

# **Territorial Integrity of Turkey and the PKK Peace Process**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis examines the undergoing peace process in Turkey between the Turkish state and the PKK organisation and seeks to assess how this development is affected by one of the principles of the Turkish national state: territorial integrity. Examining the preservation of territorial integrity as a factor shaping the pacification is crucial to understanding the dynamics of the current peace process and how distant the prospect of achieving a long lasting peace is. I investigate the PKK peace process using the works of scholars developing on conflict resolution and the specificities of Turkish politics and I address the relevance of their theories to the case of the PKK.

Keywords: Turkey, peace process, territorial integrity, conflict resolution, military, minority rights, secularism, nationalism.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AKP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party

BDP - *Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi* – Peace and Democracy Party

EU – European Union

KRG – Kurdistan Regional Government

PKK - *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Workers' Party

# 1. Introduction

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, more commonly known as the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*) has been engaged in an armed conflict with the Turkish state for approximately three decades. The struggle, initially aimed at achieving Kurdish independence, gradually evolved into one centred on demands of minority status and implicitly minority rights for the Kurdish population of Turkey. The challenge posed by the PKK has been met with military action *at least* occasionally directed indiscriminately towards the Kurdish minority, regardless of their degree of involvement in the PKK organisation. During the insurgency, more than 40,000 people were killed, including PKK militants, Turkish soldiers and civilians of both ethnicities.<sup>1</sup> The conflict has undergone periods of reduced tension, particularly since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) -led Government has initiated a dialogue with the PKK imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan. The intended cooperation between the two parties has brought into discussion the potentiality of a peace process. The thesis will discuss the current peace process between the Turkish state and the PKK and will examine the function of territorial integrity vis-à-vis this process. The peace process will be referred to as the Turkish-Kurdish peace process, the Turkish-PKK peace process, the Imralı peace process or simply the peace process. The first chapter will highlight how this pacification process is relevant to a discussion on human rights and will unravel the purpose of the thesis and its problematisation.

## 1.1. Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of the thesis is to analyse the ongoing peace process in Turkey between the Turkish state and the PKK in regards to one potentially relevant element in the peace process: the principle of territorial integrity. The analysis seeks to highlight if and in what ways this factor might mould the peace process, in order to understand the success - or failure, for that matter - of the efforts of the Government so far and finally the prospects of peace in Turkey.

Consequently, the research question is: *Does the principle of territorial integrity have an impact on the current peace process in Turkey, and if so, how?* The research question, thus, in fact,

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<sup>1</sup> The BBC, "Turkey Kurds: PKK Chied Ocalan Calls for Ceasefire", 21 March 2013, viewed 10 January 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21874427>

comprises two sections. Accordingly, the analysis will have to deal with both segments: firstly assessing if the territorial integrity affects the peace process and secondly scrutinising the manner in which it does, if that is the case. For a clearer understanding of the function of territorial integrity as one of the principles that lies at the core of the Turkish Republic, it will be examined on both a factual level and ideological one. More explicitly, the military is one concrete expression of this principle. The military has a well established role in Turkey and acquires a symbolic dimension stemming directly from the preoccupation to preserve the indivisibility of Turkish territory. This conceptual dimension will be discussed along with the military's concrete actions in regards to the PKK struggle. As will be seen, the military's role in pacification processes has been traditionally considered as inhibiting by scholars preoccupied with conflict resolution, a mainstream view which has become self-evident. Nevertheless this obstructing effect will be questioned, as other circumstances or a sum of factors can change this known effect of the military in conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the objective is not limited to labelling the military factor as either obstructive or facilitative, especially since this "black and white" approach bears the risk of being overly simplistic: the military establishment can act as an obstacle in a way and as a facilitator in other ways, or it might affect the peace process in a manner that is even more difficult to categorise. I seek to analyse the interactions between the military and the PKK armed group and assess the concrete actions and role of the military in the emerging peace process. As stated above, I will primarily examine the principle in which the military is firmly rooted ideologically and if/how the principle itself affects the peace process. Therefore, although the thesis has a solid cause-effect linear flow, it will attempt to escape an overly simplified geometry.

## **1.2. Relevance to Human Rights**

Provided that the analysis reveals the preservation of territorial integrity as a factor affecting the current peace process, territorial integrity would then be a decisive factor in the prospect of granting rights to the Kurdish population, as well. The deduction is made following a simple logic which assumes that since the peace process is crucial for the recognition of rights (ranging from cultural to civil and political, some of which fall into the category of minority rights), then

the principle of territorial integrity, as a factor of the peace process, plays a role in determining whether the rights will be achieved.

The topic of the PKK pacification is relevant for the field of human rights for at least two reasons. Firstly, it covers human rights issues on a factual, “on the ground” level. The Kurds have endured longstanding abuses and discrimination as an ethnic group, which have undoubtedly been crucial factors determining the PKK’s armed struggle. The issue does not only act on a causal or motivational level, but effect-wise as well, as reaching peace in Turkey would affect the Kurdish minority directly, either as a long-lasting peace committed to democratic principles or as one that would silence Kurdish grievances to a greater degree. Pacification does not necessarily imply the eventually full protection of the Kurdish minority rights, as it could be done solely through military means, leaving political reforms aside. However, considering the last decades’ Turkish – European rapprochement, Turkey – Northern Iraq collaboration and the democratisation steps taken by the Turkish Government, an entirely violent counter-terrorist attack aimed to pacify the PKK is highly unlikely. Nevertheless, in either of the instances, the fact that the pacification of the PKK directly affects the Kurdish minority is not to be doubted.

Secondly, the peace process is relevant to the study of human rights: therefore on a theoretical level. Turkey succeeding in pacifying the PKK democratically would amount to a Kurdish minority which enjoys not only full recognition and protection of their minority status, but also rights not strictly limited by the minority criterion and which they have been refused. The academic field of human rights would surely experience a wave of works drawing conclusions and theorising the practicalities that led to the success. Scholars would embark on a quest to identify and analyse elements of the pacification, conceptualise them and finally seek to reach a generalisation that could eventually help other cases of peace processes. The topic has been extensively treated by studies of peace and conflict; however, the essential connection and relevance to human rights should not be minimised.

### **1.3. Overview of the Thesis**

To examine territorial integrity as an element that potentially shapes the peace process, I will primarily need to establish its relevance, or the “*if*” segment of the research question. This first

step will be done bidimensionally: empirically and theoretically. Scholars preoccupied with the studies of peace and conflict and combating terrorism have in their turn drawn from concrete cases and moved towards conceptualisation. The current thesis will have these two dimensions not only as it will draw from scholars' works that already have this two-level approach, but also as it will, in its turn, be reinforced with further empirical evidence conceptualised whenever possible and relevant.

In this sense, the thesis will discuss past events and current developments in the pacification process of the PKK for its empirical basis. It will also discuss events relating to the territory and the military of Turkey, along with the solid connection that unites them. This relation is relevant for establishing how territory can still guide Turkish policies, namely Kurdish-related ones. The section analysing the aforementioned relation is associated with the "how" segment of the research question. These events relating to the PKK pacification process and to the territory and military of Turkey provide essential empirical evidence that will be further examined through the lenses of conflict resolution theorists and political analysts who focus on Turkey.

Although there is a comprehensive list of conflict resolution works, the selection has been made according to their focus on territory, nationalism and collective identity. The theoretical dimension of the thesis is further supported by analysts discussing particularities of the Turkish military, the Turkish nation-building project and multiple other concepts these entail. The thesis, following this logic, is divided into six sections: Introduction, Theory, Methods, Description of the Case, Analysis and Conclusion. Every section is comprised of subchapters that have a more specific focus, in order to provide a structured yet comprehensive analysis.

## 2. Theory

The theoretical base comprises, on the one hand, theories of conflict resolution and, on the other, scholarly works that specifically deal with the struggle of the PKK and with the highly military character of the Turkish state and the ways in which it manifests. The choice of theory reflects the way in which Turkey's case fits in a broader context of states fighting against internal armed groups, whether they are classified as terrorist, guerrilla or freedom fighters. Concurrently, it highlights the specificity of the Turkish preoccupation for territorial indivisibility.

### 2.1. Conflict Resolution Theories

As mentioned above, the thesis builds upon the theories of multiple scholars, thus, it is characterised by a mosaic of views rather than a single homogenous theory. The bits and pieces approach is used in order to reach a more comprehensive view of the pacification process. Although the approach bears the risk of lack of depth, the empirical evidence will function as the solid element either sustaining or rejecting the theoretical premises.

Conflict resolution theorists define peace processes in multiple ways. Timothy Sisk defines them as “step-by-step reciprocal moves to build confidence, resolve gnarly issues such as disarmament, and carefully define the future through the design of new political institutions” and perhaps more famously as an “exchange of war for peace”<sup>2</sup>. A similar, but more extensive definition is provided by scholar Nicole Ball. According to Ball, the four stages are negotiations, cessation of hostilities, transition and consolidation. The first two are included under a more general phase of cessation of hostilities, whereas the last two as peacebuilding.<sup>3</sup> The recent developments in Turkey can be characterised by bilateral efforts (i.e. Turkish Government on one side, and the PKK leader, Öcalan, along with the BDP Kurdish political party, on the other) to reach a consensus with the final purpose of establishing peace. Following Ball's line of thought, the peace process in Turkey would now be in its first or second phase. The difficulty in

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<sup>2</sup> T. D. Sisk, "Democratization and Peacebuilding" in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds. *Turbulent Peace*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace 2001. p. 787

<sup>3</sup> N. Ball, "The Challenge of Rebuilding War-Torn Societies." in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds. *Turbulent Peace*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace 2001 pp. 721-722

an exact labelling stems from the fact that although negotiations have been taking place for a year and hostilities have been interrupted since March 2013, tensions have erupted recently, thus impeding the Turkish-Kurdish peace process.

Scholars have categorised the stages of conflict resolution in different manners, therefore Ball's classification is only one of many. Although theorists have conceptualised and labelled causes, stages and strategies of conflict resolution in various ways, common denominators are their appreciation of context-bound relations and processes and their acknowledgement of the impossibility to generalise. The definitions displayed above have been chosen due to their broad character, although Ball's classification seems rather specific. It allows, nevertheless, for any peace process to fall under one of its identified stages. In spite of their different approaches, conflict resolution theories generally agree on the vital, yet ambivalent, role of the military in the attempt to pacify an insurgent group. Views of how the military can shape a peace process will be assessed in the analysis chapter. The conflict resolution theories are, thus, relevant for a discussion of the Turkish-PKK peace process as they would help conceptualise the developments in Turkey.

