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Roots and causes that created the PKK terrorist organization

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13. ABSTRACT

It is important to understand the factors leading to the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) foundation to take the necessary steps to avoid current and new terrorist activities in Turkey. This thesis research examines three main incentives that led to the PKK's creation and continuation beyond any governmental policies or colonial arguments. Besides many others there are three main instruments through which the PKK found the means to start and develop an armed campaign: Turkey's political atmosphere in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK; and foreign ambitions over Turkey. The main objective of this thesis is to find out what has made the PKK unique and what sets it apart from other illegal organizations and terrorist groups. A study of the origins of the group and its leader, this thesis demonstrates the PKK's ability to orient itself to the shifting environment in Turkey and in the world, and how it benefited from the chaotic atmosphere of Turkey during its foundation years. Successive chapters will touch upon the group's leader Abdullah Öcalan as well as the countries that supported the PKK. The conclusion will suggest possible long-term peace and stability solutions that Turkey might take.

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ROOTS AND CAUSES THAT CREATED THE PKK TERRORIST
ORGANIZATION

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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It is important to understand the factors leading to the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) foundation to take the necessary steps to avoid current and new terrorist activities in Turkey. This thesis research examines three main incentives that led to the PKK's creation and continuation beyond any governmental policies or colonial arguments. Besides many others there are three main instruments through which the PKK found the means to start and develop an armed campaign: Turkey's political atmosphere in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK; and foreign ambitions over Turkey. The main objective of this thesis is to find out what has made the PKK unique and what sets it apart from other illegal organizations and terrorist groups. A study of the origins of the group and its leader, this thesis demonstrates the PKK's ability to orient itself to the shifting environment in Turkey and in the world, and how it benefited from the chaotic atmosphere of Turkey during its foundation years. Successive chapters will touch upon the group's leader Abdullah Öcalan as well as the countries that supported the PKK. The conclusion will suggest possible long-term peace and stability solutions that Turkey might take.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
ARF	The Armenian Revolutionary Federation
AYOD	Ankara Higher Education Association
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party
DDKO	The East Revolutionary Culture Societies
DELP	The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DP	Democratic Party
DSP	Democratic Leftist Party
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KTTC	The Kurdish Elevation and Development Society
MIT	National Intelligence Organization
OPC	Operation Provide Comfort
PKK	The Kurdistan Workers' Party/ Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
TBMM	Turkish Grand National Assembly
THKP-C	The Turkish Peoples' Salvation Party/Front
TIP	Turkish Worker's Party
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television
UKO	National Liberation Army

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   THE AIM OF THE THESIS

The Turkish government has recently announced, in connection with the PKK (The Kurdistan Workers' Party/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan) leadership, an agreement that will end the thirty-year struggle with the PKK. The first official meetings started in September 2008 in Oslo/Norway and continued in 2009. The current Secretary of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), Hakan Fidan, took part in an August 2009 meeting in Oslo.[1] Before the Constitution Plebiscite of 2009, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accepted the Oslo Meeting's results and declared, "Yes, there are people meeting with the PKK, in order to solve this issue [the PKK problem]; they can meet even with [Abdullah] Öcalan."[2] But what kinds of political, military and social policies are likely to be necessary to allow this ceasefire to succeed when many previous ceasefires have failed? This thesis argues that the first step in helping to bring a permanent end to the PKK threat is to begin to understand the nature of that threat in the first place.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the foundation phase of the PKK terrorist organization that occurred between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s. The PKK managed to emerge as the most influential and longest lasting Kurdish nationalist and separatist movement in Turkey among many other leftist or Kurdish separatist organizations. What factors in the PKK's creation and development distinguish it from other terrorist organizations? What specifically in its formative years sets it apart? What made the PKK so successful over such a long period of time?

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[1] "PKK Ilk Kez Açikladi...Oslo'Da Neler Oldu?" *Aksam Gazetesi*, April 24, 2013. http://www.aksam.com.tr/siyaset/pkk-ilk-kez-acikladiosloda-neler-oldu/haber-199057.

[2] Ibid.

B.   THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES THAT PROMOTED PKK'S EXISTENCE

For more than three decades, the PKK has been at the forefront of Turkish politics. Mostly after 1984, the PKK caused thousands of civilian and security forces causalities and cost Turkey billions of dollars. In order to put an end to this bloody low intensity conflict, first we have to understand what the PKK is. Without comprehending its roots, one cannot completely understand the foundation and drive of the PKK terrorist organization.

In addition to casualties and its economic impact, the PKK terror campaign has also generated obstacles for Turkey in the international field.[3] Both the PKK and Turkey's neighbors that have problems with Ankara have benefited from an opportunistic partnership. Greece, Syria and Iraq have used the PKK as an extension of their foreign policy against Turkey. Accordingly, the PKK has gained financial, protective and training support from these countries.

From time to time the PKK has flinched, but at the first opportunity it resumed its campaign of terror. There are many factors that contributed to the foundation of and continue to nurture the PKK organization. These factors range from domestic policies to foreign support. While Turkey succeeded in her persistent struggle by using armed forces to limit the level of PKK violence after 1997, the government could not find an effective long-term solution to the ongoing fighting. Even while losing numerous members or lacking the support of sponsors the PKK managed to survive. The PKK persisted even after security forces captured the party leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in Kenya in 1999.

The PKK is counted as one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world and recognized as a terrorist organization not only by Turkey but also by the European Union and the United States. Yet despite the prolonged history and scale of its violence, the PKK is still an enigma. The PKK has gone through a number of mutations and evolutions. Starting as a leftist political group, the PKK also contained elements of a nationalist and ethnic insurgency. "The PKK's original goal was to establish an

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[3] While Turkey has Cyprus, FIR (Flight information) and continental shelf problems with Greece, it also has water issues with Syria and Iraq.

independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey, but in recent years it has spoken more often about autonomy within a Turkish state that guarantees Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights."[4] Recently it has become more Islamist in orientation, and has at times claimed to be a pan-Kurdish organization. And throughout its existence, the PKK has been largely driven by its leader, Öcalan, even after his capture. This thesis argues that despite these many permutations, the most important way to understand the dynamics of the PKK organization is by exploring its roots. This research focuses on those roots in order to identify strategies for understanding the motivation of the PKK members and the ideology that holds the followers together.

The aim of this thesis is to emphasize what made the PKK different from other organizations and which factors helped its birth and development. When compared with other leftist and Kurdish nationalist groups, the PKK has been more successful in developing and continuing its armed struggle because it adapted to changes both inside and outside of Turkey. The PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, directed the organization without any opposition due to his tyranny and undisputed governance. He followed the way of leftist and/or nationalist vanguards at first, but changed the Party's direction according to the shifts in politics and international arena. He took advantage of the political chaos of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s to recruit new members and organized the leadership and armed cadres.

At the inception of the PKK, the Turkish government was reluctant to allow for cultural differences or give more freedom to the Kurdish population to avoid ethnic abuses because leaders worried about the unity of the country. Moreover, such freedoms might trigger the separation of not only eastern Anatolia but also Armenian demands for control of the border territory between the two countries. Öcalan used Turkey's predicament to provoke the Kurdish community against the government and convinced some of them about the necessity of the armed struggle.

When the 12 September 1980 Coup struck, of all the marginal groups from both left and right, the PKK cadre was affected most. On the other hand, Öcalan established

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[4] *Country Reports on Terrorism 2012* (Washington, DC: United States Department of State Publication, Bureau of Counterterrorism). www.state.gov/documents/organization/210204.pdf.

connections with Palestinian and Lebanese groups, and those who managed to escape were trained and fed in their camps. While Syria and Iraq supported militants' infiltration to Turkey, Russia offered weapons and ammunition for the armed struggle. In addition to financial support, European countries gave political encouragement to the PKK. With the help of international support, the PKK returned to Turkey stronger than before and took advantage of the absence of rival groups' that had been crushed by the military forces after the coup.

Another factor that comforted the PKK was Ankara's perspective about the threat. The Turkish government underestimated the PKK and introduced the group as "bunch of bandits." This irony encouraged PKK's development and helped Öcalan to gain ground in the rural areas of eastern Anatolia. Despite the assessment by Ankara that possible terrorist activity would happen in rural areas, the PKK grew in mountainous regions especially in Hakkari and Siirt. Once managed to recruit adequate members to fight and settled into the mountainous territory of the eastern Anatolia, Öcalan was convinced that the PKK was ready for a long-term popular war and ordered the 1984 Eruh raid that started PKK's armed struggle against Turkish security forces.

It is important to understand the stimulus for the PKK's founding, make comparisons between past and current Turkey, and take the necessary steps to avoid new terrorist activities. Recent developments show that other terrorist organizations are ready to take the place of the PKK. During the dissolution of the PKK that started at the beginning of 2013, the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) began its activities once again. First, on February 2, 2013, the DHKP-C attacked the U.S. Embassy in Ankara.[5] Second, on March 19, 2013, the DHKP-C claimed responsibility for the attack against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) headquarters and Justice Ministry aiming to damage the ongoing resolution process between the Turkish

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[5] "DHKP/C Claims Responsibility for the Attack on U.S. Embassy." *Hurryiet Daily News*. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/dhkpc-claims-responsibility-for-the-attack-on-us-embassy.aspx?pageID=238&nID=40308&NewsCatID=341 (accessed May 19, 2013).

government and the PKK.[6] DHKP-C's recent activities demonstrate that Turkey's terror problem is not yet solved. If the government cannot avoid the circumstances that give rise to new insurgencies, Turkey will continue to spend its resources fighting terrorism. Once more, one can understand that unsolved democratic, social and economic problems in Turkey will create new terrorist organizations or sustain the old ones.

C. SCHOLARS' WAY OF HANDLING THE PKK PHENOMENON

The cliché "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter"[7] best resembles the trouble that anybody faces when working on terrorism. Research on the PKK requires a clear definition of terrorism because governments structure their view of terrorism according to their understanding of terrorism. In fact, academia and government organs have failed to reveal a single definition of terrorism that is accepted generally. Moreover, while the definition of the term "terrorism" continues to be vague, it is difficult to find an unbiased source about the PKK organization. Thus, there has been an ongoing debate over the explanation of the PKK insurgency. Existing literature about the PKK is mostly subjective because even though it is one of the bloodiest terrorist organizations in the Middle East, it is perhaps the least frequently studied. The PKK phenomenon has become more sophisticated and more complicated due to fact that it is still an ongoing organization. Any literature related to the study of the PKK is therefore open to manipulation for the purposes of propaganda and agitation by the government as well as PKK proponents. Even so, examining both parties' claims would be valuable to understand the PKK dynamics objectively.

Aliza Marcus is one of the few non-Turkish journalists that write about the PKK. In her book *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, she explains the PKK's "popularity" by identifying the organization with the Kurdish community's positive perception of PKK objectives. Marcus believes the PKK insurgency was a method for putting the Kurdish problem on the agenda in Turkey. In

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6 "Double Bomb Attack in Ankara Targets 'Resolution Process': Turkish PM Erdoğan." *Hurriyet Daily News.* http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/double-bomb-attack-in-ankara-targets-resolution-process-turkish-pm-Erdoğan.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43362&NewsCatID=338 (accessed 5/19/2013).

7 Gerald Seymour, *Harry's Game: A Novel* (New York: Random House, 1975).

addition, she identifies the movement as a way for Kurds to define themselves as Kurds who have a history that has honor.[8] Her book is invaluable because its content is shaped by interviews with former and current PKK terrorists, most of whom are outside of Turkey. However, because her sources are one sided, her book is not objective. She admits this at the beginning and at the end of her book, but she argues that by using such an approach, she could get detailed information for the first time directly from PKK terrorists without relying on Turkish army statements. Thus, Marcus sees her work as a success despite its bias.[9]

Dirilişin Öyküsü (*The History of Revival*) by Yalçın Küçük and *Apo ve PKK* (*Apo and the PKK*) by Mehmet Ali Birand give readers a broad understanding of Öcalan's background and how he shaped the PKK organization in the 1970s. These books consist of interviews made with Abdullah Öcalan. Many scholars have long embraced these two books as effective looks into the mentality of Öcalan in his own words. Küçük is a PKK sympathizer, so Birand's Apo[10] and the PKK appears more objective. However, both books are used by academics in their research, whether they are pro-PKK or side with the government.

It is easy to understand how one's perception of Turkey, Atatürk and the PKK campaign is changed by reading Pirim's *Ömerli Köyünden İmralıya: PKK'nın 20 Yıllık Öyküsü* (*From Omerli Village to Imrali: PKK's Story of Two Decades*). Oktay Pirim helps us to analyze the evaluation of Öcalan's discourse by including his plea that he made in the court after his capture. Rather than making a counter-argument, Öcalan prefers to present a solution to the ongoing struggle and finds the solution in democratic means. Pirim himself gives broad information about the PKK history, its creation and development, but more importantly, the reader can find the chief public prosecutor Nuh Mete Yüksel's indictment that represents official insight of the PKK. Thus, combining authors,' officials' and Öcalan's interpretation of the PKK phenomenon offers a valuable

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[8] Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 305.

[9] Ibid.

[10] A diminutive for Abdullah; the word also means 'uncle' in Kurdish.

opportunity for scholars who want to understand the motivations of the terrorist organization.

Emin Demirel accepts the PKK as "a Marxist-Leninist and separatist terrorist organization," but claims that the PKK is a continuation of the Kurdish disaffection that started long before 1960. His work, *From Past to Present: The PKK and Insurgencies,* is important because the book gives a detailed background of the separatist movements dating back to the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The book helps scholars to understand the origins of the Kurdish uprisings. At the end of the book Demirel proposes a military solution: a cross-border operation to the PKK camps in the Northern Iraq to end PKK violence and maintain Turkey's integrity. However, Demirel's military solution does not satisfy readers, unless the civilian wing that would bring a permanent peace in the region supports such a cross-border operation's aftermath.[11]

Nihat Ali Özcan handles Turkey's counterterrorism policy from a different perspective. Özcan notices that even though Turkey became militarily successful in combating terrorism, it lacks an academic framework that brings past terror experience into the present. Consequently, he defines the terrorism perception of the government as: "Terror and counter-terrorism is a social incident that should be worked through the view of sociologic, economic, cultural, physiologic, political and historic occasion that must not be analyzed solely as a criminal and military event."[12]

Besides the motivation for terrorism, Özcan explains foreign support by studying countries one by one and illuminating the PKK's political extension in the European Union. Özcan successfully links PKK's strategy with Öcalan's ideology. In explaining PKK's philosophy, Özcan highlights how different movements of thought in the 1970s influenced Öcalan and how he in turn shaped the character of the PKK. Whereas Özcan gives comprehensive information about the mental dynamics of the organization, he falls short in suggesting a solution to the PKK campaign.

