figure 7.2 (in chapter 7): *Sözcü*'s headline, 'The government proudly presents The APO [Öcalan] and PKK Show'.

'ÇARPITIYORLAR ALDATIYORLAR'

ÖZEL
HABER



İMRA'LI'DAN
HIÇ ÇIKMADI
Dursun İmralı'nın
dün açıklama
yaptığı 'Öcalan
İmralı'dan hiç
çıkamadı. Halen
cezası orada infaz
ediliyor.'

Öcalan'dan el yazılı mektup: Avukatlarımla görüşmeyeceğim çünkü sözlerimi çarpıtıyorlar. BDP ve PKK da beni aldatıyor

TERÖR örgütü lideriyle ilgili "İmralı'da değil mi" tartışması sürerken SABAH bu polemige son verecek önemli bir bilgiye ulaştı. Buna göre, 11 aydır avukatlarıyla görüşmeyen Öcalan bu tecritli Adalet Bakanlığı'na yolladığı mektupla bizzat kendi istedi.

"YANLIŞ AKSETTİRİYORLAR"

BAKANLIĞIN arşivinde olan mektupta, Öcalan avukatlarıyla görüşmeyeceğini belirtti ve şöyle yazdı: "Avukatlar söylediklerimi çarpıtıyor, yanlış aksettiriyor. Mesajlarım adreslerine ulaşmıyor. BDP ve PKK da beni aldatıyor."

KARDEŞİYLE DE GÖRÜŞMEDİ

BU süreçte mektubu doğrulayan gelişme Öcalan'ın kardeşiyle de görüşmeyi reddetmesi oldu. Öcalan, 19 Ocak'ta İmralı'ya gelen kardeşine şu mesajı ilettili: "Burası çok hassas. Görüşmeye çıkmamız uygun değil."



YAHYA BOSTAN'IN HABERİ 19'DA

Figure 7.5 (in chapter 7): Sabah's headline '[the BDP and PKK] manipulated and deceived [Öcalan]' (03.07.2012)



Figure 8.1: From eight newspapers across the ideological spectrum, including Hürriyet, had identical headlines based on Erdogan's criticism of Egyptian putschists: 'A Moses will come and hold them responsible' 16 August 2013.



Figure 8.2: From the headlines of a Kemalist, a political Islamsit and liberal conservative newspapers respectively in different periods, yet they all had criticism for the peace talks.

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