The discussion about the role of the military will, thus, be both on a general level and a Turkish-centred one. The military is believed to be a vital actor in conflict resolution.<sup>4</sup> As stated above, the views on the role of the military are less diverging than other conflict-related concepts, although there is a hesitation in labelling its exact effect, due to the context-bound considerations. Nevertheless, the military acts as a facilitating factor in the first stage of the conflict, since an immediate military response is needed in order to deter the armed group/s challenging the state. It is, therefore, efficient on a short-term. However, on a long-term perspective, the military is not as a productive agent if used as the only policy<sup>5</sup>. Conflict resolution theorists generally agree that in order to reach a long-lasting peace, the military should be employed alongside political reforms that meet, at least, some of the demands of the insurgents<sup>6</sup>. The peace process is, therefore, a long and multifaceted development. In this

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<sup>4</sup> S. Takai, "Support for Conflict Resolution and the Role of Military Power", pdf file, 125-139, p 125, viewed 12 December 2013, [http://www.nids.go.jp/english/event/symposium/pdf/2002/sympo\\_e2002\\_11.pdf](http://www.nids.go.jp/english/event/symposium/pdf/2002/sympo_e2002_11.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> P. Stanilad, "States, Insurgents and Wartime Political Orders" in *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2012, vol. 10, no.2, pdf file, viewed 1 January 2014, p 245

<sup>6</sup> L. Weinberg et al, "Political Parties and Terrorist Groups", Routledge, New York, 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p 104

context, the intensity and the duration of the military action are one of the criteria for the success of the peace project. Although there is no direct connection between the principle of territorial integrity and peace processes, in the Turkish case that is examined, the association stems from the particular significance that territorial integrity gains in the Turkish collective mentality and from the military acting as to safeguard this principle.

There are numerous works dealing with conflict resolution<sup>7</sup>, focusing on both or either root causes for conflicts and tactics of combating terrorism and sustaining peace. Since the thesis aims to reflect upon the ways in which one specific principle of the state can impact on an undergoing peace process, the theories have been selected accordingly. More explicitly, the thesis will not discuss other factors that might influence the pacification of the PKK, nor will it examine a best way to successfully finalise the peace process. Instead, the conflict resolution theories chosen elaborate only on concepts that are relevant to understanding how the principle of territorial integrity manifests itself, namely how it potentially clashes with the PKK's struggle and the Kurdish population's pursuit of recognition.

## **2.2. Territory, Collective Identity, Nationalism**

Conflict resolution studies acknowledge the central role that territory has in conflicts. Firstly, it delimits and defines states physically and secondly, it assumes a symbolic value in the collective mentality by being inseparably associated with the nation itself. As a result, control over territory can be an incentive for violence: "the more that groups are settled in a single region of the country, the more likely they will be in rebellion against the state"<sup>8</sup>. With the Kurds populating the South-East of Turkey, territory becomes a delimiter of ethnicities *and* an identifier, transcending material space and becoming a symbolically charged term. The Kurds are thus more likely to pursue self-determination, as they consider the territory they inhabit as rightfully theirs.

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<sup>7</sup> Such as: peer-reviewed articles in several academic journals such as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, the works of John W Burton ("Conflict and Communicating", 1969, "Deviance, Terrorism and War", 1972, "Conflict Resolution, Theory and Practice", 1986), James A. Schellenberg's "Conflict Resolution: Theory, Research and Parctice", 1996, Leonar Weinberg's "Political Parties and Terrorist Groups", 2009, P. Stanilad's "States, Insurgents and Wartime Political Orders", 2012, etc.

<sup>8</sup> D. D. Laitlin, "Nations, States and Violence", Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, p 20

Although the territorial conflict might erupt from the minority's claims for independence, it is important to stress the reluctance in reaching a compromise particularly from the part of the central power. The issue of territory will be extensively discussed in regards to the Turkish attitudes towards territorial integrity. The concept of territorial integrity evidently stems directly from that of territory. As territory gains certain significance in the collective mind as an indispensable element for the nation - or ethnic group - the intra-state conflict accentuates and transcends the obvious factual considerations, becoming emblematic for the nation and national identity. The preservation of territorial integrity is thus imperative for retaining the national identity unaltered. Any change even on a politico-formal level of the status-quo amounts to fears of disintegration; an example would be the granting of minority rights.<sup>9</sup> Scholarly works discussing the vital role of territory and territorial integrity in peace processes will be used for the theoretical dimension of the thesis, with the purpose of revealing mainstream views and then confronting them with the empirical evidence.

The concept of collective identity is relevant in the context of the Turkish-PKK peace process as it defines the two communities, Turkish and Kurdish. Della Porta stresses that identity is “a social process rather than a property of social actors”<sup>10</sup>; it is thus not immutable, but fluid and can change or reinforce. Considering identity as a process amounts to acknowledging that the identities of the two aforementioned communities have been constructed. Under the auspices of the newly established Turkish Republic in the 1920's, a Turkish national identity emerged as to differentiate the new state from the former multicultural Empire. The collective identity was produced on the basis of two elements, Turkish language and belongingness to the state: “A Turk is (a) one who speaks the Turkish language and (b) sees self or ego as a citizen of the Turkish Republic”<sup>11</sup>. The second identifier is under the dominion of civic belongingness and therefore more inclusive, as other ethnicities could easily consider themselves rightful citizens of the country they reside in.

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<sup>9</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 59

<sup>10</sup> D. della Porta, M. Diani, “*Social Movements: An Introduction*”, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, USA, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2006, p 105

<sup>11</sup> B. Güvenç, “Secular Trends and Turkish Identity” in *Perceptions, Journal of International Affairs*, vol II, no. 4, Dec. 1997- Feb. 1998, p 1

Collective identity easily contributes to polarising the society: the “we” versus “them” approach reveals how feelings of belongingness imply delimitations. A more formal delimitator is citizenship, which apart from assigning who is “us” and who is “other”, inscribes who has access to social and civil benefits and who is protected under which rights.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the Kurds, although citizens of the Turkish Republic, do not enjoy the full benefits that emerge from citizenry. They are still the “other” in a hybrid form of aliens and fellow nationals. Feelings of belonging to a state that does not treat them as it treats its Turkish ethnics are thus the more difficult to consolidate, *if* they ever existed. On the other end of the scope, the Turkish collective identity, although formally inclusive, marginalises the Kurds and revolves around the Republic founder’s (i.e. Kemal Atatürk’s) precepts: secularism and nationalism. Groups that do not abide by these principles as Atatürk had envisaged are thus bound to be outsiders: “In order to enforce the principle of secularism, religious traditions and institutions were abolished and banned and since Kurdish nationalism and the religion of Islam were closely intertwined, the exclusion of Islam resulted in an exclusion of Kurdish national identity”<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, repressing the Kurds was rather an implication of the grand nation building project, a collateral damage type of development rather than a purpose in itself.

There is an undoubtedly strong connection between territory and collective identity. As stated above, territory has a symbolic meaning for a nation or an ethnic group. For the Turks, Anatolia is not only a space they have been residing in for centuries, but, more stringently, a gain presupposing considerable effort. The current Turkish territory thus becomes a prize they proudly managed to conquer against all odds. However, the pride might produce side effects: an uncompromising and never satiated couple-like, *passionate*, possessiveness. This hyped sensitivity can be an extension of the Kemalist second pillar, nationalism, as the nation is “glued” to the territory. Kemalism regarded nationalism as a tool to reach radical westernisation and modernisation or as a system of belief rival to religion.<sup>14</sup> Nationalism would thus fill the vacuum left by the Islamism of the dying Ottoman Empire, acting as a social liason. David D. Laitin argues in “Nations, States and Violence” that nationalism and ethnic differences are not

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<sup>12</sup> S. Benhabib, “The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens”, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004

<sup>13</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 55

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

dangerous, but admits an exception: when the state “is engaged in ‘nation-building’ – that is the policy to make the boundaries of the state commensurate with the boundaries of the nation – and does so by seeking to affect the cultural composition of peripheral regions”<sup>15</sup>. Laitin’s exception could describe the Turkish project of nation-building, characterised by an increased emphasis on territory, patriotism and collective identity – or Turkishness – and an obtuse, bordering blindfolded, policy of assimilation that forcefully integrates the Kurds.

Theories on territory, collective identity and nationalism are relevant to the discussion of the Turkish-Kurdish peace process. John W. Burton stresses that successful conflict resolution strategies presuppose compromise, which is likely when the grievances of the insurgent group are material-based, but unlikely or impossible when values such as group identity and recognition are at stake.<sup>16</sup> The concepts discussed above gain a significant emblematic meaning both to the struggle of the PKK and the Turkish state response, and are relevant to the analysis of the Turkish-PKK peace process, because, in this case, the concepts are evidently interrelated, forming an atom-like indivisibility essential to the identity of the Turkish state and crucial in any political development that confronts Turkey with another entity. The entanglement of these concepts might shed light upon how territorial integrity can affect the current peace process and can also reveal other relevant issues such as the organisation and role of the military in Turkey and what has come to be known as the “deep state”<sup>17</sup>. In order to discuss these concepts and their function in the recent developments, works of the following theorists will be used: Omer Taspinar, Åsa Lundgren, Ayşe Gul Altınay, Feroz Ahmad and David D. Laitin.

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<sup>15</sup> D. D. Laitin, “Nations, States and Violence”, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, p 21

<sup>16</sup> G. Madison University, “Conflict Resolution: Towards Problem Solving – John Burton”, viewed 2 January 2014, <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/burton.html>

<sup>17</sup> Or “state within a state”, expressions which denote the existence of informal power structures sustained by corruption and driven by interests that clash or are not fully compatible with national interest.

