TURKEY AND THE PKK

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I. Introduction[1]

Even as regional developments have put great strains on Turkey's relations with its Kurdish population, contacts since late 2012 between the government and the insurgent Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, or PKK) still represent the best chance of reaching a peace deal. Both sides have come to the conclusion that they cannot win outright militarily.[2] For decades, the Turkish military has been able to contain the PKK but not destroy it. The PKK has been able to control small areas in mainly Kurdish south-east Turkey, but only for short periods of time.[3] Upsets have several times tested the two sides' will to negotiate, but they have remained committed to the talks.[4]

Despite occasional signs of ethnic friction, there is no widespread or deep-rooted hatred between Turks and Kurds, who make up about 15 per cent of the country's 77 million population.[5] Both sides now realise how much they benefit from normalisation, and a process of reforms since 2005 has gained traction. Turkey has become more willing to work with the region's Kurds to face challenges from jihadi organisations across its border in Iraq and Syria.[6] So far it has exclusively seen the PKK as a terrorist organisation, but a peace deal could open the way to new approaches.

Talks between the state and the PKK are not new.[7] Between 1999 and 2005, the PKK's imprisoned founder and leader Abdullah Öcalan had face-to-face contacts with Turkish military officials.[8] Back then, however, Turkey failed to take advantage of the PKK leadership's demonstrated will for a settlement.

In 2009, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) government developed what became known as the "democratic opening" or the "Kurdish initiative".[9] Officials, starting with the president and the prime minister, talked openly of a "Kurdish issue". Many taboos were broken. The government set up a Kurdish-language state TV channel in early 2009 and permitted private institutions to open and teach Kurdish in December.

Between September 2008 and 2011, these reform efforts were accompanied by several meetings, apparently in Oslo, between high-level representatives from the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) and top PKK leaders like Zübeyir Aydar, Sabri Ok, Remzi Kartal and Adem Uzun, with the presence of an in-

[1] * Plusec-Pluralism, Human Security and Sustainability Centre/Plusec-Centre de pluralism de la sécurité humanine et du développement durable (Plusec) retained the International Crisis Group to conduct this research and analysis and to prepare this report.

[2] Crisis Group interviews, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014, and senior PKK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[3] "The organisation has not been able to win the revolutionary people's war or establish control in even a small area like [Hakkari province's] Yüksekova [district]". Crisis Group interview, member of government-appointed "Wise Persons" delegation, Ankara, June 2014.

[4] "It's hard, but the process is real and we must support it". Crisis Group interview, Ahmet Türk, Kurdish mayor of Mardin province, June 2014.

[5] Turkey's citizens self-identifying as Kurds represent 17.4 per cent of the overall population. Unpublished 2013 poll of more than 7,100 people by Ankara think-tank Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), shared with Crisis Group, Ankara, October 2014.

[6] Crisis Group interview, government minister, Ankara, October 2014. See also "Border patrol: Turkey tries a new tack on its southern frontier", Crisis Group blog (blog.crisisgroup.org), 3 October 2014.

[7] "The novelty is not the talks, it is that the prime minister talks about it". Crisis Group interview, Cengiz Çandar, author and journalist, Diyarbakır, June 2014.

[8] After Öcalan was arrested abroad, brought to Turkey and jailed in February 1999, he called for the withdrawal of militants to outside Turkish borders in August 1999, and then a unilateral ceasefire, which lasted until 2004. The first indirect contact between Turkey and Öcalan was in 1992 through Iraq's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) President Jalal Talabani, who had close relationships with then-Turkish President Turgut Özal. Cengiz Çandar, "Leaving the Mountain: How may the PKK lay down arms? Freeing the Kurdish question from violence", Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), March 2012.

[9] Later officially called the National Unity and Brotherhood Project.

ternational mediator. The Turkish side asked the PKK for a list of demands. In the end, three protocols were prepared.

This "Oslo Process" stumbled, however, because of a lack of trust, unity of purpose and the necessary comprehensive preparation. The government was perceived as insincere after the April 2009 arrests of Kurdish individuals accused of links with the movement's umbrella organisation, the Kurdistan Communities Union (Koma Civaken Kurdistane, KCK).[10] Thousands of Kurds, including elected serving mayors, political activists, lawyers and students, were detained over months, though many have since been released pending trial.[11]

The PKK, for its part, overplayed its hand at the Habur border crossing between Iraq and Turkey in October 2009. Some of the first of the insurgents to return home by mutual agreement, 34 people, including eight PKK militants and 26 refugees from Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq, appeared in guerrilla outfits and were greeted as returning war heroes by local Kurds. Turkish media coverage of the celebrations as a victory for the PKK stoked Turkish nationalist resentment, causing the AKP to backtrack and postpone plans for further returns.

The "Oslo Process" collapsed in summer 2011, shortly before the 12 June parliamentary elections. On 14 July, the PKK killed thirteen Turkish soldiers in Silvan district of Diyarbakır province. The leader of its armed units, Murat Karayılan, blamed local elements that could not be controlled,[12] but another top cadre blamed the Turkish government, saying it wanted to start an all-out war.[13] Fighting lasted until the PKK's March 2013 unilateral ceasefire, killing at least 920 people, 90 per cent of them combatants, the majority from the PKK.[14]

Though previous efforts failed, both sides clearly felt the need to keep the door open to dialogue. In December 2012, the prime minister said that MIT was in direct contact with Öcalan. This latest stage in talks is variously known as the "peace process", "solution process" or "İmralı process" (named after the island where Öcalan has been jailed since 1999). AKP deputy chair Beşir Atalay, who coordinated the government's peace efforts from 2009 to 2014, said the talks were "a continuation of the paradigm shift signalled in 2005".[15] For the first time, members of the main pro-Kurdish political party have visited İmralı, as well as the PKK's military base in Qandil and the Kurdish diaspora in Europe.

[10] The dividing line between the KCK umbrella organisation and its longstanding backbone, the PKK, is not always clear, even to Kurdish activists. This report will occasionally refer to the PKK/KCK, since the leaderships often overlap.

[11] "There were two conflicting processes in 2009 – recognising the Kurdish problem on one hand, and the so-called KCK operation arrests on the other; imprisoning individuals such as former member of parliament Hatip Dicle while saying they wanted to solve the [Kurdish] issue. The government handled it clumsily". Crisis Group interview, Emma Sinclair-Webb, senior Turkey researcher, Human Rights Watch, Istanbul, July 2014.

[12] "[The attack] was not our decision. … We thought: 'this deal is done and resolved. The protocols will be accepted and peace will come'. Then Silvan happened". Murat Karayılan quoted in interview with Avni Özgürel, "Avni Özgürel: Türkiye barışa hızla yaklaşıyor" ["Turkey is fast approaching peace"], *Taraf*, 18 June 2012.

[13] "The AKP does not have the capacity to manipulate the PKK, and the PKK will not be tricked by them. Once they realised this, the AKP started an immense air offensive against our Medya defence zones [Qandil, Xinere, Hakurke, Zap, Haftanin, Metina and Gare in Iraq]. It wasn't just a military assault, they also [pressured] society. The KCK cases have put thousands in prison. The goal was to get the PKK to surrender … but they failed". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[14] According to Crisis Group's unofficial, open-source count, 304 members of Turkish security forces, including village guards, 533 PKK and 91 civilians died in this period. "War has been a necessary tool for peace. Because there has been no solution, we have to know how to fight well". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014. The head of an influential Turkish think-tank said, "PKK suffered heavy losses in 2011-2012 …. Hundreds of militants died. PKK felt no pressure [from society] over the youth that died in the mountains". Taha Özhan, *Normalleşme Sancısı: Açılım'dan Çözüm Sürecine Türkiye* [*Normalisation Pains: Turkey from the Opening to Solution Process 2008-2013*] (Ankara, 2014), p. 14.

[15] "Çözüm Süreci'nde bundan sonra takvim konuşacak" ["It's up to the calendar now in the solution process"], *Radikal*, 2 July 2014.

Beyond Turkish reforms to give Kurdish speakers full universal rights, this report focuses on the secretive track of negotiations that deals with ending the armed insurgency. It aims to show that there is a gap in both sides' public articulation of their respective end goals, as difficult issues of conditional amnesties, returns, transitional justice and disarmament will be debated.

II. A Fraught Process

Bringing the PKK insurgency to an end in Turkey means tackling deep-seated inertia on both sides. To win support for the reforms that are vital to underpinning any peace settlement, the government may need to convince mainstream Turkish public opinion, which is only now overcoming official dogma from about 1925 to about 1990 that Kurds did not exist.[16] On the PKK side, guerrilla leaders who have been in the mountains for decades have trouble accepting that Turkey has changed a great deal and envisages a future that includes Kurds as equal partners. At the same time, Turkey remains a home country for many of them.[17]

What is missing is clarity over the various tracks the peace process must travel along to reach its goal. One track is Turkish government reforms, which could go ahead separately from any detailed negotiations on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. The second is the peace deal by which Turkey and the PKK agree to end their war (see Section III below). The third track is the general atmosphere, process and context of the talks.

A. *An Avalanche of Initiatives*

Just as there is no agreed phrase to describe the talks, the peace process also lacks a mutually agreed agenda, timeframe and means for engagement. It has only begun establishing a framework and ground rules. Constantly changing, neither side has fully committed to the few parameters already in place. A senior government security official described "a very flexible process", less a plan than an avalanche of ad hoc initiatives.[18] A top Turkish analyst saw it as "more of a negotiation … a way for the two strongmen, Erdoğan and Öcalan, to keep the process under control".[19] For some, the strategy for both sides is just establishing a holding pattern to gain time.[20]

Neither side knows when or where the process will end, so both are feeling their way forward. Turkish and PKK participants appear to have no carefully designed or detailed long-term strategy, but rather respond to necessity and practical considerations as they arise. A senior Turkish security official said that even if the government made the perfect plan, it would be impossible to map it on to the shifting sands of Turkish politics.[21] President Erdoğan may have been reluctant to set up a proper process because it is politically risky. Turkish scepticism about the need for compromise means that even becoming "the leader who resolved the Kurdish problem" may offer little electoral benefit.[22]

An initial roadmap, according to both sides, entailed a three-stage process. Unfortunately, timing of mutual steps in the first and second phases triggered disagreement. According to the government, the PKK should have initiated a ceasefire and withdrawn all its forces outside Turkey, leaving its weapons behind.[23] Then the government would take democratisation steps, followed by total disarmament and de-

[16] "I tell the PKK they have unrealistic expectations [about how fast the AKP government can move]". Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

[17] "I was in jail in Turkey for more than twenty years, and then they made me do my military service too, which was like being in an open prison. And [thanks to media and visitors] I still feel like I'm in Turkey". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, exiled PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[18] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, February 2014.

[19] Interview with Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu ekibini dinler ama ikna eşiği yüksektir", *Radikal*, 27 August 2014.

[20] "I don't believe in it. They keep announcing that the next reform package will have the roadmap, and then when it comes, it's just one miniscule incremental step". Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Istanbul, September 2014.

[21] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, June 2014.

[22] Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Ankara, June 2014.

[23] "The package offered by the government was completely unbalanced. It couldn't be done that way. … The sequence as announced was disarmament before an agreement …. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDRs) should be confidential. And you'd struggle to find any conflict where disarmament or DDR preceded an agreement …. The roadmap with

mobilisation of the PKK.[24] But the PKK expected the government to make legal and constitutional reforms, and take steps such as allowing evicted Kurds to return to their native villages, at the same time as the PKK declared a ceasefire, released hostages and withdrew armed insurgents.[25] Citing inaction on government promises, the PKK suspended its withdrawals in early September 2013.[26]

Despite the confusion, the peace process has begun to displace deep-rooted mistrust between the PKK and the Turkish government, revealing a new readiness to resist provocations. Following Öcalan's letter read out at the Nowrouz celebrations in Diyarbakır on 21 March 2013, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire, its ninth since 1993. Öcalan said it was "time for weapons to be silenced and for politics and ideas to speak", and called on armed elements to withdraw from Turkish territory.[27] In March, the PKK also handed over kidnapped Turkish public workers to a delegation that included pro-Kurdish politicians.

The PKK ceasefire has been matched by an apparent Turkish government readiness to keep the armed forces from attacking PKK targets. AKP's ability to do business with the PKK has prompted voices close to the security forces to criticise the government for compromising the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force.[28] AKP had already significantly curbed the Turkish armed forces' autonomy by abolishing the Protocol on Cooperation for Security and Public Order (Emniyet Asayiş Yardımlaşma protokolü, EMASYA) that authorised the military to intervene at will in public events where it saw a risk of terrorism. Any military action now requires the government-appointed provincial or district governors' approval. But, if passed, a recent draft law that gives the police increased powers (including making it easier to search people and vehicles, allowing longer detention times) and expands the scope of terrorism and violent crimes and crimes against the government, risks overturning these gains.

A PKK/KCK confidence-building measure – the withdrawal of armed elements to outside Turkish borders that began in May and ended in September 2013 – was carried out without a formal agreement, framework or monitoring mechanism. This was a concession from the PKK/KCK, considering that during the 1999 withdrawals, Turkish security forces attacked retreating militants, inflicting a death toll in the several hundreds. Some PKK cadres had openly criticised Öcalan for surrendering territory.[29]

A 30 September 2013 democratisation package by the AKP legalised education in mother languages in private schools; removed the morning pledge of allegiance, which Kurds felt was discriminatory; gave state aid to political parties that receive at least 3 per cent of the national vote (thus to pro-Kurdish Peace

Öcalan didn't work, because it was front-loaded for the government". Crisis Group telephone interview, former UN conflict mediator, Istanbul, October 2014.

[24] Crisis Group interviews, Ankara and Istanbul, June-July 2014.

[25] Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[26] Öcalan said, "If [the government] does not [take steps], there can be no withdrawals". "İşte İmralı'daki görüşmenin tutanakları" ["Minutes of the meeting in İmralı"], *Milliyet*, 5 March 2013.

[27] For more, see Didem Collinsworth, "Öcalan announcement raises hopes for Turkey peace", Crisis Group blog (blog.crisisgroup.org), 22 March 2013.

[28] "Police and soldiers have been constrained to their outposts. Land forces cannot carry out any operations in the region. What you call 'clashes' are when the PKK blocks roads, fires rockets from afar. Once in a while the police and gendarmerie go and check out these incidents. Police, gendarmerie and soldiers are all low on morale". Crisis Group interview, Haldun Solmaztürk, retired brigadier general, Ankara, June 2014. "The AKP has handed over to the PKK the security environment established by the state in the past twenty years. … It should have continued negotiations while maintaining a tight security environment. Now the cost of reestablishing it will be too high". Crisis Group interview, Nihat Ali Özcan, PKK expert, Ankara, June 2014.