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[11] Emin Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2005), 313.

[12] Nihat Ali Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi* (Ankara: Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi Yayınları, 1999), VII.

Another important piece of literature that specifically addresses PKK's outside connections is Andrew Mango's book, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years We Fought Alone*. Mango was born in Istanbul and spent forty years working for the BBC World Service's Turkey unit, so his book is a respected source written in English by someone who knows Turkey very well.

Mango describes international counterterrorism measures, signed by the states that include PKK's sponsors, stated and approved: the United Nations conventions of 1963 and the EU conventions concluded at Strasbourg in 1977. Then he seeks to understand why some states support the PKK with political and economic aid. He notes, "If 'all states' had faithfully carried out these duties [The UN anti-terrorism resolutions], Turkey would have been spared the human and material losses incurred over 30 years in its struggle with terror."[13]

Mango's contribution is crucial because understanding international dynamics that sustain the PKK's existence explains why the PKK grew so big in Turkey.

Besides dealing with other incentives, in his book *The PKK: a Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey* İsmet G. İsmet gives more emphasize to Turkish internal dynamics between 1978 and 1982. He accuses the administration of 1980 of "ignoring the real origins of terrorist activities."[14] In addition, he highlights the government's unpreparedness for the rural campaign because of Ankara's overconfidence arising from the 1980 military coup. He notes that by thinking all illegal activities ended and that there was no other threat to the stability of the country, Ankara relaxed and could not recognize the growing threat of the PKK. Thus, the initials of the PKK went somewhat unnoticed by the Turkish government. Such unawareness served to help the PKK through its days of intensive preparations for launching attacks on Turkey. Arguing that the year 1980 was a "turning point" for the PKK, İsmet claims that if the government had noticed the PKK movements beforehand, Turkey could have prevented the flight of crucial PKK leaders to

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13 Andrew Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 75.

14 Ismet G. Imset, *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey, 1973–1992* (Kavaklıdere, Ankara: Turkish Daily News, 1992), 3.

foreign safe-havens, and by taking necessary economic and social measures, the government could have prevented PKK violence from the very beginning.[15]

Three academics, Bekir Çakar, Mahmut Cengiz and Fatih Tombul, try to clarify the problems related to the roots of the PKK by examining the Kurdish origin, language and religion. In this sense, their study presents the history of the Kurds, explains the PKK's emergence and describes its structure, ideology and strategy. They define the Kurdish question as "largely a product of the modern Turkish state" and date the PKK phenomenon back to the 1950s. The authors argue that after the shift from the single party era to the multiparty system, the new government of the Democratic Party (DP) provided more individual freedoms, human rights and democracy that satisfied the Kurdish community. However, the 1960 coup and its products caused significant disappointment and raised frictions that led to illegal outfits like the PKK.[16]

This work also provides necessary data derived from different surveys made by the BILGESAM Institute in various years.[17] The tables that provide the results of "the PKK support, reasons of terrorism, and reasons of joining PKK terrorist organization" provide substantial information about the viewpoints of the Turkish (including Kurdish) people regarding the PKK campaign. According to the authors, in 1980s two main objectives of the organization were to be the representative of the Kurdish citizens of Turkey and to establish a free and Marxist Kurdish state in some parts of Anatolia. However, the Kurdish people did not embrace Marxist ideology, so rather than ideological reasons, economic circumstances and PKK's violent oppression forced some Kurdish people to support the PKK campaign. Despite everything, the PKK has never gained majority support of the Kurdish community in its bloody war.[18]

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[15] Ibid, 31.

[16] Charles B. Strozier and James Frank, *The PKK: Financial Sources, Social and Political Dimensions* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr Müller, 2011), 6.

[17] BILGESAM is a private company located in Istanbul. The purpose of BILGESAM is to make predictions for the future by closely following developments in Turkey and in the World. To accomplish this task, the BILGESAM conducts scientific research on bilateral and multilateral relations and the security strategies of Turkey, as well as on domestic problems in political, economic, technological, environmental, and socio-cultural areas.

[18] Ali Kemal Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 231.

"Although the PKK at its outset considered itself a defender and advocate of Kurdish nationalism, it adopted a Marxist–Leninist ideology tinged with the Stalinist leadership model and a Maoist strategy for seeking power. Despite its attempts to conceal itself in Kurdish nationalism, since the PKK's inception Marxism has defined its genuine ideology."[19] Therefore, the PKK has never managed to gain vast majority support from the majority of Kurdish citizens.

After examining all the aforementioned arguments, one can still have doubts about the incentives that contributed to PKK's emergence. The authors discussed in this section accept that many factors contributed to the organization's existence, but each of them emphasizes different dynamics. The PKK campaign has continued for more than thirty years, and its structure has evolved over time. Thus, connecting its starting point to only one factor would be misleading. On the other hand, the literature is useful in that it contributes to our knowledge more generally of the leveraging arguments, Turkey's social environment, PKK's leader and foreign support. Overall, one can find valuable information from the sources as to why the PKK gained support and grew.

D.   RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INVOLVING THE PKK INSIDE TURKEY

The group was found in 1974, but was formally established as the PKK in 1978. Today, the PKK is not as dangerous as it was in the early 1990s, and its ability to carry out large-scale attacks in Turkey has greatly diminished due to the peace process that has been handled by the Turkish government since 2012. However, the PKK holds the ability to conduct attacks on targets in southeastern Anatolia. As part of its two-front strategy, the PKK also conducts urban bombing campaigns in metropolitan areas of Turkey, primarily targeting socially and economically important figures.

"Blending Marxism and theories about class struggle on the one hand, with the romanticism inherent in national self-determination movements on the other, the PKK shifted its political objectives over time. Its goals have ranged from the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, to an autonomous Kurdistan, to a truly democratic Turkey

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[19] Mitchel P. Roth and Murat Sever, "The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) as Criminal Syndicate: Funding Terrorism through Organized Crime, A Case Study," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 10 (09/18; 2013/08, 2007). doi:10.1080/10576100701558620, 4.

in which the Kurds would have equal rights and freedom."[20] Consequently, many scholars and authorities categorize it as a 'national-separatist' terrorist organization.

The PKK and its violent campaign against Turkey have claimed more than 30,000 victims, including both Turkish and Kurdish citizens. However, in its prolonged fight the PKK could achieve little, isolating comrades and supporters by its deliberate dogmatism and infuriating, threatening and uncompromising conflict by state authorities and the military in response to its habitual violent activities.

While the PKK is designated as a terrorist organization by many countries and organizations, including the EU and the U.S., it is also responsible for criminal activities like drug and human trafficking, money laundering, fraud and credit card skimming to fund its armed struggle and other political extensions.

Abdullah Öcalan, the founder and leader of the PKK, remains responsible for the overall strategy of the PKK, communicating with the organization through his lawyers, despite his imprisonment on Imrali Island. Still PKK members perceive him as their president and act accordingly. "The capture and imprisonment of Abdullah Öcalan in February 1999 came at a time when the Turkish security forces had already gained the upper hand on the battlefield through the forced evacuation of villages to deprive the PKK of logistical support from the local population, aggressive patrolling, and the use of Cobra helicopters for hot pursuit. In August 1999, Öcalan announced an indefinite unilateral ceasefire and ordered all PKK units inside Turkey to leave the country prior to the organization pursuing its goals by political rather than military means. In May 2004, he ordered the PKK to resume its armed campaign starting from 1 June 2004."[21]

Since 1 June 2004, the PKK tried to secure the release of its leader Öcalan. At the same time it continued to control the Kurdish uprising in Turkey. "In southeast Turkey, it has adopted a policy of attrition, concentrating on harassing the Turkish security forces

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[20] Lyubov Grigorova and Ted Robert Gurr, *Crime-Terror Alliances and the State: Ethnonationalist and Islamist Challenges to Regional Security* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013).

[21] "Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK)," *IHS Janes, Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, no. 1 (December 18, 2012), 1–44.

through ambushes, landmines and sniper fire, as well as conducting bomb attacks on infrastructure in rural areas."[22]

The PKK's returning to the scene after Öcalan's capture might seem confusing. On the other hand the year 2004, when the PKK once more took the active fighting decision, is not arbitrary. In 2003, the group found a second chance to act freely in the Iraqi region after the 1991 Gulf War. "Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) and the no-fly zone is believed to have facilitated the power vacuum created in northern Iraq, creating a safe haven for the PKK there, enabling their terrorist campaigns since then."[23] Lieutenant General Hasan Kundakcı (Commander of the Southeastern Region Gendarmerie, 1993–1995) summarizes the issue as follows:

"Whenever the U.S. entered Iraq, it helped the PKK, and hurt us. Particularly during the second Gulf War, it enabled the PKK to gain significant strength. Turkey was among the most hurt from the second Gulf War. Barzani, Talabani and the PKK gained a lot from U.S. operations. The U.S., unfortunately, in its effort to create the 'Greater Middle East Project' and protect its own interests, helped them."[24]

The second Gulf crisis created a semi-autonomous Kurdistan in northern Iraq. However, an independent Kurdish state carved out of Iraq is not in Turkey's national interest, because it would be a threat to the regional balance of power.

The PKK declared a "Self Defense War" against Turkey on 1 February 2003. Its decision was confirmed by Öcalan's 2004 declaration The PKK increased the violence incrementally between 2003 and 2006. Its new strategy was to establish suicide bombings, creating Special Forces inside the mountain cadre and restarting retaliation activities against security forces. From 2002 to 2003 the PKK doubled its activities. The

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[22] "Kurdish Separatists Renew Military Strategy," *IHS Janes, Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, no. 1 (February 1, 2006), 1.

[23] Operation Provide Comfort was the military operation by the United States and some of its Gulfwar allies, starting in April 1991, to defend Kurds fleeing their homes in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War and deliver humanitarian aid to them.

Kaya, Baran, "A Different War on Terrorism: The U.S, Turkey and the PKK," *Small Wars Journal*, May 2, 2012, http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Different-War.pdf, accessed on August 7, 2013, 2.

[24] Fikret Bila, *Komutanlar Cephesi*, 4th ed. (Istanbul: Detay Yayincilik, 2007), 153.

group used mining and bombing tactics that were low risk but effective. The number of casualties of 2003 increased to 21 from only six in 2002. The PKK continued to escalate the tension in 2004, and causalities reached 73 during the spring and summer of 2004. The number grew to 92 in 2005 and 121 in 2006.[25]

Finally, in 2007 Turkey tried to find ways to launch a cross-border operation against the PKK camps in northern Iraq. PKK's Dağlıca Raid gave Turkey the opportunity to convince the Northern Iraq Kurdish Administration and America about the operation, which was delayed for years because of their opposition. Turkish air raids started on 16 December 2007. Following the air strikes, Turkish land forces staged an eight-day ground assault on 21 February 2008. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) declared more than 600 militants were killed, and facilities were destroyed by both air strikes and ground operations.[26]

Not only rural but also urban attacks grew in 2007. Suicide and remote control bombs began to explode in major cities one by one. The PKK targeted civilians. "On 4 January 2008, six people were killed when a bomb exploded in a car parked outside a school in Diyarbakır. While the target appears to have been a passing bus carrying military personnel, all of the dead were civilians. On 27 July 2008, 17 people were killed when two bombs were detonated by remote control within 10 minutes of each other on a crowded street in a working class neighborhood of Istanbul. There were no obvious targets in the vicinity of the blasts, which appear to have been designed merely to kill as many civilians as possible."[27]

However, PKK's two-front war backfired, and it could not withstand public disapproval any more. On 14 April 2009 Murat Karayılan declared that the PKK was ready for a ceasefire. On 6 May 2009 he stated, "The priority is a (mutual) ceasefire.

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[25] Yilmaz, Sait, "Terorizm ve Terorizmle Mucadele: PKK Teror Orgutu ve KCK'da Son Durum," (Ankara, June 06, 2006, 21.Yuzyil Turkiye Enstitusu), 2.

[26] "Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK)," 31.

[27] Ibid, 31.

Arms will be laid down later on . . . First the guns will be silenced, then dialogue will start."[28]

Both the PKK and Turkey continued fighting despite the fact that negotiations between the Turkish government and Öcalan had already started in 2007. The guns were not silenced, but the Turkish Interior Ministry prepared the "Kurdish Opening."[29] Accordingly, in January 2009, Turkish Radio Television (TRT) started to broadcast Kurdish channel TRT 6. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan announced the Kurdish Opening officially on 23 July 2009. In return, 34 PKK members entered Turkey as "peace group" on 19 October 2009. They brought PKK demands and provided solutions to the ongoing fight. They were tried in the courts established in Şırnak/Cizre, and all were released without any punishment. Starting from April 2009, the Turkish Foreign Ministry and MIT began to play a role in the opening procedure. MIT agents negotiated with Öcalan and other cadre leaders inside while the Foreign Ministry was establishing peace talks in Oslo with PKK's outside connections.[30]

Undersecretary of MIT, Hakan Fidan, went to Imrali Prison to meet with Abdullah Öcalan. A total of 346 negotiation talks took place between March 2010 and November 2011. Those talks remain private, even though some of the documents have been shared with the media. However, it is clear that both sides promised to give up some of their previous demands or pledged to forgo some privileges.

The peace talks showed their effect, and in 2013 summer started silently. Some groups began to flee to northern Iraq and the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)[31] member Hasip Kaplan noted that more than 60% of the PKK members left Turkey.[32]

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[28] Ibid, 4.

[29] Kurdish Opening refers to the Turkish Government's initiative. It is about starting negotiations with the Kurdish groups and giving new rights to Kurdish population, besides discussing "Kurdish Problem" openly.

[30] Yilmaz, Sait, "PKK Teror Orgutu ve KCK'da Son Durum," 4.

[31] The BDP is the political extension of the PKK terrorist organization that has 10% of chairs in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey after 2008 elections.

[32] "Kaplan: PKK'lilarin Yüzde 60'i Çikti! - Milliyet Haber."http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/kaplan-pkk-lilarin-yuzde-60-i/gundem/detay/1729449/default.htm (accessed June 28, 2013).

