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# **Politics, Security and the Construction of Protracted Social Conflicts**

*With special reference to the conflict between  
the Turkish State and the Kurdistan Workers' Party*

A thesis submitted to  
the University of Kent at Canterbury  
in the subject of International Relations  
for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

By André Filipe de Carvalho Barrinha

August 2009

## **Abstract**

*This thesis offers a theoretical revision of Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts (PSCs) model under the light of a politically constructed world. It argues that politics, as a central element in the unfolding of an armed conflict, has to be understood by focusing on discursive practices that transform political issues into security issues - what the Copenhagen School calls a 'securitisation process'. This thesis analyses how, in a PSC context, these processes take place, unfold and lead to the approval of exceptional measures that tend to be reified as part of the normal functioning of the political system. This normalisation of the exceptional creates additional barriers to the resolution of the conflict as it reifies discourses of 'otherness' as part of daily life. Overcoming these discourses and bringing the conflict 'back' to the political level, is also an important part of this research. The international dimension of these conflicts will also be analysed, particularly through the prism of the Regional Security Complex Theory. It will be seen how PSCs generate regional and international dynamics that go beyond the mainstream understanding of international relations. The conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) will be used to illustrate and operationalise this thesis' main arguments. Derived from this illustration and operationalisation it will be possible to provide new insights into this specific conflict. It will be analysed, among other things, how Turkey's securitisation of the PKK evolved within a previously securitised context and, how that has led to the normalisation of an aggressive political discourse, which has, until 2008, prevented the resolution of the conflict.*

## Preface

Since it was first envisaged in 2005 until now, this thesis evolved from being about the EU's role in Turkey's Kurdish problem to a largely theoretical study on the politically constructed character of Protracted Social Conflicts, with Turkey's conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party as an illustrative case-study. The possibility of participating in a good number of international conferences and PhD courses (particularly the one organised by Ole Wæver in Copenhagen in the Winter of 2006) certainly helped shape my research. In that sense, part of what is now my PhD thesis has been presented in the form of different conference papers. Thus, the first part of chapter I was based on a paper presented at the 50<sup>th</sup> International Studies Association Annual Convention, New York City, 15-18 February 2009, under the title "A critical approach to the study of conflicts. Lessons from the 'critical turn' in Security Studies". The second part of the same chapter, as well as part of chapter III, was based on the paper "Securitized Protracted Social Conflicts?" presented at the 2nd Global International Studies Conference, WISC, University of Ljubljana, 23-26 July 2008. Chapters V and VI were largely based on "The terrorist label in securitized conflicts: Turkey's discourse on the PKK", a paper presented at the 49th International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, 26-29 March 2008. Finally, chapters VII and VIII were adapted from the paper presented at The Sixth METU Conference on International Relations, Ankara, 14-16 June, 2007, under the title "The 'War on Terror' and US-Turkey Relations in Northern Iraq". This paper was at the base of "The Copenhagen School in US-Turkey relations: the 'War on Terror' in Northern Iraq", an Occasional Paper published by the Centre for Social Studies from the University of Coimbra in January 2008. Finally, parts of chapter IV were also reproduced in a chapter ("The European Union in Turkey: the importance of the security perceptions' alignment"), published in a book I edited in 2008 under the title *Towards a Global Dimension: EU's Conflict Management in the Neighborhood and Beyond*.

However, more important than conference papers and occasional publications, it was the possibility to discuss my work with colleagues, friends and family that made this 4-year journey possible.

This journey, that started in Coimbra, Portugal and ended in Canterbury, UK, was

only possible due to the generous financial support of the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology in the form of a PhD scholarship.

It probably only started because Prof. José Manuel Pureza convinced me to do so. To him, I owe my words of gratitude. I would also like to thank Prof. Rogério Leitão, my first supervisor in Portugal, for his friendship, and for the time he spent reading and discussing my first pieces of research. The same applies to Dr. Maria Raquel Freire, and Dr. Paula Lopes, whose encouragement and support I always appreciated. Marco, Teresa, Miguel, Daniela and Sofia, colleagues and friends from Coimbra, also deserve a word of gratitude for their friendship and for constantly challenging my ideas.

In Canterbury I found new colleagues and friends. Prof. Hugh Miall, my first supervisor, is the reason why I stayed in Canterbury to finish my PhD. I owe him my eternal gratitude.

My second supervisor, Dr. Anne Hammerstad only arrived halfway through the process. Her comments, suggestions and recommendations were nonetheless precious for the completion of my research.

Even though not directly responsible for my research, there were other members of staff at the POLIR Department that contributed to my research with their feedback and comments, particularly Dr. Stefan Rossbach and Dr. Ruth Blakeley.

I would also like to thank Tom, João, Helena, Giorgos, Claire, Charles and Alex for their friendships and support.

I owe a special thanks to Zeynep and Natália, not only for their friendship, but also for their brilliant job at proofreading my work.

Ultimately, nothing would have been possible without the support and belief of my family over the years and to whom I am forever indebted.

Last but not least, is the gratitude I owe Sara, for her love and support. This thesis is also hers.

*Para o meu avô Zé, por me ter mostrado o mundo*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

- AKP** – Justice and Development Party
- CHP** – Republican People’s Party
- CS** – Copenhagen School
- DEHAP** – Democratic People’s Party
- DEP** – Democracy Party
- DP** – Democratic Party
- DTP** – Democratic Society Party
- ETA** – Basque Homeland and Liberty
- EU** – European Union
- FARC** – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
- GAP** – Southeastern Anatolian Project
- HADEP** – People’s Democracy Party
- HRW**- Human Rights Watch
- IRA** – Irish Republican Army
- KADEK** – Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress
- KDP** – Kurdistan Democratic Party (Iraq)
- KONGRA-GEL** – Kurdistan People’s Congress
- LTTE** – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
- MHP** – National Action Party
- MIT** – National Intelligence Organisation
- MPLA** – Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
- NATO** – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- NSC** – National Security Council
- PCS** – Peace and Conflict Studies

**PKK** – Kurdistan Workers Party

**PSC** – Protracted Social Conflict

**RSCT** – Regional Security Complex Theory

**RTÜK** – Radio and Television Supreme Council

**SHP**- Social Democratic People’s Party

**TAF** – Turkish Armed Forces

**UN** – United Nations

**UNITA** – National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

**USA** – United States of America

## Introduction

This project will attempt to answer *how the nexus between security and politics contributes to the understanding of protracted social conflicts* by arguing that politics has a central place in the analysis of armed conflicts that are prolonged in time and that oppose as primary actors a state and a non-state actor – i.e. Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts (PSCs).

Even though Edward Azar's name is an integral part of the history of Peace and Conflict Studies in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his work has not been as disseminated within the discipline as probably expected (cf. Ramsbotham, 2005). Safeguarding some rare exceptions, his Protracted Social Conflicts model has rarely been discussed within the discipline, much less outside it. As claimed by Gil Friedman, "scholars of international relations and comparative politics have added little to Azar and his collaborators thinking on protracted conflict" (1999, 36). Friedman's text "Conceptualizing Protracted Conflict" is actually part of one of those rare works centred on Edward Azar's theoretical contributions to the understanding of modern conflicts. It is part of Harvey Starr's (1999) edited volume *The Understanding and Management of Global Violence*, in which Azar's model serves as the starting point for a reflection on different dimensions of the analysis of conflicts after the end of the Cold War.

Apart from this volume, the work of Oliver Ramsbotham and Hugh Miall also deserve to be mentioned, the first for having published one of the few journal articles on Azar's work (Ramsbotham, 2005) and the second for engaging with his work particularly regarding Conflict Transformation (Miall, 2006; 2007). Finally I would highlight Cordula Reimann's work (2002; 2006), as it provides the first attempt to

critically engage with Azar's model, by presenting a 'gendered' view of Protracted Social Conflicts.

This thesis, even though embarking also on the re-evaluation of Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts model, takes a very different direction in terms of both the questions that it attempts to answer, as well as the theoretical contributions it takes as the basis for its critique. I would also add that, even though sharing the same constructivist ontology, the two theses have different conceptions for the meaning of politics and security and their importance for the understanding of PSCs conflicts. Bringing politics back to the centre of conflict analysis is the fundamental objective of this thesis; for Cordula Reimann it is about highlighting the gendered silences that can be found in the Protracted Social Conflicts model.

Despite being a political phenomena, armed conflicts are often analysed without much regard for the role of politics, justified by a whole myriad of deep structural causes, which end up removing conflicts from their "socio-political setting" (Vivienne Jabri, 2006b, 5). Peace and Conflict Studies' practical need to define clear variables that fit into quantitative models have contributed to the dismissal of politics, and of specific political contexts as responsible for and triggers of such conflicts. As argued by Michael Parenti,

[w]hat is missing from this scientism is the essence of politics itself, an appreciation of the inescapability of interest and power in determining what solutions will be deemed suitable, what allocations will be thought supportable, and, indeed, what variables will even be considered as interrelating and salient. The presumption that there is a scientifically discoverable "correct" solution to problems overlooks the fact that social problems involve conflicting ends and often irreconcilable value distributions; thus one man's "solution" is often another man's disaster (1970: 79).

This depoliticising move is more often than not the mere involuntary reproduction of leadership discourses (Jabri, 2006b: 6), that is, the legitimisation of certain political discourses. For instance, the identification of conflicts as ‘resource conflicts’, ‘environmental conflicts’, or more commonly as ‘ethnic conflicts’ – which allows for the establishment of clear-cut scientific typologies of conflict – justifies these phenomena as being, respectively, related to scarcity, resources, environment, or ethnic differences, i.e. non-political causes that in practice often match the discourses of the warring factions.

In order to avoid these political pitfalls I argue that Peace and Conflict Studies should embrace a ‘critical’ turn similar to the one Security Studies undertook, particularly in Europe, after the Cold War. As a contribution to that turn, I intend, in this thesis, to explore the nexus between security and politics in the context of PSCs, combining approaches from different areas, namely Security Studies, Sociology, and Political Theory, to that of Peace and Conflict Studies.

One of the relevant contributors to that critical turn in Security Studies, Karin Fierke, suggests that the act of “[d]efining security is a political process” (2007: 32), and should thus not be understood as the mere identification of real threats. Security is eminently political, which leads me to the argument that security is the frame through which politics is connected with the realm of violent conflict, as the latter – following the Copenhagen School’s security theory – must previously be politically constructed within a discourse of security (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

In this introductory chapter, I will start by outlining the objectives underpinning this project, followed by the exploration of the theoretical bases (ontology, epistemology, and key concepts) supporting it. The third section will be dedicated to the importance of discourse analysis in the study of conflicts, including the specific methods that will

be used in each of the case study chapters. Before concluding with the chapter outline, I will present the case study (the conflict between the Turkish State and the Kurdistan Workers' Party), including the justification of its choice, as well as the data used for its analysis.

## **1. Objectives**

As it will be developed in chapter I, Peace and Conflict Studies have disregarded the importance of theory in the study of conflicts, rather opting for more empirical approaches. As argued by Cordula Reimann, “[t]heorizing’ in general and ontological and epistemological issues in particular (like the status of knowledge, justification of knowledge, purpose of scientific inquiry, the methodology applied and so on) have been largely dismissed” (2002: 33) within the field. By disregarding the role of theory, Peace and Conflict Studies set the onus of its evolution merely on empirical research. As a result, its capacity to reflect and to be critical was largely diminished.

As mentioned above, this thesis intends to contribute to the ‘critical turn’ in Peace and Conflict Studies by placing politics at the centre and the analysis of discourse at the helm of conflicts’ research; by resorting to theoretical contributions outside the field, with a clear focus on securitisation theory, and to a less extent security sectors and the regional security complex theory – the three main contributions of the so-called Copenhagen School of Security Studies (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

The specific object of study for this research will be the Protracted Social Conflicts model as devised by the Lebanese academic Edward Azar. Revising his model by incorporating a politically constructed understanding of security is thus the central objective of this thesis. By doing so, I will argue that discourses of security are at the base of both the dynamics that lead to the outburst of violence in PSCs (chapter III) as

well as at the centre of any potential solution for this type of conflicts (chapter IX). By taking the politics of security into consideration it will also be possible to understand better the constitutive relation between state and non-state actors (chapter V). Finally, one of the goals of this research is to analyse how discourses of security are exported and how regional security dynamics are involved in the unfolding of PSCs. This will cover another underdeveloped area of Azar's model – the international level – with the help of the Copenhagen School's Regional Security Complex Theory (chapter VII).

The Copenhagen School is the name given by Bill McSweeney to the security theory(ies) developed at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute during the late 1980s, early 1990s, that led to the publication, among other works, of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde's *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* in 1998. These authors have, at the core of their approach, the idea that security is socially constructed and that it is by looking at how the processes of construction – securitisation processes – unfold that it is possible to understand how an issue becomes a security issue. This idea will be at the core of this thesis' understanding of Protracted Social Conflicts as a political construction, and the contribution of these authors will be visible throughout this thesis, not only in the form of the securitisation theory (Part II and V), but also the security sectors approach (Part III), as well as the Regional Security Complex theory (Part IV).

The Turkish-PKK case study will help to illustrate my argument. In return, it will be possible to shed some light on the reasons underneath the intractability and protractedness of this conflict. Nonetheless, it is the goal of this research to offer neither a narrative of the conflict nor a general explanation of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. The analyses incorporated in this research are concentrated in very limited

time-frames, which are not presented in chronological order. Again, they are not supposed to be a narrative of the conflict, but illustrations of the theoretical aspects highlighted in the other chapters (III, V, VII and IX). This does not, however, invalidate the original contribution this thesis might make to the further understanding of the conflict. It is indeed expected that by serving as the illustration to aspects and concepts that are new to the understanding of Protracted Social Conflicts, the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party will be analysed from different angles, leading to a contribution to the English-language literature on the conflict.

## **2. Ontology, Epistemology and Key Concepts**

Contrary to *epistemic realism*, whereby “the world comprises objects whose existence is independent of ideas or beliefs about them” (Campbell, 1998: 4), so common in the contemporary analysis of conflicts, this project is informed by a distinct ontological approach – social constructivism –, an approach in which the world that we live in is seen as socially constructed, not as ‘falling from heaven’, but constructed and reproduced by human agents (Risse, 2004: 160). Constructivism can be seen through different prisms and different approaches. In this case, the ‘version’ taken into consideration is what some authors call ‘critical constructivism’ (*idem*) or what Karin Fierke (2007b) labels as ‘consistent constructivism’, an approach that distinguishes itself from the ‘middle ground’ approach of authors such as Alexander Wendt (1999) by focusing on the importance of language as central to our apprehension of the world, as its epistemological basis.

For constructivism, absolute concepts such as ‘truth’ and ‘justice’ are seen as socially constructed within a certain context. **Context**, here understood as the social space

where shared rules, norms, values that constrain the understanding of social phenomena is, indeed, one of the three components on which a constructivist ontology relies on, the other two being **intersubjectivity** and **power** (Klotz and Lynch, 2007: 7). It is due to the existence of that context that discourses, practices and actions have ‘sedimented’ meanings that can change over time, but that are temporarily stable.

The second constructivist ontological component, intersubjectivity, is closely related to the concept of context. It is an ontological pillar for constructivists in the sense that meaning is established by the interaction of subjects. Therefore, understandings are not purely individual and subjective, but shared, and widely accepted. Intersubjectivity leads to an understanding of social phenomena as based on dialogical relations, which goes against a positivist causal approach “by which one element clearly impacts on another” (Fierke, 2001: 117).

The third and final ontological component, power, is an extremely complex, and difficult concept to define. According to Max Weber’s classical definition, power can be seen as “the possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behaviour of other persons” (1989: 29). For Anthony Giddens, though, power is not necessarily about imposing, but about the ability “to achieve aims or further the interests they hold” (2001: 696). Norman Fairclough (2001:3), building on a Gramscian position itself derived from a Machiavellian understanding of power, talks about the exercise of power through coercion and consent, both being relevant for its exercise. Hannah Arendt, on the other hand, rejects the notion of power through coercion as, in her opinion, power “corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert” (1969: 44). In this context, power “is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together” (*idem*). Without

rejecting the idea of power as the possibility to achieve, that ability always belongs to a collective.

However, Arendt's definition does not sufficiently consider how power is exercised, a topic cherished by constructivist approaches. For Audie Klotz and Cecelia Lynch the exercise of power is the ability to "reconstruct discourses and shape practices" (2007: 11). How these processes of producing, re-producing, constructing and re-constructing are unfolded is at the core of the constructivist agenda, and will be at the core of this project as well. This necessarily demands Arendt's definition to be complemented with the above-mentioned understanding of the exercise of power. In that sense, power could be seen as encompassing these two ideas: on the one hand, the idea of it being a collective property, while on the other, the idea of it being treated as a form of producing and shaping discourses and practices. I would argue that power, as a concept related to the political realm, is always moving between these two poles: between the power of the people and the power derived from the execution of politics. The latter only exists with the consent of the former, but the power of executing is central for the understanding of how political issues are given an existential importance, that lead to the undertaking of armed conflicts.

Epistemologically, this constructivist ontology leads to the study of social phenomena not as truth-seeking, in which actor's discourses are put in contrast with what 'actually happened', but rather as an interpretation of an intersubjectively constructed 'reality'.

As argued by Klotz and Lynch,

[b]ecause constructivist ontology rejects the notion of an objective reality against which analysts test the accuracy of interpretations, "falsifiability" cannot be the goal. Researchers can do no more than contrast interpretations against other interpretations (2007: 106).

The rejection of causal links leads to the recognition of the agent's autonomy in the structure-agent debate. Thus, structures are not deterministic features of everyday life, but rather limiting and temporary boundary setting, formed from the stabilisation of certain meanings (Klotz and Lynch, 2007: 24).

Structures open the way for the agent's autonomous decision-making, which in turn can lead to the change of the structure. In that sense, the structure is not seen as the insurmountable barrier that defines how the world relates, but rather as a mediator between human agency and social dynamics. Following the structurationist approach of Anthony Giddens (2001), human agency is situated in relation to structural properties. Structure and agency are mutually constituted, and one only has meaning through the other (Jabri, 1996: 70), which implies that "people are both socialized into their situations and capable of transformative actions" (Klotz and Lynch, 2007: 59).

After having set the ontological and epistemological basis, it is now necessary to turn to the definition of the three central concepts of this research – politics, conflict and security.

*Politics.* Returning to Hannah Arendt, politics is where the possibility of freedom lays. In this context, an autonomous agency comes at a price, and that price is the impossibility of individual freedom outside a collective polity. In that sense, politics becomes the public arena of struggle and freedom for collective actors, but not necessarily a violent one. In fact, even though power and violence are commonly used together, they actually have opposite meanings, according to Hannah Arendt's thought. Violence as an instrument of coercion can destroy power. Nonetheless, power can never grow out of it: "[p]ower and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent" (1969: 56). Even though I take Arendt's definition of politics as the basis of my understanding of the concept, the definition raises some

problems – such as the role of strategic action<sup>1</sup> –, which will be analysed in chapter III with the contribution of other authors, such as Max Weber, Carl Schmitt and Chantal Mouffe. Nonetheless, it is this overarching Arendtian understanding of politics that ethically moves this research; the understanding of the possibility of politics as the basis for the condition of humanity (1998[1958]).

*Conflicts.* Conflicts have been defined in many different ways, to refer to a broad range of different phenomena (Nicholson, 1992: 11). As previously mentioned, a problem common to Peace and Conflict Studies is related to the assertion that conflicts are just one type of social phenomena that take place at different levels of social relations. This approach has an underlying conception of conflicts as social, subjugating political conflicts to that unifying dimension.

Otomar Bartos and Paul Wehr define conflict as “a situation in which actors use conflict behavior against each other to attain incompatible goals and/or to express their hostility” (2002: 13). This follows Johan Galtung’s (1996) conflict triangle, in which a conflict occurs when three different variables converge: attitude, incompatible goals and behaviour. However, in both cases, conflicts are not seen as having an eminent political character, thus allowing for the establishment of analogies with problems that are far removed from the sphere of politics. As Vivienne Jabri highlights, there is a “difference between the stabbing in a school yard associated with petty theft and the stabbing in a school yard associated with racial hatred” (2007: 10-11). Despite the similarity of both actions, they derive from distinct rationales: whereas one is a merely criminal act, the latter is one based with a political understanding of the other.

It is difficult to conceptually distinguish conflict and war. For Michael Nicholson, war is “any situation of large-scale deadly violence between anonymous or political

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<sup>1</sup> As put by Amy Allen, “Arendt’s attempt to exclude strategic action from the domain of the political altogether paints too rosy a picture of our political life.” (2002: 143).

groups” (1992: 16), but how ‘large-scale’ is defined is a debatable question. A common tool of distinction is the number of casualties, as is done by the Swedish Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and Uppsala University. However, such criteria can be quite misleading as a) it is not always easy to find accurate data in conflict contexts and b) it does not take into account indirect casualties. For example, as highlighted by Rupesinghe (1998: 26), in 1995 it was estimated that there were as many as 50,000 casualties in the Burundi conflict, but since direct military fighting was limited, the conflict was not defined as a war. War comes as another label in a conflict, a feature of it, and hence, something that must be considered within a political framework, as a political choice, with consequences for the way a conflict is defined and perceived by both outsiders and conflict parties.

A collective conflict evolves at different levels of analysis: we can analyse the individual level and assess how the individual is affected by the conflict and vice-versa. But how useful is that approach for the general understanding of the conflict as a political phenomenon? Michael Nicholson establishes an interesting and rather useful distinction between conflicts involving ‘face-to-face groups’ and political conflicts. The former are understood as “small enough for the individuals within them to recognise the other members” (1992: 16). It is a quarrel involving this type of actors, “such as small criminal gangs are more like murder than war, and we should be careful about overstressing the relationship between them” (Nicholson, 1992: 16). Face-to-face conflicts are about private life, private quarrels and private goals.

**Table 1 – Nicholson’s adapted conflict typology**

Nature of conflict	Group characteristics	
	Face to face	Political (or anonymous)
<b>Violent</b>	Murder	Armed Conflict or War
<b>Non-violent</b>	Family quarrel	Strike

*Source: Nicholson, 1992: 16*

On the other hand, political groups involve larger amounts of people, in general anonymous to each other producing the type of violence associated with armed conflicts and wars. These conflicts are inherently different from the face-to-face conflicts in the sense that they are waged with political objectives, and take place in the public sphere, involving individuals that are fighting in the name of something that goes beyond their private interest<sup>2</sup>, be it the group, the state or the nation.

It is within this framework that I identify Edward Azar’s *Protracted Social Conflicts* (PSCs). PSCs are hostile interactions prolonged in time, with fluctuation in intensity and frequency, going from intermittent periods of violence to open warfare (Azar *et al.*, 1978: 50). These conflicts are characterised by their long duration, variable intensity, blur between internal and external conflicts, the opposition between a state and non-state actors, and the denial of human needs on the part of the state as being at the basis of the conflict.

In this thesis, both the focus on these conflicts and on the respective fulfilment of basic needs will be questioned under a framework that filters (and re-defines) potential social claims through the lenses of politics, and that gains form through discourses of security. But how is security defined in this context?

<sup>2</sup> Even though private interest might be at the heart of an individual’s willingness to engage in a conflict, it is not part of the narrative that justifies it.

*Security*. According to Ole Wæver (2006), even though both the concept and its meaning have suffered several changes throughout time, the contemporary understanding of security has two main dimensions. It is first related to the security of the individual, the everyday meaning of security. Here we refer to the ‘feeling’ of security/insecurity on the part of the individual: “[t]he first meaning of security [introduced by Cicero and Lucretius based on Epicurean and Stoic origins] is freedom from pain, discomfort and worry, and thus a condition for a happy life” (*idem*: 22).

The second situation in which the security concept is used is within the context of the ‘national security’ discourse. In this case, the concept is the latest development of an expression that refers to the need to act urgently in order to guarantee the security of a collective group, in this case, the nation. This goes back to the creation of the nation-state and to the use of the *raison d’État* concept to define certain issues as paramount, as so important that no political discussion on the topic was necessary.

In the late 1940s, after the end of the Second World War, particularly in the United States, national security became predominant in the state’s discourse, even though “the sense of an over-riding right for the state when necessity ‘demands it’” (*idem*) attached to the concept was maintained. This concept has brought a clear transference of security as need from the individual meaning to the collective level (*idem*: 36), entitling the state as an actor with its own will and with its own security needs.

From the 1970s onwards, this concept has been widened, being commonly applied to spheres of society (i.e. environment security) from where it was previously absent (*idem*: 8). In that sense, we can nowadays use the same word to refer to two different, even if related, concepts – one focusing on the individual, and the other on the state (or other polities, as it will be seen in chapter V). In this thesis, unless when stated otherwise, I will be referring to the latter definition – to the collective understanding of

security – as that is the one directly linked with the practice of politics, as will be shown in chapter III.

In short, politics, power and security are concepts inter-linked with that of conflict. Following a critical or consistent constructivist approach, this link is apprehended through discursive practices. As such, it should now be seen how discourse analysis can contribute to the analysis of that relationship and how relevant it is for the study of conflicts in general.

### **3. Discourse Analysis as a link between Peace and Conflict and Security Studies**

Discourse analysis is at the basis of a constructivist approach to the study of the world. It can be done in several different ways, depending on the authors one follows. Nonetheless they all have, as a common notion, the idea that discourse matters, and that it is more than the mere description of a reality. According to Thomas Risse,

the emphasis on communicative and discursive practices constitutes a [...] characteristic feature of social constructivist approaches. If we want to understand and explain social behaviour, we need to take words, language, and communicative utterances seriously. It is through discursive practices that agents make sense of the world and attribute meaning to their activities (2004: 164).

Discourse is a constitutive feature of our world, not just an expression of it. According to Jennifer Milliken (2001: 138), there are three main theoretical claims linked to discourse analysis. The first claim tells us that discourses are *systems of signification*, that they are “structures of signification which construct social realities” (*idem*). The second claim tells us that discourses produce, reproduce and define things, meanings, and knowledgeable practices. Finally, the third and last claim is about the play of practice, that is, discourse analysis entails the study of “dominating or hegemonic discourses and their structuring of meaning as connected to implementing practices

and ways of making these intelligible and legitimate” (*idem*: 139). This implies an understanding of language as more than a mere description of reality; an understanding in which language describes our world embedded in other discourses and dependent on an ever, even if slowly, changing context (Diez: 1999: 610). As put by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe:

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or ‘expressions of the wrath of God’ depends upon the structuring of a discursive field (1985: 108).

As mentioned before, discourse analysis distinguishes itself from cognitive approaches that try to figure out how people think and perceive (Wæver, 2004a: 199). It tries to “find the structures and patterns in public statements that regulate political debate so that certain things can be said while other things will be meaningless or less powerful or reasonable” (*idem*). It draws attention to the communicative resources through which the socio-political sphere is produced and reproduced (Jabri, 1996: 90); it draws attention to the fact that language is not just used to describe politics, it makes it possible (Wæver, 2006: 11). It does not claim that there is nothing else than discourse, just that discourse is “the layer of reality where meaning is produced and distributed”, and, as such, it deserves to be analysed (Wæver, 2004a: 199). It should be made clear that discourse is not limited to texts (Fairclough, 2001: 20) or even to language. As Klotz and Lynch highlight,

[r]esearchers should not overlook non-linguistic dimensions of discourse. Practices, such as how people wear clothing, convey meanings that need to be interpreted through non-textual evidence. Uniforms decorated with medals and ribbons, for instance, designate individual places and social hierarchies within the military (2007: 19).

Discourse analysis is weak in finding 'real' motives or intentions (Buzan *et al*, 1998: 177). Nonetheless, besides the advantage of allowing for the possibility to study in depth the production and reproduction of political discourse and practices – the visible, public dimension of politics – by focusing on what is communicated, it also allows for the study of how words can create unintended effects from which it is difficult to get out of, even if one would like to, or even if those words were not deliberate (Wæver, 2004a: 212), something a cognitive approach would overlook. As summarised by Hannah Arendt,

[t]here may be truths beyond speech, and they may be of great relevance to man in the singular, that is, to man in so far as he is not a political being, whatever else may be. Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves (1998 [1958]: 4).

In a conflict context, discourse is often seen as part of each party's strategy; it is used to gather support, legitimacy or simply to motivate the combatants. For this thesis, though, discourse is more than that. "[A]n amalgam of material practices and forms of language and knowledge where each reinforces the other in a continuous cycle" (Jackson, 2005: 19), discourse is a constitutive element of any conflict, in the sense that it allows for the apprehension of the conflict's political meaning. In order to study those rules of what can and cannot be said, I would suggest the employment of discourse analysis, as a useful tool for the study of language in a conflict context.

In recent years, several authors in the field of Security Studies have focused on the analysis of discourse as a relevant if not essential feature within their field of inquiry. Authors such as Ole Wæver (1998; 2002), Lene Hansen (2006), Karen Fierke (2001), Michael Williams (1998) or Jeff Huysmans (2007) have highlighted the importance of discourse analysis in their works. On the contrary, within Peace and Conflict Studies,

such approach has been quite neglected, with just a few examples coming from the works of Ho-Won Jeong and Tarja Vyrynen (1999), Vivienne Jabri (1996), John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary (1995).

The use of discourse analysis in Peace and Conflict Studies provides us with the advantage of focusing on how the conflict actors understand the conflict, as well as the underlying values and discourses that dominate those understandings (*idem*: 21). Understanding the processes of construction and reproduction of exclusionist discourses and how they are politically articulated is arguably the biggest contribution discourse analysis can provide to the study of conflicts.

### *Using Discourse Analysis*

Several authors (cf. Fairclough, 2001; Milliken, 2001; Hansen, 2006; Klotz and Lynch, 2007) have advanced several different ways of using discourse analysis as a research method. Nonetheless, as Jennifer Milliken argues, there is no ‘universal’ method, but just “a number of ways that scholars can identify key aspects of significant practices and, based on their study, establish a discourse” (2001: 14).

In this thesis the model adopted has been that of Ole Wæver’s layered discursive structure. Even though it is also from one of the major authors of the Copenhagen School security theory, this approach does not derive from Wæver’s work in the area of Security Studies, but rather from his insights into European Studies.

Ole Wæver (2002: 29) defends the existence of different layers of discursive structures, each one of them incorporating a constellation of key concepts. Under this perspective, any political rhetoric on any given issue is dependent on a basic conceptual logic (with its codes, and narratives), which that political rhetoric will

reproduce and possibly modify, but that at the end of day will set the boundaries of the political struggle (*idem*: 31).

If we follow Ole Wæver's layered discursive structure and apply it to conflicts, we would first have the political discursive structure layer, followed by the discourse articulating the threat (securitisation), and finally the policy layer.

The political discursive structure is a constellation of hegemonic concepts that defines the political and social systems within a polity and paves the way for the definition of narrower political issues. The frequent reproduction of expressions such as "great nation", "free country", "national unity" reifies a certain discourse that becomes dominant, and that is difficult to change in the short-term. Ruling political actors and the main opposition work on the basis of shared basic codes, even if they completely disagree on policy contents (*idem*: 31). This political discursive structure also sets the words that can and cannot be used, making some appear logical whereas others seem absurd; it makes some political options viable and others nonsensical (Jackson, 2005: 22). In a sense, it defines the polity's identity in a two-folded way: by attaching certain concepts and expressions to the basic existence of that polity; and by attaching the existence of that polity to narrower political discourses. The political system is justified by and justifies the existence of that polity. Even though the nation or the group's existence is not seen as dependant on its political leadership, it is defined by it. In the second layer, we find (in conflict contexts) the construction of a certain threat that will then justify the approval of certain policies. Here, I would argue is where the securitisation process is identified – as it links the key political concepts to the approval of specific measures to fight the threat articulated in this layer. Within that articulation, naming or labelling is seen as a fundamental part of the process. The naming of the 'other' is framed within the larger discursive structure, as it must use the

key political concepts in a way that makes 'logical' the choice of the label. The 'other' can in this context be defined as the one who is contesting incontestable concepts, such as the 'integrity of the territory', the 'unity of the nation' or 'the religion of the state'. In short, any concept politically defined as 'existential'. In a political context characterised by the aggressive content of political arguments between the political actors, the 'other' will most likely also be defined in an aggressive manner, as the practice of labelling is a political practice, embedded in that political structure.

Finally, the policies are the specific measures that are to be undertaken in order to approach the labelled 'other' in a way that is coherent with the label and, in that sense, with the broader political discursive structure.

This approach will mainly take into account an understanding of the role of discourse as explored in the speech act theory developed by J. L. Austin, and further elaborated by John Searle<sup>3</sup>. In this approach it is the utterance itself that is the act: by saying the words, something is done (such as when a judge declares his sentence). According to Austin (1962: 99), speech acts are illocutionary acts (the performance of an act *in* saying something), whereas most of what one says or writes are locutionary acts (the performance of the act *of* saying something). A speech act is not merely one of uncontested utterances. It is as much a process of claiming as it is of convincing.

Speech acts will provide the basis for an understanding of the role of words as actions that lead to exclusionary politics within conflict contexts. However, in this thesis they are not isolated acts, but rather part of larger discourses. In that sense, a single speech act only has meaning if understood as part of a broader discourse. Not only is this important to understand the logic underlying the utterance of such words, as it is important for the sake of the speech act in itself – the audience can only approve a

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<sup>3</sup> The speech act theory has also been used within a Security Studies context by Ole Wæver, and within an International Relations Constructivist approach by both Nicholas Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwill.

discourse that it finds meaningful; and it cannot find meaningful a speech act devoid of a discursive context.

This three-layered model will be present in all the case-study chapters, albeit more visible in some chapters than in others. Chapter II is arguably where the model will be less visible, as the need to analyse the conflict through the different elements that constitute a PSC demanded an approach more similar to historical analysis than to discourse analysis. It is nonetheless framed in the discourse of both the PKK and the Turkish state, and the analysis of each one of the PSC elements has the centrality of the discourse of these actors as an underlying factor. In chapter IV, it will be analysed how the key constellation concepts in Turkey contribute to an institutionalised securitisation of Turkish politics, and how that reflected in the securitisation of the PKK in the 1980s. As this chapter focuses on the securitisation of the conflict and the consequent approval of exceptional measures, a good part of it will be focused on the policies approved by both sides and what they meant in terms of the unfolding of the conflict, leading to the analysis of practices and processes, rather than discourses *per se*. In chapter VI the focus will be on how the middle-layer, particularly in what concerns the labelling of the other, affects Ankara's policies regarding the rebel movement at the same time that it is discursively applied as a common feature of the contemporary (2006-2008) Turkish political debate. In chapter VIII, it will be seen how Turkey used the Global War on Terror to internationalise the securitisation of the PKK. The focus here will be on the construction of an international discourse of security that attempts to convince the United States of the threat the PKK represents. Finally, in chapter X, it will be seen how the possibility of solving the Turkey-PKK conflict is intimately related to the change in the political discourses of both sides.

#### 4. Case Study

For this thesis, the case study should not be seen as the empirical study where the theory will be tested, but rather as an illustration of the theoretical argument (for a similar use of a case study see Reimann, 2002). Hence, this thesis proposes a new approach to the study of conflicts, not a new approach plus its validation.

Choosing a case study involves three main questions: *how many? which? and why?*

The first question was easier to answer once the case study role in the thesis had been defined. If it were supposed to validate rather than to clarify, using more than one case study in order to compare them would be necessary. This would entail a whole comparative politics methodology, which would divert attention from the core of the project and demand a different methodological approach much similar to the positivist method. Besides, as Lene Hansen highlights (2006), there is the risk of oversimplifying the analysis of conflicts if we decide to approach them collectively.

The next question was to choose a specific case study. The conflict had to be framed within the PSCs model; in that sense, it had to have lasted for more than five years and it had to primarily involve a state *versus* a non-state political actor. Several conflicts would fit this pattern, from Colombia to the Kashmir region. In that sense, the selection would have to take into consideration other factors than the mere suitability of the case to the theory. The Turkish fight against the PKK was selected for four main reasons. The first reason had to do with the lack of English language literature on the topic, much less than other PSCs, such as Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka or Israel-Palestine. Even though there are a good number of books on the Kurdish problem (cf. Barkey, 1998; Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997; McDowall, 2005; Romano, 2007), in-depth works focusing on the conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK are much less common. The most comprehensive overviews of the conflict are İsmet İmset's 1992 work

on the PKK and, Sabri Cigerli and Didier Le Saout's (2005) *Öcalan et le PKK*. The former is a dated analysis of the conflict, whereas the latter is in French, only accessible to a French-speaking audience. There is, in that sense, need for further research for an updated analysis of the conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, particularly one that attempts to bring together the actors' discourses with a securitised understanding of the conflict.

The second reason had to do with the special geopolitical position that Turkey occupies on the world map, between Europe, the Middle East and the former Soviet world. The specific topic of Turkey's regional positioning in terms of security has already been covered within the Copenhagen School's framework by Isil Kazan (2003). What still has to be done is to study the relation between this geographical environment and the articulation of an internal security discourse by both the PKK and the Turkish authorities. This thesis intends to modestly contribute to the filling of such a gap (particularly in Part IV).

Thirdly, as one of my criticisms regarding Azar's PSCs model has to do with its focus on underdeveloped *quasi*-states, to use Robert Jackson's terminology (1990), I found it relevant to choose a case study of a well-established regionally powerful state – Turkey. By doing so it is my goal to show that Azar's model is relevant in any conflict context as long as the two basic features of a PSC – the conflict involving a state against a non-state entity, and being protracted in time – are present, from weak states to strong states, from very poor states to rich ones.

A final reason has to do with the relevance that Turkish politics has acquired in the European context, due to this country's accession process to the European Union. Even though the case study is merely illustrative and not the most central part of this research, it will still be possible to reach some conclusions regarding the complexity

and intractability of the Turkey-PKK conflict, which as it will be seen, is a central part of Ankara's domestic and foreign policies.

### *Case Study Data Sources*

Whereas the bulk of this project, due to its theoretical nature, is not based on data, but rather on thoughts, ideas and concepts of other authors, building on the critical review of existing theoretical literature in the fields of Security Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, Sociology and Political Theory, the analysis of the case study involves a broad range of data sources.

As mentioned above, discourse analysis will be the predominant method advanced for the study of PSCs. In this regard, the difficulty in mastering the Turkish language is an obstacle, particularly when doing discourse analysis. There are indeed quite a number of sources, which were not available due to the linguistic barrier and that is a limitation in this thesis. Nonetheless, not only was it possible to have a few speeches and articles, which could be considered as very relevant, translated, as there were a whole myriad of official documents, speeches, and news articles originally written or translated into English by reliable sources. The same can be said for the PKK sources, as a number of Kurdish websites in Western Europe translate official PKK documents and speeches. In both cases samples of those translations have been checked against the original texts. Also of great help is the fact that Turkey has two daily newspapers with quite different viewpoints in English: the *Turkish Daily News*, part of the Doğan group linked to the centre secularist movements, that apart from its own articles, also translates articles from the main Turkish newspapers, such as *Hurriyet* and *Milliyet*; and the more conservative *Today's Zaman*, which is the English version of the Turkish daily *Zaman*. There is a third English-language newspaper, *The New Anatolian*, which

prides itself for its independence, even though it is generally sympathetic towards the AKP government. Finally, another priceless source is the *Bulletin* of the French Kurdish Institute, published since 1983, which compiles articles on the Kurdish problem from all over the world.

Interviews, press releases, and official documents will be used in the identification of Turkey's and PKK's discourses. As it is not the goal of this research to provide an intertextual analysis (which would require the analysis of a small number of significant speeches or other sources) of the conflict, but rather a more general discourse analysis, I will consider the words of relevant actors to the press, even if only a part of a speech is quoted. Whenever it was possible those quotations were double-checked so that a) it is confirmed that those were the exact words and b) it is clear which parts of those words were disseminated by the press. In cases where that was not possible, the validity of the source was considered before deciding on the use of the information.

## **5. Chapter outline**

This thesis is structured in five different parts, each one of them developing a particular aspect of the theoretical model. The case study chapters will, in each part, serve to show how those theoretical claims can be applied to a specific conflict. The case study chapters will not, however, be the mere application of the previous chapter. As in any illustration, they tend to highlight some theoretical aspects instead of others. Besides, as the theory is supposed to cover more ground than what can be applied to each specific illustrative chapter, not all the elements developed in the theoretical chapters will find their application in the Turkey-PKK conflict.

Thus, after this Introduction, Part I will be dedicated to the notion of the ‘critical turn’ in Peace and Conflict Studies and the critical review of Edward Azar’s PSC model – both in theory (chapter I) and in practice (chapter II). Chapter I will start with a discussion about what can be understood as Peace and Conflict Studies, and then proceed with a narrative of its historical evolution. In parallel, the most relevant moments in the history of Security Studies will be highlighted when relevant for the evolution of Peace and Conflict Studies. This will establish a bridge to the third part of this chapter, in which the focus will be on the links between the two fields, from their creation until the end of the Cold War. How divergent the paths of both fields have been since then and the relevance of the critical turn for the study of conflicts will occupy the following part of this chapter. The specific contribution of this thesis to the necessary ‘critical turn’ in Peace and Conflict Studies will then be presented, followed by a ‘critical’ review of Edward Azar’s PSCs model. Chapter II will then deal with the analysis of the Turkey-PKK conflict under the reviewed PSC model, focusing on the formation and initial stages (1978-1990) of the conflict. By following the model revised in the previous chapter, this initial period will allow the understanding of the genesis, dynamics and initial outcomes of the conflict. This will not only provide a tentative (as the model will only be ‘complete’ by the concluding chapter) operationalisation of the model, as it will bring a new perspective to the understanding of this particular conflict.

Part II will focus on the relation between security, conflict and politics, by introducing securitisation theory (as well as other political theory contributions) in order to establish the link between the three above-mentioned concepts. In chapter III, I will argue that PSC contexts, due to the *protractedness* and inter-play between state and non-state actors, lead to the normalisation of the exceptional, in which the conflict

consequences involve all spheres of society and accountability levels are reduced to the 'necessary in order to face the enemy'. Chapter IV will provide an analysis of the Turkish-PKK conflict as an illustration of the theoretical arguments advanced in the previous chapter. As such, I will start by arguing that Turkey can be seen as a securitised state and that such understanding should be present when attempting to assess Ankara's behaviour towards the PKK. This will be followed by an analysis of how the Turkish state and the PKK have mutually constructed their securitising discourses and what that meant in terms of protracting the conflict for the period between the official creation of the PKK in 1978 and 1990. It will be particularly highlighted how these discourses were inter-linked with the approval and maintenance of exceptional measures that further led to the intractability of the conflict.

After having established the relation between security, conflict and politics, and thus revisiting PSCs under the light of securitised politics, Part III will deal with the importance of the difference between state and non-state actors in order to understand the particular dynamics of these conflicts. In that sense, chapter V will start with the analysis of the state *versus* non-state actors inter-play in the context of PSCs, with a strong emphasis on both actors' legitimacy, and the construction of their discourses via different security sectors. In the second section of this chapter, the focus will be on the importance of labelling the 'other' as part of a process of reifying divergent identities – with a particular focus on the 'terrorist' label. Finally, it will be discussed how this labelling process establishes the limits of what can and cannot be seen as Protracted Social Conflicts. Chapter VI will focus on the recent period that led to Turkey's military intervention in Northern Iraq. This particular period was chosen for it allows a clear understanding of how labels are transformed into specific policies, in this case, how the names and words used by the Turkish authorities to describe the

PKK were linked to the Northern Iraq intervention. Thus, the chapter will begin with the analysis of the context in which the build up to a Turkish military intervention took place. A second section will approach with particular attention the ways in which the Turkish state labelled the PKK during the 2006-2008 period and how that was incorporated in the inter-party political discourse in Turkey. The chapter will then conclude with some remarks on the political repercussions of using an antagonistic discourse, and the ways in which this discourse conditions political life in Turkey.

Part IV will be dedicated to the development of the international dimension of PSCs. Thus, chapter VII will focus on the impact of Regional Security Complexes (RSCs) and the influence of geography in PSCs, and how the 'international' is understood from this prism. The concept of international securitisation as the export of internal security discourse to an external audience will also be advanced in this chapter. In the context of the Turkey-PKK conflict, chapter VIII will consider how Iraq, particularly Northern Iraq, has been influential in the unfolding of the conflict, and in a second section, how Turkey has, from April 2006 to Spring 2007, tried to convince the United States of the need to undertake a military operation in the region.

In Part V it will be analysed how PSCs' resolution is intimately linked with stopping violence, the desecuritisation of discourses and the possibility of political change. Chapter IX will begin by discussing the relevance of both cease-fires and desecuritisation processes for the ending of violent conflicts. The justification of why these two concepts are – in a conflict resolution-oriented perspective – completely inter-dependent, and mutually necessary, will be offered here. In a part dedicated to the possibility of politics in cease-fire contexts, political change will be presented as the key factor that determines the possibility of de-escalation. Linked to this, will be the concept of 'conflict transformation' here presented as essential for the stabilisation

of post-conflict societies. The chapter will then conclude with an analysis of the political consequences of failed peace-oriented attempts, and what they mean for possibilities of effective peace. In chapter X, the 1999 cease-fire call by the PKK will be analysed, paying particular attention to the arguments advanced by the movement and by the Turkish authorities. This will be followed by an assessment of the reasons underneath the failure to end the conflict between Turkey and the PKK.

The thesis will then conclude with a summary of the points raised throughout the text, particularly focusing on the added value that a political understanding of security brings to the understanding of conflicts; also considering the particular case of the conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK.

## **Part I – The ‘critical turn’**

## **Chapter I. Towards a critical approach to the study of conflicts**

### **Introduction**

The goal of this research is to update a model developed within Peace and Conflict Studies (Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts) by using authors and theories that are either part of Security Studies (such as the Copenhagen School's securitisation theory) or have been used in that context (in particular political theorists like Hannah Arendt or Carl Schmitt). In that sense, it is important to start this chapter by understanding how these two areas of research have developed by following parallel, at times convergent, paths.

I would argue that Peace and Conflict Studies and Security Studies are linked in at least two different ways. First, in the way both disciplines have historically had similar objects of inquiry, even though mutual collaborations have been limited. Second, in how Peace and Conflict Studies might specifically learn from Security Studies' 'critical turn' about the importance of being more self-reflexive, and about considering the incorporation of post-positivist contributions to the study of conflicts. In this chapter these two dimensions will be under scope, first by analysing how both disciplines have evolved and what is to be learned from that, and secondly, by pointing out how Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflict model can, in particular, be reviewed under a more critical (constructivist) light.

The chapter will thus be looking at both fields in order to see which previous interplays can be identified between them and where they currently stand in that relation. The first section focuses on the similarities and differences between the blurring areas of Peace Studies, Conflict Studies and Conflict Resolution in order to justify the

choice for the Peace and Conflict ‘synthesis’ as the discipline responsible for the study of conflicts. How the move from Strategic to Security Studies in the 1980s, how Peace and Conflict Studies developed in constant contact with these two fields, and the quality and meaning of that contact for contemporary Peace and Conflict Studies will then be under scrutiny in the second and third sections of this chapter. It will be particularly argued that Peace and Conflict Studies should replicate the ‘critical turn’ that Security Studies has been through (mainly) in Europe roughly since the end of the Cold War. The fourth section will deal with this thesis’ specific contribution to that turn by analysing how Edward Azar’s Protracted Social Conflict could be interpreted under a more critical tone, taking into consideration each one of the model’s dimensions – genesis, dynamics and outcomes. This (initial) re-interpretation of Azar’s model will occupy the remaining sections of the chapter and will set the basis for the more in-depth analysis of chapters III, V, VII and IX.

### **1. Conflict Studies, Conflict Resolution or Peace Studies?**

There is neither a consensus on what clearly distinguishes Conflict Studies from similar research fields – such as Conflict Resolution or Peace Studies –, nor a notion of its borders. For Heikki Patomaki, for instance, “[t]he identity of peace research has been under discussion for nearly 40 years, yet there has never been any clear and widespread unanimity about what it is, and what, strictly speaking, its tasks are” (2001: 724). In the same vein, one of the field’s founding fathers, Kenneth Boulding argued as far back as in 1978, “I think we can claim that the peace research movement has produced a discipline, which goes by a number of different names”. Both Boulding (*idem*) and Hugh Miall (1999: 12), suggest that the use of a common label,

Peace and Conflict Studies, could, to a certain extent put together these different approaches.

By looking at two different dimensions, the object of inquiry and relation between theory and practice, it should be possible to draw some lines between the above-mentioned three conflict-related academic fields, and thus conclude on the usefulness of Boulding and Miall's suggestion.

### *Object of inquiry*

'Armed Conflict', as a social phenomenon, is a common object of inquiry for the three fields of research, even though in different degrees and with different purposes. For Conflict Studies, or Conflict Analysis, the study of such phenomena is at the core of its research. This approach particularly developed in the United States is focused on understanding conflicts in the same way comparative politics attempts to understand politics (they even share methods and concepts). Conflict Resolution, on the other hand, focuses more specifically on how to end conflicts, rather than analysing the full conflict spectrum, from its incipency to its end. As highlighted by Ho-Won Jeong, "conflict resolution has to be geared toward finding solutions to the structural causes of problems that are responsible for contentious relationships" (1999: 15). In that sense, for Conflict Resolution, conflicts (of the violent type) only matter as social phenomena that should cease to exist. Its object of inquiry is the process of solving conflicts and not the conflict in itself.

Finally, for Peace Studies, its research object is not so much about armed conflicts, but about the conditions for peace in which the absence of conflicts is just the starting point. For Paul Rogers and Oliver Ramsbotham (1999), there are seven areas of research within Peace Studies: the need to overcome structural inequalities, a point

included after the development of Galtung's concept of 'structural violence'; the focus on interdisciplinary approaches; linked to the previous point, the advocacy of multi-level analysis, going from the individual level to the inter-state one; the search for non-violent transformation of conflicts; the rejection of ethnocentric conceptions of peace; the balance between analysis and a normative approach; and finally, as a follow-up of the previous point, the defence of a close relationship between Peace Studies and peace activism. When it comes to armed conflicts, peace scholars do not study them in order to better understand the phenomenon. Instead, they do it because they 'interfere' with their peace promotion goals. There is no other relevance to armed conflicts other than the study of how to remove them from collective human relations. Peace is, in that sense, the focal object of research, independently of how it is understood. Therefore, even if the three fields approach conflicts in one way or another, how they do it and why they do it leaves 'armed conflicts' as a weak object of inquiry, central to Conflict Studies, less so for Conflict Resolution and avoidable, when possible, for Peace Research.

#### *Academics and practitioners*

As a field of research, Conflict Resolution has a poor record of theoretical depth, which is related to its direct focus on the end result. As argued by Hugh Miall, "the complexity of these situations [contemporary violent conflicts] contrasts starkly with the relative simplicity of the core theories we can find in conflict resolution" (2001: 3). An additional problem related to Conflict Resolution is the development of alternative concepts that *a priori* would fit within the field, but that in reality do not subscribe to its intentions. A good example is the concept of 'conflict transformation' (Miall:

2001). This concept, even though willing to advocate the ending of a conflict, does it by going against the more 'immediate goals' of conflict resolution.

For the proponents of conflict transformation, conflicts are seen as very complex processes whose consequences go deep beyond the official cessation of hostilities between the parties. Without considering and approaching those consequences, something that requires a much longer time-span than what conflict resolution advocates are usually willing to defend, conflicts will tend to re-surface or at least to help create structurally dysfunctional post-conflict societies (Miall, 2001).

If we take these theoretical (the lack of theoretical depth) and conceptual (the creation of contradictory concepts, such as 'conflict transformation') challenges into consideration, it does not seem to make much sense to keep pushing forward the expression Conflict Resolution as an academic discipline. Not only is it prescriptive in its approach, but the prescription itself also seems to be increasingly challenged from within. In this case, the embedment of its knowledge *acquis* in an equally prescriptive field of research – the broader field of Peace Studies – might make more sense.

Peace Studies have a clear normative agenda. According to Terry Terriff *et al.*,

Peace studies is concerned with the liberation of individuals from all dynamics of violence, however insidious, and all impediments to self-realization, and the individual is a more significant unit of analysis than the state, a collectivity or a class (1999: 75).

Research within its context has an unambiguous and focused goal: the promotion of peace. As highlighted by Rogers and Ramsbotham, "nearly all peace researchers insist that theoretical insight must be empirically tested, and many have been more concerned with the policy implications of their research than with its reception among fellow academics" (1999: 742).

For Conflict Studies, on the other hand, its practitioner dimension is similar to what can be found in Security Studies: that is, its 'direct' practical contribution resides in the analysis and the promotion of a better understanding of the issues at stake, in this case, the dynamics and context of each conflict.

In short, Conflict Studies and Peace Studies have different goals, different objects and different agendas. As already mentioned, not only do they focus on two different areas (conflicts *versus* the possibilities of peace) but they also have a very different view on the role of academic research. Nonetheless, this does not mean that Conflict Studies' scholars do not do Peace Studies work or vice-versa. The differences are established between disciplines, not between people and there are obvious mutual influences in the development of both fields. Indeed, the history of Conflict Studies would not be complete without the huge contribution provided by Peace Studies scholars, as shown in the next section. In that sense, following Boulding's (1978) and Miall's (1999) suggestion, it might indeed be more reasonable to consider Peace and Conflict Studies as a greater umbrella, which encompasses both the (Conflict) analysis and the (Peace Studies) normative dimension. Putting the two under the same umbrella, while recognising their differences and limitations, will be less confusing when analysing their historical contribution for the understanding of conflicts, rather than establishing clear boundaries that would put many authors and research in an academic limbo between Conflict Studies and Peace Studies.

## **2. Divergences and convergences in Peace and Conflict and Security Studies**

Born from the ashes of the First World War, and expanded after 1945, Peace and Conflict Studies has experienced so far what Ramsbotham *et al.* (2005) consider as four different phases. A first phase, or generation, that goes from 1918 to 1945, was

essentially dominated by the eruption of pacifist movements. This phase would overlap with the origins of International Relations as an area of research: in 1919, the first Chair in International Relations in the world, the Woodrow Wilson Chair, was established at the University of Aberystwyth. Behind such creation was the goal of educating future generations to analyse the world through different lenses from the ones that had led to the First World War. This inter-war idealism would be manifested in other specific measures, such as the creation of the League of Nations, strongly criticised (during and) after the Second World War for having led to the appeasement policy that allowed Hitler to strengthen Germany's military capacity before undertaking his expansionary policy. Authors such as Hans Morgenthau (1948) and E.H. Carr (1939; 1944) would thus defend the inevitability of conflict and the need to see the world as it is, instead of trying to follow utopian dreams.

The collapse of the 'peace utopia' would arguably be at the base of both the emancipation and the search for scientific legitimacy by Peace and Conflict Studies' scholars in the following decades. International Relations, taken over by the Realist school of thought, was no longer a useful framework for those who believed that there were more explanations outside the Realist inevitability of conflicts. In that sense, a second phase in the history of Peace and Conflict Studies (from 1945 to 1965) was marked by the appearance of the first relevant theorists, such as Kenneth Boulding, Johan Galtung and John Burton. For Rogers and Ramsbotham, it was during this period "that peace research, as a formal field of study with its own academic institutions and professional journals, was established" (1999: 740). The study of conflicts, largely restricted to the study of major wars back then, moved away from the idealistic rhetoric, focusing on positivist scientific research, spurred by Lewis Richardson's *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (1960) and Quincy Wright's re-edition of

*Study of War* (Cusack, 1995: 192), the ‘forerunners’ of Peace and Conflict Studies, as referred to by Kenneth Boulding (1978: 342). The Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan and the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University were among the first programmes created with the specific goal of studying conflicts.

In the search for demonstrating the academic relevance of their work, these scholars resorted to other areas of research such as Economics, Psychology and Sociology mixing them with quantitative analyses in order to produce ‘valid’ scientific contributions. According to Terriff *et al.*: “It was only through ‘scientific’, ‘value-free’ analysis that peace research could attract funding and gain academic credibility” (1999: 69). As highlighted by Heikki Patomaki, “peace research reflected a belief in scientific knowledge and an ability to enlighten humanity” (2001: 726).