[29] Top PKK commander Murat Karayılan called the 1999 experience "a painful" one, saying that withdrawals do not necessarily contribute to a solution. "Gerilla sınır dışına çekilmiyor" ["The guerrillas are not withdrawing to outside borders"], Fırat News Agency, 9 November 2010. Another top cadre, Fehman Hüseyin (aka Bahoz Erdal), drew attention to the significance of the 2013 withdrawal decision: "Our leadership [Öcalan] decided on a political move …. We are hopeful about peace but not because we trust the state. We trust our leadership's foresight". Interview with Hasan Cemal, "Bahoz Erdal: Bugün silahı bir kenara koyuyoruz, ama bu silahı bırakmak demek değil!" ["We are putting weapons aside today but that does not mean disarmament"], T24 web portal (Turkey), 14 May 2014.

and Democracy Party/People's Democratic Party, BDP/HDP); lifted the ban on election propaganda in languages other than Turkish; allowed reinstatement of (mostly Kurdish) names for villages and towns; and formalised the possibility of two co-chairs for political parties (a practice currently carried out only by pro-Kurdish parties). Nonetheless, the PKK/KCK leadership believed the AKP had only addressed some of its concerns, and saw the reforms as a stalling tactic and an electoral calculation rather than a genuine effort to answer Kurdish democratic demands.[30]

The government has also released thousands of Kurdish activists charged with PKK/KCK membership and detained for years at the stage of criminal investigation or during their trials, despite scant evidence of involvement in violent activities. This mostly happened after a March 2014 legal reform package shortened pre-trial detention time from ten to five years.[31] Initiatives were put in place to release some sick prisoners. The Kurdish national movement recognises these changes but wants more: "Reforms always had sub-articles that made them pointless, like prosecutors being able to choose which sick prisoners to release. [But] a lot has changed [since the 1990s]. We used to get killed then, now we get arrested".[32]

Both sides could do more to build trust, particularly by exploring more transparent public approaches to the end goals of the process and the framework in which these goals can be reached (see Section III below). Given the controversy over responsibility for the breakdown of past ceasefires, notably in 2011, they may need to agree on what actions are considered violations and how to deal with them, as well as clear and viable verification and control systems.

B. *Seeking a Legal Framework*

The Kurdish national movement asked for a legal framework for the negotiations from the beginning. In leaked recordings allegedly from the "Oslo Process" in 2011, a Turkish official admitted that the traffic in written documents that they facilitated between Öcalan and other PKK members was at that time illegal.[33] The danger was highlighted by a March 2012 attempt by an anti-peace process faction in the Turkish state to investigate the leader of the Turkish side of the talks, national intelligence chief Hakan Fidan. On 8 February 2014, Öcalan even threatened to end the process if a legal framework was not forthcoming.[34]

The government has moved firmly to take more public responsibility for the peace process. It proposed a law in April 2014 on the activities of the national intelligence agency, and for the first time, parliament legalised the agency's involvement in PKK negotiations.[35] In July, a law gave the government authority to

[30] A KCK statement said, "It is evident that the motivation behind this package is to gain votes and win another election. … No approach or policy that does not recognise Kurds as a society, does not accept their rights … and does not take their political will as a counterparty can solve the Kurdish issue". "KCK: AKP'nin Politikası Çözüm Değil Çözümsüzlük" ["KCK: AKP's policy is one of non-solution"], bianet.org, 1 October 2013. Crisis Group interview, People's Democratic Party (HDP) member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014

[31] Crisis Group interview, Emma Sinclair-Webb, senior Turkey researcher, Human Rights Watch, Istanbul, July 2014

[32] Crisis Group interview, pro-Kurdish newspaper correspondent, Diyarbakır, June 2014.

[33] Ibrahim Ural, op. cit.

[34] He accused the government of adopting one-sided reform packages ahead of [the 30 March local] elections, which he said were more a provocation than democratisation. For more see ibid, pp. 121-122.

[35] Among other things, the law gives the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) authority to establish direct contacts with all individuals, entities, organisations or institutions and carry out talks with prisoners; requests that prosecutors first contact MIT in all denunciations and complaints related to it, and drop investigations if the actions fall within the scope of MIT's work; and rules out calling the head of MIT to testify in court without the prime minister's permission. For details of the law, see (in Turkish), "Devlet İstihbarat Hizmetleri ve Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına Dair Kanun", available on http://bit.ly/1zrxIPE. "Up until the new MIT law, everything the government was doing in the talks [with the PKK] was illegal. Now they can't be accused retrospectively. But changing the laws may not protect them. The political environment may change so drastically that they may still be called in [to court]". Crisis Group interview, Nihat Ali Özcan, PKK expert, Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Ankara, June 2014.

resolve the Kurdish issue as well as legal protection for all public officials involved, thus placing the process on an even firmer legal basis.[36] AKP deputy chair Beşir Atalay said the government will prepare the legal basis for militants' returns as a next step.[37]

This was well-received on the Kurdish side. When pro-Kurdish deputies visited Öcalan on 10 July, he reportedly thanked everyone who supported what he called the "framework law for negotiations", and called it "a positive start to establishing a great peace".[38] A PKK/KCK leader appreciated the initiative, but called for Turkey's lawmakers to stop using language that treated the problem as one of terrorism alone.[39] A pro-Kurdish politician said: "It is significant that after 90 years of denial and destruction mentality Turkey is evaluating the problem through the parliament. Nothing can be more valuable than this …. But we have to flesh out [the law's] substance through democratic politics".[40]

The next step toward creating a legal framework came on 1 October 2014 when the government officially established a mechanism to evaluate and determine action plans as well as monitor progress. The board is a strictly governmental body, headed by the prime minister or one of his deputies, and includes around ten other ministers. It oversees eleven "monitoring and evaluation" commissions, working on issues from disarmament to returns to public diplomacy, and able to collaborate with local governments and civil society.[41] However, it came as a unilateral AKP move rather than a consensus-building step and involves mainly government actors rather than representatives from both parties. Nonetheless, the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş called this new "roadmap" a "positive development" and a "very important document".[42] Clearly, the more inclusive these commissions are, the more useful their work will be.

The Kurdish national movement is still pushing for the PKK/KCK to be allowed a united negotiating delegation, the members of which would be determined by Öcalan. An insurgent leader said: "The sides accept each other, name the problem correctly and sit at the negotiating table as equals. … But our leadership [Öcalan] is alone there, in prison, carrying out a dialogue with the state by himself. That is not how negotiations are done. The same way the state has a delegation, the Kurds should have one, too".[43] While Turkey currently sees Öcalan as the PKK's sole negotiator, ways could be found to meet this demand.[44] A united Kurdish negotiating team, bringing in Öcalan, representatives of PKK fighters and members of the exiled diaspora, might speed up the process and make it more coherent.[45]

[36] Law No. 6551, "Terörün sona erdirilmesi ve toplumsal bütünleşmenin güçlendirilmesine dair kanun" ["Law to end terror and strengthen social unity"], http://bit.ly/1xwlSKmPl.

[37] "Çözüm süreci toplumdan yüksek bir onay alıyor" ["Solution process receives wide backing from society"], Anatolian Agency, 4 July 2014.

[38] "Öcalan'dan yasaya teşekkür" ["Öcalan sends his thanks for the law"], *Hürriyet*, 11 July 2014.

[39] "The Turkish government has for the first time shown the will to resolve the problem. It is positive and important. But the mentality behind it still causes suspicion and distrust [in us]. Rather than naming the problem correctly, they are continuing with a security-oriented mentality. It is not a 'terrorism problem'. They could have named it 'resolving the Kurdish issue through democratic negotiations'. … The law is a negotiation law. In itself, it is not a roadmap". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[40] Crisis Group telephone interview, Demir Çelik, HDP member of parliament, July 2014.

[41] The eleven working areas are: politics, political institutions and actors; legal arrangements and human rights; social programs; cultural programs; economic measures; social support and civil society work; security and disarmament; contacts, dialogue and other procedures with the relevant actors; returns and reintegration; psychological support and rehabilitation; and public information and public diplomacy.

[42] "Demirtaş: Desteğimiz sürecek" ["Demirtaş: Our support will continue"], *Vatan*, 2 October 2014.

[43] Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[44] Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, October 2014.

[45] "There are three key constituencies: Öcalan, the PKK and the diaspora. If they are just talking to one of these, it's like trying to sit on a one-legged stool. How can you reach a settlement just talking with one person in jail in Imralı?" Crisis Group telephone interview, former UN conflict mediator, October 2014.

The PKK/KCK also wants outside monitoring of the process, possibly by an international commission, as well as of any formal agreements. [46] The pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) implied some progress with the government on this issue but an agreement has not yet been reached on who would participate in such a monitoring body.[47]

C. *Slippery Timelines*

Just as there is not yet any full framework for the talks, there is no specified timeline either. In late October 2014, both sides said reaching a final stage was possible in a few months if all went well.[48] But previous dates by which both sides have promised to announce roadmaps and the like have repeatedly slipped by without doing visible damage to the process. A senior Turkish security official said content was more important than timing:

> Our preference is to end this as soon as possible. But if half of it is up to us, the other half is up to the PKK. The PKK has to complete withdrawals first [to] show the [Turkish] public that they are not a threat anymore. They have to give this sense of trust so that politicians can [take steps]. The PKK doesn't get this. We can't just push laws through parliament, the people have to accept them.[49]

In the months after the 2013 ceasefire, the Turkish government was clearly distracted from the peace process by the nationwide protests that began in Istanbul's Gezi Park in May-June as well as myriad tape recordings alleging high-level corruption that leaked on 17 December. At that time, the PKK was "wondering what was happening to the people they deal with" and was hesitant about moving forward with them.[50]

Similarly, the Kurdish national movement has set out no preferred timeline, although it urges the government to act quickly and demand a move from talks to proper negotiations.[51] As a leading insurgent put it: "We think negotiations should start immediately. The PKK is ready for this. [We need] a clear roadmap saying which steps will be taken at which point. … Experience shows us that risks increase as ceasefires drag on. There are people who want to sabotage [the process]".[52]

In short, the lack of a definite timeline has proven not to be a problem as long as the sides are not stalling to buy time before elections or to regroup and resupply. Indeed, the government may well want to slow-pedal until it gets past the June 2015 parliamentary elections. But the dangers of playing for time became apparent in mid-2014, as the Kurdish national movement threatened to break the process if Ankara did not help the Syrian Kurds besieged by the jihadis in Kobani on the Turkey-Syria border. Both sides might be wise to recommit to the process and move quickly to take advantage of a rare combination of

[46] "[A commission would follow] how the process works, who is acting against it … and then warns or sanctions them. … It would find Turkey at fault for the police station constructions, and would blame the PKK for roadblocks. … It should be made up of neutral, conscientious people. Neither the AKP nor us should designate the members; they must be people the society trusts and respects. … We would [not oppose] an international delegation". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014. An independent monitoring commission with four commissioners was used in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2011 and submitted reports to both the British and Irish governments.

[47] HDP co-deputy chair Pervin Buldan, quoted in "Çözüm'de yol haritası Eylül'de açıklanıyor" ["Roadmap to be announced in September"], *Sabah*, 15 August 2014.

[48] Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said if the sides did their parts, "a desired end could be reached in a few months". "Davutoğlu süreci anlattı", *Radikal*, 22 October 2014. HDP Istanbul deputy Süreyya Önder said five or six months could be enough to complete the process, including the laying down of arms. "Secretariat for Öcalan to start working soon, HDP says", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 22 October 2014.

[49] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, June 2014.

[50] Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

[51] "This is a century-old issue. Peace is more difficult than war. It can't be over quickly". Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014.

[52] Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

favourable factors: strong leaders on both sides, an established ceasefire, clear possible outlines for a settlement and a regional conflict in Syria and Iraq that shows how strong the shared interests are between Turkey and the Kurdish national movement.

D. *Beyond Charismatic Leaders*

The process mainly revolves around two charismatic and powerful leaders, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and PKK/KCK founder and leader Abdullah Öcalan, although other factions are also involved.[53] A lack of institutionalisation could one day be a problem, since there seems to be no back-up plan if what is essentially an "Erdoğan-Öcalan process" fails, or if something happens to one of them. But for now the fact that there are strong leaders is an advantage.

Promisingly, the AKP's progressive approach on the Kurdish issue is not solely connected to President Erdoğan; others within the party share the same vision of the Kurdish issue. But even government officials admit that Erdoğan is the lynchpin holding it all together: "If this process is moving along at all, it is because of [the president's] own personal charisma".[54]

Former Prime Minister Erdoğan moved to the constitutionally more ceremonial presidency in August 2014, but after winning with 52 per cent of the vote in the first round, he made clear that he would continue as Ankara's ultimate decision-maker. The peace process endures as the main political accomplishment that has mitigated criticism of his authoritarian style.[55] Allaying concerns about whether the peace process would fall off his radar after the election, he said it would remain a core issue. In a campaign speech in the Kurdish city of Diyarbakır on 26 July, he vowed to stay the course: "We put our bodies and souls into this process. They put obstacles in our way, but we stood upright".[56] Still, the Kurdish side is uncomfortable with the process being tied to one person:

> What happens to a solution if [President Erdoğan] dies tomorrow or forgets about the process? The will for a solution should move forward openly and transparently, under the people's supervision, without leaving it all up to one person's goodwill. [The process] needs to be tied to a calendar [watched over] by a third-party referee who can say 'this is what the PKK will do within the year' and then supervise it.[57]

Turkey has detained PKK/KCK leader Öcalan since 1999 and has been able to control or disrupt communication between the factions of the Kurdish national movement. One lesson of the past fifteen years of imprisonment is that Turkey's Kurdish national movement regards him as the only leader – embodying "the will of the Kurdish people" – who can unify and bless a compromise for peace.[58] Most lasting initia-

[53] "It is very patriarchal. … [Erdoğan and Öcalan] come to the fore in this process because there is no other underlying foundation". Crisis Group interview, Etyen Mahçupyan, columnist, Istanbul, July 2014.

[54] Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, June 2014.

[55] "We were worried about many things Erdoğan did, but then you look at the Kurdish issue and the progress that has been achieved there, and considering what the Kurds have been through all these years, it almost makes everything worth it". Crisis Group interview, Western official, Istanbul, July 2014.

[56] "Başbakan Erdoğan Diyarbakır'da konuşuyor …" ["Prime Minister Erdoğan speaking in Diyarbakır"], stargazete.com, 26 July 2014.

[57] Crisis Group telephone interview, Demir Çelik, HDP member of parliament, July 2014.

[58] "[Kurds] who were pro-Öcalan in theory became pro-Öcalan in practice, saying 'there is a man there who spends day and night thinking about me and my needs, struggling for me'. He is so high above everyone else that no one knows for sure what he is thinking, and therefore everyone can defend their own ideas as Öcalan's". Crisis Group interview, Etyen Mahçupyan, columnist, Istanbul, June 2014.

tives of the Kurdish national movement only happen with his approval.[59] The final instruction to lay down weapons has to come from him.[60]

Indeed, even according to Turkish officials, it was Öcalan's readiness for peace that initiated the latest process. A senior security official said it was easier to talk to him than to other PKK members: "The people in the mountains have not changed. But Öcalan has. … We must give credit where it's due, he really spends a lot of mental energy on [trying to change and reshape the PKK]".[61] An AKP minister said he was hopeful Öcalan was increasingly joining AKP's vision of a shared Sunni Muslim, non-ethnic identity for the country.[62] However, it is unclear how far Öcalan can move from more radical factions.[63]

Nevertheless, all PKK-linked parties in Iraq, Syria and Iran as well as the PKK's branches in other countries present Öcalan as their undisputed leader. The exiled PKK leadership makes no claim to be a counterpart, at times rejecting Ankara's attempts to engage it directly.[64] Still, there is a bit of pluralism. While no PKK organs or officials are able to bypass Öcalan, the exiled insurgent leadership has some influence over him, and he is open to adjusting his positions based on the views of the organisation's military arm.[65] The main pro-Kurdish political party, at the moment represented by BDP and HDP (parties that are likely to merge in the near future), plays a bridging role. It views Öcalan as its leader, but is also a legal part of the Turkish political system.

