

Conflict, Violence, Terrorism, and their Prevention

Conflict, Violence, Terrorism,
and their Prevention

Edited by

J. Martin Ramirez, Chas Morrison
and Arthur J. Kendall

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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Edited by J. Martin Ramirez, Chas Morrison and Arthur J. Kendall

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We dedicate this book to all who work for
human rights, justice, and peace

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FOREWORD

Conflict, Violence, Terrorism, and their Prevention is dedicated “to all who work for human rights, justice, and peace.” Co-Editors J. Martín Ramírez, Chas Morrison, and Arthur J. Kendall have dedicated their professional lives to efforts to bring peace to those places in the world where strife, disharmony, violence, and deprivation are more the norm. I personally have come to know the contributions of Drs. Ramírez and Kendall and of Chas Morrison over the years through collaboration efforts leading to and participation in CICA/STR conferences in Europe, the United States, and South America.

Dr. Ramírez founded *Coloquios Internacionales sobre Cerebro y Agresión* (CICA) three decades ago in his efforts to identify correlates to aggression in the hopes of lessening and minimizing the impact of violence. His tireless efforts to impact the world in a positive manner have consistently been demonstrated through his university teaching, conference organizing, writing, leadership, collaboration building, and ongoing study.

Chas Morrison has worked in some of the most conflict affected countries of East Africa and South Asia, supporting people in their efforts to reconstruct their societies following civil conflict and destruction. He can testify to the importance of rebuilding dignity and social cohesion in fostering peace. His impact on development after destruction will deepen through his academic work and formal research in conflict and peace studies.

Dr. Kendall is a staunch advocate and promoter of active involvement in the furtherance of human rights in all countries, for all peoples, in all contexts. At every opportunity, Dr. Kendall disseminates information about conferences, calls for papers, talks, publications, and opportunities to be involved in efforts to bring the right of human dignity to all. He speaks eloquently and passionately in an effort to raise awareness and action.

Each co-editor focuses their professional interests and passions on the global community. Each realizes the value of and importance of vision through the many lenses allowed in interdisciplinary study. Through their professional, personal, and activist backgrounds, *Conflict, Violence, Terrorism, and their Prevention* brings together authoritative analysis,

reflection, and the seeds of remedy through an international, multidisciplinary collection of experts.

—Tali K. Walters
President, Society for Terrorism Research
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

PREFACE

The scientific study of conflict and violence is not a new endeavor. The International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA) was founded more than forty years ago, in 1972, gathering scholars and researchers interested in the topic from quite interdisciplinary origins: individual and social psychology, psychiatry, physiology, sociology, anthropology, animal behavior, criminology, international law, political science, pharmacology, child development, and education. A decade later, *Coloquios Internacionales sobre Cerebro y Agresión* (CICA) started bringing together researchers from multiple disciplines to focus multidisciplinary attention on this important field. The main characteristic of these CICA meetings throughout the world (almost forty in five continents to date) is precisely this comprehensive approach.

The serious consequences of September 11, 2001 revitalized research on an extreme form of violence: terrorism. In 2006, the Society for Terrorism Research (STR) was formed from the recognition of the need for a focused nonpartisan interdisciplinary organization that could promote the study of terrorism and disseminate information across disciplines throughout the world.

In 2006, CICA and STR joined forces to deepen the understanding of the complexity of factors involved with aggression and terrorism. Starting the following year, they organized seven annual international conferences in a row. Most of this book is a product of contributions presented at the 7th CICA-STR Conference in Burgas, on the Bulgarian Black Sea.

Peace and conflict studies have grown in stature as scholarly subjects in recent years. The academic environment has witnessed a conceptual expansion, broadening out from issues of traditional security and military strategy to include conflict transformation, human security, peacebuilding, and governance. There is now much greater awareness that peace and conflict depend on a vast range of factors, *inter alia*, inequality, human rights, arms control, international norms, psychological perspectives, and community mobilization processes. Particularly since the end of the Cold War, standards of what constitutes 'peace' have moved toward becoming universal. Violent conflict, far from being glorious, honorable, or one route to victory is increasingly reviled and despised. Constructive conflict management therefore consists not only in effective post-war rebuilding,

but particularly in preventing conflict occurring and in limiting its impact. Research in these fields has the practical aim of seeking to reduce the severity, frequency, and duration of conflict, of all types.