### **3. Methods**

Admittedly, there are factors that shape the current peace process on a more obvious level. Common sense would dictate that the struggle for political power between the institutions of Turkey is one evident element. Turkey's foreign policy, particularly its efforts to join the European Union is another such factor. Nevertheless, even while assessing these matters, one would observe that there are underlying common elements to each direct factor. In this sense, the concern for territorial integrity comes into sight regularly and, although not in the same conspicuous manner, it holds the potential to be considered a factor itself, on a more indirect level.

Case study and qualitative method would be appropriate methods for approaching a less evident factor, as they both provide the flexibility to treat this topic extensively while having a specific focus. Whereas case study would highlight the peace process, qualitative method allows the territorial integrity principle and the military to become the focal points of the analysis and integrates them in the broader peace process.

#### **3.1. Case Study**

The PKK-related developments in Turkey will be treated as a case of pacification of a terrorist group. According to Perry, case study is "an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalise across a larger set of units"<sup>18</sup>. Nevertheless, there is a risk of generalising aspects that particularly and solely pertain to one case and that cannot cover other similar situations. More explicitly, the case study method is bound not only to constant elements but also to circumstantial elements, which admittedly vary from one particular event to another. This generates their distinctiveness while potentially hindering a generalisation.

Examining the PKK pacification as a case allows for flexibility in the sense that a large array of other methods could be used under the umbrella of case study. Qualitative method is perhaps the most evident, since the current thesis discusses a single case. This, in its turn, allows for an in-

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<sup>18</sup> B. Perry, *Case Study Research in May*, T. "Social Research, Issues, Methods and Process", Open University Press, Berkshire, 2011, p 233

depth analysis, characterised by increased awareness of details and circumstances and also an appreciation of the uniqueness of this respective case. Treating the PKK pacification process as a single case study amounts to acknowledging that the case is extraordinary. It is through the emphasised qualitative dimension that the case is revealed as peculiar.

The distinctiveness of the PKK pacification case is primarily ensured by the ways in which the conservation of territorial integrity is glued to the efforts to deal with the military conflict. The principle of territorial integrity entails not only state mechanisms built to ensure its fulfillment, but also a societal mentality directed towards an astute - bordering exaggerated - awareness of potential dangers, whether external or internal. The case study is an appropriate method to discuss what territorial integrity entails and how its elements and expressions could impact on the current peace process.

### **3.2. Qualitative Method & Empirical Evidence**

The thesis discusses a single case, the pacification of the PKK, therefore it is supported by a qualitative research that focuses on ways in which this phenomenon is affected by a particular agent (i.e. the preservation of territorial integrity). The qualitative method draws primarily from this single case study as one sample that can provide in-depth information relevant in answering to the research question: *Does the principle of territorial integrity impact on the current peace process in Turkey and if so, how?* Before being able to answer to this question, a few clarifications are imperative, namely what counts as impact and what counts as evidence.

In the case of the Turkish-PKK peace process, an impact would be any development stemming from the concern for territorial integrity. More precisely, it would be an effect either favourable or detrimental to the success of the peace process. Examining *if* the territorial integrity principle has an impact on the peace process bears the risk of becoming a theoretical discussion poorly grounded in facts, particularly as the centre of analysis is a principle, thus a concept. To avoid vagueness, the discussion considers not only the conceptual nature of the principle, but its relation to other core principles of the Turkish Republic and, more essentially, its concrete

expressions<sup>19</sup> in the Turkish society, as well, the most evident of which is the military. A focus on the concretisation of the territorial integrity principle would thus help identify the impact/s.

Since an impact is non-quantifiable, assessing an impact might amount to a Sisyphean task. The *how* of the research question (How does the territorial integrity principle impact on the Turkish-PKK peace process?) implies an elaborate answer that, although does not necessarily presuppose quantification, comprises an analysis of the factual results. If territorial integrity does affect the peace process, then an assessment of the manner in which and the extent to which it does is imperative. In order to reach a relevant conclusion, there needs to be an astute awareness of what is to be considered as empirical evidence, especially in the light of the chosen theories. In this sense, both conflict resolution theories and works developing on the Turkish military-political environment are of relevance since their “fusion” amounts to common denominators in the expression of empirical evidence.

This evidence is grounded both in historical facts and recent developments. The background of the Republic of Turkey sheds light upon the manner in which territory gained a crucial symbolic value in the collective mind and how its indivisibility became a core principle of the nationhood which was to be protected at all cost. Whereas the history of the Republic offers clues regarding the preoccupation with territorial integrity and the influence of the principle in the Kemalist legacy, the more recent events contain evidence more closely related to the peace process, as this is a newly emerging development. The congruence of these two is expected to provide a comprehensive view of the role of territory and territorial integrity in the ongoing peace process. Empirical evidence would thus be considered past and recent events revealing the preoccupation with territorial indivisibility vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue.

Considering that the thesis draws from the works of a number of scholars, the material used is secondary. Due to circumstantial limitations, the thesis cannot rely on more solid empirical evidence, such as interviews, and in return draws from the research of the scholars mentioned, whose works bear a non-negligible degree of reliability.

The empirical evidence is also provided by an array of online newspaper articles. A good percentage of these are Turkish, which raises the question of a potential bias. Nonetheless, this

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<sup>19</sup> The judiciary, the government bureaucracy at large, Atatürk himself as an institution

has been treated with considerable awareness and a balance has been pursued by also using internationally recognised newspapers such as the Huffington Post, the BBC or the New York Times. The selection of the articles has been made according to their topics, considering that these mirror specific events; the range of topics pursued is rather narrow: the recent events related to the peace process (Kurdish protests, military actions in the South-East, the Government's democratisation package, the prime minister's and Öcalan's statements about the withdrawal of PKK troops). Given that the pacification process is a recent development in Turkey, there is a lack of peer-reviewed articles developing on the topic; there is, however, a great amount of works focusing on the "Kurdish issue" considered as dating as back as the beginning of the twentieth century. Since the present situation is rooted in these past events, the scholarly works discussing the Kurdish issue will be used not only for brushing a comprehensive picture, but also for understanding why and how the current developments have emerged.

The list of the aforementioned type of works is non-exhaustive. Previous research on this topic comprises interviews, governmental and non-governmental reports (annual Turkey Progress Report by the European Commission, Amnesty International), media coverage – particularly newspaper articles in the international media (the New York Times, the Huffington Post, the BBC, the Economist, Foreign Policy Magazine, Euronews, etc.). Peer-reviewed works rely on these sources and build a more conceptual dimension, touching upon issues such as minority rights, assimilation, right to self-determination ("Minority and Group Rights in the New Millennium" by Deirdre Fottrell, Bill Bowring, "The Kurdish Drive for Self-Determination" by Israel T. Naamani, "Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-Determination" by Hurst Hannum, etc.). Although these works discuss a variety of matters, they are fundamentally connected by their focus on the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Taken into consideration that the list of works treating the Kurdish issues is lengthy, a selection has been made in order to limit the scope of the research. In this sense, the selection criterion has been an extensive discussion over the emergence of Turkish nationalism, Kurdish nationalism and the Turkish societal fears. The list of scholarly works thus comprises "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kurdish Identity in Transition" by Omer Taspinar, "Turkey: The Quest for Identity" by Feroz Ahmad, "The Myth of the Military Nation" by Ayşe Gul Altınay.

## 4. Description of the Case

To understand the potentially essential role that the preservation of territory has had in the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state, a look into the background of this conflict is a prerequisite for a consequent analysis. Examining an ongoing development implies a certain risk: that at any time the process can dramatically change its route. The thesis, however, analyses the events unfolding until mid-December 2013, for the sake of a coherent analysis; if developments arise along this timeline, they will be treated *only* if they hold the potential to impact on the results of the analysis. Any developments in a post-mid-December era will not be discussed.

### 4.1. Background

The Treaty of Sèvres, in the aftermath of the First World War, officialised the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and allowed the European powers to control a large portion of Anatolia. The territory was consequently partitioned into British, French, Italian, Greek and Armenian zones of influence, with a potentially emerging Kurdish state in the South-East and only a small independent Turkish area concentrated around Ankara. The foreign domination was soon challenged by a revived Turkish army led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who managed to raise popular support and reconquer the lost territories. The Treaty of Sèvres was annulled and replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which legitimised the new Turkish Republic and its borders.<sup>20</sup>

In an attempt to construct a national identity distinct from the late Ottoman Empire's self-perception, Atatürk implemented a series of reforms. In this sense the Republic was supported by two pillars: Turkish nationalism and secularism, both emerging as central to Kemalism, the Atatürk-inspired ideology. Turkish nationalism was seen as an agent of cohesion, an instrument for mass mobilisation and a way to "save and defend the state, at a time when the empire was reduced to its Anatolian heartland, itself at the brink of collapse under foreign invasion"<sup>21</sup>. It was

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<sup>20</sup> A. E. Montgomery, "The Making of the Treaty of Sèvres" in the Historical Journal, University of Birmingham, 1972, p 775

<sup>21</sup> O. Taspinar, "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition", Routledge, New York, 2005, p 38

a reaction concretised into a form of survivalist instinct. The Republic's second principle, Kemalist secularism was a "project aimed at civilisational change"<sup>22</sup>, Atatürk's agenda comprising a substantial change not only in the political establishment and organisation of the Turkish state, but also on a societal level. Secularism thus became a tool to modernise and westernise a highly traditional population. In this sense, both Turkish nationalism and Kemalist secularism emerged as a top-down project, imposed by the elite on a population which primarily identified with Islam. In fact, the nation-building project resented Islam particularly in its political form, which along with Kurdish nationalism, were perceived as challenges to the very core of the new Republic.

Although at a first glance, the Turkish national identity was created along civic nationalist lines defined primarily by a common national territory and language, Turkish nationalism did have a strong ethnic character. The Kurds, who in the Ottoman era enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and tax exemption, reacted against a project of nation-building which included them as "mountain Turks" and which was led by a state far more intrusive in their affairs and tribal organisation than the previous one. Thus, Kurdish nationalism emerged as a reaction to Turkish nationalism: "Turkish nationalism unavoidably generated its mirror image as Kurdish dissidents started joining nationalist movements such as *Azadi* (Freedom) in eastern Anatolia".<sup>23</sup> The resistance of Kurds was initially considered "reactionary politics, tribal resistance, regional backwardness"<sup>24</sup> and its ethnic character was either ignored or silenced.