The government is right to make as many factions as possible stakeholders in the peace process. The Kurdish national movement might be wise to follow suit, and recognise that it is not necessarily the political preference of all Kurds.[66] The meetings of the civil society platform Democratic Society Congress (DTK) represent a step in the right direction, but the group may need to be more inclusive to enjoy full legitimacy.

E. *Matching Up End Goals*

The declared goal of the peace process on both sides is to end the 30-year-old conflict that has killed 30,000 people, displaced millions more, hamstrung Turkey's economy and brutalised an entire generation or more. The government and the PKK/KCK do seem to agree that full participation of demobilised PKK mil-

[59] "We are a movement of leadership [Öcalan]", Cemil Bayık quoted in "Silah bırakmak için …" ["To lay down weapons…"], Al Jazeera Turk, 10 July 2014. "[The PKK leadership in] Qandil can take some steps in spite of Öcalan in the future, but we are not there yet". Crisis Group interview, Süleyman Özeren, Turkish expert on conflict resolution, Ankara, June 2014.

[60] "The whole organisation is steeped in Öcalan's personality, words and beliefs. He sends [commands in his] messaging to his base, using symbolism. No one else can do the negotiations". Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Ankara, June 2014.

[61] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, June 2014.

[62] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, October 2014.

[63] "Who decides in the PKK that violence doesn't make sense? Groups like the PKK have complex behavioural structures, including their relation to their 'political self' [and also] non-Turkish citizens within the PKK, like Fehman Hussein". Crisis Group email communication, Turkish official, November 2014.

[64] "The state wanted to talk to us but it is enough for them to talk to Öcalan. He is our chief negotiator". High-level PKK Mustafa Karasu, quoted in "Devlet 15 gün önce görüşmek istedi red ettik" ["The state wanted to talk fifteen days ago, we rejected"], IMC TV, 17 June 2014.

[65] For instance, at the end of his 2009 roadmap he said, "I will be reviewing, revising, and further developing these thoughts and suggestions depending on the thoughts and suggestions that will come from the parties". Cengiz Çandar, "Leaving the Mountain", op. cit. "Öcalan is always careful not to take positions that risk being disowned. In March 2013, for instance, [when he declared ceasefire and withdrawals] he underestimated the extent to which [the leadership in] Qandil was ready to challenge him". Crisis Group telephone interview, former UN conflict mediator, October 2014.

[66] "There are different groups of Kurds in Turkey; including those that support [mainstream parties like AKP or opposition CHP] and don't voice ethnic-based demands. There are also Islamist Kurds. You need a different strategy for these. Why are we talking [only] about the PKK? Because it has weapons". Crisis Group interview, Nihat Ali Özcan, TEPAV, Ankara, June 2014.

itants in Ankara politics, an end to violence within Turkey's borders and further democratisation should be included. But there is no sign of a shared vision of the deal that would achieve this.

In the meantime, both sides are trying to use the partial achievements of the peace process to solidify their positions with their own constituencies. This discourages them from announcing or promoting clear and measurable end goals, which will need much bigger public compromises. This complacent tendency to cash in the process's gains too early has slowed progress and puts at risk finalising the talks. Some see the partial implementation of promised steps as indicating that the current, relatively calm status quo is actually the end goal of the two sides.[67]

For Turkish officials, solving the Kurdish issue often boils down to solving the problem of terrorist attacks, though Turkish officials and experts wish to move away from ineffective, old security-dominated policies. According to AKP deputy chair Beşir Atalay, the goal of the process is to "normalise Turkey by taking into account our citizens' demands and expectations, and compensating for injustices done in the past. … Our next goal is for the members of the organisation to lay down weapons, [and for] the state to carry out the work necessary for these people to return home to normal life and politics".[68]

The PKK's official goal is "democratic autonomy" for Kurds, a vague concept that it says is firmly situated within Turkey's borders. Nonetheless, the government and many Turks remain suspicious that the PKK is merely concealing the old aim of an independent state.[69] Published reports of parades of local "self-defence" militias and the way local PKK units sometimes behave as impromptu courts show how the PKK is using the ceasefire to build up parallel structures to the state in the south east.

Öcalan's 55-page "roadmap" for a solution in August 2009 included the first outline of a three-phase process, eventually leading to PKK/KCK activities gaining legality in Turkey and the group not needing armed struggle any more.[70] The envisioned autonomy is substantial, referred to as "the Kurdish people's freedom" by exiled PKK/KCK leader Sabri Ok.

> Kurdish people need to have the right to rule themselves the same way people elsewhere in the world … do. Kurdish people's identity has to be accepted. They must be able to have education in their mother language. [Lowering] the 10 per cent threshold [for parties to win seats in parliament] [and] abolishing the anti-terror law will be developments allowing a final solution, but for us, they are not the end goals. For us, the end goal is that the Kurdish people experience fully their rights that arise from being a people.[71]

The PKK and related leadership want to be taken off U.S. and EU terrorist and drug-smuggler lists. The success of pro-PKK Kurdish fighters against the jihadis of northern Syria and Iraq has begun to win international support for this idea, with some noting that if Turkey is in talks with the group, others could be as

[67] "I am categorically against calling it a 'peace process'. There is no goal of reaching peace on either side. The goal of disarmament is in fact at most a temporary ceasefire. … The PKK did not withdraw. On the contrary, they are strengthening themselves in towns. … There is no definition of peace". Crisis Group interview, Haldun Solmaztürk, retired brigadier general, Ankara, June 2014.

[68] "Çözüm sürecini başarıya ulaştırarak sorunu geride bırakacağız" ["We will leave the problem behind by completing the solution process"], Anatolian Agency, 2 July 2014.

[69] "The PKK makes periodical manoeuvres … but in the long term, their maximalist demand remains … a pan-Kurdish state. [In the meantime] they use vague terms like 'democratic autonomy'. They will not disarm without an independent state". Crisis Group interview, Nihat Ali Özcan, PKK expert, TEPAV, Ankara, June 2014. "They just want to bring their fighters here and put Turkish uniforms on them. … The PKK is asking for regional and administrative powers … collecting taxes and having soldiers". Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

[70] Abdullah Öcalan, *Prison Writings III: The Road Map to Negotiations* (Mesopotamia Publishers, 2012).

[71] Crisis Group interview, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

well.[72] Delisting of the PKK itself will need the agreement of Turkey, and is thus only likely at the end of the peace process, and even then it will be hard to push through a tough maze of international bureaucratic procedures.[73] If there are PKK members who want to be part of an armed presence in Syria after a peace agreement, they can do so under the umbrella of the pro-Öcalan Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, PYD), which is not internationally listed as a terrorist organisation, as recently reaffirmed by the U.S.[74] If PKK/KCK members wish to enter Turkish politics with the same ideology and leadership, the legal and relatively broad-based BDP/HDP is already in place.

F. *Moving from Conflict to Politics*

Even if the Turkish government and the PKK/KCK's real end goals do not overlap at the moment, thorough preparation and a properly constructed political process can help bring them closer together. A main aim of peace talks could be to give armed elements or those seen as terrorists a chance to transform themselves into a political group.[75] Whether the PKK is genuine or not in its promise to disarm and enter politics, the government may need to clear the way for that possibility.

Turkish negotiators might support an eventual removal of the PKK from terrorism lists as part of the peace deal. If there is a verified end to violence and the illegal bearing of arms, with a successful delisting of the group and its members, the door could be left open for the PKK to test its electoral popularity in Turkey. Few dispute the ruthlessness it took to fight to a draw for 30 years, but for many Kurds, it symbolises a successful stand against pervasive discrimination for several decades after the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 as an all-Turk state.[76]

For any peace process to stick, however, it is unlikely that the Kurdish national movement can have it both ways – being both in armed opposition and being a candidate for governmental responsibility.[77] The PKK says it wants to include other groups in a democratic manner.[78] It has made progress in changing its image to one that is more inclusive and non-violent, but it has a long way to go, and not just among the country's Turkish majority. A sit-in in mid-2014 by Kurdish mothers in Diyarbakır whose underage children had joined the PKK was a new challenge for the organisation; it was the first time such a vocal protest took place within its own constituency.[79] One third of Kurds still see the PKK as a terrorist organisation.[80] A Kurdish political veteran asked:

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[72] See for instance "Kurdish fighters aren't terrorists", Bloomberg View, 20 August 2014. "It might be time to acknowledge that the PKK, once a malicious terrorist organisation … has morphed into a militant political group". Michael Werz and Max Hoffman, "The United States, Turkey and the Kurdish regions", Center for American Progress, July 2014.

[73] Crisis Group interview, diplomats, Ankara, June 2014.

[74] "We made it clear to Turkey that we believe it's incredibly important to support groups like the PYD …. The PYD is a different group than the PKK legally". U.S. State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf quoted in "PYD not terrorist under US law, Turkey should provide them support: Washington", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 21 October 2014.

[75] For instance, about 30 per cent of ex-Irish Republican Army (IRA) members entered politics and many ex-prisoners work within the community. Gerry Kelly, former IRA member and Sinn Fein leader, quoted in "Turkey: Comparative Studies Visit to the United Kingdom Conflict Resolution", Democratic Progress Institute, 2011.

[76] "Our concern is not to be in power. … If Kurds can say 'we exist' today, [the PKK is] the reason behind it. [Others] may not support the guerrillas but no one should disrespect [decades] of resistance and our martyrs. … We will not accept insults to [the PKK and to] our values". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[77] "Having HDP for one side of Turkey and BDP for the other seems to be another sign that the PKK is insincere and acting in a two-faced way". Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Istanbul, September 2014.

[78] Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[79] The PKK was dismissive of claims that it was coercing children to come. Crisis Group interview, PKK insurgent, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014. "For the first time, the [Kurdish national movement] is facing a revolt from within, from the families [that supported it]. It shocked them, they didn't know what to do. … If past accounts start being settled, many families will ask the PKK 'where is my child?' This is an internal struggle, it is how the PKK can democratise, by listening to their own public". Crisis Group interview, member of the government-appointed "Wise Persons" delegation, Ankara, June 2014.

> Is the PKK fighting for the Kurds or against them? .... When it was first established, it attacked us, killed three of our people in Europe. It declared all other Kurdish organisations enemies in 1978. ... At times its rhetoric [against others] is very harsh. [The pro-Kurdish national movement] BDP does not come to us and say 'let's form a coalition'. It feels it is strong enough on its own.[81]

In the end, the legal Kurdish national movement party, now transitioning from the BDP to the HDP, can be the natural vehicle for reasonable Kurdish ambitions within a united Turkey.[82] It has deep-rooted legitimacy among Kurds after withstanding death squad murders, long jailings of its leaders, harassment and numerous official closures of its predecessor parties over the past 25 years. HDP co-leader Selahettin Demirtaş's moderate, inclusive language has done much to symbolise the party's growing traction within Turkey, allowing him a breakthrough with 10 per cent of the national vote in the August 2014 presidential election, higher than the 6 per cent pro-Kurdish parties usually receive. The relatively wider margin of freedoms since the late 2000s means that the HDP is able to declare its loyalty to Abdullah Öcalan, and at the same time, operate within the Turkish system. It has already attracted increasing numbers of Kurdish activists who have been former PKK fighters or had been jailed on pro-PKK charges.

The ruling AKP has already taken many steps toward removing psychological barriers to discussing the Kurdish issue and has helped usher many topics into the political arena.[83] The 30 September 2013 democratisation package opened the way for those previously convicted of terrorism charges and crimes against the state to join political parties. Ankara wants the full transition to a political platform to happen immediately, but on its own terms. A senior Turkish security official said: "If they disarm now, they will get much farther with politics than with weapons, at the speed of light. But if they miss the spirit of the times, it will go back to the past [fighting]".[84] Still, one way to ensure full democratic representation would be for the government to lower the share of the national vote for a party to enter parliament to the European norm of 5 per cent from the current 10 per cent, a level that has excluded the Kurdish national movement and forces their candidates to stand as independents.

The Kurdish national movement has other legal and political preconditions for laying down arms.[85] It wants changes to the anti-terrorism law and to laws regarding freedom of thought, speech and conscience; the release of all KCK prisoners, including sick inmates; and constitutional changes, including changing the definition of citizenship ("Turk" is imposed on all including Kurds, and an alternative could be "citizen of Republic of Turkey"), removing obstacles to the full use of mother languages in public services and education, and changing the unitary nature of the state to allow a more decentralised structure.[86]

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[80] About one third of Turkish citizens self-identifying as Kurds see the PKK as a terrorist organisation, down from about one half two years before. This includes one fifth of voters for the legal Kurdish national movement party. Unpublished 2013 poll of 7,100 people by the Ankara think-tank TEPAV, shared with Crisis Group, Ankara, October 2014.

[81] Crisis Group interview, Kemal Burkay, head of HAK-PAR, Ankara, June 2014.

[82] More than half of Turkey's citizens self-identifying as Kurds (and one third of those self-identifying as Turks) see the legal Kurdish national movement party (then BDP) as representing the Kurds, and nearly one quarter of both communities think it is at least partly representative of Kurds. Less than one third of Kurds thought that the PKK represented them. Unpublished 2011 poll of 6,500 people by the Ankara think-tank TEPAV, shared with Crisis Group, Ankara, October 2014.

[83] "There is not much left for them to demand". Crisis Group interview, Beşir Atalay, deputy prime minister, Ankara, February 2014. "[The government] did as much as possible in the current political environment. Allowing Kurdish education in private schools was the most important step [in education in mother languages] because the first step is the most crucial one. So now, mother languages issue – it's over. The identity issue – it's over". Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

[84] Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

[85] "We are not at a point yet where the state has taken many steps and the PKK is ready to disarm. Kurds cannot enter defenceless politics without resolving their own freedom problem. With a solution based on fair, equal rights, we will disarm". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[86] Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014.

Separately from PKK demands, Turkey could change the definition of membership in an armed organisation in penal code article 314/2 to exclude those not involved in violence or in the hierarchical structure of the organisation, and vague charges of being a "supporter" should no longer be allowed to stick. Article 32 and parts of the Law 2911 could be changed to decriminalise an individual's peaceful participation in demonstrations, even if they are unauthorised. Further legal changes might be needed in penal code articles 220/4 (additional sentencing for committing crimes on behalf of the organisation), 220/6 (additional sentencing to non-members charged with committing crimes on behalf of the organisation) and 220/7 (additional sentencing to non-members charged with aiding the organisation) to define the charges more specifically and to ensure they are not being used to silence non-violent dissent.

The government maintains that the environment is not conducive to fully abolishing the anti-terror law.[87] But its overall scope might be limited by including only grave violent activity, perhaps in line with UN wording.[88] There is already a separate law in Turkey about the financing of terrorism, so the scope of the penal code or the anti-terror law might not need to be so wide.