This volume brings together thirteen chapters drawn from a diverse group of international scholars representing nine countries: Canada, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Romania, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. This eclectic cast of authors approaches four main topics intimately related to aggression: conflict, violence, terrorism, and attempts toward their prevention.

The first section approaches conflict in three different situations. Ozcelik begins with a psychological analysis of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey. Pagani uses well-established psychological ideas to interpret interviews of Italian youngsters to find out their attitudes toward immigrants. Finally, Castilla presents a short synopsis of subjective reactions to a new circumstance in Spain: religious pluralism.

In the second section, another three chapters are dedicated to understanding violence. A theoretical introduction by Beyer reviews the relationship between inequality and violence. Martinez provides a broad overview of armed violence in Central Africa. In addition, a third chapter, by Morrison, focus on uses of suicide as protest, more specifically on Tibetan self-immolation suicides.

The three chapters in the third section discuss different aspects of terrorism. Rakisheva and Morrison analyze whether four acts of suicide by explosives in Kazakhstan might be considered terrorist acts. Barna discusses how failure to meet human rights agreements benefits terrorists. Hinsz and Betts show their preliminary work on public support for counter-terrorism expenditure.

The last section of this book addresses the prevention of conflict and violence. Carpintero-Santamaría uses her extensive knowledge on the topic to provide the reader with a sound explanation of the main factors affecting nuclear security. Checa proposes some insights into the prevention of direct violence in Latin America. Thiessen advances our understanding of post-conflict community reconciliation. In the final chapter, Ramírez gives some further insight into how education and using science to promote human rights can foster a culture of peace.

Many scientific societies have been actively studying aggression and violence for decades. Unfortunately, they are often unaware of other disciplines' work. We hope that this book will show the value of purposefully crossing disciplinary boundaries.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is a positive example of the constructive cooperation among the *Coloquios Internacionales sobre Cerebro y Agresión* (CICA) and the Society for Terrorism Research (STR), expressed in the organization of seven International Conferences. More specifically most of the contributions to this book emerged from the 2012 CICA-STR International Conference held at the Bulgarian Black Sea, in Burgas Bulgaria.

Our task force is grateful to all those many individuals who took time out of their busy academic and professional schedules to contribute to this book, doing research, and writing chapters. Several phases of editing were needed due in part to the international and interdisciplinary constellation of authors. This has been a time-consuming and laborious process, and we want to thank all of the contributors for their patience. Expressions of thanks are extended to all those who supported us by encouraging others to cooperate on our project and by putting the Burgas conference together, especially Tali Walters and Tatyana Dronzina.

The senior editor would also like to express his gratitude to and appreciation of the Hoover Institution that bore the brunt of the cost at Stanford University. He dedicated most of the time of his stay as a Visiting Fellow, in 2010-11 and in 2013-14, to the editing of this book and of a previous one *Radicalization, Terrorism, and Conflict*, both of them published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Finally, we are also grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for seeing merit in our project and for working with us on it.

J. Martin Ramirez, Madrid, Spain & Stanford, CA, USA
Chas Morrison, Coventry, UK
Arthur Kendall, University Park, MD, USA

EDITORS

J. Martín Ramírez, Professor at Universidad Complutense of Madrid, has advanced degrees in Medicine, Neurosurgery, Law, the Humanities, Education, and National Defense. He has an honorary doctorate from the University of San Francisco. He has served as an International Security Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, as a Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institute for War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University, and at the East-West Center in Hawaii. Dr. Ramírez is a leader in the field of aggression research from an interdisciplinary perspective. He has leadership roles in the Complutense Sociopsychobiology of Aggression Research Group, CICA, and the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA), the Spanish National Pugwash Group, and the Society for Terrorism Research (STR). His focus is on the biopsychic processes underlying feelings and expressions of aggression. He has studied such feelings in many different species, from birds and rodents to felines and primates. Within the human species, Dr. Ramírez has studied aggression from a cross-cultural perspective in many countries throughout the world (Europe, China, Iran, Japan, Southern Africa, South America, and Canada) and served as Visiting Professor and International Faculty Member at universities in Israel, France, Poland, Wales, Australia, Japan, Quebec, Germany, and the USA. Dr. Ramirez is the author of more than 400 scientific publications, including about 30 books, in nine languages. Dr. Ramírez is on the Editorial Board of several international journals, including the International Journal on World Peace, Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, Evolutionary Psychology, and The Open Criminology Journal. Among his multiple international honors, he is a Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science, and member of the Advisory Board of the Professors World Peace Academy and of the Society for Terrorism Research.

