

WHEN CHOOSERS BECAME PERPETRATORS: DETERMINANTS OF PRE-  
ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ON THE PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRIOR TO  
THE JUNE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION IN TURKEY

by  
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## ABSTRACT

### WHEN CHOOSERS BECAME PERPETRATORS: DETERMINANTS OF PRE-ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ON THE PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRIOR TO THE JUNE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION IN TURKEY

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Keywords: Election violence, Kurdish issue in Turkey, the spatial variation of violence, ethnic conflict.

This study empirically analyzes the spatial variation of pre-electoral attacks on the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), a pro-Kurdish opposition party, prior to the June 2015 general election in Turkey. Using different news sources, this research employs a unique media-based pre-electoral violence dataset which focuses on the hard facts of the news on the pre-electoral attacks against the HDP between February 1 and June 7, 2015. I develop a theoretical foundation for the empirical investigation of my study to demonstrate why some provinces experienced more attacks vis-à-vis others based on the electoral, historical and socio-economic determinants of attacks. To this end, the spatial variation of attacks on the HDP is explained by the factors that facilitate participation in these attacks. The results show that spatial variation across the provinces can be explained to a great extent by the following provincial characteristics: lower vote shares between the AKP and HDP, higher security force casualties, higher urbanization rates are conducive to the outbreak of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP, whereas level of economic activity, unemployment rate, percentage of Kurdish population and vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties did not produce statistically significant results at the province level.

## ÖZET

### SEÇİCİLER FAİLLER OLDUĞUNDA: TÜRKİYE’DEKİ HAZİRAN 2015 GENEL SEÇİMİ ÖNCESİNDE HALKLARIN DEMOKRATİK PARTİSİ’NE YAPILAN ŞİDDET OLAYLARININ BELİRLEYİCİ ETKENLERİ

BUĞRA GÜNGÖR

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Seçim şiddeti, Türkiye’de Kürt sorunu, şiddetin mekansal varyasyonu, etnik çatışma.

Bu çalışma Türkiye’deki 2015 Haziran genel seçimleri öncesinde Halkların Demokratik Partisi’ne (HDP) yönelik şiddet olaylarının mekansal varyasyonunu analiz etmektedir. Bu araştırma farklı haber kaynaklarını kullanarak benzersiz bir basın temelli veri seti içermekte olup odaklandığı nokta ise 1 Şubat – 7 Haziran 2015 tarihleri arasında yapılan haberlerin olgusal gerçekleridir. Neden bazı vilayetlerin daha fazla saldırıyı deneyimlediğini anlayabilmek için seçimsel, tarihsel ve sosyo-ekonomik faktörler üzerinde kuramsal bir dayanak geliştirilmiştir. Bu amaçla, HDP’ye yapılan saldırıların mekansal varyasyonu, bu saldırıları kolaylaştıran etkenlerle ilintilendirilerek açıklanmıştır. Sonuçlar ise şu şekilde sunulmaktadır: Terör saldırıları sonucunda güvenlik güçleri kaybının fazla olduğu, AKP ile HDP arasındaki oy oranı farkının düşük olduğu ve kentleşme oranlarının yüksek olduğu vilayetler saldırılara olanak sağlayabilirken, iller bazında ekonomik aktivitelerin seviyesi, işsizlik oranları, önemli ölçüdeki Kürt nüfusları ve Türk milliyetçisi partilerin oy oranları istatistiki olarak kayda değer sonuçlar doğurmamıştır.

*To my grandfather...*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
- BDP: Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
- CHA: Cihan Haber Ajansı (Cihan News Agency)
- DEHAP: Demokratik Halk Partisi (Democratic People's Party)
- DEP: Demokrasi Partisi (Democratic Party)
- DHA: Doğan Haber Ajansı (Doğan News Agency)
- DİHA: Dicle Haber Ajansı (Dicle News Agency)
- DTP: Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)
- HADEP: Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (People's Democracy Party)
- HDP: Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party)
- HEP: Halkın Emek Partisi (People's Labour Party)
- I4P: Infrastructure for Peace
- IRR: Incidence Rate Ratio
- IS: The Islamic State
- KCK: Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Group of Communities in Kurdistan)
- LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
- MHP: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)
- OZDEP: Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi (Freedom and Democracy Party)
- PEV Dataset: Pre-electoral violence dataset
- PKK: Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
- SFCs: Security Force Casualties
- TBMM: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Grand National Assembly of Turkey)
- TCC: Turkish Constitutional Court
- TNA: Tamil National Alliance
- TOBB: Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği (Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange)
- TRT: Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation)
- TUIK: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Statistical Institute)
- UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
- USAID: United States Agency for International Development
- YSK: Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (Supreme Election Council of Turkey)

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On June 5, 2015, only two days before the general election, the supporters of HDP, a pro-Kurdish opposition party, gathered in Diyarbakir for their last grand rally. Regrettably, this meeting was bombed by the Islamic State (IS) militants claiming five lives and more than 400 injured<sup>1</sup>. The bombing was the latest episode of a series of some 120 pre-electoral attacks that were conducted against the HDP in the five months before the June 2015 general election<sup>2</sup>. Despite the fact that many journalists, experts, and NGOs have emphasized the severity of the attacks<sup>3</sup>, academic scholarship has not hitherto ventured to account for the reasons of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP.