Founded in 1974 as a Marxist-Leninist Organization, the PKK claimed more than 30,000 lives in thirty years. Besides being a terrorist organization, it is involved in criminal activities not only in Turkey but also in many European countries as a way to fund its fight. The PKK's armed struggle began in earnest in 1984, and violence reached its peak in early 1990s. On the other hand, Öcalan's capture in 1999 brought a new dimension to the movement, and terrorist activities decreased substantially until 2003. Not being as severe a threat as it was in the 1990s, the PKK started serious conflicts once more after it started to act freely in northern Iraq when the second Iraq war destroyed the Saddam regime. Despite continued fighting, Ankara prepared for negotiations with the organization in 2007, but these negotiations were not announced until 2009. Today, peace talks still continue between Turkey and the PKK, and PKK members have been fleeing Turkey in groups.

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II.   FOUNDATION ERA 1960–1984

For more than three decades, the PKK has been at the Turkish fore. Mostly after 1984, the PKK caused thousands of civilian and security forces causalities and cost the Republic of Turkey billions of dollars. "[PKK's] tactics… included attacks against both security forces and civilians—including Kurds—many of whom were viewed as collateral damage in the PKK's fight, or dismissed as being complicit with the Turkish government."[33] In order to put an end to this bloody low-intensity conflict, first we have to understand what the PKK is. Without comprehending its roots, one cannot completely understand the organization and its life cycle. Among many others, there are three main instruments through which PKK has found the means to start and develop its terrorist activities: Turkey's political atmosphere during the 1970s and 1980s; Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK; and foreign ambitions related to Turkey.

A.   THE KURDISH REVOLTS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC UNTIL 1980S

The Kurdish uprisings were not a new phenomenon for the newly established Turkish government. The Ottoman Empire had struggled with Ağas (land lords), aşirets (wealthy families in the Eastern part of the Anatolia), and şeyhs (the religious leaders) who sought tax, recruitment, and autonomy privileges through the end of the Empire. While Turks and Kurds fought together side-by-side during the War of Independence, at the very beginning of the republic, Turkey faced some other Kurdish militants cooperating with the enemy against her.

On the October 30, 1918, the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Montrose. At the time, some Kurdish elites tried to take advantage of the Empire's vulnerable position and established Kürt Teali and Terakki Cemiyeti-KTTC (The Kurdish Elevation and Development Society). KTTC's objective was to pursue the Kurd's interests and support the 'Kurdish nationalism' thesis. Trying to divide and terminate the Ottoman Empire, the Soviet and British governments became the basic supporters and hope of the KTTC. With

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[33] "Appendix: Kurds and the PKK," *Turkey Country Review* (July 2013), 109–121.

Şeyh Sait as its leader, the KTTC demanded a free Kurdistan in the east-southeast of Anatolia; Mesopotamia; and southwestern Iran from the English Supreme Commissariat in Istanbul. With the help of the English Prime Minister Lloyd George, Serif Pasha expressed the same arguments in the Paris Peace Conference.[34]

In addition to the KTTC, Kürt Milliyet Fırkasi (the Kurdish Nation Party), Kürt Teali Fırkasi (the Kurdish Ascension Party), Kürt Teşkılatı İçtimaiye Cemiyeti (the Kurdish Social Organization Society), Kürt Tamim-i Maarif ve Neşriyat Cemiyeti (the Kurdish Culture Circular and Press Society), İstanbul Kürt Kadınlar Cemiyeti (the Kurdish Women of Istanbul Society), Kürt Milli Firkasi (the Kurdish National Party), Kürt Hoybun Cemiyeti (the Kurdish Hoybun Society) and the Hewi Kürt Talebe Cemiyeti (the Hewi Kurdish Student Society) were waging a propaganda campaign for a Kurdish homeland-political entity in the Ottoman Empire. Without adequate support from the Kurdish population in southern Anatolia, Kurdish separatists could not survive for long in Istanbul, and some of these groups joined the Hoybun Society, which was active in Syria. Hoybun supported the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun (The Armenian Revolutionary Federation-ARF), which was fighting against the Ottoman Empire, as well.[35]

Due to the Montrose Treaty, in addition to revolutionary groups, uprisings occurred in some parts of the empire to announce their freedom or to maintain support from powerful countries for their sovereignty. Some of the main revolts at the time were the Cemil Ceto Incident (May 20, 1920), the Milli Aşireti Revolt (1920) and the Kocgiri Uprising (1921). While they occurred in different parts of Anatolia and were led by diverse groups, the uprisings were all Kurdish-oriented, and their main goal was to please allies, especially the British, and establish their own free Kurdish State by weakening the central government. Besides the Kurdish uprisings, there were other insurgencies some of which supported the idea of the British and American mandates and some others were backed the caliphate rather than Atatürk's new government. All of the revolts were

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[34] Emin Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2005), 33–35.

[35] Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar*, 37.

suppressed by the Turkish government but caused setbacks in the National Struggle in different ways.[36]

Certainly, the Şeyh Sait Revolt is the most well-known and the most significant Kurdish uprising during the first years of the Turkish Republic. Şeyh Sait was a Şeyh of a Naqshbandi Tariqa and provoked the Kurdish citizens with the slogan, "The religion was being lost."[37] After Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi-TBMM (Turkish Grand National Assembly) amended the removal of the caliphate, Sait announced that new government was irreligious and every Muslim had to fight to put an end to the TBMM administration. On February 2, 1925 the Şeyh Sait Revolt began in Piran where his followers killed one of the gendarmerie soldiers who were trying to capture two of Sait's men. The incident continued for two months and spread to Genç-Cakapur-Muş-Diyarbakır-Tunceli-Elazığ-Ergani-Şanlıurfa and finally Bitlis. On 23 February the government declared martial law in the region, and then Prime Minister İsmet İnönü sent security forces to fight against rioters. With the help of the Takrir-i Sukun Law (the Peace Resolution) and İstiklal Mahkemeleri (the Courts of Liberty) the revolt was suppressed easily in a short time, and the criminals were punished.[38]

There were other revolts originating from the Kurdish movement: Agri Revolts (including the Ağrı Revolt of 16 May to 17 June 1926, the Ağrı Revolt of 12 September to30 September 1927 and the Ağrı Revolt of 7 September to 14 September 1930) and the Dersim Uprisings. Besides these, some small-scale revolts occurred in the Eastern and Southeastern parts of the Turkey.[39] After security forces had suppressed the revolts, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk commented on the political environment in Turkey saying:

> "I believe that the overriding aim of domestic policy should be to establish order, security and discipline in the country. My latest enquiries have shown that… the level of order and security in the country is very high. Except for a couple of political bands—which have appeared and have

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[36]Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar*, 42–44.

[37] Fatma Eda ÇELİK et al, *Açıklamalı Yönetim Zamandizini 1918–1927*, ed. Nuray Ertürk KESKİN, Vol. 2 (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesı, 2012), 1743.

[38] Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar*, 50.

[39] Ibid, 51–54.

been struck down recently—there have been no incidents. Even ordinary crime is decreasing."[40]

In the Ottoman Empire revolts were common but could be suppressed by the powerful Pashas and armies. However, in the early stages of the republic, the Turkish government was at war, and its sources were very limited. The Menemen, Dersim, Agri and Şeyh Sait uprisings not only forced the Turkish government to dedicate its precious sources to suppress the insurgencies, but also they opened new fronts while Turkey was fighting with big powers. In the end, security forces succeeded in establishing stability and peace in the region, and no significant activity occurred again until the 1960s.

With the military coup of 1960, citizen and administration relations changed, and multi-party democracy left the arena to military rule. Turkey was faced with grand scale polarization among Turks as well as Kurds. Socialism became a popular trend both globally and domestically. Turkish and Kurdish socialists divided and created their own flanks. Furthermore, the Kurdish socialist community shared two different arguments about finding a solution to acquire Kurdish rights. While some claimed that negotiation with the government was impossible and the only way was armed struggle, more conservative Kurds thought that Kurds should occupy more seats in the parliament. From these two different views the first one was more popular. Consequently, the PKK became popular among radical Kurds and initiated armed struggle against security forces and Kurds who selected democratic ways.

B.   THE KURDISH ACTIVITIES AFTER 1960S

Because of the coalition government's inability to cooperate against uprisings and succeeding coups' devastating effects on democracy, Turkey was driven into chaos between 1960 and the 1980s. The 1961 Constitution was brought about by the 1961 Coup. The new Constitution was the most liberal one that Turkey had ever experienced. It gave political groups the opportunity to represent rival ideas that were once forbidden to mention. With the help of these new freedoms, organizations awakened the ethnic

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[40] Andrew Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005b), 9.

pride among marginal groups and aroused the sentiment of Kurds, Alevis and similar societies. Until 1971 radical groups managed to recruit new members and polarized society which started the struggle between the left and right wings. Although the 1971 Coup suppressed illegal groups, they continued their activities underground. Among the coups, the coup that occurred on September 12, 1980 was the most beneficial to the PKK's development. It eliminated the rivals of the PKK and let the Party become the most brutal terrorist organization in Turkey's history.

1. The 1960s

Student activities spread throughout all of Europe during the 1960s. Consequently, university demonstrations began in Turkey, as well. The motives of Turkish students were different, though. While Western students believed that they had to fight against the materialism of post-war reconstruction, Turkish youth complained of the under-development of Turkey. Actually, the Turkish economy improved rapidly under the Democrat Party administration in 1950s. On the other hand, rapid development caused inflation, and high inflation erased material gains. In fact, the government tried to control inflation with foreign help; conversely, Turkish students found the solution in Marxist ideology. For the first time in Turkey, groups could propagate Marxism under the auspices of the liberal constitution of 1961.

Students believed that only the Marxist way of economic development was possible, and foreign aid, especially American aid, made Turkey more dependent on imperialism. Abdullah Öcalan also adhered to Marxism and adapted the ideology for his comrades. "The 'Marxism' of the [Apocus] movement [had] been adopted from the wave of the Marxist Left in the 1960s and 1970s."[41]"By [the] late 1960s opposition movements increased in size and influence, coinciding with a wave of student movements in the West, as well as moderate socialist trade unions and student and youth organizations, professional associations of teachers, medical doctors, engineers, public officers and even police officers throughout Turkey, all of which expressed disenchantment with the

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[41] Nihat Ali Ȯzcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi* (Ankara: Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi Yayınları, 1999).

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system. Soon, the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP) began to suffer from internal conflicts which started to split into factions after 1969."[42]

The main defender of the leftist ideology was The Turkish Workers' Party (TIP), but it received less than 3% of the votes in 1965 and 1969 elections. After the electoral failure students became more radicalized and tried to express their motivations by using armed struggle rather than democratic ways.[43]

After the long lasting silence between 1937 and 1960 in northeastern Anatolia, the metropolitan areas became safe havens for the student groups in 1960s and 1970s. Doğu Devrimci Kültür Ocakları (DDKO, The East Revolutionary Culture Societies) was the leading association that used Kurdish motives in 1970s. The DDKO was established in 1969 in Ankara and opened offices in Istanbul, Ergani, Silvan, Kozluk, Diyarbakır and Batman. Because of the DDKO's Marxist-Leninist ideology, Turkish leftists, especially the Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TIP, The Turkish Workers' Party) supported its foundation and development. The DDKO publicized the Kurdish Problem as, "There is a Kurdish population in Turkey's East. Holding the governance, the fascist authority has put Kurdish society to an assimilation and suppression policy and many times this has turned to a bloody dominance."[44] Abdullah Öcalan participating in the DDKO's activities in late 1970s owned the same idea, "assimilation," and used it as the PKK's main point of discourse in the following years.[45]

2.   1970s

"The troubled 1970s are remembered as a period of violent ideological confrontation between self-styled revolutionaries and self-styled nationalists."[46] The pause after the coup was short lived; trouble started in university campuses. The scene was bloody: "231 political murders in 1977, 832 in 1978, 898 during the nine months

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[42] Ozcan, Turkey's Kurds, 87.

[43] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 14, 15.

[44] Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar,* 72 .

[45] Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar*, 71, 72.

[46] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 18.

between December 1978 and September 1979, and 2812 during the following twelve months which led up to the assumption of power by the armed forces on September 12, 1980. The majority of those killed were students and other young militants. But the victims included also prominent public figures, like Nihat Erim, prime minister of the first national government formed at the behest of the military in 1971, who was killed in July 1980 and Turkey's best-known liberal editor, Abdi İpekci assassinated in February 1979."[47]

Ecevit declared martial law in twenty provinces, including Istanbul, but even armed forces could not establish security and peace. Martial law commander General Selahattin Demircioğlu warned the new Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel asserting:

> Incidents of anarchy are beginning to involve the masses. After 1974, they turned into conflict pitting Sunnis against Alevis, and then Kurds against Turks.

> Due to the rapid growth of legal and illegal pro-Marxist organizations, the army believed that civilians were once again meddling dangerously with the 'democratization opportunities' [of the 1961 Constitution] they had been presented with. On 12 March 1971, the Chief of Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces overthrew the [Süleyman] Demirel government, which was considered to be a successor to [Adnan] Menderes' mainstream government. A state of emergency was imposed, associations of all sorts were dissolved, the TIP was banned, the right to strike was suspended, ongoing strikes were ended and widespread arrests of politicians and 'extreme' activists took place.[48]

After the 1971 Turkish coup d'état, DDKO lost its power, members were caught and sent to prison; the ones who could escape fled to Syria, Iraq and Iran, and then continued their activities in these countries. The group tried to reunite after military power left the government and elections were held in 1974; however, they could not manage to achieve the same success that they had before the coup.[49]

After the 12 March Memorandum, prisoners and deserters worked intensively to reorganize and develop the Kurdish and separatist motivated groups. When Demokratik

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[47] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 18.

[48] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 18; Ozcan, Turkey's Kurds, 89.

[49] Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar*, 73.

Sol Parti (DSP, Democratic Leftist Party) took power in 1974, the Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit convinced the TBMM to enact a general amnesty for the militants who were arrested during the 12 March Coup. The Prime Minister was willing to risk a lot to remain in power. Ecevit, well aware of the public discontent about the arrests, wanted to establish a more peaceful ground for both the leftists and rightists, but its result was not what he expected it to be. General Amnesty became a unique opportunity for militants to gain ground in Turkey. Many runaway leaders returned to Turkey or were set free from prison, then in a very short time organized and established numerous new illegal groups both in big cities and in rural areas.