Chas Morrison is Research Fellow at the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies, Coventry University, UK. He has extensive experience in several conflict-affected countries in East Africa and South Asia, where he managed post-conflict reconstruction programs supporting populations emerging from protracted violence, in the fields of

infrastructure, livelihoods, education, governance, and peacebuilding. He has first-hand experience of the realities of post-war recovery and balancing the needs of traumatized populations and the international community. Mr. Morrison currently manages a Marie Curie IRSES project on leadership in conflict transformation and participates in another that examines the role of youth in conflict transformation. He holds degrees in Security Studies and Disaster Management and his research interests focus on civil conflict in South Asia and Tibet/China and post-conflict reconstruction.

Arthur J. Kendall is a political psychologist and a mathematical statistician. He has a PhD in Social Psychology and a BA in Philosophy. He specializes in applying social science methods and statistics to social and policy issues. For more 40 years, he has helped individuals and organizations: develop statistical and research capacity; design, implement, interpret, and review research and evaluation; explore existing data; and review submissions for conventions, journals, and books. Dr. Kendall retired in 2001 from a Senior Mathematical Statistician position after 22 years at the US GAO where he mentored evaluators working in National Security and International Affairs, Federal statistical activities, and Federal scientific activities on behalf of the US Congress. Before that, he was an Expert - Social Science Methods at the Statistical Research Division, US Census Bureau. He is a Fellow and active member of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues and of the American Psychological Association (APA). He served on its Task Force on the Psychological Effects of Efforts to Prevent Terrorism, and helped in the establishment of APA's Division 48, serving on the editorial board of its journal. He reviewed articles and did a massive editing of the book from an APA task force *Collateral damage: the psychological consequences of America's war on terrorism*. He has also been active in the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) since it started in 1978. Dr. Kendall is currently an Associate Editor for the journal *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict and Terrorism*, on the Advisory Board of the STR and on the editorial board for its journal, *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*. Dr. Kendall is also an active member of the Classification Society and the American Statistical Association (AMSTAT). He serves on its Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights, the section on Government Statistics, and is a founding member of the Section on Homeland Defense and National Security. He is a member of Statistics Without Borders where he provides consultation to governmental and non-governmental organizations working on human

rights and humanitarian issues. He provided methodological and editorial review for many of the chapters submitted for *Statistical Methods for Human Rights*. Finally, he represents the Capital Area Social Psychological Association on the Council of the Science and Human Rights Coalition of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (SHR/AAAS). This Coalition started the On Call Scientists system which puts together human rights NGOs and volunteer scientists from many disciplines. He volunteers to help those NGOs plan and evaluate their programs, explore existing data, and document issues regarding human rights.

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PART I

CONFLICT IN THREE COUNTRIES

CHAPTER ONE

KURDISH CONFLICT IN TURKEY: A PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICT ANALYSIS¹

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Outline

Abstract and Keywords

Introduction

Deep-rooted Sources of the Kurdish Conflict

A Psychological Approach to Analyzing the Conflict

Conclusion

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Short Biography

Abstract

This study aims to present psychological perspectives for analyzing conflict, violence, and aggression. The case of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey is used to apply psychological concepts to shed light on this deep-rooted and protracted ethnic conflict. It is assumed that the underlying reason for the Kurdish conflict is the denial of the basic human needs of Kurds and Turks in Turkey. The Kurds would like to see the satisfaction of their identity and recognition needs. The Turks emphasize their needs to