By analyzing a novel media-based conflict event dataset (PEV Dataset) on the pre-electoral attacks against the HDP between February 1<sup>st</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup> 2015, I will answer the following research question: what are the electoral, historical, and socio-economic determinants of the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP prior to the June 2015 general election in Turkey? My empirical analyses will enable me to decipher why some provinces experienced more pre-electoral attacks on the HDP compared to others. Also,

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<sup>1</sup> See “Diyarbakır’daki Bombalı Saldırıda Ölenlerin Sayısı Beşe Yükseldi”, *Diken*, 13 June 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.diken.com.tr/diyarbakirdaki-bombali-saldirida-olenlerin-sayisi-bese-yukseldi/>

<sup>2</sup> Utanç Haritası: HDP’ye Yönelik Saldırıları 120’yi Aştı”, *Diken*, 18 May 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.diken.com.tr/utanc-haritasi-hdpye-yonelik-saldirilar-120yi-asti/>

<sup>3</sup> See “23 Mart 2015-19 Mayıs 2015 Tarihleri Arasında Milletvekili Seçimi Çalışmaları Sırasında Siyasi Partilere Yönelik İhlaller”, *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, 20 May 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.ihd.org.tr/23-mart-2015-19-mayis-2015-tarihleri-arasinda-milletvekili-secimi-calismalari-sirasinda-siyasi-partilere-yonelik-ihlaller/>

See “7 Haziran Seçimi Öncesinde Türkiye Çapında HDP’ye Yapılan Saldırıların Kronolojisi”, *T24*, 18 May 2015. Retrieved from <http://t24.com.tr/haber/iste-7-haziran-secimi-oncesinde-turkiye-capinda-hdpye-yapilan-saldirilarin-kronolojisi,297012>

See “Seçim Sürecinde HDP’ye Yönelik Saldırıları”, *Agos*, 13 May 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11571/secim-surecinde-hdp-ye-yonelik-saldirilar-56-yi-buldu>

this study will make use of the PEV dataset to empirically test the existing theoretical insights.

A growing body of research on the determinants of electoral violence tries to explain the geographical and temporal variation of this particular kind of violence. As will be seen in the next sections with details, election violence has been found to be associated with the following factors: Democratization in conflict settings (Kongrati 2015; Kumar 1998; Lehoucq 2003; Collier and Vicente 2011; Höglund et al. 2009), electoral institutions (Norris 2013; Höglund and Piyyarathe 2008; Fischer 2002; Dunning 2011; Onapajo 2014; Opitz et al. 2013), and ethnicity factor (Dercon and Romero 2012; Patino and Valesco 2004; Wilkinson 2004; Chandra 2004). Note that the ongoing ethnic conflict in Turkey makes the literature on the association between election violence and ethnic-based conflicts especially relevant for my analyses.

This study is one of the first to empirically analyze the determinants of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. For this purpose, I collected and coded news related to the attacks. The first contribution of my thesis is thus this unique dataset which will also be a useful resource for future research on election violence and the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Secondly, my thesis is also the first to study Turkey as a case of election violence.

Empirical results demonstrate that provincial differences in the number of attacks can be explained to a great extent by the following provincial characteristics: higher level of competition between the AKP and HDP, higher security force casualties in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, higher urbanization rates are conducive to the outbreak of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. On the other hand, level of economic activity, unemployment rate, vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties and the percentage of Kurdish population did not produce statistically significant results at the province level.

In what follows, I initially proceed by presenting the Kurdish question and Kurdish political development in Turkey. I then discuss how I have collected my data on the outburst of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP and what kind of a methodological approach will be used in this thesis. After describing my dataset and methodology, I present how I constructed my theoretical foundation for the empirical investigation. Next, I will introduce empirical findings and main results about the electoral, socio-economic and historical determinants of pre-electoral violent attacks on the HDP. Finally, I will close by discussing the significance of revealing several mechanisms behind the outbreak of the attacks.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND

#### 2.1. The Kurdish Issue in Turkey

Kurds constitute the largest ethnic minority in Turkey. Their percentage in the total population is about 18%, according to a recent survey<sup>4</sup>. Although the southeastern part of the country is densely populated by the Kurds, metropolitan cities in the Western Anatolia like Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa have also considerable Kurdish population. The Turkish state embraces an understanding of Turkish citizenship that does not allow non-Turkish ethnic groups to exercise their cultural and social rights. According to some scholars, this understanding of citizenship has engendered Kurdish nationalism and also the PKK (*Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan- Kurdistan Workers' Party*) (Saatçi 2002; Tezcür 2009).