Outside the United States, Scandinavians and West Germans developed a parallel, but somewhat different, approach. With Johan Galtung, founder of the International Peace Research Institute (Oslo, Norway) and the *Journal of Peace Studies*, at the front, they introduced a “global-cum-structuralist approach and viewed global economic relations based on violence and exploitation as constituting conflictual relations” (Scherrer, 1999: 4). Like his American counter-parts, Galtung advocated the development of research based on scientific quantitative analyses, albeit with different goals. In his opinion, “the basic concern of peace research is the reduction of violence of all kinds”, and not merely the ‘scientific’ study of conflicts (Galtung, 1985: 141). The goal of his research was to change the *status quo*, based on the idea that humanity has a tendency to cooperate instead of being inherently evil. Galtung was establishing the grounds for the development of a Peace Research culture, of a

research focused on the potential for co-operation rather than on the mere study of violent conflict (Terriff *et al.*, 1999: 70).

It could be said that Security Studies also emerged from the end of the Second World War as a sub-field of International Relations (Wæver, 2004: 2), analysing the ways in which states were threatened by other states through the main International Relations theories. This happened as the United States was reforming its security apparatus in order to cope with the new realities of the post war era. National Security became part of state leaders' vocabulary, as the National Security Act was approved in the US in 1947. National Security Studies became part of university curricula in the US, while in Europe the same contents were taught under the 'Strategic Studies' label (Wyn Jones, 1999). As security was seen in a restricted way, mainly as a military issue, Strategic Studies were seen as appropriate to tackle international security issues. As mentioned by Buzan, "[s]trategic reductionists [took] the political out of strategy and reduce[d] it to military accounting" (1991: 345).

Up until the 1960s, Strategic Studies, and Peace and Conflict Studies broadly shared the same subjects (Dunn, 1991): deterrence, arms control, game theory, among others. Only in the 1960s and 1970s did things start to change more substantially, with the latter re-directing its focus to development, colonialism, liberation wars and other unconventional conflicts. We were in the consolidation phase.

The consolidation phase (1965-1985) was marked, in Europe, by the radicalization of peace research, with the concept of 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1969) at the centre. This concept recognised economic oppression at the base of the impossibility for peace. Overcoming the structure became, in that sense, attached to the idea of peace. This suggested that the fundamental features of inter-state relations were problematic, as they only provided limited security and peace. Such approach led to further

detachment from mainstream International Relations and Politics, and a decrease of influence within the general public opinion that would last until the early 1980s, when the return of the nuclear issue as a major political topic in Europe led Peace Studies to become “more visible, vocal and significant.” (Terriff *et al.*, 1999: 76).

This radicalisation period was not followed everywhere. Indeed, as mentioned by Terriff *et al.* (1999: 75) it caused a division within the peace and conflict researchers: while Galtung and his counterparts focused on eradicating structural violence, Boulding and the American school still had disarmament and arms control as their main research focus. Kenneth Boulding saw such a move as diverging from the core focus on conflict research:

I have a strong impression that the last ten years or so in conflict and peace research have been one of consolidation and what Kuhn calls ‘normal science’ in the United States, without any striking new ideas or new lines of development, whereas in Europe the whole peace research enterprise has been diverted along ideological lines, which impress me as having been very unfruitful (1978: 345).

Despite this divergence or in spite of it, this period was also marked by the development of conflict research based on a less state-centric approach when compared to the previous two phases. The colonial wars and other internal conflicts attracted increased attention in these authors’ analyses. The Cold War and inter-state relations were no longer sufficient explanations for an increasing number of conflicts worldwide<sup>4</sup>. If not before, it became clear at this point what the major difference between Strategic and Conflict Studies was: the former stood within the level of inter-state relations, while Conflict Studies followed the conflicts’ evolution, following them to the internal dynamics of regions and countries.

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<sup>4</sup> According to Uppsala’s Database, the number of conflicts worldwide steadily increased from 1957 until 1994 ([www.pcr.uu.se](http://www.pcr.uu.se)).

In the 1980s, with the introduction of the wide *versus* narrow debate, Security Studies gained ground within International Relations. Barry Buzan's seminal work *People, States and Fear* (1983), proposed that security should no longer be seen solely the realm of military affairs. Furthermore, security was no longer a given objective concept, but one that should be debated. Buzan's work was also essential for the establishment of Security Studies as an academic field, more encompassing than Strategic Studies or National Security Studies had been so far.

The Reconstruction phase (1985 to 2005) determined the most recent theoretical literature available in Peace and Conflict Studies, which pretty much focused on handling the post-Cold War effects on conflicts worldwide. Oddly enough, the end of the Cold War served, to a large extent, to narrow the differences between Security Studies and Conflict Studies. Security left the unified space of inter-state relations and started to be analysed also at supra- and sub- levels of analysis. For Wyn Jones, Security Studies was now converging with what Peace and Conflict Studies, among others, had been advocating for years:

Whereas in the past calls for a broader conception were confined to (marginalized) peace researchers, world society thinkers, and a few of the more intellectually adventurous international relations scholars such as Buzan himself... they have now become commonplace in the mainstream of traditional security studies (1999: 105).

This approach was made even clearer in Booth's advocacy of the need to follow peace research in encompassing other security dimensions beyond the state:

The referent object of 'security' should no longer be almost exclusively the state (which emphasizes national military conceptions of security) but should also encompass the individual human being at the lowest level and world society at the highest. Thus the traditional strategic studies notion of security should become broader and synonymous with the peace research concept of 'positive peace' (1991: 341).

The emergence of Critical Security Studies<sup>5</sup> in Europe contributed in a dramatic way to this change. Aberystwyth, Copenhagen and Paris became related to Security Studies' schools of thought (Wæver, 2004: 6; CASE, 2006). With them, security became much more than the maintenance of each states' territorial integrity: economic, environmental and other kind of considerations were added to the equation. At the core of these new approaches was the "recognition of the idea that security is essentially a derivative concept; this means, simply, that contending theories about world politics produce different conceptualizations of what security is all about in world politics" (Booth, 2005: 13).

In a sense, Security Studies followed in the early 1990s a similar process to that of Conflict Studies in the early 1960s: concentrating on the concept that gives its name to the field instead of expecting it to fit within the larger bulk of International Relations theory. The end result (for now) was that, in spite of different starting points<sup>6</sup>, both fields became closer regarding their object of study (Terriff *et al.*, 1999: 79).

Curiously, some of those ideas started to float within Peace and Conflict Studies institutes, such as COPRI in Copenhagen. According to Hugh Miall, "[t]he project of the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute on post-cold war security studies, which brought together scholars and insights from both fields, is a notable example of this synthesis" (1999: 23).

Also during this period, there were several works on Third World Security (cf. Ayoob, 1995) that challenged the more classical assumptions (Thomas, 1991: 274). In a book edited by Edward Azar and Chung-in Moon, several authors discussed and questioned

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<sup>5</sup> As highlighted in the introduction to the first book compiling these different approaches, Michael Williams and Keith Krause's *Critical Security Studies*, "the term *critical to security studies* [was] meant to imply more an orientation toward the discipline than a precise theoretical label, as we adopt a small-c definition of critical for both practical and intellectual reasons" (Krause and Williams, 1997: 10-11).

<sup>6</sup> Whereas Security Studies starts by asking what threatens an individual, group, state or region's security, Conflict Studies questions how we can explain and resolve a certain conflict.

the relevance of the then existing national security theories for the study of reality in the Third World. For these authors, those works had

underestimated the salience and impact of domestic political structure and policy-making fragility, economic and technological underdevelopment, ethnic, religious and social cleavages in the ever expanding populations and the severe ecopolitical pressures affecting the Third World (1988: 2).

Indeed, this is an issue that has accompanied Security Studies to these days. Even though much more open than previous theoretical contributions, the works done under the general umbrella of Critical Security Studies are still accused of developing models and frameworks centred on the European reality, leaving largely unaddressed issues that tend to appear in other less developed regions of the world (cf. Walker, 2007; Wilkinson, 2007)

According to Ramsbotham *et al.*, we are now entering a fifth phase within Conflict Studies, “which faces the challenge of continuing to innovate and refine the field so that it is responsive to twenty-first century conflict” (2005: 33). In their opinion, this opens prospects for further cooperation between both fields as their research agendas become increasingly similar with the focus on topics like terrorism and environment (*idem*).

### **3. A relationship full of linkages**

Both Peace and Conflict Studies, and Security Studies have, as just seen, developed different paths that occasionally converged. Looking back, I would point out three different occasions in which such convergence took place.

*The ancestors.* It could be argued that both disciplines share the same origins; the post-First World War pacifist movement that advocated the study of past wars in order to

better understand how to avoid them in the future laid the foundations of the discipline of International Relations. The analysis of conflicts was back then limited to the study of major inter-state wars, and 'security' was still to replace 'state/national interest' in the international politics lexicon. In any case, it is from this period, in which the creation of the first International Relations Chair in Wales was the academic corollary, that both fields derive from.

*The scientific turn.* The surge for academic acceptance led both fields, in the early 1950s, to develop natural science's methodologies and approaches to their objects of inquiry, as well as to focus on the topic that would most easily guarantee financing and the public opinion attention: the nuclear arms race. Since they used the same approach and studied similar topics, it was often difficult to distinguish during this period, which works fell within Conflict Studies and which ones fell within (National) Security Studies.

*The broadening of the agenda.* From the late 1980s onwards, Security Studies has started to broaden its agenda, including issues previously out of its reach, such as environment, migration and terrorism. As previously seen, this was to a certain extent influenced by Peace and Conflict Studies' ideas such as Johan Galtung's concept of 'positive peace' (1996). The fact that Security Studies is now more focused on following the security label wherever it is used, makes it, in principle, more possible to establish a dialogue with Peace and Conflict Studies whenever security and conflict meet. Curiously, so far, the broadening of the agenda has led Security Studies to areas further from the study of conflicts and war. As highlighted by Iver Neumann,

[t]he wish to widen the agenda and play down the absolutely overshadowing place traditionally taken up by this issue is definitely both understandable and laudable, but it cannot be taken so far that the war-baby is thrown out with the bathing water (1998: 7).

In that sense, a dialogue between the two fields would allow for the rescue of that 'war-baby' within Security Studies, while providing the basis for a more sophisticated analysis of conflicts by Peace and Conflict Studies.

*What kind of dialogue?* The question that remains to be answered is to what extent can this dialogue become something more than the mere exchange of viewpoints on common topics? In this context, a merging of Security Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies into one field of research or even the latter being seen as sub-field of the former in the same way that Strategic Studies could be seen as a sub-field of Security Studies (Baylis and Wirtz, 2002) is not here advocated. On the contrary, Peace and Conflict Studies could be enhanced as a recognised autonomous academic discipline if it followed the example of Security Studies in Europe on how to develop an academic field based on strong (even if ever contested and ever evolving) theoretical bases.

As already seen, Peace and Conflict Studies, has, since its emergence, had as a point of honour its multi-disciplinary vocation. Unfortunately, that open approach only had limited theoretical results. Rogers and Ramsbotham mention three broad theoretical approaches that have been used and combined in peace research: "a practical problem-solving and needs-based approach; a rational quantitative and comparative-empirical approach; and a theoretical-structuralist approach" (1999: 751). The first one was clearly linked with the practitioner dimension of the field; the second, to the pursuit of a scientific approach to the study of conflicts; and finally, the third to the line of research developed by Galtung and dependency theorists, both tending to look at the macro-structures of the international system as the main cause of violent conflict in the world. It is visible the absence of other theoretical agendas, such as critical approaches of a more political stance.

On the contrary, and even though the US academia is still deeply embedded in a realist understanding of security, in Europe that critical turn in the field of Security Studies has been strongly felt in the last decade (cf. Wæver, 2004). The so-called Aberystwyth School of Security Studies, for example, is strongly influenced by the works developed in the Frankfurt School by authors such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Nonetheless, it would be inaccurate to define Ken Booth's or even Richard Wyn Jones' works as the mere implementation of Critical Social Theory to the study of security. These approaches have in common "the identification and denunciation of *depoliticization*, both in the social realm and in the realm of academia" (CASE Collective, 2006: 445), but they move forward in different directions.

As mentioned earlier, within Conflict Studies such integrative approaches are rare, the works of Mark Duffield and Vivienne Jabri, being honourable exceptions. As Carlos Yordán highlights,

[w]hat is surprising is that CA [Conflict Analysis] has not really been affected by the "critical turn" in IR. One explanation might be that CA practitioners are less interested in theoretical questions and more concerned with devising ways of resolving and preventing armed conflicts (2003: 60).

Looking at the point raised by one of the most relevant authors within Peace and Conflict Studies, Christopher Mitchell, such absence could probably be more clearly understood:

I am a fairly unregenerate positivist and empiricist, so I do believe (but ultimately can't prove beyond any shadow of doubt) that there is a world "out there" full of things, some of which we have agreed to call "conflicts", worth trying to analyse and understand. Foucault's idea that we somehow "create" or "construct" this world ourselves seems to me to be fundamentally mistaken and misleading – and also one of the most intellectually arrogant ideas I have yet come across. We do not "construct" the world, or that part of it we are interested in trying to understand (2001: 6).

As highlighted by the CASE Collective (2006:462) and Vivienne Jabri (1996:55), Peace and Conflict Studies research orthodoxy is based on an over emphasis on empirical analysis from which regularities can be discovered and general explanations deduced; an approach that is too ‘narrow’ (CASE, 2006: 462) and theoretically poor (Miall, 1999: 18; Reimann, 2002: 391) within the contemporary framework of social sciences. As further highlighted by Jabri:

The field has been so dominated by a positivist orientation that questions of ontology and epistemology have been largely ignored, since the methods of the natural sciences have been assumed to be applicable to the study of social phenomena such as conflict (*idem*: 22).

In the above-mentioned Security Studies examples, those authors’ works are not only in contact with other areas of thought, but they are also in constant dialogue with other works within Security Studies as well. However, when it comes to Peace and Conflict Studies, Rogers and Ramsbotham highlight “how sparse such dialogue has been in the past” (1999: 752).

#### **4. Defining Protracted Social Conflicts**

In order to contribute to that change, we should turn our attention to the model that is central to the whole thesis – Edward Azar’s Protracted Social Conflicts – and develop a more ‘critical’ approach to its understanding. First, however, it is necessary to define what being ‘critical’ here means.

Within the Frankfurt School, German thinker Max Horkheimer (1972 [1937]) established the distinction between ‘traditional’ theory and ‘critical’ theory. According to him, traditional theory was concerned with the separation between object and

subject, understanding science as value-free with a mere explanatory value. On the other hand, critical theory understood theory as part of social and political life, with the possibility of promoting the emancipation of the individual through knowledge. As stated by Karin Fierke,

[o]ne of the central concerns of Adorno and Horkheimer, representatives of the early Frankfurt School, was that positivism had contributed to the dehumanisation of society and the objectification of individuals. The project of critical theory was to recover the capacity to be fully human (1998: 12).

For Mark Hoffman (1987), Horkheimer's approach to critical theory had three main driving forces behind it. First, the belief that the society of his time – 1930s – was in need of radical transformation and not just reform. Second, that theory had always had a particular social context from which it could not and should not be separated. Finally, Horkheimer rejected the idea that social sciences could have independent objective theories.

Many years later, Robert Cox introduced this distinction into International Relations in order to present a strong critique of Kenneth Waltz' neo-realism. According to him, Waltz' theory fits into what could be defined as a 'problem-solving theory', that is, a theory that "takes the world as it finds it" (Cox, 1981: 128). The problem with this approach is that it neither questions those conditions of existence of what it is looking at nor does it consider the possibility of change beyond existing structure. Besides, it does not take into consideration that theories are "always *for* someone and *for* some purpose [original italics]" (*idem*).

Contrary to this, critical theories question the prevailing order, how that order came to existence and what are its underlying processes of historical change. In contrast with problem-solving theories, critical theories are constantly adjusting to the changing concepts and the objects they seek to explain (*idem*: 129). Also, they are open to

normative approaches that favour the change of the standing order: they are potentially normative in that sense. However, such openness is limited by the feasibility of that alternative order, constrained “by the comprehension of historical processes” (*idem*: 130).

The key distinction between problem solving and critical theory is in the role theory must have in understanding the world – in that sense the problem-solving theory sees itself as explaining the world as ‘it sees’ it, whereas critical theory attempts to go beyond that, asking questions about why it is seeing the world in a certain way. This inquisitive, often self-reflexive attitude thus marks the essence of the distinction between problem-solving and critical theory. As put by Ruth Wodak, critical

means not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, being self-reflective [...], and through these processes [make] opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifest. ‘Critical’, thus, does not imply the common sense meaning of ‘being negative’ – rather ‘skeptical’ (2007).

Furthermore, as pointed out by Jef Huysmans,

[t]he critical quality rests on the assumption that representations of the world make a difference (performative force of language) and that there is no natural or neutral arbiter of a true representation. Consequently, any representation, to become true, has to establish itself as hegemonic (2002: 50).

These approaches are labelled as antifoundational, since they sustain the claim that human society is not measurable with resort to objective and neutral criteria (Booth, 2005: 10).

In terms of ‘scientific positioning’, to be critical is usually seen as sitting on the banks criticising the mainstream flow of knowledge of a certain discipline, subject or area. However, the usual argument that critical is only critical until it becomes mainstream

is completely misplaced: to be critical is to have a constant tendency to question the basic assumptions, independently of whether it is fashionable or not to do so.

As mentioned above, there was a time when Peace and Conflict studies were critical: it began as an alternative way of seeing international relations and with Johan Galtung, Peace Studies in Europe became an alternative way of seeing conflicts. All these concepts seemed, however, to have stabilised, becoming dominant but not necessarily critical anymore.

It is with the need to contribute to a more critical discipline of Peace and Conflict Studies in mind that we should now turn to a critical analysis of Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts' model, the core object of this thesis' research. Underlying this preliminary (in the sense that the following chapters will further add on to this analysis) introduction of critical thought in Azar's model will be two main ideas: first, as highlighted in the introductory chapter, the idea that social reality – conflicts included – is constructed, and second, that conflicts – Protracted Social Conflicts in particular – are political phenomena and should thus be primarily understood as such.

### *Critically analysing Protracted Social Conflicts*

Edward Azar's starting point is that conflicts are an inseparable part of social interaction, involving at least two parties that due to the existence of mutually incompatible goals and to the lack of mechanisms of coordination and mediation develop antagonistic approaches (1990: 5). Within this general approach, Azar identifies what he calls *Protracted Social Conflicts*, that is, "hostile interactions which extend over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare fluctuating in frequency and intensity" (Azar *et al.*, 1978: 50). These conflicts are framed within a context of perpetuated underdevelopment that is a function of the "structural

inequality so prevalent in the Third World” (Azar and Moon, 1988: 395-396). In turn, such structural inequality is a product of “political inequality, economic stratification, and ideological domination by one group over the other” (*idem*: 396).

Protracted Social Conflicts are “distinguishable from other conflicts in terms of their focus on group and national identity and the rights and privileges associated with them” (Azar and Farah, 1981: 320). Moreover, they are characterised by a) their temporal protractedness, b) fluctuation in intensity and frequency, c) spill-over to other contexts, d) tendency towards partial equilibrium among the actors (or at least impossibility for a clear victory from one of the sides), e) absence of an explicit termination and, lastly, f) a blurred demarcation between internal and external sources of conflict (Azar and Moon, 1988: 395).

These conflicts blur the usual strict division made by both International Relations and Strategic Studies scholars between internal and external conflicts (Azar, 1990: 5). For Ramsbotham “the sources of such conflicts lay predominantly within and across rather than exclusively between states” (2005: 114). The focus of these conflicts is “religious, cultural or ethnic communal identity, which in turn is dependent upon the satisfaction of basic needs such as those of security, communal recognition and distributive justice” (Azar, 1990: 2). According to Azar, these conflicts can be analysed by taking into consideration three different conflict dimensions – genesis, dynamics and consequences –, each one of them including four different elements. It is with the articulation of these dimensions that it becomes possible to analytically make sense of these conflicts.

However, this is a model that does not take into deep consideration the world as being socially constructed, focusing rather on objective causes and conditions of conflict. In that sense, and in order to develop the relation between security and politics in

contexts of PSC, it is necessary to adjust the model to this thesis' ontological understanding of social reality. Each dimension of Azar's model will be taken in turn, starting with the genesis of the conflict.

### *Genesis*

This conflict dimension "identifies a set of conditions that are responsible for the transformation of non-conflictual situations into conflictual ones" (Azar, 1990: 7). These conditions – communal content, human needs, governance and state's role, and international linkages – are not in themselves responsible for the unravelling of a conflict, but they are nonetheless key elements in understanding how a specific conflict is formed.

Understanding the non-deterministic character of these conditions is essential for Azar's model to be used under a more critical framework. In this context, conflicts are not limited by any structure; they are processes derived from the constitutive interplay between that structure and the agents involved. With this caveat in mind, the four different elements that compose the genesis of PSCs will now be 'critically' analysed.

*Communal<sup>7</sup> content.* For Edward Azar, PSCs are most likely to arise in multi-communal societies (1990: 7). The degree of each community's political activism is usually dependent on the type of colonial legacy (if existent) and on the "historical pattern of rivalry and contest among communal actors" (*idem*). Even when accepting the importance of these two elements – communal composition and historical patterns –, it is necessary to take into consideration their constructed character, something Edward Azar does not do, as recognised by Cordula Reimann: "Azar's notion of identity remains unable to theorize the social construction of identity" (2002: 181).

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<sup>7</sup> Azar uses the term community "as a generic reference to politicized groups whose members share ethnic, religious, linguistic or other cultural 'identity' characteristics" (1990: 7).

The fact that he did not take this constructed character into serious consideration is in line with a common mistake undertaken by Peace and Conflict analysts as pointed out by Vivienne Jabri:

When the question of identity, for example, is reduced to the ‘ancient hatred’ formulation, or indeed a majority-minority construction, conflict analysis and resolution do no more than simply reiterate the language of leadership bent on such exclusionary frameworks and the practices they seek to legitimize (2006b: 6).

Identity groups are not pre-political; even though the existence of common features – language, physical resemblance, shared territory, religion – facilitates the political construction of those groups, the features that will be predominant in the characterisation of the group will be politically constructed. This is a process of constant redefinition, in which some features are sedimented and thus difficult to change (such as religious practices), while others are more visibly contingent, such as the narrative of the common past. The creation of national symbols, myths and legends are not ‘objective’, but rather eminently political practices, as it was possible to observe during the Balkans wars during the 1990s: not only was the narrative of the Southern Slavs rapidly replaced by narratives defined along the national lines existent prior to the establishment of the Yugoslavian state (Chapman, 1994: 125), as particular topics such as Kosovo as the cradle of the Serbian people were used to legitimise the promotion of an ‘ethnic cleansing’ policy in the region.

Hence, interpreting historical narratives as objective conditions of conflict will lead to the legitimisation of a particular discourse. Also, the understanding of collective groups as something different from political constructions will lead to the legitimisation of the political actors responsible for such construction. Communal groups should be seen as the articulation of a certain political discourse that their

political leaders have inter-subjectively constructed. For example, in conflicts during the Cold War period, this community would go hand in hand with a specific ideological discourse. That can be observed in the discourse of movements such as the PKK's early period (chapter IV), but also in the LTTE's discourse in Sri Lanka. As put by Anton S. Balasingham, one of its prominent leaders:

The political objective of our movement is to advance the national struggle along with class struggle, or rather, our fundamental objective is national emancipation and socialist transformation of our social formation (*apud* Marks, 2007: 492).

This understanding of community lays the core of its attention in the political agents' discourse, the discourse that will be articulated against the state when communal grievances are presented and demands put forward. When doing so, political actors will be presenting their 'imagined community'<sup>8</sup>, the community that is neither virtual nor completely 'real' either; in short, the community that is defined as having unfulfilled human needs that need to be tackled in order to avoid conflict.

*Human needs.* Individuals seek to fulfil their needs within communities or identity groups. Physical survival and well-being (security needs) are extremely relevant but, as Azar underlines, "the deprivation of basic material needs *per se* does not directly give birth to conflicts" (1990: 9). It is the lack of access to political, social and economic institutions (access needs), especially when there is a refusal to recognise the communal identity (acceptance needs), that may lead to consistent outbreaks of violence. However, as Edward Azar himself acknowledges in an article co-written

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<sup>8</sup> This term was 'borrowed' from Benedict Anderson. For him communities are imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991: 6). As he further adds, "[c]ommunities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." (*idem*). In my use of the expression, the focus is not on how individual members of the community perceive it, but how the community is politically and discursively constructed by the political actors involved in the conflict.

with Nadia Farah:

History seems to confirm that the existence of wide structural inequalities does not necessarily result in conflict, possibly because of inequality socialization, i.e., people are socialized to accept inequality as given and in the natural order of things (1981: 330).

Furthermore, to a certain extent, he takes into consideration the importance of these social constructions in what he called 'ideological domination':

In a social system contaminated by structural inequality, ideology legitimises the differential access to political and economic power among social forces, favours a particular sector or group and also attempts to stabilise the social structure by rationalising the resulting inequalities (Azar and Moon, 1988: 396).

The fact that these inequalities need to be rationalised by dominant forces was an important, albeit limited, first step towards this recognition. However, in general "Azar ignores the socially constructed and equally contested character of needs" (Reimann, 2002: 152).

By following a critical constructive understanding, it could be argued that these needs are only relevant as far as they are politically articulated. As put by Jef Huysmans,

[t]he crucial point is that the analysis shows how others or outsiders are not natural enemies but become enemies because of the way the nationalist discourses construct history, social deprivation, and so forth. Crucial for the author's distancing from the dominant discourse is that the work articulates how a discursive construction that retrospectively looks as if it was the natural or necessary way for things to develop is actually contingent" (2002: 50).

These needs are not immutable; they can evolve and change as the conflict progresses. However, when analysing a conflict, it is in this potentially evolutionary behaviour that lies the usefulness of the human needs cluster. By focusing on the political articulation of these needs, it is possible to keep track of what is supposedly

at stake in the conflict from the aggrieved group's point of view, the evolution of its claims, and how they are articulated and re-articulated in order to accommodate the dynamics of the conflict. In that sense, these human needs should not be separated along the lines proposed by Azar – security, access, and acceptance – but rather according to the discourse of the conflict actors.

*Governance and the State's Role.* The state influences the communal level of satisfaction or deprivation of basic needs (Azar, 1990: 10) by the way it intervenes and mediates communal disputes. This is even more relevant if we consider that neutrality is not a usual characteristic of states in protracted social conflict-laden countries (*idem*), with one or few groups sometimes dominating the state apparatus and precipitating crises of legitimacy. According to Azar, “[s]uch crises exacerbate already existing competitive or conflictive situations, diminish the state's ability to meet basic needs, and lead to further developmental crises” (1990: 11). A good example of a crisis situation that led to the triggering of a violent Protracted Social Conflict was the refusal by the Algerian military (with the support of the state apparatus as well as that of the Western allies) to allow an Islamic-based party to form a new government. As stated by Leonard Weinberg and Ami Pedhazur: “the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria in 1991, turned to violence only after the country's military nullified second stage balloting in a democratic electoral process out of fear the FIS would sweep victory” (2003: 2).

However, this understanding of the state and of its role in Protracted Social Conflicts needs to be revised in order to accommodate cases where states are not particularly weak, or that can indeed be seen as regular, well-functioning states – such as Spain (Basque conflict), France (Corsica) or Britain (Northern Ireland). PSCs can unfold in the context of ‘normal’ states, where no single communal group controls the system,

where there is a spirit of public duty that goes way beyond the extreme cases of private appropriation of public goods seen in some cases, such as in Congo during the rule of Mobutu Sese Seko or in Liberia throughout the 1990s. Thus, states should not be understood as the property of another group, but rather as distinct actors with particular qualities derived from their condition as states<sup>9</sup>.

Even though Azar's inclination for weak states makes his understanding of the state's role in PSCs too limited, his take on the state's repressive responses to communal grievances seems to make sense, independently of the state's strength. In all the above-mentioned cases of well-functioning states facing communal claims that led to PSCs, there were, at different levels and during different periods of time, repressive policies on the part of these states (cf. Art and Richardson, 2007), thus showing that the Protracted Social Conflicts' model may be applied beyond the conflicts that take place in less developed countries.

*International Linkages.* For Edward Azar, the international relations of PSCs are predominantly set in a context of vertical relationships between the weak state where the conflict unfolds and its external environment. Two models of international linkage can thus be conceived: first, one focused on economic dependency; and second, one focused on political and military cliency relationships with stronger states. For Azar, the degree and type of these relations influences the way conflicting actors (be they communal groups or the state) approach a crisis context.

This approach presents us with two different problems. First, it offers a theoretically poor outlook of the external involvement in PSCs. As will be shown in chapter VII, the region and the international context provide a much richer and elaborate relation with these conflicts than what is offered in Edward Azar's model. Second, it presents

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<sup>9</sup> This will be further explored in chapter V.

this limited vision in a rather deterministic way, by arguing that the financial conditions plus military capacity helps to define how state and non-state actors act *vis-à-vis* each other. Financial and military support (or lack of) are indeed either strong incentives or disincentives, but it is up to the political actors directly involved in the conflict – conditioned by the context – to choose the policies to follow. As in previous points, taking Azar's international linkages too objectively would eventually lead to the non-responsibilisation of those actors.

In short, “initial conditions (colonial legacy, domestic historical setting, and the multicommunal nature of the society) play important roles in shaping the genesis of protracted social conflict” (Azar, 1990: 12). However, one of the remarkable features of Azar's model is that these conditions do not necessarily mean that conflict must occur – “the existence or even recognition of these conditions by communal groups may not lead to an overt or manifest conflict” (*idem*). The answer for that lies elsewhere...

### *Process Dynamics*

It is in the process dynamics that the overt ‘activation’ of a conflict takes place, i.e., the way the communal actors formulate their strategies and actions, the state's actions and strategies, and the built-in properties of a conflict. It is in the inter-play of these three dynamics that the genesis of the conflict may acquire forms of overt confrontation. It should thus be seen how each one of these dynamics works in the unfolding of the conflict.

*Communal Actions and Strategies.* According to Edward Azar, the type of initial conditions, the organisation and mobilisation of communal groups, the emergence of effective leadership, the strategies and tactics of this leadership, and the scope and

nature of external ties are important factors in the way the group will approach the situation (Azar, 1990: 14). As the level of communal organization and mobilisation becomes greater, the tendency is for the group to formulate strategies and tactics that may include civil disobedience, guerrilla warfare or secessionist activities (Azar, 1990: 13-14). Azar understands this process as a mute dialogue between communal group and the state, which presents two basic problems. The first problem is that, once again, this model reifies leaderships as legitimate representatives of the group. Following the model, these leaderships 'emerge' from the group, as if the communal structure had previously determined that it was a simple matter of someone taking the helm, the 'chosen ones'. As presented in the genesis section, looking at the community as imagined political constructions rather than a pre-political entity, will hopefully help to overcome this problem. The second problem has to do with the focus on the community-state relations. I would argue that this question is relevant in order to understand both why certain groups within the community 'acquire' a representative status, while others tend to disappear or to at least to be severely weakened; as well as to better understand particular acts and levels of violence that may target actors supposedly outside the conflict. In order to understand these intra-group dynamics, I propose the concept of 'rebel Darwinism', here defined as the process by which different rebel movements struggle (violently or non-violently) against each other in order to become the 'true' representatives of their imagined community. This is done either before or in parallel with the unfolding of the conflict against the state and it demands from each of these groups the construction of either a specific discourse that legitimises the targeting of the other groups, or their incorporation into the general discourse against the state as 'collaborators', 'traitors' or 'mercenaries'.

It could be argued that if groups fight each other within a certain community, then Azar's point that communities are pre-political would make sense (in opposition to the 'imagined community' argument), as they (the communities) would be setting the space in which that struggle would take place. This would indeed be the case if the 'imagined communities' were mere subjective constructions, without any inter-play with other subjects' understandings. However, they are inter-subjective constructions that need to be approved by audiences that must accept such constructions. When the Irish Republican Army (IRA) created its imagined community, that community already had a name, language, and religion. The same applies to the PKK in Turkey and ETA in Spain. These groups constructed a discourse that articulated specific claims and ideas with a particular notion of the community they 'represent', a notion that is accepted by the targeted audience as plausible and correct. On a slightly different note, the signing of the US Declaration of Independence is a good example of this. As written by Karin Fierke (based on Jacques Derrida),

[t]he declaration invokes the authority of the American people. But the American people did not exist prior to the declaration, in so far as the document gave birth to free and independent subjects who were possible signers. In this respect, the signature on a piece of paper invented the signer (2007: 87).

The same applies to PSCs: the 'communities' representatives 'invent' the represented people. Just as the US founding fathers had a particular notion of the 'American people' they were representing, so do the rebel movements regarding their own communities.

In short, without understanding this process of 'rebel Darwinism' it will be difficult to understand some of the conflict's dynamics, actors' strategies and choices. It will, in short, hide an important dimension of any PSC.

*State Action and Strategies.* If the state accommodates communal grievances in the initial stage, then a violent conflict might be avoided (Azar, 1990: 14). Nonetheless, the winner-takes-all spirit that usually exists in weak state contexts compels Azar to be more inclined to predict harsh state responses. As mentioned in the genesis section, even if states are not weak, the tendency is for them to adopt repressive methods to counter potential threats to its monopoly of 'legitimate' violence. Whether they engage in a strategy of accommodation or repression, and which particular policies the state adopts are dependent on the discursive construction of the issue, as it will be seen in chapters III and V.

*Built-in properties of conflict.* Actors' perceptions and motivations are conditioned by previous experiences of relationship. Previously existent rivalries, fears or misconceptions will more easily trigger an overt conflict. These historical dynamics should, however, be approached from the point of view of the actors' discourses. As argued by the Foucauldian author Vivienne Jabri, "When history becomes a technology, the practices of exclusion that such a technology instantiates come to revolve around those who possess legitimacy in renditions of past and present and those denied such representational access" (2007: 145). Thus, history becomes a powerful political tool to define who is part of it and who stays at its margins.

Besides, historical processes are inserted into each other's discourse, and the way the actors self-construct their position within the historical thread is important to evaluate the degree of antagonism involved in the conflict. How is the conflict framed in terms of time-span? Is it defined as a very old process or something more or less recent? What atrocities did the 'other' commit (if any) in the past? By looking at the discourses involved in the conflict it should be possible to assess the extent to which

the conflict is grounded on solid historical arguments, or whether it is a recent creation, hence potentially easier to solve.

### *Outcome Analysis*

For Edward Azar, there are no winners in Protracted Social Conflicts, “rather all the parties to these conflicts tend to be victimized in the process” (1990: 15). As a result, these conflicts end up generating (and being further reinforced by) outcomes that contribute to the deterioration of social life in these areas. These outcomes are not the end result of the conflict, but rather a constant product of its behavioural properties – protractedness, fluctuation (in time), and actor/issue spill-over effect (Azar, 1990: 15). In that sense, Azar’s model provides what I would call a ‘constant outcome model’, in which each one of its elements provide accurate snapshots of the results the conflict is producing at a given moment. These snapshots are taken in four different areas – physical destruction, institutional deformity, psychological ossification, and increased dependency and cliency relations with the exterior.

*Deterioration of physical security.* Physical destruction is an understandable consequence of any armed conflict. However, in PSC contexts that destruction is prolonged in time, with differentiated levels of intensity. Protracted destruction not only destroys, but also institutionalises underdevelopment, potentially reinforcing some of the conflict’s pre-conditions (Azar, 1990: 16).

*A priori*, physical destruction brings an irrefutable materiality to the conflict – how can a destroyed bridge not be a destroyed bridge? There is indeed a chance that a destroyed bridge is either more or less than that: the Mostar bridge, for instance, became a symbol of the Bosnian conflict, demonstrating how the previous mental bridges between communities in that multi-ethnic city had been destroyed. However, it could have been hidden from the conflict discourse, or even defined as an accident, an

act of violence the perpetrator had no intention to commit.

Again, using the example of the Balkans, the Serbs undertook a policy of destroying mosques (cf. Chapman, 1994) in order to pass two messages in one – first, the message that not even mosques were a safe place; and second, the idea that all the Muslim symbols were to be destroyed and erased from the people's memory. In that sense, destruction has different levels of impact within a conflict. It is thus necessary, when analysing a conflict, to look at how this destruction is contextualised and interconnected in the conflict discourses, to see what is made visible, what is hidden and which processes underline both moves.

In the case of PSCs, the protracted dimension must also be added to this understanding of destruction. Physical destruction, in such context, leads to the institutionalization of a climate of fear, as well as to the normalisation of life amid an abnormal context – there is a difference between living without basic facilities (schools, hospitals...), and living with those facilities destroyed or at least, always under the risk of being so. Protracted conflicts thus create conditions for a protracted abnormal life, in which populations live amid destruction and fear. In spaces like these, it is not only the old that is destroyed, but also the new that is not built.

*Institutional Deformity.* As put by Edward Azar and Chung In Moon

[c]ommunal parties to a PSC become close-minded. There is an inability to reach a lasting political solution because all proposed solutions are interpreted and used by both sides as mechanisms for gaining relative power advantages. The political process becomes distorted and is no longer used as a means of conciliation, but rather as a means of promoting each side's own positions and legitimising subsequent actions. Hostility begets hostility and the process becomes institutionalised (1988: 398).

If the denial of access to socio-economic and political institutions can usually be at the base of the conflict, its protracted unfolding will make that access virtually

impossible for two reasons: the paralysis of political institutions and the further fragmentation of the broader social fabric. On the one hand, the creation of a discourse of ‘otherness’ will establish more rigid distinctions between groups within the conflict-ridden society, thus making it more difficult for one or more groups to be part of the political system; on the other hand, the approval of that ‘otherness’ discourse will eventually lead to additional approval of exceptional measures, that with time will be inserted into the normal political process, poisoning its functioning. In a sense, not only the ‘othered’ groups will be moved away from politics, but the rest of the population will also be under a ‘technocratic’ system responsible for waging the armed struggle in a context of exceptional politics (chapter III).

*Psychological Ossification.* In already divided societies, PSCs lead to a deepening of “fear and hostile interactions among the communal contestants” (Azar, 1990: 17). Fear fuels fear and hate fuels hate, leading to a situation where reconciliation becomes an increasingly difficult word to pronounce: individuals “get absorbed by a violent war culture, disabling them from normal civil life” (Azar and Moon, 1988: 399).

Even though these seem logical consequences of a conflict, I would argue that it is necessary to approach them with caution when analysing any particular conflict. Psychology in conflicts is largely associated with the level of the private. What one feels and thinks is, unless uttered, strictly private. As briefly seen before and as will be further explored in the next chapters, conflicts are public events composed of private features that are only politically meaningful if made public. As put by Vivienne Jabri,

[t]he historical trajectory of any conflict, any war, is but a collection of memories held and shared in the context of collectivities, in the public sphere. Memories are, however, but traces and fragments, holding some in the grip of history while totally evading others (2007: 19).

Thus, the psychological consequences of a conflict should be taken into consideration when they are part of the public discourse on the topic. Psychological ossification should be seen in this context as the public reproduction of a discourse in which the imagined communities in the conflict are defined as increasingly psychologically separated, where space for reconciliation is thus increasingly reduced. There might obviously be psychological suffering much beyond what is publicly uttered, and transformed into 'collective memory'. As put by Dubravka Ugresic, when commenting on the disintegration of the Yugoslavian 'nation', "collective memory can be erased and rewritten, deconstructed, constructed and reconstructed, confiscated and reconfiscated, proclaimed politically correct or incorrect (in the communist language: suitable or unsuitable)" (2004: 173). It is this collective memory and the way it is politically constructed that is important to understand in the context of PSCs.

*Increased Dependency and Cliency.* PSCs have, as we have seen, an important external dimension that is largely simplified in Azar's model. According to his model, with the depletion of the national social and physical infrastructures, both sides tend to be increasingly dependent on the external involvement, which means that the decision-making power tends to be increasingly distanced from the belligerent communities. The problem here is how to 'measure' the increase or decrease in dependency and to what extent it is actually useful to do so. As we are dealing with largely 'invisible' features of the conflict, it would be necessary to be inside both actors' decision-making processes in order to understand how these factors influenced the decisions taken, and even then it would probably be very difficult to make an overall assessment of the situation. I would argue that instead of analysing whether actors are more or less dependent, it would be more relevant to analyse the evolution of the actors' discourse regarding the external support. That would not provide the

'reality' of dependency, but it would nonetheless highlight the way in which that is constructed as part of the conflict's narrative.

In short, destruction creates practices of underdevelopment and political exclusion, further reinforcing the conflict's pre-conditions. The long duration of these conflicts leads to intensity fluctuations (Azar *et al.*, 1978: 54), which have an impact on and are influenced by the society in which they take place. As stated by Azar *et al.* "[s]ocieties cannot sustain intense conflict indefinitely" (*idem*). Forms of low-intensity conflict, like terrorism become common practices (Azar, 1990: 2), creating a sense of permanent security needs. The tendency then is for these outcomes to be constantly re-produced and their consequences made more visible, dividing and destructive.

### **5. The relevance of Edward Azar's model**

Azar's model's biggest contribution to Peace and Conflict Studies resides in the lack of comfort it brings to the study of conflicts. As almost all social phenomena, conflicts are neither simple nor objective. From his own experience in Lebanon, Azar understood those complexities. In his own words, it was this conflict that triggered his interest for the topic: "I did not pay attention to this phenomenon of protracted social conflict until I began [...] to look for patterns and to deal with the existential experience of Lebanon and the Middle East situation" (Azar, 1985: 67).

In his model, as seen above, Azar highlighted certain elements that constitute the genesis of a conflict, with the possibility of further developing into a full-fledged conflict, with its dynamics and consequences. In the first case, he claims that a PSC is composed of an aggrieved community with unfulfilled needs, a state actor and an international dimension that influences the behaviour of the conflicting actors. These

pre-conditions may or may not trigger a conflict; there is no dramatic determinism in his assumptions. It is the inter-play between the conflicting actors, influenced by previous experiences and perceptions, that will determine whether a violent conflict is triggered or not. Finally, there are obvious consequences if a conflict is triggered – physical, institutional, psychological and international consequences.

In short, the PSC model de-composes conflicts into certain elements that are important when analysing a conflict, but broad enough to adapt to each context, and even potentially to other models of asymmetric conflict, like Mary Kaldor's *New Wars* (1999) or the so-called terrorism problems (cf. Art and Richardson, 2007). Thus, the broadness of Azar's model could serve as the basis for the understanding of the great majority of today's non-inter-state conflicts. Still, it is far from being a flawless model, as we had the opportunity to see in the previous section. Some of those flaws – such as the objective understanding of needs, and the emphasis on contexts of weak states – have already been tackled in the previous sections, and the model can now be better understood under a constructivist light. However, the core of this thesis is not to merely re-arrange Azar's model in order to accommodate a socially constructed world, but rather essentially to understand how security and politics are related in the political construction of PSCs. Thus, the focus should now turn to the identification of the specific issues that will allow this thesis' research question to be answered (*how does the nexus between security and politics contribute to the understanding of protracted social conflicts?*), while, at the same time, re-articulating the model in order to incorporate both the above-mentioned constructivist understanding of social reality as well as the political essence of PSCs.

### *Flaws and Limitations of Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts*

In order to respond to this thesis' research question, I would argue that there are three main topics that need to be explored and incorporated in the model – the relation between politics and security, the constitutive distinction between state and non-state actors, and finally the international dimension of PSCs.

*Politics as security rather than development.* The biggest flaw in conflict theories has to do with the removal of political responsibility. Conflict theories<sup>10</sup> tend to reify causes and reasons outside politics. As stated by Vivienne Jabri

[c]onflict analysis has historically sought to somehow extract itself from social and political theory, so that its language is rendered neutral, a management consultant's toolkit, ready to use in any context wherein conflict might emerge" (2006b: 5).

This "extraction of conflict from its socio-political settings" (*idem*) is what constitutes a de-politicising move. Thus, economic, social, environmental or even religious movements do not necessarily lead to conflict unless framed within politics. Edward Azar (1983) is not innocent in this debate, as he actively defended the idea that conflicts and development are intimately linked, and that only with the latter can the former be solved. Even though it cannot be denied that economic inequalities and under-development may lead to social unrest, these factors should not, for the sake of political responsibility, be seen as the determining factor in the unfolding of a conflict. Besides, there are conflicts in places where development levels are actually high, such as in the Basque Country, Spain. In chapter III, I will argue that security and politics, rather than development are the key inter-linked concepts that allow us to understand how Azar's genesis conditions are converted into full-fledged conflicts

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<sup>10</sup> Including some interpretations of Azar's work (cf. Ramsbotham et al. 2005).

through securitisation processes. From this understanding of PSCs as eminently constructed political phenomena in which security discourses are a key element in their understanding, it is possible to find two additional issues that need to be explored. If PSCs are understood as securitised political constructions, how can the existential condition of the belligerent actors be understood and how is the conflict's international dimension to be understood?

*State and non-state actors.* A topic that deserves to be better explored in Azar's model is the constitutive difference between a 'communal' group and a state actor facing each other. The actors' qualitative asymmetry<sup>11</sup> is indeed central for the definition of PSCs. In the absence of such unevenness, we would either be in the presence of an international conflict (between two or more states) or internal conflict in a collapsed state, where there would be no state entity to defy or from whom to simply demand more rights, more access, or a better life. Although the existence of these two entities and the difference between them is clear in Azar's model, he does not explore the different conceptions of threat and security that might lead to different reactions by each actor (he does not consider security in a political sense). The variety of processes and influences that a state might have in considering an issue is not the same for a non-state collective actor. As such, it is important to look at the differences between these two kind of actors in relation to each other to better understand the state and communal actions and strategies that Azar considers as fundamental for the triggering (or not) of PSCs. By using the Security Sectors defined by the Copenhagen School, especially the military, political, and societal sectors, it is possible to draw some general lines of action and strategies for state and non-state actors. From this inter-play it is also possible to analyse the limits of Protracted Social Conflict, that is, to

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<sup>11</sup>'Qualitative', in the sense that, though it allows a state against a non-state actor, it does not mean the later has less power than the former.

establish the boundaries between what can stay inside the definition, and what goes beyond it. The concept of the political will be an important element in the understanding of those limits.

*The international dimension of PSCs.* Azar explores this topic both in the preconditions for conflict (what he defines as *international linkages*) and in its consequences (the *increased dependency and cliency*) as already discussed. This relationship with the outside world is perceived as one of economic, political or military dependency, which only tends to increase with the unfolding of the conflict. It implies a vertical relationship between the actors directly involved in the conflict and their external counter parts. Although relevant, this pattern can only be applied to contexts of structural economic dependency, unnecessarily leaving a whole range of different contexts outside the model.

The international dimension of these conflicts is more complex and ambivalent than these ideas would suggest. A broader applicability of Azar's model demands the international level to be seen as a more open element, leaving space for different types of international links. In the case of conflicts, those links are strongly related to the regional complex in which the conflict unfolds, as there are inevitable security relations between the complex's members. This regional dimension is not sufficiently addressed by Azar in his model and needs to be further explored. Chapter VII will thus attempt to fill this gap.

## **Conclusion**

As seen in this chapter, the study of conflicts involves different research fields and approaches, that tend to use armed conflicts as an object of inquiry in different ways, and that have distinctive understandings about the role of academic research.

Boulding's (1978) and Miall's (1999) all-encompassing expression of Peace and Conflict Studies provides a solid compromise between the different approaches, emphasising their common aspects, and facilitating the comparison with other disciplines.

Connected to the study of conflicts is that of security, as conflicts, particularly armed ones, are normally seen as security issues, since they threaten the existence of people and polities. Security Studies, as a field of research, should thus have a word to say in the study of conflicts. Additionally, after going through a comparative historical narrative of both disciplines, I concluded that Peace and Conflict Studies had much to learn both from Security Studies' theories and approaches, but also with the way those same theories and approaches evolved, particularly the former's 'critical turn' during the 1990s.

With this critical turn in mind, Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts – the core object of this research – was critically re-assessed under a constructivist light, and the grounding was set for the understanding of the role of security and politics in this specific type of conflict.

## **Chapter II. Critical analysis of the PKK-Turkey confrontation as a Protracted Social Conflict**

### **Introduction**

Before choosing the conflict between Turkey and the PKK as a case study, the first relevant question to ask would be whether it can be considered a Protracted Social Conflict. As previously argued, classifying conflicts according to pre-defined typologies is always a dangerous task for the analyst: such act demands hiding some characteristics of the conflict while highlighting others, in order to 'fit' the model. In that sense, I argue that it is best to reverse the process: instead of trying to see if the conflict is or is not a PSC, the model should be used as a particular prism of analysis, shedding some light on specific issues that other models would not approach. The question then is not so much whether the Turkey-PKK conflict fits the model, but rather what the model tells us about the conflict.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the amount of literature on the Turkey-PKK conflict has been limited, particularly in recent years. Ali Kemal Özcan's (2006) work on Abdullah Öcalan and Aliza Marcus (2007), *Blood and Belief* are the latest works available on the topic. Özcan's work is focused on the construction of the leadership cult surrounding the PKK leader. Even though it presents a detailed account of how Öcalan evolved from being a student at the University of Ankara to becoming Turkey's number one enemy, it does not develop or elaborate on the conflict *per se*. Aliza Marcus' work, on the other hand, is an excellent account of the PKK's evolution as a movement and its social impact in the region. However, it is an analysis void of theoretical models and concepts, more concentrated on presenting a narrative rather than an analysis of the conflict. Apart from these two authors, I could also mention Paul

White's (2000) *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey*. Focused on the Turkish fight against terrorism, Andrew Mango explores in a significant part of his latest book (2005), *Turkey and the War on Terror. For Forty Years We Fought Alone*, the way Ankara has been dealing with the PKK and other Kurdish-origin separatist movements. Although somewhat biased, this book is useful to understand Turkey's official arguments on the issue. The same can be said of Ümit Özdağ's *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey* (2003), where a thorough study of PKK's military strategy is presented and analysed. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I would argue that, overall, the best accounts of the conflict were Ismet Imset's (1992) *The PKK. A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey (1973-1992)* and Sabri Cigerli's and Didier Le Saout's (2005) *Öcalan et le PKK*. Taking into consideration that the former was written seventeen years ago and that the latter is in French, there is still a considerable gap in the (particularly English) literature on the analysis of this particular conflict. The case study chapters of this thesis will hopefully contribute to filling that gap. In this first case study chapter, I will be looking at what the revised (in the last chapter) version of the Protracted Social Conflicts' model tells us about the conflict between the PKK and Turkey, focusing on the underlying conditions, dynamics and outcomes of this conflict in the period that goes from the official creation of the PKK (1978) to 1990. This period involves the unfolding of the conflict from the initial activities of the movement to its escalation to levels the Turkish President Süleyman Demirel would later consider as a 'quasi-war' (Loizides, 2008). However, bridges with other periods will be established when necessary to reinforce, clarify, or better illustrate a certain idea.

The chapter will be divided along the three phases of a Protracted Social Conflict: genesis, dynamics and outcomes (Azar, 1990: 7). In the first phase it will be shown

how the PKK defined itself as the representative of the whole Kurdish community in Turkey and how it constructed a narrative of that same community in opposition to the Turkish state; how that narrative was linked to a set of claims and demands from the PKK; how the Turkish state dealt with those claims; and how the international context favoured or opposed any form of accommodation of those claims.

In the second phase – dynamics – it will be seen how the PKK created a discourse of inevitability in the face of the Turkish state's (non)accommodation of their demands, as well as the exact nature of Turkey's strategy in the face of the PKK threat and the patterns of previous relationships that were highlighted in their mutual approach.

Finally, in the third dimension, the focus will be on the outcomes of the conflict up to 1990, particularly the deterioration of physical security, the institutional deformity that took place in Turkey, the psychological ossification of the population and the eventual increase in dependency and client relationships from both sides regarding the exterior. The chapter will then end with some concluding remarks highlighting the main findings regarding the analysis of the conflict between Turkey and the PKK under the light of a critically revised Protracted Social Conflict model.

### **1. Genesis of the Conflict**

The genesis phase in the PSCs model analyses the elements that set the pre-conditions for the conflict to unfold. Neither in Azar's version nor in the more critical version presented here (and discussed in the previous chapter), are these pre-conditions in any way decisive regarding the unfolding of an armed conflict. They are, however, contributing elements that, together, lead to more or less favourable conflict conditions. In that sense, this section is not necessarily about the genesis of an armed conflict, but rather about the genesis of a potential conflict; about whether the

combination of a grieved 'imagined community', state and international context are propitious to the unfolding of a Protracted Social Conflict, in this case to the unfolding of the conflict between Turkey and the PKK.

*Communal content.* For Edward Azar, multicommunal states are more likely to endure some sort of internal conflict, than more homogenous societies (1990: 7). The colonial legacy and the historical pattern of rivalry should dictate whether communities would become more or less prone to political activity. However, as seen before, such understanding of community and its potential political role is based on the assumption that communities choose their political representatives. As I have argued above, this approach is both naïve and dangerous: naïve as it considers that communities are pre-political, and not a derived political construction; and dangerous as it leads to the reification of certain political groups as 'legitimate' representatives of a set of communal claims.

As such, identifying PKK's grievances as potential communal grievances would entail a political move in the sense that would legitimise the movement's actions on identity grounds. The PKK would then be treated as the representative of the Kurdish struggle. However, denying an eventual link between the PKK and the Kurdish problem in Turkey would also hide a full contextual approach to the conflict. It is necessary to understand what the Kurdish people have been through in the last hundred years in order to understand both PKK's and the Turkish state's discourses and behaviour regarding each other. So where to stand, if both positions lead to clearly different paths in the understanding of the conflict?

As suggested in the last chapter, what I propose is to allow the conflicting actors to create their own 'imagined communities' rather than attempting to create a supposedly 'unbiased' and 'objective' one. In that sense, it is necessary to see what the PKK tells

us about the Kurdish struggle in order to understand what kind of community grievances are here at play. Such methodological move builds a bridge between the two radically opposing visions mentioned earlier, as it will still deal with the ‘Kurds’ as the focal communal group, while at the same time avoiding the reification of the PKK either as a consequence of the Kurdish struggle or as a movement independent of it.

As stated above, for Azar it is important to look at potential colonial legacies and historical patterns of rivalry between communal groups and the state. Regarding the PKK-Turkey conflict, this entails examining whether (and how) the PKK points out these two reasons as being at the basis of their struggle.

The colonial argument is indeed recurrent in the PKK’s discourse even though it is internationally accepted that Turkey’s relation with its Kurdish community should not be framed under the ‘colonialism’ label, but rather as a ‘minorities’ issue (cf. Kirişçi and Winslow, 1997). For the PKK, framing the conflict as a colonial struggle provided the basis to legitimize their actions: “For all people who wish to conquer colonialism, there is armed struggle. Armed struggle is a historical fact. Our armed resistance is not the one to be judged, but on the contrary is the one to be supported. It is legitimate” (Yilmaz, 1994: 202). The colonialist labelling has important consequences in the building of a discourse of grievance as it implies a relation of externally imposed domination at different levels – cultural, political and also territorial (PKK, 1995). It is something quite distinct from a simple claim for better collective rights. In this case, it is a clear rejection of Turkey as an entity with legitimate ruling rights over the Kurdish people and the perceived Kurdish territory.

The use of the colonial jargon by the PKK led to the establishment of a stark distinction between the Turkish state and the Kurdish people. This involved a double,

albeit simultaneous discursive process – on the one hand the definition of the PKK as the legitimate representative of the Kurds; on the other hand, the construction of a historical narrative on what the Kurdish people have been through. As recalled by Abdullah Öcalan:

In April 1973 a group of six people came together in order to form an independent Kurdish political organization. They acted on the assumption that *Kurdistan was a classic colony*, where the population was forcibly refused their right to self-determination. It was their prime goal to change this. This gathering may also be called the hour of birth of a new Kurdish movement [added italics] (2008: 26).