Öcalan used the 1974–1978 period to develop his knowledge about the theories of revolutionary activity and establishing a party. At the end, PKK was formally established in 1978, but members kept their organization secret. The main objective of the party was to establish a Kurdish state after carrying out a successful communist revolution. On the other hand, the PKK did not have the capacity to implement such a revolution because of insufficient arms and members. Thus, to finance its activities, it started to rob jewelers' stores and became involved in drug trafficking.[50]

Some organizations like RIZGARI, ALA RIZGARI, KOIP and, TKSP (PSK) preferred to work legally and continue to espouse their propaganda; still others like KAWA, KUK and PKK continued to be illegal organizations and prepared for the armed struggle.[51] While following different paths between 1974 and 1980, most of these organizations embraced Marxist-Leninist ideology and Kurdish nationalism. The world's communist political atmosphere, the Vietnam War, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) intifada affected and gave hope to the Kurdish separatist groups operating in Turkey. "When violence finally broke out, it drew its inspiration from the radicalism which had affected students in wealthier and, therefore, different societies."[52]

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[50] Nur Bilge Criss, "The Nature of PKK Terrorism in Turkey," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 18, no. 1 (01/01; 2013/08, 1995), 18, 19. doi:10.1080/10576109508435965.

[51] See appendix for the organizations.

[52] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 10.

3.   1980s

Weak coalition governments, which followed each other in quick succession, were unable to establish order either in the streets or in the economy. Almost all of the public services except for the universities became politicized and split into rival factions. Neither Süleyman Demirel nor Bülent Ecevit, the leaders of the two largest political parties of Turkey, could present a common front; the state seemed paralyzed. "During the escalation of urban and rural terrorism in Turkey from January 1979 to September 1980 in the period prior to the coup, a total of 3546 civilians and 164 security forces had been murdered. In the same period a total of 146 'terrorists' had been killed while the number of wounded from both sides had reached 10417."[53] The Parliament was even unable to elect a president of the republic; this would lead to the chaos that brought the 12 September 1980 Coup.[54]

The chaotic environment of the late 1970s opened the door to illegal organizations to grow and strengthen their flanks. However, there was little harmony between the groups that supported an independent Kurdish state. Consequently, the PKK did not comprise a long lasting relationship with any other leftist or Kurdish separatist groups. Surprisingly, the PKK declared rival groups as "reformists, small bourgeois nationalists, and agent-provocateurs that cooperated with the government."[55]

Besides political failures and economic crisis, rough terrain and the old-fashioned system in Southeastern Anatolia caused difficulties to the government's establishing control. The Aşiret composition in the eastern part of Turkey, a mountainous and rugged territory, the conservative population guided by Şeyhs rendered the region vulnerable to political, social and economic provocations. Because of the land surface and the feudal composition, Turkish security forces could not maintain full control over the area and were thus unable to respond to initial illegal activities completely.[56]

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[53] Ismet G. Imset, *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey, 1973–1992* (Kavaklıdere, Ankara: Turkish Daily News, 1992), 2.

[54] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 18.

[55] Demirel, *Geçmisten Günümüze PKK Ve Ayaklanmalar*, 75, 76.

[56] Nihat Ali Ozcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi* (Ankara: Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi Yayınları, 1999), 16.

"Since a series of coalition governments failed to curb terrorism and to apply economic austerity measures, which were hampered by strikes and lockouts, the military leadership decided to take over. On the eve of the September 12, 1980, military coup, PKK leaders left Turkey for the Syrian-controlled Bekaa valley. They might either have foreseen that a coup was in the making or might have been in search of a safe haven abroad, for their activities were very limited because of an existing martial law in the eastern and southeastern provinces."[57]

The outcome of the coup was catastrophic for the illegal organizations. "During the four years which followed the military take-over, nearly 180000 persons were detained, some 65000 were charged, 42000 sentenced and 25 executed."[58]

In 1980, all of the legal and illegal Kurdish developments, including the PKK, lost their power because of the strict measures resulting from the September 12 Coup. Some groups tried to cooperate with others and establish new organizations, but none of them became successful and eventually expired The PKK, wounded but not dead, continued its activities outside of the border, despite its very limited number of members when compared to the numbers before the coup. "By stopping the slide to civil war, the military had opened the door to progress in the economy and also in democratic governance. But although the violent conflict between left-wing and right-wing terrorists had been arrested, other terms of terror continued."[59] The PKK came into Turkey where its old powerful rivals no longer existed. "This apparently came as a shock to many security officials, not because they really shared the official argument that most of the pre-1980 organizations had been fully crushed, but they believed that it would take years for the terrorists to re-establish themselves."[60]

Between 1980 and 1984, Öcalan strengthened the party structure and appointed himself as the undisputed leader of the organization. It can be concluded that the PKK

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[57] Nur Bilge Criss, "The Nature of PKK Terrorism in Turkey," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 18, no. 1 (01/01; 2013/08, 1995), 19. doi:10.1080/10576109508435965.

[58] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 18.

[59] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 21.

[60] Ismet, *The PKK : A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey, 1973–1992*, 2.

problem developed in 1980s because of certain internal shortcomings, and external factors have also played a crucial role in the problem's persistence.

4.   PKK OUTBREAK

The PKK was founded as Ankara Demokrat Yurtsever Yüksek Öğretim Birliği in 1974 and was named Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, PKK, in the 1978 Diyarbakır–Lice meeting. In order to understand the PKK's foundation, one should value the political atmosphere of Turkey and the world at that time. In addition the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan should be examined from the very early stages of his life up to the time he became the head of the organization.

Turkey's 1960s should be observed in order to understand the social environment and the 1960 Coup during which the PKK took its first steps. After a long silence Kurdish activities resumed in 1960; the previoust revolt had been the 1937 Dersim incident. Adnan Menderes' government ruled Turkey in 1950s and 1960s and maintained more relaxed policies toward the Kurds. Nationalist streams from both Turkish and Kurdish sides flowed more powerfully during these years; thus, the emergence and development of the PKK was an output of the reactionary collision of emerging Turkish and Kurdish nationalism. Because of the rising opposition and separationist declarations armed forces began to worry about the unity of Turkey. On May 27, 1960 the Turkish army took the control.[61]

Subsequent to the 1960 Coup, chaos ended and the military administration restored civilian law with the 1961 Constitution. Likewise, the DP commenced a liberation effort in 1961 in eastern Anatolia, but once again Kurdish national awareness triggered military action, and the army adapted policies similar to the old rigid ones and arrested some Kurdish activists, including 54 Kurdish DP members. Such developments caused ethnic self-awareness among Kurdish youth, but this time they could act more freely under the liberal nature of the 1961 Constitution.[62]

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[61]Mustafa Cosar Unal, Counterterrorism in Turkey, 6.

[62] Mustafa Cosar Unal, Counterterrorism in Turkey, 7.

The PKK began to emerge in the 1970s when student movements were growing all around the world. Youth was politicized and appreciated the ideology of bringing down the existing governments and establishing the new ones according to their beliefs. Besides the external influences, illegal organizations took advantage of the 1961 Constitution to exert opposing views. "Among the new rights were public freedom of expression, press freedom, the right to organize meetings and demonstration, and the right to form trade unions and associations (Turkish Constitution of 1961, articles 20, 23, 24, 25, 28)."[63]

> The return to democracy in 1961, with a liberal constitution and the growth of a multiparty system, allowed the development and emergence of Kurdish and Turkish alongside one another. The decades of the 1960s and 1970s witnessed growing differences between the traditionalist, conservative, business communities of the Kurds and the socialist activists. Kurdish socialism initially grew as part of the broader Turkish socialist movements. However, during the 1970s, a split developed between Turkish socialism and Kurdish socialism which lead to the formation of the Partia Karkare Kurdistan, or the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK). This development was mainly a result of the Turkish left's rejection of the nationalistic tendencies of Kurdish socialists. The PKK made its first appearance in 1974 and later in the same decade turned against the traditional authority of the religious and tribal leaders and towards the Turkish revolutionary groups, adopting the practices of violence and terror.[64]

In addition to the recently gained freedoms, which were used for ill purposes, seventeen governments took place after the coup until 1980 and created uncertainty. An authority gap ended political stability and created a suitable environment for anarchy. Turkey witnessed the emergence of many other revolutionary organizations like the PKK that were affected by leftist ideology. The PKK survived by effectively reacting to the variations in its field of activity and international environment. The PKK could learn from its mistakes and by using these experiences, it made accurate decisions to gain or sustain its power.

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[63] Imset, *The PKK : A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey, 1973–1992*, 86.

[64] Laciner, Sedat; Bal, Ihsan, "The Ideological and Historical Roots of the Kurdist Movements in Turkey: Ethnicity, Demography, and Politics," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, no. 3 (01/01; 2013/08, 2004), 473–504. doi:10.1080/13537110490518282, 497.

In such a politicized environment Abdullah Öcalan was in search of an identity. He first met with militants in Mamak Military Prison. Mahir Cayan, leader of Marxist group Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi/Cephesi-THKP/C (The Turkish Peoples' Salvation Party/Front) and some other members had an armed struggle with security forces, and a few died on March 30, 1972. The day after, some students of the Faculty of Political Sciences protested the event; Öcalan was one of arrestees and accused of "shouting slogans" and "distributing leaflets." He stayed in Mamak prison for nearly seven months and was released in October 1972.[65]

Öcalan explained how imprisonment affected him in these passages:

"I was in Mamak… After the operations, as leftist organizations were erased and as the members liquidated, they were sent to us [Mamak]. You know, TIP, THKP-C, in short all of them were sent. Here, I saw the first defeat from them, what I understood: the conclusion that it was inevitable to pursue a more radical inclination and continuously be organized… This is how I perceived that I should establish an organization.

If the 'Defeat of 71' had not occurred in the form of Kızıldere [the reason for his imprisonment], I would have remained a good sympathizer or member of the DHKP-C at the very most; I could not have ventured on structuring a new theory … The emergence of myself would have been impossible if Kızıldere had not happened."[66]

In sum, political atmosphere of Turkey let illegal organization's emergence and development. During this period, Öcalan was able to shape his mind and prepared for creating his own cadre in order to put his bloody war into action against the Turkish government. Despite its appropriateness for illegal organizations elaboration, Turkey's political turmoil is not enough to understand PKK's surfacing. Öcalan was the driving force that directed the organization, determined the strategy, imposed political motivations to the members and revealed the PKK that what people know as the PKK.

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[65] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 25, 26, 30.

[66] Öcalan, Kucuk, Dirilis, 48; Ozcan, Turkey's Kurds, 90.

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III. ABDULLAH ÖCALAN

A. ÖCALAN'S BACKGROUND

Abdullah Öcalan's role in PKK's existence is incontrovertible. His dictatorship when combined with his leader cadre's merciless punishment methods turned the PKK members into bloodthirsty killing machines that obeyed his commands without any criticism. What came out of Öcalan's mouth became Party rule, and members carried out orders without questioning. Thus, one cannot fully understand the PKK's emergence without understanding Öcalan's personality and ideology.

"Rapid social change after World War II did not put an end to the tradition of violence. True, tribal organizations weakened as nomads were settled and towns grew in size, but kinship, loyalty, rooted in the old tribes survived. The growing integration of the southeast with the rest of the country produced new tensions, as the whole of Turkey experienced the pains of growth. The spread of education increased expectations, and spurred the search for shortcuts when these expectations were not met. These conditions favored the emergence of violent men with simple ideas. The most ruthless among them was Abdullah Öcalan, known as Apo. His followers were called Apocu (Apo-ites) and his movement Apoculuk (Apo-ism), terms which became synonymous with the PKK, the terrorist organization he dominated until his capture in 1999."[67]

"Öcalan was born in Şanlıurfa's Halfeti district's Omerli village in 1947 in a poor and querulous family. He had a weak and ill father but a dominant nervous mother. His mother was managing the house and leading the family, which was very unusual in a patriarchal society. His mother was behaving ruthlessly to both her husband and children. His mother in many circumstances exposed Öcalan to violence. During an interview, he talked about being beaten nearly to death by his mother when he had a quarrel with his friends and returned home crying. His mother did not accept his returning home without

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[67] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 32.

taking revenge. This all led to continuous thoughts of ferocity, wrote Öcalan, "the importance of revenge and the use of violence."[68]

He admitted his psychology in this passage:

In the fight among the children in my village my head was cracked. When I returned home, I cried sobbingly as 'they beat me.' Of course, by crying I hoped that my mother would protect and defend me. But when my mother came back home, instead of protecting and defending me she said, 'Either you will go and take your revenge or I won't let you in' she threw me out of the house. And my mother was very insistent in this principle. Even though it was difficult, I started my first activities under her insistence. I began to be an attacker; I cracked the heads of many children… what I mean is she made me under that pressure. She threw me in the fight by saying, 'Even if you are dead, you will again go and take your revenge… Everyday!' I was quarrelsome… I am a product of an extremely conflicted environment. Everyday I fight against neighbors, against father and against myself.[69]

In his memories Öcalan confesses that he wished his father was dead when he understood his father's weakness. "Not even his relatives took him seriously, and he was hurt by them. It was if as he did not exist; he was gone." Another figure who affected him was his older sister, Havva, and her arranged marriage to an old man. He notes this incident as his decision to protect women's rights began soon after this marriage.[70]

Öcalan went to primary school in a nearby village and attended to elementary school in Nizip where he stayed in the home of one of his relatives. He emphasizes that his Kurdish identity started to develop in his elementary school years. "I still remember, some were officers' children and some were the children of ağa-eşraf [village owners, wealthy persons]. I had some like Kurdish property. I think my doings were not too powerful or according to them there were discrepancies in my certain behaviors. I cannot be like them. It is clear that I would not fit in according to their social

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[68]Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 16.

[69] Abdullah Öcalan and Yalçın Küçük, *Dirilişin Öyküsü* (Cağaloğlu, Istanbul: Zagros Yayınları, 1993), 13.

[70] Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 16.

characteristics and they saw this as a risk. By prickling, mocking, like this every day, they have the oppotunity to denigrate me in comparison to themselves."[71]

Öcalan went to Ankara in 1966 to rid himself of poverty and became a successful man in order to be respected. One can see a pattern in his successes and failures while he was studying in the Land Registry and Cadaster Vocational High School. He was trying to find an outlet for his confusion and frustration. He was going to Maltepe Mosque or attending meetings of the Fighting Against Communism Association; on the other hand, he was reading Barzani interviews in the Akşam Newspaper. Öcalan proudly describes his devotion to Islam by giving an example from his childhood. The imam of his village praised his doing well at Quran studies as "Abdullah, if you keep your pace like this, you will fly [be a saint]."[72]

He met with communism when he read the primer "Socialism's Alphabet" (The ABCs of Communism) in his high school years. While reading, he was repeating, "religion was losing and Marx was winning," thus his ideas were shifting from religion to socialism.[73]

Kurdish movements in Turkey gained momentum in 1960s after the Democrat Party took over the government. Groups, under Barzani's influence, organized and prepared for their future battle. The Cold War was on the scene, and Turkey was America's ally. Thus, in order to weaken the Turkish government and gain an ally on Turkish soil, Kurdish groups became a critical matter for Moscow once more.