The PKK, a Kurdish secessionist terrorist organization with a Marxist-Socialist ideology, was founded in 1978. The aim of the organization was to establish an independent Kurdish state within the borders of the southeastern part of Turkey. The armed struggle between the Turkish state and the PKK has been continuing for over 35 years. And unfortunately, it claimed the lives of more than 35000 people.<sup>5</sup> Especially, we see an intense armed struggle between the Turkish state and the PKK between 1984 and 1999. Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, was captured and imprisoned in 1999. After the incarceration of their leader, the PKK decided to announce unilateral truce but this was ended in 2004. Meanwhile, ten year reform period was initiated by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) governments between 2004 and 2013. Within

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<sup>4</sup> See "Türkiye'deki Kürt nüfusu açıklandı", *Milliyet*, 18 April 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/turkiye-deki-kurt-nufusu-aciklandi/gundem/gundemdetay/18.04.2013/1695156/default.htm>

<sup>5</sup> See "30 Yılın Terör Bilançosu: 35 Bin 576 Ölü!", *Radikal*, 28 January 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/30-yilin-teror-bilancosu-35-bin-576-olu-1118893/>

this particular time period, Turkish state has bestowed some of cultural and social rights of Kurds. For example, TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) as the state television in Turkey opened the first TV channel called *TRT 6* which broadcast in Kurdish<sup>6</sup>. Equally important was the decision that Kurdish language courses became to be offered at high schools as an elective course as of the beginning of 2012-2013 academic year<sup>7</sup>. Also, the state ameliorated the current situation of education and health systems in the eastern provinces of the country (Karakoç, 2013). Despite all these reforms, the armed attacks continued until the latest peace process initiated by the AKP government in 2013 to put an end to the longest standing armed conflict in Turkey (Gürses 2015; Tezcür 2015).

Regrettably, peace talks were suspended after the KCK (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan - Group of Communities in Kurdistan*), an organization which supports democratic confederalism theorized by Abdullah Öcalan, announced the breakup of ceasefire on July 11, 2015<sup>8</sup>. Following this announcement, ten days later, the IS organized a bombed attack in Suruç, a district of Sanliurfa, and 34 young socialist university students were killed<sup>9</sup>. This incident also clinched the breaking of truce in the PKK. Concomitant to the above mentioned attack, the PKK accused the Turkish state of being the organizer of this bombing and resumed its attacks with killing two police officers<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, the armed conflict has been continuing with attacks from both sides since summer 2015.

## 2.2. Kurdish Political Development

Regarding the Kurdish political development in Turkey, eight pro-Kurdish political parties entered the Turkish politics so far. The People's Labor Party (HEP) was the first of them. It was established in 1990 and dissolved by the decision of the Turkish Constitutional Court (TCC). Following its closure, The Freedom and Democracy Party (ÖZDEP), was founded in 1993 but was closed down by the TCC. A successor of

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<sup>6</sup> See "TRT'nin Kürtçe kanalı TRT 6 yayına başladı", *Milliyet*, 01 Ocak 2009. Retrieved from: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/trtnin-kurtce-kanali-trt-6-yayina-basladi-10683296>

<sup>7</sup> See "Haftada iki saatlik seçmeli Kürtçe", *Radikal*, 13 June 2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/haftada-iki-saatlik-secmeli-kurtce-1090968/>

<sup>8</sup> See "KCK ateşkesin bittiğini açıkladı: Bundan sonra tüm barajlar gerillanın hedefinde olacaktır.", *T24*, 11 July 2015. Retrieved from: <http://t24.com.tr/haber/kck-ateskesin-bittigini-acikladi-bundan-sonra-tum-barajlar-gerillanin-hedefinde-olacaktir,302608>

<sup>9</sup> See "Suruç'ta 34.Ölüm", *Aljazeera*, 14 August 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/suructa-34-olum>

<sup>10</sup> See "Şanlıurfa'da 2 Polis Şehit", *Milliyet*, 27 July 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/sanliurfa-da-2-polis-memuru-olu-gundem-2090995/>

OZDEP was established as The Democracy Party (DEP). The same story recurred, and the party was closed. Fourthly, The Peoples' Democracy Party (DEHAP) was founded, and it performed very well because it was the first Kurdish ethnic party to enter general elections. DEHAP ran in the 1995, 1999 and 2002 elections<sup>11</sup>. Even though they got a significant percent of the Kurdish voters in the southeastern region, they were not able to pass the election threshold.<sup>12</sup>

In 2003, the party was dissolved and replaced by another party called The Democratic Peoples' Party (HADEP). Party members ran independently in the 2007 general elections, and this strategy enabled some of them to get elected in the southeastern provinces of Turkey. Similar to the dissolution cases in the past, this party was dissolved by the TCC too. Note that the main rationale behind the decisions of closure was that all closed pro-Kurdish parties pursued activities that jeopardized the indivisible integrity of the Turkish state and nation, according to the members of the TCC<sup>13</sup>. Put it differently; these parties were seen as the political arm of the PKK. Therefore, in the public eye, these decisions created a perception such that pro-Kurdish parties and their MPs supported the Kurdish secessionist movement and the terrorist organization PKK<sup>14</sup>.