This kind of narrative brings together those two elements – the PKK as the ‘new Kurdish movement’ and Kurdistan as ‘a classical colony, where the population was forcibly refused their right to self-determination’. The PKK is, according to its own discourse, the frontline in that fight against colonialism. The historical narrative about the Kurdish resistance against the Turkish state can then be framed within a colonialist background: “In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a new occupying force took over Kurdistan. These were the Oğuz tribes, or Turks, which were near the upper levels of barbarism and which developed into a conquering power after adopting Islam” (PKK, 1995).

This colonial jargon must be put in the context of the leftist movement from which the PKK arose. The fact that the PKK eventually preferred to focus on a discourse of ‘rights’ and later on a discourse of democratization proves that point (Gunter, 2000: 853). At the onset of the conflict, however, this was the discourse that encapsulated the movement’s *raison d’être*. It was an inter-linked discursive construction that started with the PKK as the legitimate representative of the Kurdish movement, moved to Kurdistan as a colony, and ended with Turkey as the inevitable colonial power. Thus, the logical corollary is that the PKK, due to its leadership condition, is obliged to wage war against the ‘oppressive’ Turkish state.

*Human needs.* As seen in the last chapter, the human needs point raises, from a critical perspective, some important issues. Azar identified security needs, access needs and acceptance needs as the basic human needs that would lead to a communal conflict whenever they are not minimally fulfilled. These needs are being constantly re-defined. They are not a fixed set of assumptions, but instead a narrative that changes throughout the conflict, in order to best accommodate the movement's interests and strategies. For the PKK, these needs are materialised in an existential discourse in which the survival of the Kurdish people is at risk, and thus, the PKK has to step up and confront the Turkish State.

The needs of the Kurds are indeed intimately linked with the PKK's understanding of the Kurdish problem. In the early 1980s, independence was the only solution for the Kurdish people, as that would mean freedom from Turkey's 'colonial power' (Yavuz, 2009: 190). In 1999, however, the Kurdish needs were those of cultural rights and integration, as put by Abdullah Öcalan:

If the state and the public are more forgiving and more democratic, as I mentioned in the previous statement, and if the obstacles to the use of the Kurdish language and culture [are removed], a historic turning point can be reached. Integration of the Kurdish people with the state will occur. Negative perceptions and distrust of the state changed to positive perceptions and trust. The basis for rebellion and confrontation will be finished (1999).

According to him, this lack of access to cultural rights legitimised the PKK's actions:

The PKK was born as an illegal movement of that period and developed into a movement that mainly rested on the social reality of the Kurds in its analysis, propaganda and activities. Its emergence was legitimate if not legal. The legitimacy of an uprising against a system of repression as extensive as the "language ban" of the 1982 constitution should be kept in mind when talking about this being an illegal movement (*idem*).

As such, we should not understand human needs as conditions for a conflict, but rather as the discursive pillar that legitimises the PKK's actions. The way these grievances are framed and re-framed provided the comfort zone from which the PKK derived its policies and actions. They constituted the set of primordial concepts that gave meaning to the struggle. However, as it will be seen in chapter IV, those concepts are merely 'sedimented' – they appear as solid and structural, but they can be replaced, and with them the human needs that are supposed to be 'real'.

*Governance and the State's Role.* According to Edward Azar's model, states tend to reply in a repressive way to communal demands, as they are generally weak institutions controlled by a small group with the spirit of 'winner-takes-all'. As seen in the previous chapter, this is a limited understanding of the outreach the PSC model might have. States do not have to be weak to be involved in these conflict contexts, as they may undertake repressive policies<sup>12</sup> whether or not they are weak. Turkey was such a state.

During the escalation period in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Kurdish problem was taboo in Turkey. The mere utterance of the word 'Kurd' was forbidden. In 1981 a former member of government, Şerafettin Elçi, was sentenced to one year in jail for having uttered the words, "There are Kurds in Turkey. I am a Kurd" (*apud* Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 111). Two years later, Yılmaz Güney's film *Yol*, winner of the *Palme d'Or* in the Cannes film festival was forbidden from being screened in Turkey as in one of its scenes the word 'Kurdistan' was mentioned (*Le Monde*, 3/08/1989). In that same year, a law was approved (Law 2392 from 22 October 1983) stating that Turkish was the mother tongue of all Turkish citizens and that it was thus forbidden to use

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<sup>12</sup> In the next chapter I will be looking at the reasons for such behaviour.

other languages. Even though it was not expressively directed at the Kurdish language, it was commonly understood as such (Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005: 15).

According to a study undertaken by Murat Somer (2005: 591), mainstream Turkish daily *Hürriyet* published, between 1984 and 1985, 25 articles in some way related to the country's Kurds. Of those 25, only three used the word 'Kurd'. This shows not only how obedient the press was to the censorship of the Kurdish problem, but most importantly, how the Southeast was a completely neglected area for mainstream Turkey. During this period, neither the political access needs, nor the acceptance of the Kurds as a group received any kind of consideration. In the first case, there was the belief by state institutions that all Turkish citizens had the same access right to political institutions, so any claim for political access by any group was nonsensical as any Turkish citizen, independently of the ethnic background, had the same type of economic and political access. Indeed, many ethnic Kurds occupied important political posts (Uslu, 2007: 158) and many others were successful businessmen during this period. Nevertheless, such access was denied to people that intended to use the political arena in order to express ideas contrary to the founding principles of the Turkish Republic – prison was the most common destination of those who publicly asserted any form of Kurdish identity (*idem*). Political parties with a Kurdish ethnic background were (and still are) frequently shut down by the Constitutional Court, something that has become a normal political practice (Koğacioğlu, 2004). In 18 cases of dissolution of political parties, nine were related with the Kurdish problem (*idem*: 439).

For Turkey, the only recognised minority groups within its territory were those defined in the Lausanne Treaty (1923), people of Jewish, Orthodox, or Christian backgrounds. The Kurds, as a largely Muslim community, did not have the right to

claim any collective specificity. Thus there were no acceptance needs at stake – the case did not even deserve consideration. For the former Prime Minister Turgut Özal, in 1985<sup>13</sup>, Kurds were not an ethnic group in Turkey: “I can’t agree with that. There is no separation and today I don’t know whether in my ancestors there are Kurds or Turks because there were intermarriages and the language is very similar” (IHT, 8-9/06/85).

Apart from this already complex context, the PKK’s entrance in the Turkish political scene took place during one of the most turbulent periods of the Republic’s history – the 1970s. Turkey was a polarised society, with extreme left and extreme right groups fighting each other on the streets and at universities; with political leaders, journalists and businessmen being the target of frequent terrorist attacks and assassinations.

In that sense, the PKK was too insignificant, and the other problems too important for Öcalan’s men to deserve particular attention from the Turkish authorities. For example, on a tour to some of its Western allies in 1978, Prime Minister Ecevit never mentioned the existence of any particular problem in the Southeast (much less the specific question of the PKK), generalizing about the tense situation of the country and the ‘terrorism problem’ state authorities were facing (Ecevit, 1978). Ecevit was the Prime Minister of a divided country with bigger problems to solve.

*International Linkages.* As said before, Azar’s approach to the international dimension of PSC lacks the inclusion of a great number of relevant dynamics that will be explored in chapter VII with the help of the Copenhagen School’s Regional Security Complexes’ Theory (RSCT). Here I will only be looking at the cliency relationships and dynamics of dependency of Turkey, and the PKK regarding the regional and international context that allowed and sustained the unfolding of the conflict.

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<sup>13</sup> As it will be seen in chapter X, Turgut Özal would reverse his position a few years later.

In the early 1980s Turkey was not a state dependent on its international linkages to survive, or at least no more than any other of its NATO partners. It was, however, a state in debt. According to Tim Jacoby (2004: 141), due to the need to negotiate a rescue plan of US\$ 1.5 billion with the IMF in 1979, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Kenan Evren decided to postpone the plans for an already well-planned military coup. Apart from this small postponement the international context did not play much of a role regarding Turkey's behaviour towards the conflict.

Even if not significantly pressured internationally, Turkey was, nonetheless, limited regionally; linked to the unfolding events in its neighbourhood, particularly Iran's, Iraq's, and Syria's policy towards its own (and others') Kurdish population (Robins, 1993: 670). In that sense, the regional context was less than ideal: the Iraq-Iran war, the Kurdish rebellion in Northern Iraq, the difficult relations between Syria and Turkey, and the political chaos regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict provided Öcalan's movement with the conditions for its expansion. The regional environment was thus conducive or at least permissive to the undertaking of the armed struggle by PKK. The movement would eventually benefit from Syria's 'generosity' by setting its headquarters between Syria and Lebanon after Abdullah Öcalan's escape from Turkey in 1979.

Syria's difficult relations with Turkey meant that all the Turkish dissidents were welcome in Damascus. Syria had disputes with Turkey regarding its former Alexandretta province that Turkey absorbed after a plebiscite in 1939. Furthermore, it had concerns regarding the Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP) as that allowed Turkey to have more control over the two rivers both countries shared – Tigris and Euphrates. Finally, according to Aliza Marcus, Damascus was suspicious that Turkey was giving shelter to the Muslim Brothers, a group that had the goal of over-throwing

Assad's regime (2007: 60). As such, Syria accepted the PKK's presence in that territory, providing Öcalan with training facilities as well as contacts with other rebel movements in the Middle East that were stationed in either Syria or Lebanon, including Yasir Arafat's Fatah, George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Samir Ghosheh's Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, and the Lebanese Communist Party. From 1985 onwards the relationship became more solid, with the PKK being allowed to take full control of its training facilities in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon (*idem*: 99).

The war between Iraq and Iran was another headache for Ankara as it allowed the Iraqi territory to be an entry point into Turkey, with the Iraqi Army focusing on the Iranian threat. The PKK reached an agreement with Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), with the latter allowing the PKK to operate in northern Iraq thus giving the PKK two main routes of infiltration into Turkey – one from Syria and another from northern Iraq (Lundgren, 2007: 47).

In short, the international linkages in the early 1980s were not particularly encouraging for Turkey, even if its dependency links were tenuous. The spreading of instability throughout the region – from Turkey to Iran –, provided the PKK with a very favourable setting to undertake its armed activities. Together with the PKK's antagonistic discourse and the Turkish state policy regarding both the PKK and the broader Kurdish problem, the stage was set for the triggering of an armed conflict between the two belligerent actors.

## **2. Process Dynamics**

After assessing the preconditions for the PSC between Turkey and the PKK, the chapter's attention will now turn to the factors that, according to Edward Azar are

“responsible for the *activation* of overt conflict” (1990: 12), that is, the communal actions and strategies, state actions and strategies and the built-in properties of the conflict.

*Communal Actions and Strategies*. The first of these elements, the *Communal Actions and Strategies*, looks into the strategies and policy options undertaken by the communal group in the face of the background conditions. In the case of this specific conflict, it was seen that both the Turkish state reaction and the international context were in favour of the use of aggressive means: Turkey by responding to the PKK demands with repressive policies; the international context by providing support and resources for the PKK to launch its armed activities against the Turkish state. The PKK would thus create a discourse of inevitability in the face of this situation, as stated by the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan,

[w]e are not looking for a solution only in the context of war. This war was not of our choosing. It is the Turkish State which has forced us into defending our national existence, with its intransigent determination to wage a dirty war on our people, convinced that it can achieve a military solution through state terror (1994: 218).

According to PKK’s official rhetoric, the years before the beginning of the armed struggle in 1984 were marked by three different phases. From 1973 to 1978 the PKK engaged in a period of ‘ideological formation’ and group formation; from 1978-80 it was about ‘testing’ the political ideology; and the four years that remained until the 1984 initial attacks were a time of preparation. According to the official discourse:

The rule of the Turkish Republic over Kurdistan was undermined during this phase, as Kurdish society experienced an enormous rise of revolutionary and national consciousness, which led to the formation of a front and an army within the national liberation movement (PKK, 1995).

However, they were also years of what I called ‘rebel Darwinism’ (see chapter I) in which rebel movements fought each other off until the strongest prevailed as the leader of the community. In the years after the foundation, PKK engaged with other movements and tribal leaders, killing around 350 people during the period. They were labelled as ‘fascists and reactionaries’ (Bermejo, 2006: 126). Tribal chiefs found guilty of ‘collaborating’, and cadres of rival Kurdish organisations in Turkey and Europe were also targets of hit squads. In their discourse, such ‘Darwinism’ was undoubtedly legitimate. In the 1978 party programme (*Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu*, the Path to the Revolution of Kurdistan), Kurdistan was seen as a divided colony dominated by a clique of semi-feudal landlords. These landlords, together with the region’s bourgeoisie, collaborated with the ‘colonising powers’ and were thus ‘traitors’ to their own nation (van Bruinessen, 1988: 42). This inter-twined logic between Turkish colonialism and local representatives allowed for the ‘traitors’ to be attacked and defeated.

The ‘long-term popular warfare’ that began in August 1984 was to have three different stages: strategic defence, strategic balance and strategic offense, along the lines of Maoist guerrillas (Özdağ, 2000: 1; Kutschera, 1999). During the first stage, the PKK used violence to “foment popular resistance”, launching attacks against village guards (the Kurdish militias armed and paid by the government), or Turkish civil servants, particularly teachers (Kutschera, 1999). According to Abdullah Öcalan, in the first stage, the leadership should “before anything else convince the people that they must be defended and that they must defend themselves” (*apud* Kutschera, 1999).

This phase was supposed to have lasted until 1995, when the PKK would move on to a large-scale guerrilla warfare. However, by 1990 the PKK was ready for a full-scale guerrilla war, as decided during its 4<sup>th</sup> Congress (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 148).

According to one of the movement's 'founding fathers', this multi-phase protracted approach was, as in any other colonised nation, essential, in order to accomplish Kurdistan's independence (Yilmaz, 2007: 6).

*State Action and Strategies.* The key issue here is whether the state accommodates the group's claims before the conflict escalates or, instead, opts for a repressive policy. In this particular conflict, Ankara's behaviour seemed, by any standards, very clear. As mentioned earlier, the PKK's ascendancy coincided with a period of great political turbulence in Turkey that eventually led to the military coup of 1980. Following the words of Hamit Bozarslan (1999: 66) it could even be argued that the PKK was above all, a product of the period.

From 1980 until 1983 Turkey was in a state of military dictatorship, building on the 1979 martial law imposed throughout the country: thousands of political activists were arrested and torture widespread within state prisons. In that sense, the PKK claims to have received the same kind of reply other political or social movements received during that period. As highlighted by Henri Barkey,

state authorities responded with harsh measures, interrogations, torture and detentions quickly alienated the local population from a state for which there was no great reservoir of sympathy and support. In the insurgency's initial days, villagers quickly discovered that the local gendarmerie forces proved quite unfriendly, even if they were called to defend people against the PKK (2007: 356).

Turkey was living one of the most repressive periods of its history and the Kurds were not even recognised as a distinct group within Turkey. The possibility of Ankara accommodating the PKK's claims was thus quite reduced. As such, a cycle of violence and coercion developed between both parties contributing together to form a collective memory of the unfolding conflict (Bozarslan, 2000: 27).

This conflict raises an interesting point regarding the state's role as there seems to be a clear difference between the state's role in replying to the group demands and the state's role in approaching some of the problems identified by the PKK as part of the unfulfilled Kurdish human needs. There is a tendency by the Turkish authorities to clearly differentiate between the PKK and the Kurdish problem, the first one a problem of security, the second a non-consensual problem that nonetheless evolved from straight denial to increased recognition (as the PKK became more visible) (cf. Abramowitz, 1993). There was a clear will from state authorities to avoid any sort of "communalization of the conflict" (Yavuz, 2009: 172). In addition, there was the recognition of the economic problems affecting the Southeast region. For example, when asked about his opinion regarding the problems in the Southeast, the Mayor of Diyarbakir would highlight the unemployment and lack of opportunities as the biggest problems (AP, 14/08/1985). The Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP) was seen in that context as the great solution to the problem. GAP is a project that started to be developed in the early 1980s, involving the construction of dams on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers which would allow for the development of a better irrigation system for the Southeast lands. The plan did not produce the expected results for that initial period (McBride, 2000: 110); on the contrary, with the argument that only the big landlords were benefiting from the project, it actually helped the PKK to fuel its Marxist discourse of class oppression.

In short, the indirect, very partial and ineffective accommodation of the PKK claims together with a strong policy of repression further contributed to the escalation of the conflict.

*Built-in properties of conflict.* It is difficult to talk about previous patterns of relationship when the PKK was a recently formed movement, and its leadership young

and with little history of confrontations with state authorities. Nonetheless, it is important to take this element into consideration in order to understand, on the one hand, eventual discursive comparisons between the PKK and previous Kurdish insurgencies by both the Turkish state and the PKK.

From the end of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the Second World War there were more than 20 rebellions in the Southeast region of Turkey undertaken by ethnic Kurds. As Metin Heper highlights “[b]etween 1920 and 1938 alone, that country faced 17 Kurdish rebellions, three of them, those of 1925, 1930, and 1937 being major ones” (2008: 1). Afterwards, we had what Özcan calls the ‘silent decades’ until the end of the 60s when different leftist Kurdish groups were formed under the influence of the May ’68 Generation (2006: 60). For Öcalan there was a continuum between these initial rebellions and the PKK, for whom “The PKK is indeed the latest extensive movement of Kurdish rebellion” (*apud* Özcan, 2006: 128). As seen above, this continuity allowed the PKK to embed itself in the history of the Kurdish people as their legitimate representatives. In order to strengthen that claim, they engaged in a process of ‘institutionalisation’ of the organization by creating the image of the ‘Supreme leader’, the image of martyrdom and the ‘purification’ of violence (Bozarslan, 2000: 26). Even the songs dedicated to the PKK link it with previous Kurdish rebellions (Dorronsoro and Grojean, 2004).

On the Turkish side, looking into the built-in properties of the conflict opens a paradox between *how* they characterize the PKK and *which* words they use to do so. First and foremost, the PKK was defined as a group that is not representative of any communal claims. This opened the way for the consideration of the movement as ‘terrorist’, ‘bandit’ or ‘criminal’, outside the realm of any potential legitimate claim<sup>14</sup>. However,

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<sup>14</sup> Topic further developed in chapters VI and VIII.

by doing so they led to an unintended consequence – they corroborated the PKK’s discourse about its Kurdish credentials. According to Yunus Nadi, editor of the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet* in the 1930s, the two large-scale Kurdish uprisings of that time, including the Sheik Said rebellion, had been the work of ‘bandits’ (*apud* De Bellaigue, 1999: 6), the same label that was to be used to define the PKK by newspaper editors, politicians and opinion makers fifty years later. There seems to be a continuum between the understanding of those rebellions as mere manifestations of disobedience by a group of people, and the PKK as a localised phenomenon soon to be defeated. At the end of the day they were all ‘bandits’. Thus, inadvertently, these movements were put in the same box, allowing the PKK to make all sorts of linkages with the history of those previous rebel movements. By using the same rhetoric for the rebellions coming from the Southeast, the Turkish state reified the link between the movements and community they were claiming to represent, that is, between history, the PKK and the Kurds.

In short, the cycle of coercion and violence generated between the Turkish state and the PKK, together with an appropriate regional context, has been at the basis of the durability of this conflict (Bozarslan, 2000: 29). The fact that they have both resorted to tactics and strategies that confirmed each side’s discourses – the PKK by attacking civilians (‘terrorism’) and extorting money (‘bandits’), and the Turkish state by undertaking a repressive policy in the Southeast (‘colonial’ and ‘oppressive’) helped the mutual reinforcement of both sides’ discourses of war.

### **3. Outcome Analysis**

The Protracted Social Conflict model is not very strong in providing a framework for the analysis of conflict dynamics: it does not tell much about how the conflict will

evolve – it is not a set model in that sense. It does, however, provide key concepts, and highlights key topics that need to be followed in order better to understand how the conflict is unfolding; it also provides what in the previous chapter was called a ‘constant outcome model’ – elements that at any point of the conflict might be applied to assess the social, economic and political consequences of the conflict. It should now be seen how this applies to the first twelve years (1978-1990) of the Turkey-PKK conflict, by looking at the four elements identified by Azar – the deterioration of physical security, the institutional deformity, the psychological ossification, and the increased dependency and cliency.

*Deterioration of physical security.* As developed in the previous chapter, protracted conflicts lead to the re-production of a protracted abnormal social life, where destruction and fear are prime factors in people’s daily existence.

In the Turkey-PKK conflict, these conditions were mainly felt in the Southeast, in a context where the few basic infrastructures that existed were being destroyed by both sides of the conflict. Forced and unforced displacement of people – more than one million (cf. Freeman, 2008) – became a reality in the region leading to the overcrowding of the bigger towns and cities – and thus to an indirect deterioration of the existing infrastructures, not ready to accommodate so many people:

Displaced villagers, many of whom are not allowed to take their belongings with them, flee to larger Southeastern Turkish cities or to Diyarbakir, largest city in the Southeast, or to cities in western Turkey, chiefly Istanbul, Mersin, Adana, and Antalya. There they live in extreme poverty, working as day laborers in construction or as vendors. Diyarbakir, which had a population of 300,000, now is home to an estimated 900,000 (HRW, 1994).

However, this protracted destruction and individual physical insecurity is but part of the politics of the conflict. Destruction was a bargaining chip played by the PKK in the

discursive conflict against the Turkish state. As stated by Öcalan in his interview with Mehmet Ali Birand:

[t]here is nothing we will not do for our own defence. We can actually cause a lot more destruction. We have rockets in our possession. We do not aim to cause a situation like Lebanon, for now. Though we are very strong we do not target members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We could also organise suicide missions. We could assassinate important administrators of the country. However, we do not want this. We do not want to get into a situation of terror without any limits. But all of these can be made real. Everything depends on your attitude (Birand, 1988).

As seen in the words of Öcalan, destruction is an externality of a conflict, whose avoidance is desirable but not necessarily essential – it all depended, in this case, on Turkey's response. Violence is, according to this vision, something situated in the inter-play between both actors.

Throughout the period under analysis (1978-1990), the aggressiveness of both PKK's and Turkey's armed initiatives demonstrates a mutual low concern with the levels of destruction that the conflict was provoking in the country's Southeast – the end justified the means. The political price to pay for such destruction was not particularly high. On the contrary, it helped to reinforce both sides' discourse about the 'other' and thus further protract the conflict.

*Institutional Deformity.* The lack of political and socio-economic access that is often part of the rebel movements' discourse is, as the conflict unfolds, reinforced. Emergency laws and curfews are usually put into practice; on the rebels' side, leaderships are enhanced by the harsher political conditions, and the possibility of accommodation of both sides' views reduced. According to David McDowall, this situation was well felt in Turkey, with the reinforcement of some institutions instead of others, with the National Security Council being a particular example of that reinforcement:

Internally Turkey also paid a heavy price. There can be little doubt that the Kurdish challenge was used as a pretext by the National Security Council to maintain its own ascendancy, and thereby dangerously diminish the process of civil government and democracy (2005: 445).

In 1983, after the ban on political parties was lifted (see chapter IV), the NSC would veto 719 parliamentary candidates, and 12 of the 15 political parties that had registered their intention to compete in the general elections of November 1983 (Jacoby, 2004: 147). This was a clear institutional deformity derived from the military coup but clearly maintained and enhanced with the ascendancy of the PKK (*idem*: 143).

Directly or indirectly related to this military dominance of the political institutions, Turkey was, by 1986, spending 25% of its national budget with the Turkish Armed Forces – much more than the spending with education and health combined, as highlighted by Mehmet Ali Birand (1988, xiii). Thus, even though the Southeast suffered the most with the conflict, the institutional deformity was something that affected the whole of Turkey and eventually made any attempt to solve the conflict more complex than ever.

On the PKK side there was also a sort of institutional deformity with the ascendancy of Öcalan as the undisputed leader during the movement's Third Congress (cf. Özcan, 2006). Critical voices were attacked, punished or even killed, and Öcalan's word definitely became the word of the PKK. The movement's plurality was thus progressively curtailed, and the Congresses became more a confirmation of Öcalan's ideas and orders, than a space for discussion.

In short, both sides of the conflict suffered levels of institutional deformity that further distanced the parties from any peaceful solution to the dispute. How this was done and its consequences will be further explored in chapter IV, once the securitisation theory is introduced.

*Psychological Ossification.* In this context, psychological ossification is about the collective reproduction of a hatred discourse towards the 'other' that leads to an increasing impossibility of reconciliation. It is dangerous to understand it differently; as seen before, personal feelings are not called into a conflict unless uttered publicly, where they then stop being personal and become public. Following this understanding, the identification of such divisions is not clear in the Turkey-PKK conflict. There was always a clear distinction between the Turkish state and the Turkish people in general: "Our war is against the Turkish government, not the people of Turkey" (Öcalan *apud* Peterson, 1991), as well as between the Kurds and the PKK (cf. Imset, 1992). However, mass demonstrations in the Southeast, as well as some situations of Turkish-Kurdish tension became increasingly more visible. As mentioned by Philip Robins:

Growing numbers of Kurds seemed willing to take to the streets in support of the PKK and to protest against the presence and policies of the Turkish state. This increased level of Kurdish public protest (which was to reach its peak during the Nevruz celebrations of 21 March 1992) was first seen in early spring 1990. Mass demonstrations, together with strikes and subsequent unrest, racked the frontier towns of Nusaybin and Cizre with the disaffection spreading to the regional city of Diyarbakir. The protests were ominously labelled the beginning of a Kurdish *intifada* by members of the Kurdish nationalist movement (1993: 665).

The celebrations of the Nevruz<sup>15</sup> became the high point of the social confrontation between Turks and Kurds, and only in recent years, has it been possible to have those celebrations without massive acts of violence involved. In that sense, even if the conflict did not mark a clear open conflict between Turks and Kurds, it nonetheless led to the definitive affirmation of some sort of Kurdish identity that by the end of the 1980s even Turkish officials started to recognise.

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<sup>15</sup> This holiday, celebrated by Kurds all over the world, takes place during the first day of Spring, and is the first day of the Iranian calendar.

*Increased Dependency and Cliency.* It is not clear whether Turkey and the PKK became, overall, more or less dependent on the outside world during this period. For instance, the debt issue, which led to the postponement of the 1980 coup, had actually improved between 1981 and 1990. According to the United Nations database (2009), Turkey's IMF credit was down from US\$ 1,567,400,000 in 1981 to US\$ 47,638,000 in 1989 and to zero by 1990. However, in the same period there was an increase in arms trade between Turkey and the United States. As shown by Tim Jacoby (2009: 11), the annual American military assistance and legal arms sales to Turkey rose from \$413.2 million in 1980 to \$1.3205 billion in 1987, reaching a peak of \$2.460 billion in 1993. It could always be questioned whether, if it was not for the US, Turkey could have acquired the same military equipment elsewhere, or even whether those numbers can be interpreted as a matter of increased dependency, or a mere increase in support. It is nonetheless clear that such support provided a huge contribution for the Turkish armed effort against the PKK.

On the PKK side there was an increased dependency on Syria, as Damascus increased its support to the movement. The movement's leadership publicly acknowledged the PKK's dependency on the Syrians. As put by Abdullah Öcalan in an interview with the Spanish daily *El País*: "[i]f they wanted, the Syrians could shut this training camp down in 48 hours" (Gumucio, 1991). Even though the PKK was a much stronger movement by 1990 than it was in 1984, it is not clear how it would have been capable of keeping its levels of armed activity without the Syrian backing.

In general, there were some changes in terms of the external support to the conflict, but it would probably be too speculative to bluntly affirm that both actors were increasingly dependent on their international linkages.

## **Conclusion**

By taking a critical inter-subjective approach to Azar's model, a number of points from the Turkey-PKK conflict can be highlighted. A first clear issue is the sensitivity of linking movements with communal groups. Letting the actors 'speak', instead of enforcing objective analysis, allows for a better understanding of the identity constructions underlining the conflict, such as the PKK's constant need to affirm itself as the leader of the Kurdish community. Furthermore, it presents the complexity of the state role within the context of a PSC. Turkey, for instance, has a paradoxical approach to the conflict, directly rejecting the existence of a Kurdish identity at first, progressively accepting it as the conflict unfolds; while, at the same time indirectly acknowledging the PKK as an illegitimate legitimate Kurdish movement.

Azar's model shows how conflicts are a murky business, derived from the intransigence of political leaders and other relevant actors; how Turkey's blatant rejection of any sort of collective Kurdish rights facilitated the PKK's discourse on oppression and colonialism, and how PKK's actions also enhanced Turkey's discourse of terrorism about the PKK. In short, it reveals that conflicts are about discourses and processes of reinforcement of those same discourses. The following chapters should shed some light on how those discourses give meaning to the conflict, particularly by 'speaking security', and how that leads to the prolongation of the conflict.

## **Part II – Security, politics and conflicts**

### **Chapter III. Protracted social conflicts: a securitised update**

#### **Introduction**

The argument put forward in this chapter is that a proper understanding of what Protracted Social Conflicts are can only be accomplished if the role of politics and security are also taken into consideration. Politics through security rather than (lack of) development, I argue, are at the core of PSCs. It is from the construction of an issue as a security issue, and of the ‘other’ as a threat, that policies that lead to armed confrontation are approved – what the Copenhagen School calls a securitisation process.

Thus, the first section introduces security and, more exactly, the securitisation theory as the potential linkage between politics and conflict. This theory has as its basic argument that security is “a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such” (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 24); and that ‘securitisation’ is the process where that issue is moved from the realm of normal politics to that of exceptional politics, due to the security threat it represents (*idem*).

In order to see how these processes are politically framed it is necessary to analyse the underlying understanding of politics involved in securitisation theory. This is important to understand how conflicts unfold, as well as to hint on how they might end (chapter IX). The second section of this paper will thus be dedicated to the exploration of this issue.

As mentioned before, with the approval of a securitisation process that in the context of PSCs leads to the unfolding of armed conflicts, politics itself becomes securitised, and exceptional norms dominate the political system. In a context of protracted

conflicts, these exceptional rules are normalised, poisoning politics. I particularly argue that PSC contexts, due to their *protractedness*, lead to the normalisation of the exceptional, in which the conflict consequences involve all spheres of society, and where accountability levels are reduced to the ‘necessary in order to face the enemy’. The passage of a securitised issue from the level of ‘normal’ politics to that of ‘exceptional’ politics, as well as the long-term ‘normalisation’ of the exceptional will be discussed in the third section of this chapter that will conclude with some remarks summarising the main points of the arguments presented.

### **1. Securitisation as the missing link in the study of Protracted Social Conflicts**

Edward Azar considers security to be among the human needs that are pre-conditions for a PSC. In that context, security is mainly seen as survival and well-being, both individual and collective. This vision tends to see security as something inherently good, almost as a condition for human happiness – it is a security conception related to daily life (Collins, 2007: 429). Security is, put in this context, something similar to Galtung’s idea of negative peace, or to a restrictive idea of human security – approaches that take the individual as the ‘referent object’, focusing on “values and goals such as equity and solidarity” (Tadjbakshsh and Chenoy, 2007: 13).

Apart from this individual understanding of security, the concept was progressively related to the national level, particularly after 1947:

as distance, oceans, and borders become less of a protective barrier to alien identities, and a new international economy required penetration into other worlds, *national interest* became too weak a semantic guide. We found a stronger one in *national security*, as embodied and institutionalized by the National Security Act of 1947, as protected by the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, and as reconstructed in? the first and subsequent National Security Council meetings of the second cold war (Der Derian, 1993: 109).

Security thus became related to the idea of the state as an organic entity with the same sort of needs and demands as those of individuals. In this sense, security or 'national security' replaced the 'national interest' concept when defining an issue's existential importance.

Security and insecurity are intimately related as the latter is a necessary condition for the former to be convincing and is the end result if appropriate measures are not taken: the more one tries to securitise social phenomena in order to ensure 'security', the more one creates (intentionally or non-intentionally) a feeling of insecurity (CASE, 2006: 461).

This goes to the core of the political understanding of security. As put by Karin Fierke,

[t]he discussion of politics and security raises two issues. First, it points to a political relationship at the core of security, that is, between a protector and the protected. Second, it highlights the political dimension of defining threats, including the relationship between the type or source of a threat and the best means to address it. From the acknowledgement that security is, in several respects, political flows a further acknowledgement that its meaning can change as it becomes a subject of contestation (2007: 15).

This political meaning of security is understated in Azar's model. The factors the author considers as eventual pre-conditions that trigger PSCs (communal actions and strategy, state actions and strategy, and built-in properties of the conflict), are, in reality, directly linked to the definition of a situation in security terms: will the state allow the aggrieved group to politicise their issues, allow these issues to be debated in the public sphere, or will it consider it a threat to its existence? And does that group really want to discuss their grievances? How both sides consider and define the issues at stake, in terms of relevance to their own existence, is fundamental to understand the consequences of the decisions taken, and for the evolution and potential resolution of

the conflict.

As seen before, conflicts, as well as conflict resolution, should be understood within the realm of politics. Development, and education, usually pointed out (including by Azar) as long-term solutions for PSCs are all relevant, but not absolute issues as they always start from political choices. The link between politics and conflict is, in that sense, fundamental for framing acts of constant significant political violence. But how can we establish such link? I claim that security, as understood by the Copenhagen School, provides the link between politics and conflict.

### *Copenhagen School's security framework and Conflict Studies*

From all the new early 1990s Security Studies theories that flourished in Europe, the one developed by a group of researchers from the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI), including Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, was arguably the most ground-breaking<sup>16</sup> and controversial<sup>17</sup> one. The bringing together of these two authors led to a “rare theoretical merger between something like an ‘English School constructivist realist’ coming from a strategic studies background (Buzan) and a self-proclaimed ‘post-structural realist’ strongly influenced by the works of Derrida and Kissinger (Wæver)” (CASE, 2006: 452). Of the same opinion is Steve Smith for whom,

the work of the Copenhagen School is one of the most interesting developments in the contemporary study of security. Although it is true that there are tensions between the positions of the two main members, Buzan’s neorealism and Wæver’s poststructural realism (by which I mean his use of the tools of poststructuralism to examine the ontology of the realist world), it is nonetheless the case that some innovative works is

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<sup>16</sup> By incorporating researchers from different theoretical backgrounds in International Relations, the Copenhagen School ended up creating a theory appealing enough to different sectors of International Relations and Security academia, especially within Europe.

<sup>17</sup> The debate in the *Review of International Studies* (1997-1998) and many other supportive and critical articles that followed have been fundamental in the re-definition of Security Studies.

going on here (2005: 37).

Although not denying the potential contributions other theories within Security Studies might offer to the analysis of conflicts, the Copenhagen School's security framework is the approach that best links politics with security by explaining how security comes to exist through politics. And this understanding is fundamental to establishing the relation between these two concepts in the context of PSCs, the central focus of this research. Security, in this context, and adapting Alexander Wendt's expression, is 'what the process makes of it' and not an *a priori* defined concept. This approach matches perfectly with Azar's approach to conflicts (not his approach to security, though, as we have just seen) as fluid, dynamic phenomena. As he himself puts it: "[p]rotracted conflicts [...] are not specific event clusters of events at a point in time; they are processes" (Azar *et al.*, 1978: 50).

The Copenhagen School is defined by three main ideas: securitisation, sectors and regional security complexes. As securitisation is the most relevant concept in the context of this thesis and also "what defines most distinctly the school in a metatheoretical sense" (Wæver, 2004: 8), I will briefly define the other concepts first (also because they will be further developed in the next chapters) before engaging in greater length with the former one.

*Sectors* refer to the distinction made by these scholars between different types of security: these are the military, political, economic, environmental and societal sectors. According to Buzan *et al.*, "[o]ne way of looking at sectors is to see them as identifying specific types of interaction" (1998: 7) in order to simplify the analysis. In chapter V, it will be explained how these sectors are articulated and it will be highlighted which sectors are directly related with the understanding of PSCs.

*Security complexes* underline the importance of the regional level in security analysis,

providing “a conceptual frame that captures the emergent new structures of international security” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 40). It provides a theory of how the world is organised in regional security complexes, and how national security dynamics are strongly related to the regional context in which they are situated. All these issues will be further explored in chapter VII, when discussing the international dimension of PSCs.

Having briefly explained the other two dimensions of the Copenhagen School security framework, let us return to the *securitisation* concept. According to the Copenhagen School theorists, every threat is securitised in a process that includes referent objects, securitisation actors and functional actors. The *referent objects* are the things that are perceived as existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival, such as the state, the nation or even the identity group. On the other hand, *securitisation actors* are the ones who declare that something is a ‘real threat’, the ones that indicate the referent object. State actors, due to their position and legitimacy, are privileged security actors. As put by Jef Huysmans, “statesmen representing the state and uttering security in the name of the state are the privileged agents in the securitizing process” (2002: 54). However, other actors can be securitising agents, mainly so in the context of Protracted Social Conflicts where non-state actors also construct their own securitisation processes. Besides, even in the case of statesmen, a securitising claim “does not [...] imply that successful securitization and the specific way in which a problem may become securitized is a direct result of the intentional practice of a statesman” (*idem*). As further added by Huysmans, “[i]n a social-constructivist perspective, the effects are always inter-subjectively constructed and therefore not controlled by the individual agents themselves” (*idem*).

Finally, the *functional actors* and *facilitating conditions*. The former are actors that



influence a securitisation process, but are neither referent objects (as they are not the ones that have to be existentially preserved), nor securitising actors (as they do not actively articulate a securitisation discourse). A functional actor can, in parallel, be a securitising actor, but of a different securitisation process. The Iranian President, for example, when publicly considering that Israel “should be wiped out from the map” (CNN, 2005) was being a functional actor in the Israeli securitisation of Iran, and a securitising actor in Iran’s securitisation of Israel. Apart from the functional actors, we have situations that help support a securitising claim – such as the explosion of a bomb or the acquisition of a nuclear weapon by a neighbouring country. These are facilitating conditions, limited to an influential but not determining role.

A security issue is, for the Copenhagen School, a self-referential practice. It is created, not necessarily because a threat exists, but because the issue is presented as such (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 24). In the last instance, we must keep in mind that it is always a political choice to securitise or to accept a securitisation move:

one should not believe this [securitisation] is an innocent reflection of the issue being a security threat; it is always a political choice to securitise or to accept a securitisation (*idem*: 29).

Security ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but *among* the subjects (*idem*: 31) – it is always inter-subjective and socially constructed. It is by labelling an issue as a ‘security issue’, that it becomes one. The process of securitisation could be seen as a *speech act* in the sense that it is the utterance itself that is the act, that is, by saying the words, something is done. However, this process is not merely one of uncontested utterances. It is as much a process of claiming as it is of convincing.

Conditions for a successful speech act are two-fold: (1) the internal, linguistic-

grammatical – to follow the rules of the act, and (2) the external, contextual and social – “to hold a position from which the act can be made” (*idem*: 32). As such, a successful speech act is a combination of language and society. Regarding the first, the grammar of security, it should contain, according to Juha Vuori (2003), an existential threat for a referent object, which should exist (Claim); a point of no return, whereby the threat’s concretisation will change things forever (Warn); and a possible way out that will guarantee that the threat will be extinguished (Request).

On the other hand, the external conditions have to do with a) the social capital of the securitisation actor, who should be in a position of authority, although not necessarily defined as an official authority<sup>18</sup>; and b) the threat condition. As argued by Buzan *et al.*, “[i]t is more likely that one can conjure a security threat if certain objects can be referred to that are generally held to be threatening – be they tanks, hostile sentiments, or polluted waters” (1998: 33).

Some situations are more prone to create a securitisation process than others – “heavily armed neighbors with a history of aggression are more easily construed as threats than are lightly armed, pacifist ones” (*idem*: 57). They make securitisation moves more probable to succeed. As mentioned above, these facts, objects, historical backgrounds are facilitating conditions; they do not determine, they influence. It is up to the securitising actors to construct a threat in a convincing way, but even that construction will not be more than a securitising move:

A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitisation – this is a securitizing move, but the issue is securitised only and when the audience accepts it as such (*idem*: 25).

Thus, it is the audience that will determine whether those security claims can indeed

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<sup>18</sup> I will return to this point in chapter V.

be taken as a security issue, and concede the requested special powers that will allow that issue to be moved from the realm of 'normal' politics to that of special politics.

### *Criticising the Copenhagen School*

As with any theoretical contribution that causes an impact in its academic field, the Copenhagen School was not immune to criticism (even its label, Copenhagen School was given by one of its critics, Bill McSweeney). It is not my intention to go through a thorough review of all those criticisms, but merely to focus on those that are directly related with this research. In that sense, I will briefly focus on four main issues that were claimed against the Copenhagen School as either being incomplete or inconsistent with the overall framework: the potential for its general application (outside Europe), the role of the audience, the post-securitisation process, and the role of conflicts in the theory.

*The Copenhagen School's 'Eurocentrism'.* *A priori* it could be argued that securitisation theory would only work in democratic societies, where accountability and transparency are perceived as core values and where there is a vast audience (media, citizens, political parties...) that needs to be convinced of the existence of such security threats (cf. Wilkinson, 2007). Nevertheless, securitisation is equally applicable to non-democratic regimes as even the bloodiest despot needs to be inserted into a collective: "[n]o government exclusively based on the means of violence has ever existed. Even the totalitarian ruler, whose chief instruments of rule is torture, needs a power basis" (Arendt, 1972: 149). In that sense, there is always an audience to convince.

*Audience.* The role of the audience in securitisation theory is another point in which the Copenhagen School has been criticised. As put by Thierry Balzacq, "although the

CS [Copenhagen School] appeals to an audience, its framework ignores that audience” (2005: 177). Even though this topic is indeed under-specified (and deserves further research) – it is not clear how the audience is involved in the securitisation process, apart from the need of its approval for the securitisation to succeed. What is relevant to highlight in this case is that the audience’s approval will ultimately be seen by the approval of the exceptional measures. It certainly does not explain how the audience is convinced; it just acknowledges the result. As put by Buzan and Wæver:

If people are killing each other in organised ways, or spending large and/or escalating sums on armaments, or being driven from their homes in large numbers, or resorting to unilateral actions contrary in major ways to international undertakings, then it is virtually certain that successful securitisations have taken place (2003: 73).

Until then we can only talk of a securitising move: “only once an actor has convinced an audience (inter-unit relations) of its legitimate need to go beyond otherwise binding rules and regulations (emergency mode) can we identify a case of *securitisation*” (Taureck, 2005: 4).

*Post-securitisation.* Following the same framework I would argue that a securitisation process is followed, when successful, by a continuous post-securitisation process. Once the issue is securitised then the importance of discourse changes. Still, moving an issue to the sphere of special politics does not mean that it disappears from the public sphere. What follows is not silence, but the Copenhagen School has little to say on the topic.

There is a permanent securitisation maintenance process in which certain arguments must be repeated in order to continue to convince the audience, or what Vuori (2003) calls the “reproduction of securitisation”. I would argue that in this context the discourse of emergency is replaced by one of ‘control’, in which the ‘appropriate

authorities' are 'taking care' of the securitised issue. Despite losing its dramatic tone, this discourse maintains the structures underlying the approved securitisation: it still treats the securitised issue/actor as such; it maintains the importance of the exceptional measures approved; and it maintains the level of importance of the threat. This discourse of control can be seen in Moscow's discourse towards Chechnya. As Audrey Kurth Cronin mentions in her analysis of the Chechnya conflict, "by spring 2000, Putin had publicly declared 'victory over terrorists'" even though "human rights abuses by Russian forces continued unabated, and the pace of terrorist attacks by Chechen operatives on traditionally Russian soil increased, especially after October 2002" (2007: 391). As some authors such as Michael Williams have noted, there is a paradox between the increasingly diminished political participation in an issue that has been securitised and the increase in public debate on the topic. The war in Afghanistan is a good example of this: it had a massive media coverage and intense public debate after the approval of the exceptional measures to deal with Osama bin Laden, while the potential participation in the decision-making process was reduced to the closest aides of President George W. Bush (cf. Woodward, 2002).

This paradox means that even though an issue has been securitised, the potential for public exposure has actually increased. With a discourse of control, it is possible to maintain the securitised features while at the same time toning down the public interest on the topic by declaring it under control. It is a sort of progress report (it can literally assume this form) that attempts to justify the use of the exceptional measures, while at the same time attempting to remove the problem from the eyes of the public opinion. In the next chapter it will be seen how Turkish authorities have used this discourse in the early stages of the conflict against the PKK.

*The Copenhagen School and conflicts.* Another criticism directed against the

Copenhagen School is related to the lack of consideration for the particular role of securitisation processes in contexts of conflict (an area in which this thesis hopes to give a contribution). According to Neumann (1998), “the [Copenhagen] School has (so far) avoided confronting the issue of outbreak of war”. This author defends the inclusion of another concept – *violisation* – in the Copenhagen School theory in order to fill the gap. In terms of *violisation*, Neumann means, “the process whereby an already securitised issue such as identity becomes a *casus belli* over which blood must run” (1998). Although correct in his assertion that the Copenhagen School has so far preferred to look to less traditional security issues, “the relationship between identity and ‘outbreak of war’ as an ontological question could be elaborated within securitisation theory, without much need to add the concept of ‘violisation’” (Kazan, 2003: 49).

It is in that sense, a question of working on the relationship between security and conflict, rather than coming up with new concepts that serve as intermediaries between the two.

Despite the above-mentioned criticisms – regarding the role of the audience, the follow up of a securitisation, and the particular application of the theory to the study of conflicts – to which we could add Lene Hansen’s (2000) gender silences and Erikson’s (1999) involvement of the security analyst in its analysis, not to mention Bill McSweeney’s (1999) criticisms (some of them tackled in chapter V), overall the Copenhagen School’s path-breaking work is certainly a huge contribution not only to the understanding of security, but also to the understanding of conflicts, by the way it provides a framework for linking conflicts, security and politics.

## **2. Securitisation as the linking concept between politics and conflict**

Defining security is a political move. As put by Ole Wæver, “[i]t is ultimately a political activity to define certain developments or perspectives as ‘threats’ and *thereby* put an issue as a security issue” (1997: 30). But what is political activity, or what is politics in general in the context of securitisation theory? Some authors (cf. Williams, 2003) have argued that securitisation theory is, to a large extent, influenced by Carl Schmitt’s idea of the political, where the distinction between friend and foe is the key dichotomy. Schmitt understood politics as an intrinsically ‘antagonistic’ activity delimited by the power of the sovereign – who decides on the exception. The exception is here essential to understand the political, as well as the meaning of order. As put by Jef Huysmans: “exception refers to the idea that order is constituted in the definition of what is exceptional to it, what is seemingly its outside” (2006a: 136). To speak of security is, as such, to define the friend from enemy, to be political in Schmitt’s sense of the term. However, besides Ole Wæver’s own negation of this direct influence (Wæver, 2006), I would add that such a vision would deny the securitisation concept one of its most important characteristics – the belief that there is such a thing as ‘normal’ politics.

The political definition underlying the securitisation theory can be better understood by using Max Weber’s definition, where, although politics could be seen as a space of conflict, the politician should restrain from using force. Contrary to Schmitt, for Weber politics should be a space of responsibility, where sovereignty should be used with restraint (Scheuerman, 1997: 21). The responsible use of the sovereign prerogatives does not make politics less antagonistic, just less ‘uncivilised’, that is, it does not eliminate the antagonistic content of politics. For Weber, “politics means

conflict” (1968: 1399); it is, as put by William Scheuerman, “a battlefield for representatives of competing value choices, each of whom accumulates possibilities for (state-based) coercion, which may at some point have to be used against those with alternative value preferences” (1997: 16-17).

The biggest difference between Schmitt and Weber resides in the ethical and moral values underpinning such choice. Whereas for Weber politics should be dealt with restraint and care, for Schmitt such ethical and moral restraints are nothing more than the imposition of constraints defined by a hegemonic group. In the realm of the political, the relationships are established on a friend/foe basis: “The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy” (Schmitt, 1996: 26). In that sense,

[t]he political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible (*idem*: 27).

Both Max Weber’s and Carl Schmitt’s approaches still provide limited accounts of the role of politics in securitisation theory, particularly since they do not fully grasp, as mentioned above, the normal politics dimension of the theory. In that sense, Hannah Arendt’s promise of politics seems to bring a relevant contribution to this debate. Hannah Arendt was not against the idea of conflict within politics. For her, it was the possibility of politics that was essential – it did not have, in that sense, to follow a Habermasian conciliatory approach (Owens, 2007). For Arendt, political activity aroused “between citizens as individuals, binding [them] together or separating them as shared or conflicting interests” (*idem*: 72). The true basis of

politics was the freedom of coming together and discussing issues of public concern. Arendt's concern was with this possibility, more than with the result or the form of that discussion<sup>19</sup>.

However, in between Arendt's conception of freedom within politics and a conception of politics as a space for conflict (be it Schmittian or Weberian) lies an important difference. For Schmitt and Weber politics is seen from top-down, as their interest was mainly focused on the role of the sovereign and of the elites, which held the power. Arendt, on the contrary, underlines the bottom-up potential of politics by focusing on politics as the space for individual freedom through the collective. Kari Polonen notes that, "Arendt, in accordance with Jefferson and Tocqueville explicitly defends democracy on the local level as a medium of connecting individuals into the community" (2008: 58).

Chantal Mouffe's ideas could help bridge this gap between Arendt and Schmitt. In her critique of Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*, Chantal Mouffe proposes a way of accepting Schmitt's understanding of the political as an arena of conflict, while at the same time overcoming its antagonistic content. For that she advances the concept of 'agonistic politics'. In this context, the conflicting character of the political is kept, but within a commonly accepted structure. As put by Mouffe,

[c]onflict, in order to be accepted as legitimate, needs to take a form that does not destroy the political association. This means that some kind of common bond must exist between the parties in conflict, so that they will not treat their opponents as enemies to be eradicated, seeing their demands as illegitimate, which is precisely what happens with the antagonistic friend/enemy relation (2005: 20).

It is this agonistic character of politics – in which there still are winners and losers,

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<sup>19</sup> Her work has actually been criticised for its lack of consideration for strategic action. For Amy Allen, "Arendt's attempt to exclude strategic action from the domain of the political altogether paints too rosy a picture of our political life" (2002: 143).

and irreconcilable positions – that prevents political actors from having to be antagonistic. Thereby, the possibility of politics, Arendt's main concern, is safeguarded.

It is, however, important to highlight that the *political* and *politics* are not different forms of defining the same phenomenon, but different concepts altogether. Whereas the latter is about governing the public arena, the former is about creating the possibility of plurality. The *political* is in that sense “the dimension of antagonism which [is] take[n] to be constitutive of human societies” (Mouffe, 2005: 9), i.e. something ontological – embedded in the understanding of the social world – whereas politics is a derivative, that can assume different forms and models, depending on the context: “the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political” (*idem*). As further added by the author, “[t]hings could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. It is in that sense that it can be called ‘political’ since it is the expression of a particular structure of power relations” (Mouffe, 2005: 18).

For her, this is something that goes against Hannah Arendt's understanding:

Some theorists such as Hannah Arendt envisage the political as a space of freedom and public deliberation, while others see it as a space of power, conflict, and antagonism. My understanding of ‘the political’ clearly belongs to the second perspective (2005: 9).

I would argue that Arendt's ‘political’<sup>20</sup> is not necessarily incompatible with Mouffe's position. Arendt takes one step back. In her view, the problem is not about conflict or consensus, but about the coming together for the possibility of politics. As put by

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<sup>20</sup> According to Patricia Ownes, “[Arendt] usually spoke in the lexicon of the ‘public realm’ and ‘politics, properly speaking’, rather than ‘the political’” (2007: 25).

Patricia Owens, for Arendt “[p]olitics is full of conflict and disagreement. But it is also limited by the condition of plurality, that there are many and not one of us, the very condition for speech and political action among equals” (2006: 97).

Chantal Mouffe certainly does not disagree with this. Indeed, the underlying meaning of her understanding of agonistic politics is not very different from Arendt’s:

The agonistic approach does not pretend to encompass all differences and to overcome all forms of exclusions. But exclusions are envisaged in political and not in moral terms. Some demands are excluded, not because they are declared to be ‘evil’, but because they challenge the institutions constitutive of the democratic political associations. To be sure, the very nature of those institutions is also part of the agonistic debate, but, for such a debate to take place, the existence of a shared symbolic space is necessary (2005: 120-121).

That there is the need for a common ground where the possibility of politics takes place is something both authors clearly agree with, and such is the relevant issue when understanding the idea of normal politics in the context of the securitisation theory.

This understanding of politics is placed against that of tyranny. In contexts of tyranny there is no political conflict, as well as there is no political consensus, but the simple elimination of the possibility of both. Following Montesquieu, Arendt argued that it is the principle of fear that is the basis of tyrannies: “the tyrant acts because he fears his subjects and the oppressed because they fear the tyrant” (2007: 724). This is something problematic when interpreting Schmitt’s work. As put by Jef Huysmans, “by choosing the ‘enemy’ as the organizing principle of the political, Schmitt does something very substantive, indeed. He renders politics into a politics of fear, which for Montesquieu was the defining principle of despotism” (Huysmans, 2008: 170). In that sense, Chantal Mouffe’s work is important in order to give Schmitt’s political the possibility of politics.

Besides, the introduction of Mouffe's critique of Schmitt is relevant inasmuch as both Mouffe's and Ernesto Laclau's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* were influential in Wæver's understanding of security and securitisation. Among other things, securitisation theory is consciously linked to Laclau's understanding of politicisation as the space for opening up petrified relationships (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 161 n.1). According to Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (*idem*: 29),

[p]oliticization means to make an issue appear to be open, a matter of choice, something that is decided upon and that therefore entails responsibility, in contrast to issues that either could not be different (laws of nature) or should not be put under political control (e.g., a free economy, the private sphere, and matters for expert decision).

In this context,

the political is opposed to the social, when the latter refers to sedimented practices as unreflected "natural" ways of being and doing that can be moved into the sphere of choice and contestation by politicization (*idem*: 161 n.1).

In short, securitisation theory incorporates three different political views: the securitisation move obeys to a vision of politics as the field of conflict – of the definition of friend and enemy –, whereas the consequences of that securitisation – the placement of an issue within the field of the exceptional –, is linked with both Arendt's understanding of political freedom, and Laclau, Mouffe, and Schmitt's definition of the political.

It could be argued that it is the preoccupation with the lack of freedom and debate in a context of the exceptional that 'morally' moves the Copenhagen School authors. That is why they argue for the *desecuritisation* or even the ideal *asecuritisation* of issues, instead of securitisation, which is a process that leads to the reduction or even silencing of political accountability (*idem*: 1998). With a securitisation process, the

debate is stopped and freedom is restricted regarding the securitised issue. The arguments used for securitisation then become easily applied to those who go against that successful securitisation. The ‘us *versus* them’ or the friend *versus* enemy rationale is directly and freely applied in this context.

### *Politics, security, and Protracted Social Conflicts*

In the frame of Edward Azar’s model, I would argue that securitisation links the genesis of the conflict with its dynamics. In PSC contexts, discourses of the ‘other’ as a threat become part of the public discussion, and both the communal contestation and the state’s behaviour towards that community (or their ‘representatives’) become increasingly antagonistic leading to the approval of exceptional measures. This links with the strategies both sides take in the face of increasing social unrest. Exceptional measures will certainly mean their respective audiences<sup>21</sup> have approved the securitisation of the ‘other’. As stated by Michael Williams,

[a] successful securitization of identity involves precisely the capacity to decide on the limits of a given identity, to oppose it to what it is not, to cast this as a relationship of threat and even enmity and to have this decision and declaration accepted by a relevant group (2003: 519).

In that case, it is necessary to look into the policies that have been approved as well as the concepts and narratives attached to it, both in terms of how the other is labelled (chapter V) and how the conflict is set in historical terms (built-in properties of the conflict).

When violence erupts and becomes continuous (even though with different levels of intensity), the conflict becomes increasingly protracted and what used to be

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<sup>21</sup> As mentioned above and further developed in chapter V, in the case of the non-state actor that approval might be done *a posteriori* by increasing popular support. It must, however, be done in order for the movement to be politically relevant.

exceptional measures become normalised. In such contexts, security increasingly takes over the political debate and pluralism; in a nutshell, it takes over the possibility of politics.