After graduating from high school in 1968, Öcalan was assigned to Diyarbakır as a cadastral officer. He was taking bribes to save money for "the general insurgence that would be started one day." He worked in Diyarbakır, and then he went to Istanbul and worked in Avcılar in 1970. He continued to "save money for the revolution." At the same time, he was preparing for the university examination to study in the Social Sciences

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[71] Ozcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 27, 28.

[72] Ozvan, Kucuk, Dirilis, 21.

[73] Ozcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 28.

Faculty. As he had learned communism from a book, he learned the term "nationalism" after reading "Question de la Politique Nationale et de L'internationalisme Proletarian."[74]

In 1968 and 1969, meetings called Doğu Mitingleri (The East Meetings) were organized in major Kurdish cities where Kurds voiced their demands. The East Meetings inspired the establishment of the DDKO in 1969. DDKO's standpoint was mainly socialist on the Kurd's demands and problems. The DDKO stayed active until the 1971 Coup. Öcalan took part in DDKO activities from which the Marxist and Kurdish nationalist approach influenced him. Öcalan went one step further and "bravely" questioned the idea "why there should not be a Kurdish country" that no one ever dared to think about in the 1970s' Turkey. Another influence on Öcalan's mindset was Mahir Cayan who was the leader of THKP-C.[75] Mahir Cayan was one of the most influential figures who radicalized Turkish youth in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cayan first became a Marxist, then the advocate of Kurdish identity. He provoked the Kurdish community in eastern Turkey to revolt, and Turkish army commandos killed him in 1972 during an armed struggle.[76]

Öcalan was successful in the university examinations and attended Istanbul University Law School first but then voluntarily transferred to the Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences. He preferred studying in Ankara because he knew the city better, and he had like-minded friends studying in Ankara who thought there should be a Kurdish revolution. At university he became the leader of the student organization "SBF" as a "third grade militant." He was arrested on June 7, 1972, because of illegal leaflet distribution, but he continued to study in the faculty after he was released.[77] "After being released, he started to talk to other students from the southeast region, mainly Kurdish members of AYOD [Ankara Higher Education Association], and in short time was

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[74]Ibid, 29.

[75] Gokhan Bacik and Bezen Balamir Coskun, "The PKK Problem: Explaining Turkey's Failure to Develop a Political Solution," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 3 (2011), 248–265. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2011.545938; Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi,* 31.

[76] Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Problem in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 42, no. 3 (Summer, 1988), 393.

[77] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 29–31.

prepared to hold the first meeting that would gradually lead to the establishment of the UKO (Ulusal Kurtuluş Ordusu) or National Liberation Army which was the nucleus of the PKK."[78]

> I had one-to-one meetings in the utmost secrecy with each individual person for the nucleus of the group. The idea of colonialism was emerging at that time. 'The Kurdish question is a colonial matter,' I said. Nobody had thought of such a diagnosis [about Kurdistan] if you remember. But the terms 'Kurdistan,' 'colony' came to my mind… do you believe that when I was going to tell someone I used to go to the deepest room, if there were two doors I shut them both, and I was simply whispering into their ears.[79]

Among his friends he tried to create a profile of a man of wisdom and courage. He was spreading the idea that "Kurdistan is a dominion" by talking to people one by one, face to face. Similar to Öcalan's idea, some Kurdish groups were mentioning their 'worries' about the 'discrimination tendencies' against the Kurds. They incited the Kurds to secede by using the linguistic and educational restraints or by admitting that Turks treated Kurds as second-class citizens.

B. BEING THE GROUP LEADER

At last, Öcalan managed to convince a few students, and they became followers of the Kurdish movement; thus he built his own group. At the "Çubuk Dam picnic" he started to talk with people in groups rather than one-on-one. Another more organized meeting was held in Ankara Tuzluçayır. In this meeting there were the same seven people who had been at the Çubuk picnic. "The participants, who were to rise to fame later in the history of the PKK were Abdullah Öcalan, Haki Karaer, M. Hayri Durmuş, Kemal Pir, Mazlum Doğan, Cemil Bayık and Şahin Dönmez."[80]

"At the Tuzluçayır meeting, Öcalan created a strong position for himself, and from then on he began to be recognized as the obvious leader. He 'was gradually

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[78] Ismet, *The PKK*, 9.

[79] Ozcan, Turkey's Kurds, 92.

[80] Ozcan, Turkey's Kurds, 93.

becoming a leader for their nameless gathering.'"[81] Now, he was closer to achieving his goal and became a popular leader among the students because most of the student leaders were either in prison or in foreign countries. Leftist organizations were incautious and spread their propaganda by openly using all kinds of media. Thus, police could easily chase and detain them. On the other hand, Öcalan used one-on-one tactics and kept himself and his group unnoticed. "Although much information has been obtained on the organization's activities since it was declared a party, the 1974–78 period is still the least known one."[82]

Despite their amateurism, the PKK gradually expanded its activities by concentrating its efforts on recruiting new members and preparing the structures for an armed conflict. After gaining enough power, Öcalan tried to attract members of the other groups like ADYOD, T-KDP and KAWA, but his plan backfired, and he lost members rather than recruiting new ones. By this time, ideological conflicts and the struggle for recruits caused mutual distrust and the hostility among rival groups. The PKK leader told his comrades that adequate conditions for freedom existed in Turkey, and they did not need to get on well with other 'Turkish leftist' groups any more. The PKK branded leftists as 'social-Chauvinists.'[83]

"As a Marxist-Leninist organization it had employed generic Party techniques mostly for the purpose of eliminating like-minded rivals. When the PKK was officially founded in 1978, there were at least eight other illegal Kurdish organizations in Turkey. There were also a number of socialist and communist groups. Instead of cooperating with like-minded organizations, the PKK's leader Öcalan dedicated much of his time and energies to purging his movement of those who dared to contest his authority. Öcalan was willing to kill his fellow leftists, as well as other Kurds whom he believed to disagree with the PKK's plan for the immediate communist revolution in Kurdistan. "Brutality

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[81] Ozcan, Turkey's Kurds, 93.

[82] Ismet, *The PKK*, 12.

[83] Ozcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 31–33.

took place even inside the ranks of the PKK itself."[84] The scene gives important clues to the question how the PKK was able to emerge as the most powerful organization despite its short history and comparatively weak organization.

Öcalan did not found the PKK by himself, but he had the most important effect on the PKK's organization. When this fact is recognized it reveals that Öcalan is actually not only the key to explore t the "why" of the PKK but also the "how" of the PKK. Consequently, one must recognize his importance in order to understand the dynamics of the PKK in its first years.

C.   PROFESSIONALISM

Groups, including Öcalan's, were mostly active in the universities; thus, the members recruited were students. These students created the backbone of these organizations. Öcalan's group (Apocular) extended its movements into the rural areas. "According to official sources in Ankara, the first pioneers of this propaganda campaign were Kemal Pir and Cemil Bayik, who were sent to Gaziantep, Şahin Dönmez and Ali Haydar Kaptan, who were placed in charge of Tunceli province and Abdullah Öcalan, who went to his home-town of Şanlıurfa."[85] When the schools were closed and militant students went to their hometowns, they were spreading the group's propaganda. Thus, supporters were increasing both in major cities and in rural areas.

Because of this development Öcalan decided to step forward and increase the professionalism in their actions. "The Dikmen Meeting" was the first phase of the Apocus-organized meeting and decision making. In the Dikmen Meeting the main topic was the organization's revolutionary programs. At this time the "Ideological phase" was ending and the party was evolving from "an optional, volunteer revolution to a professional revolution."[86]

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[84] Lyubov Grigorova and Ted Robert Gurr, *Crime-Terror Alliances and the State: Ethnonationalist and Islamist Challenges to Regional Security* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), 54.

[85] Ismet, *The PKK*, 13.

[86] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 36.

After the Dikmen meeting, Öcalan and his comrades met in Diyarbakır to prepare their 'party program,' which was published as 'Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu' or 'Path of the Kurdish Revolution.' In the meeting they discussed the leftist and Kurdish activities in Turkey and decided on the future strategy of the organization.

The First Party Program[87] is very important to understand motivation principles of the PKK. A summary of the 1977 Party Program draft follows:

- Kurdistan has been divided into four regions by the four exploiting countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

- The largest part of this territory is Turkish Kurdistan (Middle-West and North of the Whole)

- There are semi-feudal production relations in existence in this territory. This is a classic pattern of exploitation.

- In the revolution there will be a national democratic revolution.

- The structure of revolution will be a national democratic revolution.

- The minimum objective will be to establish an independent non-aligned Kurdistan State in the region.

- The maximum objective will be to establish a state based on Marxist-Leninist principles.

- The proletariat will be the pioneering force of the revolution.

- The peasants will be the major force of the revolution.

- The main alliance for the revolution will be the alliance between workers-peasants and intellectual youth.

- The allied forces in this revolutionary movement will include other patriotic circles, the Turkish revolutionary movement, other patriotic revolutionary movements in capitalist countries and international liberation movements.

- Propaganda activities will be supported by armed violence.

- Obstacles in front of the Kurdish revolution include:

  - Fascists (Idealist youth or Nationalist Action Party),

  - Social-Chauvinists (Those in the Turkish left who believe that the freedom of Kurds depended on the revolution in Turkey),

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[87] Ismet, *The PKK*, 14.

- The agents and state-supporter network (in Kurdish territory financed by Turkey) and
- Feudal landlords and natural collaborators.

While the program suggested 'armed propaganda activities,' in order not to endanger preparation or the organizational structure, security forces were not targeted deliberately. Ex-PKK militant Şahin Dönmez thought that due to the influence of the Ottoman structure of the society, people living in the east and southeast grew up with strong feelings of respect towards the state. Because of this mindset, it was difficult to establish a Marxist-Leninist mentality in the region; thus the need for armed propaganda was realized.[88]

The PKK incrementally targeted the goals mentioned in its program. Furthermore, the party severely punished anybody who dared to criticize the decisions. Thus, Öcalan established strict discipline inside the PKK, and fear spread among the Kurdish people in the region. Because of the attacks, more powerful leftist organizations deserted the rural areas, and the PKK's small groups took their places.[89] Öcalan was in favor of armed struggle:[90]

> I had a principle for myself: why did I dare to initiate and believe in this war? Because the greatest harlot is one who does not fight.

> My world at the very beginning was this: I [mold] myself to believe this. All of these men [implying the leading figures] in the Kurdish groups which claimed to undertake the national cause are dishonest. Why? Because, I said, they prostitute themselves more than a prostitute. I said I will fight for loftier aims. In short, in those early times I oriented myself in believing this, and this belief, look, is my nutriment, my sap. It still drives me. Naturally, the belief on its own is not good enough; I also mentioned tactics. Tactics are indeed much more intelligent than evil.

The group progressed gradually and steadily by increasing its membership, but simultaneously controlling people became more and more challenging. Öcalan visited his comrades' works in Anatolia (Ağrı, Kars, Tunceli, Elazığ, Şanlıurfa, and Antep) in order

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[88] Ismet, *The PKK*, 18.

[89] Ismet, *The PKK* , 19.

[90]Ozcan, Turkey's Kurds, 102.

to emphasize his presence and observe the group's activities. While an enlarged group became more difficult to control, Öcalan began to put his violent precautions into action in order to bar dissolution within the group. Öcalan intimidated the members, who became aware of the fact that any opposition to his decisions would be their death warrant.

While Öcalan was trying to restore order, one of the group's leaders, Haki Karaer, was killed in Gaziantep and panic started among members. Öcalan tried to soothe frightened members and severely punished the ones that were not "convinced" to stay with the group. Once again he managed to keep people inside his organization.

D.   APOCULAR

Öcalan began to grow wilder. He could not stand any contrary ideas inside and outside of the group. Rival organizations and individuals were put on the spot. Even columnists, criticizing Apocu movement, were targeted. A journalist from Aydınlık newspaper was killed because of his counter-view comments about Apocu's violence in his column. Öcalan assumed all rivals were enemies without assessing their number or power. Öcalan punished even leftist or Kurdish separatist organizations. His group believed in the Stalinist socialism, which terminated rival organizations. Just as the Russian Communist Party banned all other parties and got rid of cliques, Öcalan and his followers fought with the other Kurdish groups in 1970s. Öcalan wanted to be the only "representative" of the Kurds.[91]

Apocular sought to occupy new territories that were already held by others. In May 1978 the terrorist Halil Cavgun was killed in Hilvan while trying to penetrate the city where the Süleymanlar Aşiret (tribe) was dominant. Öcalan planned an assassination of the leader of Süleymanlar to take revenge. By doing so, he would show his superiority against the wealthy landowners who were supporting the Turkish government. Two PKK members killed Mehmet Baysal, the leader of the Süleymancılar. This incident was a message sent to the Kurdish people that only Apocular and no other Kurdish group dared to fight against powerful families of the region. By the same token, the PKK's popularity

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[91] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, İdeolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 37–41.

increased among poor and hopeless villagers who never before thought that standing up against the landlords was possible. The Cavgun's revenge operation was the starting point of the PKK's offensive activities. The assassinations of other agha (the leaders of wealthy families) succeeded Mehmet Baysal, and on July 30, 1979 the group tried to kill Mehmet Cemil Bucak, a parliamentarian of the Justice Party and the leader of the Bucak Aşiret.[92] The assassination attempt was important to reveal two facts. First, the PKK could estimate the upcoming military intervention; second, they also recognized that they did not have the capacity to maintain a guerilla war yet. Öcalan described their dilemma as:

> By the end of the 1970s, it was evident that a military regime was coming. Meanwhile, our resources to develop the party's central structure and its armed struggle were running out. Our going abroad is closely related these developments. We had to go out and create the sources which would feed our struggle whatever happened.[93]

Apo's perception of the struggle distinguished his group from others. Some groups were thinking that the Kurdish problem could be solved by democratic means; however, some others accepted the necessity of the armed struggle but could not decide when to start. Öcalan was the first to initiate the armed struggle, and this was his biggest advantage in gaining popularity from the Kurdish hawks. He was brutal, and it was working.