The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was established in 2008. The BDP members have followed the same strategy of running independently in the 2011 general election and gained 36 seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). In late 2013, The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) was created because they aimed to get the support of voters living in other regions apart from the southeast. So, they decided to enter the general elections as a party. For this reason, the HDP's main objective was to provide the provision of a democratic atmosphere in Turkish politics for people coming from different backgrounds to exercise their identity-related differences and live peacefully<sup>15</sup>. In the light of this principle, the party conducted a successful campaign before the June 2015 general election in Turkey. Interestingly, a pro-Kurdish political

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<sup>11</sup> "History of Kurdish political parties in Turkey" in the website of HDP –Representation in Europe. Retrieved from [http://en.hdpeurope.com/?page\\_id=537](http://en.hdpeurope.com/?page_id=537)

<sup>12</sup> In 1983, ten percent election threshold has been enacted by the military government after the 1980 Coup d'état in order to prevent instability in government affairs.

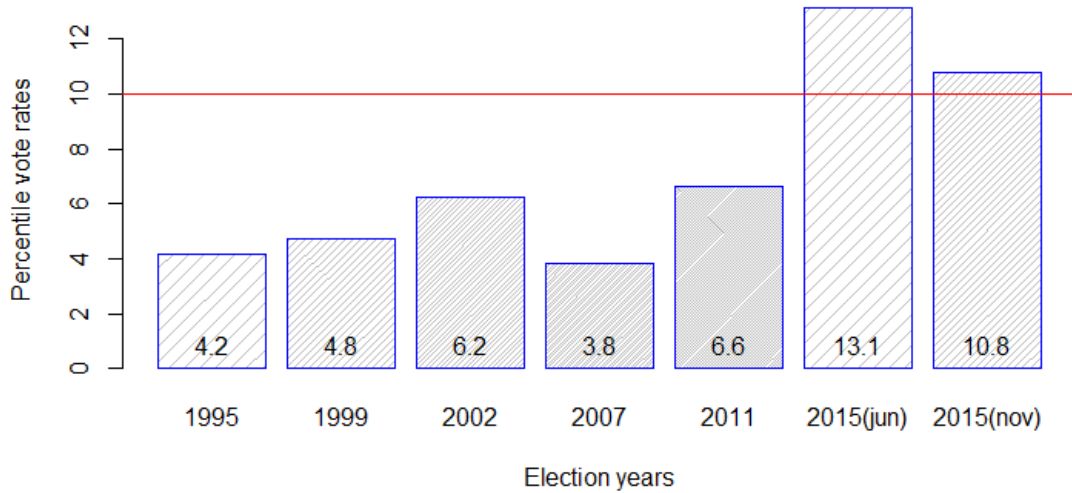
<sup>13</sup> Güngör, Buğra (2014) *Is there a democratic argument for party closure?*.Senior Thesis, Bilkent University.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, Ahmet Türk, Aysel Tuğluk and Leyla Zana along with 34 party members had been banned from politics for 5 years because the judges decided that they pursued secessionist discourses against the indivisible integrity of the Turkish state. See "Leyla Zana, Aysel Tuğluk ve Ahmet Türk'ün yasakları sona erdi", *Cumhuriyet*, 15 December 2014. Retrieved from [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/162797/Leyla\\_Zana\\_\\_Aysel\\_Tugluk\\_ve\\_Ahmet\\_Turk\\_un\\_yasaklari\\_son\\_a\\_erd.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/162797/Leyla_Zana__Aysel_Tugluk_ve_Ahmet_Turk_un_yasaklari_son_a_erd.html)

<sup>15</sup> Please see footnote 8.



party, for the first time in its history, passed the ten-percent election threshold and gained 80 deputies, even though it lost a considerable number of its voters in the November 2015 repeat election. Historically, pro-Kurdish parties mostly have gotten their votes from ethnic Kurds living in the southeastern part of Turkey and some metropolises like Istanbul. As the Kurdish political movement has long been limited to a very homogeneous region and voter profile, the parties of this movement did have difficulty in increasing their existing vote shares - as can be seen from Figure 1. Finally, the HDP as the last party of this movement had achieved to gain ‘hearts and minds’ of an adequate number of registered voters to pass the ten-percent election threshold.