[87] "When the threat of weapons ends, we are ready to change the laws. I believe these changes will happen". Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014. AKP deputy chair Beşir Atalay said on 9 July, "we won't lose anything by abolishing the anti-terror law, but it is not on our agenda now". "'Çerçeve Yasa' görüşmeleri devam ediyor" ["Discussions on 'framework law' continue"], *Özgür Gündem*, 9 July 2014. "The PKK should remember that these laws are not just about them, they are about all the terrorist groups we face .... EU definitions of terrorism include the threat of force, and, ironically, Turkey has been warned not to limit the definition of terrorism finance crimes to specific acts committed". Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, October 2014.

[88] UN member states cannot agree on a single definition of terrorism, but in a resolution on combatting terrorism, the Security Council urged states to prevent and punish "criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act". UN Security Council Resolution N°1566.

III. **Elements of a Peace Deal**

The nuts and bolts of a deal that will allow the PKK and its insurgents to disarm, demobilise and return home in Turkey are rarely discussed in public in detail. The problem is not just the familiarity of the status quo and the apparent gap between the end goals of the two sides. Another issue might be that both sides are wary of explaining to their constituencies that a military victory is simply impossible and that peace will therefore require compromise. There are key components, however, that may need to be worked out: transitional justice including conditional amnesties, disarmament, the type of decentralisation that will work best for Turks and Kurds alike, and how to fit jailed PKK leader Öcalan into the process.

A. *Transitional Justice*

In the course of the conflict both sides have committed innumerable serious crimes, including murders, extrajudicial executions, torture, kidnappings and other human rights abuses.[89] This makes a credible, expedient transitional justice mechanism a way to ensure a long-term, transformative peace.

Small steps have already been taken to break taboos in dealing with Turkey's dark years. The process started with retired colonel Cemal Temizöz's case in September 2009 in Diyarbakır, which also included three former PKK members-turned-informants and three village guards (a pro-government Kurdish militia). The case covered the killings of twenty people in the Cizre district of Şırnak between 1993-1995, a small number in the grand scheme of the atrocities yet symbolically important.[90] Another step came in April 2011 when Diyarbakır's chief prosecutor started an investigation into human rights violations in the notorious Diyarbakır prison between 1980-1988. In early June 2014, in a case from 1996 concerning the deaths of ten inmates in prison, Diyarbakır's third high criminal court sentenced 62 public officials to five years in jail while acquitting twenty others.

1. Bringing PKK members back home

Any peace deal would need to provide legal channels for PKK militants and others driven from their homes by the conflict to return. There is as yet no consensus on how to label these homecomings, when to discuss them or what the conditions of return for different groups would be, though the government says the issue is on its agenda.[91]

As controversial as the issue has been for mainstream Turks, discussions of amnesties for insurgents are not new in Turkey. The idea of extending a gradual amnesty to the PKK was developed in 1993 by then-president Turgut Özal. But the forms of legal leniency on actual offer so far have not proved attractive to the PKK leadership or the great majority of its militants. This is because previous offers have been made in the form of "repentance laws", which demand cooperating with the state and security forces, betraying former comrades and denouncing the struggle. Also, trust in the state was undermined during the "Oslo Process" when in October 2009 several PKK militants who were allowed to return were charged in court or felt obliged to flee back to Iraq. Exiles who were due to come back were similarly disappointed by the withdrawal of visas at the last moment.[92]

[89] The Turkish government says 40,000 people have been killed since 1984, but this figure apparently includes large, unconfirmed casualties on the PKK side in Turkish army's hot pursuit raids into northern Iraq in the 1990s.

[90] Temizöz is the most senior member of the Turkish military ever to stand trial specifically for gross violations of human rights committed in the course of the PKK-army conflict. Human Rights Watch criticised the limited scope of the investigation, however, saying the prosecutor failed to explore a possible chain of command going beyond Temizöz himself. "Time for Justice: Ending Impunity for Killings and Disappearances in 1990s Turkey", Human Rights Watch, 2012.

[91] AKP deputy chair Beşir Atalay in "'Çerçeve Yasa' görüşmeleri devam ediyor" ["Discussions on 'framework law' continue"], op. cit.

[92] For details, see Crisis Group Report, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, op. cit., p. 3.

The state is now ready for the return of Kurdish fighters: "We have plans to address [the returning militants'] key concerns. If there are no guns, there will be no problems. … Our mind is very clear. We have no confusion, no grey areas. There is no problem with the [insurgents] coming back [to Turkey]".[93] The issue will clearly be addressed by the monitoring and evaluation commissions set up by the government on 1 October 2014, one of which will deal with returns and reintegration.

One possible problem with securing legal immunity is the PKK's international listing as a terrorist organisation. Such designations are notoriously hard to remove, and the PKK might have to find another political vehicle, such as the current Kurdish national movement's HDP (see Section II.F above). As the process deepens, Turkey might also have to defuse potential problems with the U.S. Department of Treasury's "kingpin" list, which currently features thirteen top PKK-related names on it, including Murat Karayılan, Ali Rıza Altun and Zübeyir Aydar, as well as Cemil Bayık, Duran Kalkan, Remzi Kartal, Sabri Ok and Adem Uzun as foreign narcotics traffickers.[94]

The PKK accepts that it will eventually enter legal democratic politics, but is not pressing the issue of militants' return at this stage, saying its priority is securing rights for Kurds in a democratic Turkey.[95] KCK co-chair Cemil Bayık defined this as a "return [to] an environment where … Kurds' will, culture and language are recognised, Kurds organise and express themselves freely, govern themselves, and all this is guaranteed by the constitution. I would come and … do politics. We will not come back to go to prison".[96] Another expert, encouraged by the government to research the Kurdish position on amnesties, says junior PKK cadres expect to go into local politics or education upon returning.[97]

Designing durable legal parameters for such returns would require extra care. The PKK will not accept any old-style repentance laws that read like surrender. This approach may also be out-of-date given the Turkish acceptance that military victory has evaded both sides.[98] The PKK may need a narrative to explain to its supporters that in the end, the sacrifices were all worth it.

There might have to be a limited amnesty that would work fast and would not grant automatic or blanket immunity for combatants from either side, as the latter would risk international and domestic legal challenges and would be a hard sell to both Kurdish and Turkish constituencies, as well as an easy excuse for the opponents of the process to reject it.[99] While it might not be general or unconditional, any amnesty might need to have a comprehensive reach. It could extend to cadres in the Qandil mountains, Kurdish refugees from Turkey inside northern Iraq, as well as exiled Kurds in Europe.[100] The legal arrangements could also address prisoners held in Turkish jails on PKK-related charges. The government could conduct

[93] Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

[94] The U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) List.

[95] "Now is not the time to talk about returns. They will happen when [the Kurdish] problem is resolved, not the other way around. When the PKK decides that we are at a point of no return [in the peace process], then it will [go back to Turkey]. No one will go down from the mountain before then. … Our problem is the freedom of the Kurdish people and democratisation of Turkey. … We would not be enduring these hardships if we thought of ourselves". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014. "It's not just about going home. Why did we come here? We need to think long term. … We see our struggle as permanent. … We want to solve the Kurdish problem, not to go home". Crisis Group interview, KCK spokesperson, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[96] "Silah bırakmak için…" ["To lay down weapons …"], op. cit.

[97] Crisis Group interview, Etyen Mahçupyan, columnist, Istanbul, June 2014.

[98] Crisis Group interviews, Turkish officials, Ankara, June 2014.

[99] For instance, in the context of Colombia's peace process between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) sent a letter to the head of the Colombian Constitutional Court underlining the need for effective sanctioning of the responsible offenders. Turkey is not an ICC member but has partially recognised the court. In May 2004, an amendment to Article 38 of the Constitution was adopted allowing the extradition of Turkish nationals to the ICC.

[100] The U.N.-run Makhmour refugee camp once had 12,000 people, most of whom fled Turkey's Şırnak province in 1992-1993 and potentially face prosecution in Turkey. Fighting in northern Iraq in mid-2014 emptied the camp, making the issue less problematic. Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, October 2014.

inventories of these inmates and release as many as possible, especially those being held for political crimes.

Any amnesty or reintegration mechanism may need to make sure not to exclude women and girls who are combatants or otherwise associated with the insurgency. Historically, sidelining female fighters from demobilisation and reintegration schemes has reduced post-conflict opportunities for women.[101]

At the same time, discussions on amnesty and returns could include clear pathways that provide returning militants fully documented civilian status as well as support in finding sustainable employment, including within the state bureaucracy.[102] International institutions, such as the World Bank, could provide financing as well as technical and analytical assistance. Outside material aid could also be used to meet the initial basic needs of militants and their families such as food, clothes, shelter, medical care and training. The international community could give financial and technical support as well as guidance to local civil society and private sector initiatives for reintegrating demobilised PKK members.

The timeline for returns should be realistic. Disarmament could be gradual, and it may be important to inform the public that the process could take several years. Any amnesty could be implemented as part of a wider framework of transitional justice mechanisms and democratic reforms, be grounded in relevant domestic legislation and recognise Turkey's obligations under international law.

[101] See Tsjeard Bouta, Georg Frerks, and Ian Bannon, *Gender, Conflict and Development* (Washington DC, 2005), pp. 17-22, and Crisis Group Africa Report N°112, *Beyond Victimhood: Women's Peacebuilding in Sudan, Congo and Uganda*, 28 June 2006, p. 21.

[102] "If you shut people out, you risk seeing the formation of illegal armed groups or criminal networks that rely on disenfranchised former combatants. It's important to have a medium- to long-term perspective to ensure that people stay on board with the normalisation and demobilisation process". Crisis Group interview, Priscilla Hayner, independent expert on transitional justice, Brussels, October 2014.

2. Balancing peace and justice

The Turkish government has not yet made public how it will implement transitional justice mechanisms, although the board and the commission on legal arrangements and human rights set up on 1 October 2014 have a clear mandate to do so. In private, a senior security official was open to the idea of comprehensive judicial redress, including for state agents, but worried about how quickly and far it could go: "You can't threaten all security forces with jail now if you need them on board with a solution".[103]

This will not be a simple matter for the government to solve. From the beginning, Turkey's security forces were told that they were operating against terrorists within the wide margins of the old martial law regime. In fact, operations moved forward under a "state of emergency" declared in the south east between 1987 and 2002. In the words of a Turkish expert: "Politicians are smarter than soldiers. They pushed the soldiers without a legal framework. Now, when cases are opened twenty years later, the soldiers say 'we did our job'. But on paper, that was not their job".[104]

PKK leader Öcalan has long insisted – pointing particularly to the South African experience – that a peace process should include setting up a truth and reconciliation commission through parliament.[105] This might need to be on the talks' agenda, in a way that also takes into account the victims' wishes and hears their stories, but it is unclear how much the two sides really want full transparency.[106] A normal parliamentary commission that hosts hearings and produces a report under parliament's standing human rights commission might not be a good option given that such commissions are generally obliged to produce a report and dissolve after four months, which might be too short, since truth commissions typically take years to finish their work.

Most such commissions created by parliaments in other countries have been independent bodies. Turkey could have an agreed panel of experts that would report to parliament and whose proceedings and report would be public. Given an agreement on the issue among the two sides, taking victims of the conflict into account, one option might be to produce a report that would not make public any names but would give an account of what happened, which institutions or groups were responsible, and in the case of disappearances, where the bodies are.[107]

Negotiators might have to define a process for choosing members of such a commission, what its main aim would be and what timeframe it would cover.[108] They might also need to decide how its findings would feed into a new law on judicial redress for criminal acts and serious human rights violations during the conflict. These would have to be in harmony with the legal arrangements for the broader amnesty.

This law on judicial redress dealing with criminal responsibility for past events would probably best be taken care of within the current court system expediting and setting criteria for cases related to the conflict.[109] Realistic criteria would have to balance the need for justice and the need to put the conflict behind,

[103] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, June 2014.

[104] Crisis Group interview, Nihat Ali Özcan, PKK expert, Ankara, June 2014.

[105] See for instance "Abdullah Öcalan: We need a truth and reconciliation commission", ANF, 18 November 2010.

[106] "People will prefer to pull a blanket over the past". Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, October 2014.

[107] Guatemala's main truth commission was designed to document abuse but not name perpetrators, although it specified key positions. Findings were cited in subsequent court cases, however, most notably the trial of ex-dictator Jose Efraín Ríos Montt for genocide and war crimes. See Crisis Group Latin America N°50, *Justice on Trial in Guatemala: The Ríos Montt Case*, 23 September 2013.

[108] "The 'who' is more important than anything else, and it can usefully take a few months to decide in a consultative public nomination and vetting process to select the truth commissioners. This is an opportunity also to engage and educate the population about the commission". Crisis Group interview, Priscilla Hayner, independent expert on transitional justice, Brussels, October 2014. In terms of time-scale, the commission's report could start in 1984 with the beginning of the insurgency; in 1980, when the military coup radicalised many Kurds; or with the 1925 Kurdish-Islamic Sheikh Said uprising that was the first of several cycles of repression.

[109] "If you set up some special court, it will just turn into a kind of [1940s] Nuremberg affair in which everyone says they were following orders". Crisis Group interview, Turkish commentator, Ankara, October 2014.

separating political from human rights crimes, carefully using suspended or reduced sentencing where appropriate, and taking into account jail time already served. Negotiators might have to agree on what to do about the twenty-year statute of limitations, which applies to killings in which the victim's body has been found. This limitation is already undermining the judiciary's tentative efforts to begin a search for justice, since the worst of the fighting and abuses took place in the 1990s. Negotiators could decide whether prosecutions should be for crimes against humanity and war crimes, or as individual murder cases, the former being exempt from the statute of limitations.[110] A lack of continuity and focus in the proceedings, excessive delays and changes to the make-up of the panel of judges have all posed major problems so far.[111]

Full attention might need to be paid to the criteria for reparations to victims on all sides, witness protection schemes, faster judicial procedures, and appeals for international logistical and financial help. Any deal will have to respect Turkey's obligations under human rights and international criminal law treaties to which it is a party, particularly the European Convention on Human Rights, which is deeply embedded in the Turkish legal system. These obligations also provide parameters that ensure any deal can survive future judicial scrutiny.[112]

Compromises could be negotiated. There is a legal expectation in Turkey that all who committed serious crimes will be prosecuted, but few countries have found this to be possible after an armed conflict of any length. The sides could consider an administrative procedure for many PKK members, especially those not in leadership positions, and offer them reduced or alternative sentences. Any law could distinguish between the different levels of culpability, even though this is often difficult.[113] The process could make special provisions for all political crimes. The Kurdish public might also need reassurance that it need no longer fear the PKK.[114] The PKK could help build trust with Turkish officials by making clear that it would be open to scrutiny into the non-combat-related killings and disappearances for which it is responsible.

B. *Disarmament*

Turkey's government and public opinion are accustomed to the maximalist public goal of disarming the PKK entirely as part of any peace process. The Turkish side and public remain highly suspicious of the

[110] The twenty-year limit does not apply to crimes against humanity, torture cases and disappearances. The killings carried out by state perpetrators in the 1990s should not be treated as individual cases of murder but as crimes against humanity, along with enforced disappearances. "Time for Justice", op. cit.