High-profile targets appealed to more sympathizers and increased the morale of the group members. Bucak's assassination effort, even though it failed, was a clear declaration of the PKK's existence, although it had been active since early 1970s. As mentioned before Haki Karaer's murder caused a panic within the group. The fear forced Apocus to answer two questions: will the group survive or not? Or, will it upgrade itself or not?

The process from 1977 to 1978 was a determining process to decide whether 'we shall be a party or continue as a group'. After having a very hard time we concluded,

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[92] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 109.

[93] Ismet, *The PKK*, 25.

"Let's give ourselves a party name; we are weak, we are powerless but it would at least be good if a party name was to go down in history."[94]

On November 28, 1978 in Diyarbakır's Fis village they decided to shift their group into a party. Still, the members kept the name as a secret until July 1979, and they delayed the announcement for a significant event.[95]

In declaring the PKK, Öcalan re-organized the group and brought a more professional approach to their activities. Small groups were not acting individually any more. "The Central Committee was authorized as the sole decision-maker within the overall structure, with authority to control everyone and make decisions on behalf of the party without a congress." The central committee consisted of Öcalan, Şahin Dönmez and Cemil Bayik.[96] After they adopted the name 'PKK', Öcalan, as party leader, started the clashes that took place between PKK and the security forces, because Öcalan believed in guerilla warfare.

The PKK was not professional in much of its work; some members continued their old habits. The Central Committee could not control eager young members who tried to prove themselves. The small individual groups used the most brutal methods, operations were not planned as required, and outcomes were getting the PKK into trouble. Additionally, because of their hostility, the PKK gained lots of enemies: rival leftist or Kurdish groups, Aşirets and opposing villagers. The PKK was bleeding and losing its popularity.

E.   FEAR AND PANIC

The 1961 constitution was the most liberal and social constitution ever made in Turkey's history. Thus, illegal groups began to act freely and voiced the "East Matter."[97]

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[94]Öcalan, Kucuk, Dirilis, 61.

[95] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 46, 47.

[96] Ismet, *The PKK*, 20–23.

[97] "East Matter" means Kurdish demands that correspond to more liberties like language and education or even separation from Turkey and establish a free Kurdistan in the region.

"These groups were encouraged by victorious popular examples of socialist movements in different territories across the world, such as Asia, Africa and Latin America."[98]

The dynamics of 1960s and 1970s introduced immense social and economic changes in Turkey. Migration from rural areas to big cities caused rapid urbanization. Nevertheless economic development could not cope with increasing unemployment. Small groups gathered in metropolitan areas, especially Istanbul, accordingly national identity became important for the immigrants. Opposition emerged in shantytowns and opposition-generated grievances provided fertile ground for outlawed organizations in the cities. The main grievance of Kurds had been the denial of cultural and political rights.[99]

By ruining the gains and freedoms of the 1961 constitution, the 1971 military coup decreased the activities of illegal groups. On the other hand, military rule continued only for the next three years. In 1974 the military administration stepped down and transferred the government to civilian control. Instability in the government paved the way for outlawed organizations, and chaos dominated life once more. From 1974 to 1980 four coalition governments took place in Parliament. The violence that began to speed up reached its peak in 1979; tens of people were dying every day. "The intensity of terrorist violence in Turkey was striking: [between 1978–1980] 43,000 incidents of political violence occurred in the country, each resulting in fatalities averaging twenty eight deaths per day." Security forces lost control both in universities and in villages. In order to end the perilous and terrifying course of the country, the military was planning another coup.[100]

For the sake of its reputation and superiority, the PKK's local leaders were working in their territories and showing a presence in the villages. In May 1979, police arrested Şahin Dönmez, one of the top leaders of the PKK, in Elazığ. The PKK was faced with panic once more because the police gained a lot of information about the

[98] Ozcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 17, 18; Mustafa Cosar Unal, Counterterrorism in Turkey, 2.

[99] Mustafa Cosar Unal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 3.

[100]Mustafa Cosar Unal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 3; Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 109.

organization from Dönmez's confession. Dönmez was the first leader detained by the police, and he told everything he knew. Assuming that Dönmez mentioned where he was stationed, Öcalan left his safe house in Diyarbakır. Öcalan moved from one city to another, but nowhere was safe anymore. He had to get over this trouble, so he left Turkey and fled to Syria in July without notifying other members. It took one year for others to realize his escape, and they also abandoned Turkey in groups.[101] This flight saved the group because the 1980 Military Coup would sweep up the PKK members who stayed in Turkey. Even though Dönmez told the police everything he knew about the PKK and there were twenty four of them in it, the PKK's name was not mentioned in the official list of left-wing terrorist groups that was published on August 30, 1980.[102] Öcalan notices the importance of Dönmez's capture as:

> The Elazığ arrest was a slight arrest that could not be counted as my imprisonment's cause. But Şahin [said] 'Let's go and find him [Öcalan] very easily. In fact, one of the most important aspects [of Elazığ's arrest] was its forcing us to decide… By capturing and telling everything he drove me to take the decision of going abroad.*103*

Leftist and rightist movements were terrorizing Turkey; people got used to hearing about tens of victims killed from both sides every day, and the police could not maintain order in the streets. Too much turnover in Parliament hindered the government from taking the necessary actions. On September 12, 1980, General Chief of Staff Kenan Evren addressed the public and announced the military coup on the radio. Killings, fighting, smuggling, and similar violence suddenly ended. After order was restored, the members of illegal organizations were arrested and put into prison; the lucky ones managed to escape to foreign countries where their comrades were waiting. The military administration charged a group of scholars and military personnel with rewriting the constitution. The 1960 Constitution was found too liberal and was pruned in 1971, and the 1980 Constitution was prepared in order to prevent the reemergence of the illegal

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[101] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 48.

[102] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 19.

[103] Öcalan, Kucuk, Dirilis, 66.

groups.[104] However, due to international complaints another constitution was ratified in 1982.[105]

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[104] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 50.

[105] "TURKEY - Turkey.Pdf." http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Turkey.pdf (accessed 4/29/2013), 4.

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IV.   FOREIGN SUPPORT

It was unimaginable that the PKK would survive the devastating effects of the coups or develop and return to Turkey as a stronger organization without foreign aid. The PKK learned how to organize and undertake guerilla warfare in Palestinian (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine) camp and train its members in Lebanon Beqaa Valley and in Northern Iraq.

European countries also supplied recruitment and financial support to the PKK. Russia, Greece, Bulgaria and many other countries offered weapons, money and encouragement to the organization to fight against the Turkish government..

A.   NEIGHBOR COMRADES

Whenever the group found itself in trouble inside Turkey, foreign counties rescued the PKK. Syria and Iraq, for example, played a substantial role in PKK's development by supporting the group in every way. While the September 12 Coup destroyed illegal organizations, the PKK found new havens and friends outside of Turkey. Being in Palestine not only helped the PKK to survive but also helped it to reorganize and train its members for upcoming rural campaigns.

"The roots of the groups which fought each other and the state in 1970s lay within Turkey. But these roots produced a poisonous growth in such abundance because they were watered from abroad."[106] The PKK enjoyed the active support of some of Turkey's neighbors. "Relations with friendly forces in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Europe were also established through Öcalan and his comrades, which created the necessary conditions for the survival of PKK militants abroad."[107] After most members fled to Syria they passed to Lebanon. Öcalan was busy making preparations for the newcomers. He preferred Lebanon because he had connections with Lebanese leaders and was not known by the Syrian authorities. Lebanon was a suitable place to grow because the civil war there made it difficult for the government to maintain adequate control over the country. Öcalan met

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[106] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 19.

[107] Ismet, *The PKK*, 31.

the leader of the DELP, Nayif Hawatmah, and Palestinian political leadership member, Abu Laila, in Damascus. He managed to convince them, and DELP offered to host and train PKK militants. In the Palestinian Halwe camp PKK terrorists were learning: military training, explosives, topography, artillery and guerilla fighting. Besides military training, Palestinians were spreading propaganda and motivating civil insurgency education in the camp. Between 1980 and 1982, more than 300 PKK terrorists were trained in the camps of DELP, including Yaser Arafat's Fatah, Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Samir Gloshch's Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, and the Lebanese Communist Party.[108]

After the 1950s leftist movements emerged more often than before. There were three main reasons of this development: first, World War II exhausted the male population in most countries, and so their armies faded correspondingly. Second, without foreign support, terrorist organizations could not survive for long because Western powers were dealing with their own problems. On the other hand, organizations continued to educate their followers ideologically and militarily in Palestine. During the War, Turkey was rather peaceful, except for some minor incidents on the Turkish Iranian border caused by the Barzani peshmargas.[109] Third, after China exported guerilla-style fighting to Palestine, Palestine became an attraction center for the leftist organizations from all over the world, including Turkey.

It was impossible to train PKK members in Lebanon or in Palestine without Syrian attention, since the Syrian dictatorial regime was controlling most parts of Lebanon, monitoring and supporting Palestinian organizations, as well. At first Syria view the existence of the PKK in the region suspiciously. Syrians were calculating the possibility that PKK could influence Syrian Kurds and become a prototype for the insurgency. However, Öcalan was aware of the situation and tried not to disturb Syrian sensitivities. Syria noticed that PKK would be a good instrument in her debate with Turkey because the Tigris-Euphrates water and Hatay issues were challenging both countries deeply. Both parties, Syria and the PKK, found common ground that Turkey's

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[108] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 54–57.

[109] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, İdeolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 12, 13.

weakness was beneficial for them. El Mukhabarat (Syrian Intelligence Service) prepared ID cards with fake names in order to hide and protect PKK members from Turkey. Turkey was militarily more powerful and was a NATO member, so it was not possible to defeat Turkey in a conventional war. However, PKK could weaken it.[110]

Assuming that Syria alone supported the PKK might be misleading because there was a more powerful country beside Syria that would also benefit from the downfall of Turkey. Turkey (including the Ottoman Empire) and Russia have been enemies for centuries. Russia had long desired to reach the Mediterranean Sea, and the only way to realize such an aspiration was to control Bosporus, but Turks controlled it. The "Sick man of Europe," which once nearly lost Istanbul to the Russian Empire, managed to survive even WWI. However, the PKK gave Russia a second chance to weaken the Ankara government and become more effective in the region. A Turkish foreign ministry official declared:

> We have good reason to believe that the Russians are paying the bill for these guerrillas. It is easy for their agents to find a few hundred unemployed young men who will do this kind of thing for the sake of adventure. It only costs a few million dollars a year. It has a completely Marxist program. They can't foment terrorism anywhere else in Turkey now, but in the southeast they can keep the fires burning in the hope of heating them up in the future.[111]

Targeting a common enemy, Syria and Russia acted together on the PKK issue. While Syria gave place and training to the PKK; Russia supported the organization with money, weapons and ammunition.

B. BARZANI AND TALABANI

Barzani was an important figure who affected Turkish politics of the 1970s and had a major influence on Turkish leftist groups. The left stream of the illegal organizations was active in İstanbul and Ankara, as well as in several main towns in the 'East.' These groups were influenced by the Kurdish armed struggle under Mustafa

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110 Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 58–61.

111 Gunter, Michael M, "The Kurdish Problem in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), pp. 389–406, accessed on August 6, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4327776, 401.

Barzani's KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Part) in the south more than by the Turkish socialist factions. The KDP imposed Kurdish nationalism on DDKO and TİP, two of the most important leftist and Kurdish nationalist organizations in Turkey. Certainly, the KDP was a role model for the PKK, as well.[112]

International developments affected the Kurdish nationalist movement. Any Kurdish activities in Iraq, Iran or Syria were either motivating separatist wishes or armed struggle in Turkey. While the Talabani was active in Syria and Barzani in Iran, Molla Barzani became the Defense Minister of "Mehabat Kurdish Government," established after the Soviet and the British forces left Iran. But the Kurdish state could not stand for long. Iran occupied and razed the country, and Barzani escaped to Iraq. He could not stay there for long and so passed to Russia where he lived for eleven years between 1947 and 1958; the Soviets used Barzani against Arab countries until 1958.[113]

After returning to Iraq, Barzani tried to organize the Kurds of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. He offered to gather and establish a "National Congress." His suggestion could not gain approval; only his followers attended the assembly. On the other hand, he became partly successful in his armed struggle on the Turkish border.[114]

Receiving support from Syria and securing the PKK bases, the PKK came back to Turkey. Öcalan wanted to sweep Kurdish and leftist groups and secure his party's leadership in the Kurdish struggle. He easily accomplished the mission because the 1980 military coup had eroded the leadership of the existing illegal organizations. Thus, groups fell apart, and many of their members became new recruits of the PKK. The groups serving Öcalan lacked harmony; consequently the PKK emerged as "number one" owing to the September 12 Coup.[115] In the spring 1980, Kemal Pir guided nearly thirty militants to Turkey. The group recruited some new members from Siverek and sent them abroad to be trained.

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[112] Ali Kemal Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds : A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (London ; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2006), 87.

[113] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 17, 18.

[114] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 15.

[115] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 62–65.

In July 1981 the PKK held its first Congress in Syria in which a Vietcong-style long-term strategy was accepted. The second congress took place in 1982. Its political and military program suggested three main points:

- The armed struggle in Kurdistan depends on the targets of the political struggle.

- The Kurdistan revolution is a national war of liberation which will begin against a strong enemy in a semi-feudal colony with weak forces.

- The other name of this revolution is a 'long-term popular war.'[116]

Another key point of the congress was 'the strategy and structure of the warfare' in Kurdistan. The plan was to be carried out in three stages: strategic defense, strategic balance (balance of forces) and strategic offense periods. Additionally, the PKK would adopt three tactics: armed propaganda, guerilla and professional guerilla. And, a professional leadership would conduct this renovation. Abdullah Öcalan became the Secretary General of the Party and domestic central office, foreign central office and polit-bureau that made up the new Central Committee. "Following its incubation during the 1970s and after ample preparation, the PKK initiated a prolonged guerrilla war."[117] The PKK officially started its armed struggle with two attacks in Şemdinli and Eruh on August 15, 1984.[118]

C.   EUROPE

Despite the support from abroad, Öcalan demanded more backing. He sought especially financial aid, in order to be the most powerful organization and gain full control of the "Kurdish" territory. Thus, by hosting rich Turkish workers, Europe became another arena of the PKK. "The PKK receive[d] substantial financial support from the large Kurdish diaspora in Europe and from criminal activity there."[119] In 1981, a few militants were sent to Europe to organize the Kurdish population. Germany was easy to

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[116] Ismet, *The PKK*, 33.