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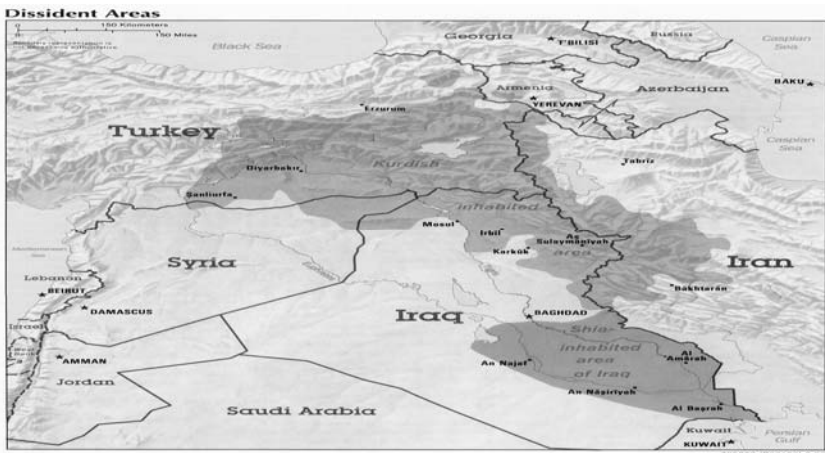
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be secure and remain intact. The escalation of the Kurdish conflict is also explained by psychological processes such as chosen trauma, conflict residue, psychological entrapment, and cognitive shortcuts. Also, the author introduces two new concepts, Iceberg Approach and Threshold Obstacle, to explain why de-escalating this conflict is hard. In the conclusion, it is suggested that the solution of the conflict requires multi-level and multi-approach analyses as well as conflict resolution techniques.

Keywords: Kurdish question, Turkey, conflict residue, psychological entrapment, cognitive shortcuts

Introduction

Since 1984, the Kurdish conflict in Turkey has put tremendous pressure on the Turkish state. At the heart of the Kurdish conflict in the Middle East is the desire of the Kurds to create an independent state. They live mainly in parts of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria (see map). The Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the world that has no state to call their own homeland (Radu, 2006; Moeller, 1999; Kirisci & Winrow, 1997).



The Kurdish conflicts in the Middle East overall, and in Turkey in particular, have been explained using a variety of scholarly perspectives. Since the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey have dealt with numerous Kurdish uprisings that are mostly based on religious, tribal, and economic factors. The current Kurdish conflict in Turkey, dating from 1984, has been a violent, chaotic, complex intra-state and

inter-state phenomenon. The deep-rooted, ongoing, and protracted conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK)³ has resulted in 30,000 – 40,000 deaths, 1 million internally displaced persons, and huge economic, social, environmental, and psychological damage in Turkey (Barkey & Fuller, 1998; Kaliber & Tocci, 2010; Kirisci & Winrow, 1997; McDowall, 1996). During the most intense period of the conflict in the 1990s, almost 3,000 villages were evacuated, 1.5 million children were without education, and 500 medical centers were forced to close down (Beriker-Atiyas, 1997). At that time, Turkey's military build-up in the southeast provinces reached 300,000 troops, police officers, and intelligence officers. The PKK force was almost 10,000 (Radu, 2001). The Kurdish side has mostly employed terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare. The Turkish government has used military operations in northern Iraq (Chowdhury & Krebs, 2010).

What are the deep-rooted sources of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and why has the formation of an "ethnic" Kurdish identity followed a path of violence, aggression, and terrorism? This chapter explores why the Turkish government policy toward the Kurdish issue has not marginalized and minimized the PKK violence and bloodshed. This chapter also focuses on how "conflict-as-process" has become more important than "conflict-as-startup conditions" in analyzing the Kurdish conflict (Sandole, 1998, 1999, 2012b). It describes the psychological journey of the conflicting parties that contribute to the perpetuation and expansion of this conflict. Interestingly, the Kurdish conflict has not yet evolved into a full-fledged war between Turks and Kurds. However, with the spiral of escalation and de-escalation, it is possible that the conflict will become more deep-rooted and protracted. However, as for any social problem, the Kurdish conflict cannot be explained by a one-perspective approach. Explanation requires multiple perspectives. This study attempts to present a broader explanation of the Kurdish conflict by adding psychological concepts and theories.

³ The PKK stands for the *Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* (PKK); otherwise known as the Kurdish Workers Party. Its main objective is the creation of a separate state for all Kurds in the region. Founded in 1978, it has waged a violent campaign against Turkey despite the capture and imprisonment of its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999.