### **3. Protracted Social Conflicts and the ‘normalization’ of exceptional politics**

Following the last section, the question that needs to be asked is: what are the limits of the political in the context of Protracted Social Conflicts?

Edward Azar had a consensual understanding of politics. In his opinion: “[p]olitics must be about consensus and community building as opposed to power acquisition. Otherwise, mankind will continue to live in a perpetual state of war” (1990: 1). Such conciliatory position clearly sets a very strict limit to what falls within politics and the political. However, as mentioned above and following Chantal Mouffe (2005: 5), it is dangerous to think about politics as consensual: politics is always ‘partisan’; there must be alternatives from which people can choose one or the other (*idem*: 29). Thinking of it as something different than this simply leads to the closure of the agonistic channel and the displacement of political actors that refuse to be part of the consensus to an antagonistic mode.

As put by Mouffe, “society is always politically instituted and [...] the terrain in which hegemonic interventions take place is always the outcome of previous hegemonic practices and [...] it is never a neutral one” (*idem*: 34). Thus, politics is a space of the impossibility of neutrality.

In this space of non-neutrality, the choice of whether or not to resort to the use of armed force is an intrinsic feature of politics, involving political options and political actors, even if ‘covered’ under another name. As stated by Carl Schmitt,

[e]very religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy [...] A religious community

which wages wars against members of other religious communities or engages in other wars is already more than a religious community; it is a political entity (1996: 37).

Any argument contrary to this is nothing more than the covert attempt of one group to dominate the other.

For Arendt (1972), that use of violence signifies the absence of power. In that sense, the use of violence tends to be opposite to politics, as it usually leads to the silencing of plurality. However, her ambiguous position regarding that use (cf. Owens, 2007) makes it a rather ambivalent criterion to test the limits of the political for Hannah Arendt. As explained by Patricia Owens, on the one hand, Arendt “did not believe violence was truly political” (2007:4); on the other hand, she was “passionate for the need for a Jewish army to fight against Hitler” (*idem*). For Arendt, in distinction to power, violence can only be politically used if justified, it must be a means to a given (political) end – war or violence in general cannot be justified in any other terms, such as morality<sup>22</sup>. Violence is only justified if used briefly and in order to establish new political spaces (Beardsworth, 2008: 507).

In *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt defines two contexts in which violence is justified – as a response to extreme injustice and as an opener for the political space. The use of non-violence requires, as a pre-requisite, that there already is some space for politics. As she suggests, Gandhi’s campaign would not have succeeded in anti-political places such as Nazi Germany or Stalin’s Soviet Union (Frazer and Hutchings, 2008: 102). In that sense, violence is never political but it can be justified as the creation of its possibility. As put by Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberley Hutchings,

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<sup>22</sup> Regarding morality in politics, Arendt follows the Schmittian critique, by refusing to acknowledge its role. As Patricia Owens concludes: “[b]oth Schmitt and Arendt shared a belief that morality in political and international affairs could only lead to disillusionment and the further intensification and brutalization of war” (2007: 508).

Arendt certainly wants to say that [violence] is not political, strictly grammatically speaking. But there seems to be no particular reason, on just this account, why political actors should reject non-political (strictly speaking) actions if they bring about desired political effects. Such as the one that she has in view – making the public world in which political action is possible. Of course, for the most part Arendt argues that violence is politically ineffective. However, the concession that violence might be the only way significantly weakens this strand of her argument (*idem*: 104).

I would argue that through the evolution of the securitisation process applied to Protracted Social Conflicts it is more accurate to analyse Arendt's limits of politics, at the same time that it is possible to compare those limits with those of Mouffe, Schmitt, and Laclau.

As defined above, an issue is securitised after having been politicised, that is, it has moved from the sphere of normal politics to that of special politics. If we inserted Mouffe's distinction between 'agonistic' and 'antagonistic' politics it could thus be argued that a securitisation move is always about the partial rejection of the former. That is, the issue/actor that has been securitised is placed outside any eventual form of agonistic politics. This does not mean that 'agonistic' politics is no longer possible – this is true only for those that have been securitised. Hence, we can talk about a 'partial' rather than a *tout court* rejection of agonistic politics. In that sense, even when an issue has been 'upgraded' to the level of special politics, it is still possible to understand it within the limits of the political, according to Mouffe, Schmitt, and Laclau. What about Hannah Arendt? *A priori* a securitising move would entail a rejection of politics for Arendt. As seen before, politics is, within the 'exceptional', a suffocating area for the free and plural expression of opinions. However, there is in Arendt's thought openness to the exceptional, if undertaken during a short period of time. For Arendt, political action meant, "that men in their freedom can interact with one another, [...] as equals among equals, commanding and obeying one another only

in emergencies – that is, in time of war – but otherwise managing all their affairs by speaking with and persuading one another” (2005: 117).

Deliberation was from her perspective seen as a consequence of the possibility of politics, even if it was not politics *per se* anymore. Thus, it could be argued that the moment of deliberation is the moment where politics in an ‘Arendtian’ viewpoint reaches its limits. If so, the approval of exceptional measures within a securitisation process that leads to an armed conflict – a PSC in this case – is the limit of Arendt’s politics: after the approval of the exceptional measures and the undertaking of violent measures, politics is no longer expressed in such context.

For Mouffe, Schmitt and Laclau, nonetheless, it is still possible to talk of the political in this context. As claimed by Rob J. Walker,

to speak of security is to engage in a discourse of repetitions, to affirm over and over again the dangers that legitimize the sovereign authority that is constituted precisely as a solution to dangers. But it is important to remember that in this discourse of dangerous affirmations of a self-constituting danger, they simultaneously exclude the possibility of admitting the presence of other subjectivities, most obviously of those of class, race, gender, and humanity (1997: 73).

In reality, it is this condition of differentiation that is at the core of the political. Hence, for these authors, the limits of the political are placed beyond the approval of the exceptional; it is placed in the understanding of the securitised other. If the other is defined as an enemy, then the conflict will still be framed within the political; however, if using Schmitt’s terminology, the other is framed not as the enemy but as the total enemy, whose total destruction must be achieved, then the limits of the political have been reached. Hence, the threshold is not in the violation of the human body, but rather on how the overwhelming use of force might have the full destruction of the ‘other’ as a goal. In such context, the conflict crosses the boundaries of the

political.

In that sense, the threshold is not set in the use/non-use of violence, but rather in the purpose of that use and the way it is discursively constructed. The conflicts in Liberia and Somalia, perfect illustrations of the 'criminal' *New Wars*, are a good example of this. In this respect, it is worth quoting at length Isabelle Duyvesteyn views on these two conflicts:

the conflicts [in Liberia and Somalia] were political to the extent that political issues provided the most important driving forces of the conflict. The invasion created a political process, which had not been possible before. The factions moved for the capital which was seen as the seat of power and whomever could control this, would be in control of the country. The right to rule lay in the occupation of the presidential mansion. The disagreements over who should rule more than how the country should be ruled provided an important impetus in keeping the war going after the presidents were removed from power. War was initially a creator of politics and later on once a political arena had been created, war was a continuation of the fight over the exclusive control of politics (2000: 108).

The distinctive characteristic of PSCs is thus its political character. A conflict is more than the mere acts of violence for that reason. There is, in that sense, an intimate relation between armed conflict and politics, as the former only has meaning when relating to the latter. Therefore, the *New Wars* discourse (Kaldor, 1999; Munkler, 2005) that presents contemporary armed conflicts as criminal rather than political phenomena are a conceptual paradox, as they define war and conflict as largely non-political. As Kalyvas (2001; 2006) argues, contemporary wars are not necessarily less ideological or more criminal than past wars:

By removing coherent, if flawed, political categories and classificatory devices, the end of the cold war has led to an exaggeration of the criminal aspects of recent civil wars and a concomitant neglect of their manifold political aspects (Kalyvas, 2001: 117).

In that sense, it is necessary to distinguish violence as an instrument (Arendt, 1969)

from conflict as a political process. This does not mean that armed conflicts are a perfectly legitimate way of undertaking political struggle. Both Chantal Mouffe and Hannah Arendt are clear in advocating a form of ‘agonistic’ politics as the ‘ethical’ solution for the resolution of social conflicts. However, the inclusion of these conflicts within a broad understanding of the political prevents them from being de-politicised and thus framed as a technical issue with objective solutions.

In the context of PSCs, there is, however an extra challenge that is placed in the face of politics, and that is their protracted character. As stated by Jef Huysmans,

[s]ecurity rhetoric defines existential challenges, which endanger the survival of the political order. As a result it alters the premises for all other questions; they become subjugated to the security question. If the danger is not properly dealt with first, the other policy questions will lose their significance because the political community in name of which economic and welfare policies are developed seriously risks losing its independence and territorial integrity (2006: 25).

By being prolonged in time, these conflicts end up dominating the societies in which they arise leading to the absolute rejection of agonistic politics placing the perpetration of a technocratic system at the threshold between antagonistic politics and its complete elimination.

### *The normalisation of the exceptional*

Although focusing specifically on the global war on terror, in which Western practices of democracy stand as normal politics<sup>23</sup>, Vivienne Jabri develops a Foucauldian approach to conflict/war interference in politics. For this author, conflict

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<sup>23</sup> According to Jabri “war, rather than being confined to its own time and space, permeates the normality of the political process, has, in other words, a defining influence on elements considered to be constitutive of liberal democratic politics, including executive answerability, legislative scrutiny, a public sphere of discourse and interaction, equal citizenship under the law and, to follow liberal thinkers such as Habermas, political legitimacy based on free and equal communicative practices underpinning social solidarity” (2006: 49).

becomes part of a group/country's daily routine:

Perpetual war is also a state that is in a permanent state of mobilization, where every aspect of public life is geared towards combat against potential enemies, internal and external (Jabri, 2006: 54).

This leads to the normalisation of the exceptional, where 'special politics' become 'normal politics', and to the infiltration of the security discourse in almost all areas of society. As argued by Jabri,

war permeates discourses on politics, so that these come to be subject to the restraints and imperatives of war and practices constituted in terms of the demands of security against an existential threat (*idem*).

Securitisation theory leaves unanswered what exceptional or special politics legally means. According to Werner (1998), it could either mean the temporary suspension of the norm or the breaking of it. Whereas the "breaking of rules does not require any special position of an actor within an institution", the "suspension of rules [...] requires the existence of constitutive and regulative rules empowering an actor to perform derogating legal acts" (*idem*: 14). In this context, derogatory practices would be limited to state actors, with non-state actors only able to break the rules (Kazan, 2003: 52). Though this introduces a difference in terms of securitisation processes, as derogatory-securitisations might be different from breaking-securitisations, I would argue that in PSCs, the outcome tends to be the same, and that is the creation of a new norm. This can work both for state and non-state actors, as the latter might have the real control of territory, which becomes, under their effective jurisdiction, different from the state jurisdiction.

In the case of PSCs the practices derived from the protraction of the situation lead to the reification of the securitised issue within the normal functioning of the political system, with the consequent ramifications to other non-securitised issues. As argued

by Rupesinghe, “[o]nce violence is triggered, it seeps into society, undermining trust and the most basic feelings of security” (1998: 25).

Within the context of PSCs, it is no longer simply a case of ‘upgrading’ an issue from normal to exceptional politics, but of placing that securitised issue at the centre of normal politics, affecting all other political issues. In the case of Israel, for example, “emergency government has been the norm in Israel. What started as a temporary transition mechanism during a ‘war of independence’ quickly became and remained a permanent feature of the Israeli state” (Neocleous, 2006: 202).

Any decision taken within normal politics needs from then on to take the securitised issue in high consideration, be it education or health policies. This rationale ends up affecting all other issues. Their degree of politicisation is, as such, greatly conditioned. Directly or indirectly the political life of that society becomes strongly limited by the securitised issue. As put by Didier Bigo, in these contexts “[t]he lines between security and liberty blur and thus “[l]iberty is the not limit of security but the condition of security, so security has no limits” (2000: 175). It is an institutionally securitised context, by the reproduction of permanent securitisation discourses as well as by practices of ‘exceptional normalisation’. These practices<sup>24</sup>, although exceptional in ‘normal times’, become increasingly entrenched into the day-to-day life of societies, reaching the point in which “new generations, who are growing up in an intractable conflict, have no conception of reality other than fighting and believe that it is normal to live in such a society” (Jeong, 2008: 13). They are mutually the consequence of that securitised discourse and catalysts for its further reinforcement.

According to Fierke,

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<sup>24</sup> The conscription of children, the implementation of discriminatory policies, or the imposition of long-term/regularly curfews are but some of those common practices in PSC contexts.

[m]any critical analysts use the concept of securitization, but ... [t]hey go beyond Wæver's claim that securitization represents the suspension of normal politics to explore, alternatively, the role of securitization as a continual technique of governance; its role in the suspension of the political, such that the 'state of exception' becomes the norm (2007: 112).

What I have argued so far agrees with the conclusions of these other 'critical analysts' usually linked to the Paris School Foucauldian tradition, that the 'exceptional' tends to be 'normalised'. I do not agree, though, with the way they perceive the process. As argued by Agamben,

[the] transformation of a provisional and exceptional measure into a technique of government threatens radically to alter – in fact, has already palpably altered – the structure and meaning of the traditional distinction between constitutional forms. Indeed, from this perspective, the state of exception appears as a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism (2005: 2-3).

These authors' vision gives a negative connotation to the act of governing, linking it with the society's control of bodies and minds – 'technique of government' (CASE, 2006: 457). As put by Didier Bigo,

security does not emerge everywhere, it is connected with special 'agents', with 'professionals' (military agencies, secret services, customs, police forces). And it is only if we follow in detail how they manage to control people, to put them under surveillance, that we will understand how they frame security discourses (2000: 176).

In this context, securitisation processes should be, to a large extent, derived from pre-intentional processes, developed for the citizens' control. This line of thought contains, underneath it, a very strong critique of liberal democracy that does not really fit in this chapter's analysis, which focuses on the political, but not on any specific political regime. Whereas I see the normalisation of the exceptional as a consequence of a protracted conflict, which cannot easily be premeditated (we always

know how wars start but never how they end), these authors see it as one among several different government techniques.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, by introducing securitisation theory I have tried to show how the move to an armed conflict context is necessarily political. This move is linked to an issue's securitisation, in which the securitising actor's appeal for exceptional powers leads to the armed conflict. In the particular case of PSCs, in the long run, this will tend to lead to the normalisation of the exceptional. The long time-span and the variable intensity of these conflicts oblige the political system and societies where these conflicts take place to incorporate them in their daily lives. That incorporation results in the infiltration of exceptional measures in all spheres of society, conditioning everything around it. Securitisation becomes institutionalised.

As such, for the understanding of a conflict of this kind, it is necessary not only to look at securitisation discourses, but also at the discourses that help reproduce the process after the exceptional has been triggered, and to practices of normalisation which come in parallel with the post-securitisation discourses.

## **Chapter IV. From securitisation to the exceptional: Turkey and the PKK**

### **Introduction**

Politics as security is, as seen in the last chapter, the glue that puts together all the elements identified by Edward Azar in his Protracted Social Conflicts model. In chapter II I have shown how those individual elements helped to make sense of the conflict between the PKK and Turkey. However, as discussed in the last chapter, any conflict context needs to be put into some form of political discourse in order to bring together all the different aspects into a coherent, convincing narrative. As also argued, any political process is best understood within what the Copenhagen School has identified as a securitisation process in which political issues acquire an existential dimension, and claims of security threats lead to the approval of extraordinary political measures. In this chapter, the focus will turn to how those elements – following chapter III – are activated within a context of securitised politics. This will be a particular challenge for the securitisation theory, as it is normally associated with the passage of an issue from normal to exceptional politics and not necessarily with previously securitised contexts. I argue that Turkey is institutionally securitised and that such condition is essential for the understanding of a) its policy towards the PKK b) the exceptional measures put in place to fight against Abdullah Öcalan's movement and c) PKK's own policies and strategies.

I will thus begin with the analysis of the reasons for this claim followed by the consequences this has in the specific case of the conflict with the PKK. The second section will then deal with how both Turkey and the PKK have securitised each other, focusing on the period between 1978 (year of the foundation of the PKK) and 1990.

Finally, the last section of this chapter will show how, by the end of this period, the conflict was framed in a context of exceptional measures by both sides.

### **1. Turkey, a securitised state?**

Defining a state as 'institutionally securitised' would imply a country living in a permanent state of *quasi*-exception where the vast majority of political subjects were defined under the prism of security priorities. So, could Turkey during the period under analysis (1978-1990) fit into this pattern? I would argue that it could, due to the inter-connection of three main reasons: the principles of the Turkish Republic, the frequency with which exceptional measures were implemented in Turkey, and finally the role of the Armed Forces in the Turkish political system.

The first reason I would advance is related to the foundational principles of the Turkish Republic. Turkey's creation was made against both space and time. Against space in the sense that the rebellion led by general Mustafa Kemal was not against one specific enemy, but against the occupiers of the Anatolian space during that period – the occupying entente powers. This notion of the importance of liberating the Anatolian space is vital to understand the meaning attached to the unity of Turkey's territory. It was also against time, as under the creation of the Turkish state was the notion of avoiding the mistakes and problems of the Ottoman Empire that led to its downfall, in particular the lack of national cohesion and the importance attached to religion<sup>25</sup>. As put by William Hale, “In Ataturk’s vision, the new Turkey was to be a national republic, divorced from its Ottoman past, and basing its legitimacy on the concept of popular sovereignty in place of Islamic tradition” (1991: ix). However, it

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<sup>25</sup> It should not be forgotten that the Ottoman Sultan was at the same time the Caliph, supreme spiritual leader of Sunni Muslims.

was not Atatürk's vision that necessarily contributed to the institutional securitisation of Turkey but rather the way his thoughts have been compiled and re-constructed by his political successors in the form of Kemalism – a political, social and cultural ideology that dominates Turkey's daily life.

As put by by Éric Rouleau (2000), Kemalism was transformed into a state dogma, where the state itself maintains the 'exclusive rights on its interpretation'. Its six principles – republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, and revolution – are the guiding concepts from which all public life in Turkey should be conducted. As the young military cadets learn in the Academy,

Ataturkism [or Kemalism] is the set of realistic ideas and guidelines concerning the state, intellectual and economic life, and the fundamental social institutions, whose basic principles have been set down by Ataturk (*apud* Birand, 1991: 69).

Kemalism is extremely assertive, antagonistic, and prescriptive, providing a clear view of the nation-state Turkey should be. According to Fuat Keyman (2007: xxi), it defines the nation-state as the 'sovereign subject of modernity', dominating life at the political, economic and cultural levels and constructing an understanding of national identity that rejects or subjugates all the groups and aspects that do not fit in that understanding. This understanding of the state is reinforced by a general mistrust of the elites towards the citizens, particularly of the potential influence of reactionary forces within society (Baban, 2007: 92). This suspicion of their own citizens makes, "not only the identity claims but also different social and economic policy preferences that diverge from officially set standards are perceived as threats to the notion of *national security*" (Özman and Cosar, 2007: 206). These understandings of state, modernity and citizens, together with the conditions underlining the creation of the Turkish Republic are at the base of a permanent state of political suspicion in Turkey.

As the standards of public life are so narrowly defined and the space for existential claims so broad, the securitisation of a political issue is always something imminent within Turkish politics.

This leads us to the second reason why Turkey could be considered as an institutionally securitised state: the constant imposition of exceptional measures – measures that go beyond the normal political process. In Turkey, this is attached to the securitisation of specific issues and movements – such as the PKK or Islamic movements – that go against the Kemalist principles.

Turkey is constantly reverting to some sort of exceptionality, be it through martial laws, military coups or emergency rule. For example, the martial law that was imposed in 1979 during a period of strong social and political unrest only began to be progressively removed in 1985, still excluding Istanbul, as well as most of the Eastern provinces, including the Kurdish-majority areas (IHT, 14/09/1985). In the latter case, martial law was transformed into Emergency Rule in 1987, leading to the creation of super-governors with extended powers over the region (more details in the next section).

The closing down of political parties by the Constitutional Court is, as already mentioned in chapter II, another common feature of Turkish politics. The Court is regularly asked to pronounce itself on the rules of the political system and the judiciary tends to see itself as another guardian of the system (Cooper, 2002: 123). The political system is under constant threat of being overruled by the judiciary.

Political parties in Turkey are weak institutions, extremely attached to their leaderships. It is worth noting that none of the parties represented in the parliament since 2002 had a legal existence 20 years earlier (*idem*: 119). These are examples of how Turkey has been constantly flirting with exceptional measures, or how the

political process is constantly interrupted by exceptional measures imposed by supposedly non-political actors – the judiciary and the military.

The political importance of the Turkish Armed Forces is in itself the third and final reason of why Turkey can be seen as an institutionally securitised state. The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) is a vital part of Turkey's collective identity. Its political importance goes back to the Ottoman times (Drorian, 2005: 263). After Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had led the army to victory, during the post-First World War Independence war, the Armed Forces consolidated and even enhanced their prestige in the new Turkish Republic.

The Turkish Armed Forces see themselves as the guardians of the Kemalist principles, of the Turkish Republic. As it is taught in the Military Academy: "Ataturk put this country in our [the military] safe keeping. If you become a soldier and officer worth of Him we will entrust the flag – which means the fatherland – to you. This country will belong to you" (*apud* Birand, 1991: 4). It is interesting to note, both the reverential treatment given to Atatürk, 'Him', and the way in which the speech is constructed following the idea that the soldiers are 'entrusted' the fatherland – they are the guardians of Turkey.

Direct military involvement in Turkish politics only became visible during the late 1950s. Atatürk's death and the holding of the first multi-party elections that led the Democratic Party (DP) to power worried the military. The DP brought a new political agenda, defending, among other things, a more open view on the role of religion. According to retired Generals Armağan Kuloğlu and Mustafa Şahin, this factor, combined with increasing oppressive policies and a galloping inflation rise, led to the 1960 coup, promoted by the lower ranks of TAF "so as to restore the Kemalist order and democracy" (2006: 94).

This coup would mark the beginning of the TAF's active involvement in Turkish politics. Their role as guardians of the system would be underlined in the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Laws (1961), which granted the TAF "a duty to protect and preserve the Turkish republic, as defined in the constitution" (*apud* Drorian, 2005: 265).

The Armed Forces forced regime change in Turkey on three other occasions – 1971, 1980 and 1997. From these three, "[t]he 1980-83 period is perhaps the only era in Turkish history that approximates a full-blown military regime" (Demirel, 2005: 251). It was at least the only period in which the military did not relinquish political power immediately after the coup, establishing a brutal dictatorship for three years. Interestingly enough, the first civilian government after the coup (1983) would be the one with most control over the military since Atatürk and, eventually, for years to come. The government led by Turgut Özal on several occasions went against the will of the military, including the nomination for the highest military ranks of generals who were not those in line of succession, something the Armed Forces liked to follow strictly. According to Stephen Kinzer, the military acceptance of those orders showed that it never intended to "rule for the sake of ruling, but believes it is there to fill whatever vacuum is left by civilian leaders" (2002: 166). During Özal's tenure there was no such vacuum.

The image the large majority of the Turkish people have of the TAF is that it intervenes, not due to its power, but due to the lack of competence by the civilian elites in charge of the political system (Güney and Karatekelioğlu, 2005: 457). In addition to that general feeling of political incompetence, the Turks are also constrained by the sense of continuous threat that they are taught their country faces, both from internal forces and external powers (Jenkins, 2001: 16).

The TAF's apparent detachment from the political system is in stark contrast with its historical involvement in a number of politically relevant institutions. Indeed, TAF's presence in Turkish politics has, until recently, materialised in several institutions whose power was accumulated each time the military felt they had to dramatically intervene to restore political order. Since 1982, the Chief of the General Staff, for example, is not accountable to the Ministry of Defence, only to the Prime Minister. As a result, in the Turkish protocol the Chief of General Staff ranks only second to the Prime Minister (Jenkins, 2001: 22). The Ministry of National Defence (MND) is solely responsible for carrying out the services of: recruitment in peace and war; procurement of weapons, vehicles, equipment, logistic materials and supplies; defence industry; health; construction; and financial and inventory account auditing (White Book, 2000).

At the centre of this institutional design is the National Security Council (NSC). Originally, it had seven civilians and four military representatives, but, with the 1982 Constitution, the composition became more balanced, with five for each side (Aydinli, 2006: 82). Although it had existed before, with different names and less powers, it became, after the 1960s coup, a major institution within the Turkish political system, and a central feature in understanding Turkish security culture. For instance, this body is the one responsible for defining the Turkish National security policy document<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> The NSC has, however, seen its power reduced in the last few years. On 19 March 2001, the Turkish government launched its National Programme where it detailed Turkey's necessary steps towards reform, according to EU standards (Dorransoro, 2004: 53). Seven months later, the 1982 Turkish Constitution was amended in 34 articles in order to accommodate some of those EU requirements. Prevention of torture, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and equality between men and women were among the individual rights introduced or underlined in the revision (*idem*: 53-54). Regarding the Turkish security sector reform, important measures were taken, especially in the redefinition of the NSC composition. In an amendment to Article 118, the number of civilian representatives in the NSC changed from five to nine. The NSC would, from then on, consist of: President, Prime Minister, Chief of General Staff, Deputy Prime Ministers, Minister of Justice, Minister of National Defence, Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Land, Naval and Air Force Commander Generals and the General Commander of Gendarmerie. The advisory nature of the body was also underlined. In 2003, with the 7<sup>th</sup> Harmonization Package, more measures were taken with the goal of diminishing the TAF's

The document is prepared by the General Staff with the help of the NSC's Secretary General and discussed in the NSC. Its decisions are not subject to public scrutiny and the document is classified as top secret. The first document was conceived in 1963, in the follow-up of the first military coup, and is usually updated every five years (Jenkins, 2001: 47). The fact that it is considered a top secret document says much about the way security is conceived in Turkey. The National Security Policy Document (NSPD) "bears greater importance than that of any ordinary decree by the Council of Ministers" (Yıldız, 2006: 18). Despite its secret status, at least lately, whenever a new NSPD is approved, it eventually gets to the press and its contents become known to the common Turkish citizen. As Zühtü Arslan states, "the National Security Policy Document (*Milli Güvenlik Siyaseti Belgesi*, MGSB) is one of the most discussed but least known documents on civil-military relations in Turkey" (2006: 28). The Supreme Military Council is also relevant in the security hierarchy. According to Law No. 1612 from 1971, it was established to act only during peacetime and it is composed by the Prime Minister, the Chief of General Staff, the Minister of National Defence, the Commander of the Land Force, the General Commander of the Gendarmerie, the Commander of the Navy, the Commander of the Air Force, and the Generals and Admirals of the Armed Forces. Its main duties are to decide on the promotion, retirement and disciplinary measures within the military. The body meets twice a year, chaired by the Prime Minister (Arslan, 2006: 29). As the voting system is by simple majority, the military dominate the body.

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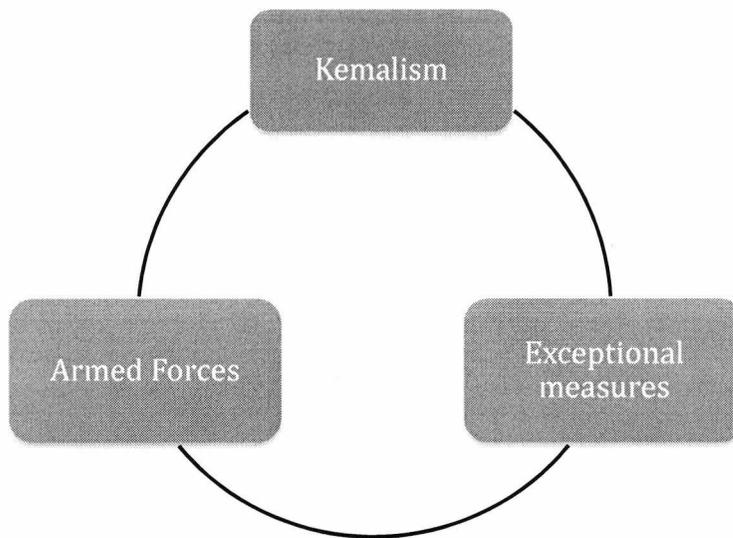
role in the political sphere. The military exclusivity for the post of NSC Secretary General was abrogated, as was its extended executive and supervisory powers, such as the provision empowering the SG to follow-up, on behalf of the President and the Prime Minister, the implementation of any recommendation made by the NSC. However, these were all reforms put into practice much later than 1990, and therefore, are not part of the time scope of this chapter.

Besides these military bodies, the TAF have also marked its presence in other institutions directed at managing areas outside traditional security. In 1980, for instance, after years of revolts and disorder in Turkish universities, the military created the Higher Education Council in order to supervise the Turkish educational system. They also controlled the Radio and Television Supreme Council, thereby being able to monitor media activities in the country.

Taking all the above-mentioned into consideration, it comes as no surprise that the Turkish people, when asked about which national institution they trust the most, have the TAF in the highest regard. Both in the 2004 *Eurobarometer* on Turkey and in a poll conducted by the Turkish daily *Hürriyet* (Konijnenbelt, 2005: 161), the military came first as the most trusted institution in Turkey.

These three reasons – Kemalism, the common application of exceptional measures, and the political relevance of the TAF – contribute to making Turkey a securitised state (diagram 1). For instance, the military presence in Turkish politics must be understood in the context of the foundational bases of the Turkish Republic (whose protection the Armed Forces take as its main responsibility), and also in the frequency with which normal democratic rule is suspended in order to undertake exceptional measures. In the same vein, these measures only have meaning if understood in a context where the military are politically active and where the state is defined in a very strict sense. Finally, the contemporary interpretation of the foundational Kemalist legacy can only be understood in the context of a system that is tolerant towards the suspension of democratic norms, and lenient regarding the intervention of the military in the current affairs of political life.

**Diagram 1 – Pillars of Turkey as a securitised state**



Each of these facets of Turkish politics could be explained without reference to the others, but in order to understand their constitutive meaning in the definition of Turkey as a securitised state, they seem to be inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing. Put together these three aspects highlight the notion of security above politics (military predominance), of the exception as a common political tool, and of a certain metaphysical notion of the Turkish nation-state attached to its territory, secularism, and unity (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 32).

These last three concepts – territory, secularism and unity – are, what I would call ‘front-line existential concepts’ as they are the key concepts of Turkey as a securitised state (cf. chapter V and VI). When facing any issue that rises to the political sphere, the Turkish state will immediately check it against those concepts. If the issue is not defined as threatening to these principles, it can then be discussed in the political arena. If it is, then it will, as soon as possible, be dealt within an exceptional framework. These concepts are filters through which issues are directed to follow

either the normal political arena or the sphere of the exceptional, as it will be shown in greater detail in chapter five.

## **2. The securitisation of the PKK**

As discussed before, the 1970s and early 1980s were a period of huge political turmoil in Turkey, marked by two military coups at the beginning of each decade. Violence, left-right confrontations, terrorist attacks, and the eventual collapse of the Turkish political system were the consequence of such instability. In that sense, until the 1980 coup, any reference to the PKK would be within the logic that the movement was one among many other extremist groups in Turkey. In 1979, the nationalist opposition leader Alparslan Türkeş would put the question in rather mixed political terms: “On the orders of the imperialists, the communists and the traitors are trying to divide the nation and establish communism [...] by telling our youth in eastern Turkey that they are a different nation” (*apud* BBC, 4/10/1979).

The social unrest in the Southeast was nonetheless particularly worrying leading both the Minister of Internal Affairs by order of Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and the Chief of Staff (soon to be the leader of the military coup) Gen. Kenan Evren to visit the region in order to assess the situation. A report by the Head of the Gendarmerie Supervisory Unit in April 1979 highlighted that separatism had become a major factor in the Southeast:

it is no longer possible to employ two-strong military patrol teams. It has become a rather courageous act to enter a village and try to get hold of an accused person with a detachment of less than 20 gendarmes. [...] People in such areas increasingly behave towards our officers as if the latter were members of a colonial army<sup>27</sup> (*apud* Heper, 2007: 140).

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<sup>27</sup> It is worth noticing how the state institutions inadvertently reproduced the PKK’s ‘colonial’ discourse highlighted in the chapter II in their own documents by mentioning that they were treated as members of a ‘colonial army’.

According to Mehmet Ali Birand's account of the 1980 coup, one of the military concerns that led to the coup was the perceived 'soft' approach of the government regarding the Kurdish question. For the military, the Kurdish movements were "a threat to split Turkey, and the merest hint of compromise was therefore branded as aiding and abetting assaults on the territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic" (1987: 40). However, Birand also highlights (*idem*) the existence of a huge lack of information regarding the problem, without clear indicators about what was exactly happening on the ground. Thus, there was a general concern with the region's instability, but none of the 'bandits' that were provoking that instability deserved any particular attention.

In 1981, at a time where the military were brutally attempting to curb any potential source of instability in the country, 574 Kurdish activists started to be tried for 'constitution of armed group with the goal of dividing part of the national territory' and for 'terrorism'. The trial lasted for two years and in the end 35 were condemned to death penalty, 28 to life imprisonment and 333 received sentences from three to 36 years in prison (*Le Monde*, 26/05/83). This was one of the first times in which Turkish public opinion was confronted with the existence of problems in the Southeast. A few days after the trial, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that Turkey had set a 'limited operation' into Iraqi territory with Baghdad's consent (*Le Quotidien*, 28/05/83) in order to pacify the region "which had become one with no peace and security where armed bandits were roaming at will" (*The Times*, 28/05/83). In the following months, three Turkish policemen would die in combats against Kurdish movements, but the authors of such killings would only deserve the label of 'bandits' (*The Economist*, 18/06/83).

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The 17 August 1984 attacks would, however, bring the PKK to the limelight of Turkish politics. Soon it became visible that the movement was more than just an externality of the instability climate in the 1970s. In a concerted attack in the provinces of Siirt and Hakkari, the PKK attacked military outposts killing 11 soldiers and injuring dozens more. The military declared a blackout on the press with the authorities declaring that the ‘leftist separatists’ had attacked posts in Eruh and Şemdinli. As İsmet İmset would write in the first complete account of the PKK in Turkey: “[w]hen the first blow was delivered in 1984 by the separatists, it was delivered at such a time and place that Turkey, the government and its security forces, were all caught off guard” (1992: 8).

Lieutenant General Kaya Yazgan, which was in charge of the Seventh Army Corps in the Southeast also admitted, three years later, how unexpected those attacks had been: “Up until that point we didn’t know Apo. His name was known, but he was not someone who was focused on. And besides, PKK militants were seen more as bandits”. He would further add “[t]he politicians in Ankara did not believe that this event was the first sign of a big start. It was being evaluated as the remnants of what took place before Sept. 12” (*apud* Marcus, 2007: 83).

On October 5, President General Evren visited the Southeast in order to assess the situation in the area, as well as the counter-attack operations of the military. Again, the PKK was not directly mentioned: “These anarchists and separatist terrorists get help from foreign sources. In other words, they are no more than slaves at the disposal of others. That is how they gain their livelihood” (*apud* Heper, 2007: 153). The same notion of external support was advanced by the Populist Party, for whom “the separatist forces trained abroad are used against the integrity of Turkey, in accordance with a wide and well programmed conspiracy” (*Le Monde*, 17/10/1984). The idea of

conspiracy and external support – the commonly called Sèvres syndrome<sup>28</sup> – was once again revitalized in the discourse against the PKK. The *realpolitik* tradition embedded the Sèvres syndrome, has been something inculcated in the Turkish society, and particularly in the military from a very young age. According to Stephen Kinzer,

at the academy, cadets are taught strategic doctrine that presents a world fraught with danger. Threats are everywhere. Foreign powers plot endlessly to subvert, divide and weaken Turkey. Bad Turks, the enemies of Atatürk, lend themselves to these plots (2002: 168).

The illusion that the origin of the problems lies elsewhere, led the government of Turgut Özal to sign a security agreement with Baghdad, renewing the confidence among the Turkish people that this would be a short-term problem, soon to be solved. The Turkish daily *Hürriyet* would write: “After the Baghdad agreement, the armed forces will pursue the outlaws directly in their headquarters and destroy them at the source” (*apud Le Journal quotidien rhone-alpes*, 18/10/1984). In the speech after the agreement was signed, the Turkish Prime Minister would use the expression “Kurdish terrorists” as the main source of the “coordinated efforts” between Ankara and Baghdad (*Le Progres*, 18/10/1984). However, a few weeks later the Prime Minister Turgut Özal would highlight that “the state should not use the methods of the terrorists” (*Libération*, 20/10/1984) in an attempt to clearly establish a moral boundary between the PKK’s behaviour and the Turkish state’s response to it.

Progressively, the PKK became detached from the pre-coup instability discourse and became the centre of the renaissance of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. In the Spring of 1985, after a wave of armed attacks, and amid an extensive coverage from the press, Interior Minister Yildirim Akbulut spoke of a guerrilla war instead of the usual

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<sup>28</sup> The Sèvres syndrome is the expression usually attributed to Turkish suspicion of the Western world regarding their hypothetical interest in dividing Turkey. This sentiment derives from the Sèvres Treaty that the Ottoman Empire was obliged to sign after the First World War, in which most of the Empire including large parts of current Turkey were to be divided among several European states.

'bandits' (van Bruinessen, 1988: 40). The interesting aspect here is that there was not a securitisation of the PKK as a new phenomenon, but rather a transition from the PKK as a mere group of disturbers within the larger instability problem to a more specific threat.

In that same year, Özal's government approved the introduction of the 'village guards' system, in which villagers were paid to support the state in guaranteeing security in the region (Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005: 123). In practice, this system led to the creation of an uncontrolled paramilitary force of more than 60,000 people, further adding to the complexity of the conflict. In 1987, more measures to tackle the PKK were taken. The Martial Law was replaced with the State of Emergency in the Southeast (Barkey, 2007: 357), which included the appointment of regional governors with extra powers to deal with the region's unrest (*Le Figaro*, 20/07/1987). The provinces of Bingöl, Diyarbakir, Elazığ, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Tunceli and Van, later added by Adiyaman, Batman, Bitlis, Muş and Şırnak were all under this exceptional legal system (Jacoby, 2005: 649). In a sense, the passage of the Martial Law to the Emergency Rule in the Southeast was a juridical metaphor of the passage of the PKK from an externality of a period that according to William Hale brought Turkey to the brink of a "Lebanese-style collapse of the state" (Hale, 1991: xi), to a full-fledged threat.

In the summer of 1986, Turkey undertook air bombardments of PKK's hideouts in Northern Iraq. Turkish authorities would describe the operation as a "hot pursuit in order to capture or neutralize activists". In the aftermath of the operation, a public statement (*apud* IHT, 16/08/86) would add that,

[i]n order to capture or neutralize the rebels on the border and on adjacent Iraqi soil under the existing agreement with this state, an air pursuit operation was launched this morning by several planes of our air force only, and the places where the rebels were determined to have hideouts were bombed.

After another PKK attack in July 1987, the Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal declared that the PKK was no more than a “bunch of bandits” to whom “the end was near”: “They are maybe 100 or 200 but we will stop them all, one after the other” (*Libération*, 10/07/87). The Turkish leaders would be quite dismissive regarding the importance of the threat. The lack of clarity when referring to the number of PKK activists was an unambiguous sign by the Turkish authorities that they were attempting to downsize the importance of the threat. The idea of control as a source of securitisation presented in the last chapter is here quite clear. This was a way of showing Turkish people that the authorities were competent enough to deal with the problem, that they knew what they were doing even if that involved the approval of further measures that ‘inadvertently’ led to the restraint of public freedoms.

By the end of 1988 it had already been established that the PKK was a threat and extraordinary measures had been passed to specifically address that problem. As stated by a Turkish official quoted by Ismet Imset, the PKK “had already become Turkey’s Number One Problem and would remain so for many years to come” (1992: 128). And indeed, by the end of the 1980s, the Southeast was already witnessing a full-fledged conflict involving more than 100,000 Turkish troops, 40,000 village guards and around 15,000 PKK guerrillas. According to the Uppsala conflict database (2008), between 2000 and 2500 people had been killed in battle during this period (1978-1990).

As mentioned in the state’s response to the PKK, one of the characteristics of the conflict is the way Turkish authorities distinguish between the PKK and the Kurdish issue. In 1989, at the peak of the conflict between the two parties, Turgut Özal’s executive passed a law easing the restrictions on the use of Kurdish language, allowing lawyers to talk to their clients in Kurdish and allowing Kurdish names to be given by

parents to their children (*Christian Science Monitor*, 25/08/1989). Özal himself announced that he had Kurdish blood himself, which according to Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth Winrow was “a significant first step towards an eventual recognition of the Kurdish reality” (1997: 113).

Özal believed that economic development in the form of the GAP, together with the containment of terrorism would solve the instability problem of the Southeast (Imset, 1992: 227). The measures that were being taken were, however, quite limited and the general mindset was clearly very far from recognising the Kurdish problem in its full extent, as I have mentioned in chapter II. In the same summer, when asked about the possibility of allowing the writing of poetry in Kurdish, the Turkish President Süleyman Demirel would reply: “That’s impossible, Turkey cannot become a federal state” (*Le Monde*, 3/08/1989). Writing poetry in Kurdish was an issue that when faced with the Turkish state’s frontline concepts would be directly sent to the area of the exceptional.

In April 1990, a Government decree would enhance the exceptional sphere by approving a set of measures that would increase the power of regional governors as well as restrict the freedom of press. According to the decree, journalists would not be able to publish stories potentially ‘harmful for the security operations’ or if threatening to ‘law and order’. The regional governors had the power to ban publications and close the printing plants if some of those stories were actually printed. They were also empowered to stop strikes and lockouts. Finally, jail terms were doubled to 10 years for whoever aided or harboured ‘terrorists’ (Imset, 1992: 216).

In short, the securitisation of the PKK by the Turkish authorities, was accomplished by progressively detaching the movement from the general instability problem of the 1980s, leading to a full-fledged recognition of the ‘enemy’. Thus, by 1990 there was

no doubt the PKK was a security threat on its own – deserving a particularly focused securitising discourse as well as specific exceptional measures.

### **3. Securitising the Turkish state**

When talking about non-state movements (a topic which I will explore in the next chapter), it is difficult to establish the securitisation process in the same way as when talking about states. Still, in the case of the PKK there were sufficient structures in place to consider the distinction between a normal political process and an exceptional one. The political relevance of non-state actors can be seen by their organizational forms, in the case of the PKK leadership speeches and documents of its institutions and major political events, such as the Party Congress. It is through these processes that non-state organizations can be considered political, in the sense that a) they have formal structures through which is possible to understand the group's claims; and b) they present themselves as a form of political organization with its own rules, codes and structures. And it is through these processes that the securitisation of the 'other' can be understood.

Built around blurred ideological axis, the PKK's Marxist-Stalinist side offered the initial discursive background for the construction of the Turkish state as a threat. Interestingly, in the same way the Turkish state considered the PKK part of the broader political instability period in Turkey, so did the PKK consider itself as such. In the words of an imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan, PKK's 'narrow and strict ideological approach' was 'a remnant of the fiery 1970s', that needed to be updated to the realities of the new century (Öcalan, 1999). Even though the nationalist component was present in the PKK's discourse since the beginning, it was a nationalism paired with the great

goal of a Stalinist revolution in Turkey (Özcan, 2006: 20). In the movements founding declaration it could be read:

For some centuries, the people of Kurdistan have directed a war of liberation against foreign domination and its local collaborators. In order to raise the struggle to the level of a war of national liberation for which the situation is mature, and so as to combine the fight with the class struggle, the Kurdistan Workers' Party has been founded. It is the new organization of the proletariat of Kurdistan (*apud* White, 2000: 136).

This Marxist jargon can also be seen in the leaflets distributed in the region around Diyarbakir in the summer of 1979, eight months after the Party's actual creation on November 28<sup>th</sup> 1978 (*apud* Marcus, 2007: 46):

Forward to an independent, united, democratic Kurdistan!  
Down with imperialism and colonialism!  
Long live independence and proletariat internationalism!  
Long live the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party)!

However, with time the Marxist discourse became progressively subsumed under the nationalist one. According to Abdullah Öcalan (1999), this was a problem of the poor understanding of socialism by the PKK in its initial phase:

By the time the 1980s were reached, the system had been transcended both feudally on the local level and officially on the general level. It was clear that ideological and political systems and barriers could no longer be a deterrent. This rested on the power of a socialism that was not understood in any depth and of Kurdish consciousness of history and society which were once again poorly examined and superficial. In other words, these were enough for an amateur movement. This is essentially how the development up to the 1980s can be explained. Only the army could stop this development, and indeed that was what happened. There was, however, a partial response to this in the form of the refuge found in the Middle East and the situation was partly transcended. This was how the army's traditional method of suppression was transcended by the time we arrived at the 1990s (Öcalan, 1999).

The PKK was in favour of a Kurdish state from the beginning. It was, however, a very volatile discourse, easily adapted to the context, which eventually changed with the

end of the Cold War, and then again when it lost its military edge – moving to a smoother concept of federation (Barkey, 2007: 348). By 1989 the discourse even started to include religious references, to take into consideration the beliefs of the majority of the population in the area (Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005: 171).

I would argue that two different discourses regarding Turkey could be identified within the PKK. A first initial discourse linking the ‘coloniser’ Turkish state with more general problems in the region, and a second discourse depicting Turkey as an ‘oppressor’ of the Kurdish rights.

The use of a Marxist discourse in which Turkey is occupying a territory to which it does not belong, served both the purpose of justifying the armed violence against the state (including the assassination of Turkish officials and civil servants), and the claim for an independent Kurdistan. However, it also provided the justification for attacking and killing Kurds that were ‘collaborating’ with the ‘colonial’ power:

In the name of the ‘anti-colonial liberation struggle’ the PKK carried out actions not only against the Turkish state but also against the various classes of ‘collaborators’, ‘liquidationists’, ‘social-chauvinists’ and other opponents of its own brand of ‘revolution’ (van Bruinessen, 1988: 40).

The discourse on Turkey’s oppression is a softer version of the previous one. This is a discourse used to gather international support while at the same time showing political flexibility by the PKK leadership regarding an eventual political solution to their demands, as the problem is not with the Turkish state as an entity, but with its actions towards the Kurds and the Southeast. This discourse became predominant after 1990, when the PKK began an active policy in search of international recognition. This will

be further developed in chapter X, when we focus on the late 1990s PKK discourse of desecuritisation.

These discourses were supported and enhanced by the decisions and practices that resulted from the institutional structure of the organisation. By looking at them it will be possible to map the directions the movement took from its incipience until the decision to undertake a major direct confrontation against the Turkish state in 1990.

### *Congresses, Conferences and the securitisation of the Turkish state*

The PKK was (and still is) composed of a complex set of organs and committees, but the annual Congress would be the central institution by which the main decisions were framed within a legitimising discourse. The decisions there made would in many cases provide some sort of exceptional power for the executive body. I should now focus on the four congresses and two conferences that took place up until 1990, in order to track down the institutional practices that legitimised the PKK's actions throughout the 1980s.

The first Congress was held in July 1981 in the Lebanese-Syrian border. Congresses were supposed to be a forum of discussion and agenda-setting. However, they were soon revealed to be a form of increased control by Öcalan over the movement (Özcan, 2006). This was the largest gathering of PKK members since the party's foundation, with around 80 people attending the event. It was decided to begin preparing the war in Turkey, as well as the expansion of activities to Europe (Marcus, 2007: 66). An alliance with the leftist Dev-Yol movement was established, leading to the creation of the United Revolutionary Front Against Fascism (FKBD-C). The mindset of these movements was still pretty much contextualized in the ideological battleground of what Turkey had represented during the 1970s.

The Second Congress took place one year later and among its main conclusions was the idea that armed struggle depended on the political objectives the movement wanted to accomplish; that they were undertaking a Kurdish Revolution in the form of a long-term war of liberation against a semi-feudal colonial enemy (Imset, 1992). A political and a military programme were adopted (Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005: 69). In that same year the first group of combatants were sent to Turkey in observation missions (*idem*). In 1984, the PKK took steps in the direction of the establishment of that long-war by creating the ‘Hazen Rizgariya Kurdistan’ (the Kurdistan Freedom Unit) which was modelled on the Vietcong guerrilla (Imset, 1992: 38), and one year later, the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK) was created. Involved in combats against the Turkish state in the beginning, it moved on to become a backup organization – recruiting, looking for funding and leading the propaganda of the movement (Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005: 158). In the spring of 1985 the PKK engaged in a fierce battle in Siverek against Turkish Armed Forces, leading to over 60 deaths between guerrillas, troops and civilians. The conflict death toll would increase to 200 by August in more than 60 armed incidents (McDowall, 2005: 423).

In 1986, by the time the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress took place “it was clear that not only was real debate not allowed, but also that any analysis had to conform to Öcalan’s views, and to assure this he freely rewrote reports to incorporate his interpretations of what had happened and who was to blame” (Marcus, 2007: 109). According to the PKK (1995),

[v]arious conservative, individualist, incompetent, and other corrupting tendencies brought our revolutionary struggle to brink of defeat. But these tendencies were overcome during the 3rd Party Congress. The thesis of party leader Abdullah Öcalan, namely that class, not the individual, was important, and that history, not the moment, was primary, assured the further development of the revolutionary renewal following the revolutionary action of August 15, 1984.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress took place in October 1986, a year that, according to the PKK, had seen “great advances” (*apud* Imset, 1992: 45) in which this Congress would be the corollary. Some unpopular measures were approved during the Congress such as the taxing and forced military conscription (Marcus, 2007: 111).

For three years, the PKK would not organize any major congress or conference; it was a period in which, “the guerrilla spread out and established itself all throughout Kurdistan [...]. The struggle, which was also directed against unruly gangs and feudalism, was able to take concrete steps towards revolutionary procedures” (PKK, 1995).

During this period the PKK realised the negative effects of their policy regarding attack on civilians, and in 1990, during the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress, these attacks were officially condemned, and the military conscription suspended. As highlighted by Aliza Marcus, “the PKK was sufficiently popular that forced conscription no longer seemed necessary” (2007: 119). This 4<sup>th</sup> Congress, held in the last week of December, took place in northern Iraq and it was the first congress to take place in Kurdish territory since the foundation of the movement in 1978 (*idem*).

By then the PKK had in place a clear institutional structure with the Kurdistan Popular Liberation Army (ARGK) being set up in alternative to HRK and the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK) created. As such, and according to Öcalan, the PKK consisted of three structures, which were the PKK Central Committee (CC. or Party), the ERNK (Front) and the ARGK (Army) (Ismet, 1992: 131).

The PKK acronym and the name Abdullah Öcalan were well known in Turkey and abroad. The PKK impact in the Southeast had led to the building up of an immense Turkish deployment in the region; to an increase in claims of human rights abuses; to the opening up of a public debate in Turkey on the ‘Kurdish Issue’. According to

Ismet Imset, from 1990 onwards “Öcalan wanted to force Turkey to openly ‘show its repressive face’ and wanted the local people to see that the PKK was the only *political alternative* to state *oppression* in the region” (1992: 226).

The 4<sup>th</sup> Congress would take place in Syria, in December 1990, and it decided, among other things, the abandonment of village raids and massacres, the priority targeting of village guards and military troops, and the beginning of warfare by all militias and guerrilla units in Turkey. A possible federal solution was also discussed, with arguments that Kurdish independence did not have to mean the creation of a separate state (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 148). The move from the first to the second above-identified discourse was still in the making.

#### **4. The clash of emergency measures**

By 1989, the Southeast was under Emergency Rule while the violence between the PKK and Turkey was reaching new heights. As argued by Ismet Imset, “Turkey’s position in 1989 was one of taking tighter measures, more security and somewhat repressive steps to crush the separatist movement” (1992: 86). In 1990, additional legislation was passed (decree 430) conceding powers to the super-governor of the region to order the temporary or permanent displacement of people in the region for reasons of ‘public security’ (Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005: 106), to detain suspects without charge for up to ten days (article 3) and to prohibit publications deemed to be provocative. The official discourse was one of confidence in a short-term victory, a discourse of control. As the Emergency Law Regional Governor Hayri Kozakçıoğlu would announce: “If the struggle keeps up this rate, the region will be completely cleared of terrorists and our citizens will have peace” (*apud* Ismet, 1992: 79).

According to Tim Jacoby, “[t]he undifferentiated nature of OHAL policy provoked ‘total’ reactions which tended to view the regime as monolithic and unyielding.” However, “PKK agents operated similar blanket systems of repression in which non-combatants were offered no neutral ground: every settlement was either PKK or village-guard protected, taxed and policed” (2005: 650). In a visit to the region, journalist Ismet Imset would describe the Southeast as a complete battleground where citizenship rights had been removed:

Leaving Sirnak towards the east is even more ‘impressing’. The road to Uludere is blocked by a military checkpoint – sandbags and all – while civilians who want to travel this way are briefly questioned, their cars are searched, destinations written down along with their names. Whether this is a measure to protect the civilians or prevent PKK activities could be questioned (1992: 62).

The clash between the Turkish state and the PKK developed into something structural, with deep ramifications for the people in the region. The conflict structured Kurdish society in the Southeast, creating new elites intimately rooted in and dependent on the armed struggle, as well as relations of power responsible for the allocation of resources, jobs and wealth (Bozarslan, 2000: 26). Such structural dynamics were also visible within Turkish society. Self-censorship among journalists was common (Barkey, 2007: 364) and when it was not they were often told to be, as when General Sabri Yirmibeşoğlu told journalists “the struggle in the Southeast is like our war of independence...journalism ends here” (*apud* Barkey, 2007: 353). In the same tone spoke the ‘supergovernor’ for the region in 1990, Hayri Kozakçıoğlu, who in an address to journalists would warn: “Pay attention to the headlines and sub-headlines that you write. It can’t give the impression of separatism” (Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005: 83). He also demanded journalists to use the word ‘martyr’ when referring to any victims of PKK attacks (*idem*).

In short, if Turkey had a divided society in the 1970s, the 1980s saw Turkey turning into a conflict society, a society that lived within a system of exceptionality this time designed not to unite what was divided, but to directly eliminate a ‘visible’ threat. In that sense, it was a system that could only change once the threat was suppressed. For the people in the Southeast this exceptionality was overlapped by the PKK’s own ‘special politics’, by its own exceptional system that could only end once it considered that the goals it was fighting for had been achieved. Thus, for the people in the Southeast it was not merely about living under a state of exception, but about living under a state of double-exception.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began with the attempt to understand the core structures of the Turkish state that lead to some sort of institutional securitisation. I have argued that the combination of three different factors – the Kemalist legacy, the frequency of exceptional measures, and the role of the Armed Forces – have led to this situation.

The introduction of the securitisation theory also allowed for the focus to turn to how that context produced and was re-produced by the dynamics of the belligerent actors, both through the identification of the evolution of the Turkish state’s discourse on the PKK; and the PKK’s discourse on the Turkish state. As seen throughout this chapter, the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state emerged in a very particular context of instability, in which it was difficult to trace a securitisation of the PKK separate from the securitisation of the general instability in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Regarding the PKK, that general context also led to a securitisation of the Turkish state along the same rhetorical lines of other countless Leftist movements in Turkey. Only in the late 1980s did both actors start to evolve beyond that turbulent

period and establish a focused discourse of insecurity regarding the other, something that was kept until the end of the period under analysis (1978-1990). After this, it was possible to look into the resulting context of exceptionality of the first 12 years of indirect and direct inter-play between the Turkish state and the PKK.

This brief analysis of the 1978-1990 period in the history of the PKK-Turkey conflict also shed some light on two relevant aspects related to the securitisation theory. A first element is related to the exceptionality of the measures approved by both sides. In the Turkish case, it is relevant to note that claims for the placement of the PKK threat under special conditions did not require major claims of insecurity, as the PKK was framed within a discourse of danger that had already been granted special powers. In that sense, when the Emergency Rule for the Southeast was approved, for instance, no major security claim for its approval was necessary; it was about transferring and enhancing what had been put in place for the whole country – Martial Law – some years earlier. This highlights an interesting point regarding the securitisation theory – the problem of securitising an issue in an already securitised context. Still within this topic, it was also interesting to note how the PKK's securitisation of Turkey led to the increase of Abdullah Öcalan's control of the PKK. Its ascendancy as the undisputed leader was, in a sense, the equivalent of the granting of special powers within a state structure.