[111] "Everything inches along. And you still have a protective approach to state agents and courts seem unwilling to probe the evidence or examine chain of command responsibility. The defendants benefit from trials being transferred to provinces remote from the region where they committed the crimes. My fear is that the government reached an understanding with the military over the Ergenekon and Balyoz [coup plot cases] which included the message that they would not pursue accountability for the military's past crimes in the south east". Crisis Group interview, Emma Sinclair-Webb, senior Turkey researcher, Human Rights Watch, Istanbul, July 2014.

[112] At least two of the human rights treaties to which Turkey is a party, the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, impose obligations to investigate and punish perpetrators of serious human rights abuses. "Time for Justice", op. cit.

[113] "The most serious crimes may go up the chain of command, and the people most responsible for these crimes may also be the most powerful – often the people who are also required to complete the peace deal". Crisis Group interview, Priscilla Hayner, independent expert on transitional justice, Brussels, October 2014.

[114] "About the crimes the Turkish state carried out, you can find thousands of people willing to speak out giving name and surname and picture if necessary. … That's all hard to do when it comes to PKK crimes. They are covered in obscurity. Covered in anxiety, too". Frederike Geerdink, "The fear of the PKK is greater than the fear of the state", *Kurdish Matters*, 27 August 2014, http://bit.ly/1vQUONA.

PKK's intention to disarm at all.[115] This is especially true after the group's affiliates took over areas of Syria, and the PKK itself joined the fight against jihadis in Iraq and Syria. According to a senior Turkish security official: "Even if we agreed on a peace deal in Turkey, would the government enter such an agreement knowing that the PKK maintains armed elements elsewhere? The PKK doesn't have an answer to this. They think the current environment, especially in Syria, is a great opportunity for them".[116]

For its part, the PKK firmly rejects government demands for laying down weapons as premature. In fact, it does not speak of disarmament at all. Former co-chair of the PKK/KCK Murat Karayılan was uncompromising: "We are a power evolved from an armed movement. We keep it as a tool for defence. ... We cannot yet quit arms. ... If the Turkish state clears the way for the democratic political struggle of the Kurdish nation ... arms may lose their meaning".[117] Hardliner PKK/KCK member Bahoz Erdal said the request to disarm is "an imposition for surrendering .... We cannot accept surrender even under the most difficult conditions. ... It is not about disarming. It is about solving the Kurdish problem. It is about eliminating the reasons for going to the mountains".[118]

The PKK's often-stated demand is that it be allowed to keep armed formations as a kind of self-defence force after a peace deal.[119] Former PKK/KCK chair Murat Karayılan said in August 2013 that the goal was to create a "professional guerrilla".[120] The Kurdish national movement's parliament-like Democratic Society Congress (Demokratik Toplum Kongresi, or DTK) repeated this demand in September 2014, and according to a Kurdish politician: "In a democratic, joint homeland, the overall defence will be managed from the centre but the 20-21 provinces in the [Kurdish region] ... will have their own police and public order forces".[121]

Turkey has the equivalent of a municipal police force, the Zabıta, which could perhaps be given new powers nationwide. But it is probably unrealistic to expect Turkey to agree to parallel armed formations on its territory, let alone any armed group manned by ex-PKK militants. It may even be better that demobilised combatants not be allowed to take jobs bearing arms, at least for a certain period.[122] The best remedy for the PKK's fears of an Ankara-based security mechanism is perhaps greater confidence in the peace

[115] "The PKK can't disarm because it is not politically mature. ... Their mentality is 'let me find ways to keep weapons as an instrument'. ... They don't have the slightest intention of putting down their weapons". Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, June 2014. According to the head of an influential Ankara think-tank: "What PKK understands from disarmament is ... to exist conspicuously as heroes in society ... to extend their charisma arising from being in the mountains". Taha Özhan, op. cit., p 69.

[116] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, June 2014.

[117] Cengiz Çandar, "Leaving the Mountain", op. cit. Duran Kalkan had a similar view in early 2013: "[Those who want us to disarm] are trying to fool us. I ask them this: If the PKK disarms, what do [the authorities] plan on doing to it? I assume they are trying to say 'put your weapons down, we know what to do with you'. Are [we] stupid? .... What is needed is not laying down weapons, but ... [giving] leader Apo [Öcalan] the opportunity to play a real and active role in solving the problem. ... Starting with disarmament is putting the horse before the cart. We are not stupid. Kurds are not in a position to hand over their security to someone else". "Duran Kalkan: Biz ahmak mıyız?" ["Duran Kalkan: Are we stupid?"], *Taraf*, 7 January 2013.

[118] Interview with Hasan Cemal, op. cit.

[119] "Kurds have and will continue to have a self-defence problem. A police force under the municipality exists in Belgium and elsewhere in Europe. Why can't this be [the case] in Turkey? The Turkish army will be a big army. Kurds may have their own security force for maintaining public order. How many and under whom this will be, we don't know". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[120] "Karayılan: Profesyonel gerilla hedefliyoruz" ["Our aim is a professional guerrilla"], Dicle News Agency, 15 August 2013. "Everybody thinks of armed forces when you say self-defence. ... We don't see it only as that. We see it as protecting your language, culture and the ecological balance, as living in a humane way". Seydi Fırat quoted in Pınar Ogunc, "Kürtler demokratik ozerklikle ne istiyor? (2)" ["What are the Kurds demanding with democratic autonomy?"], *Radikal*, 29 April 2014.

[121] Crisis Group telephone interview, Demir Çelik, HDP member of parliament, July 2014.

[122] "In Colombia, we didn't ever allow [ex-combatants] to take jobs in security firms .... It takes six years to rehabilitate former combatants, but every penny spent on education [for them] is worth it". Speech about the Colombian peace process by Monica de Greiff, president of the Bogota Chamber of Commerce, Istanbul, 29 September 2014.

process, more transparency, better service regulations, including the removal of any remaining ethnic discrimination, and more local political say over policing and security everywhere in the country.

Before disarming, the Kurdish national movement also ambitiously demands the disbanding of the so-called Gendarmerie Intelligence and Anti-terrorism Unit (JITEM), a secret organisation that Ankara has not even acknowledged exists.[123] The two sides may need to agree a commission and determine criteria to vet the security personnel serving in the region, excluding any involved in past crimes.

The PKK also wants the 50,000-strong, pro-government Kurdish village guard militia in the south east to be disarmed. At the point of a peace and disarmament deal, ensuring sustainable security in the south east will likely require the government to dismantle this militia while also making sure that there will not be PKK retribution against these people and their families.[124] Another option would be for ex-village guards and ex-PKK combatants who choose to do so to be comprehensively combined and retrained to serve as a reformed rural gendarmerie. Some in the PKK think the village guards need not be a major obstacle:

> At the point of a solution, the village guards will no longer take a side. They are Kurds anyway. The government left them hungry and economic needs made them pick up guns against other Kurds. It is a tragedy. Many village guards now don't fight us like they used to; they laid down their weapons. But it is still a problem. The state needs to provide jobs and security for them. … We are not against this, it would be the right thing to do.[125]

More problematic after reaching a conclusion to the armed struggle may be thousands of land disputes, since the families of village guards often seized the grazing grounds of villagers who were forced to flee in the 1990s. Turkey has spent only 171 million Turkish lira (TL) (about $80 million) as of year-end 2013 on projects encouraging return to villages.[126] With almost 1,000 villages and over 2,000 upland pastures affected from the conflict, a much greater effort may be needed.

In the end, equal rights and representation for Kurds in a democratising Turkey are the key to the PKK's agreement to disarm. Disarmament in Turkey can be separated from what happens in the rest of the region. Given the role since 2012 of PKK-linked armed units protecting Kurdish communities in Syria (and in Iraq since mid-2014), it seems unrealistic to expect PKK-linked forces to disarm there (see Section IV.D below). But if both the government and the PKK/KCK leadership could agree on a deal that is viewed as complementary to their respective strategic interests, the two sides would be well-equipped to ensure the conflict inside Turkey ends smoothly. In the meantime, PKK/KCK leaders could publicly voice unequivocal commitment to the goal of total disarmament of their forces within Turkey's borders. Continued tensions around the PKK's unilateral ceasefire – and PKK leaders' public efforts, and sometimes failures, to calm radical youth – show how difficult even this may be to achieve.

C. *Decentralisation*

A key part of any peace negotiation will likely be meeting a main Kurdish demand – the devolution of central authority to Kurdish-majority areas. There is no easy way to draw a line around a region that demarcates an ethnically or linguistically homogeneous Kurdish area. Some Kurds view 24 of Turkey's 81

[123] Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014.

[124] "The real peace will have to be achieved between village guards and the Kurds living there. I don't think this is even on the government's agenda". Crisis Group interview, member of government-appointed "Wise Persons" delegation, Ankara, June 2014.

[125] Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[126] Crisis Group email correspondence, Turkish official, June 2014. "We already have plans for them, we will retire them and give them salaries … Our land registries are good, as long as the [displaced villagers] have deeds, they can [get their properties back]". Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

provinces as having Kurdish-speaking majorities, others suggest the figure is closer to twelve.[127] On the other hand, about half of Turkey's citizens of Kurdish origin live in western Turkey, and are often well integrated. Nevertheless, during his prime ministry, President Erdoğan publicly recognised the historic reality of Kurdistan.[128] Similarly, liberal commentators made decentralisation a legitimate part of the public debate.[129]

Turkey is a highly centralised state with many core government functions like security, health, infrastructure and education directed from the capital or by provincial outposts of ministries. Nevertheless, municipal power has grown somewhat in recent years. Despite the jailing and legal harassment of thousands of mayors, councillors and pro-PKK activists after 2009, politicians from the Kurdish national movement party won eleven of 23 provincial capitals in Turkey's eastern and south eastern regions in the March 2014 municipal elections. In principle, at least, the government is committed to further devolution, including, among other things, increasing the financial autonomy of local governments and enshrining the right to local governance in the constitution.[130]

The gains by Kurds in Iraq and Syria in recent years have contributed to a new confidence and ambition among Kurds in Turkey. One poll shows rising support for a federal or even independent Kurdish state, although the latter is still not the preference of the majority of Turkey's Kurds.[131] Even a municipal councillor from the ruling AKP in Diyarbakır said he wanted not just autonomy but a federation in which, for instance, Kurds controlled the small oil and gas deposits in their region.[132]

Contrary to Turkish public preconceptions, it is not the pro-PKK Kurdish national movement that has the most radical public demands for autonomy. Kemal Burkay, the moderate Kurdish politician and founder of a small legal party known as the Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR), openly advocates a Kurdish federal state covering 24 provinces in Turkey with broad powers similar to those of the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq: "We can be under the same state roof but we have to have equal rights. … We want an official language. There can also be a [Kurdish] defence force".[133]

Since the PKK abandoned its separatist goal of a greater, independent Kurdistan for the 25 million Kurds of the Middle East in the mid-1990s, it has sought a "solution within Turkey". Initially this resembled a federal model, but after 2001, the goal became a high level of autonomy. Abdullah Öcalan coined a concept he calls "democratic confederalism" in 2004, which presents the basis of the current demand for "democratic autonomy". This model divides Turkey into twenty to 25 regions based on socio-economic levels and cultural proximities and gives all powers other than foreign relations, defence and justice to the regional authorities.[134]

[127] Veteran Kurdish politician Kemal Burkay's party counts 24 such provinces while Kurdish academic Vahap Coskun counted 22 with a significant Kurdish population. A leading Kurdish AKP municipal councillor counted around fifteen with Kurdish majorities (Hakkari, Ağrı, Bingöl, Iğdır, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Van, Bitlis, Mus, Tunceli, Adıyaman, Urfa, Şırnak, Siirt and perhaps Kars). Crisis Group interviews, Ankara and Diyarbakır, June-July 2014.

[128] "PKK accuses Davutoğlu of supporting Syrian rebels in fight against Kurds", *Today's Zaman*, 16 August 2013.

[129] "The victims of Sykes Picot [the Kurds] are making a comeback. … As the region is in turmoil, the Kurds will accept no less than self-rule". Crisis Group interview, Cengiz Çandar, Turkish commentator and author, Diyarbakır, July 2014.

[130] AKP's program, www.akparti.org.tr/english/akparti/parti-programme.

[131] Nearly a third of Turkish citizens self-identifying as Kurds support independence, up from just over one fifth in 2011. The proportion supporting a federal entity similar to the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq rose to nearly two thirds, up from just over one half in the same period. Unpublished 2011 and 2013 polls by the Ankara think-tank TEPAV, shared with Crisis Group, Ankara, October 2014.

[132] The councillor was also convinced that his party was ready to move to elected provincial governors "if the Middle East settles down in a way that rules out a pan-Kurdish state". Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, July 2014.

[133] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, June 2014.

[134] "For other parts of Turkey, administrative reforms may suffice but not for the Kurds. The Kurds want to rule themselves. Regional parliaments must have political powers". Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014.

The Kurdish national movement's DTK, which includes a broad spectrum of civil society organisations and political parties, appears to be the unofficial precursor of a parliament for Turkey's Kurds, and it placed democratic autonomy at the top of its agenda in September 2014.[135] A 2013 poll found that nearly two thirds of Turkey's Kurds want their own parliament.[136] A Kurdish national movement parliamentarian said the aim was to have all education, health, culture, and tourism administered locally, and advocated elected regional governors rather than the current system of centrally-appointed provincial governors.[137]

The PKK has nevertheless failed to be clear and consistent about its real end goal in terms of devolution. For instance, PKK cadres in the mountains, while not contradicting Öcalan and other leaders explicitly, are less willing to rule out an independent state.[138] But the top leadership maintains that a model of regions or U.S.-style states could work: "What matters is that the existence of a Kurdistan people is accepted. … We are not thinking about giving or taking an inch of land. We don't want to draw thick boundaries; to the contrary, we want to remove them".[139] Interestingly, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's longstanding vision of softer borders with Turkey's Muslim neighbours is similar to the Kurdish national movement's idea of stronger links between the Middle East's Kurdish populations.

Currently, the history of the PKK is that of a one-party armed group, not of an organisation that can convincingly offer more democracy for Turkey's Kurdish-speakers. The broader Kurdish national movement does have wide support, but it may need to demonstrate its capacity to operate as a normal political group within Turkey without using arms. This will take time and a peace deal. Kurdish national movement figures would be wise to refrain from pro-independence statements that are both contradictory to previously stated positions and likely to inflame Turkish public opinion, not to mention unrealistic given lack of credible international support for such a goal. Such statements are also economically problematic: apart from well-established but small oil fields and some mines, the impoverished region has no obvious resources to support itself separately from Turkey.

The government meanwhile would be wise to make sure that Kurdish municipalities are not discriminated against and have the same access to finance and assets as all others.[140] It might, for instance, start changing laws, guided by the criteria embodied by the EU accession process and the Council of Europe's European Charter of Local Self Government, and ensure implementation of these laws.[141] It could call the

[135] Meeting in Diyarbakır, the DTK divided Turkey's Kurdish-speaking region into five areas, which the Kurds refer to as Amed, Botan, Serhad, Dersim ve Tolhıldan – roughly Diyarbakır, Cizre, Iğdır, Kars, Ardahan, Ağrı, Tunceli provinces. It said each should have its own parliament. "DTK yeniden yapılandırılıyor" ["DTK is re-structured"], Al Jazeera Turk, 7 September 2014.

[136] This figure is up from nearly one half in 2011. The proportion wanting a Kurdish flag went up from just over one third to over one half in the same period. Unpublished polls by Ankara's TEPAV think-tank, op. cit.