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the Kurdish minority has endured repeated discrimination, the authorities refusing to acknowledge their minority status and all the rights and freedoms that it entails. Suppressing the Kurdish identity amounted to a fiercer Kurdish opposition to forced assimilation. The Kurds' refusal to accept an imposed Turkish identity created further problems for the Republic, "more likely to escalate into perceived and actual security threats for the hypersensitive state."<sup>25</sup> As a result, in the early days of the Turkish

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<sup>22</sup> O. Taspinar, "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition", Routledge, New York, 2005, p3

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p79

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> S. Kiel, "Understanding the Power of Insurgent Leadership: A Case Study of Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK", Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. Washington DC, 2011

Republic, more specifically between 1924 and 1938, there were seventeen Kurdish rebellions.<sup>26</sup> The Turkish military crushed every uprising, refusing any politically oriented solution.

During the Cold War era, Turkey was an ally of the United States. The formation of the PKK in 1978<sup>27</sup> with Abdullah Öcalan as the leader was instantly perceived as a threat: not only was the group born out of Kurdish nationalism, but it was also Marxist-oriented and Soviet-friendly. The early days of the PKK activities were contemporary with the 1980, then 1991 military coups, which had negative effects on Kurds' ways of expressing their identity. For instance, Kurdish names were prohibited as they would "contradict the national culture, morality and traditions and insult the public"<sup>28</sup>. Violence was used bidirectionally, by the PKK towards the population and by the Turkish state towards the PKK and Kurdish people. The authorities allowed villagers to possess and use weapons in order to defend themselves against the attacks of the PKK, which only made violence escalate further. A subsequent measure involved evacuating the borderline villages and burning them. The hard-line policy presupposed "mass arrests, beatings, torture" and it "targeted not only PKK guerrillas but anyone who was suspected of being a collaborator"<sup>29</sup>. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's the conflict continued along these violent lines. With the capture and imprisonment of the PKK leader, Öcalan, in 1999, the struggle lost momentum, particularly because he announced several cease-fires ever since. Originally sentenced to death, Öcalan is now serving a life sentence, after Turkey aligned to EU accession requirements that prohibit the practice of death sentences.

## 4.2. Recent Developments

Peace talks began in 2012 between Turkey's prime-minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Öcalan<sup>30</sup>, who had already stated that he was willing to establish a dialogue with the Turkish authorities, as he had redirected the PKK fight from a path to independence towards one aimed at

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<sup>26</sup> O. Taspinar, "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition", Routledge, New York, 2005, p 56

<sup>27</sup> The group was formed in 1974, but had a coherent agenda and organisation starting with 1978

<sup>28</sup> Å. Lundgren, "The Unwelcome Neighbour: Turkey's Kurdish Policy", I.B. Tauris, London, 2007, p 56

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p 57

<sup>30</sup> K. Matthees, G. Seufert, "Erdoğan and Öcalan Begin Talks: A Paradigm Shift in Turkey's Kurdish Policy and New Strategy of the PKK", German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2013, p 2

a form of autonomy and recognised minority status for the Kurds. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013, which marked the Kurdish New Year, Nowruz, Öcalan called for a cease-fire stating that “Politics and not guns will be in the forefront. We are at the phase of withdrawing our armed elements beyond the border.”<sup>31</sup> The speech marked a turning point for the Kurdish movement, through its redirection towards a non-violent political path, provided that the cease-fire would not be unilateral. The peace plan presupposes that PKK armed fighters withdraw from Turkish territory to other bases in Syria and Northern Iraq, a process which is to be supervised by the Parliament and civil society organisations. Turkey’s commitments comprise setting up a commission addressing past human rights violations in the Kurdish populated area and implementing democratic reforms to better represent Kurds on the political scene, officialising the Kurdish language in the region and facilitating education in Kurdish, restricting the definition of terrorism in the penal code and counterterrorism law and releasing political prisoners.<sup>32</sup>

The PKK troops were supposed to retreat entirely by the latest November 2013. The deadline comes with a dispute: on the one hand, Demirtaş, chairman of the Kurdish BDP (Peace and Democracy Party), claims that 70% to 80% of the PKK militants have successfully withdrawn from Turkey, whereas according to Erdoğan, the percentage is approximately 15%, which furthermore mainly comprises women and children.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the Erdoğan-led Government put forward a democratisation package, the main beneficiaries of which are the Kurds. The package meets few of the promised reforms, such as lowering the parliamentary election threshold from 10% to 5%, relaxing the rules for political parties’ funding, removing the national oath students were obliged to recite (which obliged students of any ethnicity to declare their pride in being Turks), allowing mother-tongue education in private schools and lifting the ban on the use of the Kurdish letters “q”, “w”, “x”, which would further allow the use of several localities’ Kurdish names. However, Öcalan alongside BDP claim that

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<sup>31</sup> C. Çandar, “Öcalan’s Message is Much More Than a Cease-Fire” in Al-Monitor, 24 March 2013, viewed 11 December 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ocalan-ceasefire-newroz-speech-farewell-to-arms.html#>

<sup>32</sup> The Associated Press, “Turkey Unveils Democratic Reforms, Including Kurdish Rights Improvements” in Haaretz, 30 September 2013, viewed 11 January 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.549736>

<sup>33</sup> C. Çandar, “Öcalan’s Message is Much More Than a Cease-Fire” in Al-Monitor, 24 March 2013, viewed 11 December 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ocalan-ceasefire-newroz-speech-farewell-to-arms.html#>

the package is insufficient and fails to meet their expectations, especially in regards to the much criticised anti-terror law, whose use has led to the imprisonment of approximately 40,000 people only in the last four years<sup>34</sup>. Law 2932 states that: “written propaganda, assemblies, meetings and demonstrations aimed at damaging the indivisible unity of the Turkish Republic with its territory and nation are prohibited regardless of methods, intentions and ideas behind them”<sup>35</sup>. According to the BDP, over 6000 of its members are currently held under the above mentioned law, alongside thousands of Kurdish politically non-affiliated people<sup>36</sup>. The anti-terror law also legitimised the imprisonment of journalists, Turkey having the world’s worst record as jailer of journalists, the majority of which are again of Kurdish ethnicity<sup>37</sup>. The failure to meet expectations of democratisation has urged critics to call the reform package “completely cosmetic” and “empty”<sup>38</sup>.

The Imralı peace process, as it has come to be designated after Öcalan’s imprisonment location, has thus reached a deadlock in spite of the partial withdrawal of PKK troops on one side and the - critics say *insubstantial* - democratisation measures on the other. Moreover, the latest developments have exerted increased pressure on the already fragile peace process: two Kurdish protesters were shot dead in a confrontation with the police originating in claims that PKK member graves had been destroyed<sup>39</sup>. The deaths triggered Kurdish protesters to set up barricades of burning tires and to throw Molotov cocktails at security forces and into the AKP office in Diyarbakır, the chain of events progressing with echoed protests in Istanbul and clashes between the Kurdish protesters and the police and culminating with the abduction of four

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<sup>34</sup> D. Jones, “Turkey’s Anti-Terror law Casts Increasingly Wide Net”, in Voice of America, 18 October 2013, viewed 11 December 2013, <http://www.voanews.com/content/turkey-anti-terror-law-casts-increasingly-wide-net/1772399.html>

<sup>35</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 103

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Journalists Union of Turkey

<sup>38</sup> Koray Caliskan, political scientist at Bosphorus University in Istanbul cited by C. Letsch, “Turkish PM Unveils Reforms After Summer of Protests” in The Guardian, 30 September 2013, viewed 11 December 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/30/turkish-pm-erdogan-reforms>

<sup>39</sup> AFP, “Clashes in Turkey after the Deaths of Two Kurdish Protesters” in Yahoo News, Istanbul, 7 December 2013, viewed 15 December 2013, <http://news.yahoo.com/clashes-turkey-deaths-two-kurdish-protesters-181819713.html>

Turkish soldiers by PKK militants.<sup>40</sup> With the intervention of the BDP and Öcalan's call for calm, the prisoners were released.<sup>41</sup>

The ten-month peace process is thus facing increased tensions, with failed expectations on both sides and with Turkish authorities setting up military posts in the East. A process that is supposed to be marked by demilitarisation is thus experiencing an increase in militarisation and in actual violence.

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<sup>40</sup> Reuters, "Kurdish Militants Free Abducted Turkish Soldiers" in Voice of America, Diyarbakır, 9 December 2013, viewed 15 December 2013, <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-kurdish-militants-free-abducted-turkish-soldiers/1806417.html>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

## 5. Analysis

As mentioned, while inspecting factors that determine the evolution or retrogression of the Turkish-Kurdish peace process, one will come across the preoccupation of Turkish authorities for the preservation of territorial integrity. Although a less obvious determinant, the territorial integrity principle is an underlying factor that constitutes the common basis for multiple direct factors, such as the Turkish Government's strategy or policy towards the Kurdish minority. The following analysis will reveal how territorial integrity has come to weigh a great deal in Turkish minority-related policies and even broader, on a Turkish societal level. It will also highlight the crucial connection that this principle has with other concepts such as nationalism, collective identity, Turkishness, Kemalism and the function of its concretised forms, such as the military.

### 5.1. The Construction and Significance of Territorial Integrity

Territory is a necessary but not sufficient condition for defining a nation. However, the Atatürk era was characterised by a nation-building project that strongly emphasised the territorial dimension of the newly emerged nation state. This subchapter will provide an assessment of the construction of territorial integrity and its essential role and significance for the Turkish Republic.