The second relevant aspect has to do with the type of discourse employed by Turkish authorities in the light of a context in which the PKK was already seen as a threat and in which emergency measures have been approved – i.e. in which the PKK had already been securitised. Instead of developing a discourse of emergency, Turkish securitising actors developed a discourse of 'control', in which the threat was defined as minimal and temporary even though the need for exceptional measures was still

present. This discourse was accompanied by the implementation of measures restricting press reports of the conflict, making both factors indicate a willingness to downplay the threat in the public realm.

### **Part III – Actors, labelling, and the limits of PSCs**

## **Chapter V. Sovereignty, legitimacy and the issue of labelling in Protracted Social Conflicts**

### **Introduction**

Whereas chapter III was about the connection between securitisation and conflict, and how that can be seen in an evolutionary way, culminating in the normalisation of the exceptional, this chapter introduces the issue of the ‘quality’ of the securitisation. The words that are used to characterise the ‘other’ are in this context important not only as signifying the undertaking of a securitisation process, but also as a way of showing the political meaning of that securitisation. For that I argue it is necessary to look into the middle-level of the tiered discursive structure as presented in the introductory chapter. In particular, it is essential to analyse the ‘labels’ used within a specific political discursive constellation. This will indicate whether the ‘other’ is defined as an enemy, or as something that has to be destroyed.

This is a topic intimately linked with the Schmittian limits of the political. It is argued here that a conflict that falls outside this sphere of the political is not a PSC altogether: it can be genocide, or simply the undertaking of violent activity for private gains – usually taken as criminality.

As such, this chapter will comprise three sections. In the first section, the analysis of the state *versus* non-state actors inter-play will be defined and its applicability in the context of PSCs explained, with a strong emphasis on the actors’ legitimacy (Section I). In order to explain this relationship, I will make use of the Copenhagen School’s sectoral approach, focusing on the military, political and societal sectors. In the second section, the focus will turn to the specific importance of the quality of what is said in the form of labelling the ‘other’ (Section II), particularly on the use of the ‘terrorist’

label. Ole Wæver's layered discursive approach will provide the theoretical basis for the section. After this, the chapter will focus on the limits of PSCs, and on the analysis of what sits outside these conflicts. It will particularly analyse the distinction between conflicts and genocide practices. Finally, the last section will conclude with some remarks on the major points raised throughout the chapter.

### **1. State *versus* non-state actors and the PSC structure**

Armed conflicts can be fought between different sets of polities. They can involve international organisations, regional organisations, states or non-state actors. Depending on the type of actor involved, the conflict will certainly assume different dynamics and produce distinct outcomes. As already seen, one of the preconditions for defining a PSC is the confrontation between a state and a non-state actor. But what does this exactly mean? In order to start answering this question we should start by identifying the specificities attached to each one of these actors.

*State actors.* There are specific patterns, behaviours and attitudes that are expected from a state actor. Being a state implies a minimum degree of commonality with actors at the same level, a necessary condition for a state to be recognised as such. For instance, it is expected to have a regular army that not only acts according to the military codes of conduct, but also according to the international treaties of which the country is part. The state is also expected to fulfil its commitment and obligations, even in the face of insurgency (Pye, 1969: 178). Indeed, one of its primary obligations is to assure that it can maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It is difficult to understand the emergence of the modern state and the attached concept of sovereignty without taking into consideration its role in curbing and limiting organised violence in political life (Krause and Williams, 1997: xiv). In that sense, the

state can be seen as a space of creation, the guarantor of the “fulfilment of human agency” (Williams and Lang Jr, 2005: 5) and of “the condition of possibility of identity, norms and rules that are to be effective within a social collective” (Bishai and Behnke, 2004: 7). However, it can also be a space for exclusion, by making use of its claim over holding the monopoly of legitimate violence (Weber, 1947), thus specifying “what violence is legitimate and what is not suggesting that relations of power politicise certain forms of violence and depoliticise others” (Jabri, 2007: 101). In that sense, “[t]he invocation of security, for example, is not simply about protection from violence; it is a claim for the right to use violence” (*idem*). Following this logic, the right to use violence must be applied to those who defy the logic underneath that right. Defying that use of violence is defying the state. As a result, the state needs to define the insurgent ‘other’ as either a foreigner or a traitor; in short, as being outside the sphere of sovereignty that it is entitled to defend. However, if the ‘other’ is outside that sphere, its treatment is not as an enemy, but as a ‘criminal’ that attempts to remove the state from its own right.

This leads to a paradox that results from the state’s double capacity as responsible for the limitation of organised violence within its sovereign space and as one among equals in the international sphere. Even though preserving the sovereign space is an existential condition of the state, so is being recognised as such by its peers.

As a result, state actors face the dilemma between using the conventional methods appropriate for a state, or resorting to the same type of non-conventional military tactics, which normally imply the use of internationally disapproved methods. This does not mean that there is only one way for state actors to deal with PSCs. The state’s condition is not monolithic. It can change, and states do change their policies regarding these conflicts – Israel and Palestine or Britain in Northern Ireland are good

examples of this. As stated by Dale Copeland, “states can reshape structure by process; through new gestures, they can reconstitute interests and identities toward more other-regarding and peaceful means and ends” (2006: 1). That said, these two conditions – sovereignty and international legitimacy – are at the core of the difference between state and non-state actors, independently of how the former is constituted and represented, independently of whether those conditions are followed or ignored.

*Non-state actor* is an extremely broad definition. It can encompass a great range of armed actors, going from the classic guerrillas to criminal gangs. In the context of PSCs, they have to be present in the state they are fighting against, or at least to direct their political claims against that state. They are defined by their irregularity, high mobility, intensity of political commitment, and tellurian character (Schmitt, 1962: 14). They must be, in Schmittian terms, *partisans*:

[t]he partisan [...] fights on a political front, and it is precisely the political character of his action that brings to the fore again the original sense of the word *partisan*. The word is derived from *Partei* [party] and refers to the relation to some kind of fighting, warring, or political active party or group (*idem*: 10).

This excludes actors such as, among others, private military companies (cf. Singer 2003), as they operate on a de-territorialized basis.

PSCs have, as a background a breach in the Weberian conception of state as the one having the “monopoly of legitimate violence”. It defies the state’s security prerogatives; it questions its legitimacy. In that sense, it is the non-state actor that by defying this monopoly establishes the conditions for the constitution of a conflict as a PSC. Contrary to the state, its goals might change more easily: non-state groups are more mobile and better adaptable to the circumstances. According to Pye,

[r]ebels [...] are not bound by the same restraints, and their demands and objectives can therefore easily escalate, as do war aims in international wars, if they seem to be succeeding in the struggle. This difference between the necessarily more rigid position of government and the shifting demands of rebels according to their fortunes is one of the most basic elements of asymmetry in insurrections, an element that does not exist in international conflicts (1969: 168).

As mentioned above, this constitutive difference between state and non-state actors leads to particular conflict dynamics that are characteristic of Protracted Social Conflicts. By de-composing the 'Protracted Social Conflict' expression into each of its words, some of those particular dynamics will be easier to grasp.

*Protracted*, meaning the prolongation in time of a conflict, is something that, if not exclusive, has the possibility of being much more common in a conflict opposing a state against a non-state actor. This is linked with the already mentioned issue of intensity. With different degrees of intensity throughout the conflict it becomes more 'sustainable' to undertake an armed insurrection for longer periods. On the other hand, the intensity is also linked with both the actors' goals and their capabilities. Whereas in a classic inter-state conflict the other's defeat is the goal for both actors, in this context, for the non-state actor, unless very well equipped, the tendency is to find success in both the absence of defeat and/or in the re-politicisation of the conflict (chapter X). Non-state actors are usually less well prepared for direct, armed confrontation. In that sense they privilege a less intense type of warfare, which contributes to the protraction of the conflict. As put by Peter Waldmann, whereas state's actions are conditioned by election dates and periods (and thus tend to adopt short-term strategies), "[g]uerrilla forces have no timetable. They fix a goal without giving an exact promise as to when it will be reached. Generally the time horizon of rebels is vague; they speak of decades or generations that will pass before their goals will be fulfilled". As a result, "time generally is in favour of the rebels and against

democratic governments” (2007: 244), which makes it easier to understand the protracted character of these conflicts.

*Social.* When defining the actors in these types of conflicts, PSCs oppose *communities* to states, even if an in-depth analysis could also lead to the definition of groups within that state’s decision making process. Indeed, as previously seen, and as put by Gil Friedman “[t]he state exists in Azar’s approach as an apparatus controlled by one or a few communal groups” (1999: 37). However, even if not in practice, there is at least a whole rhetoric that needs to be constructed and sustained, ‘wrapping’ those ruling communities’ interests as those of the state. As argued by Ole Wæver,

[p]ossibly, ‘state security’ is always just window dressing for ‘regime security’, but the regime cannot use the rhetoric of ‘security’ by saying this is an unacceptable development that threatens the survival of the regime, it has to make a compelling case for this being a threat against the state, against natural sovereignty (1997: 316).

Thus, the ‘social’ is the domain of the non-state actor, a domain that can be differentiated between the actor’s background and the issues that underline the conflict discourse. Regarding the actor’s background, the social is here linked with the idea of the societal, which in turn is related to the construction of the ‘imagined communities’ as explained in chapter I. It is this condition that allows these actors to construct a ‘grievances’ discourse based on social problems (Azar’s human needs) within a societal sector logic, as defined by the Copenhagen School.

Security sectors initially appeared in Barry Buzan’s first edition of *People, State and Fear* (1983). There, sectors were still largely embedded in the objectivist culture of traditional security studies. In the book’s second edition (1991), Buzan redefined the concepts giving it a more constructivist tone, later highlighted in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (1998). The inclusion of the societal sector concept was

relevant in the sense that security could be analysed from the group level prism as well. For the authors, “[i]f a multisectoral approach to security was to be fully meaningful, referent objects other than the state had to be allowed into the picture” (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 8).

As defined by these authors, “[s]ecurity means survival in the face of existential threats, but what constitutes an existential threat is not the same across different sectors” (*idem.*: 27). They vary depending on whether they are defined as military, political, economic, environmental or societal. According to Buzan, the military sector “concerns the two-level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, and states’ perceptions of each other’s intentions” (1991: 19), whereas the political security is more related with “the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy” (*idem.*). Apart from these two ‘classical’ sectors, Barry Buzan introduced the economic security sector, which is arguably the most difficult sector to define (cf. Buzan *et al.* 1998), as well as the environmental and the societal sector. In general the economic sector “concerns access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power” (Buzan, 1991: 19), while the environmental sector “concerns the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend” (*idem.*: 20). Finally, societal security “concerns the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom” (*idem.*).

One possibility raised by Buzan *et al.* is that a conflict might involve discourses based on different sectors, in which an environmental sector for one might be an economic threat for other. The combination of different sectors is something underdeveloped, but important in securitised conflict contexts. Still, it should be noticed that security

sectors are simplifiers, that is, conceptual frameworks that allow for an easier interpretation of a given phenomenon. The risk here is that of over-simplification.

According to these authors,

[d]isaggregating security into sectors has been helpful in distilling distinctive patterns of vulnerabilities and threats, differences regarding referent objects and actors, and different relationships to territorializing and deterritorializing trends in the system. The number of cross-linkages, however, stands as a massive warning against treating the sectors as closed systems (1998: 167).

When it comes to PSCs, it is difficult to go beyond the military and political sectors. In the states' discourse, PSCs are essentially about the integrity of the state. In Buzan's elaboration, the military sector is, though not denying its applicability to non-state actors (1998: 54), closely linked to classical inter-state security perceptions: it is about the survival of the state as an international actor. The political sector is more oriented towards the survival of the state in the face of non-military threats. As said by Buzan *et al.*,

[p]olitical threats are aimed at the organizational stability of the state. Their purpose may range from pressuring the government on a particular policy, through overthrowing the government, to fomenting secessionism, and disrupting the political fabric of the state so as to weaken it prior to military attack (1998: 143).

As we can see there is a very thin line separating both. The authors acknowledge this by saying that the political sector "easily gets squeezed between the military and societal sectors" (*idem*: 141). Nevertheless, they are the two sectors where there is this clear preoccupation with the states' integrity.

Military and political sector claims are, in the context of PSCs, usually put against societal claims. Indeed, the introduction of the societal security sector created two-tiers when it comes to the sectoral approach. As put by Ole Wæver, "[s]ocietal security is

not (only) one out of five sectors, but we have two kinds of security: state security (political, military, etc) and security of the society/nation” (1997: 312).

The societal sector was an addition made necessary out of the post Cold War conflict map, with identity and ethnicity being common terms used to describe the violence unfolding in different parts of the world. According to Buzan *et al.*, “[t]he organizing concept in the societal sector is identity. Societal insecurity exists when communities of whatever kind define a development or potentiality as a threat to their survival as a community” (1998: 119).

The most common threats to societal security are migration (which might disrupt the ‘purity’ or the ‘balance’ of the community), horizontal competition (neighbours’ influence) and vertical competition (integrative or separatist projects<sup>29</sup>).

This concept (societal security) has been criticised by different authors. The biggest argument against it resides in the reification of identity implied by the concept. As McSweeney (1999) suggests, identities are mutable and neither them nor their interests are immune to transformation. Indeed, one of the aspects this author pointed out to the Copenhagen School framework had to do with the identity crystallization produced by the definition of sectors. As he suggests,

[c]ollective identity is not out there, waiting to be discovered. What is ‘out there’ is identity discourse on the part of political leaders, intellectuals and countless others, who engage in the process of constructing, negotiating, manipulating or affirming a response to the demand – at times urgent, mostly absent – for a collective image (1999: 76-77).

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<sup>29</sup> According to the same authors, integrating projects or secessionist projects “are both instances of vertical competition in the sense that the struggle is over how wide the circles should be drawn or rather – since there are always numerous concentric circles of identity – to which to give the main emphasis” (1998: 121).

In this sense, if societal security means the feeling of an existential threat within a certain group, then we must define and take for granted that that group is a reality. Again, the answer coming from the Copenhagen School is clear and coherent – what matters is not whether a group is or is not an evolving social construction – but the discourse in that sense. If the Hutu political leadership says they represent an identity group named Hutus, and that they have certain characteristics that makes them as such, and that allows them to be different from Tutsis, then the important aspect is not to assess whether those characteristics are indeed ‘valid’ or not, but what the consequences of such a discourse are.

As argued by Buzan *et al.* (1998), societal security provides a snapshot of a certain group. It does not mean it will not evolve or even disappear. It does not reject that this particular group might be a completely artificial social construction either. That is not sufficiently relevant if it is used as a way to persuade and convince an audience vast enough to create or enhance a certain conflict:

Objective factors such as language or location might be involved in the idea of national identity, but it nevertheless remains a political and personal choice to identify with some community by emphasizing some trait in contrast to other available historical or contemporary ties. Threats to identity are thus always a question of the construction of something as threatening some “we” – and often thereby actually contributing to the construction or reproduction of “us”. Any we identity can be constructed in many different ways, and often the main issue that decides whether security conflicts will emerge is whether one or another self-definition wins out in a society (*idem*: 120).

What is suggested is a reconceptualisation of the security field in terms of the duality of *state* security and *societal* security, the former having *sovereignty* as its ultimate criterion, and the latter being held together by concerns about *identity*. Both actually imply ‘survival’: sovereignty is the name of the survival of the state – if the state loses its sovereignty, it has not survived as a state; survival for a society is a question of

identity, because the way a society will talk about existential threat is: if this happens, “we will no longer be able to live *as us*.” (Wæver, 1997: 313).

*Conflict* is a broad concept. It can include a vast range of social phenomena, going from the inter-personal level, to the inter-state one. The degree of intensity, the motives, and the instruments to face a conflict are also widely varied. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, this has had, as a negative consequence, the establishment of general patterns of conflict that cut across all levels of social life, mixing matrimonial discussions with devastating wars. This leads to the overlooking of political processes that exist in armed conflicts, and that makes them very different from inter-personal quarrels, as seen in Michael Nicholson’s typology in the introductory chapter.

Another problem related to the use of the conflict or war label has to do with its geographical applicability. Wars are seen as the extreme version of those violent political conflicts. In classical terms, war was a very well defined phenomenon.

According to Carl Schmitt, war was, as understood in the Congress of Vienna,

conducted between states by regular armies of states, between standard bearers of a *jus belli* who respect each other as enemies and do not treat one another as criminals, so that a peace treaty becomes possible and even remains normal, mutually accepted end of war (1962: 6).

Nowadays, definitions of war are usually linked to a high death-toll rate. The Michigan Project, started by David Singer in the mid 1960s, for example, considers a war when there are military hostilities that have led to at least 1,000 combat fatalities (not including civilians) per year during the course of the conflict (Wallensteen, 2002: 20). The Uppsala project uses the same threshold, though also including civilian casualties. Less than that and more than 25 deaths for the duration of the conflict is

considered as a *minor armed conflict*, and a death toll between 25 and 1,000 per year an *intermediate armed conflict* (*idem*: 24).

The events that followed the end of the Cold War contributed to the popularisation of the term ‘conflict’ in detriment of ‘war’. The 1990s conflicts that mainly unfolded in Africa and the Balkans, were seen as ‘ethnic conflicts’, “as if most internal conflicts are an outburst of spontaneous and uncontrollable social forces” (Jackson, 2001: 66).

This established the existence of first and second-class armed conflicts:

A conflict that is “framed as ethnic”, by belligerent elites or by outsiders, is simply not the same thing as an “ethnic conflict.” The former interrogates the label, asking who uses it and for what purpose; the latter simply assumes that there is a natural kind of conflict called “ethnic conflict” and that both analysis and policy should be crafted in such a way as to make useful distinction between this and other types of organized violence (King, 2007: 118).

In that sense, and following Charles King’s argument,

the idea that there is a type of violent conflict that could meaningfully be called “ethnic” should probably be abandoned in favour of research on how social categories (of whatever type) are made, manipulated, and transformed (*idem*).

This differentiated labelling highlights some notions of civilization and barbarity, a structure in the international system in which the civilised fight wars and the barbarians wage ethnic conflicts. This geographical focus is irrelevant as it depoliticises the conflict along cultural lines while focusing on a mere ideational structure that does nothing to either analyse or solve the conflict. In the case of PSCs, it is not important (for the sake of the definition) where the conflict takes place or whether the number of deaths were higher or lower than 1,000. Even though those are fundamental aspects in dealing with the specific conflict, they do not add anything

new to its central characterisation as it is the condition of political enmity between state and non-state actor, together with the protractedness of the conflict that dictates whether we are in the presence of a Protracted Social Conflict or not.

### *The Legitimacy Issue*

Legitimacy and representation are difficult issues in PSC contexts. In order to be in the presence of a PSC, both sides need to be legitimised by their audiences. As seen in this type of conflict, there is an inter-play between the political-military sectors and the societal sector that affects the way in which the securitisation process unfolds. State actors have formal institutions, norms and powers, which lead to a clearer process of competences' concessions. On the contrary, at the societal level, the only power the audience has is the power of giving legitimacy. As Buzan *et al.* argue,

when the referent object is the state, fairly clear rules usually exist about which state representatives can speak security on its behalf. For less institutionalized units such as nations, the rules are less clear, and the legitimacy of attempts to speak security is determined by the scale and depth of support they receive (1998: 55).

This does not mean states are always coherent (*idem*), particularly in democracies, with different voices sometimes engaging in competing securitisation discourses. Nonetheless, the tendency is to have a clear division of competences. In the area of PSCs, there is a clear difference between both sides regarding legitimacy, seen as “the ability to evoke compliance short of coercion” (Janos, 1969: 132). States and state officials are *a priori* legitimate actors in securitisation process and the consequent undertaking of a violent conflict. The importance of that initial legitimacy concession is structural for the whole conflict, as the legitimacy during the conflict will tend to

naturally reinforce itself, with the increase cleavage between ‘us’ and ‘them’. As stated by Lucian Pye,

[t]he initial decisions of a government confronted with the threat of internal war are usually the most fateful and long-lasting of any it will be called upon to make throughout an insurrection. These decisions tend to have a binding effect, which, to an extreme degree, gives structure and form to the entire ensuing conflict. In a sense, the first acts of the government establish the crucial parameters of the conflict, because they generally define the issues at stake, the presumed character of the struggle, and the legitimate basis for any eventual termination of the struggle (1969: 167).

Non-state groups, on the other hand, can only have *a posteriori* legitimacy concessions, as there are no previous structures in hand to sustain some kind of institutional legitimacy.

As such, audiences play a different role, depending on the type of actor. In the state context the audience’s role is merely one of approval of the securitisation in order to guarantee the state’s sovereignty. In the non-state context, it is much more than that. The audience approval is also the definition of itself. By conceding legitimacy and support to a movement like Hamas in Palestine, or FARC in Colombia, the audience is, to a large extent, delegating to those movements the construction and representation of its own identity. On the other hand, this is also what gives that movement its political character. As stated by Schmitt “the partisan requires legitimation if he wants to remain in the sphere of the political instead of sinking into criminality” (1962: 59).

As already seen, conflicts unfold in unpredictable ways and, in specific cases, that support can be eroded or even disappear without the movement stopping its armed activities. Besides, the concession of that legitimacy can, in many cases, be extracted by those movements (which means it is not legitimacy, but coercion), rather than given by the audience. Forced conscriptions, revolutionary taxes, and death threats are some of the common practices that lead to ‘forced’ support. These same tactics are

often used by states as well. In both cases, these tactics can only be of limited use. If political leaders acted completely against the will of its audience, it would be difficult to undertake a process of public persuasion. On the other hand, non-state actors could not be seen as representatives of a community without the consent of their audience, as the core of a PSC is in the articulation of a discourse based on the existence of a strong internal collective disagreement against the state. The fact that groups or societies do not speak, makes it more difficult to see an *a priori* legitimacy concession. As put by Ole Wæver,

‘[s]ociety’ never speaks, it is only there to be spoken for. And this is done all the time; actually a large part of politics is about speaking in the name of ‘society’, but there is a difference between this and speaking specifically ‘security’ in the name of society. We can not predict who will voice the ‘societal security’ concerns; we can only see after hand how much legitimacy an actor *does* have when he tries to speak on behalf of society (1997: 237).

States usually tend to opt for one of the two possible strategies: either they reify the community along the lines of that institutionalisation, taking the whole community as the enemy; or they try to break that link by constructing a discourse in which the armed group and the community are two distinct collective actors - the former is the enemy, and the latter citizens of that state being exploited by the enemy. In both cases, there is always a simultaneous process of conviction of the state’s own audience by deepening the cleavages between both sides. That is usually done by labelling the ‘other’ in a way that a return to the previous situation will be deemed as impossible. Again, legitimacy appears as determining for the general acceptance of a label. As defined by Michael Bathia, “[t]he actual ability to name, and to have that name accepted by an audience, holds great power” (2005: 9).

The labelling of the 'other' assumes particular consequences, not only for the construction of the other, but for the strategies and tactics adopted towards the conflict. The implications of using such a term within PSCs should now be analysed.

## **2. The state and the 'other': the game of labelling in PSCs**

Discourse is, as argued throughout this and previous chapters, an important feature of conflicts. Labelling is, in such contexts, an important step for the definition of 'us' *versus* 'them'. As Michael Bhatia confirms:

Once assigned, the power of a name is such that the process by which the name was selected generally disappears and a series of normative associations, motives and characteristics are attached to the named subject. By naming, the subject becomes known in a manner which may permit certain forms of inquiry and engagement, while forbidding or excluding others (2005: 8).

One common assumption regarding PSCs is their diffuse character. In a conflict where formally the state fights against some of its citizens, a first distinction that state authorities must make is between the 'internal' and the 'external'. The discourse must be constructed either in a way that considers the rebel movement mainly as a proxy of an external actor or in a way that acknowledges it mainly as an internal issue.

In the first case, the whole rhetoric will be directed towards the country or countries in support for the rebels. In this case, the conflict might easily evolve into a regional conflict. It goes out of PSC boundaries as the core of the conflict is not on internal social-political problems, but on inter-state rivalries. In the second case, the discourse construction can broadly assume three different levels. The first level is the one in which the rebel movement is treated in an isolated way. They are not given identity labels nor even political ones; they are taken as a movement looking to destabilize the country or to create some kind of conflict dynamics that benefits them. They are

usually labelled as ‘terrorists’. According to Guelke, “[t]he term, terrorism, carries a connotation of absolutely illegitimate violence” (2006: 182). Still according to this author,

[t]he very use of the term ‘terrorists’ by the authorities is commonly an indication that the government has no intention of entering into negotiations with the political representatives of the insurgents in question. Indeed, it is usually an indication that they hope to be able to suppress the insurgents by force and therefore avoid the political claims that lie behind the campaign of violence (Guelke, 2006: 211).

For Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah “[the Sri Lankan state] differentiate[s] ‘LTTE terrorism’ from ‘Tamil terrorism’, in part by insisting its military campaign was intended to ‘liberate the Tamils from the LTTE’” (2005: 93). There is, in this case, a clear distinction between the group and the citizens, the latter under the state umbrella, the former, enemies that should be destroyed.

The second level goes into the political arena, absorbing the ‘collaborators’, usually legal political parties. In that context, there already is a broader network in place, in which the rebel movement tries to combine the illegal means (the use of violence against the state) with legal political participation. These are usually *leitmotifs* for closing down political parties in PSC contexts.

Finally, the third level goes all the way to the community. It is more than a rebel movement, more than a political party: it is an ethnic group, a minority, a whole community challenging the state.

In this respect, the game of labelling is adaptable to the circumstances. Regarding the rebel movement, as mentioned above, the labelling of ‘terrorists’ is a very common one. When it comes to the second level, those members of the political parties or similar organizations are defined as ‘traitors’ or ‘supporters of a terrorist group’. Eventually they will rest under the broader ‘terrorist’ label. Finally, the third level has

the seeds of a generalised ethnic conflict, as the 'other' must be defined along very broad division lines. The 'other' must, in this case, be defined as inferior, and as damaging to the stability of the state. It is broadly the same kind of discourse employed by the Nazis during the Jewish genocide and that has been reproduced in several different conflicts around the world, from Rwanda to Darfur. It is a type of discourse that tries to create insurmountable barriers between communities, groups within the same state. There is an attempt for general popular mobilization, which will tend, as a consequence, to lead to attempts of communal annihilation. This type of rhetoric, if leading to these type of situations, will fall outside the boundaries of PSC and approach those of genocide. As a political tool, genocide falls beyond the limits of politics itself, as the enemy is to be destroyed and not defined. It is the passage from the real enemy to that of the absolute enemy: "[i]t is the renunciation of real enmity that opens the door for the work of annihilation of an absolute enmity" (Schmitt, 1962: 67). As stated by Bishai and Behnke (2004: 5),

[d]ifference as an ontological condition of political life makes the attempt to eradicate its expressions in favour of Identity the ultimate act of violence in a sense. But for conflict to endure, it must be made endurable. Limits on the scope and intensity have to be imposed to keep it from deteriorating into a war of all against all, with the sole aim of mutual annihilation.

From the other side, the non-state actor discourse can be constructed along two different lines: a state level or a societal level. In the first case, the state is taken as not capable of providing the services that it should, at least to that community. The second possibility is a discourse that uncovers the state as an instrument of a dominant identity group. Again, this is the other side of a state's securitisation of a whole community, having as its potential consequence, ethnic cleansing.

The issue of labelling, viewed from this prism, is informative regarding the importance of discourse for the definition of PSCs. As genocide claims do not figure within the PSC framework<sup>30</sup>, the terrorist label, whether applied to groups (by the state) or to states (by the groups), is the most radical point in a line of potential discourses of securitisation. According to Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah,

[t]he deliberate conflation of ‘terrorism’ with the Tamil political project by successive Sri Lankan governments has produced a political culture in which the main (Sinhala) parties routinely vie to adopt more hard-line positions on the ‘ethnic question’ – a practice which began as long ago as 1956 (2005: 98).

With terrorist claims one descends into the absolute field of Good *versus* Evil. It is no longer a matter of being right; it is a matter of the other being Evil. Terrorism is unethical, even in a context where death is a feature of daily life. For that, no movement, much less state, ever defines itself as a terrorist. Even the ones accused of such, reject that claim. Terrorism is, in that sense, the dark beast of conflicts, or even more broadly, of political violence:

Terror occupies the upper reaches of the spectrum of political agitation, immediately above other types of political violence. Terror may be distinguished from these other types by its *extranormal* quality; that is, terror lies beyond the norms of violent political agitation that are accepted by a given society (Thorton, 1969: 76).

Terrorism points to an interesting paradox. It is at the same time political and apolitical. As mentioned above by Thorton, terrorism is understood as the most radical form of political violence. In that sense, it leads to the notion of terrorism as violent but still political. At the same time, as such labelling prevents the acceptance of the ‘other’ and the recognition of its political legitimacy, terrorism cannot be fought on

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<sup>30</sup> This topic will be further developed in the next section.

political grounds. It is this paradox that allows a state to declare at one point a movement as a terrorist group, with whom it cannot negotiate, and at another to recognise their legitimacy by engaging in actual negotiations. The British government's relations with the IRA or the Spanish talks with ETA are examples of such ambiguity.

But what are the implications of such labelling for a PSC? One first assumption is that whenever terrorism discourses are internally produced and reproduced in a consistent and prolonged way, we are in the presence of a PSC, which means, in the presence of exceptional politics:

The extranormality of terror can also be expressed as a function of the internal war situation. Internal war will not come about in a situation that permits the conflicting vital aspirations of the incumbents and the insurgents to be met by constitutional means – i.e., by 'normal' means (Thorton, 1969:76).

The same can be applied to 'state terrorism' claims. State terrorism is usually the state's strategy for responding or preventing 'terrorist' attacks with the same lack of ethical behaviour (cf. Blakeley, 2009). In both cases, terrorism is associated with the undertaking of violent acts against the civilian population. Non-state groups frequently recur to this type of argument in order to sustain secessionist claims as Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah (2005: 94) argue in relation to the Sri Lankan conflict.

Although I could try to define the always contested concept of terrorism, it would be meaningless for this context, as what matters is not whether there are violent acts that can be described as terrorist acts but, instead, whether those violent acts are indeed described as such. Still, the continuous application of the term to certain contexts (such as when a car bomb explodes in the centre of a city, or when a suicide-bomber explodes in a bus full of people) has given the notion to the ones who commit those

attacks that they are perpetrating terrorist acts. In that sense, there is the self-consciousness by these groups of the consequences of such acts. In their relation with the audience: “the insurgent must attempt to communicate effectively to his audience the idea that terror is the only weapon appropriate to the situation” (Thorton, 1969: 76).

According to the same author, there is a link between these acts and the conflict’s phase. In his opinion, “terror is only appropriate if the insurgents enjoy a low level of actual political support but have a high potential for such support” (*idem*: 74). In a conflict where violent attacks commonly seen as terrorist attacks take place for a long period of time, it is questionable whether the group that commits those attacks has strong support from the ones it claims to represent.

In short, in a PSC the only objectivity that can be taken for granted is the one related to the existence of at least a state and a non-state actor in confrontation. Only the rhetorical constructions of both actors can reveal whether it ‘is’ or ‘is not’ a ‘real’ PSC. PSCs, as other conflicts, are not given facts that we analyse. They are a combination of practices and mainly discourses that define what the conflict is. In that sense, the issue of labelling is a central factor, as it will be the labels used by each side that will define the parties and help construct the securitisation discourses that lead to armed confrontation.

### **3. The Limits of PSCs, and the limits of the Schmittian concept of the political**

As discussed in chapter III, and following a Schmittian understanding of the political, it is the enmity condition that establishes the difference between a political phenomena and something standing outside its limits. In that sense, the way the ‘other’ is considered is intimately related to the behaviour of the parties involved in the conflict:

the ‘other’ must be accepted as an enemy as “[t]he negation of real hostility will in this way open the way to the work of extermination of an absolute hostility” (Schmitt, 2004 [1962]: 66). Within this Schmittian logic, for a conflict to endure it must have limits on intensity and scope that prevents it from deteriorating into a war of annihilation (Bishai and Behnke, 2004: 5). If limits are not imposed and the other is not defined as the enemy, but rather “pushed into the abyss of total devaluation” (Schmitt, 2004 [1962]: 67), then “new kinds of absolute enmity must come into being” (*idem*). In such context, “[e]nmity will be so terrifying that one perhaps mustn’t even speak any longer of the enemy or of enmity, and both words will have to be outlawed and damned fully before the work of annihilation can begin” (*idem*). Hence, “[a]nnihilation thus becomes entirely abstract and entirely absolute” (*idem*). It is in this context that Schmitt introduces the concept of the modern partisan, as presented in the first section. The modern partisan is the new enemy, the absolute enemy.

This approach confirms the importance of labelling in conflict contexts – as it is through words that the condition of enmity is established, and thus the ‘fate’ of the conflict decided. Through words it is possible to understand not only the conflict, but also its limits, and this is something that Schmitt’s *Theory of the Partisan* comes to support.

However, Carl Schmitt’s interpretation of the ‘modern partisan’ contains a flaw that limits the usefulness of his argument, an ethical flaw, which is somewhat surprising when talking about an author that is also known as the crown jurist of the Third Reich.

According to Schmitt,

[t]he modern partisan expects neither justice nor mercy from his enemy. He has turned away from the conventional enmity of the contained war and given himself up to another – the real – enmity that rises through terror and counter-terror, up to annihilation” (*idem*: 7).

In his understanding the practices involved in these types of conflicts are beyond what is politically acceptable, they are merciless and ruthless and thus lead to terror and counter-terror, which he takes to eventually lead to annihilation. Underlying this understanding is a definition of what is ethically acceptable in the sphere of politics, which is paradoxical in face of the general understanding of Schmitt's approach as being crude and void of ethics or morals. Under this definition there are limits to how violent a conflict can be, which clearly goes against the ruthless acts of violence so well portrayed in the *New Wars* literature.

In that sense, I would argue that Schmitt's approach is useful for the understanding of the limits of the political in Protracted Social Conflicts, while its application is actually flawed by ethical and moral considerations. That a movement can be labelled as terrorist, be involved in horrific attacks against civilians and then be incorporated in the political process – such as the IRA in Ireland or Hamas in Palestine –; that people can commit acts of absolute brutality without being absolute enemies is beyond Schmitt's comprehension.

Hence, I would argue the limits of a Protracted Social Conflict are those of absolute enmity, but not Schmitt's absolute enmity. As shown in the previous section, the enemy is not only about how it is labelled, but also about the extent of that label. It is the extent of the label that sets the conditions of absolute enmity that eventually lead to processes of annihilation. Genocide practices set those limits.

As put by Patricia Owens,

[w]ars of annihilation that aim to wipe out a particular group attack the basic fact of human plurality and violate the 'limits inherent in violent action'. With genocide we are not 'just' talking about large numbers of dead but something that is potentially immortal. The public, political world, the political constitution of a people, the outcome of a people's living together, and debating their common affairs is also destroyed with genocide (2007: 110).

Intense and inhumane acts of violence between the modern partisan and the state do not necessarily destroy the possibility of politics, because the target is not the whole, but a part, the destruction is limited in scope even if unlimited in intensity. There is always the possibility of politics outside this confrontation, a possibility that allows these actors to return to it even if they were taken as the Schmittian absolute enemy.

However, when the objective is not the destruction, but annihilation of a whole group of people according not to the incompatibility of interests, but to their colour, religion or language, then the question is no longer one of destruction, but of the destruction of plurality and thus of the possibility of politics:

If it is true that a thing is real [...] only if it can show itself and be perceived from all sides, then there must always be a plurality of individuals or peoples... to make reality even possible and to guarantee its continuation. In other words, the world comes into being only if there are perspectives... If a people or a nation, or even just some specific human group, which offers a unique view of the world arising from its particular vision of the world [...] is annihilated, it is not merely that a people or a nation or a given number of individuals perishes, but rather that a portion of our common world is destroyed, an aspect of the world that has revealed itself to us until now but can never reveal itself again. Annihilation is therefore not just tantamount to the end of the world; it also takes its annihilator with it (Arendt, 2005: 175).

Genocide practices, derived from all-encompassing discourses of othering, set the limit between what is political and what is not, what is a conflict and what is a criminal practice. This leads us to a final point, one shared by both Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt – the danger of wars in the name of ‘humanity’. Humanity is not a political category, it goes beyond its limits, as the possibility of establishing the distinction between friend and enemy is emptied in the totality of the friend (humanity in general). In this context the enemy is a mere “‘disturber of peace’ and hence an

outlaw of humanity. War is not perceived as war, but as ‘executions, sanctions, punitive expeditions, pacifications, protection of treaties, international police, and measures to ensure peace remain’ (Schmitt, 1996: 54). Wars in the name of humanity are thus wars beyond the limits of politics.

## **Conclusion**

From what has been seen, it can be concluded that labelling is the middle-discourse, in between the broader political structure and the narrower policy options, reflecting the former and limiting the latter. As was also seen, terrorism puts conflicts on the edge of the political. The terrorist label raises the question of whether a conflict fought under that label can still be defined as political, as it antagonises the ‘other’ in a *quasi* non-reversible way, willing to ‘destroy’ it rather than keeping ‘enmity’ relations. However, it is in the *quasi* that resides the political dimension of terrorism. Recurrent examples, such as the conflict in Northern Ireland, show that the terrorist label is often displaced of its post, giving way to the resolution of the conflict. However, this does not mean that Protracted Social Conflicts are boundless phenomena. As seen in the last section, there are limits between what can be defined as a conflict, and what stays outside those limits; that is, what can stand inside and outside of the political. Those limits are set by the scope of the labels used in the identification of the conflict’s parties. All-encompassing categories that target large sects of the population and that lead to genocide practices with the ultimate goal of eliminating them imply the destruction of plurality and thus the possibility of politics itself.

## **Chapter VI. Labelling the PKK**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter the importance attached to the issue of labelling in conflict contexts was highlighted, in particular the terrorist label. In this chapter the theoretical argument regarding the ‘terrorist’ label will be illustrated by looking at how that label has been included in Turkey’s discourse regarding the potential invasion of Northern Iraq in order to curb PKK’s activities in that region. Thus, this chapter aims at understanding how the ‘terrorist’ label has contributed to the development of Turkey’s conflict against the PKK in the period that goes from July 2006 to January 2008. This period corresponds to Turkey’s public discussion on whether to intervene in Northern Iraq and the eventual military operations in the territory. Finally, it will be seen how these events in Turkey were related to the labelling of the PKK as a terrorist group and how that labelling is in itself conditioned and have been conditioning the broader political discourse. I will then conclude by summing up the most relevant findings of this chapter.

For this chapter, more than 100 news articles and official documents were analysed. In terms of actors, these discourses were divided into three main groups: political leaders (which in Turkey also include the high military ranks); commentators, or opinion-makers, which go from leading journalists to former politicians and diplomats; and newspaper articles reporting news. The first group is included as the main source and recipient of the discourse on terror regarding the PKK; the second group as functional actors (in the Copenhagen School sense of the word) and reproducers of the discourse; and finally the third group as reproducers of the discourse, while applying it to the events they report. In all cases, the basic goal is to a) identify the constellation of terms associated with the PKK ‘terrorism’ or ‘terror’,

and b) analyse how it links with the options regarding the ‘threat’ reproduced in the political discourse.

Due to language restraints, all the texts under analysis were published in English. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in Turkey there are three newspapers in English, each one representing a distinct political view (*Today's Zaman* with a more conservative view, *Turkish Daily News* linked to the Kemalist/secularist view and *The New Anatolian*, sympathetic with the AK Party government, but defined as independent). Also, there are two other newspapers, *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, which only have Turkish print editions, but that translate the most relevant news into English. Finally, there are some services that translate the main news from the other main Turkish newspapers, as the one provided by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These will be the predominant sources for this chapter, even though other international media sources, such as the *BBC News* website and the *International Herald Tribune* will also be taken into consideration.

## **1. The context**

Since 2006, Turkey had been using all diplomatic channels available to try to convince the US of the need to curb the PKK ‘threat’. A tri-lateral cooperation mechanism was eventually established between Washington, Ankara and Baghdad. The results would, nonetheless, be far from what the Turkish public opinion expected. This mechanism would eventually fail, with two of its original members – the Turkish representative, retired Gen. Edip Başer (antagonised with the Turkish government), and the US representative, retired Gen. Joseph Ralston – resigning during the process (see chapter VIII).

In April 2007, the military requested the political authorization for a cross-border operation in Northern Iraq. This was not seen by the military as the solution to eradicate the PKK, but as a mere contribution to solve the problem. In a public statement in June that same year, Turkey's Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Yaşar Büyükanıt would make it clear that such operation "would bring benefits" (TDN, 28/06/07), or as more emphatically put by the Land Forces Commander Gen. İlker Başbuğ, "a big blow on them" (*idem*). The first visible action came in early June, when the Turkish military created three interim security zones in Southeast Turkey.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2007, the Supreme Board for the Fight Against Terrorism, composed of government members, military and security staff, issued an order for a cross-border operation. A few days later, on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the Parliament would approve (507-19) a motion authorizing the government to order the military to carry out an incursion into Iraq. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Turkish Armed Forces stepped up their operations against the PKK. With dozens of thousands of Turkish troops in the Southeast ready to enter Northern Iraq, Erdoğan went to the US to meet George W. Bush, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November. After the failure of the first mechanism, the establishment of a more practical one, involving the sharing of intelligence between Washington and Ankara, was decided at the meeting. Soon after, Turkey began its series of five air bombardments against the PKK bases in Northern Iraq, followed by a military ground incursion. The operation would finish after eight days of incursion into Northern Iraq. According to the Turkish Armed Forces, 240 PKK fighters and 27 members of the Turkish security forces were killed in eight days of fighting and almost 800 PKK positions were destroyed (BBC NEWS, 29/02/08).

After this brief contextualization, the focus should now turn to the reproduction of the PKK's discourse as a terrorist threat. Here, two different aspects will be under

analysis. First, it will be seen what ‘kind’ of terrorists the PKK are portrayed to be and how this links with Turkey’s structural political discourse; and second, the competing discourses regarding the solutions to the problem, relating them to the way the PKK is labelled.

## **2. The ‘terrorists’**

One of the main concepts in the political discursive structure of any polity is that of security, as it is a core element in the definition and reproduction of identities (cf. Campbell, 1998; Williams, 2006). In that sense, looking at official security doctrines or concepts (when there is one) gives us a clear advantage in understanding the political discursive structure under analysis. In the Turkish case, Article 2 of Law No. 2945 on NSC and the NSC General Secretariat defines ‘national security’ as the:

[...] preservation and protection against the collective internal and external threats to the *constitutional order of the state*, its *national existence, integrity*, all of its political, social, cultural and economic interests and contractual rights in the international arena (*apud* Arslan, 2006: 26).

This understanding of national security is simultaneously vague – it can be applied to almost anything – and narrow, as it only considers the existence of the state, and not the safety or well being of its citizens. Nonetheless, the concept lies in the definition of specific referent objects, such as the ‘constitutional order’, the ‘national existence’ and the ‘integrity’ of the state, concepts that can be found when talking about the PKK. For instance, when commenting on recent attacks undertaken by the PKK, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared,

[a]s long as we are firmly bound together, the treacherous separatist terrorist attacks will never attain its goal [...]. I want to declare this one more time: the struggle we lead against separatist terrorism that aims to

destroy our *unity* and our *constitutional order* will continue with belief and determination (TDN, 29/10/07).

In a keynote speech delivered at the beginning of the 2007-2008 academic year at the Turkish Military Academy, Gen. Başbuğ, Turkish Land Forces Commander signalled that “[t]he separatist terrorist movement is based on ethnic nationalism. Separatist terror aims to *destroy the Turkish state* and the *unitary structure of Turkey*” (TNA, 25/09/07). In both cases, there is the explicit attachment of the ‘terrorist threat’ to above-mentioned key concepts of the Turkish political discursive structure: ‘unity’, ‘constitutional order’ and ‘unitary structure of Turkey’; as well as the mentioning of opposite concepts such as ‘ethnic nationalism’ and ‘separatist’. The PKK embodies an ethnic nationalist project that intends to destroy the Turkish state and, as such, must be eliminated. This discourse is also used to reproduce the securitisation process, by reminding the audience of what is at stake if the threat is allowed to exist.

But how do Turkish authorities define terrorism in a general sense? Terrorism is, according to the then Turkish Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Yaşar Büyükanit (2007), “a form of violence that is consciously and politically motivated as well as a crime against humanity”. In the website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one can also read that terrorism serves a “specific ‘political’ goal” (MFA, 2007); and that it can be considered “as an extreme form of expression, which is most contrary to the values of democracy, civilization and humanity” (*idem*). Terrorism is, in that sense, both political and criminal.

Within this context, the PKK is singled out as “one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world” (*idem*). Still, such discourse, in itself, would place the PKK as an enemy, but a ‘legitimate’ one. In that sense, a process of depoliticisation and dehumanisation of the movement accompanies such claims. Regarding the first,

the former *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı* (MIT)<sup>31</sup> deputy undersecretary, Cevat Öneş, commenting on a PKK attack, declared: “The attack [...] showed that the PKK does not have a political aim any more. This attack indicates their defeat and loss of power” (Sabah, 07/01/08). Such claims reproduce a discourse in which, even if conceding that the PKK had some kind of political legitimacy in the past, the movement does not have any logic of existence anymore. As for the dehumanisation of the PKK, the military weekly reports are a case in point. Each week, the military weekly reports that cover the operations in the Southeast mention the number of terrorists ‘eliminated’ (TZ, 12/06/07) or ‘rendered ineffective’ (*idem*, 26/10/07) in opposition to the Turkish soldiers that are ‘wounded’, ‘killed’ or even sometimes ‘murdered’, which also highlights the criminal dimension of the PKK.

The only explored human side is related to the movement’s ‘weakness’ and ‘desperation’, as portrayed by the following passage in *Today’s Zaman*: “The ever-weakening group is increasingly relying on rocket launcher and hit-and-run attacks against gendarmerie stations in a desperate attempt to damage the security forces” (06/06/07). For Fatma Dişli, columnist of the same newspaper, the PKK attacks in Diyarbakir in early January 2008 when five civilians were killed “showed how the terrorist organization is striving in *desperation* to survive, having been cornered by Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) attacks in its hideouts [added emphasis]” (07/01/08).

Emotional moments and a source of strong images, the soldiers’ funerals, considered as martyrs in Turkey (even though Turkey is a secular state and the martyrdom concept has religious origins), became paramount political moments, with thousands of people attending the ceremonies, political slogans exhibited and government members strongly criticized for not doing enough to counter the PKK. At one of those

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<sup>31</sup> Turkey’s secret service, National Intelligence Organisation.

funerals, the Parliament Speaker, Bülent Arinç, declared: “We are continuing to shed tears, but we are not desperate. We are determined to fight terrorism until the very end. We will put an end to terror, we will finish it and our country will return to peaceful and happy days once again” (TZ, 12/06/07). It is relevant to highlight in this case the replacement of the PKK acronym for the mere word ‘terrorism’, and the promise of the return to a ‘happy’ and ‘peaceful’ past. It is also interesting to note the predominance in official discourses of a sense of defiance and bravery in the face of danger, as exemplified by the words of both Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (“We will never be intimidated. We will continue progressing on our path with the same determination”) and Abdullah Gül (“No power will be able to resist before our nation’s and state’s unshakable will regarding this matter”) (TNA, 11/06/07).

Media coverage of the funerals tends to highlight the difference between the *evil* terrorists and *innocent* soldiers. For example, a report published in *Today’s Zaman* began by describing the scenes at the funeral, followed by the mentioning of other funerals in other parts of Turkey. The article then ends with the human dimension of one of the ‘martyred’ soldiers: “Ilhan Yalçın, was only 21 years and was due to complete his military service in four months. The martyr had spoken with his father on the phone a day before the attack. Yalçın said he was fine but missed his home and family very much” (TZ, 07/06/07). The soldier’s name and human side is here in stark contrast with the terrorist’s without a face or a name.

One of the main issues in defining the PKK is actually the extent to which the terrorist label can be applied. For political leaders and military officials there is a concern with separating the ‘terrorists’ from the Kurds, even though in different degrees. For the Turkish Prime Minister, for instance, “[t]he terrorist organization does not represent my citizens of Kurdish origin” (TZ, 08/12/07), whereas for the main opposition party

it is not even a matter of speaking of a 'Kurdish problem' but, as put by the MP Recai Birgün, rather of a 'Southeast problem' that is due to a problem of land distribution and to the archaic tribal divisions still existent in the region (TZ, 14/07/07).

For others, though, those divisions are not as clear-cut. For *Sunday Zaman's* editor-in-chief, Bülent Keneş, the previously existent political support of the Kurdish population in Turkey for the PKK does not exist anymore and that is why the PKK, again in an act of despair, is trying to drag Turkey into Northern Iraq (24/10/07). More sceptical about the disappearance of such support is Gen. Büyükanıt. In his opinion there is still a certain complicity on the part of the population that makes it harder to fight against the PKK: "The main reason preventing the success in the fight against terror is the collaborators. If a village headman or an imam lives peacefully in a village but plants bombs at night, how can you fight terror?" (TDN, 28/06/07).

The role of the Kurdish population in supporting the PKK is directly linked with the internal/external dimension of the problem. As can be read in the official AK Party programme, even though the PKK has been having "intensive outside support", "the fact that the region's population is attached to the unitary state structure, and the fact that the problem did not turn into an ethnic conflict with the common sense of our people, is proof that the issue can be solved as an internal affair" (JDP, 2007).

This position is not consensual within Turkish political discourse, with many other relevant political actors externalising the problem, largely by linking it to the developments in the Kurdish autonomous region in Northern Iraq. For Mehmet Şandır, deputy chairman of the *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (MHP), a nationalist party with 71 seats in the Parliament,

[t]hese Barzani and Talabani-based efforts should be mentioned together with the PKK threat. The separatist terrorism of the PKK aims at making

Turkey recognize a policy through armed terrorism. This political goal is to divide Turkey with its land, people and state (TZ, 13/07/07).

The appeal aims at extending the terrorist label to both the (Kurdish) President of Iraq and the President of the autonomous Kurdish region in the north of the country, while once again underlining the dividing character of the PKK. For political commentator Mehmet Ali Birand, Turkey's fight against the PKK is actually nothing more than a proxy war between Ankara and Erbil (the capital of the Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq):

From the outside, there is an impression that the conflict between northern Iraq and Turkey is actually over the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). But this outside view is the most misleading. Barzani uses the PKK card to rid himself of Turkey's pressure about Kirkuk and independence. Meanwhile, Turkey is trying to prevent an independent northern Iraq and prevent Kirkuk from becoming a completely Kurdish region (30/10/07).

The main opposition leader, Deniz Baykal followed the same line, mentioning the "covert war launched against Turkey through the PKK" (*Hürriyet*, 22/10/07).

Nonetheless, this externalisation process is not only done by extending the label to outside actors, but also by pointing out the qualitative changes inside the PKK, highlighting its multi-national character. For Retired Lt. Col. Şenol Özbek,

[p]reviously, most members of the terrorist organization were citizens of the Republic of Turkey, but this has changed. We are certainly faced with a new formation directed by Kurdish elements that have Iranian, Iraqi and Syrian roots" (TZ, 8/06/07).

Orhan Cengiz, columnist of the Turkish Daily News, prefers to talk of the PKK's 'Middle Eastern character', marked by the movement's 'suicide attacks' (06/10/07).

Apart from the tendency to separate the Kurdish population from the PKK and to link the latter with external political actors (with a clear focus on the Iraqi Kurdish leaders

Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani), there is also a strong discourse on the Kurdish DTP as the political wing of the PKK. For the Turkish political analyst based in Washington, Soner Cagaptay (2007), the DTP is the main body of the PKK, which works as the military wing of the movement. The same position is defended by Mehmet Ali Birand. For this influential Turkish political commentator,

[n]obody really knows how it works [PKK's decision mechanism]. We have scant information on the stages of decision making and implementation. We know just as little about the organization's configuration and the various tendencies that compose it. It has particularly, constantly changing and development-sensitive structure, whose net balances remain hazy (5/12/07).

Nonetheless, a few sentences below he claims that "The PKK dominates the Democratic Society Party (DTP)", even if not completely (*idem*). Apparently, the lack of knowledge is not extended to the PKK's links with the DTP. For the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP) leader, Deniz Baykal, the DTP "tries to legitimize them [the PKK], reflect their ideas and pull the government to negotiate with them" (TDN, 09/10/07). MHP leader Bahçeli goes even further advocating that the "supporters of terrorists are wandering in municipal buildings, university conference halls and even in the corridors of the Parliament" (TZ, 24/10/07).

The DTP is the only political party with Parliament seats that rejects the PKK terrorist label. For one of the leading party figures, the mayor of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, the PKK should merely be seen as "armed Kurdish opposition" (Sabah, 10/07/07). As well as being the only political party not recognising the PKK as a terrorist movement, the DTP is also the one highlighting the political dimension of the movement. For Selim Sadak, MP, the PKK imprisoned leader Öcalan "is offering solutions to the problems of Turkey, whether we like it or not" (Çevik, 17/05/07).

In early November, the PKK kidnapped eight Turkish soldiers. They were eventually released, with the DTP mediation, leading to a public investigation on their role, as well as to several criticisms by all the other parties (TDN, 06/11/07). For CHP deputy leader, Cedvet Selvi, “Turkey would never negotiate with terrorists. These attempts are merely intended to distract Turkey from a cross-border operation” (TDN, 06/11/07). The eight soldiers were sent to prison, facing charges of disobeying orders (TZ, 13/10/07).

As it can be seen, there is no consensus on the ‘external’ dimension of the PKK. In a sense, with the exception of the PKK being a terrorist movement, everything else that surrounds the problem seems to be on contestable political grounds. This is made even clearer when we look at the policy options, a topic of heated political debate.

The policies to approach the PKK are a source of strong political rhetoric. In the same way as the PKK is weak and Turkey strong, the same type of rhetoric is used by the political actors in Turkey in order to get some political leverage. The issue of ‘courage’ is, for instance, frequently used as a political tool. For Devlet Bahçeli, the nationalist MHP leader, Erdoğan should not be ‘afraid’ of facing the PKK: “Don’t escape; it is your duty to fight against terror. Don’t be afraid, you are the prime minister make your decision. If you can’t, resign right now!” The level of discursive aggressiveness is once again revealed in an increasingly dramatic discourse against Erdoğan:

I know why you avoid fighting against terror and eliminating the terrorists. You can’t run and you can’t save yourself. You will pay the price. In Turkey or overseas, wherever you hide I’ll find you and bring you back to Turkey” (TDN, 11/06/07).

The Turkish Prime Minister is here portrayed as ‘weak’, as he ‘avoids fighting’; and is willing to ‘hide’. For that, he will ‘pay’ and when he tries to run away, due to his

weakness, the MHP leader will 'bring him back', as if we were talking of an outlaw or a criminal. After a PKK attack killed 13 Turkish soldiers in early October 2007, Deniz Baykal was also extremely critical of the government's actions in no uncertain terms: "Unfortunately this government does not have that will and I have no trust that it can acquire it [...] [w]e continue to pay for this absent will with more martyrs" (TZ, 09/10/07).

This emotional tone is in stark contrast with the AK Party positions, arguably less dramatic in making their point. When considering the possibility of a cross-border operation Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan defended the need to "avoid acting emotionally on the issue of a cross-border operation [...]. So far, there have been 24 such operations. When you look back at its benefits, we see they have not been particularly effective." (TZ, 12/10/07). Responding to opposition criticisms, Erdoğan would further add a few weeks later: "We are not *cowboys* with guns in our hands. We move with *wisdom*. We'll surely eliminate the terrorists" (TDN, 21/11/07). It is interesting to oppose this speech to the one by Bahçeli analysed above. Whereas in that speech, the MHP leader would, if necessary, be a lone avenger, here Erdoğan clearly rejects that kind of approach, preferring to use 'wisdom' even if guaranteeing the elimination of the PKK.