[117] Akkaya, Hamdi, Panel 17: Kurds-Insurgency and Foreign Policy, "From Denial to Insurgency: the PKK and the reconstruction of Kurdish identity," Ghent University, May 8, 2011, 3.

[118] Ismet, *The PKK*, 34; Mustafa Cosar Unal, Counterterrorism in Turkey, 8.

[119] United States and Department of State, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (Washington: DC U.S. Department of State, 2013), 35.

penetrate; Syria maintained the required fake passports for the PKK members. Another way to enter European countries was by becoming a refugee "playing the atrocity game." They were asking for asylum, and countries were accepting their demands without question. Terrorists were enjoying European hospitality. Old ones and newcomers, thousands of Kurds in Europe were the new targets of the PKK, and Öcalan benefited as well.[120]

Although Western democracies were Turkey's allies against communism's threat during the Cold War, they involved terrorism indirectly by not taking effective measures to stop the PKK from finding refuge or collecting funds inside their countries. For example, the PKK could rely on contacts and accomplices among Turkish migrants in West Germany. "This goes some way to explaining the vast scale of the havoc it caused. When the support was withdrawn, the PKK collapsed."[121]

It is difficult to clarify the attitudes of Turkey's NATO friends and allies to the Turkish public. NATO is supposed to serve as a serious base for the political independence and territorial integrity of Turkey. Yet, it is puzzling to understand the motivation behind letting the PKK engage in so-called democratic activities that are directed at Turkey's security.

"Turkey has ratified all thirteen international counterterrorism conventions, protocols, and resolutions adopted by the UN. Moreover, Turkey is a party to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism."[122] Consequently, Turkey supported the international war on terror that the U.S. started after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Despite her cooperation, Turkey has never received the same understanding from European countries.

While Palestine and Lebanon trained the militants, Russia supplied the weaponry, and Western countries supported the organization financially. Foreign support let the

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[120] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 65–67.

[121] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 31.

[122] Ibas, Selahattin, "Fighting Terrorism: A Chance to Improve Bilateral U.S.-Turkish Ties the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 22, 2007." http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/fighting-terrorism-a-chance-to-improve-bilateral-u.s.-turkish-ties (accessed 8/7/2013).

PKK's recover from the 1980 Coup and made it stronger than before. Members flocked to Turkey in small numbers, searching for suitable ground for the future cadre waiting outside of Turkey. By 1984, the PKK believed that they were ready to confront with Turkish security forces.

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V.   CONCLUSION

A.   WHY PKK BUT NOT OTHERS?

Despite other leftist or Kurdish nationalist organizations' failures, the PKK's ability to survive and grow stronger was made possible by its ability to notice developments inside and outside of Turkey in time. In order to fully understand the PKK's philosophy, one has to look at the factors that shaped Abdullah Öcalan's mindset because he was the architect of the PKK's ideology. It was unthinkable to judge his decisions or to differ from his views in the party. His childhood, ambitions, loneliness in big cities, search for identity, and excessive personal confidence are the factors that contributed to his way of thinking.

However, it would not have been possible for Öcalan to create his organization if the political instability of 1970s and 1980s had not assisted him. While military coups "managed" to take illegal organizations under control, peace did not last for long. Actually, these groups were suppressed but never completely erased; thus when they found a suitable atmosphere, they re-emerged with more power. The 1971 and 1980 coups affected the PKK much more than the others; on the other hand, Öcalan and a group of terrorists managed to leave Turkey just before the coups. After a period of training and reorganizing outside of Turkey ended, the PKK returned as a more professional and powerful organization. The military coups and coalition governments created a vast area of instability in which the PKK could flourish.

Another factor that helped the PKK's development was the Turkish government's unpreparedness. "Unlike the terror-ridden years of the late 1960s and early 1970s, this time [1980s] it was not urban violence that led to rural activities but the other way around. Instead of the resurrection of armed activities in major cities, as some of Turkey's professional terrorism experts had predicted, the country was confronted by a totally different security crisis. This time it was characterized by vicious attacks concentrating on the local people of the backward Southeast region, where about half of

Turkey's ten million Kurds live."[123] In addition, believing that military measures destroyed all separatist movements, Ankara could not estimate the coming attacks of the PKK in 1984. Thus, the beginnings of the organization went somewhat unnoticed by Turkish officials, and when it was noticed, Ankara labeled the PKK 'a bunch of bandits.'

Despite the speculations that the Turkish government intentionally ignored the development of the PKK, Öcalan gives an adequate answer to the phenomenon:

> In reality, in those days we were not an organization that should be taken into account. Now that the PKK developed today, everybody is asking 'Why was it not crushed [?]' But at that time, it was not so perilous that even I could not estimate that it would be so dangerous for the enemy. Even I could not guess that the PKK would manage to develop so much, how could the enemy guess and why should it acquire a big measure to the thing that it didn't know.[124]

"The [PKK] offensive [of 15 August 1984] later considered to be the '29th revolt,' which would be smashed in weeks or months just like the preceding 28 attempts. The most recent revolt, 'the 28th,' had taken place in Dersim province in 1937 to 1938 and was over in less than six months—the longest one to date."[125] It was believed that the PKK would face the same fate as the other leftist and separatist organizations; after the coup army crushed them so successfully they could not show up once more. This organization was Marxist like many others, but they were using rural areas not cities as their base. Southeastern Anatolia, in particular, was not easy for the government to control; its rugged terrain was unknown to the conventional army. Although the Turkish gendarmerie had been stationed in those areas, they were small in number and not ready for a guerilla war.

But how did the PKK manage not only to be the leading organization of Kurdish separatists but also the Middle East's bloodiest terrorist movement? "The organization has managed to expand its structure from a 12-man gathering in 1970s to the present 10,000-plus armed force of the early 1990s." Many people believe that "had Ankara

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[123] Ismet G. Imset, *The PKK : A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey, 1973–1992* (Kavaklıdere, Ankara: Turkish Daily News, 1992).

[124] Öcalan, Kucuk, Dirilis, 70.

[125] Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan Işçi Partisi) Tarihi, Ideolojisi, Ve Yöntemi*, 84.

taken serious and economic measures in that period [after the 1980 Coup] to accompany the military crackdown, acknowledging the nature of the terrorist-separatist movements in the Southeast, this so-called 'party' would never have come to the point of enjoying the vast popular support it has in the troubled region."[126]

Öcalan controlled the group tightly, making members appear to act like his private army of gangsters rather than politically motivated terrorists. Accordingly, brutality followed the dictatorship. The PKK did not grant the opposition even the right to live, believing that 'if you are not with us, you must be with government' and punishing any group or people who refused to cooperate. Without any rival or resistance from villagers, the group expanded daily. In addition, the PKK also took account of changes inside Turkey and in the world, and took the necessary steps to survive accordingly.

The PKK's ability to stay underground by not publishing any newspapers or pamphlets prevented security forces from recognizing the scale of their activities.[127] In addition, "[f]acts have shown that the over-confidence of the government back in the early 1980s only served to help the PKK through its days abroad of intensive preparation for launching attacks on Turkey."[128] Doubtless, foreign support was another key factor that helped PKK's development. "Certain foreign powers and their treacherous collaborators at home who knew that their deviant ideologies could not ever come to power in Turkey through democratic channels, planned to create a climate of violence in the country."[129] The Soviets used Bulgaria and Syria as bases to supply terrorists with weapons and training. In addition, Syria, and Bulgaria, Iraq, Greece, and many western powers always backed the PKK, and used it as a tool to dictate their wishes to Turkey. PKK militants were constantly welcomed by these states.

To sum up, Turkey's politics, Abdullah Öcalan himself, and the support of foreign countries as a whole transformed the PKK from an idealistic group of students to

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[126] Imset, *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey, 1973–1992*I, 2.

[127] Mehmet Ali Birand, *Apo Ve PKK* (Büyükdere, Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1992), 85.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years we Fought Alone*, 19.

a violent terrorist organization. Disunity of the coalition governments prevented Ankara from undertaking precautions against the growing terrorist threat. Military coups let illegal organizations develop, while radicalizing them by blocking the democratic means to express their demands. Öcalan's oppression eliminated rival groups, and under his dictatorship, even members of his own group who dared to criticize his decisions faced death. Fear and despair kept the members under control and made them obey his commands without judging. Thus, unity and absolute obedience among members lead the PKK to success. International leftist movements' effects on illegal organizations, neighbor countries' complicity, Russia's arms aid and European countries' reluctance to take action against PKK activities on their lands helped PKK's development and left Turkey alone with the organization. At the end, the PKK became the most violent terrorist organization that Turkey had ever met in her history.

APPENDIX. KURDISH ORGANIZATIONS IN TURKEY
(1970–1992)[130]

A.   KURDISH ORGANIZATIONS

1.   SIVANCILAR

DESCRIPTION: Kurdish group. Formerly pro-Soviet and has active links with Talabani. Reportedly had links with TKP and IGD as well. Named after the false name, Sivan, used by the group's leader Doctor Sait Kirmizitoprak.

ESTABLISHED: It was formally established in 1972 when the Sivancilar Group broke away from the TKDP, although it had been active as a group within the TKDP and DDKO since the mid-1960s.

SUMMARY: An active, Kurdish group. Its founder is Dr.Sait Kirmizitoprak who drew supporters from TKDP and DDKO. It supported Masoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democrat Party until its defeat in 1975. It changed allegiance to the Patriotic Union of Talabani and became his supporter in Turkey.

2.   TKDP TURKIYE KURDISTANI DEMOKRAT PARTISI (Kurdish Democratic Party of Turkey)

ESTABLISHED: Accounts differ on the date of establishment. It seems to have been formally established in 1965, but its activities began early in the 1950s. It was crushed following the September 1980 coup.

SUMMARY: The Turkish branch of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The best known of the Kurdish parties in Eastern Turkey of the 1960–1970 period. Its strength has been sapped by dissension and subsequent splits within the party. The defeat of Barzani in Iraq in 1925 produced conflict within the party especially on its position vis-a-vis the former Soviet Union. Party decisions were made in the form of meetings to evaluate proposals and demands extended to the Central Committee by following a hierarchical series beginning with the cell. The hierarchical series was followed again with the

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[130] This section is prepared by using Ismet G. Ismet, *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey, 1973–1992* (Kavaklıdere, Ankara: Turkish Daily News, 1992), 370–450.

decisions being communicated from the Central Committee to the cells. Within the organization a total practice of democracy was planned, every member had, as he conformed with the decisions made by any organ, the right to criticize them and present alternative proposals. If it is necessary to schematize the TKPs organizational structure, it takes the form of Congress-General Secretary-Politburo-Central Committee-Village Committee and cell.

3. **DDKO DEVRIMCI DOGU KULTUR OCAKLARI (Revolutionary Eastern Culture Clubs)**

ESTABLISHED: In 1969 a group of Eastern youths broke away from the TIP and established the DDKO. They quickly organized and opened offices in virtually every town and city in Eastern Turkey.

DESCRIPTION: Kurdish. No longer exists in viable form. Many members joined the DDKD - Devrimci Demokratik Kultur Dernegi in the 1970s.

SUMMARY: The group's members were said to be socialist or even revolutionary but they appeared very (Kurdish) nationalist. A section of the DDKO was influenced by the Sivancilar group and joined in it when it broke away from the TKDP. Virtually all of the members joined the DDKD when it was formed in 1975.

4. **DDKD DEVRIMCI DEMOKRATIK KULTUR DERNEKLERI (The Revolutionary Culture Associations)**

ESTABLISHED: Established in 1975 by former members of the DDKD and several other groups (including the Sivancilar group).

DESCRIPTION: It no longer exists.

SUMMARY: The Turkish Worker's Party (TIP), which was set up after 1961, also consisted of the Kurdish and Turkish left. In setting up the legal organization, the Revolutionary Democratic Culture Clubs (DDKO), these groups became involved in secessionist activities. As a result of these activities they were arrested after 12 March 1971, but some were acquitted on lack of evidence and others were released under the general amnesty granted in 1974. Thus, the founding members of the DDKO met and

established the DDKD in 1975. The DDKD gained many sympathizers during the illegal activities it pursued under the appearance of legality before 12 September 1980. For DDKD history, policies, influence and publications, see Sivancilar.

5.   PPKK KURDISTAN ONCU ISCI PARTISI (Kurdistan Avant-garde Workers' Party)

ESTABLISHED: February 1983.

SUMMARY: Since the 12 September 1980 Coup, military coup, the PPKK (Kurdistan Oncu Isci Partisi, Pariya Pesenga Karkeren Kurdistan, has been an extension of the DDKD (Revolutionary Democratic Culture Association), which was organized legally in provinces and towns in the Southeastern region, and which had its central office in Diyarbakir. It took this new name after February 1983. The PPKK stretches back to the 1970s (as the DDKO) and is mentioned within the Kurdish movements as the "pesheng." M.Ali Cilgin, who lives abroad, was known to be the last general secretary. In 1980s, they continued secretly selling and distributing regular monthly editions of their magazine, *Pesheng*, in the Southeastern region of Turkey.

After 1987, there arose within the Pesheng formation a wing arguing for an armed radical struggle. After a quarrel within the organization, a portion of this opposition crossed over to the ranks of the PKK. Within this opposition, there is a group that set forth different views. The workers' associations linked to this party that are organized abroad continue to publish an organ called *Armanc*.

6.   TKSP Turkish Kurdistan socialist Party (Ozgurluk Yolu)

ESTABLISHED: Founded in 1975 by group of supporters.

DESCRIPTION: Kurdish, formerly pro-Moscow group.

SUMMARY: This group was established in 1975 by former TIP members. Its ranks were swollen in 1976 when a group of DDKD supporters broke away to join it. In late 1977 the Ozgurluk Yolu group established the DHKD (Revolutionary People's Cultural Associations) in several provinces in Eastern Turkey and began using these

associations to try to extend its influence. It was active through DHKDs in the 1970s and later took the name of TKSP.

INFLUENCE: It was very effective before the PKK. Its supporters were youths or intellectuals from the Bingol, Diyarbakir and Van areas. They were also active through the TOB-DER framework.

7. KAWA (Legendry Name of a Kurdish Hero)

ESTABLISHED: 1976 when a group of supporters broke away it from the DDKD.