The concept of territorial integrity is implicit to the Westphalian state system and is embodied as a principle in the Charter of the United Nations and in international customary law. Its main use is in *jus ad bellum*<sup>42</sup>. Territorial integrity is traditionally understood as the preservation of existing borders<sup>43</sup> and it has been challenged by the emerging human rights-oriented concepts such as self-determination. This potential tension manifests exclusively, in the sense of either inclining the balance on one side or the other, particularly in the case of ethnically heterogeneous

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<sup>42</sup> Latin for "right to war", legal criteria regulating the legitimacy of going to war

<sup>43</sup> J. Scudder, "Territorial Integrity: Modern States and the International System" in Exploring Geopolitics, King's College London, December 2010, viewed 16 December 2013, [http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/Publication\\_Scudder\\_Jamie\\_Territorial\\_Integrity\\_Modern\\_States\\_International\\_Political\\_System\\_Jurisdiction\\_Peace\\_Westphalia\\_Lebanon\\_Somalia.html](http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/Publication_Scudder_Jamie_Territorial_Integrity_Modern_States_International_Political_System_Jurisdiction_Peace_Westphalia_Lebanon_Somalia.html)

societies, such as Turkey.<sup>44</sup> Turkish territorial integrity would thus be threatened by Kurdish claims of self-determination. However, with the PKK changing its agenda and turning to minority rights claims instead, the territory of Turkey would be preserved. Following this line of thought, the principle of territorial integrity should not affect the undergoing Turkish-Kurdish peace process. Nevertheless, it does.

The territory of Turkey has not been inherited from the Ottoman Empire, but it has been achieved through a War of Independence<sup>45</sup>. The struggle for conquering the mainly Turkish inhabited Anatolian territory came with the reinvention or construction of a national identity restricted to the aforementioned inhabitants. Since Turkish nationalism emerged from a sense of “survivalist instinct”<sup>46</sup>, the fight for independence only strengthened nationalist approaches. With the instatement of the Republic, Turkishness became a *modus operandi*, a justification and conceptual base for a national identity needed not only for a civic cohesion, but also for the radical modernisation of the society at large. Turkishness came to be understood as the criteria for identifying oneself and being identified as a Turk: “one has to be a Turk and a Moslem to belong to the nation. Non-Turks can, however, become Turks – *provided* that they adopt the Turkish language, identity and culture”<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, Turkishness was designed as an all-inclusive concept built on civic, rather than ethnic lines, and “based on a common national territory and language”<sup>48</sup>. Atatürk’s famous maxim “Happy is whoever says ‘I am Turkish’ ” reveals that a self identification with Turkishness is prioritised to the detriment of ethnic scrutiny of the population. Turkishness therefore became a code of norms which one could opt to internalise, regardless of their roots.

As part of this code, national territory was idealised as a fundamental condition for the construction of a national identity. The nation building project was realised strictly within the newly accomplished borderlines. The Turkish History Thesis was a decisive element of this

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<sup>44</sup> According to the 2012 CIA World Factbook, Kurds account for 18% and other ethnic minorities between 7% and 12% (Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Arab, Circassian, Bosniak, Albanian, Laz, Assyrian).

<sup>45</sup> 1919-1923

<sup>46</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 15

<sup>47</sup> Å. Lundgren, “The Unwelcome Neighbour: Turkey’s Kurdish Policy”, I.B. Tauris, London, 2007, p 32

<sup>48</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 40

project, presenting the old civilisation of Hittites as directly related to Turks, which “firmly extended the roots of the Turks within present territorial borders”<sup>49</sup>. More explicitly, the thesis presented the Turks as the predecessors of the Hittites, who were the founders of European civilisations. Legitimising the occupation of Anatolia by building on a direct blood connection did not contribute to the assimilation of the Kurds; on the contrary, it further delimited what was to be understood through Turkishness, proving that it did have a strong ethnic character and was not as inclusive as it was portrayed initially. Ethnicity was, in practice, a vital criterion in defining the Turkish nation. National identity and Turkishness were, thus, romantic interpretations of a “common descent traced deep into the past”<sup>50</sup>. The theory was meant to engender a strong feeling of national identity, which, through its blood lineage, bordered ethnic superiority.

Along the same lines, the Sun Language Theory implied cultural superiority by claiming that there was one primordial language which all the others derived from and which Turkish was the closest to, “before its contamination by Arabic and Persian”<sup>51</sup>. The Turkish Language Institute took on the mission to purify the Turkish language, thus returning it to its roots.<sup>52</sup> The two theories, the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Thesis, were therefore attempts to create a national identity that would seem rooted in an ancient past, legitimising nationalism and in-lining the Turkish nation with the Western civilisations that Atatürk considered superior. The theses were researches conducted entirely under the close scrutiny of Atatürk himself, which led to “an absolute control of all intellectual life in Turkey”<sup>53</sup>, and, thus, to less scientifically valid works. Furthermore, the Turkish History Thesis, in particular, was meant as proof that Anatolia “had been a Turkish country from time immemorial”<sup>54</sup>. The focus on territory as having been inhabited by Turks delegitimised the foreign occupation following the Treaty of Sèvres and, in

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<sup>49</sup> O. Taspınar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 58

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p 16

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p 57

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p 57

<sup>53</sup> A. Altınay, “The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey”, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p 21

<sup>54</sup> O. Taspınar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 58

fact, any other future invasion, while it additionally delegitimised the inhabitancy of ethnic minorities, such as the Kurdish one.

The Turkish History Thesis not only compatibilised the origins of the Turks with Turkey's territorial borders, it also annulled any reminiscence of pan-Turkist nostalgia. Kemalist nationalism was thus characterised by non-irredentism; Atatürk himself said: "I am neither a believer in a league of all the nations of Islam, nor even in a league of Turkish peoples [...] Neither sentiment nor illusion must influence our policy."<sup>55</sup> Non-irredentism had been, in fact, part of the policy since the beginning of the War of Independence. The Turkish resistance adopted a manifesto entitled the "National Pact" that designated the borders as definitive and determined they were to be militarily protected. The National Pact became a symbol of the "sacrosanct concept of territorial integrity"<sup>56</sup>, stressing the individuality of the Turkish nation within the borders. This type of nationalism thus emphasised the autonomy, sovereignty and homogeneity of the Turkish nation within the borders, while fearing division and promoting non-irredentism.

The inviolability of the territory is therefore not only a principle of the state, but an achievement glorified and safeguarded as a treasured value. The territory is thus defined by a sacred character and territorial division would amount to betrayal. As seen, territorial integrity forms an almost indivisible chemical-like connection with the Turkish nation, Turkish nationalism, Turkishness and national identity. The relations established are either inclusive, subordinate, as one incorporates the other, or equivalent, as they are all principles of the state.

## **5.2. Threat Perceptions**

Thus, the romantic approach extended as to cover territory, since territory had been both a precondition for national identity and a purpose in itself. Although Kurds were referred to as "mountain Turks" with the intention of portraying an ethnically homogeneous population, their sense of self developed in parallel with the Turkish nationalism. The attempts to construct the

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<sup>55</sup> Atatürk cited O. Taspınar, "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition", Routledge, New York, 2005, p 58

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p 59

image of a homogeneous society were designed to avoid a potential conflict between territorial integrity and self-determination, but the development of group identity could not be obstructed. Kurdish nationalism was however not only a sign of discontent, but “a challenge to the very premises on which the Turkish nation-state was built”<sup>57</sup>. The first perceptions of a Kurdish threat to the integrity of Turkey’s territory date as back as the beginnings of the Republic, before the Kurdish rebellions emerged and were suppressed: during an interview in 1923, Atatürk referred to the problematic spill-over effects in the case of a Kurdish independent government in Mosul (Kurdish populated Northern Iraq)<sup>58</sup>.

The threat perceptions persisted throughout the twentieth century and Kurds only enjoyed their first set of minority rights during the early 2000s with the AKP rule. The threat perceptions were oriented towards the conservation of the current borders. Turkish nationalism emerged as a “state borders nationalism” stressing the “indivisibility of nation and state within the republic’s territorial borders”<sup>59</sup>. In this context, minority rights are seen as threatening this indivisible harmony of nation and state, since it would amount to recognising the ethnic heterogeneity of the population. This perception escalates so that “even symbolic compromises regarding minority rights are considered as a prelude to separatism”.<sup>60</sup>

The fear of territorial disintegration came to be designated as the Sèvres Syndrome, named after the Treaty that dissolved Anatolia and legitimised its occupation by the Allied forces internationally. The Treaty was disastrous for the Turks and the emphasised focus on maintaining the indivisibility of the Turkish territory is traced back to this national trauma. Although it determined an “instinct of self-defence”<sup>61</sup> which manifested through a fierce united fight to recapture the lost territories, it also generated increased threat perceptions. The Sèvres Syndrome has come to mean “fear of territorial dismemberment, mistrust toward the outside world, worldview based on conspiracy theories and other phobias.”<sup>62</sup> The choice of words is not for entertainment purposes; the term “syndrome” suggests an inescapable disease affecting

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<sup>57</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 40

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p 51

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p 40

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p 40

<sup>61</sup> L. Hovsepyan, “The Fears of Turkey: the Sèvres Syndrome”, Information and Public Relation Center, Yerevan, 2012, p 4

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p 4

Turkey on a societal level and not only its political and military establishments. After recovering the lost territories, the borders delimited a Turkish spatial dimension freed and salvaged from the outside world perceived as a constant potential threat.