[137] This parliamentarian left finance within the central government's list of powers. "[Our demand] does not mean separation, it is unity within diversity. It is a decentralised form of government". Crisis Group telephone interview, Demir Çelik, HDP member of parliament, July 2014.

[138] Crisis Group interviews, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[139] Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[140] Ahmet Türk, elected in March 2014 as mayor of Mardin, one of the few Kurdish-majority provinces that benefited from new powers under the latest local administrative law, said he reaped few advantages from it. "It's unbelievable. They made Mardin a super-municipality, thinking that AKP would win. [Seeing they would lose,] two days before the election, they transferred [all assets]. 2,168 parcels of land were held by the [formerly powerful governor's office]. Only one was transferred to us, a cemetery. The machines were redistributed [to central government entities]. Five big pieces of land near the airport … and a [cultural centre] built for [$10 million] were given to the Treasury. But we have got TL 500 million ($250 million) of debt. This is an attempt to sabotage Kurdish politics". Crisis Group interview, Mardin, June 2014.

[141] Turkey signed the charter in 1991, but put reservations on nine articles (4.6, 6.1, 7.3, 9.4, 9.6, 9.7, 10.2, 10.3, and 11.1) that would have strengthened local authorities by involving them in the central decision-making process; allowing them to determine their internal structures; giving them more freedom over financial resources; permitting them to associate with other local domestic and foreign governments; and giving them the right to judicial recourse.

Kurdish radicals' bluff by promoting the discussion of all kinds of possible decentralisation scenarios, including independence.[142] In the end, whether Kurds wish for a separate state or continue to want to remain within Turkey might depend on how well Turkey can address their legitimate, democratic demands.

D. *Öcalan's Status*

Discussions on the fate of the jailed PKK founder, once routinely dismissed as a "baby killer" and "terrorist chieftain" in the Turkish media, is still a sensitive issue but no longer taboo. Leading AKP politician Bülent Arınç accepted in June 2012 that house arrest for Öcalan could be discussed in the context of a broader PKK disarmament.[143] A Turkish official told Crisis Group such a move could be discussed before weapons are laid down, as long as there was a real prospect for disarmament.[144] Demonstrating a new level of tolerance toward discussing the issue, Interior Minister Efkan Ala said on 18 October that the government would take necessary steps to improve Öcalan's conditions, as long as it contributed to a solution.[145] Even the two main opposition parties may have no fundamental objection, based on the mild approach offered by their joint candidate in the August 2014 presidential election.[146]

The status of their leader is of utmost importance for the PKK in exile and the pro-PKK Kurdish national movement in Turkey.[147] Kurdish politician Ahmet Türk, a much-jailed veteran campaigner who is now the mayor of Mardin in south eastern Turkey, paints it in black and white terms: "You can't make peace with either the Kurdish people or the PKK as long as their leader is rotting in a dungeon. If [the government] wants peace, Öcalan has to be free".[148] Öcalan himself makes few direct public demands about his situation as he is aware that government negotiators know this item is a core, but sensitive, part of the overall package.

If the peace process succeeds, an amnesty for Öcalan might be possible. In the interim, it might serve Turkey's interests to allow him more contact with the outside world. The Turkish media, sensitive to the government's new mood, has already played a significant role in normalising his image in recent years, printing his statements from jail with his picture alongside regular domestic political news. The more transparency that is brought to his activities, the more the Kurdish national movement will be brought into Turkey's democratic mainstream. According to a leading campaigner for rights in Turkey, this would also help rein in hardline factions: "When there is no [regular] contact with Öcalan, [hardline PKK leaders

[142] For more, see Crisis Group Report, *Turkey's Kurdish Impasse*, op. cit.

[143] "Öcalan'a ev hapsi konusunda flaş açıklama" ["Breaking news on house arrest for Öcalan"], *Sabah*, 15 June 2012. Arınç was then government spokesman, but since September 2014 has been the deputy prime minister in charge of the peace process. Nearly half of AKP voters could accept house arrest for Öcalan – but nearly the same proportion would prefer he were hanged. Unpublished 2013 poll by Ankara's TEPAV think-tank, op. cit.

[144] Crisis Group interview, Ankara, June 2014.

[145] He ruled out transferring him from İmralı island to a different location at this time. "Efkan Ala' dan Abdullah Öcalan açıklaması" ["Efkan Ala's Öcalan statement"], CNN Turk, 18 October 2014.

[146] Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the joint presidential candidate of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Action Party (MHP), implied on 27 July that he would approve a bill paving the way for Öcalan to be released: "The president should probably approve anything that society and parliament approve". "Parliament's word important on Kurdish issue, Öcalan's freedom: İhsanoğlu", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 28 July 2014.

[147] "Mr. Öcalan represents the will on the Kurdish side.... He must be freed at the end of the process. We don't see his freedom separate from that of Kurds". Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, July 2014. A top-level PKK leader said: "We are having difficulties in this process. We had a hard time convincing our cadres ... to withdraw. They mostly asked us: 'What about the leadership [Öcalan]?' The way to [Öcalan's] freedom through better jail conditions and house arrest is the most sensitive issue for the guerrilla". Interview with Hasan Cemal, op. cit. KCK co-head Cemil Bayık in July 2014 said: "For negotiations to start ... leader Apo [Öcalan] needs to be freed. Because he can't take any more steps in the İmralı [prison] system. He needs to be free to negotiate and take further steps". "Silah bırakmak için ..." [To lay down weapons ...], op. cit.

[148] Crisis Group interview, June 2014.

like] Cemil Bayık and Duran Kalkan can speak more freely. They can excite the militants in the mountains. … Increasing Öcalan's communication with them may limit provocations".[149]

E. *Third-party Assistance*

Mediators have broken the ice, and the time for proper talks and direct contacts has come, but outside help might be useful at different stages in the process. Disarmament will likely need a neutral referee or a mediator to ensure no weapons are circulating freely in areas vulnerable to ongoing violence. As it has no experience in this area, Turkey would benefit from international expertise. For instance, a structure similar to the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) used in Northern Ireland could be helpful.[150] There is also room for international assistance and the sharing of expertise on more technical issues like local policing.[151]

In some peace processes elsewhere, host governments pay for oversight of disarming, demobilising and reintegration.[152] Accepting international financial support is also possible. A government request to international institutions or supportive governments for help in rebuilding some of the hundreds of villages destroyed in the conflict could also lead to a joint project that would bring all sides closer together.

For the time being, apart from an undisclosed external mediator revealed in the leaked "Oslo Process" (see Section I above) tapes, the Turkish government has declined outside government assistance in the talks. But third parties – governmental or otherwise – could continue to play an important role down the line.[153] A new law passed in July 2014 leaves the door open to this by allowing the government to talk and assign duties to domestic or foreign individuals or organisations in its efforts to "end terrorism and strengthen social unity".[154]

The sides may need to use a common friend or observer to build confidence. This could be a local independent commission, made up of jointly agreed, respected individuals like former diplomats who may enjoy more confidence of the state, and intellectuals or newspaper commentators with more trust of the Kurdish movement. The Kurdish national movement prefers a fully neutral, outside referee, and has suggested that the U.S. would be a welcome candidate.[155] If there were agreement on international help, in order to build up domestic legitimacy and increase the chances of success, the government would have to reverse the conspiracy-minded, anti-foreigner rhetoric favoured by pro-government media, President Erdoğan and other AKP leaders.

[149] Crisis Group interview, member of government-appointed "Wise Persons" delegation, Ankara, June 2014.

[150] The IICD established in 1997 oversaw decommissioning of the provisional IRA's arsenal in 2005. It was headed by a Canadian general. A five-member International Verification Commission (IVC) made up of former statesmen was also used in the case of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain from 2011 onwards to monitor disarmament and decommissioning, although the Spanish government, which refuses to negotiate with ETA, also has not recognised the IVC.

[151] In Northern Ireland, there was a police oversight commissioner, a role filled by retired North American police chiefs.

[152] The IICD in Northern Ireland was paid for by the Republic of Ireland.

[153] In Northern Ireland, the British government eventually accepted an international commission on decommissioning chaired by a Canadian general, which made it easier for the IRA to hand over its weapons, as well as an independent commission to monitor the process. Jonathan Powell, "Security is not enough: Ten lessons for conflict resolution from Northern Ireland", London School of Economics Ideas, November 2011.

[154] Law no. 6551, published in the Official Gazette on 16 July 2014.

[155] "The preferable referee would be a demonstrably neutral state. A domestic group could be allied with one side or the other and that will cause problems". Crisis Group telephone interview, Demir Çelik, HDP member of parliament, June 2014. See also "Bayık: Çözüm sürecinde ABD veya uluslararası bir heyet gözlemci olabilir" ["Bayık: The U.S. or an international delegation could be monitors"], T24, 3 November 2013.

IV. A Hard But Open Road Ahead

A major motivating factor to reach a peace deal now is the low number of domestic obstacles to a workable solution. Yet both sides may still have to overcome an inertia that prefers the historically entrenched if uncomfortable status quo to the short-term uncertainties and risks of a deal. A major milestone has been passed with the government's 1 October 2014 framework that includes a board led by the prime minister's office (see Section II.B above). But success will probably depend on how actively and inclusively this mechanism is put to work.

A. *Building Confidence*

Trust remains in short supply. Frustrated polemics during the fighting between Syrian Kurds and Islamic State jihadis around the Syrian-Turkish border town of Kobani/Ain al-Arab in September and October 2014 led Kurdish national movement leaders and President Erdoğan to accuse each other of being the same as Islamic State.[156] Also in October, the worst security breakdown in the south east since the March 2013 ceasefire further exacerbated tensions (see Section IV.E below). Many in the Turkish government believe that the PKK has not changed at all, that it continues to have a separatist agenda and wants to keep arms (see Section IV.C below). This includes officials from departments directly dealing with the PKK.

> All organisations are like people. They will try to find ways to survive. Even when they no longer have a cause, they keep [on going]. … There is nothing that has not been discussed [whether in negotiations with the PKK or through the Wise Persons commission]. There are no more taboos. We are now in a very different Turkey. But the PKK plays the same tunes from 37 years ago. … They use memorised sentences [and see us as] assimilationist.[157]

While Turkish attitudes toward Kurdishness have changed markedly during the past decade – thanks to democratisation, lower violence and proactive policies promoting respect and rights for Kurds by the ruling AKP – the PKK has not had much chance to get used to the new Turkey. A mid-ranking PKK cadre in the group's remote Iraqi headquarters saw no change: "The Turks still have this mentality, this refusal to recognise us, that's why we have to keep struggling".[158] Indeed, the PKK leader still blames a clandestine, "deep state" in Turkey for sabotaging the 2008-2011 talks.[159]

The Kurdish national movement has long expressed doubts about the government's intentions to implement a long-term solution.[160] A Kurdish politician involved in the process complained: "We don't trust them. We don't know what the government wants. We can't say for sure that they have decided on peace and will recognise Kurdish rights. They are taking an opportunistic approach. The state has seen that it can't resolve the Kurdish issue by fighting. But … the government is frightened of being exposed".[161] Lack of trust toward the Turkish establishment extends to other Kurdish groups as well.[162]

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[156] See for instance, "Erdoğan: PKK, ISIS same for Turkey", *Daily Sabah*, 4 October 2014.

[157] Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara. June 2014.

[158] Crisis Group interview, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[159] In leaked minutes of his February 2013 meeting with pro-Kurdish deputies, Öcalan mentions a threat to the process posed by counter-guerrilla units and "Gladio" [the supposed Turkish branch of a mythical Western intelligence-controlled network]. "İşte İmralı'daki görüşmenin tutanakları" ["Minutes of the meeting in İmralı"], *Milliyet*, 5 March 2013.

[160] "We have no reason to believe the AKP. But we want to". Crisis Group intreview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[161] Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014. Another said: "[In this process] Turkey takes one step forward and two steps back, it is still not ready. They have to first accept the reality of the [Kurdish] people". Crisis Group telephone interview, Demir Çelik, HDP member of parliament, July 2014. "Even during the solution process, they do not view the Kurds as a people. [They think] 'what shall I give them to buy their silence?' The gov-

In spite of daily developments, both sides would be wise to bear in mind that the best ways to build confidence in the long-term may be real momentum in the peace process – both in demonstrable steps toward Kurdish rights and an end to all PKK provocations in the south east – and agreement on an independent, verifiable monitoring mechanism.

B. *Winning Public Support*

Public opinion in Turkey has greeted the precarious ceasefire with relief and appreciation, but it does not yet express real confidence in the peace process itself, with few people knowing what it entails or where it is heading.[163] An April-July 2014 poll found that nationwide support for the process was at 57 per cent while 47 per cent of the public believed the Kurdish issue would be resolved as a result of it. Support is high among Kurds. The poll said 83 per cent of pro-Kurdish BDP voters, and over 60 per cent of Turkish Kurds, believed the process would resolve the Kurdish issue.[164] Another October 2014 poll found 58 per cent of Turkey's population wanted the government to continue its dialogue with PKK.[165]

The lukewarm reaction in the Turkish mainstream is partly due to public grandstanding by the two sides as they seek to reassure their constituencies, even as compromises are clearly being discussed. Deepening polarisation in Turkish society between pro- and anti-government camps, a tool used by President Erdoğan as an election-winning strategy, has also negatively affected public support.[166]

The PKK's ceasefire and AKP's innovative steps over the years have gradually helped increase public support for talks, and the two sides have at times taken care not to push too far.[167] The Turkish mainstream showed little real opposition to the "Oslo Process" when tapes of the talks were leaked in September 2011, or when notes from a meeting between BDP deputies and Öcalan were leaked in February 2013. Democratisation has also been largely accepted.[168] A senior regional government official in south-east Turkey said: "If it was up to me, I'd do [full] mother language education right away. What's the big problem?"[169]

AKP has been ready to take important steps but nevertheless remains sensitive to opinion polls.[170] The public perceives the PKK as a terrorist organisation, not a partner for peace.[171] Conversely, the trend to

ernment and the state are not prepared to accept Kurds as an entity". Crisis Group interview, Ahmet Türk, mayor of Mardin, June 2014.

[162] "The state, including the AKP, is not ready to solve the Kurdish issue. For many years, Kurds were disregarded, the PKK was called a terrorist organisation. Now reaching an agreement is hard. The government objects to even [full] education in mother languages". Crisis Group interview, Kemal Burkay, head of HAK-PAR, Ankara, June 2014.

[163] "[President] Erdoğan says 'we did not give [the PKK] anything', or 'men of honour don't talk to the PKK' …. They are saying one thing in [talks with Öcalan] and the opposite to the public …. We need some honesty from both sides …. People must know where we are going. We need a clear-cut roadmap …. The public cannot stand being deceived. The government cannot come out and say there have been no concessions to the PKK. A child won't believe this". Crisis Group interview, academic expert on the PKK, Ankara, July 2014.

[164] "Identities, the Kurdish Issue and the Peace Process: Public Perceptions and Behaviours", Bogazici University and Open Society Institute, April-July 2014.

[165] Metropoll survey quoted in "Both PKK, ISIL are dangerous, Turks say", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 3 November 2014.

[166] "For a segment of society, everything he touches is poison". Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Ankara, June 2014.