Deep-rooted Sources of the Kurdish Conflict

Scholarly research on the Kurdish conflict in Turkey has increased greatly since the 1980s. The first research on the Kurdish conflict focused on the symptoms (Sandole, 2002a) or “conflict-as-startup conditions” (Sandole, 1998, 1999, 2012b). Start-up conditions or symptoms in a conflict are usually the visible part, such as we see daily in the media: the number of bodies, the number of violent attacks, destroyed property, etc. However, conflict researchers should observe the “underlying conflicted relationships”, “deep rooted causes and conditions”, and “conflict-as-process”. The sources of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey have been framed as a terror and security issue, as relative deprivation of the Kurdish people in the Southeast region, and as a political power struggle between Turkish and Kurdish domestic and international actors (Ozcelik, 2006). The Kurds demand the satisfaction of their identity and recognition needs. Between 2000 and 2005, the security and terrorist problem seemed to abate due to the capture of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. Nonetheless, we have recently seen an upsurge of violence in both rural and urban areas of Turkey. Without addressing the identity, security, and recognition needs of all conflicting parties, the Kurdish conflict, despite de-escalation trends, is likely to experience escalatory stages in the future. In later years, researchers have emphasized the psychological root cause of conflict in relation to identity and ethno-political factors.

The Turkish state policies toward the Kurds have mostly emphasized assimilation to a single national citizenship identity. These policies were taken as a denial of a *completely separate* Kurdish ethnic identity. These policies have led to a military strategy to eliminate the PKK’s violent attacks (Kushner, 1997). Since Ataturk’s establishment of modern Turkey, its nation building and modernization efforts have been based on a uniform definition of the new Turkish citizenship inclusive of all ethnic identities in Anatolia. This definition led to the denial of the existence of Kurds as a separate people and the construction of the Kurdish identity demands as tribal, “reactionary, backward, and dangerous” (Yavuz, 2005, p. 238). Although the PKK attacks in 1980s used many terrorist tactics and an aggressive campaign of violence against civilians, the PKK’s strategy has evolved from “terrorist provocation to rural insurgency” (Chowdhury & Krebs, 2010, p. 130). This insurgency has been blamed on external factors and international actors. They are blamed for destabilizing and trying to dismantle the Turkish state.

In short, the primary cause of the Kurdish conflict is the failure of the two sides to see the basic needs of the conflicting parties, namely, the

identity needs of the Kurds and the security needs of the Turks. A strict interpretation of Kemalism and Turkish nationalism results in opposing Kurdish nationalism and the promotion of Turkish nationalism (Gurbey, 2000). In other words, Turkish nationalism promotes Turkish citizenship at the expense of the Kurdish identity. This perspective on nationalism has radicalized Kurdish nationalism. In return, the rise of PKK and Kurdish political actors in Turkey resulted in the use of military and security tactics by the Turkish government (Tezcur, 2009). As a result, we have seen conflict cycles with recurring escalation and de-escalation stages.

A Psychological Approach to Analyzing the Conflict

Psychological concepts are critical in viewing Turkey's history. We should not forget that the goal of the founding elites of the Turkish state was to create a nation. Moreover, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire has had direct effects on the perception of the Turkish people in general and the Turkish elite in particular. This legacy has left a pervasive memory of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that had ruled across three continents. At the end of the First World War and the August 10, 1920 Treaty of Sevres, the Ottoman Empire was squeezed into a small nation-state in the Anatolian peninsula. A big chunk of the Ottoman territory was separated to establish Greater Armenia. The Treaty of Sevres also set a precedent of recognizing the separate identity of Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Sevres carved a large territory from the Southeastern and Eastern part of the Ottoman Empire for Kurdistan. These historical traumas still open psychological wounds for the Turkish people. For Kurds, the lack of recognition of a Kurdish state is the root of the conflict. Not only have the Kurds suffered from this, they have also felt excluded and neglected within Turkey.