The Treaty of Sèvres envisaged an Armenian state and a Kurdish state, both encompassing Anatolian territory.<sup>63</sup> Several other developments represented - or were perceived as - dangers to the Turkish territorial integrity in the twentieth century. The newborn Republic of Turkey managed to avoid one such peril in 1945 when the USSR unilaterally annulled the treaty on Soviet-Turkish friendly relations signed in 1925 and claimed the North-Eastern part of Turkey (Kars and Ardahan regions) in order to incorporate it in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>64</sup> The territorial demands became part of the Armenian Question, along with claims of an Armenian genocide, which Turkey has since vehemently denied. Although the crisis was averted, in the 1960's and 1970's Turkish historians and political analysts tied the Soviet-Armenian irredentist claims to "the diplomatic efforts of Britain and Russia, who had territorial ambitions toward the Ottoman Empire"<sup>65</sup>. The view that foreign forces have had territorial interests and other such damaging plans has been maintained throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

The emergence of the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government in Northern Iraq was again a significant threat perception, as it was bearing the risk of igniting nationalist sentiments among the Turkish Kurdish population just North of the Iraqi border. One of the outcomes of the 1991 Gulf War was the setting up of a no-fly zone in Iraqi Kurdistan, under international protection, which in fact instated and legitimised Kurdish self-rule.<sup>66</sup> Although there have been tensions between the Kurdish leadership in Turkey (Öcalan) and the Kurdish leadership in Iraq (Barzani), for the PKK troops the Kurdistan Regional Government has been a safe haven, which impelled the Turkish military to conduct several attacks on PKK bases in Northern Iraq.<sup>67</sup> The counter

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<sup>63</sup> A. E. Montgomery, "The Making of the Treaty of Sèvres" in the *Historical Journal*, University of Birmingham, 1972, p 777

<sup>64</sup> L. Hovsepyan, "The Fears of Turkey: the Sèvres Syndrome", Information and Public Relation Center, Yerevan, 2012, p 9

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p 9

<sup>66</sup> The Washington Post Company, "Who Are the Kurds?" in *Washington Post*, February 1999, viewed 30 December 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/feb99/kurdprofile.htm>

<sup>67</sup> B. Brunner, "Kurdish History Timeline" in *Information Please Database*, 2007, Pearson Education, viewed 30 December 2013, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/kurds3.html>

terrorist measures were thus entirely military and not limited within the borders. The threat of a united Kurdistan with regions of the current Turkish territory urged the Turkish military-political establishments in the 1980's and 1990's to violentise their suppression of the Kurdish minority, with police and army brutality and mass imprisonments facilitated by the anti-terrorism law.<sup>68</sup>

The PKK insurgency is the most poignant example of a threat to Turkish territorial integrity and perhaps determining the most conflicting perceptions: while Turkey has viewed it as an internal challenge that requires military action, the Western world has seen Turkey's response as suppression of civil rights.<sup>69</sup> In the light of Turkey's intentions to join the E.U., the country has recently provided a more flexible minority rights framework, but which, as previously stated, does not yet amount to the European standards and fails to meet Kurdish expectations. The Turkish politicians have thus endangered their country's accession to the union of Western civilisations, seen as superior through Kemalist lenses, de-prioritising their international position and prioritising the perceived internal threat. The matter has been significantly sensitive: "The Turkish reaction both to the Kurdish challenge and to criticism of Turkey's handling of it was particularly emotional because the threat was perceived as one to the indivisible fabric of the state as enshrined in the constitution".<sup>70</sup> Considering the recent increase of violence in South-East Turkey, which is perceived as a challenge to the "indivisible unity of the Turkish state"<sup>71</sup>, internal securitisation might gain considerable leverage again, to the detriment of external diplomacy, since they seem to be in a relation of indirect proportionality: when one grows, the other decreases, quality-wise.

The Sèvres Syndrome thus manifested in regards to all foreign forces, but especially in relation to the Kurdish issue. Although the Treaty of Sèvres was replaced with a more advantageous Treaty of Lausanne, the provisions of the former were executed for a brief time. The scars remain to this day and what they mean, in practice, is that "Many (i.e. Turks) are convinced that the world is still plotting to dismember Turkey. They see every claim for regional or cultural

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<sup>68</sup> Reuters, "Turkey Passes Anti-Terrorism Law Reform" in Voice of America, Ankara, 12 April 2013, viewed 30 December 2013, <http://www.voanews.com/content/turkey-passes-anti-terrorism-law-reform/1640169.html>

<sup>69</sup> Particularly the E.U. has criticised the human rights record in regards to the treatment of Kurds in its annual reports on Turkey

<sup>70</sup> M. Cooper, "The Legacy of Atatürk: Turkish Political Structures and Policy-Making", Chatham House – International Affairs, no. 78, vol. 1, 115-128, p 127

<sup>71</sup> Extracted from the Preamble of the Turkish Constitution

autonomy, including those put forward by Kurdish nationalists, as means to this end.”<sup>72</sup> The Sèvres Syndrome thus functioned as a magnifying lens shaping an outside world avid of territorial gains and leverage in Turkish politics; according to this image, the outsiders funded and supported the PKK militants as part of their plan to challenge the territorial integrity of Turkey. In April 1979, the military seized 370 firearms in Van, Eastern Turkey, which were destined to be smuggled into Iran to the Iranian Kurds.<sup>73</sup> The Prime Minister at that time, Ecevit, reacted by stating that the discovery signalled “foreign provocations for a separatist movement”<sup>74</sup>. Some decades later, in an article, a Turkish professor maintains that “The imperialists are waiting for a convenient moment to bring into life the Sèvres provisions and will do what they want as they have not forgotten about the plans of dividing Turkey. In short, the doors of Sèvres opened again”<sup>75</sup>. Examples of such statements are numerous. Since the Treaty envisaged a Kurdish state and an Armenian state, the potentiality of this emergence is perceived as disastrous. The territorial indivisibility having a sacred character, perceptions of threat are over-emphasised and lead to an increased sensitivity vis-à-vis the granting of minority rights.

### **5.3. The Military as an Expression of Territorial Integrity**

The territorial integrity principle is sustained and implemented by the Turkish Military. One could say that the latter is actually a product or expression of territorial integrity, as it represents a concretisation of the mentioned concept. This subchapter discusses the manner in which territorial integrity is sustained by the military and the manner in which the military affects the Turkish-Kurdish peace process. The subchapter has been divided into two sections, the first discussing the mainstream views of conflict resolution theorists and the second focusing on the military in Turkey.

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<sup>72</sup> S. Kizner, “Turks See Throwback to Partition in Europe’s Focus on Kurds” in *New York Times*, 7 December 1998, viewed 30 December 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/07/world/turks-see-throwback-to-partition-in-europe-s-focus-on-kurds.html>

<sup>73</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 95

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p 95

<sup>75</sup> Ç. Yetkin, “Sèvres Revives Again”, cited in L. Hovsepyan, “The Fears of Turkey: the Sèvres Syndrome”, Information and Public Relation Center, Yerevan, 2012, p 11

### **5.3.1. The Role of the Military in Conflict Resolution**

The PKK is enlisted as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union<sup>76</sup>. This labelling is relevant in the context of conflict resolution, but more stringently in the context of how Turkey perceives the matter. Nevertheless, regardless of this politically charged stamp, there is an undoubted fact that the PKK has been conducting attacks in Turkey, both on the military and the population. Conflict resolution approaches this issue on a long-term perspective and seeks to find long lasting solutions that would pacify militants through concessions from both sides. Conflict resolution-wise, military is a state organ that acts in the interests of the state and can have a vital role in the achievement of peace, depending - as will be seen - on the nature and intensity of its counter-attacks.

The relevance of territory in conflicts is central, particularly in ethnic ones. The relation between territory and terrorism is frequently highlighted in works of conflict resolution, especially on a causal level. As shown, territory is not only a factual consideration, or spatial dimension, but also a symbolic value in the collective mentality as it is associated to the cradle of the respective civilisation. It transcends materiality to be incorporated in the collective identity of the ethnicity it “hosts”. The PKK struggle began with claims of independence. It consequently had an emphasised territorial nature. Nevertheless, the evolution towards demands of civil and political rights indicates that, in the Kurdish issue, territory is not to be treated simply as a cause for the eruption of conflict. Such an approach would be obtuse, since the suppression of Kurdish identity is a much more poignant determinant, calling for recognition and protection. Territory gains a special significance rather in the Turkish collective identity, of which it is an essential element. Territory is thus a factor shaping the Turkish attitudes and Kurdish-related policies, which, in their turn can shape the peace process. Maintaining the territorial indivisibility is thus a prioritised preoccupation of the Turkish political elite and its focus can impede the peace process.

The military, as vital organ of the state, has the responsibility to ensure the territorial integrity of Turkey. The role of the military in conflicts is self-evident; less is its role in conflict resolution. A few considerations should be taken into account when discussing the engagement of the

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<sup>76</sup> Aljazeera, “PKK Halts Withdrawal from Turkey”, News Europe, 9 September 2013, viewed 31 December 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/09/201399724433841.html>

military in internal conflicts. Firstly, groups which challenge the state militarily “operate outside the political arena, indeed they operate outside the bounds of civilised society”<sup>77</sup>, which urges aggressive counter-terrorist measures. Since violence is a type of “anti-politics”<sup>78</sup>, the state makes use of non-political mechanisms in order to neutralise the threat. In other words, it engages militarily into a violent conflict, aiming to annihilate the anti-political organism that is unbalancing its system. The choice of words is non-arbitrary. Seeking goals on a non-political path challenges the very core of the state: its monopoly of violence. By unbalancing it, the group raises questions about the security of the citizens and the legitimacy of the state. Although employing the military to counter-strike is a legitimate response, using it as a single policy is considered a faulty strategy, bearing the risk of engendering violence<sup>79</sup>, although “there is no single pathway to stabilisation or set of best practices in counterinsurgency”.<sup>80</sup> Until the early 2000’s, Turkey had been committed to eliminating the Kurdish insurgent group specifically in a military manner.

Secondly, the conflict has an asymmetrical nature. There is a high discrepancy between the resources of the challengers and the ones of the challenged government, regardless of the impact that the former produces. Peaceful settlements are generally more common when there is no such disparity. Accordingly, in the case of an asymmetrical relationship, the conflict tends to remain violent and self-perpetuating.<sup>81</sup> Whereas the insurgent group continues its strikes, making an impact on the general population, the military often comes to be accused of arbitrarily and indiscriminately attacking the segment of the population they associate with the armed group. In other words, in an attempt to maintain security, the military contributes to an escalation of violence that upsets groups and individuals outside their target. The violence does not only spread on a horizontal level, but vertically as well, which translates into excessive force.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> L. Weinberg et al, “Political Parties and Terrorist Groups”, Routledge, New York, 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p 141

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p 141

<sup>79</sup> P. Stanilad, “States, Insurgents and Wartime Political Orders” in Perspectives on Politics, June 2012, vol. 10, no.2, pdf file, viewed 1 January 2014, p 245

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p 245

<sup>81</sup> L. Weinberg et al, “Political Parties and Terrorist Groups”, Routledge, New York, 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p 142

<sup>82</sup> N. Goswami, “Escalation and De-escalation of Violence in Insurgencies: Insights from Northeast India” in Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 13 January 2012, viewed 1 January 2014, <http://www.idsa.in/event/EscalationandDeescalationinIrregularWarfare>

Thirdly, an important factor to the state response itself is the source of the conflict, which is represented by grievances. The fact that these are unheard or neglected over a vast period of time creates or helps create an emotional commitment to the group's cause.<sup>83</sup> Kurds have had their identity silenced ever since the Republic of Turkey was formed. This commitment is, in fact, the balancing factor in the equation of available resources, allowing for the group to compensate and be perceived as a threat. Moreover, the emotional commitment "contributes to the conflict becoming intractable, i.e., a situation in which inflicting harm on the adversary comes to be seen as an end in itself irrespective of its impact on achieving the group's ostensible goals."<sup>84</sup> Following this line of thought, the more the group has endured, the more committed they are to the cause, which amounts to a fiercer fight. Correspondingly, the more violence the group employs, the more violent the state response is.