[167] "The best thing the government did was show that the Kurdish issue can be solved". Crisis Group interview, academic expert on the PKK, Ankara, July 2014. A Turkish deputy governor in the south east believed "people don't want to lose all that they have gained. I am sure peace will win. My hope is in the hope of the people". Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, June 2014.

[168] See Crisis Group Report, *Crying Wolf*, op. cit.

[169] Crisis Group interview, June 2014.

[170] An important step was the workshop in Diyarbakır organised by the government in June 2014, which sent a message to Kurdish society that the process is continuing and is inclusive. In addition to three ministers, journalists, academics and rep-

normalise and even legitimise Öcalan has also increased the Kurdish national movement's appeal and thus eroded some of AKP's strength among the Kurds.[172]

For an eventual agreement to be acceptable to society, the government would need to have the legitimacy to negotiate on behalf of the people, and, like the PKK, would need to be able to sell a deal to its constituency. Both the government and the PKK could agree a clear communications policy that would jointly brief the media on the progress of negotiations and provide relevant information. The government could commission and promote polls testing the genuine concerns of the respective communities. Turkish and Kurdish media could play a more constructive role by maintaining an objective perspective in its reporting. The top levels of Turkey's government might need to do more to improve the atmospherics, to build confidence in the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the safety of national borders, and the fact that a peace deal will be good for everyone in Turkey.

C. *Change in the PKK*

The PKK's ability to prove it can switch to a legal platform and promote democratisation within its own structure is an important component of peace. It has not yet convinced its constituency or the Turkish public at large that it is capable of acting within the parameters of democracy, instead demonstrating a monolithic style and overly hierarchical structure.[173] Its almost spiritual ideology and longstanding doctrines about its mission may make compromise hard to swallow. For instance, a PKK insurgent compared his group's dedication to the cause – without pay, without holidays, without families, and without any love life permitted – to that of a spiritual and ritualistic "dervish lodge".[174]

It is hard to judge the impact of a peace agreement on the PKK/KCK's dogmatic unity and strong central controls. When the PKK last faced a major choice between ceasefire and continued armed struggle in 2004, it forced out the pro-peace faction.[175] In an apparent attempt to head off any future fracturing, Öcalan shuffled the KCK leadership in July 2013.[176] Both sides would be advised to prepare for the possi-

resentatives from pro-Kurdish HDP and the civil society platform DTK attended the meetings, but the main opposition groups were not represented.

[171] "The government is taking on a huge political risk. People no longer react to low intensity clashes. Maintaining that environment is politically more profitable than entering into an uncertain solution process". Crisis Group interview, senior Turkish security official, Ankara, June 2014.

[172] "A year ago, 20-30 per cent of the people [in the south east] supported Öcalan. Now it's 60 per cent. Because he is seen as the co-author of the peace plan and he's cool while Erdoğan is angry". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish AKP councillor, Diyarbakır, June 2014. Two thirds of Turkish citizens who self-identify as Kurds believe Öcalan should be the Turkish state's counterpart. Unpublished 2013 poll by TEPAV think-tank, op. cit.

[173] "In our 'Wise Persons' meetings, we saw that while the BDP/PKK base speaks of such concepts as democracy and freedom, they obey *mot-à-mot* the instructions they receive [from the organisation]. They are homogenous in their responses, repeating verbatim the same sentences to us". Crisis Group interview, member of government-appointed "Wise Persons" delegation, Ankara, June 2014.

[174] Muslim dervishes traditionally seek divine grace through rituals, brotherhoods and abjuration of wealth. Crisis Group interview, PKK insurgent in his 30s, Qandil checkpoint, Iraq, July 2014.

[175] Abdullah Öcalan's brother and top-level PKK commander Osman Öcalan and several other high-level members left the PKK in 2004 in opposition to restarting armed struggle.

[176] Cemil Bayık and Hülya Oran were made co-chairs of the KCK Executive Council and Presidency General Council. Öcalan remained the overall head of KCK and Murat Karayılan, the former KCK co-chair, was made head of Hêzên Parastina Gelê (People's Defence Forces or HPG), the PKK's armed wing. Although a noted hardliner got the top job, this may not have much to do with the peace process. Öcalan's 2013 Nowrouz message caused discomfort with the movement's substantial constituency of Alevis, a heterodox community of non-Sunnis who share some Shia beliefs. Alevis were not mentioned in the message, while at the same time, in leaked minutes of a February 2013 meeting with BDP deputies, Öcalan made several references to Islam, in what was seen as an attempt to draw a Sunni brotherhood parallel with Turks. Possibly to remedy this, in the recent reshuffle, Alevi women including co-chair Oran took high-level positions.

bility that splinter groups could use violence to derail the peace process, and agree on ways they could be absorbed with minimum damage to the political process.[177]

Another potential obstacle is the local mafias involved in drug trade, smuggling and racketeering, which operate in areas under the PKK's influence. Demonstrating the scale of the drug problem in the region, the Turkish police's September 2013 drugs report said harvest areas (mainly of marijuana in Diyarbakır and Bingöl provinces) doubled in places where the PKK is strong.[178] Other remote towns where the PKK is strong, like Yüksekova, close to the Iranian border, notoriously prosper from heroin trafficking. A successful peace process would help bring this phenomenon under control, but would face resistance from those profiting from it. The Kurdish national movement would have to take a clear stand against the drug trade and on the side of Turkey's central authorities if its will for peace is to be taken seriously.[179]

D. *Regional Complications*

Any sustainable peace deal with the PKK means that Ankara may have to take a stronger hand in dealings with a number of regional states and partners. At the same time, the evolving conflicts in Syria and Iraq make it even harder to imagine a full demobilisation agreement between Turkey and the PKK. The PKK has become more than a Turkey-based insurgency; it has guerrilla bases and controls territory in northern Iraq, and has sister organisations in Syria (the Democratic Union Party, or PYD) and Iran (the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, or PJAK).[180] Already in 2009, Öcalan had said that PKK forces withdrawing from Turkey would not be demobilised but would rather be deployed in various areas and countries in a controlled manner.[181]

The PKK has vowed to support the region's Kurds in fighting against jihadis, particularly the Islamic State (IS, formerly Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL).[182] In July, Öcalan said: "[We] will fight [ISIL] until the end. And whatever force is behind it, we will fight that force, too".[183] When IS closed on the Syrian Kurdish region of Kobani in September, Turkish Kurd politicians and the KCK presidency called Kurds everywhere to rise up in its defence.

Regional conflicts, however, should not rule out the PKK's disarmament within Turkey (see Section III.B above).[184] This can be enough to achieve peace in the country. To make sure foreign aiding and abetting of PKK insurgents does not undermine it again, as it has done in the past, Ankara could reach a new

[177] The "Real IRA" and the "Continuity IRA" split off from the IRA and continued bombings in Britain and attacked British soldiers in Northern Ireland, but these did not derail the process. The government is convinced that shadowy PKK splinter groups like the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) remain a big threat. Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, October 2014.

[178] Turkey's Drug and Drug Addiction Monitoring Centre (TUBIM) said in its 2013 national report that the PKK plays an active role in harvesting cannabis, producing heroin, smuggling and distributing all kinds of drugs. See (in Turkish) www.kom.gov.tr.

[179] "The PKK can't go on claiming to be legitimate and at the same time being racketeers". Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Istanbul, June 2014.

[180] From the 1990s onward, and especially after 1999, the PKK secured a safe haven in northern Iraq's Qandil mountain. A region of Iraqi Kurdistan has hosted thousands of armed PKK militants. In 2002, the PKK declared this region including Qandil, Xinere, Hakurke, Zap, Haftanin, Metina and Gare in Iraq as "Medya Defence Zones" and said it would target any other armed forces entering these areas. However, it is the Iraqi Kurdish KRG that brings services like roads, power and cellphone coverage to Iraqi Kurdish civilians living in these areas.

[181] *Prison Writings III*, op. cit.

[182] KCK, the umbrella organisation that includes both PYD and PKK, said on 11 June 2014, "our guerrilla forces are ready to give any kind of support and fight actively side by side with the peshmerga forces".

[183] "Öcalan'dan İŞİD mesajı" ["Öcalan's ISIL message"], *Taraf*, 21 July 2014.

[184] Öcalan did not mention a total demobilisation of the PKK but said, "with KCK's activities gaining legality, there will be no need for the PKK to operate within the territories of Turkey". Cengiz Çandar, "Leaving the Mountain", op. cit.

compact with its Kurdish-speaking population.[185] If Turkey and the PKK continue to carry out more successful confidence-building measures, Turkey could more easily tolerate or even support pro-PKK/KCK groups like the Syrian Kurds' PYD against the threat of jihadi or other hostile advances.

The PYD has had high-level contacts in Turkey and is openly angling for a better relationship.[186] But Turkey demands that the PYD join the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, give up aims of autonomy inside Syria and cut all ties with the Damascus regime.[187] In practice, with a common enemy in IS and a peace process under way, there have been elements of occasional, unspoken collaboration between Turkey and pro-PKK forces. The PKK clearly wants Turkey to do more in terms of allowing weapons and Kurdish fighters into Syria via its border to help them fight IS. But already, several hundred Turkish Kurd fighters have joined the PYD's armed unit, the People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG), in Kobani.[188] Acting under international pressure to contain jihadi advances and seeking to expand the influence of its northern Iraqi partner, Masoud Barzani, Turkey's foreign minister also said on 20 October 2014 that Turkey was facilitating Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga crossings into northern Syria.[189] Similarly, wounded PYD fighters from Syria have often been treated in Turkish hospitals, just as Turkish Kurd politicians accuse Turkey of treating jihadi fighters.[190]

But while a Turkish-Kurdish pact is informally discussed in Turkey, it might not work without having first completed a peace deal. It would be difficult for Turkey to supply anti-tank weapons or allow other military materiel to reach the PYD while it is still in effect at war with the PKK.

Turkish policy toward the Syrian Kurds, particularly the PYD, has vacillated between blockade and engagement. It is not just Turkey that sees the PYD issue as directly linked to the PKK peace process. According to a Kurdish national movement politician in Ankara, "a state that is serious about a solution [to the PKK] cannot have a separate policy toward Rojava [the Kurdish areas in northern Syria]. It has to be part of the whole".[191] The Kurdish national movement in Turkey went as far as tying the fighting between IS and PYD in Kobani/Ain al-Arab to the fate of Turkey's peace process and threatened to end the process if the city falls. Turkey opened its borders to over 160,000 Syrian Kurdish refugees fleeing the fighting around this border town in September and October 2014, bringing to 400,000 the number of Syrian Kurds granted refuge in Turkey.[192] Despite this, Kurds remain convinced that the AKP is siding with ji-

[185] Damascus allowed the PKK, then based in Syria, to start its armed insurgency in 1984, the year that Turkey started threatening Euphrates river water flows into Syria by building the Atatürk dam.

[186] "ISIL didn't have the power to take Mosul on its own. Saddam's people and local forces helped it. … We hope that sooner or later Turkey will take the hand we are holding out to it. … We are the biggest obstacle in the way of ISIL". Interview with PYD leader Salih Muslim, "Türkiye düşünsün; PYD IŞİD'e yenilirse veya IŞİD ile anlaşırsa ne olur?" ["Let Turkey think about what would happen if PYD is beaten by ISIL or comes to a deal with ISIL"], T24, 15 June 2014.

[187] See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°151, *The Flight of Icarus? The PYD's Precarious Rise in Syria*, 8 May 2014.

[188] The director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights on 14 July said 800 Turkish Kurd fighters had crossed to join fighting in Iraq and Syria; Kurdish nationalist sources at the time said it was closer to 300. "Hundreds of Kurds enter Syria to fight ISIL as Turkey increases security on Rojava border", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 15 July 2014, and Crisis Group interview, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014. In September 2014 when Kobani was under attack, up to 700 more reportedly crossed over. Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, September 2014. See also "'Their fight is our fight': Kurds rush from across Turkey to defend Kobani", *The Guardian*, 26 September 2014.

[189] "Peşmerge'nin Kobani'ye geçişine destek için yardım ediyoruz" ["We are assisting peshmergas' transit into Kobani"], *Sabah*, 21 October 2014.

[190] Crisis Group interviews, Ankara, October 2014.

[191] Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014. "Why would an AKP that wants to solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey be against Kurds getting rights in Rojava? Why would it fight them? We are not saying Turkey should arm the Kurds in Rojava. But it should be neutral. … It can open crossings, allow humanitarian aid and people through". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[192] See Crisis Group Europe Report N°230, *The Rising Costs of Turkey's Syrian Quagmire*, 30 April 2014, pp. 37-38.

hadis, so Ankara would be wise to convince them that it is not.[193] Consistent constructive messaging and refraining from rhetorically equating the PKK and IS could help get this point across.[194]

If Turkey has a main Kurdish partner, in recent years it has been the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) just over the Turkish border in northern Iraq. Turkey's fear that empowering Kurds will threaten its own territorial integrity has abated as relations with the KRG have developed. Large commercial interests, and hopes of greater oil and gas trade in the future, cement this apparent alliance. This was symbolised by a joint visit by then Prime Minister Erdoğan and KRG President Masoud Barzani to Diyarbakır in November 2013.

Yet Turkish policy seems inconsistent. On one hand, when the KRG faced grave danger in August 2014 as IS appeared poised to make a dash for its capital, Erbil, Turkey did little to help.[195] On the other hand, there was no protest from Turkey at KRG's success in taking disputed territories in Iraq and the city of Kirkuk. Statements from KRG officials about a pending declaration of independence were also left unchallenged. In the past, this would have been seen as crossing an unacceptable red line for Turkey.[196]

Another regional factor is Iran, which has historically shifted between secret support for the PKK and collaboration with Turkey against pan-Kurdish ambitions. The PKK's Iranian branch, the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê, PJAK), is also a part of the overall KCK structure. However, a ceasefire between Iran and PJAK has largely held since 2011, and Turkish officials say Iran and Russia are in touch with hardline PKK factions.[197] Such potential vulnerability against outside interference only underlines the urgency for Turkey to settle its Kurdish and PKK problems while it can.

E. *Sustaining the Ceasefire*

The PKK's unilateral ceasefire since March 2013, while breached several times, is a major lifeline for the peace process. To make what will be a multi-year peace agreement stick, the two sides may have to preagree on a full range of responses to ceasefire violations, accidents and disagreements on the ground. This will be especially complex due to the PKK/KCK's armed operations outside Turkey, which are unlikely to stop in the near future. So far, the military and the police have demonstrated relative patience in the face

[193] Early in the Syria war, Turkey turned a blind eye to extremist opposition elements crossing its border into Syria in the hope that they would expedite the fall of President Bashar al-Assad. However, Turkish government officials have clearly come to realise in the past year and a half that the jihadis present a serious security threat to Turkey. For more, see Crisis Group Report, *The Rising Costs of Turkey's Syrian Quagmire*, op. cit.

[194] For instance, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said on 2 October that Turkey would do "whatever it can" to keep Kobani from falling. "Kobani'nin düşmemesi için ne gerekirse yaparız" ["We will do whatever is necessary to keep Kobani from falling"], Anatolian Agency, 3 October 2014. Two days later, the message changed. "We will do everything possible to help *people* [emphasis added] of Kobani because they are our brothers and sisters. We don't see them as Kurds or Turkmen or Arabs. But if there is a need of intervention to Kobani, we are telling that there is a need of intervention to all Syria, all of our borders". Interview with CNN, 6 October 2014.