The amnesty<sup>32</sup> of PKK members was under discussion for a long time during the period here analysed, particularly after Erdoğan's remark about the PKK "laying down its arms" (TZ, 21/11/07). For Baykal, such claim "is the discourse of the PKK. This talk is not directed at tackling terrorism, but rather is part of a strategy directed at letting terror acquire a result through negotiation" (TZ, 21/11/07). Some weeks later,

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<sup>32</sup> In the past, Turkey passed seven amnesty laws, in 1985, 1988, 1990, and 2000. Accordingly, 1900 people benefited from this law; with only two people being reported as having re-joined the PKK (TZ, 22/11/07).

after Erdoğan clearly stated that options were being analysed regarding the amnesty of PKK members, the MHP MP for Ankara would reinforce the idea that the ruling party was opening the way for ‘negotiations’ with the PKK:

The prime minister has announced that a new arrangement will be made for a comprehensive amnesty for terrorists – and this shows that a new process for bargaining with terrorists will be started. The remarks made by the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) officials evidence that the new constitution will be used to satisfy some political demands as those of the terrorists (TZ, 11/12/07).

It is worth highlighting the way in which the idea of ‘negotiation’ is here understood. For the Turkish opposition parties (with the exception of the DTP), the mere possibility of negotiations, and hence of politically recognising the PKK, is seen as an existential threat that needs to be avoided by denouncing the government’s ‘strategy’.

### **3. The analysis**

From the above-mentioned case we could draw four main conclusions regarding Turkey’s discourse on the PKK.

*The visible link between the broader political structure and the label in use.* By using the security definition as a ‘representative’ of that political structure, it could be seen that some of its core elements were reproduced in the discourse on the PKK, by linking the movement with the attempt to contest these ‘basic concepts’. Another noticeable feature was the aggressive tone in which that discourse was reproduced, with some of the same features that were applied to the PKK (weakness, dividing character) being part of the broader political rhetoric within Turkish party politics.

*The externalisation of the problem.* Even if the Kurdish population is generally not linked to the terrorist label, other outside actors are. For a good part of Turkey’s public and political opinion, the same label can be extended to the Northern Iraq

leaders' (particularly Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani) as both the PKK and they are seen as part of the same problem. Adding to this is the notion that the PKK is an increasingly external problem, with its members coming from all over the Middle East, enhancing its Middle Eastern character that should be put in clear contrast with the Western, Kemalist Turkish identity.

*The depoliticisation of the PKK.* The contrast between a past in which the PKK might have had some kind of political legitimacy and the present, in which that legitimacy has been lost, was one of the arguments used to contribute to the de-politicisation of the movement. Nonetheless, the central arguments regarding this topic have been both the potential closure of the DTP and the possible amnesty law for the PKK combatants. Regarding the first topic, only the AK Party, among the political parties, assumed a position against the closure, even though highlighting that the recognition of the PKK as a terrorist group was a necessary requirement for the 'viability' of the DTP. Even when not supporting the closure, all the other political actors, commentators and the military seemed to have reached a consensus that the DTP was the political wing of the PKK. Nonetheless, instead of this being the recognition of the PKK's political dimension, it's rather a questioning of the DTP's political legitimacy.

As for the amnesty debate, there is not even a consideration of the merits of such policy among the main political parties (the DTP being the exception). In spite of all the harm caused to the Turkish population over the years due to the clash between Turkish authorities and the PKK, the political actors linked with the CHP, MHP and AKP used such policy as another political weapon to use against each other. A distorted political tool in that case, as the debate and accusations moved from the merits of an amnesty policy to its meaning. For the opposition leaders, the amnesty

issue is about surrendering to the PKK's wishes and opening the door for negotiations with the movement, i.e., recognising their political legitimacy. This links with a final aspect worth highlighting: *the political handling of the fight against the PKK*.

This conflict context has not promoted any kind of political consensus on how to approach the issue. Indeed, the only thing all the political actors (with the exception of the DTP) seem to agree on is that the PKK is a 'terrorist' movement. There is no agreement regarding both the extension and the way to tackle the issue. In a sense, the conflict seems to have given new, more dramatic, rhetorical tools to political actors. Contemporary politics in Turkey is not just about being right or wrong; it is about being held responsible for the killing of its citizens; it is about being part of the 'terrorist' movement, and therefore, the absolute Evil; and it is about being either so weak that the nation's existence will be in jeopardy or so strong that any enemy of Turkey will be 'destroyed' or 'pursued until the end'. Within this context it seems difficult to undertake measures to face the PKK that are anything but completely antagonistic, contributing little or nothing for the solution of the problem.

## **Conclusion**

By focusing on Turkey's discourse regarding the PKK in the build up to the Winter 2007-2008 military operations in Northern Iraq, this chapter illustrated the ways in which labelling is incorporated in a security discourse, and how the discourse is constructed round specific words that are derived from the constellation of key concepts which, in turn, lead to specific policies regarding the securitised issue/actor. In addition, it showed how these labels end up permeating the 'normal' political debate, thus leading to the normalisation of the exceptional.

It could be observed in this case that the wording used by Turkish authorities to label the Kurdish movement was extended to include other actors (such as the Northern Iraqi leaders or the DTP members) and was used as a rhetorical political tool against the ruling party. The 'terrorist' label was normalised within the political discourse, where claims for exceptional measures were no longer exceptional but part of the normal political game. In a sense, the exceptional became the norm and the failure to recognise so was the exception. In this case, it can thus be concluded that even if the PKK was to be completely dismantled by the Turkish military actions, its political effects within the Turkish political system would still be felt for a long period of time.

## **Part IV – The regional and international dimension of PSCs**

## **Chapter VII. Regional Security Complexes and the international securitisation in Protracted Social Conflicts**

### **Introduction**

As previously highlighted, one of the biggest shortcomings in Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflicts model is its incapacity to fully apprehend and explain the regional and international dimensions of these conflicts. The mere focus on dependency relations with the external world (cf. chapter I) is a limited incorporation of the external into the internal dynamics of the conflict, as will be analysed throughout this chapter.

Here it will be argued that Protracted Social Conflicts are related to their regional context in three different ways. First, they are related in the way that the regional context influences the conflict. This touches Azar's point on dependency and cliency relations regarding the exterior, but it goes beyond it, including other forms of involvement and intervention. Second, they are related in the way the conflict affects the region, due to its consequences – refugees, flux of arms, violence – but also due to the discursive constructions that can easily be extrapolated beyond the geographical space of the state. These two aspects are, however, inter-linked in the sense that one cannot be analysed independently of the other. A new concept will be advanced in this context – international securitisation, here defined *as the process by which an internally securitised issue is put in front of an international audience in order to legitimise the internal securitisation, and depending on the context, actively help to counter the threat.*

Finally, the PSCs are related to the regional and international context in how these conflicts construct a specific vision of international relations – defining a world where

states do not necessarily possess the monopoly of legitimate violence, where the boundaries between internal and external security dynamics are blurred, where borders are not set by states but by 'imagined' communal groups.

In this chapter, these three aspects are inserted into what the Copenhagen School calls the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), in which the world's security dynamics are primarily understood at the regional level through a set of inter-related security constructions. As put by Ole Wæver, "[n]o nation's security is self-contained: it is about other states and thus inherently relational. The region refers to the constellation where states link together sufficiently closely that their securities cannot be considered separate from each other" (1997: 51). This theory will help to frame the PSCs relationship with their international environment.

Thus, in the first section the main features of the RSCT will be presented; followed, in the second section, by the analysis of how PSCs influence and are influenced by the regional context, with a particular emphasis on the idea of international securitisation. This will pave the way for the fourth section where the understanding of international relations that results from the analysis of PSCs will be explored. The conclusion will then summarise the major points highlighted throughout the chapter.

### **1. Regional Security Complexes and the study of conflicts**

As seen in chapter I, International Relations, on the one hand, and Security Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies on the other, have, since the ascendancy of the realist paradigm in the 1950s, gone their separate ways. Arguably due to this schism, International Relations as a discipline never attempted to seriously incorporate conflict dynamics into their own explanation of the world. Conflicts were self-evident phenomena that resulted from the anarchical condition of the international system.

With the development of competing theoretical paradigms, such as the English School's middle ground, neo-liberalism, and constructivism as a social theory applied to International Relations, the potential for analysing conflicts from an International Relations perspective returned: conflicts were no longer mere consequences of the anarchical system. The RSCT is a result of that openness, just like other approaches, such as Mary Kaldor's *New Wars* – where conflicts are explained through a cosmopolitan approach. The choice for the Regional Security Complexes in this chapter results from two main factors. First, as it is obviously<sup>33</sup> more compatible with the PSCs 'securitised' approach that has so far been put forward in this thesis, thus giving greater coherence to the whole argument. Second, because the level of analysis privileged in this theory – regional – seems to be the appropriate level to meet the usual top-down approach of International Relations with the bottom-up approach of Peace and Conflict Studies.

As Oliver Ramsbotham (2005) highlights, one of the great added values of Azar's model is the way in which it dismisses the debate between internal and international conflicts, by focusing rather on the processes related to their origin, evolution and consequences. In that sense, Protracted Social Conflicts are not marked by that dichotomy, which means a larger space beyond the national must be made available to understand those dynamics associated with the phenomenon.

Regional Security Complexes (RSCs), underline the importance of the regional level in security analysis, providing "a conceptual frame that captures the emergent new structures of international security" (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 40). RSCs are defined by "durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of sub-global,

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<sup>33</sup> Same authors, same 'school' and same theoretical 'framework'.

geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence” (*idem*: 45). In this context, *region*,

refers to the level where states or other units link together sufficiently closely that their level is where the extremes of national and global security interplay, and where most of the action occurs (*idem*: 43).

The RSC Theory is (as well as the Security Sectors model) Barry Buzan’s original idea, further developed in the COPRI context. When first elaborated, it had a strong realist orientation. In the first edition of *People, States and Fear* (1983), Barry Buzan defined a RSC as “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently close that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another” (1983: 106). In 1998, in the collective work *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, the RSC was rephrased as “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another” (1998: 201). This linkage between regions and securitisation theory would be further developed in the 2003 book *Regions and Powers*. In this work, regions are no longer seen as deterministic variables, but functional actors in securitisation processes: “[r]egions have analytical, and even ontological, standing, but they do not have actor quality” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 27).

Taking as a background the last definition of RSCs, regions are not pre-determined givens, but instead the consequences of security dynamics (*idem*: 44). Geographical proximity does not determine behaviour, but demands some kind of interaction. In this sense, “[s]imple physical adjacency tends to generate more security interaction among neighbours than among states located in different areas” (*idem*: 45).

Four elements embody the essential structure of an RSC: first of all, the existence of a boundary, a security dynamics' boundary, which differentiates one RSC from another; secondly, the composition of that region by two or more autonomous units, i.e., an anarchical structure; thirdly, polarity, which covers the distribution of power among the units; and finally, the socially constructed dimension, the factor that defines the patterns of amity or enmity between a region's units (*idem*: 53).

Issues and historical relations are also extremely relevant in the definition of an RSC. As stated by Buzan and Wæver, they "take part in the formation of an overall constellation of fears, threats, and friendships that define an RSC" (*idem*: 50). In that sense, understanding and analysing those dynamics is essential for the understanding of a RSC.

The authors distinguish between standard and centred RSCs. The first ones are "broadly Westphalian in form with two or more powers and a predominantly military-political security agenda" (2003: 55); whereas centred RSCs can have three (potentially four) different forms. The first two concern cases in which the RSC is unipolar, where it is either a great power or a superpower, rather than just a regional power. The third form involves a region integrated by institutions, rather than by a single power, the EU being the best example (2003: 60). The fourth form is when the RSC is centred round a regional power.

Regarding the distribution of power, Buzan and Wæver distinguish between three different types of relevant actors: superpowers, great powers and regional powers.

*Superpowers.* These are actors with top military, political and economic capabilities. Their actions and policies have a global reach, influencing or determining securitisation and desecuritisation processes in all, or almost all regions of the

international system (2003: 34-35). According to these authors, the US is currently the only superpower.

*Great Powers.* They do not have the same global reach superpowers have and their capabilities are more limited. Nonetheless, a great power is “treated in the calculations of other major powers as if it has the clear economic, military, and political potential to bid for superpower status in the short or medium term.” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 35). Since the end of the Cold War, Britain/France/Germany-EU, Japan, China and Russia are, according to these authors, the current great powers of the international system (*idem*: 36).

*Regional Powers.* These are actors with a great reach at the regional level, but with very limited capabilities and capacity of action at the global level. In regional terms, they define the polarity of the RSCs (2003: 37).

For Buzan and Wæver, global powers and regional dynamics are interlinked by the mechanism of ‘penetration’ (2003: 46). As defined by these authors, penetration occurs “when outside powers make security alignments with states within a RSC” (*idem*). Still, these outside powers cannot change the region. If the interregional dynamics do override the regional ones, then the most probable outcome is the formation of a new, potentially larger RSCs (2003: 61). If the great (or super) power interests and actions transcend penetration and control the regional dynamics, then the RSC ceases to exist and we are in the presence of an ‘overlay’ condition. According to Buzan and Wæver, “the strongest examples of overlay are European colonisation of Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and the situation of Europe itself during the Cold War” (*idem*). Overlay is one of the two conditions in which RSCs do not or cannot form. The other is unstructured security, that may occur for either or both of two reasons: when a region does not have a single unit capable of affirming itself as a

regional power; or where geographical insulation makes interaction difficult. The presence of both the former and the latter certainly make the generation of security interaction even more difficult, as “[l]ow capability of course amplifies the effect of geographical insulators, and high capability reduces it” (2003: 63).

Outside the RSC, we have what Buzan and Wæver defined as ‘insulators’, a “location occupied by one or more units where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back” (2003: 41). According to these authors, an insulator should not be confused with a buffer state, “whose function is defined by standing at the centre of a strong pattern of securitisation, not at its edge” (*idem*). Turkey, Burma, Nepal and Afghanistan are seen as examples of insulator states.

Turkey, for instance, is surrounded by three regional security complexes: the Middle Eastern RSC (including the sub-complexes of the Levant, Gulf and the Maghreb); the European RSC (with the sub-complex of the Balkans); and the ex-Soviet RSC (with the sub-complexes of the Baltic, the Western – Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova –, the Caucasus and Central Asia (cf. Kazan, 2003: 90-91).

According to Isil Kazan, Turkey’s position as an insulator means that “Turkey risks being isolated from the core politics of its three RSCs, the European, the Ex-Soviet and the Middle East” (2003: 92). As acknowledged by Buzan and Wæver, Turkey is a special kind of insulator. Whereas insulators usually play a passive role, Turkey is a very active actor in the RSCs that surround it. Still, as the authors recognise, “Turkey is not able to bring the different RSCs together, to make them form one coherent strategic arena, of which it is part” (2003: 485).

In short, RSCs are socially constructed regions, “contingent on the *security practice* of the actors. Dependent on what and whom they securitise, the region might reproduce or change” (*idem*: 2003: 48).

## 2. Influencing Protracted Social Conflicts

For Edward Azar (1990), the international relations of states where PSCs unfold would be either of cliency or of dependency, particularly at later stages of the conflict, when the economic infrastructures of the country start to deteriorate. This limited and historically situated vision does not allow, as argued before, for a full analysis of the international dimension of PSCs.

Making use of the RSCT, I would argue that there is an inevitable regional security dimension in every internal conflict, and PSCs are not exceptions. This is inevitable, as it is very difficult to conceive a context of internal armed violence in which the region is not affected. This relation is visible in both directions: the region influencing the conflict and the conflict influencing the region.

The regional involvement in a PSC can be done in many different ways, affecting different stages of the conflict. Still, there are four aspects that I would argue deserve to be looked at when assessing the potential regional interference in the conflict.

*Patterns of regional relationship.* As defined by Buzan and Wæver, in a RSC it is possible to find both relations of amity and enmity. The way a state undertaking a PSC relates to the other units in the region will, in a conflict context, determine whether it will receive their support or not. In this context, the intensity of that same relationship is also important. A strong positive relationship might result in the sound support for that state by some or most of its neighbours. On the other hand, denigrated relationships might lead other states to support the rebelling non-state actor, even though that might not be well seen by their peers:

In the 1980s, there was increasing interest in the role played by particular states in supporting and sponsoring the violence of small groups. It was encapsulated in a notion promoted by the Reagan Administration, the terrorist state. It should be noted that this did not mean states terrorizing their own citizens but states which harboured

small groups which carried out hijackings, attacks on diplomats, bombings and the like in other countries. Thus, Iraq was labelled a terrorist state by the State Department not because of its conduct towards its own Kurdish population, but, ironically, for supporting the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) in Turkey (Gueken, 2006: 194).

Such behaviour will also depend on the next relevant aspect, the societal composition of the RSC.

*Societal Composition of the RSC.* This aspect relates to the distribution of identity patterns in the region. Religious, cultural and ethnic patterns will be important for the potential involvement of regional dynamics in the conflict. Imagined communities that cut across more than one border will most likely support their peers in a PSC. On the other hand, states under similar identity pressures might decide to support each other, even if their relations are not particularly friendly.

*Interest of the super/great power.* Another important aspect of regional security dynamics is the role of super or great powers, as already mentioned. Although they do not determine the security patterns in the region, they do have an influence in how they unfold. The same applies to PSCs. When having an interest, their intervention can either be merely formal or quite substantial. In that latter case, it can assume three different forms: support for the state undertaking the conflict; support for the non-state actor (which had to be made either on humanitarian grounds or as covered support); or attempt to intervene as a broker, with the possibility of sponsoring a peace operation.

In the case of insulators, like Turkey or Afghanistan, the dynamics are similar as if they belonged to a RSC. The main difference is that as insulators, in the case of a PSC, they might see the security dynamics of more than one PSC interfering in the conflict. In that sense, they have the potential of getting the worst of two (or more) worlds.

*Diaspora/networks.* Though not necessarily conscribed to the regional level, it is a relevant external factor to PSCs, and the regional contexts can and do facilitate those

fluxes. This aspect is in line with Mary Kaldor's *New Wars* (cf. 1999). Kaldor states that these global networks are arguably the main characteristic of contemporary wars, waged in the globalisation era. As Stathis Kalyvas (2001) argues, though, these aspects are not necessarily new. Still, he concedes that nowadays they can be developed in a faster and easier way. Diasporas have a tendency to construct ideal types of their homeland and of their people in romantic ways. That reflects in groups that appeal to those kinship relations, with Diasporas frequently being large financial contributors to PSCs. Together with migrants' remittances, other financial flows resulting from the sale/acquisition of weaponry, illegal trade, and money laundering are sent to these groups. The underworld economy, another phenomenon that saw a huge boost with greater flexibility in global transactions, has PSC contexts as relevant supplying points – i.e. diamond trade in Angola, drugs in Colombia. In that sense, they support and are supported by these conflicts.

#### *Protracted Social Conflicts influencing the region*

In the same sense as PSCs are influenced by the region, they also affect regional security dynamics. First, they accelerate regional security dynamics (either of amity or enmity), as the other units are obliged to react to the conflict. Besides, there are externalities to PSCs that spill over to the whole region, such as illegal trade, violence, refugees and the enhancement of other societal claims.

Regarding the PSCs' influence in a region, it matters whether the state where the conflict is being undertaken is an insulator or a member of a region, as these consequences for the region will tend to be more pronounced in the latter than in the former.

In any case, the major potential impact of a PSC to a region is in the export of the normalisation of the exceptional. This alteration of the normal political relationship can be exported (if not internally to each unit) at least to the regional security dynamics. The conflict becomes a focal point for inter-state regional dynamics and possibly for the domestic politics of those states. Security for any unit must, from then on, contemplate that focal point. A good example of this would be the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has become a structuring issue for all the neighbouring countries' foreign and security policies, such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon or Jordan.

*The political quasi-determinism of the regional*

The importance of the regional level not only comes from being the 'best' prism to view a conflict, but also from its quasi-political determinism. Global causes might lead political actors to undertake decisions towards the securitisation of the 'other', but that might or might not happen. The same does not apply to the regional level, as it is necessarily involved in the conflict, either by influencing it or by being influenced. Regional units do not have another option but to react to a PSC. A context in which a country does not react to a neighbour's conflict is simply not acceptable according to the RSCT. Such dismissal would mean that those two countries, even if geographically close, were most likely not part of the same complex.

That can also happen at the level of the insulator, with the only difference being that the regional level will not be as influenced by the insulator as it would be by another RSC member. Turkey's undefined reaction to the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 1980s or Afghanistan's lack of involvement in the Pakistan-India conflicts are good examples of this lack of involvement on the part of the insulator.

In either case, it is always essential to take into consideration the regional approach to the conflict, as there is always one. The involvement of great and superpowers in the conflict will, in that sense, be dependent on the importance attached to either the state where the conflict is being held or to the region where it takes place.

### *International securitisations*

External influences on PSCs and vice-versa are intimately related to what I call international securitisations. As presented in the introduction, these are processes in which the securitising actor puts internally securitised issues before an international audience in order for it to be equally recognised as a security threat by that audience. These processes vary to a great degree in terms of the focused audience, character of the claim, type of request, and type of reply.

*Audience.* There are three main types of audience on which these securitisation claims focus. First, there is the regional audience. Here the focus is on regional solidarity, and it does not necessarily require a strong relationship between the actors involved. The sharing of the same regional context is presented as a motive strong enough for the security claim to be made beyond the securitising actor's borders. Second, we have the international allies. Any state in the international system has some sort of preferential relationship with some other country, that does not necessarily need to be within the same RSCT – the relation between Israel and the United States being a classical example. However, allies are not an exclusive prerogative of states, as non-state movements also have their international allies, either other non-state actors or even states, as seen in chapter I regarding Syria's support of the PKK. The third and final audience is what could be called the 'international community'. This is usually aimed at the United Nations and involves the use of universal moral claims to support the

securitisation of a certain issue. Colin Powell's presentation to the UN Security Council on the Iraqi threat, represented Washington's attempt to internationalise its already successful internal securitisation of Saddam Hussein's regime.

*Character of the claim.* Usually associated with the targeted audience, the character of the claim can nonetheless be made towards more than one audience. We can distinguish between three main claims. First, a securitising actor can assert the validity of the internally securitised issue/actor in front of an international audience. It is claimed, in this context, that there was a legitimate reason, beyond doubt, for the securitisation of the issue/actor in question. Even if the issue does not have regional or international consequences, it should be accepted by the regional/international audience as deserving the approval of exceptional measures. A second claim involves the construction of the securitised issue as a regional threat. This already changes the internal securitisation discourse, due to the addition of an extra layer of intensity to the threat. There is a claim that the securitised issue is also a threat to the neighbourhood. Finally, the third claim involves the generalisation of the threat as international (limited geographically but still going beyond the regional level) or even global. The construction of a certain issue as a global threat necessarily involves claims associated with the future of humankind. Colin Powell's above-mentioned visit to the UN Security Council is a good example of an internationalised claim. This internationalisation is obviously not limited to states. As Audrey Kurth Cronin points out, there has been an international securitisation of the Chechnya conflict by the Chechen rebels, with the increasing introduction of a jihad discourse and the increased financial support from Islamic groups outside Russia (Cronin, 2007: 404).

*Type of request.* Attached to the claim is the request that is made by the securitising actor(s). In the case of international securitisations, the issue of the exceptional

acquires different dynamics. There are three different types of requests that can be made in this context. The first type is that of legitimacy. In this case, the securitising actor does not request any other measure apart from the recognition of the internally securitised threat by the international audience it is targeting. Apart from enhancing its internal legitimacy, such move allows for the recognition of the threat beyond national borders. The second type is the co-operation request. Arguably the most common at the regional level in PSCs, this request focuses on the establishment of an institutionalised relationship between the original 'securitising' actor and the external audience it is targeting. This kind of request may involve the signing of co-operation agreements, or the facilitation of arms sales, or any other materials required. Finally, the most extreme request involves asking for external intervention. This usually happens in contexts of vertical relationships in which weaker states or non-state movements ask for help from stronger states or international organisations.

*Reply.* In the face of the request, external actors' replies involve two different moves: first, the construction of a discourse about the request; and second, the insertion of the reply within that context. The reply involves, first of all, either the acceptance or the rejection of the international securitising move. Rejecting the move can either be made actively or passively. If, when faced with the request, the audience simply does not reply, then we can say the move has not been accepted. Worse for the securitising actor, though, is when that move is faced with an answer, but a negative one. In that case, the international securitisation move fails, albeit the securitisation had been successful internally. If the reply is positive, however, the international audience must construct its own security discourse on the threat. The question then is whether or not it is necessary for the international audience to construct a securitising discourse itself in order to respond to the international securitisation move. There are three possible

outcomes here. The audience might merely accept the securitisation as such and not necessarily as its own. In this case no additional internal securitisation is required, as the process is seen as an external one – there is the recognition of the existential claims, but not of their appropriation. In this context, the measures that are put into practice in order to reply to the securitisation request can be done through a normal political procedure.

A second scenario, however, is when the international securitisation is accepted in a way that involves the construction of a threat discourse on the part of the securitisation recipient – i.e. the audience. In this case, the existential claim is not only recognised but linked to an internally constructed existential claim. There is a sort of domino effect in which one securitisation leads to another.

A third scenario is when that international securitisation does not lead to a new internal securitisation but is rather inserted in an already existing one. In that context it is a matter of adapting the discourse, rather than building a radically new one. For example, the LTTE rebels in Sri Lanka were inserted by the United States within the discourse on the Global War on Terror. As put by Thomas Marks, “[t]he 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the resulting ‘global war on terrorism’ caused Western countries finally to move to cut off LTTE fund-raising activities on their soil” (2007: 512).

### **3. The international relations of Protracted Social Conflicts**

After analysing how PSCs inter-play with the international context, it should now be explored what these conflicts tell us about the way we understand the world. I argue that it challenges two main points that are mainstream notions in International

Relations: the distinction between North and South; and the distinction between internal and external security.

### *North and South?*

As mentioned in chapter V, the utterance of the word ‘conflict’ instead of ‘war’ was linked to more than the mere size of the confrontation at stake. The ‘conflict’ concept has been attached to an idea of uncontrollable struggle that goes beyond the laws of war; a non-civilized form of armed violence. It is also an all-encompassing concept that can absorb all sorts of violent practices, from the conflict in the Balkans to the genocide in Rwanda. Conflicts such as those in Northern Ireland, the Basque Country and even Turkey tend to receive alternative names such as an ‘instability’ or ‘terrorism’ problem.

In a sense, this distinction has been used to further reinforce the notion of a civilized, rich world – the Global North – against the poor, un-civilised Global South. As put by Patricia Owens, “civilized and savage wars, conventional European and ‘small’ imperial wars, were kept in separate boxes in nineteenth and twentieth-century military thought” (2007: 53).

Protracted Social Conflicts were, in the original concept, mainly designed to analyse armed conflicts taking place in post-colonial contexts in the Third World. However, as shown in the previous chapters, the model can be useful in the understanding of conflicts independently of their location. In that sense, it blurs the distinctions between the phenomena in Northern Ireland and that in Sri Lanka or Angola. The world in which Protracted Social Conflicts take place is thus a world where armed conflicts are a geographically unlimited possibility. The post-colonial context or the peripheral conditions are certainly important reasons for the understanding of particular aspects

of a given conflict; however, they should not be seen as determining factor in the unfolding of the conflict. Conflicts are ultimately political phenomena, derived from political decisions, and politics is an inherently human activity, thus (influenced but) not determined by a specific context. Whenever violence is contextualized in a discourse of enmity that does not attempt to fully destroy the 'other' it can be understood as political (chapter III). The political is the ontological condition for PSCs to take place. Outside this, we have phenomena that do not fit into this pattern. In that sense, the Angolan civil war is closer to the conflict in Northern Ireland, than to the genocide in Rwanda.

Hence, the world is, from this interpretation of PSCs, understood as a myriad of inter-related political actors, whose condition is not defined by their power (economic, military...) or by their official borders, but by their mere political existence. It is a world of polities, with different sizes, shapes and power, but still a world of competing polities, which may or may not be states.

#### *Internal and external security*

This leads to a second topic – the different understandings of internal and external security. In this context, the classical division between the internal and the external is blurred. This goes hand in hand with Didier Bigo's argument about the fundamental transformations in the Western world. According to him, "[t]he process of 'securitisation' is not only enlarging towards identity", but also merging the understandings of internal and external security (2000: 171). However, from the PSCs prism, such merging takes place not only in the Western world but wherever these conflicts take place. The internal use of military forces to counter the securitised internal 'other' is a good example of an *a priori* external practice (the military are

supposed to safeguard the sovereign independence of the state against external threats) applied to an internal context. In that sense, the world seen from the perspective of PSCs is not one divided along the lines of internal and external security perceptions, but merely of security perceptions, in which discourse and follow-on practices, rather than the physicality of borders, set the distinction between what stands inside and what stands outside.

The combination of the blurring distinctions between North and South, and internal and external security leads to an understanding of international relations quite distant from both a Realist (Waltzian) and a Structuralist (of the Marxist type) perspective of the world. Conflict, from a PSC point of view, is not a result of the anarchical system or of the inequalities between rich and poor countries. It is a political outcome that does not necessarily follow pre-established boundaries or conceptions. It goes to the heart of human social existence by focusing on its limits: the limits of politics, of security, and of collective life.

## **Conclusion**

As put by He-Won Jeong, the international context is essential for the understanding of conflicts and the difficulties to end them:

Often the dynamics of one conflict originate from the course of events in another with converging issues and parties. The difficulties experienced in resolving conflicts between Israel and Palestine have been partly created as a consequence of their interlinkage to other conflicts in the Middle East. By defining a setting in which conflict relationships evolve, external events determine the scope and character of the struggle (2008: 38).

It was revealed in this chapter how the regional and international dynamics that surround Protracted Social Conflicts go much beyond the dependency patterns presented in Edward Azar's model. The Copenhagen School's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) was presented as providing a framework for the analysis of these conflicts at regional and international levels. Patterns of regional relationship, the social composition of the region, interests of great/super powers, and networks/diasporas supporting the conflict were seen as key factors in understanding the relationship between PSCs and their external context. Apart from these 'facilitating conditions', the regional/international is also related to Protracted Social Conflicts by what I called processes of 'international securitisation'. These processes are essential for an understanding of how the internal-external dynamics inter-play and are often blurred in this type of conflicts. It was also seen how the state versus non-state condition leads to distinctive patterns of internal-external relationships; these relationships should be taken into account when applied to the analysis of specific conflicts, as well as how the world can be understood when looked upon from a PSC perspective – a world where the North/South divide becomes redundant, and external and internal security become one.

## **Chapter VIII. The international securitisation of the PKK**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will illustrate how international securitisation discourses are constructed and articulated by focusing on Turkey's attempt to convince the US about the need to attack the PKK bases in Northern Iraq between April 2006 and Spring 2007. The Copenhagen School securitisation and Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) models will be used to analyse US and Turkish discourses. This theoretical framework will provide an examination of how these two securitising processes have developed, how they inter-play, and how they are influenced by the 'regional' factor. Although the RSCT includes several different dimensions, this chapter will only focus on the relationship between superpower, region and insulator, as they seem to be the main features of the US-Turkey relationship regarding Northern Iraq.

Therefore, the chapter will begin with the analysis of US concerns regarding its 'Global War on Terror'. Following a brief introduction to the Northern Iraq context, the discourses of both sides will be explored. First, Turkey's security perceptions will be considered, followed by those of the US. After taking into account both sets of discourses, the chapter will conclude with some remarks on the Copenhagen School's RSCT's contribution to the analysis of this case study as well as potential theoretical contributions taken from US-Turkey relations in Northern Iraq.

### **1. US-Turkish relations in Northern Iraq (2006-2007)**

Whether an "indispensable NATO ally" (Holbrooke, 2007) or a "strategic ally and a global partner" (Condoleezza Rice *apud* Enginsoy, 2007b), Turkey has been, at least

since the Eisenhower doctrine in 1947, one of United States' most relevant international partners.

Ankara's accession to NATO signified the structuring of Turkey's foreign policy in line with the West. For the US, Turkey was the tip of NATO's spear both regarding the Soviet Caucasus and the Middle East. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Turkey's strategic importance was naturally transformed. Turkey's support and active participation in the First Gulf War showed the US that even in the New World Order, as defined by George H. Bush, Ankara wanted to be an active US ally. According to Ian Lesser,

[i]n the United States, the experience of 1990-91 reinforced the image of Turkey as a strategic ally, at the forefront of new security challenges emanating from the Middle East. Turkish policymakers sought to reinforce this impression with American policy audiences, although the notion of Turkey as a key Middle Eastern ally was always an uncomfortable fit with Ankara's European aspirations (2006: 84).

With 9/11, American allegiances were redefined according to the 'Global War on Terror'. Turkey was once again side by side with the US, giving Washington its full support within the NATO framework and contributing significantly to the subsequent mission in Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> The war in Iraq would, however, change that harmony of interests and actions.

The Turkish Parliament's rejection of a bill that would authorise Washington to use Turkey's military bases and ports in support of the deployment of US troops to Iraq obliged the Americans to rethink their strategy. As a consequence, the US relied on the Kurdish *peshmerga* to help in the Iraqi invasion from the North. The US empowerment of the Kurds in the region was not welcomed in Ankara.

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<sup>34</sup> Turkey has been one of the major contributors to Operation Enduring Freedom. It has participated in the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) since its inception, and undertook a leadership role in ISAF II in 2002 and ISAF VII in 2005 (Ibaş, 2007).

In reality, if the US has been Turkey's most important ally, the Kurdish question has arguably been the most relevant issue in Ankara's relations with the other neighbours in the Middle East region. Since the creation of the Turkish Republic, its relations with Iraq, Syria and Iran have been deeply influenced by the fact that all these countries share the existence of a Kurdish minority within their own borders. The Kurdish issue has become intrinsically linked to a threat to Turkish existence; it has become a security problem and a regional issue.

With the end of the cease-fire by the PKK in June 2004, Northern Iraq acquired an even more visible importance, and Turkey began to demand the US to act in order to remove the group's bases of support from the region. The relations between both countries deteriorated to the point that in a 2006 poll the Turkish population considered the US a less friendly country than Iran (*Transatlantic Trends*, 2006). Thus, more than a decade after the Gulf War (1990-91), the Kurdish issue returned to the top of the Turkish-US agenda.

#### *The US "War on Terror" and the regional and global levels*

September 2001. President George Bush declares war on terrorism. The Global War on Terror would from then on define the US global policy, overtaking and subjugating all other aspects of its foreign policy, especially regarding the Middle East. As argued by Ian Lesser,

the overwhelming focus on counter-terrorism has led to the subordination of many traditional foreign-policy priorities and has spurred greater activism in areas seen as directly related to national security in the narrow sense. In the Middle East and Eurasia, American strategy is now essentially one of extended homeland defence (2006: 90).

The war in Iraq was another phase in the war that had started after 9/11. Its goal was to destroy any Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) capability of Saddam's regime and to eliminate Iraq's 'terrorist links' with Al-Qaida. In his 'victory' speech after the end of the major military operations in Iraq, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003, US President George W. Bush would say: "The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 – and still goes on" (Bush, 01/05/03).

As previously mentioned, the Turkish Parliamentary rejection regarding the authorisation of US troops' deployment in Iraq from Turkey was a shock to the US, who had relied on its 'Turkish ally' for several decades. Turkey, which had been the tip of NATO's spear during the Cold War era, was now the only US ally in two simultaneous but different contexts: Europe and the Middle East.

On March 1, 2003, with Turkish public opinion overwhelmingly opposing the war and with the fear of the unintended consequences of a major invasion in Iraq quite present in the political sphere, the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) government failed by a narrow margin<sup>35</sup> to gather the parliamentary majority needed to allow US troops deployment in Turkey (Mango, 2006: 77). The proposal was to allow the US to deploy around 60,000 troops, 225 warplanes and 65 helicopters in Turkish territory. In exchange, Turkey would receive a multi-billion dollar aid package and would be allowed to send a substantial number of troops to Northern Iraq as a precaution against the establishment of an independent Kurdish state and to prevent a potential refugee flow.

Although Turkey would eventually open its airspace to coalition warplanes, and offer to participate in a post-Saddam Hussein peacekeeping mission (which was eventually

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<sup>35</sup> There were actually 264 votes in favour of the resolution, 250 against and 19 abstentions, but it required the approval of an absolute majority in order to be authorized.

rejected by Baghdad), the spectre of the Turkish Parliamentary refusal would persist in US-Turkish relations.

Turkey was essentially placing US regional and global priorities one against the other: on the one hand, the maintenance of Turkey as an important bi-regional ally; on the other, the success in the next phase of the Global War on Terror – the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and the reconstruction of the country along more democratic lines. This clash of interests was going to be played in Northern Iraq.

#### *The Northern Iraq context*

According to William Hale (2007: 26-27), it was only with the Gulf War that the Turkish government started to have contacts with the Iraqi Kurds. Relations with neighbouring Iraq were defined according to the Baghdad Pact and not even the rebellions led by Mustafa Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in 1961-3, 1964-6, 1968-9, and 1974-5 had led to any kind of reaction by Turkey, which was "happy to stand aside, since events in Iraq at the time did not appear to have had any significant effect on the Turkish Kurds" (*idem*: 24).

After the Gulf War, in order to avoid a refugee crisis in its own territory, Turkey would actually be one of the main supporters of the autonomy of the Northern Iraqi region. The Kurds had tried to rise up against Saddam's regime, and their failure led more than a million people to seek refuge close to the Turkish and Iranian borders. In order to avoid a repetition of the 1988 crisis, when around 60,000 Iraqi Kurds sought safety in Turkey, during the bloody Anfal operations (in which more than 100,000 Kurds died at the hands of Saddam's regime), Turkey now supported the creation of a safe-haven and a no-fly zone in Northern Iraq.

UN Security Council Resolution 688 was adopted and Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) launched. OPC was a tripartite arrangement between Washington, Ankara and

London that enabled US and British planes to fly regularly over Northern Iraq to prevent Saddam Hussein's forces from entering the region.

In the absence of the 'state', the Kurds became progressively more responsible for the region's administration and Turkish military presence was increasingly felt, with frequent incursions into the region in order to find PKK operatives. In 1997, OPC was replaced with Operation Northern Watch. After the initiation of that operation, Turkey established a significant permanent military presence in the region, with up to 5,000 troops, according to some estimates (Lundgren, 2007: 81).

With the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, Turkish control over the region was significantly weakened. The US needed the support of the Kurdish authorities to overthrow Saddam and Turkish security preoccupations in Iraq were not on the top of the US agenda. As explained by Asa Lundgren,

Turkey was not able to prevent the entry of Kurdish *peshmerga* forces into Kirkuk. Turkey has also had to accept that its military presence in Northern Iraq has been substantially reduced, that the US Army has not moved against the PKK, that the Kurds have gained increased importance as political actors and that the Kurdish *peshmerga* has been allowed to retain weapons captured from the Iraqi Army (2007: 118).

Turkish security problems became more visible when the PKK declared the end of the cease-fire after Abdullah Öcalan, their leader, was arrested in Kenya and handed over to Turkish authorities. The Turkish authorities' fear that a US invasion over Iraq would provide the necessary conditions for the return of the PKK seemed to be confirmed. According to Cagaptay and Koknar, there are direct links between both events:

In summer 2003, the PKK made a strategic decision to infiltrate back into Turkey. Since then, an estimated 1,500 PKK terrorists have joined their 500 comrades already in Turkey, with some 300 of these operatives crossing the border between April and June 2004. These

terrorists are well armed with weapons from the old Iraqi army (e.g., surface-to-air missiles), obtained in Northern Iraq in the immediate aftermath of the war in April 2003. On the Iraqi side of the border, the PKK maintains around 5,300 terrorists at nine bases near Haftanin, Hakurk, and the Iranian and Iraqi sides of Mount Qandil (2004).

In support of that same link, Turkish police authorities reported in August 2004 that, in 2003, the number of smuggled weapons seized while they were being crossed from the Iraqi border to Turkey corresponded to the total amount for the two previous years combined (Mango, 2006: 78).

As stated by Isil Kazan, “the Kurdish issue is fully securitised. This has meant that it has taken priority over all other issues” (2003: 231). It is, in that sense, the core aspect of Turkish policy towards Iraq, and broadly towards the Middle East region. The fight against the PKK spreads to other issues regarding Northern Iraq, constituting a constellation of security threats for Ankara in the region. Besides the direct military approach to the PKK, Turkey is also worried about the status of the oil rich city of Kirkuk, as well as the status of the Turcoman minority in the region. Ankara was afraid that the Kurds would take total control of Kirkuk, which used to be an ethnically diverse city. That would mean a potential financial boost that could guarantee the viability of a possible Kurdish independent state, something Turkey sees as a threat to its integrity, as it could enhance separatist feelings in Southeast Turkey. It is in this context that Turkey has securitised the Turcoman issue as well. Based on allegedly ‘ethnic’ affinities, Ankara has affirmed itself as a defender of the Turcoman minority in Northern Iraq. They are a counter-balance to Kurdish hegemonic aspirations, and, as such, constitute another issue to deal with in the context of US-Turkey relations.

The region has had, over the years, the capacity to create odd bedfellows. At different periods in time it has put together Kurdish parties and Turkish leaders, Kurdish parties and Saddam Hussein, Iran and Turkey, and during the period under analysis, even the

AKP and the opposition parties. It is against this volatile background that attention shall now turn to how the relations between the US and Turkey have developed between April 2006 and April 2007, especially regarding their security discourses on terrorism in the region.

*April 2006-April 2007: The US and Turkey in Northern Iraq*

In the 12 months from April 2006 to April 2007, there were relevant developments linked to US-Turkey relations regarding Northern Iraq. After several already-mentioned turbulent periods – such as the 2003 Turkish Parliamentary rejection of authorization for US troops' deployment in Turkey, or the arrest of Turkish military forces by US soldiers in that same year<sup>36</sup> – and after years of ineffective Turkish pressure on the US to counter the PKK, 2006 and the beginning of 2007 appeared as a time of necessary outcomes. The PKK attacks and the consequent Turkish response in the Southeast were intensifying; at the same time, electoral dynamics were starting to loom in both the Turkish and US political horizons; and the domestic and international pressure on the Bush Administration regarding Iraq was mounting.

At the end of April, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Turkey to discuss several issues, including Northern Iraq. As a positive measure, it was announced that both countries were preparing a 'Strategic Vision' document establishing the basis for the overall relationship between Washington and Ankara on the Northern Iraq issue. That document would be presented in the following July, when the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Washington. A brief reference to the PKK was included in the text: "Turkey and the United States pledge themselves to work together on all issues of

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<sup>36</sup> On July 4, 2003 US troops arrested a number of Turkish Special Forces troops together with operatives from their ally Iraqi Turcoman Front. They were accused of preparing an assassination attempt on the governor of Kirkuk province. The Turks were given 'the al-Qaida treatment' and were hooded and transported to Baghdad. This event was seen in Turkey as a serious humiliation (Barkey, 2007: 26).

common concern, including [...] countering terrorism, including the fight against the PKK and its affiliates” (US State Department, 05/07/06). Shortly before Abdullah Gül’s visit to Washington, US Ambassador to Turkey Robert Wilson declared he was “unsure” that the US had done its utmost regarding the PKK, but that Turkey should refrain from using force against the group in Northern Iraq. As a response, Prime Minister Erdoğan declared Turkey was “losing patience” and that an operation in Northern Iraq, which had the support of opposition parties (TZ, 19/07/06), was being prepared. US President George Bush called Erdoğan shortly after, asking Turkey to refrain from intervening and promising at the same time to do “whatever he could” to defeat the PKK. Again, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, Erdoğan declared that “the limits of our tolerance have been reached” (TZ, 1/08/06), regarding PKK in Northern Iraq. This time it was the Iraqi Prime Minister that reassured Ankara that Iraq would “not allow the PKK to shelter anywhere in Iraq” (TZ, 03/08/06). This ping-pong of declarations between Turks and Iraqis would continue throughout the following months, with Ankara constantly calling for action and threatening to attack and Iraq replying with promises of action. In the meantime, Ankara was also pressuring Washington, whose answer would inevitably point to the tripartite mechanism in development between the US, Turkey and Iraq, though clearly stating: “The PKK is a terrorist organization, and we are dedicated and have dedicated ourselves to working with both governments, Iraqi and Turkish, to see that this terrorist organization is dealt with” (State Department spokesman Sean McCormack quoted in TZ, 11/08/06).

On the 28<sup>th</sup> August, General Joseph Ralston was appointed as the US Envoy to Counter the PKK, a step taken by Washington as a follow-up to Rice’s visit to Ankara. This decision was made in order for the US to show Turkish authorities that concrete steps to face the PKK threat were being taken. Two weeks later, Gen. Ralston would

visit Ankara, being 'received' by the PKK with three coordinated bombings. Four days later, an explosion in Diyarbakir, Southeast Turkey, would kill 10 people, the biggest incident in Turkey since Al-Qaida's terrorist attacks in Istanbul in November 2003. The PKK was supposedly behind the attack, although it never claimed responsibility for it. Four days later, Iraq appointed Gen. Amir Amet Hassun, a Sunni Arab, as their special envoy to counter the PKK. At the end of that month, Gen. Ralston would, in a briefing at the Foreign Press Center in Washington, declare that he would not meet with the PKK because "we [the US] do not meet with terrorist groups" (Ralston, 2007).

The issue in Turkey would acquire a new dimension, in late September, when Abdullah Öcalan called for a cease-fire, later declared by the organization and immediately rejected by both politicians and the military. Jalal Talabani, Iraq's President, declared that he was behind that decision, taking the opportunity to appeal for an amnesty in Turkey for PKK combatants. As a reply, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, would say: "A president should be more careful while speaking. The United States may be showing interest in him now, but he will ultimately return to the region. We will always be together" (Ulker, 2006). It is worth highlighting the presence of the inevitability of neighbourhood relations in the face of the volatile presence of the superpower in Abdullah Gül's words.

For Turkey, the PKK is not a state and, as such, has no authority to call for cease-fires. Total disarmament and surrender is, for Ankara, the only way out for the PKK, as stated by the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan:

A cease-fire is agreed between states. It is not something for a terrorist organization to do... The terrorist organization must lay down its arms. That is what we are waiting for to restore peace in the region (TDN, 30/09/06).

At the beginning of 2007, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan would severely criticize America's behaviour towards the PKK by saying that:

The US appointed a special envoy but there is no concrete step. We could cooperate with the US and Iraq in combating the terror network but this did not take place. They say they will stifle the terrorist organization's financial resources. They say there are troubles in other areas and they cannot focus on Northern Iraq. Are these delay tactics? We expect serious steps (TZ, 04/01/07).

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January George W. Bush presented his new Iraqi plan, following the Iraq Study Group report. Although presenting several different measures in order to restore order and stability in the country, the PKK only merited a vague reference in the report (Cagaptay, 2006), as well as in the US President's plan.

Abdullah Gül visited the US in early February, for the second time in less than a year, shortly followed by the Turkish Chief of Staff, Gen. Büyükanit. Amid constant tense declarations especially from Turkish and Northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders,<sup>37</sup> the beginning of Spring (the time of the year Turkey usually resumes military operations against the PKK) saw Turkey intensifying calls for a military intervention in Northern Iraq. Both the US (once again) and the European Union (EU) reacted negatively to the prospects of a Turkish military intervention.

This was the scenario until the end of April 2007. It shall now be seen how both US and Turkey's discourses could be interpreted following an international securitisation process.

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<sup>37</sup> Barzani declared that he did "not fear their [Turkish] military power" and that if Turkey intervened in the issue of Kirkuk they would "interfere in the issue of Diyarbakir and other cities" (Çandar, 2007).

## 2. Discourses on Northern Iraq

### *Turkey's discourse on Northern Iraq*

For Turkey, Northern Iraq is part of a more complex issue regarding the Kurdish minority in its own country. However, Turkey has managed to externalise the problem, by placing the solution largely outside its own borders. This discourse follows a line of argument sometimes used in Turkey, where the PKK is a proxy movement created and supported by outside forces in order to divide the country. The unity of the Turkish state is, in that sense, the referent object of this securitisation process. The fact that Northern Iraq could signify for Turkey a threat to its integrity led Ankara to define a second-degree referent object. This second-degree referent object refers to the unity of the Iraqi state: claims for an independent Northern Iraq are as dangerous for Turkey as they are for Iraq. For Turkey, its territorial integrity is greatly related to the integrity of the Iraqi state. According to Gen. Büyükanıt, “The terrorism problem in Northern Iraq, the terrorism problem in Turkey and the issue of Iraq’s territorial integrity cannot be separated from each other” (*apud* Enginsoy, 2007c).

Defining it according to the grammar of securitisation (chapter III), the threat is, in this case, clearly identified – the PKK. However, whereas it is usually defined as a major internal threat, it is now also presented as a regional menace, as stated by Turkish Air Force Colonel Selahattin Ibaş:

Under any name, the PKK is a regional threat. Since its establishment, it has created trouble in Turkey, as well as in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, challenging peace and security across the Middle East (2007).

The request for extraordinary measures is made to both the US and Iraqi authorities. They are, in this sense, the audience. This is an interesting point for the securitisation

theory, as this securitisation move seems to be built on a previously existing internal one, which is, in itself, institutionalised in Turkey – the already mentioned securitisation of the PKK. The PKK is, in Turkey, accepted as a threat. The threat it represents has been sufficiently clear and the audience has given consent to the Turkish authorities for action. However, this second securitisation has an inter-state dimension, in the sense that it includes other state actors within the process: the referent object is multiplied and the demand for action is made externally. In this sense, it is not an internal audience that needs to be convinced, but an international one, as presented in the previous chapter.

#### *US security discourse regarding Northern Iraq*

The biggest doubt in Turkish-US relations towards Northern Iraq is whether the US has indeed securitised the PKK or is simply part of an audience that Turkey is trying to convince. For the US, the PKK question is a problem within the context of stability in Northern Iraq. Although the Iraqi territorial integrity could be seen as essential for US security, through the War on Terror discourse (Bush, 2007), it seems they do not extend the link to the PKK, as Turkey suggests.

US officials usually talk about “our [the US and Turkey’s] shared battle against the PKK” (Bryza, 2006). Nonetheless they do not have a clear line or a strong discourse on how to defeat the PKK. In security terms, words like ‘patience’, and ‘multilateral mechanisms’, which are frequent in the US officials’ discourses, are more common to desecuritisation discourses than to intense securitisation appeals.

The usual attempts to securitise the issue are either a) by stating Turkey’s importance for US foreign policy or b) by considering the ‘Global War on Terror’ as a war against

all terrorist groups. Matthew Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, synthesises both attempts in the following words:

The PKK is a serious terrorist threat to one of our most important allies in the world so we're obligated [to do something]. But we're also obligated to do something against PKK by our own vision for Iraq and our own global policy on terrorism (1/02/2007).

Regarding the same issue, Matthew Bryza goes even further, constructing a narrative of intentions regarding the US Iraqi invasion, that is suitable in his argument linking the PKK to the Global War on Terror:

If you go back and read the statement that President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, and then Prime Minister Barroso of Portugal and President Aznar of Spain issued just a couple of days before the Iraq war began you will see in it – it's called the Azores Declaration – one of the goals we outlined is that there will be no haven for terrorists of any sort in Iraq. We meant the PKK. I know, having been involved in the drafting of that document, what we meant when we wrote that in there. We meant the PKK. So even before any U.S. troops set foot in Iraq that was our goal (*idem*).

In reality, the US seems to have these two competing processes going on at the same time, led by the same people. On the one hand, highlighting the link between the PKK and the War on Terror, in which they admit the poor results obtained so far (Bryza, 2007); on the other, arguing for multi-level, multilateral approaches that avoided the military option. Apparently, the US accepts the Turkish international securitisation of the PKK but is not willing to concede them special powers, which, in this case, would be to agree on a military operation against the PKK bases in Northern Iraq.

## **Conclusion**

For both the US and Turkey, there is no doubt that the PKK is a terrorist group and that Iraq must remain a unitary state. However, taking into consideration Ankara's

disappointment with Washington, those common aspects do not seem strong enough to produce a consensual solution to the problem.

Compared to March 2003, the US and Turkey are playing seemingly reversed roles. Back then it was the US which was trying to convince Turkey of the need to attack Saddam Hussein, his WMDs, and his terrorist links from Iraq (Menon and Wimbush, 2007: 7). From April 2006 to April 2007 it was Ankara's turn to try to convince Washington of the terrorist problem that the PKK represented.

The absence of an understanding between Washington and Ankara regarding the PKK and Northern Iraq could be related to three different aspects of their relationship: the non-belonging to the Middle East RSC; the US contradiction between its global and regional policies; and the ambiguities of the international securitisation processes.

*Non-belonging to the Middle East RSC.* It is worth noting that both countries are dealing with a region to which none of them fully belong. The US is a 'penetrator', a superpower with great influence but not with enough capacity to overlay the region. Proof of this can be seen in the way events have unfolded in the region, differently from Washington's plans. Turkey, on the other hand, is an 'insulator'. Its main purpose has historically been to step aside from the region's security problems (Kazan, 2003). The main problem in the relationship between both countries regarding Northern Iraq could perhaps be partially answered by this involvement in a region to which none of the actors fully belongs. Should the US be able to change the security dynamics there, then the Middle East would no longer be a RSC; the region would shift to an 'overlay' condition. In the same sense, should Turkey be able to have a say in the Middle East security dynamics, it would not be an insulator, but a member of this RSC.

*US global and regional policies.* US President George Bush defined very clearly what the US global policy would be from 9/11 onwards: to undertake a 'Global War on Terror'. This is a framework into which all other dimensions of US foreign policy should fit. One problem with such a policy is that the definitions of terror and terrorism, and especially the identification of the threat, are not clear.

US officials have, at least regarding Northern Iraq, decided to apply the 'Global War on Terror' discourse according to their needs, as it could be seen in Matthew Bryza's words (2007). The result is an incoherent discourse from the US, at least in relation to Northern Iraq. The identified global war has as its main focal point Iraq and the direct fight against the US defined Al-Qaida militants. In that context, Northern Iraq is the only element of stability in the country and the Kurdish regional leaders are useful actors in that global war. Nonetheless, Turkey also desires to play its part in the Global War on Terror against a group that has its headquarters in the frontline theatre of that war – Iraq. In that sense, there seems to be a profound incompatibility between the global strategy and its regional implementation.

*Ambiguities of the international securitisation process.* This case study has shown the potential existence of international securitisation processes in which all the steps in a securitisation move are taken at an inter-state level. In this case, Turkey has identified various referent objects (Turkey, the Middle East, United States, and the world), various dangers coming from the same threat (the PKK) and has an audience composed of two international actors (US and Iraq). On the other hand, the US, which has internally securitised the 'Global War on Terror', has an ambiguous stance regarding Turkey's own 'war on terror'. Along with the two problems identified above, the US also seems to have a policy for the issue (based on the trilateral mechanism, together with a multi-level approach), which it has found difficult to

transform into a coherent narrative. As we have seen, it often mixes desecuritisation features with securitisation ones commonly found in the 'Global War on Terror' discourses. This incapacity has also been met by Ankara's incapacity to construct a strong international securitisation discourse. Its main weakness resides in the vital lack of justification for action. What is at stake for regional stability? Why is it more necessary to intervene now than ever? Both sides have, in this sense, communication problems.

In short, during this period, both Turkey and the US were not able to find a common strategy (or a common language) for the fight against the PKK in Northern Iraq. Turkey's international securitisation did not succeed, as the United States was not able to give a clear reply to Ankara's request. The fact that neither of them belongs to the Middle East RSC, the restrictions and incoherencies imposed by the US Global War on Terror, and the fact that both US and Turkey have been finding it difficult to create strong and coherent security discourses were the determinant factors in such an outcome.