The three aspects mentioned above urge the state to employ its military organ in a counterinsurgent mission aimed at crushing the group which challenges its monopoly of violence. The military has therefore the vital function of eliminating the threat, although the more violent its attacks are, the more motivated the terrorist group and the more intense the conflict becomes. Although conflict resolution theorists admit that there is no universal recipe for the control and pacification of insurgent groups, the mainstream view is that the military response is a necessary but not sufficient pillar for the accomplishment of the mission. What this means, in practice, is that the military measure should be sustained by political reforms that meet (at least some of) the group's demands or that accommodate the group's political wing so as to moderate it.<sup>85</sup>

This two-level approach contributes to escaping a zero-sum game and is considered as beneficial for the cause of the insurgents, as well, and not only for securitisation.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, "the adoption of 'institutionalised tactics' by an organisation previously reliant on terrorism and other forms of violence represents an acknowledgement that existing institutions are somehow legitimate"<sup>87</sup>. This would amount to using increasingly political leverage to the detriment of

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<sup>83</sup> L. Weinberg et al, "Political Parties and Terrorist Groups", Routledge, New York, 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p 143

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p 143

<sup>85</sup> L. Weinberg et al, "Political Parties and Terrorist Groups", Routledge, New York, 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p 104

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p 104

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p 142

violence. Since there is a direct proportionality between the increase of violence used by the challengers and the one used by the state, the same logic would apply in the case of a decrease of violence.

Consequently, the military has an ambivalent function: on the one hand it facilitates the pacification of the insurgent group, on the other, it inhibits it, hence the hesitation of conflict resolution studies to single out a success formula. Generally, the military can only temporarily neutralise the immediate threat, and as seen, bears the risk of intensifying its attacks which generates a fiercer terrorist response. However, if supported by a second, *political*, pillar, the military is considered as an efficient instrument. The military is, therefore, a concrete reflection of the monopoly of violence and an expression of territorial control and integrity, essential in conflict resolution processes which it can shape in one direction or the other, depending on how the military is employed.

### **5.3.2. The Military in Turkey**

Similar to the process through which territory gained a conceptual dimension essential to the identity of the Turkish state, the military, too, progressed into a symbolic meaning. As the savior of the Turkish nation and the establisher of the Republic with Atatürk in the forefront, the military evolved from a state organ to an independent entity responsible for maintaining the Kemalist precepts of nationalism and secularism. This subchapter discusses the emblematic role that the military has had in Turkey and how it can still impact on Turkish internal politics to a great degree.

With the birth of the Turkish Republic, “the military emerged as a modernising force”<sup>88</sup>, led by Mustafa Atatürk and carrying out the reforms he had envisaged. The military was created as an organ committed to maintaining the security and peace of Turkey, which functioned according to Atatürk’s famous maxim: “Peace at home, peace in the world”<sup>89</sup>, motto which guided Turkish politics throughout the twentieth century and which clearly incorporated an anti-irredentist

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<sup>88</sup> O. M. Ulus, “The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism”, Pgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p 10

<sup>89</sup> Extracted from the website of Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, viewed 3 January 2014, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/mustafa-kemal-ataturk.en.mfa>

approach focused on the internal affairs. However, Atatürk regarded the military as a distinct body that should not interfere in the political life of the country, as this “would damage both the prowess of the army and the political system.”<sup>90</sup> Officers were, thus, asked to make a choice between a military career and a political one, in the Kemalist era, which led to many former officers occupying key positions in the Government and in Atatürk’s political formation, the Republican People’s Party (CHP according to its Turkish denomination). As a result, military interests were indeed represented in the political bodies, whereas the army escaped direct political influence.<sup>91</sup>

Atatürk’s legacy comprised, alongside the conceptual pillars of the Republic, secularism and nationalism, concrete and distinct mechanisms dedicated to safeguarding the principles and ensuring the well functioning of the Republic, from a Kemalist perspective. Although the military was meant as one such distinct body, its interference into politics is non-negligible. Apart from having leverage through political figures with military background, the army conducted several military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and a couple of other alleged attempts, in 1997 and 2007.<sup>92</sup> The military overthrew governments it considered were compromising the Kemalist principles of the state through their authoritarianism and substantially nuanced political colour, among other considerations.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, the military interventions highlight a paradox: on the one hand the military was designed to honour the principle of non-interference, on the other, it was committed to safeguarding the principle of secularism. The two seemed to clash.

Since the regimes overthrown were perceived as endangering the Kemalist precepts, the military prioritised Kemalist secularism to the disadvantage of the separation of the military and political powers. Kemalism was well embedded as the ideology of the military. Although the army was supposed to subordinate to civilian rule, “the military did assume as their self-image the role of guardian of Kemalist ideals and chief protagonist of modernising reforms, which was also the

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<sup>90</sup> O. M. Ulus, “The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism”, Pgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p 11

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p11

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p 11

<sup>93</sup> O. Taspinar, “Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition”, Routledge, New York, 2005, p 86

ideal of Atatürk himself”.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, the civil sector was directly subordinated to military rule during the military interventions and somewhat indirectly on a permanent basis, as the military had the responsibility to silently oversee the functioning of the Republic according to Kemalist principles.

The military, although not politically affiliated, had strong ideological connections to the CHP. The party was the “inheritor” of the Kemalist ideology and it governed the state until the multi-party system was instated in 1945, after which the military’s affinity towards Atatürk’s party became increasingly apparent.<sup>95</sup> Manifesting an aversion towards both left-wing and right-wing parties that, in their eyes, “deviated” from centre-oriented politics to more radical views, the military experienced an identity crisis, as rules concerning the political involvement of military officers loosened and the range of parties broadened. This led to “internal strife, diverging conceptions of its role and ideological factionalisation reflecting what was common to Turkish politics as a whole.”<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, the military managed to maintain its ideological homogeneity and relative political neutrality.

The military’s influence in - at times control of - politics was legitimised through the army’s solid ideological stance: “protecting national interests, the secular and modern state and even socio-political liberties”, which falls under the umbrella of Kemalism. The military interventions were justified through leaders’ inability or unwillingness to carry on Atatürk’s legacy, which called for arbitration by the guardians of the Republic. The military coups were, thus, widely accepted as necessary measures, and it was the military’s reputation which generated this acceptance or state of “normalcy”. Its reputation, apart from having the Kemalist *ideological* dimension, also had a *social* one, as the staff was recruited from lower classes from an omni-geographical Turkey, thus being perceived as representing the common people rather than the elite, and a solid *historical* reputation, as having emerged as a modernising force in the War of Independence.

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<sup>94</sup> O. M. Ulus, “The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism”, Pgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p 11

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p 12

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p 12

During these military interventions, an increased number of issues were securitised. Needless to stress, the discussion of a Kurdish minority was still a taboo. Since the Kemalist tradition denied the ethnic existence of Kurdish people, restrictions on means of cultural and political expression were reinforced. After the 1980 coup d'état, martial law was introduced, which prompted the military to resort to an accentuated policy of repression of the Kurdish provinces. As a result, "Diyarbakır, the region's cultural and political centre, became synonymous with death and torture"<sup>97</sup>. The particularly brutal policies proved counterproductive, boosting Kurdish nationalism and facilitating the PKK's rise in popularity during the 1980's and 1990's decades. Under the martial law, "the military has great discretionary authority to quell disturbances"<sup>98</sup>, and the Kurdish dissidence has been the most targeted. The effects of the Turkish military's counterinsurgent strategies prove to be compatible with the previous theoretical discussion.

The mechanism which has had a considerable leverage in the increased securitisation of the Kurdish issue has been the National Security Council (NSC). As one of the legacies of the first coup d'état, in 1960, the NSC (or MGK according to its Turkish denomination) is a body consisting of ministers, military commanders of the General Staff and the president of the Republic.<sup>99</sup> Its function has been to assist the Government in issues related to security. Nevertheless, until a 2003 reform limited its prerogatives and brought it under civilian control<sup>100</sup>, it enjoyed extensive rights manifested through a strong grip on the political establishment: "The National Security Council institutionally evolved into a shadow government with substantial political power and no democratic accountability".<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, the NSC's understanding of "national security" was all-embracing so that "generals were able to interfere in virtually every question before the cabinet."<sup>102</sup> This led to the council holding a strong grip on society at large.

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<sup>97</sup> O. Taspınar, "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition", Routledge, New York, 2005, p 97

<sup>98</sup> K. H. Karpat (ed.), "Studies on Turkish Politics and Society: Selected Articles and Essays", Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, the Netherlands, 2004, p 150

<sup>99</sup> F. Ahmad, "Turkey: The Quest for Identity", Oneoworld Publications, Oxford, 2003, p 123

<sup>100</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, "Political Reforms in Turkey", Ankara, 2007, pdf document, viewed 4 January 2014, <http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/pub/prt.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> O. Taspınar, "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition", Routledge, New York, 2005, p 96

<sup>102</sup> F. Ahmad, "Turkey: The Quest for Identity", Oneoworld Publications, Oxford, 2003, p 123

Another result of the military coups was the compromise of civilian justice courts, with the creation of State Security Courts, in which military judges served.<sup>103</sup> Officers became increasingly involved in the business sector, as well, holding leverage on the socio-economic life of the country. As their salaries increased and as they began investing, they became more integrated in the system. In 1961, the Army Mutual Assistance Association (OYAK) was created; it took 10% of the officers' salaries which it invested in the most profitable businesses, and it provided loans and other benefits to its members.<sup>104</sup> This system ensured the more practical dimension of the military, less rooted in ideology and more integrated in a capitalist structure it had interests in. Therefore, with the military playing its role as the guardian of the Turkish Republic and of Kemalist values, it infiltrated itself into bodies of the political, the judiciary and the economic, thus having heavy leverage on decisions of every level in the state.