**Figure 1: Electoral performance of pro-Kurdish parties in general elections between 1991 and 2015 (Decimals are rounded).**

It has always been the case that pro-Kurdish parties have experienced a lot of violent attacks since their establishments by the supporters of other parties and security forces. We began to observe these attacks starting with a specific case in 2009 when the DTP supporters violently confronted with the voters with opposite views in Izmir<sup>16</sup>. Saraçoğlu (2011) claims that it was a critical moment that the DTP supporters and citizens having hostile attitudes towards the DTP skirmished with each other in one of the metropolitan cities of Turkey. Recently, thanks to these attacks’ visibility in the press, we have clearly seen the series of violence inflicted on the HDP supporters and

<sup>16</sup> See “İzmir’de DTP konvoyu taşlandı”, *Posta*, 22 November 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.posta.com.tr/turkiye/HaberDetay/Izmir-de-DTP-konvoyu-taslandi.htm?ArticleID=8734>

See “İzmir’de meydan savaşı yaşandı.”, *Yeni Asır*, 23 November 2009. Retrieved from [http://www.yeniasir.com.tr/politika/2009/11/23/izmirde\\_meydan\\_savasi\\_yasandi](http://www.yeniasir.com.tr/politika/2009/11/23/izmirde_meydan_savasi_yasandi)

the party's campaign materials in different provinces before and after the June 2015 general election. To this end, the goal of my thesis is to explain the spatial variation of violent attacks with a specific focus on the pre-election period.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE EXTANT LITERATURE ON ELECTION VIOLENCE

Elections are not always held in peace. Unfortunately, we see major violent attacks in some occasions (Dunning 2011; Höglund 2009). This is why we come across with the notion of election violence. So, what is this sort of violence? There are different definitions of electoral violence in the literature. In this study, I will be using the definition of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The UNDP in 2011 announced the definition of electoral violence in the report called *Understanding Electoral Violence in Asia* as the following:

“Any acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process, or that arise in the context of electoral competition. When perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the process of elections — such as efforts to delay, disrupt or derail a poll — or to influence the outcomes: the determination of winners in competitive races for political office, or securing the approval or disapproval of referendum questions.” (UNDP, 2011)

In other words, politicians and voters might resort to electoral violence to manipulate the conduct and results of elections.

Höglund (2009) argues that scholarly attention on electoral violence has been divided into two aspects. Firstly, electoral violence can be witnessed in countries where communal violence exists. The second aspect says that electoral violence can be used to manipulate the conduct of elections by illegal means. Besides, she emphasizes the differentiation between the notion of political violence and electoral violence. Höglund argues that electoral violence constitutes a part of general conflicts such as civil conflict because it more commonly erupts in certain countries where communal conflicts or civil wars exist. This is why she argues that electoral violence does not only have detrimental impacts on the conduct of elections but also it deeply affects the dynamics of the

existing conflicts and even the reconstruction of a new society in the post-conflict settings. At this point, the important question is ‘Why do we observe election-related violence in some places, but not others?’ and ‘What are the main determinants behind the outburst of violence before and after elections?’ To find answers the questions mentioned above, I am, in this chapter, going to review the literature on election violence focusing on the three important determinants.

### **3.1. Democratization in Conflict Settings**

Elections held in countries, which experience transformation from conflict to peace, are more likely to experience the outburst of violence. As political actors, who have played important roles in the war-time period, do not want to lose their political power in post-conflict era, they attach huge importance to post-conflict elections (Höglund 2008; Norris 2013, M. B. Altier et al. 2013, Onapajo 2014). Because, elections carry an uncertainty for these actors about what post-election period would bring them. Furthermore, as they do not want to lose having access to political power in the post-conflict era, they might intimidate voters of both their group and opponent parties. By using violence and spreading fear, they aim to consolidate their loyal voters and also to receive the votes of the rest.

In “*Wars, Guns and Votes*” by Paul Collier (2009), he argues that democracy highly emphasizes on the significance of elections in the post-conflict eras of bottom-billion countries. Collier (2007) created this notion *Bottom billion* in his influential book called “*The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are failing and What Can Be Done About it*” to direct our attention to the following: a billion people have been exposed to very stagnant economies over half a century, and they lagged behind the rest of the world. In this way, elections in these countries are seen as do-or-die. This is why voters are more likely to resort to violence in order not to lose elections. In Adam Przeworski’s (1991) thinking, bottom-billion countries lack the idea of “institutionalizing uncertainty” that losers of the system are not sure about whether they will not have a chance to access to political power or be in the government in the future. Besides, Collier argues that conflicting parties express their struggle in electoral arena by inflicting violence upon each other. Considering the fact that ethnicity as an instrument of identity politics can be manifested through voting for ethnic parties, voters do not attach importance to the practices of governments but mainly the ethnic identity of the elected. He demonstrates an exit from these violent elections as the following: politicians of these countries should gather ethnically different groups under a single

roof. By this way, every citizen would embrace this common identity regardless of ethnic differences. More importantly, the performance of candidates should be the main indicator to be elected rather than their ethnic affinity.

Snyder (2000) argues that institutional instability and change can lead to election violence even in the absence of conflictual backgrounds. He touches upon the importance of the conditions pertinent to the political elites' behaviors, the behavior of the voters and the types of nationalism countries embrace. His pivotal argument follows that democratization process contributes to the increase in the risk of nationalist conflicts. These conflicts mostly turn to violence in election periods where each group overtly performs its nationalist features. The mechanism of his claim is two-fold. One is about the conditions before democratization stage. This is, in other words, about whether there were past hostile relationships among the communities before the democratization process. The other is the elite manipulation of the communities' ethnic features.