**Part V – From cease-fires to the possibility of politics**

## Chapter IX. From cease-fires to desecuritisation processes: de-escalating PSCs

### Introduction

De-escalation processes have both short and long-term goals (Kriesberg, 2007: 206). Whereas long-term goals are associated with the accommodation of the parties and contextual change, short-term goals focus “on stopping ongoing violence and preventing imminent escalation” (*idem*: 365). This chapter attempts to discuss the inter-linked relevance of the desecuritisation and cease-fire concepts within a de-escalation context. It will be argued that in order to fulfil those short-term goals the cessation of violence, usually associated with a cease-fire, is an important requirement. Only then can a long-term process of subsuming a conflict under the aegis of normal politics (desecuritisation) be undertaken. This follows an Arendtian understanding of the relationship between politics and violence (chapter III) in which the former is only possible in the absence of the latter. In that sense, it is not the goal of this chapter to provide a detailed account of how conflicts can be solved, but rather to focus on the underlying conditions that allow for conflicts to return to a context of what Chantal Mouffe would call ‘agonistic politics’ (2005; cf. chapter III).

Even if all this seems evident, these two concepts (cease-fire and desecuritisation) have not been brought together either by the Peace and Conflict Studies or by the Security Studies literatures. This might have to do with both the “little empirical study on the conflict resolution merits of cease-fires” (Wallensteen, 2002: 46)<sup>38</sup> and with the way the desecuritisation concept has “remained seriously underspecified” (Aradau, 2004: 389).

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<sup>38</sup> For an honourable exception please see James Smith’s *Stopping Wars. Defining the Obstacles to Cease-fire* (1995), Oxford: Westview Press.

The argument put forward in this chapter paves the way for an understanding of politics as the appropriate arena for violent conflicts to transform themselves into non-violent political issues. Nonetheless, some relevant questions arise regarding the role of violence, security and politics: is desecuritisation a necessary process for the resolution of a violent conflict? If so, how is that process undertaken? Why are cease-fires so relevant for the desecuritisation of a conflict? And finally, how is the politics of security translated into de-securitized politics?

In order to answer these questions this chapter will start (section 1) by discussing the relevance of the Conflict Transformation concept, with a particular focus on Raimo Vayrynen's levels of conflict transformation, to then move on (section 2) to the analysis of both cease-fires and desecuritisation processes as paramount processes in the accomplishment of such transformation. The reasons why these two concepts – cease-fire and desecuritisation – are seen as completely inter-dependent, and mutually necessary, will be contemplated in section 3. The last section will, once again building on Vayrynen's typology, present political change as the key factor that determines the possibility of de-escalation. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the political consequences of failed peace-oriented attempts, and what they imply for effective peace prospects.

### **1. The role of Conflict Transformation**

Conflict transformation is an “emerging distinctive theory” (Miall, 2001: 3) within conflict theories. It is “a process of engaging with and transforming relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of societies that support the continuation of violent conflict” (*idem*).

For Raimo Vayrynen (1991) such transformation can occur at four different levels. At the *actors' level*, which means either the emergence of new political actors or the change in terms of political leadership; at the *rules level*, where the norms, which actors are expected to follow, change; at the *structural level*, which involves the change in the distribution of power between the actors and/or in their mutual relationships; and finally at the *issue level*, where “the political constellation supporting the previous agenda will have to change” (1991: 5). The importance of competing issues is thus replaced by the focus on the issues where there is commonality of interests (*idem*). To these four levels, I would also incorporate the *context level*, as suggested by Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (2005: 163). According to these authors, it is necessary to take into consideration the transformations that take place in the external context of the conflict as “[c]hanges in the context may sometimes have more dramatic effect than changes within the parties or in their relationships” (*idem*).

I would argue that these five levels do not possess equal relevance in the transformation of a conflict. It is not possible to change the structure if the conflict issues remain framed in the same discursive way; and the change in the rules might only have any meaning if they are politically translated into change. In addition, changes in the regional and international context do not necessarily translate into changes in the conflict, as many long-term PSCs – from Colombia to Sudan – demonstrate. Finally, new political actors or the shift of power will only be meaningful if political change is promoted, and, as it will later be seen, it is not absolutely necessary to change political actors in order to transform issues. It is thus on this last point that rely the hopes of a conflict's transformation. The transformation of those issues would, I argue, be the ultimate road towards the existence of some political and

social 'normality'. But all this may only be achieved if violence is stopped in the short-term, and if in the long-term those transformations have sufficient political space in which to develop.

## **2. From cease-fires to desecuritisation**

Conflicts are not necessarily negative: conflicts, as non-violent contestation processes, are at the base of social change. Louis Kriesberg has labelled the conflicts that are "pursued using persuasive efforts and promises of benefits, rather than relying wholly or largely on coercive threats or action" as "constructive conflicts" (2006: 19-20). In these contexts, "the adversaries recognise each other as legitimate entities and do not threaten the other's existence" (*idem*: 20). Hence, conflicts, when kept within the boundaries of 'normality', might be positive, the problem being when they move beyond that sphere, as seen in chapter III.

As conflicts become securitised and violent, politics changes its character and, in many cases, it actually ceases to exist, being replaced by a 'technocratic system' responsible for the tackling of the securitised issues. Bringing conflicts back to normal politics by de-securitising them is thus *a priori* the only way of breaking a conflict cycle. Nonetheless, this move is not problem-free. For instance, it is probably worth asking why is it so relevant to bring the conflict back to the non-violent sphere; and also, if in some cases, politics becomes poisoned by existential measures, or even ceases to exist, what is there left to 'go back' to? As the answer to this second question will only be dealt with later on in the chapter, let us now focus on the first one.

There is no stronger facilitating event in a securitisation process than the visibility of acts of violence and its consequences. This happens for three specific reasons. First, those directly affected (surviving victims and families and friends of the victims) will

want the perpetrators of the attacks to be punished. Second, the images and sounds of the acts of violence will be disseminated throughout the population enhancing feelings of anxiety and insecurity. Third, the attacks will create a short-term arena for emotional politics – the funerals of those killed –, which will largely unite those directly affected by the attacks with the rest of society, where demands for action will be heard. Those images will end up further reinforcing the hatred feelings towards the perpetrators. In that sense, violence is the ultimate materialisation of a securitisation claim: people can see and feel what happens ‘if nothing is done’.

Bringing the conflict ‘back’ to the sphere of normal politics is most likely to happen with the end of violence in the short-term. Until this happens, it is very difficult to break the conflict cycle as the images and processes of destruction will favour the continuation of that same conflict. Edward Azar advocated that Track Two diplomacy was a ‘crucial first step’ (Azar, 1990: 3) to end Protracted Social Conflicts. I would indeed agree that these processes that involve non-official representatives of both sides of the conflict (Track Two), can lead to positive results in terms of ending the violence, just as it became clear in the process that led to the Oslo Agreement between Israel and Palestine in 1993 (cf. Egeland, 1999). However, the focus here is not necessarily on the way to achieve a cease-fire, but rather on the meaning of that achievement in terms of bringing the conflict back to politics.

I would thus argue that obtaining a cease-fire (as a return to a situation of non-violence) represents the potential turning point in a conflict, as it allows the de-securitising actors’ discourse to be progressively heard and consequently for a desecuritisation process to unfold.

If conflicts are a murky business, ending them is not any less complex. Conflicts as inter-subjective processes are not about the mere sum of violent acts, but about the

construction of securitised political narratives in which violence is a facilitating (in the Copenhagen School sense of the word – cf. chapter III) condition, being selectively used to corroborate or highlight a certain argument. In that sense, ending violence will only imply the silencing of a facilitating element, and not necessarily of the whole conflict narrative. As such, the latter might go on without any signs of desecuritisation – it all depends on how it is incorporated in the belligerent’s discourse. In the Omagh bombing case, for instance, those who committed the attacks were defined as security threats. In August 1998, a car exploded in Omagh, Northern Ireland killing 29 people and wounding another 220. As mentioned by Richard Jackson, this act

could have been used by leaders in Britain and Northern Ireland to create another powerful grievance, as could other terrorist attacks by the Real IRA during this period. Such language, however, would probably have upset the fragile peace process at the time and would have renewed the cycle of violence, which is why it was avoided by the British officials (2005: 37).

Tony Blair, for instance, considered the act as an “appalling act of savagery and evil”, further stating, “[t]hese people will not win” (BBC NEWS, 16/08/98). Whereas if such attack had been undertaken five or ten years earlier, the whole Northern Ireland republican movement (or at least the more radical groups within the movement) would have been securitised, as those attacks were committed shortly after the Good Friday Agreement (i.e. during a peace process attempt), only those directly linked to the attack were targeted.

In the case of Israel, the opposite happened. In June 1982, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel had been following a cease-fire for the previous 11 months. However, when Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom Shlomo Argov suffered an assassination attempt (having survived, but badly wounded) by Sabri al-Banna, a foe of the PLO, Israel claimed the cease-fire had been broken and decided to

invade Lebanon on those grounds (Norton, 2002: 32-33). This clearly shows that materiality must be incorporated in the discourse before it acquires some other meaning outside the physical destruction it has caused.

However, the point that is being highlighted here is that violence, as arguably the strongest facilitating condition in a securitisation process that leads to an armed conflict, will, if silenced, make it much more difficult to sustain a discourse of war, and easier to undertake a desecuritisation move.

But how can we define a cease-fire? Using James Smith's definition, a cease-fire can be understood as

an implemented agreement between belligerents (either explicit or implicit) involving all or the greater part of their military forces to, at a minimum, abjure the use of violent force with regard to each other for a period of time (not necessarily specified) regardless of the intention for doing so and regardless of the eventual outcome of such agreement (1995: 266).

A cease-fire is nonetheless different from the concepts of 'truce' and 'armistice'. A truce is related to the stabilisation of a cease-fire (Smith, 1995: 266). On the other hand, an armistice differs itself from a cease-fire, as it can be local in character (a cease-fire must involve the halt of violence by the vast majority of the belligerent actors involved) and it involves the intention by these same authors to reach a more permanent peace agreement (*idem*: 267). As James Smith highlights,

whether or not it was the original intention of the belligerents or concerned third parties, the cease-fire will (by definition) create an atmosphere relatively – if not completely – free of violence, an atmosphere in which, given time, a more permanent peace can be concluded [...]. Moreover, it should be obvious that a cease-fire is a necessary condition of both ending the war, and of resolving the conflict. Finally, a successful cease-fire always has a humanitarian component; the saving of lives is an inevitable and undeniable advantage to any cease-fire (1995: 8).

An effective cease-fire is thus a fundamental step if a violent Protracted Social Conflict is to end. As Wallensteen (2002: 9) describes, sometimes cease-fires are only made public after the conclusion of a peace agreement (which does not mean that the violence has not effectively stopped in the meantime); in other cases they come before any kind of further agreement. Indeed as the author further highlights, there are a good number of cases where the cease-fire was the only agreement ever reached, such as in Cyprus, or in the dispute between North and South Korea. In any case, “[i]t is safe to conclude that a peace agreement, solving the central incompatibilities between the parties, which does not include a simultaneous undertaking to cease fighting, is not likely to be credible” (*idem*).

In order to have a cease-fire, two conditions need to be fulfilled. As Smith points out, there must be, first of all, a “recognition that an opponent exists at least in fact – that the enemy is a force which must be dealt with if a cease-fire is the desired result” (Smith, 1995: 171); second, beyond that recognition, there must “exist a willingness to communicate, even if only through a third party” (*idem*). As cease-fires are all essentially about reciprocity (Fortna, 2004: 3), they can only work if both sides make a sincere effort in order to guarantee their maintenance.

I would argue that for a cease-fire to take place it is necessary that the belligerent actors overcome three major inter-related dilemmas: the *security dilemma*, the *bargaining dilemma* and the *legitimacy dilemma*. The security dilemma is related to the different ways in which cease-fire calls have been used in contemporary conflicts. Cease-fires are not always conducive to the resolution of the conflict. In many cases they may even prolong it. As Wallensteen argues,

the parties might agree on a cease-fire, to reduce the pain, have a chance of recuperation, even getting the opportunity for buying new weapons. It could be time for a pause, perhaps calculated on what is needed before a

new offensive. It is a limited strategic rethinking, where the goals are maintained. A cease-fire, in other words, may slow down the move towards a settlement, and instead prolong the fighting (2002: 46).

In that sense, accepting a cease-fire call always involves facing the option of risking to give time to your adversary to re-gain strength. As highlighted by Smith,

[t]he concern, then, is that belligerents will either be unable to achieve their objectives under a cease-fire (they can still be better achieved through war, or their opponents will achieve more objectives than they will)?, or if the fighting resumes the cease-fire will have put them in a worse position than they had been before the cease-fire (1995: 16).

Apart from this security dilemma, one or both actors face the bargaining dilemma, intimately related to their negotiating position. As mentioned by Smith (1995: 48), in order to be willing to call or accept a cease-fire it is necessary that a) the cease-fire is not perceived as more beneficial to just one of the sides; b) that both sides' bargaining positions are either equal or completely disparate; and c) that these positions are seen as stable in the short-term. Even if the actors involved believe these conditions will be fulfilled, they still have to make sure they do not convey an image of weakness by accepting or proposing a cease-fire, while at the same time facing the consequences of not stopping a stalemated conflict by not doing so – this is the bargainer's dilemma (Smith, 1995: 63).

The third and final dilemma has to do with the legitimising move that accepting a cease-fire entails. This is a specific problem in PSC contexts. In chapter V the importance of PSCs involving two distinct types of actors – state and non-state – was discussed. That same issue arises again when discussing cease-fires. Accepting a cease-fire call involves the acceptance of the 'other' as a legitimate actor, something

that can be quite problematic when we are talking about a state recognising a non-state actor<sup>39</sup>.

Weakness ends up being a sub-dilemma within any of the three above-mentioned dilemmas. A manifestation of weakness by a leader entails the risk of him/her being overthrown by other domestic political actors or even by the military, particularly when it involves backing away from a position previously defended (Smith, 1995: 75). That weakness may be 'revealed' when a political leadership chooses to go through with the cease-fire even if it involves either security risks, the loss of a stronger negotiating position, or the recognition of the other belligerent actor(s). The problem is often one of image. Hannah Arendt highlights this point rather well, when focusing on the US involvement in Vietnam:

The ultimate aim was neither power nor profit. Nor was it even influence in the world in order to serve particular, tangible interests for the sake of which prestige, an image of the 'greatest power in the world', was needed and purposefully used. The goal was now the image itself, as is manifest in the very language of the problem-solvers, with their 'scenarios' and 'audiences', borrowed from the theatre. For this ultimate aim, all policies became short-term interchangeable means, until finally, when all signs pointed to defeat in the war of attrition, the goal was no longer one of avoiding humiliating defeat but finding ways and means to avoid admitting it and 'save face' (1972: 20).

One way of avoiding these risks is by undertaking what I would call an 'informal cease-fire', in opposition to a formal cease-fire. Formal cease-fires involve the existence of some type of communication between the parties (usually supported by a third party), in which they agree to halt the hostilities. In many cases a document is signed between parties and there can be some sort of negotiation between them. It is in this context that the legitimacy problem is prominent, as both sides need some kind of

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<sup>39</sup> Accepting the call while at the same time considering the 'other' as criminal or an outlaw would not make any sense from a state actor's point of view, as it would imply that it was acceptable for the state to make deals with criminals.

mutual recognition in order to sign joint documents, and particularly to enforce them. In informal cease-fires, there does not need to be any direct communication or agreement. One party calls a cease-fire and the other, without losing face, also stops its violent acts. In the case of PSCs, it is usually up to the non-state actor to undertake such step, as its political stakes are lower. When referring to the abandonment of the armed struggle by four guerrilla groups in Colombia – the M-19, the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), the Quintin Lame and the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT), Peter Waldmann would refer:

The first and perhaps most important lesson is that negotiations with armed rebels can make sense and can lead to a successful conclusion. They can be started without granting to the insurgents the status of an acknowledgement political force. There is granted the assumption that their fight has some legitimacy. It would be a contradiction in terms for the government to insist that the rebels are “terrorists” while negotiating with them at the same time (2007: 240).

As argued throughout the thesis, PSCs, as any other social phenomena, are conditioned by communicative actions. Be it by speech acts, or by the exchange of images, sounds, or symbols, conflicts flow as those cards are played, as if it was nothing more than a game of poker. Cease-fires can be part of that game, as powerful symbolic moves, when they are formal. Images of enemies shaking hands after an agreement, or even just sitting under the same roof discussing the possibility of peace, are inspiring for other conflict actors and for the populations in general. Nonetheless, their (cease-fires) strength is also their weakness. In the same way it inspires people to behave in a different way, it also raises the political stakes, demanding a higher political risk from the political actors involved, which entails the above-mentioned dilemmas. In that sense, it not only increases the risk of being overthrown for the

political leadership that chose the cease-fire path, but it also increases the visibility of eventual spoilers that choose not to put an end to the violence.

There is not a higher moment in the evolution of a conflict where materiality so directly confronts discourse, as during cease-fires. The explosion of a bomb or the shooting of a gun is immediately taken as a breach in the cease-fire, which can then easily derail the whole de-escalation process. As such, the importance of the cease-fire move resides, above all, in its material consequences – the end of violence – and not as much in its symbolism, even if it can potentially be a huge contribution to the resolution of a conflict, if and when both parties actually obey the agreement. Hence, informal cease-fires can fulfil the role: they are not as politically relevant, but as the stakes at risk are lower they might end up achieving what is essential to achieve in a more effective way – the end of armed violence and the opening of the possibility of politics.

### **3. The opening of a political window of opportunity**

Collective insecurity perceptions are at the base of social conflicts that eventually lead to war. The biggest problem any conflict resolution strategy may face is exactly how to change those security perceptions. If conflicts begin due to security (mis)perceptions, they can only be solved by changing them. As Paul Roe argues, “if an issue can be shifted from normal politics [...] requiring emergency measures, then, arguably, it can also be shifted back again – it can be ‘desecuritized’” (2004: 282).

The first direct consequence of ceasing violence is that “it gives a chance for a more vibrant society to have an impact on the course of peace” (Wallensteen, 2002: 200). It gives politics a chance. After breaking the securitisation-conflict cycle, it is thus

essential to guarantee the conditions for a successful desecuritisation process, that is, the return to the realm of normal politics.

There is no conflict resolution unless the issue is *de facto* de-securitized, that is, unless we have a process in which the issues are moved out of “[a] threat-defence sequence and into the ordinary public sphere” (Buzan *et al.*, 1997: 29). But how can a conflict be de-securitized?

Desecuritisation is a three-step process. The first step involves keeping “the responses in forms that do not generate security dilemmas and other vicious spirals” (Wæver, 2000: 253). The second step is to avoid talking about the issue in terms of security. Here we should take into consideration the speech act paradox, as highlighted by Andreas Behnke:

Desecuritization as a speech act [...] seems to be a contradiction in terms. To declare that a particular issue or actor no longer constitutes a security threat and does not require extra-ordinary measures simply opens up a ‘language game’ in which more often than not the correctness of the declaration, its implications and consequences become the topic of further debate. Hence, the issue or actor never leaves the discourse on security within which the securitization embedded it. After all, even a denial of a connection still maintains the potentiality of that connection (2006: 65).

As such, for Behnke, an issue becomes de-securitized by not speaking, rather by uttering new ‘de-securitized’ speech acts (*idem*). I would argue that merely not speaking, would allow for the opponents of the process to take control of the discourse, which would eventually be more damaging than using a desecuritisation discourse contemplating the existence of difference. In that sense, and bearing in mind this speech act paradox, it is necessary to speak, albeit increasingly less, as the process flows in the ‘correct direction’ and away from the previous discourses of security.

Finally, the last step involves bringing the issue back from the security realm into the field of 'normal' politics (Roe, 2004: 284). That does not necessarily mean that the conflict has been solved, but that there are regular mechanisms in society to solve them, therefore avoiding violence.

According to Jef Huysmans (1995: 65), there are three different strategies to accomplish this desecuritisation process. The first one is the objectivist strategy. This strategy involves perceiving security as something with an objective content. Hence the objectivists will try to convince people that the security problem is not a 'real' security problem. Part of the strategy is the production of statistics demonstrating for example that immigrants are actually good for the national economy and do not constitute a 'foreign invasion', or that people from a certain religion, ethnicity or nationality are against the use of violence, and not mere 'terrorists' or 'terrorist supporters'. A problem with this strategy is that it needs the maintenance of the original friend *versus* foe distinction in order to work. It can only show that the 'other' is not a threat if it still considers the other as such. Thus, in the long-term this strategy cannot overcome the above-mentioned speech act paradox.

The second type is the constructivist strategy. In this case, security is defined as a social construction, as "something produced by social practices in a particular spatial and temporal context" (Huysmans, 1995: 66), which demands a deep look into the processes that triggered the securitisation process in the first place. In a constructivist approach, it is the process that needs to be understood. There is a divide between the process and the way to solve the issue. The problem, according to Huysmans (1995: 67), is that the context might have changed by the time the analyst focuses on the handling of the previously assessed issue.

Finally, the third type is the deconstructivist strategy. In this perspective, the world is not a reality outside, but rather fully inside us – we construct it. In that sense, ‘reality’ is no more than the reproduction of a particular narrative. Hence, the way towards a desecuritisation process involves the diffusion of an alternative narrative, one where the ‘other’ is deconstructed, first by showing that it is not a threat, and then by blurring the other into ‘us’, until that distinction stops making sense. It is what Claudia Aradau calls a process of “dis-identification” and “partaking of a universal principle”, where “women are not women but equal citizens. Migrants are not migrants but workers with equal rights” (Aradau, 2004: 402). The problem with this approach is that it does not allow space for identity, as it provides its success by blurring differences (Huysmans, 1995: 68). This raises a dilemma within desecuritisation processes: on the one hand their goal is to frame issues outside the security rhetoric; on the other hand, in order to do so, these processes must involve the transformation of identities, as the ‘other’, against which the securitisation process was created, is no longer supposed to be framed under those terms. In that sense, what is relevant to know is whether we might have ‘de-securitised’ identities. For Paul Roe, that is not possible, as identities, particularly minority identities, can only persist if they are placed against something that has been securitised:

To remove the language of security from the issue of minority rights, to shift from a position of societal security to one of societal asecuritisation, is in essence to stop talking about group distinctiveness. In this way, it signals the death of the collectivity, of the distinct minority (2004: 290).

In his opinion, instead of desecuritisation we should talk about ‘managing’ securitisations, something that in his opinion can be a ‘strange place to be in’, but nevertheless, something that can be empirically proved in many different majority/minorities relations. According to Roe, in many cases, such as in

multinational federations, political actors frame minorities as a political issue that deserves discussion and deliberation, without leaving the sense of difference or the language of threat and security (Roe, 2006: 436). Managing a securitisation process would then involve the maintenance of the security rhetoric, while at the same time keeping it within the sphere of normal politics (*idem*, 2004: 285): “[m]anagement in this sense is about ‘moderate’ (not excessive) securitization, about ‘sensible’ (not irrational) securitization” (*idem*: 293); it is about managing rather than ‘panicking’. Of a different opinion is Matti Jutila, to whom desecuritisation should be about “reconstructing identities”, about “[u]nderstanding identities as open processes” (2006: 180). Under such context, “[t]he state is presented as a state of and for two or more nationally or ethnically defined groups” (*idem*: 181).

In my view, both authors have legitimate points, the problem being that they are talking about different moments in a desecuritisation process. One problem with the operationalisation of the desecuritisation process is that it does not have a temporal limit: it can be a short-term process, but it can also last for decades, and it will always be difficult to tell when it is finally accomplished. One can only perceive snapshots in time, to see whether at a certain point, the issue has been fully de-securitised or if it is still defined according to a securitised rhetoric. The example of multinational federations given by Roe is a case in point. In some cases, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, we could argue that it is more about managing securitisation rather than de-securitising. But if we take the example of the United States, even if there can still exist perceptions of a somewhat different identity between North and South, there are neither emergency measures in place nor hegemonic aggressive discourses between regions or federal states anymore. The United States is, more than a century later, regarding that issue, fully de-securitised, just as Bosnia might be in the long-term. In

that sense, we could argue that managing securitisation is not an alternative form of de-securitising, but rather an embryonic signal of such process.

Regarding the need for a strong 'other' in order to construct an identity, it could be argued that most national identities have, at some point been constructed against a different 'other'. Still, neither does this process need to be eternal (which opens the space for temporary securitisations), nor does it necessarily need to be horizontal (against the 'other'). As Ole Wæver (2000) points out by using the European Union example, these processes can also be vertical, that is, an identity constructed without the need for a different 'other'. According to the same author, the European Union and the European ideal have been constructed against its own terribly devastating past, rather than against a different 'other'. In that sense, there is plenty of space for, as argued by Jutila (2006), the understanding of identities as open constructed processes that can be re-constructed in order to accommodate desecuritisation processes.

Returning to Huysman's typology, I would argue that a constructivist approach that takes into account an objectivist strategy in the short-term, and a deconstructivist strategy in the long-run, might actually provide a more encompassing desecuritisation process. It uses both a short-term 'objective' approach that, while keeping the conflict's rhetorical structure, is useful to cool down the political environment; and a long-term deconstructivist strategy in which identities are re-constructed. All this while focusing on the processes that allow the transition from one strategy to another. In that sense, the usefulness of this model resides in the focus it provides when looking at political discourses and practices within de-escalation processes.

As argued throughout the thesis, the difference between securitising actors and functional actors/facilitating conditions within the securitisation theory is a key contribution to Peace and Conflict Studies, a discipline that has focused for too long

on the latter (the functional actors/facilitation conditions) as a form of justifying the former (the securitising actors). In de-escalation processes, the same problem is quite frequent, with processes such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), the signing of Peace Agreements, or the holding of elections being taken as signs of a 'return' to normality when the common political discourse is still one of 'speaking conflict'. In that sense, it is important for the understanding and promotion of a peaceful approach to PSCs, to analyse the small steps that contribute to the progressive disappearance of a securitised discourse.

#### **4. The paradox of the return to normal politics**

According to the three-step process presented above, bringing the issue back to normal politics should be the ultimate goal of a desecuritisation process. But does a desecuritisation move automatically return an issue to the sphere of normal politics? Also, as already questioned above, but still unanswered, what kind of 'normal politics' is the issue expected to return to?

Starting with the first question, the answer is a straight 'no'. There is no certainty that an issue will stay at the political debate level. As Rita Floyd exemplifies with the Bush administration's attempt to desecuritize the global warming issue:

With the existential threat not mentioned any longer, emergency mode outmoded and units in charge of environmental security dismantled, it is fair to say that the Bush administration has successfully desecuritized the environment. This desecuritisation, however, has not led to the defence of environmental issues being part of the political agenda in the US today [...]. This shows that a strategy of desecuritisation, opposed to Wæver's suggestion, does not necessarily have to be positive. Desecuritisation does not automatically make an issue area into a political concern, but rather the issue may be threatened to leave the political agenda altogether (2007: 347).

In that sense, this author questions the Copenhagen School advocacy of desecuritisation as a positive step, by arguing that it can actually be negative, as seen by the environmental issue in the US. In her opinion, there should be a distinction between positive and negative desecuritisation.

The same 'silencing' process can be perfectly applied to PSC contexts, where the end of the armed conflict might not mean its political resolution but simply its oblivion from the political sphere. Even though this point deserves to be taken into consideration, the risk here is not between having a negative or a positive desecuritisation, but rather between a desecuritisation move and a desecuritisation process. For the Copenhagen School what distinguishes a securitisation move from the securitisation process is the actual move from the normal politics level to that of special politics. As put by its authors:

Securitization is not fulfilled only by breaking rules (which can take many forms) nor solely by existential threats (which can lead to nothing) but by cases of existential threats that legitimize the breaking of rules (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 25).

Using the same line of thought, I would argue that a desecuritisation process only exists when the issue returns to the normal politics' level. If it does not, we simply cannot talk of a desecuritisation process, but rather of a desecuritisation move that may or may not end in a desecuritisation process. Nevertheless, a securitised issue that has been de-securitised still needs to be politically dealt with. Otherwise, it will not necessarily be fully de-securitised (as it does not return to the political level), while being fully de-politicised. In the same way, a successful desecuritisation process can only be seen by the changes it brings, which imply, among other things, the treatment of the 'other' as a legitimate political partner. This might imply

institutional changes, judicial reforms or even the setting of a whole new political system.

The second question deserves a much more complex response. As seen in chapter III, in PSCs contexts, politics is infiltrated by exceptional measures that end up poisoning the entire political system. The system is distorted by negative images of the 'other', by discourses of hate and anger, and by the allocation of resources to fight the conflict. As a consequence, the elimination of that 'other' cannot be simple:

[e]ven if high levels of coercive activities and violence are permanently withdrawn, emotional residues, as well as social and political legacies (following colonialism and ethnic atrocities), cannot be easily annulled by simply reinstating the pre-escalation state (Ho-Won Jeong, 2008: 182).

The protracted character of these conflicts leads to the institutionalisation of these practices, turning the exceptional into the norm. The 'technical' character of how to fight the enemy and the hegemony of absolute truths leaves little space for contestation and alternative options. Hence, how can such a context be conducive to both a de-escalation process and to the accommodation of the conflict issues into its political sphere? The answer is, it cannot. For the conflict to de-escalate, some kind of *a priori* political change must exist. Be it because of the conflict's burden or due to some external phenomena (such as changes in the international context), only change in the political system allows the PSC to have an opportunity to be 're-politicised'.

But what is political change, and how is it accomplished? I would argue that political change is a process in which dominant discourses and practices are either modified or replaced by other dominant discourses. Institutions may or may not be replaced, but it is in the alteration of political discourses and practices that political change is accomplished. It is obviously more difficult to see change if the political leaders

remain the same<sup>40</sup>, but their replacement is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to accomplish political change.

Returning to chapter V, I would argue that within a layered discursive structure, talking about political change directly affects the first discursive level: the constellation of key political concepts. This does not necessarily demand its total replacement by a new set of core concepts; it only demands a partial change. As we are talking about a constellation of key concepts, a partial change will mean being in the presence of a new constellation even if only some key concepts were modified in the political discourse. As these are fundamental concepts, the change of one will affect the meaning of all other concepts. For example, in a country where a socialist President is elected replacing a liberal President, the concept of ‘social justice’ might turn into ‘social equality’. This does not only mean that the concept has changed in itself – advocating a more equal society rather than just a minimally fair one – but also, that it will promote the re-definition of that country’s political constellation. Human rights might change to mean social rights in the first place, and only after would it change to mean political rights; the economy might move from being associated with free enterprise to nationalisation and state planning. In that sense, the new President would be both the trigger and symptom of that change. He or she would help trigger this change by reproducing a certain discourse, but his or her election would have already been a sign of a receptive political context, one where a discursive change towards these ideas was already in place. In that sense, it is this gradual process of change of the political discourse that should be understood as political

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<sup>40</sup> According to Ho-Won Jeong, “Escaping from intractable conflicts may involve the establishment of a new leadership more openly committed to embarking on fresh initiatives. While there are examples of policy changes under strong public pressure without any leadership change, abandoning past policies and adopting different ones is easier in a new political environment” (2008: 196).

change, and not the election of a President or the victory of a particular party. This process does not have a clear start or a clear end. It is continuous, slow, and difficult to track in the short-term.

In PSCs, this process must open the possibility for a progressive dismantling of a concept of security and an idea of identity in which the belligerent 'other' is central. Such opening will then potentially translate into new forms of approaching the conflict (such as the way the other is labelled) and consequently, into new types of policies regarding it. Only then does it become more reliable to talk about bringing the conflict 'back' to politics.

The fact that these processes are prolonged in time makes approaches such as Paul Roe's 'securitisation management' and Jef Huysman's objectivist strategy essential for keeping the de-escalation process on track, and are in themselves contributing to that political change taking place. In short, in the long-term it is not possible to talk about desecuritisation without a return to normal politics. However, in practice, that return is more of an advancement to some new form of political life, as political change must occur in order to accommodate that desecuritisation process. Hence, the desecuritisation process is in itself a symptom of a different attitude towards the securitised issue, one which already implies change.

## **5. When everything fails**

More often than not, cease-fire and de-escalation attempts tend to fail. PSCs, due to their extension over time, tend to include several frustrated attempts of ending violence and solving the conflict. William Zartman (1995) would argue that such failure is the result of both parties not having reached the point where the conflict is at a dead-end, of reaching the point in which both sides have more to lose than to win

from continuing with the conflict. This absence of a 'hurting stalemate' is in Zartman's opinion the reason for the failure of these attempts.

Such argument would make sense if politics was maths and if societal demands were mere statistical numbers which, once intercepted, would provide the right result and thus the moment where conflict parties would stop fighting each other. Since that is not the case, such argument is of limited explanatory value. Too many conflicts have shown (the Israeli-Palestinian being one of them) that even when both parties do not seem to have anything else to win, they still find ways to keep the armed conflict alive. The biggest consequence of that failure (apart from not ending the conflict) is the normalisation of a 'peace-failure' discourse. Within such context, expressions such as 'cease-fire', 'peace promotion', or 'conflict resolution' are discredited. Hence, not only does the violence not stop, but also, the alternative discourses that could be used are deeply undermined. In the same way that the securitisation of a certain 'other' creates insurmountable barriers that demand each individual to choose sides, the usage of 'peace-oriented' expressions tend to be attached to one side or the other. If one advocates peace, it is because he/she is a 'traitor', and not because that person is actually interested in putting an end to violence. The same applies to political actors, where peace-mongers and traitors are one and the same. A peace-failure cycle is then created, in which any attempt to promote peace is condemned to fail and to make the next attempt even more difficult to succeed. This makes the discourse of violence the only 'viable' way to wage the conflict.

In Angola, for example, peace through politics was given two chances, both of them rejected by one of the sides. In 1991, after signing a peace agreement with the ruling MPLA, Jonas Savimbi's UNITA started a process of selecting candidates and campaigning for the eventual national elections of 1993. The MPLA's victory was not

accepted by Savimbi and soon the armed struggle soon resumed (Weinberg and Pedahzur, 2003: 23). One year later, in 1994 after the signing of the Lusaka Agreement, it was expected once again that both sides would put an end to the violence. Even though a faction of UNITA decided to participate in a unity government, the leadership of the movement decided to stay away from the process waging the armed struggle until Savimbi was killed in 2002. This was a clear case in which the agonistic dimension of politics was rejected by the loser side. The fact that the two peace attempts ended up being discredited by that side led to the general acceptance that the Angolan Civil War could only result in some sort of military defeat.

In Colombia, even though the result has been the same, the context is different. According to Waldmann, “[a]fter 1980, all presidents who initially announced that they would make no concession to the insurgents but would fight them implacably later came up with offers of amnesty and peace” (2007: 234). As a result, any

peace talks suffer from having become a routine that no one takes seriously anymore. Both sides tend to treat them like a tactical game while always considering the option of continuing the war. The trust between the two sides has been undermined in endless rounds of negotiation (*idem*: 243).

In short, the tendency to engage in consecutive political processes that adopt peace-related labels might actually work more as a facilitating condition of securitisation than as a positive step towards peace.

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter has as an underlying rationale, an Arendtian understanding of the distinction between politics and violence. As put by Patricia Owens,

Arendt's goal was to salvage politics from brute violence, to show that it is not as meaningless as it might seem. The meaning of *politics* is the freedom to act in concert with plural equals. The meaning of *war* is coercion and being coerced, the force of compulsion (2007: 15).

In that sense, the end of violence is central for the de-escalation and eventual resolution of a conflict in a political context. However, I have argued that the way this process is normally considered has often been misplaced. It has been portrayed as the arena to which violent conflicts should return to, but as I tried to show in this chapter, there cannot be a 'return' to normal politics; there can only be the transformation to something different, as politics has, during the conflict, normalised the exceptional. That is why the concept of conflict transformation seems much more appropriate in the context of PSCs, than the mere idea of a conflict resolution. There needs to be an evolution to a different context from that in which the conflict was born, not only because that context was at the origin of the conflict, but most importantly because it no longer exists, ravaged by years of 'hate' politics and the reification of war.

As seen in the first section, Raimo Vayrynen (1991) argues that conflict transformation must occur in four different areas – actors, rules, structures and issues – to which I have added Ramsbotham *et al.* (2005) context transformation. While agreeing with these authors, I have tried to show that one area – the issues area – is more relevant than the other three. All of them are important for the transformation of the conflict, but none of them will work if the conflict issues have not been politically re-phrased.

In order to accomplish such transformation, it is necessary for violence to stop in the short term, as the social relevance of violence does not allow an issue to be progressively defined outside a security discourse. Only with a cease-fire (or some other commitment to avoid the use of violence) is it possible to trigger a desecuritisation process that will eventually lead to the replacement of a security discourse about the 'other' by means of a political discourse, which at the same time involves some form of non-discourse, as argued by Andreas Behnke (2006).

Desecuritisation processes go hand-in-hand with the transformation of the political discourse, that is, with the transformation of the conflict issues. They are indeed mutually constitutive. We cannot have a desecuritisation process without political change, and there cannot be political change in a conflict context if that conflict is not progressively reframed outside a discourse of security.

As we have seen, these are long-term processes that in the short-term usually involve the use of specific strategies and approaches, such as Paul Roe's (2006) management of securitisation situations and objectivist desecuritisation strategies as presented by Jef Huysmans (1995). The failure to understand the need for these processes usually leads to unsuccessful peace attempts, which are strongly damaging in a PSC context. Not only do these attempts not reach their goal, but they also undermine the legitimacy and value of a peace discourse. Violence thus becomes the only 'solution' for the conflict, and alternative discourses are marginalised. In short, peace is discredited, if not silenced.

## **Chapter X. The 1999 cease-fire and the lost chance for peace**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will illustrate the difficulties associated with desecuritisation processes in PSCs, in particular, how the constant reproduction of a specific security discourse in Turkey limits the possibility of a political discursive change and the subsequent end to armed violence. For this, I will be looking at the 1999 cease-fire call, which lasted until 2004 – the longest period in this conflict in which violence was officially suspended by one of the parties.

Several cease-fires have been called by the PKK during its conflict with the Turkish state (1993, 1995, 1999, 2006), always with the same result – the return to violence. From all these attempts, the 1999 cease-fire was the most promising one, due to the context in which it was called: the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan had been arrested, calling for the movement to stop the violence; and Turkey was involved in the process of becoming an EU candidate<sup>41</sup>, thus in need of proving its democratic credentials before all else. However, the Turkish authorities never recognised the cease-fire and in 2004 the PKK eventually resumed its armed activities.

This chapter will start by exposing the PKK's discourse on the 1999 cease-fire and Turkish authorities' reaction to it. This will be followed by an analysis of the reasons that prevented the resolution of the conflict, by particularly showing why Turkish politics has been so resistant to the possibility of peace.

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<sup>41</sup> Turkey was recognised as a potential EU-member state in the Helsinki European Council Summit, in December 1999.

### **1. The PKK's 1999 cease-fire call**

As mentioned above, the 1999 cease-fire call was not the first attempt by the PKK to negotiate the end of the conflict through non-violent means. In Öcalan's first interview to the Turkish media in 1988, he highlighted that a cease-fire was possible under certain conditions (*apud* Birand, 1988). However the context was one of military escalation and these words did not deserve any consideration from the Turkish authorities.

If it had not been for the sudden death of the Turkish President Turgut Özal, 1993 could have indeed seen the end of the bloodshed, or at least the beginning of something new. Despite being involved in some repressive measures towards the PKK and the Kurds in general, by 1993 Özal was deeply involved in the possibility of reaching some sort of solution to end the armed violence that had been ravishing the Southeast for the previous decade. Members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (HEP), and later the Democracy Party (DEP), were even asked to secretly start negotiations with the PKK after the movement had declared a cease-fire in March 1993. The cease-fire was a unilateral declaration made by the PKK as a 'gesture of goodwill' towards the Turkish state. Initially, it was to run from 20 March through to 15 April, but it was later extended indefinitely by Abdullah Öcalan, for as long as the Turkish Armed Forces did not attack the PKK (Robins, 1993: 669). According to Gülistan Gürbey (1996: 14-15), Turgut Özal saw in the cease-fire call an opportunity for a political engagement with the movement. He was indeed convinced that with negotiations, peace could be achieved and that a cease-fire was essential for that process to be triggered.

History, however, played its tricks: Turgut Özal died in that same year, leading to early general elections, after Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel declared that he was

running for the vacant Presidency spot. A few weeks later a PKK unit led by Şemdin Sakik killed 33 Turkish soldiers in Bingöl apparently without having received any order to do so (cf. Cigerli and Le Saout, 2005). In a case where an unpredicted episode of violence was incorporated into the narrative of the conflict, the PKK leadership declared the end of the cease-fire and the resumption of the hostilities on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June. On the 29<sup>th</sup> a coalition government was to result from the elections and Tansu Çiller was chosen Prime Minister. Even though she initially adopted a mild approach to the Kurdish problem, even proposing some sort of Basque solution for the conflict in the Southeast, this was quickly substituted with a more hawkish tone, and the TAF was given a *carte blanche* to solve the problem by military means (Loizides, 2009: 289).

The PKK would declare another cease-fire in December 1995, at the peak of Turkey's attempt to destroy the movement's bases in Northern Iraq. This would not receive the same attention as the 1993 call, which ended up having "little impact on the course of events" (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 1).

Four years later, after a tumultuous process that saw Abdullah Öcalan moving from country to country until finally being arrested in the Greek embassy in Kenya, the PKK following his leader's wish, declared a cease-fire in September 1999. Öcalan's arrest would provoke shockwaves throughout the Kurdish world (cf. Gunter, 2000; Özcan, 2006) in general, and obviously within the PKK in particular. When Öcalan was arrested, the PKK issued a ravaging statement saying "All Turkey is now a war zone. That includes the touristic regions of the Turkish Republic" (AFP, 15/03/1999). On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1999, Öcalan would eventually be condemned to death, guilty of having created the 'armed terrorist organization' of the Kurdistan's Workers Party and for "having ordered acts that made thousands of innocent victims" with the final goal

of “separating a part of the territory under Turkish sovereignty in order to create some kind of Kurdish state” (IKP, May-June 1999: 1). In a conciliatory message, Öcalan would state:

Let us Kurds use our language freely, let us have a television station, and acknowledge our ethnic identity. Then we will stop waging a war that has cost Turkey more than \$100 billion and the lives of more than 30,000 people over 15 years, tearing the country apart and darkening its name” (*apud* Kinzer, 6/07/1999).

In its final declaration, Öcalan “refused to be defined as a traitor”, further arguing that he has not fought to “divide the country but to live in a democratic country” (*idem*).

In August 1999, two months after his death sentence, Abdullah Öcalan would appeal for the PKK to give up the armed struggle (Marcus, 2007: 286). However, there were signs indicating a change in policy by the PKK even before Öcalan’s arrest. In April 1998, Öcalan declared that if the Kurdish candidates were allowed to compete in the elections, then they could be mediators in the same way Sinn Fein worked with the IRA to end the conflict in Northern Ireland (*apud* Erdoğan, 25/04/1998). The Turkish authorities were not quite willing to listen and soon after Öcalan’s declarations the Armed Forces launched one of its biggest ever military operations in the region with more than 40,000 men involved in operations against the PKK (Demir, 30/04/1998).

Again, in August 1998 Öcalan declared in an interview with Med TV that from the 1<sup>st</sup> September until the April 1999 elections the PKK would not attack Turkish soldiers (IKP, July-August 1998). As a reply the Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, leader of “one of the weakest administrations in Turkey’s recent history” (Barham, 23/06/08), stated that Turkey would reject to talk with the PKK, but that he would consider it a positive step if the PKK had finally realised that it could no longer fight

against the Turkish state and was thus willing to lay down its weapons and surrender (IKP, July-August 1998: 6).

In a continuing dialogue of the deaf, Öcalan would propose in November 1998 specific measures to resolve the conflict. Those measures included: the end of Turkish military operations against Kurdish villages; the return of forcibly displaced Kurdish refugees to their villages; the abolition of the 'village guard system'; autonomy for the Kurdish region within Turkey's existing borders; the granting to the Kurdish people of all democratic rights enjoyed by the Turkish people; official recognition of Kurdish identity, language and culture; and the freedom of religion and pluralism (KIC, 1998). Some months later, in the 'Political and Organizational Report' he submitted to the congress, there was the recognition that "the armed violence was no longer producing the desired result" (*apud* Özcan, 2006: 214). In an interview with Chris Kutschera, Öcalan would reduce the PKK's struggle to one goal – the recognition of Kurdish identity. In his words, the political system under which such recognition would occur was secondary: "The form is not a problem, if the will is there. The most important thing is to acknowledge the Kurdish identity" (Öcalan *apud* Kutschera 1999).

In that Congress, a radical change in discourse was indeed taking place – its 'strategic target' until then, the defeat of 'Turkish colonialism', evolved to a more selective combat against the 'oligarchic structure of the dominant clique in the Republic' (Özcan, 2006: 239). The term 'republic' became a very common word in this phase of the movement's discourse – republic as a unifying concept, rather than exclusively belonging to 'colonial' Turkey. For Öcalan, the PKK actions should thus be understood within some sort of 'republican duty':

We wanted to overcome the serious backwardness, ignorance and slavery in the East with progress, enlightenment and freedom. This is a republican duty. There can be no doubt that this was the essence. However, look at the paradox that we are on trial charged with the greatest crime against the

republic. Within a seemingly legal framework. This is unfortunate. It is not an expression of our essence. History will demonstrate that this movement did not target the founder of the republic but was a movement aiming to curing a decaying, sick entity and to ensure its two legs or the part that needed to be healthiest was restored to health and strength (1999).

In the same text, Öcalan would compare his ‘republican duty’ to that of Mustafa Kemal ‘Atatürk’:

Ataturk also founded the republic under a death sentence, and against the Sultanate which appointed him. What he demolished was not the essence of the state but the Sultanate and Caliphate forms which could not adapt to the needs of the age. It should not be misunderstood, we are not claiming greatness for ourselves. How from the beginning I have asserted that it is not the essence of the republic which we oppose, but the oligarchic, undemocratic, feudal values and structures in Turkish society. The goal has been a democratic republic (*idem*).

In a sense, Öcalan re-wrote the PKK actions as targeted against a particular sector of Turkish society that has existed in the territory throughout different periods and under different forms. The fight against these reactionary forces was the aim of the PKK, according to Öcalan, just as the demolition of the Sultanate and the Caliphate was Atatürk’s aim. In that sense, condemning the movement’s action would be the same as condemning Atatürk’s rebellion – they were both similar historical processes.

In his opinion, *constitutional citizenship* would be the link that would keep Turks and Kurds together: “If fundamental membership in Turkey, constitutional citizenship, are united with individual freedom, they will result in the resolution of the majority of the problems”. The Kurdish problem would then be limited to its economic dimension (Öcalan, 1999). Thus,

Turkey's goal of reaching an historic democratic republic will be achieved. Under this formula there will be no reason for rebellion. Then, every corner of the country will experience unity, not separation, and togetherness instead of rebellion. Turkey will be stronger and no power will be able to destroy that unity (*idem*).

Following his appeals from prison to lay down arms, the group declared a unilateral cease-fire in early August, starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1999 (Yilmaz, 2007: 9). This had been preceded by a statement declaring the retraction of the PKK to an 'active defensive' position, which was not a cease-fire. According to the statement: "from now on and until another order is issued there will be no sacrificial actions and efforts will be made to prevent attacks on civilian targets" (IHT, 14/07/1999). In a statement three days later after the announcement of the cease-fire, the PKK's Central Committee would add: "even though the armed struggle sometimes is a necessity, it has lost its dominant nature throughout the century [...]. It has been replaced by political struggle. The forces incapable of changing will become insignificant" (IKP, 08/1999). This was a strong statement in clearly showing that the PKK was interested in finding a political solution for the conflict.

Still in September, Öcalan would ask for a symbolic gesture from the PKK, which was followed by the surrender of eight PKK commanders at the Iraqi border. In a statement by the military a few days later it could be read: "The terrorist organization has always used such tactics to gain time and then redouble their attacks", further adding "[f]or this reason, the Turkish armed forces are determined to pursue the battle until the last terrorist is neutralized" (Zaman, 8/10/99). In October a second group of eight PKK members would surrender. In January 2000, the PKK would hold an extraordinary 7<sup>th</sup> Congress in Northern Iraq where Öcalan's appeal for the end of violence, as well as further considerations regarding the future of the organisation were adopted by the movement (Kinzer, 10/02/2000). As highlighted by Aliza, "[t]he Congress was important to ensure that as a whole, the PKK had shifted direction" (2007: 288). In a statement issued in January 2000, the PKK's Central Committee highlighted the following: "The internal and external forces who try to prevent Turkey from moving

in a democratic direction and try to execute our party chairman cannot be Turkey's friends. Whether these circles are internal or external, they are trying to prevent a democratic Turkey" (Özgür Politika, 2000). The cease-fire would last until 2004, when in the face of no political dialogue (Marcus, 2007: 295) the PKK ended the cease-fire and resumed hostilities against Turkey.

## **2. The failure of peace in Turkey's fight against the PKK**

1999 was a year of many relevant events for Turkey: Abdullah Öcalan was arrested, the EU recognised Turkey as a potential candidate member, and in September a terrible earthquake devastated the Western part of the country, killing thousands of people. On top of that, Turkey was spending US\$10 billion annually in military terms alone in fighting the PKK (McDowall, 2005: 444), with 300,000 out of 800,000 men stationed in the Southeast by the beginning of 1999 (Kutschera, 1999b).

Thus, the moment seemed ripe for the potential resolution of the conflict, particularly after the PKK cease-fire declaration. The president of the Turkish Constitutional Court, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, as well as the Chief Justice of the Turkish Supreme Court of Appeals, criticised the Constitution for its restrictions on basic rights and democracy (Gunter, 2000: 852; IKP, 09/99: 1-2).

Bülent Ecevit's government would begin a process of what Gunter calls 'implicit bargaining' with the PKK, by asking the movement to lay down its weapons:

If and when conditions become more conducive to solving certain problems, the new approaches may prevail. A substantial decrease in terrorism would be conducive to improvements and reforms in the social, economic and political life of the country (Ecevit *apud* Gunter, 2000: 857).

Former Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz would also come to public to defend the end of the emergency rule: “We want to do this in order to terminate the shortcomings of our legal system and for the rights of the people who are living in these regions” (TDN, 28/07/1999).

This optimism was supported by journalist Mehmet Ali Birand, for whom even if Öcalan’s claims were not to be taken seriously,

the question of giving him the benefit of the doubt is nevertheless being asked in all segments of society. For the first time, some of the more prominent establishment figures are openly stating that his execution would have a negative impact on Turkey’s long-term interests (8/07/1999).

He would further conclude: “For the first time, the heart of Turkey is beating with hope for a real peace” (*idem*). In September 1999 General Hüseyin Kivrikoğlu, Chief of Turkish General Staff, contributed to that implicit bargaining by stating that

the leader of the terrorists [PKK] admitted, the terrorists have realized they will get nowhere with the use of arms. Now they are contemplating a solution through political means [...]. What they want are cultural rights, some of the rights have already been given to them. Kurdish newspapers and cassettes are free. Despite the fact that it is banned, radio and TV stations are operating in Kurdish in eastern and Southeastern Turkey (*apud* Gunter, 2000: 860).

This passage is quite revealing in some points. First of all, there is an implicit recognition of the PKK as a representative of the Kurdish rights. Second, there is the recognition of the PKK’s move towards a political solution. Finally, even though less relevant for this particular context, there is the recognition that infringing Turkish law is an acceptable practice. Soon after these declarations and after both Öcalan and PKK’s number two, Cemil Bayik, welcomed those words, the General would back off refusing any kind of recognition of the PKK and telling them to surrender and give up their weapons: “for this reason the Turkish armed forces are determined to continue to

battle until the last terrorist has been neutralized” (*apud* Gunter, 2000: 860; cf. IKP, 1999d: 4-5).

However, that was not to happen. The initial signs had already been in that direction: in an interview with the German weekly *Die Zeit* soon after Öcalan’s arrest, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit declared that there was no Kurdish problem in Turkey, just a terrorism problem under the name of the PKK, supported by outsiders seeking to divide the country (Jung, 2002: 128). In another interview, with the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, he would declare: “they [the PKK] speak of cultural autonomy, but everyone knows very well that they want independence. Turkey has been sufficiently divided after the First World War, we would never accept another attempt against our [territorial] integrity” (1999). This discourse continued throughout 1999 and 2000, enhanced by Turkish military operations in Northern Iraq and the announcement of an increase in spending on new military equipment in April 2000 (Gunter, 2000: 866). According to a *Defense Weekly* article, Turkey started, during this period, a modernization process that would cost more than \$70bn over a 15-year period (Rouleau, 2000).

For *Özgur Politika*, the newspaper close to the PKK, contrary to what happened in 1993 where Özal seemed engaged in finding a solution to the problem, in 1999 the PKK’s cease-fire was seen in Turkey as the mere consequence of Öcalan’s arrest and thus a symbol of the movement’s military defeat (Gerger, 1999). Indeed, in a visit to the Eastern province of Sivas, the Ministry for Agriculture would put the question in no uncertain terms: “Putting down their arms and moving abroad will not save the PKK, we will grab them by the ear and bring them back”, further adding that Öcalan peace calls “comes from the separatist bandit’s misery and baseness” (Bryant, 8/08/1999).

This understanding of the cease-fire as a sign of weakness rather than a sign of potential political compromise would be maintained until the resumption of hostilities between the Turkish state and the PKK.

At the same time clashes between the Turkish Armed Forces and the PKK continued in the Southeast, particularly against splinter groups of the PKK. The news that arrived were nonetheless unclear:

It appears that the PKK is still controlling the activities of Hamili Yildirim, whom the PKK's so-called Executive Committee had claimed they no longer had any ties with since he had made the decision not to leave Turkey following the cease-fire announcement and would carry on fighting for the terrorist organization's cause (TDN, 11/05/00).

In January 2000 the Turkish coalition government decided to postpone the decision regarding Öcalan's execution until the European Court of Human Rights considered the appeal of the PKK's leader. That decision would only come in 2003 and the trial was considered unfair. In 2002 Turkey had commuted Öcalan's sentence to life imprisonment without appeal. In an article in *Turkish Daily News* by Serdar Alyamaç in July 30, 2000, one could read:

The conflict in the region has nearly come to an end. The region is settling down. However, economic problems are beginning to emerge as it does so. The state is not yet inclined to lift Emergency Rule because of the fear of terrorism and it still perceives a potential threat in the region. However, it is possible to state that in the cities and settlements there is no armed conflict. But because of this potential threat people still have to live under these rules. Lifting Emergency Rule would in no way affect the state because the military already controls the rural areas and can guarantee security there and fight the PKK without the need for Emergency Rule which is psychological oppression of people living in OHAL cities.

Only in 2002 would that happen, although the village guards system was kept and the military presence remained quite high. This, despite polls showing that from 1998 to

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## The Turkish-Kurdish Peace Process

Michael M. Gunter

During the summer and fall of 2009, the continuing and often violent Kurdish problem in Turkey<sup>1</sup> seemed on the verge of a solution when the ruling *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party) or AK Party (AKP)<sup>2</sup> government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul announced a Kurdish Opening. Gul declared that "the biggest problem of Turkey is the Kurdish question" and that "there is an opportunity [to solve it] and it should not be missed."<sup>3</sup> Erdogan asked: "If Turkey had not spent its energy, budget, peace and young people on [combating] terrorism, if Turkey had not spent the last twenty-five years in conflict, where would we be today?"<sup>4</sup> Even the insurgent *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK) or Kurdistan Workers Party, still led by its imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan, briefly took Turkey's Kurdish Opening seriously.<sup>5</sup> For a fleeting moment optimism ran rampant. That optimism, however, would ultimately go unfulfilled. What happened?

The Kurdish Opening failed to live up to expectations because of roadblocks it encountered before it had a chance to get off the ground. Decades-old resistance to decentralization and an unwillingness to negotiate seriously with the PKK additionally worked to undermine the stated goals

**Michael M. Gunter** is a professor of political science at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee and the author of numerous critically praised scholarly books on the Kurdish question, the most recent being *Kurdish Historical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 2011; and *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey*, 2nd ed., 2011. Currently he also is the secretary-general of the EU Turkey Civic Commission, an NGO promoting further democratization in Turkey to facilitate its accession to the EU.