The military's positive reputation and its infiltration into all sectors of the Turkish society prompted some political analysts<sup>105</sup> and even Turkish high profile politicians<sup>106</sup> to name Turkey a "military nation". An explanation is provided by a Turkish official, who claims that "characteristics related to the military are bound to make a great contribution to the shaping of the culture of a society so unified with its military as ours (i.e. the Turks')"<sup>107</sup>. The congruence of military and culture is an indicator of the glorification of the military, which becomes a significant and implicit part of the Turkish national identity. This leads to the idea of militarism, which is understood as the glorification of "practices and norms associated with militaries"<sup>108</sup>. The greatness and triumph of the Turkish military is asserted in students' History books<sup>109</sup> and is

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<sup>103</sup> O. Taspinar, "Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition", Routledge, New York, 2005, p 94

<sup>104</sup> F. Ahmad, "Turkey: The Quest for Identity", Oneoworld Publications, Oxford, 2003, p 123

<sup>105</sup> A. Altınay, "The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey", Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p 1

<sup>106</sup> Former Turkish Minister of Culture, İstemihan Talay, in a speech on his book, "The Turkish Military", in 1999

<sup>107</sup> Suat İlhan, director of the Atatürk High Council for Culture, cited in A. Altınay, "The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey", Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p 1

<sup>108</sup> Cenoy, 1998, cited in A. Altınay, "The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey", Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p 2

<sup>109</sup> A. Altınay, "The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey", Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p 121

regularly maintained by officials in their discourse: “Our military has won great victories, glory and honour for our nation.”<sup>110</sup>

Following this line of thought, one could say that the Turkish society has undergone a process of militarisation throughout the twentieth century. Militarisation emerges as “a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas”<sup>111</sup>. The accepted coups d’états, integrated into a state of normalcy, suggest a successful process of militarisation, with the military maintaining its appeal and role as protector of Kemalist precepts. The obligatory conscription under the slogan that “every Turk (man) is born a soldier”<sup>112</sup> indicates not only a deeply rooted militarisation of the Turkish state, but also, as pointed in a previous subchapter, increased threat perceptions that call for the permanent mass mobilisation of Turks.

The current AKP-led Government has implemented reforms in accordance to EU requirements, bringing the National Security Council under civilian control and “taming” its “coup-minded military”<sup>113</sup>, by arresting its high ranks with charges of high treason, corruption and membership to an underground terrorist faction, among numerous other charges. The Ergenekon trial<sup>114</sup> amounted to the prosecution of 275 people, including journalists, lawyers, military officers and the former military chief, Gen Ilker Basbug; seventeen people were given life sentences.<sup>115</sup> The network has supposedly been plotting to overrule the AKP Government, the antipathy stemming from the former’s ultra-nationalist secularist-minded members in opposition with the AKP’s Islamist roots.<sup>116</sup> The investigation began in 2007, when explosives were found in the house of a former military officer, “tied by state prosecutors to what they said was a much larger conspiracy”<sup>117</sup>. Although the military has denied any connection to the events under

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<sup>110</sup> Former Turkish Minister of Culture, Istemihan Talay, in a speech on his book, “The Turkish Military”, in 1999

<sup>111</sup> A. Altınay, “The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey”, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p 2

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p 1

<sup>113</sup> N. Blaser, “Turkey’s Prime Minister Isn’t Backing Down, Corruption Charges be Damned” in Foreign Policy Magazine, 4 January 2014, viewed 5 January 2014, [http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/01/03/erdogan\\_holds\\_the\\_high\\_ground](http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/01/03/erdogan_holds_the_high_ground)

<sup>114</sup> The trial is named after a mythical Central Asian valley said to be the ancestral home of the Turks.

<sup>115</sup> The BBC News Europe, “Q&A: Turkey’s Military and the Alleged Coup Plots”, 5 August 2013, viewed 5 January 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16447625>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

investigation, the arrest of retired generals and serving officers was “unprecedented”<sup>118</sup> in Turkey. These recent developments highlight a conflict between the Government and the military, which has been enjoying a favourable status in Turkey since its establishment as a republic. The events also prompted analysts and politicians to characterise the Republic as a “deep state”, term which denotes “a shadowy power structure unencumbered by democratic checks and balances”<sup>119</sup>.

The trial amounts to a demilitarisation of the Turkish state that should prove favourable to democratic reforms and to a peaceful pacification of the PKK implying the eventual recognition of civil and political liberties to the Kurdish minority. Since the military has manifested reluctance, or active opposition, to the idea of a *political* deal with the PKK, bringing the military under civilian control and limiting its influence should amount to a *détente* in relations between the PKK and the Turkish state. The year 2013 was marked by peace talks between the PKK and the Turkish Government. Another marker of the same year was the Ergenekon case, which resulted in the arrest and trial of important military figures, among others. The synchronisation is unlikely to be coincidental, since the military, as a fierce defender of the indivisibility of the territory, has been hostile to the Kurds, firstly as a tool employed by the state to counteract the PKK attacks and secondly as an independent entity with an ideological dimension fully dedicated to maintaining secularist and nationalist ideals.

Nevertheless, despite these recent developments which mirror a relaxation of Kurdish-related policies, the peace process seems currently vulnerable, with the PKK claiming there is an undergoing militarisation of the Kurdish populated areas, accentuated by unfulfilled commitments from the part of the Turkish Government. The increased presence of the armed forces in the South-East is simultaneous with the PKK withdrawing, thus leaving the territory under the control of the Turkish military. This would suggest a “recapture” of the territory that is perceived as rightfully Turkish. The agreement between the two parties presupposed that the PKK armed forces retrieve to Iraqi Kurdistan and there is no mention of amnesty or integration

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<sup>118</sup> Al-Jazeera Europe, “Timeline: Turkey’s Ergenekon Trial”, 5 August 2013, viewed 5 January 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/08/20138512358195978.html>

<sup>119</sup> E. Toksabay, H. Pamuk, “Protesting Turkish Prosecutor Piles Pressure on PM” in Reuters, Istanbul, 26 December 2013, viewed 5 January 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/26/us-turkey-corruption-idUSBRE9BNOD720131226>

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of the fighters into Turkish society. This would only suggest that, on a factual level, the fighters, even after surrender, are not welcome on Turkish territory, and on an abstract level, that the longstanding perception that threats are to be eliminated at all costs is “alive and kicking”. This scenario reveals that if the threat is not neutralised, territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic would be fatefully compromised.

## 6. Conclusion

The thesis has revealed the strong, almost chemically indivisible, connections between concepts essential for the Republic of Turkey: national identity, Turkishness, nationalism, secularism, territory and territorial integrity. These created an interdependent relation, any of these concepts relying on the others for an integral completion, as envisaged by Kemalism. Through their realisation, the Republic of Turkey could create an identity distinct from that of the late Ottoman Empire. Nationalism emerged as a “state borders” nationalism, which focused on feelings of commitment and patriotism, with the clear direction of preserving the Turkish territory. As territory gained a symbolic meaning essential to Turkish national identity, conserving it has been a priority.

Factually, the military has been in charge of protecting the borders of the state. With the military emerging as a modernising force and building the reputation of a secularist entity committed to Kemalist ideals, Turkey maintained and, more importantly, *legitimised* its security policy. As shown, the military’s deep infiltration into multiple sectors of the state led to a “normalcy” where the coups d’état were accepted as necessary measures bringing the political establishment back on its Kemalist route. The Kurdish issue became a top security priority due to the PKK insurgency challenging the very core of the Turkish Republic: the nationalist principle and the territorial integrity principle. Any concession or admittance of another ethnicity was perceived as a threat of secession. The Turkish military’s actions are compatible with conflict resolution theories which stress the beneficial effect of military in pacification processes, on an immediate level, but its counterproductive effect, on a long-term one. Nevertheless, the Turkish military has proved to transcend this “traditional” understanding, as it has proved to be much more than a state organ.

The year 2013 witnessed a rapprochement between the Turkish Government and the PKK organisation. Öcalan announced a ceasefire in March 2013, whereas the Turkish Government promised to meet Kurdish demands for rights by enforcing democratic reforms. However, the democratisation package which has been recently passed fails to bring about substantial changes to the status of the Kurds. The current Turkish-Kurdish peace process is, consequently, frail, being first and foremost characterised by a lack of reciprocal trust. While the PKK is claiming to

have already retreated in a large percentage, the Turkish Prime Minister is stating otherwise. Taking into consideration that the territories the PKK retreat from are increasingly brought under the control of the Turkish military, Turkish territorial integrity is again safeguarded and liberated from foreign threats.

This quid-pro-quo game emerges on the background of Turkey's military-related Ergenekon scandal that has shed light on the existence of a Turkish deep state. Although important military figures have been prosecuted, it seems the demilitarisation process is only superficial, as the culture of the military survives through the revival of Kemalist ideals, as proved by the recent protests in the major cities of Turkey and by the discoveries of the trial itself. Therefore, even if the PKK peace process is intended to be conducted non-violently and in a diplomatic manner, the fact that the political establishment and the Turkish society are still under the influence of an unaltered Kemalist ideology can only suggest that threat perceptions are everlasting. The lingering of these threat perceptions can stimulate the Turkish deep state formations to act as to obstruct the peace process, or can "convince" the more formal political establishments that democratic reforms function against the territorial indivisibility, seeding secessionist sentiments. As a core principle of Kemalism, territorial integrity is, thus, indeed, a factor that affects the peace process.

One could say territorial integrity is a factor affecting relations between *any* state and a group challenging it militarily. However, the Turkish case is indeed extraordinary due to a Turkish collective mentality having defensive attitudes caused by increased threat perceptions and thus oriented towards the preservation of territorial integrity, at the expense of compromising human rights. The way in which the territorial integrity principle affects the current Turkish-Kurdish peace process is exactly through the dramatisation of these perceptions of threat and their endurance, despite the military establishment having been officially "tamed". Therefore, although the military establishment has been brought under civilian control and although the AKP Government is favourable to a more political conflict resolution strategy, the culture of a military state with territorial integrity as its nucleus affects the peace process. The limited democratisation package and the remilitarisation of the Kurdish populated South-East stand as proof.

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