As an example of how the behavior of political elites affects the risk of violence during elections, Kongkirati (2015) argues that Thailand presents an interesting case as it experienced two different periods in the last two decades. Whereas it had a stable political atmosphere between 2001 and 2005, it experienced a very violent period between 2007 and 2011. The reason why these two distinct periods occurred is the relationship between local political settings and the central government. Local political bosses and families, who are influential in local politics, established a patronage relationship with the local communities because the weak government had prepared a ground for that kind of a relationship. When a strong political party came to power in 2007, it tried to cut off the deep-rooted local loyalty networks and behaved like a genuine centralized government. It is for this reason that when centralization attempts came to the fore, local political bosses did not react positively and thereby each group resorted to violence to eliminate each other in election settings (Kongkirati, 2015).

Similar to the Thai case, the Philippines also demonstrate the significance of the relationship between weak state structures and local elites. Following the revolution in 1986, Patino and Valesco (2004) argues that election-related violence has been in every election. They erupted at the local level since the lack of a centralized government fostered fertile circumstances for the warlords to conduct unlawful economic activities. In this case, we do not see any change in the strength of government *per se*. Rather, weak state structures create a vacuum in which different local organizations pursuing

illegal activities competed to preserve and perpetuate their economic interests. This is because Patino and Valesco think that electoral violence in the Philippines has broken out at the local level.

Scholars have also investigated electoral assistance provided by the international community for democratizing countries. To ensure electoral integrity, international electoral assistance and monitoring play a critical role to reduce the level of election-related violence – especially in countries experiencing a transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. If we are to hypothesize, elections held under international election observation teams are less likely to experience violence. In this context, to evaluate the performance of the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) in electoral assistance, Kumar and Ottoway (1997) prepares a report which highlights the fact that El Salvador, Mozambique, and Nicaragua were the countries where assistance was useful in decreasing the level of violence. Yet, this assistance did not manage to achieve its task in Angola and Cambodia.

Contrary to the benefits of international election observation teams in democratizing countries with conflictual past, Reilly (2008) brings the Bosnian case as an example of how post-conflict elections supported by the international community ignite tensions among the communities. In line with what Collier (2009) highlighted about the behaviors of politicians before elections in the post-war era, he says the following:

“Bosnia’s repeated post-Dayton elections held in 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002 were an illustration of this process in action, as voters from different ethnic communities persistently re-elected hard-line nationalist leaders despite overt attempts by the international community to encourage, moderate, pro-Western victors instead.” (Reilly 2008, p.160)

Therefore, international support and monitoring might not work in countries, which have recently gotten out of violent conflicts. Rather, they sometimes exacerbate the conditions for the outburst of election violence when hostile attitudes are yet to be ceased.

### **3.2. Electoral Institutions**

Election management bodies play an intermediary role among the political rivals. They make political parties obey the election rules (Opitz et al. 2013; Dercon and Romero 2012; Brancati and Snyder 2011; Höglund 2009). In other words, they are designed to ensure a smooth electoral process. When they are absent, parties might shirk

their duties, or they might not obey the electoral rules. This is why previous research has highly stressed the role of election management bodies through infrastructural support to provide free and fair electoral settings.

Dercon and Romero (2012) shed light on the importance of electoral institutions and support their arguments with quantitative and qualitative evidence from the 2007 Kenyan episode of electoral violence. They argue that nationwide electoral malpractices conducted by the election commission, security forces and the judiciary mechanisms are at the heart of the post-electoral violence. As such, political elites and their supporters did not believe that election was held in fair and free circumstances. As electoral administration bodies did not achieve to build a rapport with the voters, we observed electoral violence across the country.

As a comparative case study on the significance of strong and impartial electoral institutions, Opitz et al. (2013) studied on the Malawi (2004), Ethiopia (2005) and Zanzibar (2005) elections. Their results show that functioning electoral management bodies provide preventive power for a possible eruption of violence before and after the elections. These bodies ensure that disputes originated from electoral misconduct can be resolved. In other words, government and opposition parties can find alternative ways of resolving their election-related conflicts through the intermediary function of electoral institutions. In sum, they find that electoral governance in the 2004 Malawian elections along with the 2005 Ethiopian elections did not prevent electoral violence. Rather, the 2005 elections in Zanzibar, the semi-autonomous part of Tanzania, witnessed relatively more peaceful election using actions electoral institutions took. To further emphasize the role of strong institutions, by using quantitative methodology on the elections of different countries in the post-civil war eras since the end of the World War II, Brancati and Snyder (2011) reveal that institutional weaknesses of these countries determined whether elections were held peacefully. They find that electoral governance plays a major role in mitigating the distrust between the war-time political actors and the incumbent government.

Researchers have also explored the association between people's propensities to protest and the weakness of institutions. Machado et al. (2011) demonstrated that people are more likely to attend contentious actions, such as protests, when they live in weakly institutionalized settings. To support the afore-stated claim, they collected individual-based data from 17 Latin American countries to analyze country-level participation in

protest movements. They found a negatively significant association between a tendency to participate in protests and the institutional strength of the country. For example, due to the unfair practices of electoral institutions, the supporters of opposition parties make demonstrations in the streets and can be exposed to disproportionate force by security forces (Patino and Valesco, 2004).