Another reason the Kurdish conflict continues in Turkey is the lack of conflict analysis using what I call an "iceberg approach". During the 1980s and 1990s, the Kurdish conflict was explained with a unilateral theoretical perspective using one-sided solutions. By the 2000s, scholars and political decision-makers carried out a holistic approach to analysis of the conflict by employing additional theories and perspectives. However, analysis of the underlying and deep-rooted nature of the conflict is still lacking. One reason is the residues from the conflict's past events in a group's psyches. Like an iceberg, the residues of conflict history accumulate in the minds of the group. One framing of this, Freudian analysis, says that unacceptable and unpleasant content such as feelings of pain, anxiety, and trauma produce a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges,

and memories. The commonality of this reservoir affects group behavior and experience (Volkan, 1997). As a result, the reservoir of conflict creates an iceberg under the surface of the conflict. The tip of the iceberg represents the stated positions of groups' spokespersons. Most of the time, the conflicting parties have refused to pay attention to the underlying sources of the conflict. De-escalating conflicts without addressing the iceberg nature of the conflict is harder.

Pruitt, Rubin, and Kim (2000) argue that when conflict escalates, the process of the conflict produces residues. These residues affect conflict structures, situations, and the parties' behavior, thus changing communication, relationships, and issues. As a result, conflict-instigating factors have become more complex, more misunderstood, more ethnocentric, more distorted, more hostile, and more negative due to the conflict residues (Wall & Callister, 1995). Some residues of the Kurdish conflict are framings and memories of counterterrorist activities and dirty wars during the 1990s, the Sevres Syndrome (Dixon & Ergin, 2010), and the fear of spillover effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia.

The residues of the Kurdish conflict have been affecting both sides' group psychological processes slowly and gradually. Arkonac, Tekdemir, and Çoker (2012) did focus groups among the participants who identified themselves as Turks, Kurds, and Arabs by using newspapers articles as starting points for the focus group discussions. They conclude that the participants perceived the conflict from a macro perspective blaming the USA, global capitalism, the West, and foreign powers. In recent studies, scholars highlight that the Kurdish conflict in Turkey has caused more anti-Kurdish beliefs. Interestingly, the more secular, globalized, and economically, educationally, and culturally advanced segments of the Turkish society exhibit more beliefs and perspectives at odds with the desires of the Kurds. This conclusion is based on "socio-psychological and sociological explanations" (Dixon & Ergin, 2010, p. 1344).

The recent "Kurdish Opening", "Democratic Opening", or "National Unity Project"⁴ (Efegil, 2011; Ikizer, 2011; Yildiz, 2012) may be addressing

⁴ The "Kurdish Opening", "Democratic Opening" or "National Unity Project" describes the recent reform process that led to peace negotiations between the PKK and the Turkish government. Turkey's candidacy to the EU has started democratic, human rights, and political reforms that mostly relate to the Kurdish question. Some reforms are the removal of obstacles to using Kurdish first and last names, the use of former Kurdish names of districts and villages, the use of Kurdish languages in social activities such as theaters, sports, concerts, and exhibitions,

the satisfaction of the Kurdish identity and recognition needs. However, it has not addressed the residues and the security needs of the Turkish side. A recent peace talk on the Kurdish conflict ended military operations and terrorist attacks and started dialogue between the Kurdish side and state officials. However, without addressing the underlying psychological residues of the conflict, the de-escalatory moves may set off the next stage of conflict escalation. The acceptable level of compromise for the resolution of the Kurdish conflict has been constantly changing because of the dynamic nature of Turkish society, and the region. The Arab Spring and other within-nation movements may affect the Kurdish conflict. Since the start of the PKK violence, there have been many successful examples of nation re-building all over the world. Second, the nationalist Turks' perception that Kurds should assimilate into the Turkish melting pot has not changed (Yegen, 2007).

The psychological investments of both parties are one source of the conflict. From a human needs point of view, the Turks have identity and security needs, whereas the Kurds have identity and recognition needs (Burton, 1997). Keyman (2012) described this as a discursive struggle of framing the Kurdish conflict "security" versus "liberty and democracy" (p. 469). One reason Turkish people are often reluctant to recognize the Kurdish identity is because Turkey is ethnically diverse. Turkey is home not only to people of Turkic origin but also to non-Turkic people. For example, it hosts Bosnians, Circassians, Albanians, and many other ethnic groups who are not culturally and ethnically of Turkish origin, yet who have become Turkish citizens. In one study, there were 39 ethnic groups in Turkey (Andrew, 1989). Many ethnic groups in Turkey have accepted being included in a larger Turkish citizen identity. These ethnic groups have mostly enjoyed cultural freedom and have never raised any secessionist demands against the Turkish state.