[195] "They [Turkey] consistently reiterated that if the security of the Kurdistan region is threatened, they would intervene. Well, our security was under threat, but still we did not receive any support from Turkey. … We are upset". Fuad Hussein, chief of staff to the KRG presidency, cited in "Senior Kurdistan official: IS was at Erbil's gates; Turkey did not help", Rudaw, 16 September 2014. A Turkish official said Ankara's main concern at the time was 49 diplomatic staff taken hostage by IS and that it remains engaged with the KRG. "They should remember where the money is coming from that pays their salaries". Crisis Group interview, Ankara, October 2014.

[196] "We've changed. We still want to defend our borders. But we no longer have such a strong position about borders elsewhere in the Middle East". Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, October 2014. An AKP official's statement about an independent KRG showed the big turnaround in the government's approach: "Iraqi Kurds can decide where they want to live and under what title. … If Iraq cannot resolve its internal problems, the people living there have a right to self-determination". AKP spokesman Hüseyin Çelik in interview with Rudaw, reprinted in Deutsche Welle Turkish, "AKP'den Kürdistan'a yeşil ışık" ["AKP gives green light to Kurdistan"], 18 June 2014.

[197] Crisis Group interviews, Ankara, October 2014.

of provocations by groups sympathising with the PKK in south-east Turkey. The PKK's patience has also been tested by the way the armed forces have steadily used the ceasefire to consolidate their infrastructure in the south east. AKP deputy chair Beşir Atalay said that the number of security forces in the region had actually increased since the process started.[198]

The Turkish government says that in 2014, the PKK carried out 293 attacks with firearms and 785 attacks with explosives including Molotov cocktails, killing nine security officers and 49 civilians. Several hundred people were injured.[199] The atmosphere began to heat up substantially in May and June 2014.[200] The apparent reason was the government's construction of many new security outposts and dams, which are seen as a means to flood lands used by the PKK.[201] In June, the Diyarbakır-based Human Rights Association said that in the preceding year, 341 new police or gendarmerie stations have been tendered in the region and 143 constructions were under way.[202] A PKK leader asked: "All this has the potential to provoke us. Why so many new stations? Why so many reconnaissance flights?"[203]

According to Turkish sources, the PKK kidnapped over 200 people in 2013 and 2014, the majority of them civilians but also including members of security forces, with fourteen of these still missing.[204] Tensions first rose in 2014 when two young Kurds died in Diyarbakır's Lice district on 7 June during violent protests against construction activities. During their funeral the next day, a group with covered faces jumped the wall at an air force command unit and took down the Turkish flag, leading to nationwide anti-PKK protests. President Erdoğan's response struck a strong nationalist cord.[205] The security forces on 9 June warned that the events were "pushing the limits" of their tolerance, and that they were "trying to remain cool-headed".[206]

In September 2014, Kurdish national movement affiliates allegedly carried out arson attacks on public schools in the south east to protest the lack of full mother-language Kurdish education.[207] The escalation led to speculation in Ankara that the PKK intentionally wanted to sabotage the process and aggravate western Turks against Kurds.[208] But the incidents were more likely an attempt to show a slow-acting government that the PKK still has clout and could cause trouble if things did not move along accordingly. The or-

[198] "We tell the security forces [to deal with] the [roadblocks, attacks on soldiers] as public order incidents. These have nothing to do with the solution process. … On one hand we are managing a solution process, on the other when incidents happen, there is the harshest intervention". "Çözüm süreci olgunlaşma safhasında" ["The peace process is maturing"], Anatolian Agency, 8 July 2014.

[199] Crisis Group email correspondence, Turkish official, November 2014.

[200] The PKK opened fire on a military helicopter in Diyarbakır's Lice district and attacked the construction site for a hydroelectric power plant in Siirt on 12 May; fired on Turkish soldiers carrying out demining duties in Tunceli on 16 May; burned a civilian construction vehicle in Van on 19 May; and opened fire on soldiers at a construction site in Hakkari on 20 May. On 21 July, the Turkish army said three soldiers were killed in a clash with the PYD's armed unit YPG near the border in Ceylanpınar/Ras al-Ain; the PKK said they were ambushed by soldiers and two guerrillas had died. On 20 August, one soldier died in Van in what the army said was an ambush.

[201] Turkey's development minister, Cevdet Yılmaz, defended the dams: "Why would Turkey give up building dams … when one of the world's leading issues is water and Turkey is not a water rich country?" "Kalekol'un ardından bu da baraj tezgahı" ["After police stations, now dams are part of a ploy"], *Türkiye*, 4 July 2013.

[202] "İHD: Lice'de askerler öldürme kastıyla ateş açtı" ["Human Rights Association: Soldiers shoot to kill in Lice"], Dicle News Agency, 12 June 2014.

[203] Interview with Hasan Cemal, op. cit. He counted 48 new forts under construction in Diyarbakır, and 22 in Tunceli/Dersim.

[204] Crisis Group email correspondence, Turkish official, November 2014.

[205] "The fact that [the demonstrator] is a child does not concern us. He will pay the same price as those who sent him there. … It is not possible for us to remain silent after an attack against our sacred flag". "Erdoğan ve Gül'den bayrak açıklaması" ["Statement regarding the flag from Erdoğan and Gül"], www.bianet.org, 9 June 2014.

[206] "TSK'dan çok sert açıklama" ["Very harsh statement from Turkish security forces"], *Sabah*, 9 June 2014.

[207] "1 Ayda 17 okul" ["Seventeen schools in one month"], *Hürriyet*, 16 September 2014 and "Örgüt yandaşları Nusaybin'de okul ve yurt yaktı", *Zaman*, 7 October 2014.

[208] Crisis Group interview, Süleyman Özeren, Turkish expert on conflict resolution, Ankara, June 2014.

ganisation's leadership says it was defending itself against perceived Turkish aggression.[209] The legal Kurdish movement blamed the government for continuing hostilities even while the militants were conducting their 2013 pullback.[210]

Tensions rose even further in September-October 2014 as Turkey's Kurds protested the government's military inaction in the face of IS advances in the Kurdish town of Kobani/Ain al-Arab in northern Syria (See Section IV.D above). Following HDP's calls to demonstrate on 6 October, thousands of Kurds took to the streets in over twenty Turkish provinces. Clashes broke out between protesters and the police as well as among rival local gangs, mainly the Kurdish Hizbullah and PKK affiliates.[211] At least 36 people died, mostly from inter-gang fighting, scores more were wounded, including police officers, and hundreds were temporarily detained. In scenes reminiscent of 1970s street violence and Turkey's 1980s coup years, troops were deployed in some locations and the authorities declared curfews in six provinces, including Turkey's largest Kurdish-speaking city Diyarbakır.[212]

October 2014 saw the worst escalation since the ceasefire began, apparently pitting Turkish security forces directly against the PKK. On 9 October, gunmen killed two policemen in the Kurdish town of Bingöl; on 23 October, a PKK-army clash near Kars killed three PKK militants who set fire to a hydroelectric power plant facility; on 25 October, masked gunmen killed three off-duty soldiers shopping in Yüksekova, a Kurdish town near Turkey's Iran border; the PKK later denied involvement. On 29 October, assailants shot dead a Turkish soldier shopping in Diyarbakır.

Harsh rhetoric used by both sides has fuelled the flames – Turkey's interior minister threatened to fight street violence with more violence, and HDP threatened to end the peace process.[213] Although the situation looked grim, given the bloody history of the conflict, the fact that the peace process remained on the table shows its resilience.[214] Even if the two sides back away during a period of tension, they will eventually have to return to the same basic issues, as after the 2011-2012 flare up.

The Kurdish national movement's attempts at reconciliation to preserve the process were promising, for instance when HDP's Sebahat Tuncel said on 9 June that she did not approve of taking down the Turkish flag or the party's co-leader Selahattin Demirtaş warned his constituency on 7 October to refrain from provocative acts like attacking national symbols.[215] On 9 October, he added that Öcalan has offered to ex-

[209] "We are not attacking anyone, this is self-defence. We have to defend [ourselves] if the state attacks the [Kurdish] people, arrests them in what we call political genocide, or carries out operations over guerrilla areas. We are not concerned with invading or destroying the Turkish state. We want to live … as equal citizens in Kurdistan's villages and cities. If our rights and identities are accepted, we will not fight. But [Turkish] warplanes should not be circling us above [in northern Iraq] …. Why is the AKP building so many dams and police stations in the south east? … The Turkish state has to give up this approach". Crisis Group interview, Sabri Ok, PKK/KCK leader, Qandil, Iraq, July 2014.

[210] "The guerrillas were disciplined about withdrawals [which started in May 2013]. But the state … dug ditches on guerrilla routes, built [hundreds of] stations, used thermal cameras [to track the guerrillas], and reinforced armed units. The soldiers shot dead [at least three] Kurds crossing over [into Turkey] from [Syria]. The PKK considered all these as breaches of the ceasefire. When the state did not back down, PKK became involved and tensions rose". Crisis Group interview, HDP member of parliament involved in the process, Ankara, June 2014.

[211] At least eight people were reported dead in an armed fight between PKK supporters and members of Turkey's Hizbullah-affiliated Hür Dava Partisi (Hüda Par) in Diyarbakır on 7 October 2014.

[212] See Hugh Pope, "Why Syria's disaster threatens a war in Turkey", *The Guardian*, 10 October 2014.

[213] "Efkan Ala: Şiddet misliyle karşılık bulur" ["Efkan Ala: Violence will be reciprocated many times over"], *Hürriyet*, 7 October 2014, and "HDP: Kobane düşerse süreç biter" ["HDP: If Kobani falls the peace process ends"], T24, 7 October 2014.

[214] "[Erdoğan] has to react this way to make sure western Turkish opinion supports the process". Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, June 2014.

[215] "Sebahat Tuncel: Bayrak indirilmesini tasvip etmiyoruz" ["We don't approve of taking down the flag"], www.bianet.org, 10 June 2014. The KCK on 14 July urged the movement to avoid "road blocks, setting up public order units, and kidnapping of police and soldiers during this period". Crisis Group email correspondence, KCK spokesperson, 14 July 2014. Öcalan also said, "we do not harbour a negative or offensive approach to any national values and symbols". "First statements after taking

pedite dialogue and negotiations in order to defuse tensions.[216] Shortly after, government representatives also reiterated that the peace process would move forward.[217]

down of Turkey's flag", www.bianet.org, 10 June 2014. Also see "Demirtaş'tan provokasyon uyarısı" ["Demirtaş warns against provocations"], Yüksekova Haber, 8 October 2014.

[216] HDP press meeting in Diyarbakır, 9 October 2014.

[217] "No one has the luxury of backtracking on the solution process". Government spokesman Beşir Atalay on Kanal A television station, 15 October 2014. "The solution process is like holding fire in one's palm. We put our whole bodies under this heavy burden. There will be a peace process … but public safety … is also important". Bülent Arınç, deputy prime minister in charge of the process, "Bülent Arınç'tan çözüm süreci açıklaması" ["Statements on the solution process"], Haber Türk (online), 15 October 2014.

V. Conclusion

The succession of peace initiatives that started in 2005 and sped up again in late 2012 is paving the way to a long-term agreement between the Turkish government and the Kurdish national movement. However, the end goal that seems obvious to outsiders – a deal that allows the PKK to lay down weapons and integrate fully into Turkey's society and politics – is not yet clearly and publicly embraced by either side. In the meantime, the process and context can be improved, including a more effective ceasefire and a more positive atmosphere. When the process falters, the vacuum is quickly filled by tensions and violence.

The government and PKK might now agree on a roadmap for a multi-year, irreversible transition to peace. Both sides might set realistic goals and expectations for themselves and their constituencies, including compromise on the thorny issues of amnesty and transitional justice. They might need to keep underlining that a new conflagration, which remains entirely possible, would be more painful and costly than accepting a deal that would necessarily fall short of long-stated ideals. Any final agreement, if reached, would not end the process but rather begin another phase of long and necessarily difficult implementation. The chance of having two strong leaders willing to work for peace, the turmoil that threatens both peoples in the region, and the strong constituencies on each side that want Turks and Kurds to live side by side in the same country are just some of the factors that could persuade both sides that the time to seriously commit to the negotiations might be now.

The PKK might internally accept that it faces a choice, and make public the way it wants to go. It could either take this chance to forge a peace agreement, come down from the mountains having achieved its stated objectives and join fully in a united Turkey, or it could revert to its previous goal of an independent state. The former is almost certainly what the majority of Kurds in Turkey wish for. To continue along the current path of wanting both the benefits of being part of Turkey's successful geography and economy, but at the same time giving the appearance of trying to build a parallel, independent statelet of its own is neither economically realistic nor does it stand much chance of being accepted by Turkey's government or public. Murders of off-duty Turkish servicemen in October 2013 and October 2014 also raise the question over whether all factions in the PKK have given up using violence against civilians.

For Ankara, the deteriorating security in Iraq and Syria, and its spillover into Turkey, show how important it is to fortify without delay its south-eastern flank where Kurds live and the PKK is strong. Peace would release a longstanding brake on its economy as well as on its democratisation efforts. The government might recognise that the end goal is not just disarmament in Turkey, but to get to a point where Turkey's Kurds no longer feel any need for the PKK. Otherwise, there is little anyone can do to stop the movement from arming again the next day after a deal. Perhaps more essentially, mainstream Turks may need to visualise and embrace a possible scenario that this process may well lead to if it succeeds: Turkey's President Erdoğan standing together on an international podium alongside PKK leader Öcalan, accepting accolades for having made hard choices and taken the risky road to peace.

November 2014

Appendix A: Map of Turkey

Appendix B: Glossary

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party): Turkey's ruling party, formerly led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is now president. The current leader is Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. It enjoys a strong parliamentary majority and popular support.
BDP/HDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party) and Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party): Two main legal parties representing the Kurdish national movement in Turkey, both in parliament, and expected to merge in the future.
CHP	Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party): The main, left-of-centre opposition party in Turkey.
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party): The other main and right-wing opposition party in parliament.
IS	(Formerly ISIL) – the Islamic State, formerly Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant: The best known of the jihadi militant opposition groups fighting in Syria, it has generated strong criticism from activists for its authoritarian tactics, public executions, ideological extremism and vicious sectarianism.
KCK	Koma Ciwakên Kurdistanê (Union of Communities in Kurdistan): Created by the PKK in 2005-2007, it is an umbrella organisation for all PKK affiliates in Kurdish communities in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria (including PYD, see below) and the diaspora.
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government: The ruling body of Iraqi Kurdistan in the mainly Kurdish north of the country. The president is Masoud Barzani.
PJAK	Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan): The Iranian Kurdish organisation, also part of the KCK. Its ceasefire with the Iranian government since 2011 has largely held.
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers' Party): Co-founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan, it started an armed insurgency in Turkey in 1984. The PKK has around 3,000-5,000 insurgents based in northern Iraq and Turkey. It is banned as a terrorist and drug-smuggling organisation by Turkey, the EU, the U.S. and a number of other countries.
PYD	Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (Democratic Union Party): The Syrian Kurdish affiliate of the PKK/KCK, founded in 2003.