Drawing on the differences between government-driven and independent electoral commissions, Höglund (2009) argues that the lack of impartiality of electoral institutions eases the electoral violence in conflict-prone countries. Besides, she claims that the political characteristics of the societies and highly competitive electoral settings are the other factors that lead to the outburst of election-related violence. As it was shown by Kristine Höglund:

“While the party-based electoral commission in Mozambique served as a vehicle to build trust in the 1994 election which put a definite end to the conflict, in subsequent elections, the electoral commission became an arena for party politics and competition, which weakened the democratic institutions. In the 1998 general elections, complaints about violence during the election campaign were addressed only after inquiries by the international observer.” (Höglund 2009, p.422)

Hence, we see the drawbacks and advantages of these two different styles of electoral management in the Mozambican case.

Hyde (2010) and Hyde & Marinov (2014) find a negative correlation between electoral monitoring and the risk of electoral fraud. They argue that election monitoring teams sent by the international institutions produce competitive atmosphere to the elections through equal campaign facilities. Therefore, it suffices to ensure that elections are held under free and fair conditions. Similarly, Fischer (2002) offers some strategies to prevent election violence by examining the elections of 57 countries in 2001. After he had completed his report, he came to the following conclusion: international electoral assistance ought to work on the capacity-building in “electoral management bodies, security forces, election courts and political parties” (Fischer 2002, p.29). In line with the Fischer’s recommendation, Alihodzic (2012) identifies poor electoral administration as conducive to the outbreak of election violence. To have peaceful elections, he gives the following advice to policy makers:

“Electoral management bodies and other organizations mandated to contribute to peaceful elections need to develop new competencies and operationalize tools that will enhance their capacity to understand the factors that contribute to



election-related violence, analyze risks throughout the electoral cycle, and take timely prevention and mitigation measures” (Alihodzic 2012, p.67)

This is why he shows the significance of early warning mechanisms like I4P (Infrastructure for Peace) - I4P is a technique of peace-building in some countries where local actors take an active part in the resolution process<sup>17</sup>. By this way, violence would be eradicated by enhancing the infrastructural capacities of the conflict-ridden and post-conflict countries.

### **3.3. Ethnicity Approach**

Elections are more likely to be held in violent settings if ethnic diversity exists. Prominent scholars of ethnicity studies have long held that politicians coming from different ethnic groups often prefer to play their ethnic cards while consolidating their supporters and attracting potential voters (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Horowitz 1985). Therefore, we see that ethnicity overlaps with electoral competition paving the way for ethnic violence (Brubaker and Laitin 1998).

M. B. Altier et al.(2013) argues that elections are the most appropriate platforms to the outbreak of violent attacks. Furthermore, inter-communal violence might be indispensable if the rivals come from different ethnic or religious backgrounds. M.B. Altier et al. claim that these rivals exacerbate the existing hatred and hostilities among the communities for the sake of receiving more votes.

To demonstrate how inter-ethnic conflicts are associated with electoral violence, Wilkinson (2004) in his study, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*, analyzes the association between electoral politics and ethnic violence using Hindu-Muslim riots. His argument mainly follows that when politicians see electoral stakes as do-or-die, they are more likely to ignite violence between different ethnic groups to get more supporters and win the elections. Likewise, drawing on the example of Hindu-Muslim riots in 2002, Wilkinson and Haid (2009) empirically show that ethnic violence has been used as an alternative way of the conventional election campaign to receive more votes.

Contrary to the widespread view on the positive association between ethnic diversity and inter-ethnic violence, Wilkinson (2004) finds that fractionalized political systems having two or three ethnically different political parties prepare ground for the political elites to aggravate the election-related disputes. Put it differently; each

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<sup>17</sup> For more information, please see <http://www.i4pinternational.org/infrastructures-for-peace>

competing party has a higher propensity to receive and consolidate the votes of its co-ethnics. In line with Paul Collier's (2003) highly influential World Bank Research Report, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Report*, by measuring ethnic fractionalization as a measure of ethnic diversity, he has empirically shown that the higher ethnic fractionalization, the lower the risk of civil war. In other words, ethnic diversity is non-monotonically associated with the risk of civil war. Therefore, the risk of civil war rises for low levels of diversity then decreases for higher levels. In a similar vein, Wilkinson finds that political systems comprised of at most three ethnic parties open space for the election violence by these parties to capture their co-ethnics' votes. Therefore, we see a nonmonotonic relationship between ethnic fractionalization and the risk of election violence.