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of the Kurdish Opening. This article will provide historical background to the recent efforts as well as a timeline of the government's initiatives and the Kurdish response regarding the Kurdish Opening. The question of why the Opening has failed to date will be examined. Recent developments including the civil war in Syria, which suggest that some possibility for progress on the Kurdish question remains, will also be discussed. Finally, the article puts forth recommendations to facilitate progress on finding a political settlement between the Turkish government and the PKK.

**Historical Background.** The effort to solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey is not new. It has been ongoing since the PKK—formally founded on 27 November 1978—began its violent uprising on 15 August 1984.<sup>6</sup> Over the years the PKK goals have evolved from initial plans to establish an independent Marxist state to its current goals of recognition of Kurdish political, social, and cultural rights within a decentralized Turkey. However, the Turkish government has long considered the PKK a terrorist movement, a designation accepted by its allies, the United States and the European Union. As a result, in most cases the efforts to achieve peace amounted to attempts to impose it by military means and thus until recently did not include any meaningful political reforms.

Nevertheless, over the years, the PKK had declared numerous unilateral cease-fires with the stated intention of having them lead to peace negotiations. In most cases Turkey ignored these, deeming them mere signs of PKK

weakness and imminent defeat.<sup>7</sup> The only important exception occurred in March 1993 when then-Turkish President Turgut Ozal appeared close to accepting one of these PKK cease-fire offers to negotiate. Ozal's sudden death on 17 April 1993, however, ended this effort and even heavier fighting soon ensued.

In October 1998 increasing Turkish military pressure forced PKK leader Ocalan out of his safe house in Syria and led to his eventual capture by Turkish commandos in Nairobi, Kenya on 15 February 1999.<sup>8</sup> At this time, Ocalan's capture seemed to end the conflict. The PKK declared another cease-fire and withdrew its forces from Turkey into the largely inaccessible Kandil Mountains in northern Iraq bordering Iran. However, Turkey continued to dismiss PKK offers to negotiate and demanded what amounted to a total surrender. By the summer of 2004, violence had begun again and gradually escalated to the situation analyzed in this article as the Kurdish Opening.

**Initial Problems.** The Kurdish Opening was hobbled almost from the start. Despite initiating the effort, the AKP quickly demonstrated that it had not sufficiently thought through its Kurdish Opening and then proved rather inept at implementation. Specific proposals were lacking. Despite AKP appeals to support its Kurdish Opening, all three parliamentary opposition parties declined to participate. The CHP (Kemalists or Nationalists) accused the AKP of "separatism, cowing to the goals of the terrorist PKK, violating the Constitution, causing fratricide and/or ethnic polarization between

başarı  
yaklaşım  
bir bors  
süreci

Diger  
Türk-sol  
gruplarıyla  
aynı hedef  
Dev-401,  
Dev-301  
70lerde diger  
Marxist gruplar  
da siddet  
kullaniyodu

AKP süre  
destekler  
CHP, MH  
reddetti  
CHP'nin  
nederi  
neydi?

PKK's  
goal

Establishment  
of an independent  
Marxist - Kurdish  
state



Recognition of  
Kurdish culture, language et  
and establishment of  
decentralized Turkey (in south  
region)

Kurds and Turks, being an agent of foreign states, and even betraying the country.”<sup>9</sup> The MHP (Ultra Turkish Nationalists) “declared AKP to be dangerous and accused it of treason and weakness.”<sup>10</sup> The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party’s (DTP) refusal to condemn the PKK, as demanded by the AKP, ruled out its participation.<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister Erdogan himself began to fear that any perceived concessions to the Kurds would hurt his Turkish nationalist base and future presidential hopes.

The PKK’s “peace group” gambit on 18 October 2009 to return home to Turkey thirty-four PKK members from northern Iraq also backfired badly. Huge welcoming receptions met these Kurdish expatriates at the Habur

or Peace and Democracy Party quickly took the DTP’s place, coming when it did, the state-ordered banning of the pro-Kurdish DTP could not have come at a worse time and put the kiss of death to the Kurdish Opening. In addition, more than 1,000 BDP members and other Kurdish notables were placed under arrest for their supposed support of the PKK, yet another body blow to the Kurdish Opening.<sup>12</sup> Soon the entire country was ablaze from the fury that had arisen and the Kurdish Opening seemed closed. The mountain had not even given birth to a mouse, and the entire Kurdish question seemed to have been set back to square one, in the words of DTP leader Ahmet Turk.<sup>13</sup>

Other problems also surfaced. In May 2010, the Kurdistan National

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**Despite initiating** the effort, the AKP quickly demonstrated that it had not sufficiently thought through its Kurdish Opening.

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Border Crossing between Turkey and Iraq, and later again in Diyarbakir, a heavily ethnic Kurdish city. These celebrations appeared to even moderate Turks as a PKK victory rally. The “peace group” affair, in particular, suggested that the government had not thought through the implications of its Kurdish Opening and could not manage its implementation let alone its consequences.

A few weeks later on 11 December 2009, after mulling for more than two years, the Constitutional Court decided to ban the DTP on account of its close association with the PKK. Although the *Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi* (BDP)

Congress (KNK), an arm of the PKK, charged that since April 2009, more than 1,500 politicians, human rights advocates, writers, artisans, and leaders of civil society organizations had been arrested. In addition, 4,000 children had been taken to court and 400 of them imprisoned for participating in demonstrations. Osman Baydemir, the popular ethnic Kurdish mayor of Diyarbakir, was scheduled to go to court on charges of “membership in a terror organization,” while Muharrem Erbey, the vice chairman of the Human Rights Association (IHD), Turkey’s largest human rights organization, had already been imprisoned. Jess

Hess, an American freelance journalist, had been deported for reporting critically on human rights abuses against the Kurds.<sup>14</sup> The Kurdish Opening seemed stillborn.

**Renewed Hope.** All hope was not lost, however. The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), a leading Turkish think tank, stepped forward with recommendations on how to reopen the seemingly closed Kurdish Opening.<sup>15</sup> Their recommendations were six-fold. Firstly, the references to Turkish identity and Turkishness in many laws and the Turkish constitution do not comply with the multi-ethnic structure of Turkish society, it argued. These constitutional references should be changed despite the dictum

be corrected. Fifthly, the education law needs to be changed because it presently reflects "the ideological and monist education understanding of the state." Finally, TESEV recommended that the law on provincial governance, which has been the basis of changing the Kurdish names of many locations and the laws on surnames and the alphabet, which prevents Kurds from using their language freely, should be adjusted.

Although TESEV's proposals seemed appropriate for the situation, in the context of Turkish politics they were not. Since the inception of the Turkish Republic in 1923 as a strictly Turkish national state, there has been no room for other nations such as the Kurds. Indeed, the belief was that to grant the Kurds even a little would

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## Another problem for the Kurdish Opening remained the question of with whom among the Kurds the government could negotiate.

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in Article 4 of the current constitution that they "cannot be changed; changing them cannot even be suggested." Secondly, laws regarding political parties and the ways deputies are elected need to be altered, as they are "incompatible with the principles of democracy and the state of law." Thirdly, Article 301 of the Turkish penal law on "insulting Turkishness" and Article 318 regarding criticism of the military prevent freedom of speech in Turkey and need to be deleted. Fourthly, the Anti-Terror Law (TMY) protects the security of the state at the expense of freedom and security of individuals. This too should

open the floodgates to partitioning Turkey. Therefore, the only solution to the Turkish problem could be repression and/or assimilation of the Kurds. Although this traditional Turkish thesis has been rephrased in recent years—especially given Turkey's application for membership in the European Union (EU)—TESEV's proposals were problematic at best.

Another problem for the Kurdish Opening remained the question of with whom among the Kurds the government could negotiate. Although even Turkish observers recognized that "Ocalan and the PKK have legitimacy among a con-

siderable portion of the Kurds despite all the state's efforts to discredit them," it would be difficult for the government to negotiate with them given the government's designation of the PKK as a terrorist organization.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, secretive talks with Ocalan were already taking place.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, other high-ranking PKK leaders were talking with Turkish intelligence officials from the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) in Oslo.<sup>18</sup> Although these secretive negotiations ceased once they became public, they aroused considerable optimism, even despite the ensuing Turkish nationalist pressures following the national elections on 12 June 2011 and the renewal of violence.

**Ocalan's Proposals.** Although Ocalan's 160-page roadmap for solving the Kurdish problem was confiscated by the government in August 2009 and therefore never officially submitted, the basics of his proposals are known based on his testimony at his trial for treason in 1999<sup>19</sup> as well as from subsequent statements.<sup>20</sup> The imprisoned PKK leader has proposed a democratization and decentralization of the Turkish state into what he has termed at various times a "democratic republic," "democratic confederalism," "democratic nation," or "democratic homeland." Such autonomy and decentralization would be based on the guidelines already listed in the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted in 1985 and presently ratified by forty-one states including Turkey—albeit with numerous important conditions—and the European Charter of Regional Self-Government, still only in draft form. Thus, one might argue that by giving

the Kurds self-government, Ocalan's proposals would be bringing Turkey into conformity with EU guidelines. Such a system of local autonomy or proto-federalism had some precedent in the former Ottoman Empire. Ethnicity, however, would form the basis of the proposed system instead of religion.

The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Congress's (DTK) December 2010 proposed solutions, however, appalled the AKP and proved to be a non-starter for the Turkish government. Meeting in Diyarbakir in December 2010, the DTK outlined a plan for democratic autonomy that included: Kurdish as a second official language; a separate Kurdish flag; a Marxist-style organizational model for Kurdish society; and a vague proposal for "self-defense forces" that would be used not only against external forces but also against the subjects of the so-called democratic autonomy initiative who were not participating in what was called the "struggle."<sup>21</sup>

Such radical decentralization, as proposed by the PKK, BDP, and DTK, goes against a central tenet of the Turkish Republic: strong centralization. Even though other strongly centralized states, such as Britain, have successfully used decentralization reforms both to satisfy local particularisms as well as to check possible demands for future independence, such a proposal remains highly controversial in Turkey.

**Renewed Problems.** Although the AKP won nearly 50 percent of the popular vote or 326 seats while the BDP and its allies won a record 36 seats in the parliamentary elections held on 12 June 2011, new problems soon arose

and hopes for a renewed and more successful Kurdish Opening quickly foundered.<sup>22</sup> Shortly after the election results had been announced, the newly elected BDP members of parliament began to boycott parliament in protest over the jailing of five of their elected colleagues, while a sixth (the well known Hatip Dicle) was stripped of his seat for "terrorism" offenses.<sup>23</sup> The Turkish judiciary declined to free any of the six BDP politicians or the numerous other local members of the KCK, a pan-Kurdish umbrella group, still imprisoned for reputed links to the PKK. Newly re-elected Prime Minister Erdogan seemingly turned his back on an earlier promise to seek consensus on the drafting of a new constitution that would help solve the Kurdish problem, broke off contact with the BDP, and continued to declare that the Kurdish problem had been solved and only a PKK problem remained. How could the new AKP government begin to solve the Kurdish problem when it refused to deal with its main interlocutor?<sup>24</sup>

A few weeks after the election on 14 July 2011, the DTK, the umbrella pro-Kurdish NGO, proclaimed "democratic autonomy," a declaration that seemed wildly premature and overblown to many observers and which infuriated Turkish officialdom. Amidst mutual accusations concerning who had initiated the renewed violence and warlike rhetoric, on 17 August 2011 the Turkish military initiated several days of cross-border attacks on reputed PKK targets in northern Iraq's Kandil Mountains.<sup>25</sup> The Turkish government claimed to have killed one hundred Kurdish rebels, while the PKK maintained that it had lost only three fighters

and that seven Iraqi Kurdish civilians had been killed.<sup>26</sup>

Violence erupted again several months later on 19 June 2012 when the PKK attacked Diglica, a Turkish outpost near the Iraqi frontier, and killed eight soldiers while wounding another sixteen.<sup>27</sup> The same outpost had been hit five years earlier, suggesting that the Turkish government had not made progress in controlling the violence, which many Turkish observers saw as a result of the state's failure to negotiate with the PKK.

Others argued, however, that even more, the ultimate problem was the inherent ethnic Turkish inability to accept the fact that Turkey should be considered a multi-ethnic state in which the Kurds have similar constitutional rights as co-stakeholders with the Turks. Moreover, during 2011 and 2012, the Turkish government continued to arrest leading intellectuals for alleged affiliations with the KCK/PKK.<sup>28</sup> Many of those arrested were also affiliated with the BDP. Those arrested included a well-known publisher Ragip Zarakolu and the prominent female Kurdish leader and BDP Member of Parliament Leyla Zana. This silencing of pro-Kurdish voices as constitutional debates go forward, following the AKP's 2011 electoral victory, undermines attempts at serious political reforms vis-à-vis the Kurds.

**Recent Developments.** Recent events offer cautious hope that the time to renew the dialogue and resume direct negotiations between the Turkish government and the PKK may have arrived. In late October 2012, Zaman, a respected news outlet, reported that the

government was "preparing to launch a new initiative to deal with the Kurdish problem to hopefully pave the way for arms to be buried for good."<sup>29</sup> The *Zaman* report went on to say that the government had learned from the past what steps would not work. It concluded cryptically that "therefore, actors and factors that had a part in the previous peace process will not be included in the new process, while for some other actors the government will reach a decision based on observation of the present attitude of those actors."<sup>30</sup>

Turkey's ongoing support for the Sunni Kurdistan Regional Government in Northern Iraq as well as the potential for it to play a role as a mentor to

If autonomy proved to be the way to resolve the Kurdish problem in Iraq and Syria, more democracy, language rights, and decentralization embodied in a new, more democratic Turkish constitution would arguably be the way to resolve the Kurdish problem in Turkey.

In late October 2012, Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Turkey's south-eastern Kurdish-populated region, led to speculation that he would start a new Opening to solve the Kurdish problem. Erdogan had already said he was ready to relaunch talks with Ocalan. Indeed, Erdogan even declared that the Turkish intelligence service could "do anything at any moment. . . . For example, if it

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## **One reason** for Erdogan's newfound interest in reopening Turkey's closed Kurdish Opening might be the Turkish local elections to be held in 2013.

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protect the interest of Syrian Kurds in the wake of the civil war in Syria could also provide the Turkish government further impetus for making progress in dealing with its own Kurdish population. Support for Syrian Kurdish rights might offer a hedge against further instability from embattled Syria. More immediately, a buffer zone on Turkey's southern border with Syria might better control the increasing spillover of destabilizing refugees into Turkey from the Syrian civil war.

Such an imaginative Turkish policy of mentoring two small Kurdish statelets on its southern border could only work if Turkey made peace with its own disgruntled Kurdish population.

is necessary to go to Imrali [the location of Ocalan's prison] tomorrow, I will tell the [intelligence services] chief to go ahead."<sup>31</sup> Hasip Kaplan, a leading BDP member of parliament, actually suggested that new negotiations were already underway: "I presume that talks on Imrali have started anew."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, by January 2013, it was clear that the Turkish government had reopened its closed Kurdish opening and tentative negotiations with Ocalan had begun.<sup>33</sup> The sudden murder of three PKK activists in Paris on 10 January 2013, appeared to be an attempt to sabotage these negotiations, but initial reactions seemed to indicate that both sides still were determined to proceed.<sup>34</sup>

One reason for Erdogan's newfound interest in reopening Turkey's closed Kurdish Opening might be the Turkish local elections to be held in 2013. Erdogan's AKP and the pro-Kurdish BDP were expected to be the main rivals

a sizeable number of Turkey's ethnic Kurds have mostly assimilated into a larger Turkish civic identity. What is needed, however, is for the Turkish government to begin seriously talking with the most important, genuine rep-

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## The government should accept mother-tongue education and usage in courts, and drop its prosecution of Kurdish politicians, lawyers, and civil society leaders.

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for support in Turkey's southeastern Kurdish region. During the prime minister's recent visit to the area, he reminded the locals that his governing AKP was in a better position to provide basic services for them than the opposition pro-Kurdish nationalist BDP was. The immediate question was whether the national elections of 2007, when the AKP party prevailed over the BDP's predecessor, the DTP, in the region, or the 2009 local elections, when the DTP trumped the AKP in the region, would repeat itself.

**Recommendations.** Beyond halting its efforts at silencing Kurdish voices, the Turkish government should take concrete steps to seek a political solution to the Kurdish question and to revisit the Kurdish Opening. Radical decentralization of the kind in Britain that would be incompatible with modern Turkey's heritage may not be necessary. More than half of Turkey's ethnic Kurdish population does not even live in its historic southeastern Anatolian homeland, but rather reside scattered throughout the country, especially in cities such as Istanbul. In addition,

representatives of its disaffected Kurdish minority: the PKK.

If the Turkish government is going to resume negotiating with Ocalan and the PKK, it needs to cease labeling the PKK a terrorist organization and instead challenge it to negotiate peacefully. The terrorism appellation distorts the discussion and not only prevents the two main parties to the problem from fully negotiating with each other, but also prevents the EU from playing a stronger role in achieving peace.

The current 10 percent electoral threshold that makes it nearly impossible for pro-Kurdish political parties to win any seats in the Turkish parliament should also be lowered in line with current EU standards. In addition, the government should accept mother-tongue education and usage in courts, and drop its prosecution of Kurdish politicians, lawyers, and civil society leaders (the so-called KCK trials mentioned above) that were continuing into 2013.

**Conclusion.** What is going on in Turkey today appears to be an attempt to stifle Kurdish voices and impose a

unilateral Turkish solution to fundamental issues of security and the future of the country. The KCK/PKK arrests in particular look less like a war on terror and more like one on dissent. The Turkish government's announcement in June 2012 about initiating elective Kurdish language classes and the opposition CHP's statement of willingness to discuss the Kurdish problem with the government are less encouraging signs of progress than they might seem.<sup>35</sup> Private Kurdish language classes supposedly were made possible several years ago, and why should the CHP not dis-

cuss the Kurdish problem?

More importantly, the government still refuses to negotiate genuinely with the PKK. Unilateral Turkish attempts to solve the Kurdish problem with minor unsatisfactory gestures while ignoring or even trying to eliminate the other side, the PKK, will not work. Until the Turkish government truly accepts the PKK as a legitimate negotiating partner—along the lines of what Britain successfully did with Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the 1990s—it is doubtful whether a political solution to this continuing crisis can be reached.

#### NOTES

1 I remember fondly Christopher C. Joyner who for many years was a noted professor of international law at Georgetown University and a very generous friend. For recent analyses of the Kurdish problem in Turkey, see Mustafa Cosar Unal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey: Policy Choices and Policy Effects toward the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); and Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012). Also see Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden, eds., *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey* (2nd ed.; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Robert Olson, *Blood, Beliefs and Ballots: The Management of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey, 2007-2009* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2009); and Kerim Yildiz and Susan Breau, *The Kurdish Conflict: International Humanitarian Law and Post-Conflict Mechanisms* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), among others.

In addition, see the proceedings of the 7th international conference of the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC), "The Road to Peace: Facing the Challenge," November 17-18, 2010, European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium. See <http://www.mesop.de>, accessed on 15 July 2012. The EUTCC held its eighth annual conference "The Quest for Democracy in Turkey—Universal Rights and Kurdish Self-Determination and the Struggles over the New Constitution," EU Parliament, Brussels, Belgium on December 7-8, 2011; and its ninth annual conference "The Kurdish Question in Turkey—Time to Renew the Dialogue and Resume Direct Negotiations" on 5-6 December 2012. For some of these proceedings, see the MESOP web

site cite above.

2 For recent scholarly work on the AK Party (AKP), see Umit Cizre, ed., *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (London: Routledge, 2007); William Hale and Ergun Ozbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Banu Eligur, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Arda Can Kumbaracibasi, *Turkish Politics and the Rise of the AKP: Dilemmas of Institutionalization and Leadership Strategy* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Also see Michael M. Gunter and M. Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish Paradox: Progressive Islamists versus Reactionary Secularists," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 16 (Fall 2007), pp. 289-301.

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## THE TURKISH-KURDISH PEACE PROCESS

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11 Rusen Cakir, "Kurdish Political Movement and the 'Democratic Opening,'" *Insight Turkey*, no. 12 (Spring 2010), 185.

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14 "Resolution of the Tenth General Assembly Meeting of the Kurdistan National Congress KNK," Brussels, Belgium, 24 May 2010.

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2002, the percentage of Turkish citizens who viewed 'terror and security' as the greatest threats to the country had dropped from 39.3% to 5.5% (Somer, 2004: 236). One year later the PKK would declare the resumption of hostilities, and in 2004 the combats and attacks returned with some regularity (Romano, 2006: 59).

### **3. Turkey, the PKK and the failed desecuritisation of the conflict**

Despite the favourable context, some public optimism, and the presentation of initial 'objective' desecuritisation measures, such as the polls showing Turkish people as much less concerned with 'terrorism' as a security issue than in previous years, the armed conflict with the PKK was resumed within five years.

The partial end to violence produced some clear signs of desecuritisation from the part of the PKK. Independently of the motivations, the PKK's discourse became increasingly one of reconciliation rather than of conflict, and some of their claims were indeed approached by the Turkish state during the years of the cease-fire. However, those reforms were not encompassing enough for the PKK to consider that significant steps had been taken to tackle the Kurdish problems. It remains to be seen, though, to what extent the possibility of the Kurdish issue being effectively approached by the Turkish state without the recognition of the PKK as a legitimate political intermediary, together with the new regional context of the Iraqi war and the affirmation of the Kurdish autonomy in Northern Iraq, were not the 'real' reasons behind the movement's decision to resume the conflict. Whereas the latter issue could have worked as a facilitating condition, the persistent non-recognition of the PKK as a political actor seems to provide a good justification for the PKK's behaviour. As seen in previous chapters, the PKK has always defined itself as the legitimate representative of the Kurdish people in Turkey. Approaching the Kurdish problem without their

involvement would remove their *raison d'être* and demystify all the discursive construction of the movement. In that sense, for the PKK the desecuritisation of the Kurdish issue can only be done if they (the PKK) are desecuritized by the Turkish authorities.

The political recognition of the PKK is arguably the capital sin in Turkish politics. The demonization of Öcalan and its movement through a discourse of security led to the construction of the PKK as the total enemy, an enemy that can only be destroyed. This became a structural idea within the Turkish political discourse (as seen in chapter VI) that cannot easily be removed.

However, and returning to the second chapter of this thesis, in the same way the communal content at the genesis of the conflict was not about the Kurdish issue but about its construction by the PKK the issue that needs to be de-securitized is not just the Kurdish one but the PKK's version of it. As seen in chapter IV, this version includes the PKK as the legitimate representative of those claims, and thus a legitimate actor whose political importance in the process must be recognised.

#### *The AKP election and the possibility of change?*

The election of the AKP in November 2002 has, to a certain extent, led to some changes in this field. The AKP brought (or allowed to be brought) religion, tradition and ethnicity into the public realm, believing that would lead to the possibility of ending societal polarization in Turkey, particularly by using religious beliefs, in this case Islam, as a sort of 'social cement' (Yavuz, 2009: 173).

This is linked with a more general idea of re-shaping Turkish politics "along the identity and needs of civil society" (*idem*: 13). However, these reformist tendencies have collided, not only with Erdoğan's tendency to reject political compromise, but,

above all, with the structural, securitised institutions and practices of Turkish politics (chapter III).

Nevertheless, this openness has led to the undertaking of several measures regarding the Kurdish problem. Although in August 2002 the Turkish Parliament approved some fundamental changes, such as the end of the death penalty in time of peace or the right to broadcast and learn languages other than Turkish, the most important changes would come with the election, in November, of Justice and Development Party (AKP) in November. The emergency zones created since 1987 to battle the PKK insurrection would be progressively dismantled until 2003<sup>42</sup>. After some problems related to its implementation, the August 2002 and 2003 reforms were finally transferred into practice in 2004: the torture, arbitrary imprisonment and persecution cases have drastically diminished; and the displaced populations have, slowly, started to return to their lands, supported by a government programme especially conceived for those displaced from the Turkish Southeast. In parallel, Kurdish languages could finally be taught in private schools and broadcasted on television. Nonetheless, these measures are still far from being entirely implemented.

Numerous problems remained in the still strongly militarized Southeastern region. Almost 60,000 'village guards' – militias paid and maintained by Ankara – are still active, despite the numerous accusations of human rights violation, criminality and corruption. The political problems remain, with the Democratic Societal Party (DTP) being persecuted and frequently harassed by Turkish authorities<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> However, according to the IISS (2002: 169), in March 2002 Ankara extended the state of emergency in 4 of its provinces, two and a half years after the PKK's cease-fire.

<sup>43</sup> At this point (July 2009) it is not clear whether the Constitutional Court will not close down the DTP, as the case is still being under the analysis of the court.

## **Conclusion**

From 1999 until 2004, Turkey had the possibility of solving its armed conflict problem with the PKK. However, it did not manage to do so. It would be too much of a coincidence that the PKK's return to arms was at a time when the regional context (war in Iraq) allowed for the undertaking of armed action. The discourse underneath the resumption of hostilities is far from the one that led to the original escalation in violence. Discursively speaking, the PKK is no longer fighting for the same goals it was 25 years ago. However, it is still fighting. At the same time, the general political discourse in Turkey seems to have started to change during this period, with more recent trends (AKP attempts to break some of the political taboos regarding the Kurdish issue) further contributing to that notion of change.

According to Fuat Keyman, five recent developments in Turkish politics and society should lead to the understanding that the country is moving away from the old Kemalist structures, destroying the barriers between people and elites; between democracy and nation: the February 2001 financial crisis and resulting Turkey-IMF negotiations leading to a better regulation of the market, the election of the AKP, the changing nature of Turkey-EU relations, the change in the relation between Ankara and Washington after the 'Iraqi crisis', and finally the increasing importance of civil society in Turkey (2007: xxiv). For Hakan Yavuz, these changes, together with rapid social changes (urbanization, spread of higher education and higher degree of social mobility), are redefining "the meaning of state, national identity, secularism and political community" (2009: 267).

The fact that the PKK did not take these changes into consideration says as much about the lack of opportunity to find a pacific solution from the part of the Turkish authorities, as it says about the lack of interest on the part of the PKK to wait and see,

particularly with the general opportunity opened by the Iraqi instability. Once again, both the difficulty in de-securitising the PKK and the regional context were strong factors that worked against the possibility of peace.

## Conclusion

This project had as its starting point the idea that Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflict model was a largely forgotten, but extremely useful tool in understanding contemporary conflicts, which nonetheless suffered from some of the major problems affecting the general field of Peace and Conflict Studies. It was too objectivist in the way it approached some of the conflict features – such as the central importance of 'real' human needs – as well as too focused on its applicability to contexts of underdevelopment and state weakness. Furthermore, it lacked the incorporation of contributions from outside Peace and Conflict Studies, particularly in what concerns the understanding of the political dimension of these conflicts.

As argued, these were faults in Azar's model that were not necessarily exclusive to his model, but rather part of an identified larger trend in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, a discipline too oriented towards the empirical, and to the finding of exact results and solutions. The critical voices of the 1960s and 1970s that influenced developments in other fields such as Sociology or Security Studies were now mainstream discourses – such as Galtung's structural violence (1996) – constantly reproduced, but no longer in search of new frontiers.

As shown in chapter I, only in recent years have some authors been trying to work on the constitutive meanings associated with the discipline and its practices: authors such as Vivienne Jabri, influenced by the works of philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben or Cordula Reimann, who advanced a critique of Azar's model from a feminist point of view. To contribute to this emerging literature was thus a major objective of this thesis.

By taking Azar's Protracted Social Conflict model as the object of inquiry, I have tried to show how a more critical stance on the model would allow for a refocusing on the political discourses of security, rather than on human needs, and how that refocusing had to take into consideration the socially constructed character of politics and conflict.

The Copenhagen School of Security Studies was in that context the chosen door opener for the insertion of theoretical contributions outside Peace and Conflict Studies in the updating of Azar's model. Through its securitisation theory it was possible to establish the link between security and conflict as eminently political phenomena, with the latter deriving from the former. In that sense, conflicts as political phenomena, and PSCs in particular, could only be understood within a politically constructed security discourse.

These understandings – the social construction of reality and of conflicts as securitised politics – had obvious implications to Azar's model, since they not only implied the introduction of new dimensions to his model, but also a different understanding of most of the conflict clusters he had identified.

In this concluding chapter, the first section will focus on the result of this reconfiguration of Edward Azar's model, summarising the main points developed throughout the thesis and proposing a new diagram for the analysis of Protracted Social Conflicts.

Throughout this theoretical endeavour, some new concepts were also created, such as: 'rebel Darwinism' (chapter I), post-securitisation 'discourse of control' (chapter III), and international securitisation (chapter VII). Section II will explore the significance of these concepts as well as of other topics developed throughout the thesis that could not be summarised in one concept, but that could certainly provide a valuable

contribution for ongoing theoretical debates, particularly those related with the development of securitisation theory.

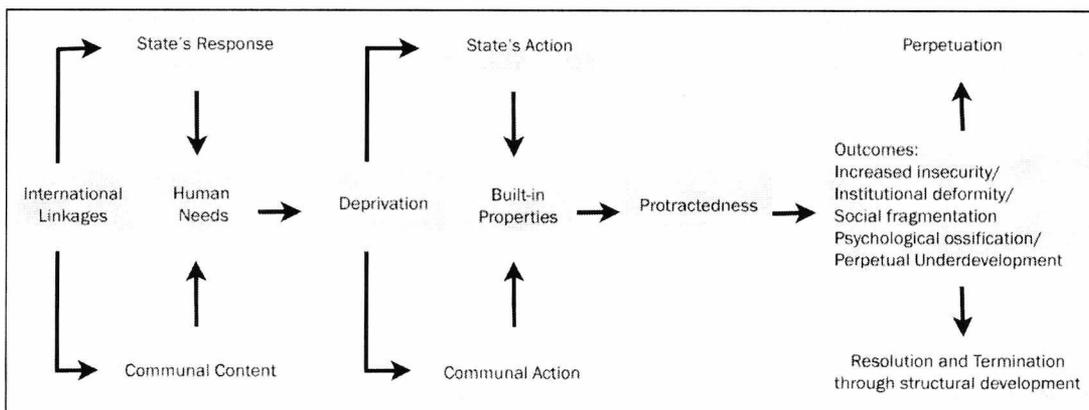
Another important, but not central, feature of this thesis was the analysis of the Turkey-PKK conflict. It not only was suitable to ‘operationalise’ some of the concepts and ideas developed in the theoretical chapters, as it hopefully also shed some new light on the understanding of this conflict. The third section of this chapter will therefore focus on what I would argue are the most relevant conclusions to take from the analysis of the case-study.

Finally, as part of the academic *praxis*, the chapter will conclude by highlighting questions and topics left unanswered that could provide a basis for the development of new lines of research.

### 1. Updating Azar’s Protracted Social Conflict model

The critical ‘update’ of Edward Azar’s Protracted Social Conflict model was made on the basis of a progressive line of thought that started off with ‘excessive’ objectivity (even if open enough to allow for a dynamic understanding of conflicts) found in the way the different clusters were defined and articulated, as can be seen in diagram 2.

Diagram 2. Edward Azar’s model



Thus, this thesis' approach began with the definition of the ontological, epistemological and methodological settings from which the model could be revised. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, a socially constructed understanding of the world in which discourse defined such construction was the basis for the theoretical engagement with Azar's model. In that sense, the question that cut across chapter I was, *what are the implications of a socially constructed world for the Protracted Social Conflicts's model?* Almost all the clusters and phases were in one way or another touched by this clash between a world of objective reality, and a world in which what we know is inter-subjectively constructed through discourse. In the genesis of the conflict, it was seen how the *communal content* should not be about the existence of different communities, but about the way in which they were politically 'imagined' by their representative leaderships – incorporating in their discourse, both the colonial legacy and the 'historical patterns of rivalry' that in Azar's model is taken as objective, and that in the 'revised' version was a discursive construction, not necessarily subjective (rather, inter-subjective), but a construction nonetheless. Then, in the *human needs* cluster, it was argued that these human needs are indeed fundamental, but not exactly as defined by Azar. If the communal actors are constructed, so are the needs they portrayed as being unfulfilled. In that sense, the central issue here is not what the 'real needs' of a certain community are, but rather what is discursively constructed by the community's 'representatives' as being the needs that the state does not fulfil. Thus, the centrality of human needs in the understanding of Protracted Social Conflicts is still present in the 'revised' version of the model, but now defined as a contingent, politically dependent discourse. These human needs were presented as the key link between the state and the non-state actor,

as it is in the inter-play of these discourses of grievance that the conflict will either unfold or be accommodated by the state.

Regarding the latter, the major point raised in the *Governance and the State's Role* cluster was related to the underlying understanding of the 'state' in Azar's model. As argued in chapter I and further developed in chapter V, the focus on the private appropriation of the state apparatus by a single community is misplaced as it shows Protracted Social Conflicts more as inter-communal rivalries, than as a conflict between a state and a non-state actor, which, as seen in chapter V, has a constitutive importance in the way the conflict is labelled and unfolds. States and state actors have internal and external responsibilities – related to the ideas of sovereignty and international recognition – that, even if not fulfilled, will always be taken into consideration, and are usually part of the conflict discourse. That constitutive difference (that distinguishes PSCs from other types of inter-communal conflicts), as well as the potential extension of the model to be applied in contexts where states are not necessarily weak or privately 'owned', were the two main features introduced in this cluster.

Finally, in *international linkages*, chapters I and VII highlighted the point that the actors' relation with the exterior could go beyond the mere cliency and dependency patterns identified by Azar. It was argued that there is a much richer international context that the Copenhagen School's Regional Security Complex Theory can help to analyse, and that involves impacts in both directions – internal/external and external/internal – and not just uni-directional vertical relationships with the PSC actors at the bottom. It was also mentioned that these relations are not determining conditions for the conflict to unfold, but rather (again using the CS jargon) facilitating conditions that enable the actors to construct discourses in a more or less aggressive

way. The major two points highlighted in this topic were that a) the international is a much richer topic to explore than what is portrayed in Azar's model, and b) that context does not determine the actor's behaviour, it can only influence it. Otherwise the core argument sustaining the whole project – that actors are politically responsible for their actions – would be redundant.

When the inter-play between these factors (communal content, state's role and international linkages) is discursively constructed in an aggressive way by the political actors, leading to the escalation of the conflict, securitisation theory becomes an essential tool for analysing how the process moves from initial political claims to a full-fledged violent conflict. As presented in chapter III, securitisation provides the linking point between the genesis and the dynamics of the conflict, as the articulation of the discourses towards the other acquires an urgent character requiring the approval of specific exceptional measures that allow the problem to be solved.

Thus, the rebels' – as those that rebel against the state's monopoly of legitimate violence – and the state's actions are informed by this securitised character. The latter is a fundamental aspect in the understanding of these conflicts as political phenomena, since in the absence of this securitising discourse, Protracted Social Conflicts would be politically nonsensical as there would not be a justification for violent action in the absence of a security threat.

In addition to what was mentioned in the genesis phase regarding the construction of identities, the non-homogenous character of these imagined communities was highlighted in the *Community's Actions and Strategies*, in the sense that they tend to be the scenarios I referred to 'rebel Darwinism' (section II). In that sense, the rebels' actions and strategies can be simultaneously oriented towards other rebels and towards the state; this is relevant for the understanding of the rebels' construction of both their

community and the state, particularly when including the built-in properties of the conflict in the discourse. Contrary to Azar's approach, I have argued that these built-in properties – perceptions based on previous experiences – are important, but only insofar as they help legitimise some discourses over others (Jabri, 2007). In the construction of a conflict discourse there is a re-construction of history in which the latter fits the former rather than the other way around.

In chapter V it was argued that policies undertaken by both sides are related to a layered discursive structure, as defined by Ole Wæver (2002), that includes a set of political concepts that define what makes sense from what is nonsensical in political terms, and from which the construction of the 'other', mainly through the game of labelling, is undertaken. From this labelling process derives the specific policies that are approved in order to deal with the issue at stake. Thus, in both actors' strategies it is important to analyse how these processes evolve: both the labels in use and the policies derived from them.

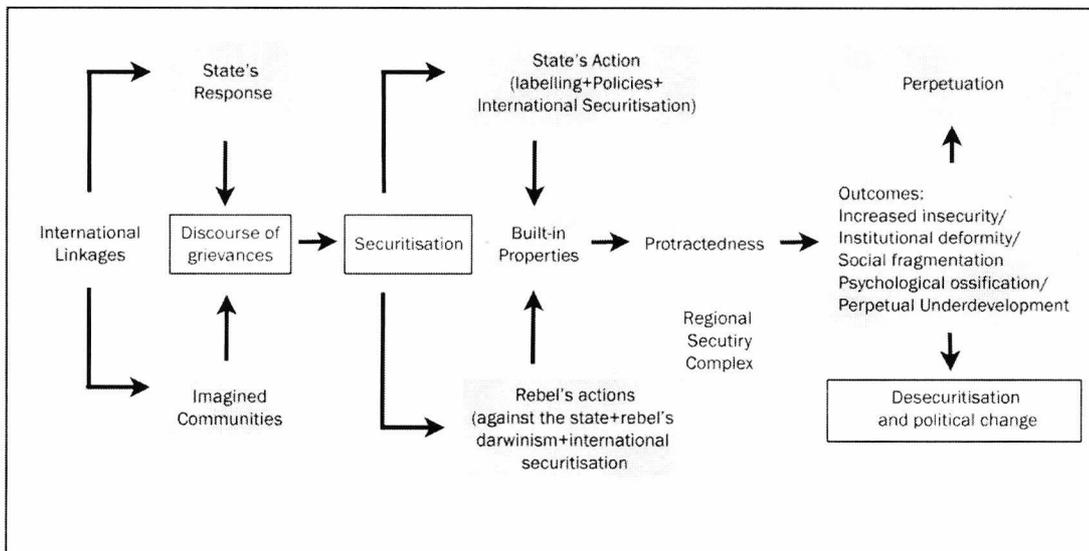
The condition of protractedness under which these conflicts develop leads to the 'routinization' of political and social practices that damage the way life is conducted in those contexts. Azar identified four main outcomes that led him to the conclusion that Protracted Social Conflicts end up resulting in lose-lose situations for all the parties involved. According to this author, they lead to the *deterioration of physical security*, to *institutional deformity*, to *psychological ossification* and to *increased dependency and cliency towards the exterior*. Regarding the first of these elements, it was argued that despite the material character of violence, its political importance is conditioned by the way in which that destruction and violence is inserted into the conflict discourse. In that sense, violence could be hidden or over-emphasised when compared with what 'really happened'. As for institutional deformity, chapter III dealt in more

depth with the topic when it considered the normalisation of the exceptional, in which the exceptional measures approved to wage the conflict become part of the normal functioning of the political system as the conflict drags through time. This led to the same type of conclusions Azar reached, regarding the increased difficulty in reaching a political solution for the conflict, as the parties were increasingly defined along incompatible lines. The third outcome highlighted by Azar – *Psychological Ossification* – was tackled with great scepticism due to the difficult relation between private and public in a conflict context. As put in chapter I, it is an important topic, but one that should only be regarded when this psychological dimension was intersubjectively understood as ‘real’, and thus part of the discourse against the ‘other’. Finally, the international dimension deserved the same sort of criticism applied in the genesis section, as it once again focused on cliency and dependency relations.

From these outcomes, Azar identified two main consequences: either the further perpetuation of the conflict, which *a priori* would lead to the constant worsening of these outcomes, or its resolution with the promotion of a structural development approach that would fulfil the community’s human needs. This approach is coherent with Azar’s underlying understanding of the conflict as being one about development. As highlighted in chapter IX, even though underdevelopment might be a facilitating condition for the conflict to endure, it is only relevant for the conflict when translated into the political discourse. Thus, in the same way we must look into how a conflict is politically constructed through a discourse of security, it is necessary to look at those same elements in order to try to solve it. In that sense, what I propose is an approach that takes into consideration the need to end violence (due to an Arendtian understanding of the relation between violence and power) and the promotion of desecuritisation steps (with the help of the Copenhagen School) within a context of

political change. That should hopefully lead to the transformation of the conflict, moving it away from an ‘antagonistic’ and towards an ‘agonistic’ context, hence bringing politics to the centre of its eventual resolution.

**Diagram 3. Edward Azar’s model revised**



As can be seen in diagram 3, the end result of our theoretical endeavour has thus produced a model that hopefully fits better with an understanding of the world as socially constructed; one in which politics is at the core of public life, where political actors are responsible for their decisions, even when constrained and influenced by their social and political context.

It is this centrality of politics that is the core of this research. As stated by Rob J. Walker, “Security cannot be understood, or reconceptualized, or reconstructed without paying attention to the constitutive account of the political that has made the prevailing accounts of security seem so plausible” (1997: 69). Indeed, as I hope was possible to see throughout this thesis, it is in the understanding of politics and security as inter-twined elements that it becomes possible to understand the unfolding of PSCs.

## 2. Conceptual contribution

Throughout this thesis I have advanced some new concepts that could have a positive contribution to both the study of conflicts and securitisation theory.

*Rebel Darwinism.* In the first chapter I advanced the concept of ‘rebel Darwinism’ as an important element to take into consideration when analysing the communal actors’ strategies and actions. This concept applies to the process whereby different groups fight each other (violently or non-violently) in order to acquire the monopoly of the community’s grievances discourse. It includes the definition of the friend/enemy along intra-communal lines, creating labels such as ‘traitors’ or ‘collaborators’ that will then be attached to the labels used against the state. This concept is important not only to understand which actors are or have been securitised, but also to understand the imagined community constructed by the hegemonic groups. Thus, PSCs become more than struggles between state and non-state actors, they become struggles between rebel movements that assert themselves with the task of representing their ‘community’ against an external threat that includes the state (otherwise it would not be a PSC), but that may go beyond it.

*Discourse of control.* In chapter III I advanced the concept of discourse of control within the post-securitisation context. This was not necessarily presented as a Foucauldian understanding of government and government techniques (with which this term is usually associated), but as a follow-up to the existential discourse that underlines a securitisation process. With the exception of the work undertaken by Juha Vuori (2003), post-securitisation processes have been largely understudied.

The discourse of control is a type of discourse that usually occurs after a securitisation process was successfully accomplished; it involves the maintenance of the securitising discourse structure (same referent object, same securitised other, same understanding

of the need for the approval of exceptional measures), under a different tone. The discourse is no longer about how a certain issue or actor is an imminent security threat, but rather about how the exceptional measures approved are leading to the control of the problem. Further research needs to be done on this specific issue, but I would argue that this concept is a useful trigger for the discussion about the politics of post-securitisation processes.

*International securitisation.* In chapter VII I put forward the concept of international securitisation as the process whereby a successful securitisation or just a securitising claim is upgraded in intensity in order to reach an international audience. These processes are the basis from which the relations between securitising actors and their regional security complex are publicly established (there is always the possibility of being undercover, but in that case they are politically irrelevant, as Hannah Arendt would argue). These processes vary according to the target audience, the character of the claim, the type of request and the form of reply. The combination of these points will define how that international securitisation is constructed, how it is received and what the involvement of the targeted audience is in the reply. In short, it is a crucial tool in understanding the regional and international relations of security.

Apart from these concepts, and apart from the general conclusions presented in the previous section, there were also a number of other theoretical contributions that resulted from this research. I would highlight four:

#### *The limits of PSCs*

After analysing the relation between state and non-state actors, and the issue of labelling in the context of Protracted Social Conflicts, chapter V focused on understanding the limits of these conflicts, the threshold beyond which social

phenomena deserve to be treated under different terms. As discussed, those limits are established by the extension of the labels used. When the securitised ‘other’ encompasses not only a rebel group, but a whole community leading to the approval of genocide policies, then it can no longer be a PSC as defined in this thesis, since the possibility of politics is completely eradicated from the conflict context – what is left is absolute enmity. This distinction is particularly important as the term ‘conflict’, mainly after the Cold War, is associated with some sort of ‘barbarian’ practices that occur in ‘non-civilised’ contexts. In that sense, the Rwanda genocide has for example been easily associated with other conflicts in the region, due to the geographical proximity, the similarity of issues, and the actors involved. However, such approach leads to either the criminalisation of all sorts of conflict or the legitimisation of practices, which do not intend to establish any new political space, rather to merely destroy it. By taking these limits into consideration, it is possible to distinguish social phenomena that, even if violent, are focused on creating new political spaces, from attempts to merely destroy the possibility of politics through the complete eradication of plural life.

### *The possibility of Arendt and Mouffe’s politics*

In chapter III the link between conflict, security and politics was discussed, leading to the debate on the limits of politics and of the political by referring to the works of authors such as Hannah Arendt, Carl Schmitt and Chantal Mouffe. Even though all these authors have the critique of liberal politics as a starting point, they all end up going in different directions, with Arendt focusing on the possibility of politics as the coming together of individuals to discuss in public; Schmitt highlighting the distinction of friend/enemy as the key aspect in understanding the political as a distinct

area of social life (distinct from economics, culture, society); and Mouffe underlying the distinction between ‘antagonistic’ and ‘agonistic’ politics.

The argument put forward in chapter III could be summed up in the idea that Chantal Mouffe’s distinction between ‘antagonistic’ and ‘agonistic’ politics could be seen as a bridge between Schmitt’s conflictual approach to politics and Arendt’s belief in its possibility. Mouffe does not deny the importance of individuals coming together in discussion (as long as there are winners and losers) nor does Arendt deny that conflict is part of politics. The bringing together of these three authors (Schmitt through Mouffe) allows for a richer view on politics and the political that shows both their limits and potentialities, while insisting on their central place in the undertaking of human life.

*The linkage between securitisation and the layered discursive approach*

Ole Wæver has produced relevant work in different, but inter-linked areas, such as European Studies, International Relations Theory, and Security Studies. It is not common however to see these works integrated, as they tend to be separated according to the discipline in question. There is obviously, on the part of this author, a common approach to these different areas that make it hard to understand why there is not more of an overlap between them. This is not the space to speculate on why this is the case, but rather to highlight how the discursive approach that Ole Wæver (2002) takes within the context of European Studies can be useful for the further elaboration and operationalisation of his securitisation theory.

As presented in chapter V, through an understanding of political discourse as composed of different layers – from abstract constitutive concepts of the polity to specific policies – Ole Wæver created a model for the analysis of political discourses

that involves following continuous discursive threads as the debate moves from the abstract and general to the specific and detailed. If we overlap the securitisation theory with this discourse analysis model it becomes possible not only to analyse the origins of the securitising discourse (which key concepts have been used and how?), but also to understand its quality (how is the security issue framed and who is included in that discourse?) as well as the policies – most likely exceptional – derived from the process (how are the policies defined and constituted?). Apart from bringing these two methods together, I have also added the game of labelling to the mid-level (issue definition) as fundamental for understanding the framing and the limits of Protracted Social Conflicts. Labelling, I have argued, brings an added value to the understanding of securitisation processes by particularly focusing on the words used to define the securitised issue/actor thus showing the quality of that securitisation. A rebel movement can be securitised whether it is labelled as a guerrilla movement or as a terrorist group. However, the use of these different labels implies different existential claims, and probably even different types of exceptional measures, with different consequences for the unfolding of the conflict. Thus the game of labelling illuminates what the mere acknowledgement of a securitisation process does not – the particular quality of each process.

### *Desecuritisation*

Regarding this largely unexplored topic of securitisation theory, there were two main issues in which it could be argued this thesis presented a valid contribution. First the issue of negative desecuritisations, and second the ‘problematic’ relation between minorities and desecuritisation.

The key to answer both questions relied on an understanding of desecuritisation as a long-term process that could only be considered successful when the previously

securitised issue had returned to the level of normal politics. Rita Floyd (2007) raised the question of potential desecuritisation processes resulting in the silencing of the issue altogether, just as President George W. Bush had done in the United States regarding the environmental agenda. Desecuritisation is understood in this context as the mere removal of the issue from the sphere of exceptional politics, without having a specific destiny. However, this understanding does not follow the Copenhagen School's Arendtian 'ethics' in which politics is at the centre of human life. In the same way a securitisation process is seen as (usually) problematic because it removes the possibility of politics (at least in its agonistic form), so must the desecuritisation process be related to a return to the political debate. In that sense, Bush's desecuritisation of the environment was not a desecuritisation at all, but a mere silencing process.

The second question, regarding the relation between minorities and desecuritisation, evolved from the debate between Paul Roe (2004; 2006) and Mati Jutila (2006). For the former, minorities or other communal groups need to securitise some 'other' in order to define their own identity and thus we can only talk of 'managing securitisations' rather than desecuritisations. On the other hand, for Mati Jutila identities are open processes that can be constructed and re-constructed without having to differentiate the group from the 'other'. As I argued in chapter IX the two authors' points are not incompatible if a desecuritisation process is understood as a long-term process. Paul Roe's case that minorities need to differentiate in order to exist is a strong argument, derived from many empirical examples. However, as Mati Jutila points out, identities are constructed and re-constructed and the 'other' that helped cement a certain collective identity can evolve or even disappear from the political discourse, opening the possibility for de-securitised minorities in the long run.

### 3. Turkey and the PKK

It was never the intention of this research project to provide an *in-depth, organised, and systematic* account of the conflict between Turkey and the PKK. As an illustrative example its place in the thesis was in a supporting rather than a leading role. As fascinating as this particular conflict is, an in-depth analysis of it would demand a much more thorough study of the conflict than what this thesis was capable of or supposed to offer. Using an *Arendtian* term, different features and aspects of this conflict were pearl picked, with each chapter (with exception to the relation between chapters II and IV) constituting a practical follow-up of the previous theoretical chapter, but with no necessary connection with the chronological order of the previous or following case study chapters. As a result, the first two case study chapters (II and IV) go from 1978 to 1990, while chapter VI goes from July 2006 until January 2008 and chapter VIII looks at the period between 2006 and 2007 (in that sense there is a short time overlapping between these last two chapters). Finally, chapter X focuses on the 1999 cease-fire, analysing the period immediately previous to it, the second half of 1998, and up until the return to hostilities in 2004.

The thesis did not provide a systematic study of the conflict, in the sense that particular questions (again, pearl picking) were chosen for being related to the theoretical chapter, rather than for fitting in an overall narrative of the conflict. Thus, whereas in chapters II, IV and X there is a balanced approach in terms of showing both sides of the conflict, in chapters VI and VIII that balance was sacrificed in order to illustrate better the relevance of the labelling process (chapter VI) and the international securitisation of the conflict (chapter VIII).

Notwithstanding these factors, the research put in each of these chapters, combined with the use of new approaches and prisms to the analysis of this conflict, allowed this thesis to provide a number of conclusions that can be seen as original contributions to the understanding of the Turkey-PKK conflict. I would highlight three of them in particular:

### *The double securitisation of the PKK*

By analysing both sides' discourses during the initial stages of the conflict, a mutual understanding of the PKK was discernible as a consequence of the volatile political climate that Turkey lived during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In that sense, when the PKK began its armed activity it was not defined by Ankara as a particular threat but rather as part of the general instability the whole country was going through; an instability that had been securitised by both the political and the military system and that resulted in a widely popular *coup d'état* by the Turkish Armed Forces (exceptional measures being approved). The PKK was thus operating under that exceptional framework, a rather aggressive one in which thousands of political dissidents were silenced, either by being arrested or killed. However, as the country became increasingly stable (or controlled) the PKK's actions became more visible and there was a transfer of the securitisation from the general instability Turkey was living in the early 1980s to the PKK in particular, with its specific jargon, policies and labels. The PKK became a clear enemy, and measures were approved in order to specifically tackle this threat.

This double securitisation was interesting to note in terms of the securitisation theory's application, that does not develop this possibility, and in terms of the conflict's unfolding *per se*, as it showed how both sides' discourses evolved from a more general

(and highly ideological) instability framework, to a more focused and 'ethnic' based one (the PKK by highlighting its Kurdish character, the state authorities by denying it while using the same jargon applied to previous Kurdish uprisings).

#### *The 'normalisation' of the conflict labels*

In chapter VI, when Ole Wæver's layered discursive structure was applied in greater depth to the conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, it was possible to understand how the labelling used against the PKK in recent years (2006-2008) had been transposed to the political sphere as part of the normal political discourse among political parties. There was (and still is) a constant reproduction of an aggressive political discourse that influences the way Turkey 'speaks' about the PKK, that ends up being influenced by the conflict as the words that are used to label other politicians (such as terrorist) are done with the intention of attaching the same meaning that is attached to when in reference to the rebel movement. It is not just about being a traitor or a terrorist, but about being a traitor or a terrorist just like the PKK. There is thus a clear normalisation of the exceptional in Turkish politics, derived from the conflict with the PKK that the layered discursive structure helped to highlight and that is relevant to the understanding of the direct and indirect damages this conflict inflicted on Turkish politics.

#### *The possibility of politics*

The central problem regarding the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state has firstly to do with the latter and only then with the former. As revealed in chapters IV and VI, Turkey as a securitised state has a very limited conception of what is possible and not possible in politics; of what makes sense and what is nonsensical. Those limits

are established by the constellation of key concepts derived from the inter-play between the Kemalist ideology, the role of the Turkish Armed Forces, and the general acceptance of exceptional measures as part of the political process. These concepts structure the political system in a way that limits the possibility of plurality, and thus the possibility of politics. For instance, as pointed out by Aylin Özman and Simten Coşar, “[w]hen analyzed critically it is possible to argue that on the scale of nationalism and the Kurdish issue center right and center left political parties have more common points than differences” (2007: 208). With such a limited understanding of what is possible in politics the policies regarding the PKK derived from the key political concepts were necessarily limited and narrow-minded. Thus, the conflict with the PKK is as much about the conflict itself as it is about the possibility of politics within the Turkish state. Without political change (chapter IX) that leads to the alteration of those concepts (and some of that change seems to be occurring with the ruling Justice and Development Party) it will be very difficult to find a positive solution for the conflict.

The PKK is obviously not immune to that change, and as discussed in chapters IX and X, both the persistent use of violence and the recurrent use of a ‘peace jargon’ attached to unreliable cease-fires have only contributed to the further postponement of any solution.

#### **4. Avenues for further research**

Underlying this whole thesis is the idea that it should be one among many works in the area of Peace and Conflict Studies that tries to be more self-reflexive, theoretical and more critical. In that sense, and if my argument stands, there is a whole ‘new world’ to

explore. Regarding the particular topics developed here, I would advance four main areas that would deserve further attention.

*Study of the discipline.* If Peace and Conflict Studies is to be more self-reflexive, it needs to start asking questions about itself, something that since the debates between Kenneth Boulding and Johan Galtung in the late 1970s, has rarely been part of the discipline's agenda – the *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation* is an exception to this, even though their focus has not encompassed the 'whole' discipline. What the future of the discipline is and how is it to relate to its International Relations, Sociology, Politics, and Security Studies 'brothers' are all questions that need to be debated on a much more regular basis.

*Securitisation and conflicts.* Even though it was a theme that ran across the vast majority of this thesis, the complexity of this relationship leads me to conclude that there are still a good number of issues to explore within this topic, particularly in the areas of post-securitisation and desecuritisation. Regarding the latter, it is particularly relevant to understand how political change and desecuritisation can be linked in order to promote the end of a violent conflict. This is something I tried to develop in chapter IX but which requires much more research as it implies the full mastering of a whole literature on social and political change, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

*The revised Protracted Social Conflicts model.* A whole thesis was indeed needed in order to update Azar's model according to a socially constructed world. The case study used did not provide an application of the model as such, but rather allowed the pinpointing, further explanation and operationalisation of some of the ideas developed in the theoretical chapters. In that sense, it is now necessary to use the model in the analysis of specific conflicts; not in order to validate or reject this revised model (that would go against the ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches

undertaken in this thesis), but rather to help make it more coherent while attempting to analyse those conflicts through prisms previously ignored or even rejected.

*Study on the Turkey-PKK conflict.* Even though it touched some original and relevant points regarding the conflict, this thesis was not a study focused on the conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK. A thorough study of the securitisation and unfolding of this conflict would not fit into the limits of this PhD thesis. I hope my research was a contribution in that direction, but the bulk of this work still needs to be done.

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