DESCRIPTION: Kurdish group, formerly anti-Soviet and anti-Maoist.

SUMMARY: KAWA emerged in 1976 when a group of DDKD members disagreed with the rest of the party over their relations with the Soviet Union (KAWA declared the USSR a social imperialist country). It was established when Ahmet Zeki Okcuoglu, a member of the Ankara Revolutionary Democratic Culture Association (AYOD) and a suspected member of the Revolutionary Eastern Culture Club (DDKO), set up a publishing house in Istanbul and called it Kawa. The group later split (1977) into the Denge Kawa and Kawa Redciler groups following debates on Mao's Three World theory.

8. DENGE KAWA (Voice of the KAWA)

ESTABLISHED: 1977, when the pro-Maoist group broke away from KAWA.

SUMMARY: Formed in 1977 when supporters of Mao's Three World theory broke away from KAWA following debates on validity of this theory. They published a magazine called *Denge Kawa* and adopted the same name for their group.

Both these groups [Sivancilar and Ozgurluk Yolu] and the PKK have clashed violently with Denge Kawa in the past.

9.   RED KAWA OR KAWA REDCILER (The Kawa Rejectionists)

ESTABLISHED: 1978 by anti-Maoist group in KAWA.

DESCRIPTION: Kurdish group, anti-Soviet and anti-Maoist. See entry on "KAWA" as Kawa Redciler [is] the direct descendants of this group.

10.   RIZGARI (LIBERATION)

FOUNDED: Formed in 1977 by a group who broke away from DDKD.

DESCRIPTION: Kurdish group which was mildly pro-Soviet.

SUMMARY: Prior to 12 March 1971 the Rizgari group were members of TIP. They left TIP to join the DDKD when it was formed, they broke away and join with other groups. As a result in 1977 they established the legal ASDK-DER (Anti-Colonist Democratic Cultural Association) which they tried to promote amongst the Southeast youth. In April 1979 the Rizgari group split when the Al Rizgari group broke away.

11.   ALA RIZGARI (Red Liberation)

FOUNDED: March 1979 when a group broke away from Rizgari.

DESCRIPTION: Kurdish Group, pro-Talabani and pro-Soviet.

SUMMARY: Following differences within Rizgari over Talabani and Soviet Union a group calling itself ALA RIZGAZGARI broke away. The split was very bitter and resulted in several killings. While the Komal publishing house and magazine remains in Rizgari's control, the majority of the ASDK-DER associations followed Ala Rizgari. A propaganda war subsequently broke out between the two groups. Prior to the publication of its own magazine in June 1979 the Ala Rizgari group split and a strong pro-Soviet group calling itself Muhalefet or opposition, emerged.

12.   KUK KURDISTAN ULUSAL KURTULUSCULARI (Kurdistan National Liberationists)

ESTABLISHED: Established in 1978 by former members of Turkiye KDP.

DESCRIPTION: Was of pro-Soviet but anti-Talabani origin.

SUMMARY: Following the defeat tot Barzani in 1975, a pro-Soviet group describing itself as KUK emerged In the TKDP. It eventually broke away from the party in 1978 taking a fair degree of support with it. They regarded themselves as true representatives of the KDP and supported the struggle of the Iraqi KDP. At present it maintains close relations with the TKSP and continues to oppose the PKK.

13.   AKSA The European Union of Kurdistan and Youth

ESTABLISHED: 1956, East Berlin.

SUMMARY: The organization was set up by supporters of Jalal Talabani and became active in Frankfurt as a result of differences of opinion that emerged between the supporters of Talabani and Mullah Mustafa Barzani in the European Society of Kurdish Students, which became active in East Berlin in 1956. The organization had centers in London and Heidelberg. It also had branches in Hungary, Sweden, Britain, Germany and Belgium. Its publication was the *Roja Kurdistan* (the Kurdistan Sun). The organization changed its name to AKSA (the European Union of Kurdistan and Youth) at its ordinary congress held in Berlin in 1982. There were more Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian·nationals than Turkish citizens in positions of power within the .administration of this organization. Its aim was to set up an anti-colonialist, anti-fascist, anti-chauvinist, anti-racist Kurdistan in the areas densely populated by Kurdish people.

14.   BAHOZ Kurdistan struggle Association

ESTABLISHED: 1970 Sweden

SUMMARY: Bahoz is an organization which was set up on January 3, 1970. From the point of view of the word, Bahoz means "whirlwind" or "tornado," and it is the same name of the Komela Tekoseren Kurdistan (the Kurdistan Struggle Association).

Anter Anter and Bedirhan Anter are among its founder members. It is known to have aimed to achieve unity togetherness and solidarity among Kurdish students.

15. BIRKOM Anti-fascist Unity Committee Abroad

ESTABLISHED: 1982 as a joint terror front.

SUMMARY: Members of the Revolutionary Path (Dev Yol) PKK, Turkish Labor Party, Socialist Homeland (Vatan) Party abroad met on 3 March 1982 and set up Birkom. It was been observed to be in close cooperation with other subversive organizations in West Germany, in particular, and trying to secure funds. In 1983, it was seen to organize activities such as· protest marches as well as hunger strikes and occupations of buildings in Europe· It was also known to be in solidarity with such organizations as Dev-Genc (Revolutionary Youth), DIP, FAK; lsci Gercegi (Worker's Truth), Kawa, Komkar, Tekosin and Partizan.

16. FEYKA The Federation of Kurdistan Patriotic Workers' Cultural Unions

ESTABLISHED: 1984, Cologne, Germany.

SUMMARY: The organization is a federation set up by as many as fifteen pro-Kurdish associations in the German city of Cologne on 21 March 1984, and serves as the PKK's mask in Europe. It has been observed to have spread rapidly throughout Europe, having organized in particular in France and also in Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark. It has been known to convince citizens of Eastern Anatolian origin in Europe about the rightness of their cause and to send them to Turkey to engage in activities after first sending them to Western countries and to Syria, in particular, to receive theoretical and practical training. Feyka aims to set up an independent Kurdish state, to increase PKK's membership and sources of income, to establish a political base and educate that which exists, as well as to transfer funds to the PKK.

17. KKEP Kurdistan Communist Party of Labor

ESTABLISHED: 1982 in Syria.

SUMMARY: The outlawed Turkish Communist Labor Party, which collapsed after the 12 September 1980 military operations, held its second general congress on 14 April 1982 in Syria. Addressing the conference the organization's leader, Teslim Tore, put forward some proposals that were adopted.

In this way, the decision was made to set up a new organization to be called the Kurdistan Communist Party of Labor (KKEP), with the aim of securing the right of the Kurdish nation in the "Kurdistan region" of Turkey freely to determine their own destiny after a communist regime had been set up to replace the existing constitutional regime in Turkey, which would be brought down by general force of arms.

18. TEKOSIN (STRUGGLE)

SUMMARY: Tekosin is a 1970s group that left the Kurtulus movement, with a magazine of the same name: *Tekosin*. It is an organization formed by those who came together having left different movements, particularly in the Southeast. They have a very limited following abroad. They have good relations with the PPKK and even better ones with the TKSP. It has no weight at all within the Kurdish movement. In parallel with the activities carried out after the 1974 amnesty by the outlawed group of THKP/C, the Tekosin organization was set up in line with Marxist/Leninist principles, by a group of militants who took up the Kurdish question in 1978 and argued that the Kurds were a separate nation, that an Independent state of Kurdistan should be established, and that an organization should be formed on the principles of Kurdish nationalism. It has its center in the city of Tunceli. Tekosin aimed to carry out military political, regional and rural work to start an armed uprising in the eastern and southeastern Anatolian regions by achieving the support of the revolutionary democrats in Turkey. The end result of an armed movement, it argued, would be to create an independent socialist state of Kurdistan in Turkey and after that to unite in the struggle with the Kurdish organizations in other parts of the region.

### 19.	TKP (B): YKK Patriotic Kurdistan Communists

SUMMARY: The YKK (Patriotic Kurdistan Communists) was an organization, established by Ibrahim Seven, the general secretary of the TKP(B), and the members of which received training in the Bakaa Valley in Lebanon in order to be able to wage an independent armed struggle in the East and Southeast where the PKK was active. It is referred to, in official documents, as an organization that will eventually enter into actions within the country. Although no clear actions of the organization have been observed to date, official documents say it supports the PKK.

### 20.	YEKBUN (Birlik-Union)

SUMMARY: The Yekbun is known to be an illegal separatist organization that was set up on the initiative of Pasa Uzun and Mahmut Cikman, who left the DDKD in May of 1979. The organization chose the provinces and towns of Siverek, Urfa, Mardin, Derik, Kiziltepe, Bitlis and Diyarbakir as its area of activities. It has had links with the illegal organizations Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party) and Ala Rizgari. Its publication is *Yekbun* magazine. The organization was known to be carrying out armed activities in Southeastern Anatolia toward realizing a democratic people's war to liberate the Turkish part of lands they call Kurdistan. It aimed to begin an armed struggle against the Turkish Armed Forces, which they consider as obstructive elements, as well as against local feudalism and "United States imperialism."

### B.	MARXIST ORGANIZATIONS IN TURKEY (1970–1992)

### 1.	THE TURKISH PEOPLES' LIBERATION PARTY AND FRONT (THKP-C) MOVEMENTS:

The Turkiye Halk Kurtulus Partisi ve Cephesi (THKP-C) or the Turkish Peoples' Liberation Party and Front was a military extension of the Dev-Genc organization. The Dev-Genc was a popular student movement in 1960s. On the other hand, THKP-C could not show presence between 1972 and 1975, an era known as "a period of inactivity for the THKP-C." The Kizildere Operation, in which THKP-C took a Canadian and two British technicians as hostages, was a turning point in THKP-C's history. The police crushed the operation, and many leaders of the organization were either killed or arrested.

Both the Kizildere incident and the period of inactivity triggered criticism within the organization, so the THKP-C's dissolution process began.

The THKP-C related terror organizations which have come into existence in Turkey, some of which are still believed to be operational, include:

- THKP/C-MLSPB (Devrimci Kurtulus)
- THKP/C-Cephe Yolu
- THKP/C·Cayan Sempatizanlari
- THKP/C-Kasabalilar
- THKP/C-Acilciler
- THKP/C-Devrimci Savas
- THKP/C-HDO
- THKP/C-Partizan.
- THKP/C- Eylem Birligi (Devrimci Kurtulus)
- THKP/C-DKB
- THKe/C- Ucuncu Yol
- THKP/C-TKMO
- THKP/C-Dev-Yol
- THKP/C-Dev-Sol
- THKP/C-Kurtulus (TKKKO)
- THKP/C-D.Halkin Yolu (TKIH)

Having different names and cadres, all these organizations believe in the necessity of armed propaganda to achieve a national democratic revolution in Turkey. Many of these groups were ended with the 12 September 1980 Military Coup. Unlike the PKK, THKP-C extensions mostly target political or high-ranking officers in metropolitan areas rather than fighting with security forces in rural areas. Thus, their activities are small-scale but influential.

2. THE TURKISH COMMUNIST PARTY-MARXIST LENINIST (TKP/ML) MOVEMENTS

The Turkish Communist Party-Marxist Leninist (TKP/ML) is the second most active and dangerous leftist organization following the Dev-Yol. Its extensions are still

active both in urban and rural areas and target political figures as well as security forces in Turkey.

The TKP/ML family, which is as divided as the THKP-C over personal and political disputes, has taken various forms and names over the past years which may include the following:

- TKP/ML(l.Kaypakkaya)
- TIKKO
- TKP/MLCC
- TKP/ML DABK
- TKP/MLGKK
- TKP/ML-Partizan
- TKP/ML-Bolsevik Partizan
- TKP/ML-HB
- TKP/ML-DHB
- TKPIML-H
- TKKBKP
- SPARTAKUS

3. THE PEOPLES' LIBERATION ARMY OF TURKEY (THKO) MOVEMENTS

The THKO is the third major leftist illegal organization in Turkey. It is mostly active in urban areas, and its violence is felt in the streets of major cities. Huseyin Inan, the party leader, describes their strategy as:

> The THKO believes that the people's freedom, and the independence of this country can only be won with armed struggle, and this is the only way. Our goal is to wipe out America and all foreign enemies to destroy the traitors and to create a fully independent Turkey which has been cleared of enemies.

Like the Dev-Yol and the THKP-C, the THKO fell apart and created many new factions, such as:

- THKO (D.Gezmis)
- TDKP/IO

- HALKIN KURTULUSU
- THKO/MB
- THKO/EB
- TKEP
- THKO/TDY
- THKO/DIRILIS
- THKO/I
- THKO/AKTANCILAR
- TIKB

After examining Kurdish separatists and the Marxist Leninist leftist organization, one can recognize that most of them were established before PKK's emergence. In addition, they were supported by great powers like the Soviet Union and European countries. Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran played crucial roles in their rise and development. They took advantage of student activities and enjoyed military coups and political instability that created the chaotic environment of Turkey in 1960s and 1980s, as did the PKK. They had hundreds of members whereas the PKK was only a group of people gathering at picnics or in small houses in Ankara at the time.

The PKK can be distinguished from other organizations by its unique ability to adapt to Turkey's and the world's changing environment. While many organizations were competing with each other to be known by their publications, the PKK stayed silent and did not print any document publicly until 1984. By remaining silent[131] the PKK was able to develop slowly but successfully without being disturbed by security forces. The PKK suppressed its rivals one by one if they were unwilling to share their territory. Threatened or killed by the PKK, other organizations left the rural areas to the PKK. Some of them cooperated, but these alliances continued only as long as the PKK benefited from them.

The 12 September 1980 Coup harmed the PKK as well as others; however, before the Coup, unlike other groups' leaders, Abdullah Öcalan was able to flee to Syria and

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[131] The PKK did not publish any journals or brochures unlike other illegal organizations. By this way the PKK became unique because making propaganda and recruiting new members was a popular trend among illegal organization. Thus, security forces could not notice PKK's activities for a long time.

prepare proper conditions for his comrades. Öcalan used foreign support to train excising members in Bekaa and financed his organization from European funds. While many illegal organizations stayed undercover with the horror of 1980 Coup, Öcalan started an armed struggle as soon as he gained enough power. Thus, the PKK emerged as the leading terrorist organization after 1980. Taking necessary actions on schedule and threatening rivals and the Kurdish people, the PKK became the most dangerous terrorist organization in Turkey.

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