One cause of the conflict can be explained by what I call "The Threshold Obstacle". The Threshold Obstacle is a psychological trap by which a social group is unable to move from an escalation stage to a de-escalation stage of the conflict. One or both parties are blinded by the entrapment, making them reluctant to abandon their positions in the conflict and to address their human needs, namely, identity, security, and recognition (Ozcelik, 2006). Some processes such as mutually hurting

lifting restrictions on broadcasting in the Kurdish language on TV and radio, the opening of Kurdish language courses in public schools, and the establishment of Kurdish language and literature departments at the state universities.

stalemate⁵, ripeness, systematic changes, third-party intervention, disaster diplomacy, etc. may help the parties to overcome the Threshold Obstacle and make it possible to employ peaceful means to the conflict.

The Threshold Obstacles for the Turkish state are the Sevres Syndrome and Turkish nationalism. Although Turkey consists of 39 ethnic groups, only the Kurds have used force, mostly terrorist tactics, to challenge the intactness of the Turkish state. Since the establishment of Turkey, Turkish people have psychologically invested considerably in two main perspectives: nationalism and secularism. The conflict history in Turkey in the post-Cold War era has been based on the competitive stance between Turkish nationalism and Kurdish nationalism and between secularism and the Islamic movement.

One consequence of the Threshold Obstacle is that the Kurdish conflict has become the focus of the Turkish foreign policy during the post-Cold War period. Unlike Turkey's recent foreign policy slogan, the "Zero Problem Policy"⁶, Turkey had defined its relations with her neighbors mostly by the neighbors' distances from the PKK and from the Kurdish conflict. Moreover, the Kurdish Conflict has affected Turkey's bid for the EU membership and its "strategic ally" relationship with the United States. This shows that the psychological processes in the conflict situation are so powerful that the state sometimes behaves not in its national interest exercising rational choice but in terms of immediate positions and interests.

The Threshold Obstacle for the Kurds is interestingly the Sevres Syndrome, too. The Kurds had a chance to have an independent and viable state for the first time in their history. In the Treaty of Sevres, the Kurds

⁵ The occurrence of a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) is used to determine that a conflict is ready for intervention. It occurs when both conflicting parties hurt from escalation of the conflict and neither side perceives it can win a decisive victory. When the conflict reaches the MHS point, usually a third party first calls for cessation of the conflict and then paves the way for negotiation and mediation (Zartman, 2007).

⁶ The Zero Problem Policy is a new Turkish foreign policy approach based on peaceful and good relations with Turkey's neighbors. The new policy is significantly different from the former non-interventionist foreign policy of Turkey. The new Turkish foreign policy also involves developing relations with Turkey's neighbors and beyond, following multi-faceted foreign policy, a balance between democracy and security, and proactive diplomacy that is based on face-to-face communication and active participation in international organizations (Davutoglu, 2008).

were promised their own state, but they failed to retain it (Husain & Shumock, 2006, p. 271). This failure still affects the Kurdish mentality.

Another reason the Kurdish conflict has continued is the psychological process of cognitive shortcuts. When human beings face a complex situation, they simplify it to explain and understand it. Like many conflicts, the Kurdish conflict is highly complex. As a result, Turkish people and policy makers have explained it using a one-dimensional approach, mostly framing it as a terrorist problem.

One example of a cognitive shortcut is the shift in perception of the Kurds in Turkey. Somer (2005a) analyzes why “democratic transition and moderate-moderate cooperation of both sides in Kurdish conflict is hard to achieve because [of] structural barriers and cognitive gaps.” The Turks view the conflict as “democratization but no fundamental changes in constitutional principles”. The Kurds view it as “recognition of the Kurdish identity and integration of the separatist Kurds into the mainstream society” within the borders of Turkey (p. 238). They want a Turkey that respects human rights and promotes stronger democracy, greater freedom of expression, a more dynamic civil society, and increased governmental transparency. The psychological gap between moderates of the Turks and Kurds is obvious in some survey studies. Most Turkish moderates are not ready yet to identify and recognize the Kurds as an ethnic nation, without first eliminating PKK violence and then engaging in dialogue with Kurdish moderates without “reinventing Turkey’s republican principles” (p. 239-240).

Another psychological process that plays an important role in making the Kurdish conflict a frozen conflict is psychological entrapment. Psychological entrapment is also termed a “sacrifice trap” by Boulding (1989). It can be summarized as follows: “a decision making process whereby individuals escalate their commitment to a previously chosen, though failing, course of action in order to justify or ‘make good on’ prior investments” (Brockner & Rubin, 1985, p. 5). When all parties are entrapped, they become more committed to continuation of conflict and less eager to take necessary steps for de-escalation. As a result, the conflict becomes more protracted and violent. The justification of violent conflict is not done “according to [the] original conflicts of interest that caused it, but in terms of sacrifices already made in pursuit of a particular war aim” (Ryan, 2007).

The workings of psychological entrapment can be spotted very easily in both sides of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. Turks have a long tradition of sacrifice and martyrdom, which can be linked to Muslim ideals of resurrection, redemption, and self-sacrifice. Together with entrapment, a

violent and protracted ethnic conflict also causes “immobilization, negativism, and numbness” (Ryan, 1996, p. 156). Entrapment leads to not abandoning the failed strategy and increases sacrifices on both sides. This brings about a situation in which, without assistance from third parties, the conflict spirals out of control.

Hardliners become more dominant in policymaking and the moderates are squeezed out and marginalized. Interestingly, during this process hardliners from both conflict parties may sometimes eliminate moderate voices. Dissenting voices are intentionally targeted within their own parties. Somer (2005b) investigates discourse changes in the Kurdish conflict by positing cognitive mechanisms. He argues that the struggle between the Turkish hardliners and the moderate elites’ perceptions of the conflict resulted in “the mainstream discourse that favors recognition of the Kurdish identity.” (p. 593).

Increasing numbers of migrants from the Eastern part of Turkey to the Western urban areas have produced changes in the nature of the Kurdish conflict. The Turks no longer define the Kurdish conflict in a narrow sense as between the Turkish security forces and the PKK terrorists. Previously, Turkish people could easily categorize the conflict as between the “bad Kurds” and the Turkish state. However, with the demographic and immigration changes in Turkish society together with the globalization of the Turkish economy and democratic reforms for the EU accession process, it has not been possible to analyze and categorize the Kurdish conflict through a good Kurds / bad Kurds lens anymore. Based on emotions, conflict-as-process has become more important than conflict-as-start up conditions. As a result, the Kurdish conflict has become more complex, chaotic, and multidimensional. In other words, the internal psychological phenomena that affect the conflict process have become more important than the perceived external factors when the Kurdish conflict started.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the 21st century, Turkey emerged from 15 years’ struggle against the PKK in 1999 with a decisive military victory. They captured the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan and forced the PKK to proclaim a cease-fire (Aydinli, 2002). However, this may be a “Pyrrhic victory”: that Turkey may have won some battles but it will lose the war (Barkey, 2007).

The Kurdish conflict in Turkey was analyzed from an eclectic set of perspectives. The latest reform process may be the last chance to find

negative peace in the Kurdish conflict since both sides have been heading toward a new impasse. Although the PKK may be weakened, it is still unwilling to disarm and declare a cease-fire. Similarly, the Turkish government has understood that the PKK cannot be eliminated by using military and security measures alone. The only remaining option is to use political dialogue and conflict resolution approaches. As shown above, the psychological processes in the Kurdish conflict have changed the conflict-instigating factors. Conflict resolution requires not only negative peace but also positive peace.⁷ For positive peace in the Kurdish conflict, all conflicting and third parties should employ post-conflict peace building such as disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion, reintegration, security sector reform, reconciliation, acknowledgment, forgiveness, etc. To achieve this, both parties need to change their conceptual frames. In addition, the identity and recognition needs of the Kurds and the security needs of the Turks should be addressed in a meaningful and satisfactory way.

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⁷ Negative peace refers to the absence of verbal assaults to actual war and violence. Positive peace includes negative peace plus the presence of social and economic justice for all and transformation of cultures oriented to war.