By establishing a relationship between democratization and ethnic conflict, Cederman et al. (2012) provides an excellent literature review and they emphasize on the two mechanisms paving the ways for conflicts during democratization processes. The first mechanism follows that democratization has been understood to equate all citizens in countries with the major ethnic group. That is to say; these states melt different ethnic groups in the pot of the major ethnic group. This implementation can be counted as a step on the road to the discrimination process of various ethnic groups. In the second mechanism, they explain how ethnic conflicts turn into ethnic violence in elections as the following: when the incumbent government encounters with robust electoral competition, they might resort to "play the ethnic card" and foment atrocity against the rival groups (Cederman et al. 2012, p.390). In this way, they find that ethnicity-based group differences might result in inter-communal election violence if the elite manipulation of group differences exists. In other words, political elites have opportunities to use the ethnic features of the voters to come to power or stay in office. Thus, elites might play a facilitative role in the election-related violence.

Contrary to the argument about 'playing the ethnic card', some scholars argue that ethnic parties do in fact contribute to the stability of the democracies with different ethnic groups. They also do not ignite inter-ethnic clashes. Chandra (2004) shows that ethnic parties can peacefully compete with their multi-ethnic or non-ethnic rivals based on the performance of ethnic parties in India. Thanks to non-violent competition, Chandra accounts for why ethnic parties are noteworthy successful in getting the votes of their ethnic groups. Also, Birnir (2007) stresses the same point in her book called *Ethnicity and Electoral Politics*. By statistically analyzing ethnicity-based voting in

Romania, several case studies and lastly cross-national statistical research, her pivotal argument is that ethnic groups do not necessarily have irreconcilable features. So, ethnic characteristics of the groups do not have to be the rationale behind for the outburst of electoral violence.

Reif (2009) shows that even though election violence takes place in many inter-ethnic conflicts, we cannot generalize it for every country. Considering a case from Sri Lanka, she indicates that a majority of the attacks have been between the Sinhalese parties, even though Tamil and Sinhalese people had a very bloody past. Moreover, as the Tamils always vote for their co-ethnics, Sinhalese parties do not resort to violence against them. Because, a possible violence inflicted on the Tamils would change nothing. It is for this reason that they engage in violent activities against the undecided voters. A similar logic applies to the Tamils but with a different rationale. The LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) resorted to violence due to two motivating factors in the Sri Lanka's 2004 parliamentary elections, according to the EU Election Observation Mission Report<sup>18</sup>. The first factor springs from the intra-group division in the LTTE. The second factor is that the LTTE did not want more than one Tamil party to compete in the elections. In this respect, the organization only wanted the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) to compete against the Sinhalese parties. Therefore, it perpetrated violent attacks on its co-ethnics. In striking contrast with Wilkinson (2004)'s study on India, the Sri Lankan case shows that this does not work in every circumstance.

### **3.4. Implications**

The literature I have discussed so far drives me to look at some specific variables while accounting for the episodes of pre-electoral violence on the HDP before the June 2015 general election in Turkey. First implication comes from the ethnicity approach of election violence in which ethnic heterogeneity is one of the strong indicators as to whether electoral violence is more likely to erupt. To this end, focusing on the ethnic distribution of the population to explain the spatial variation of election violence allows me to look at several factors. First, Turkey has been witnessing an ongoing ethnic conflict between Turks and Kurds for over 35 years. Also, the armed struggle between the Turkish state and Kurdish separatists claimed the lives of more than 35000 people on both sides. By looking at the ethnic map of the country, provinces with a significant Kurdish population are expected to be more prone to have pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. Secondly, as the armed conflict fostered huge numbers of

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<sup>18</sup> For the detailed information, please see [http://eeas.europa.eu/eueom/missions/2004/sri-lanka/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/eueom/missions/2004/sri-lanka/index_en.htm)

security force casualties (SFCs), these losses have exacerbated the existing grievances of the Turkish population. Therefore, I will seek to find an association between the number of SFCs and the number of attacks on the HDP. Thirdly, as is indicated in the literature, nationalist parties are more prone to attack their rival parties who represent different ethnic groups. In this respect, one of my independent variables will be the vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties for all 81 cities in Turkey.

Second implication follows from provinces where elections go head to head with two or more parties can facilitate violent confrontations. To clarify, voters can attack the supporters from other parties to prevent any possible victory of the rivals at the end of the election. For this reason, I look for the absolute difference between the vote shares of AKP as the incumbent party and the HDP as a pro-Kurdish party. By this way, I plan to understand whether high electoral competition, which is intertwined with the ongoing ethnic conflict, is a significant factor in the outburst of attacks.

Apart from several explanatory variables demonstrated above, I will look for the role of the unemployment rate, economic activity, urbanization rate, and the number of population at the provincial level. Although the determinants of civil war literature have long analyzed these factors and found strong evidence on the outbreak of violence, election violence literature has paid scant attention so far to decipher how these factors contribute to the series of violent attacks in electoral settings. To exemplify, the majority of provinces in Turkey have been rapidly urbanizing over the last three decades. What is more, changing urban dynamics brings new opportunities for the people engaging in violent and criminal activities. So, urbanization rate as a variable to explain why the number of attacks changes from a province to another would be useful to analyze electoral violence in the Turkish case.

Regarding the contribution of my study, this thesis is a first in its attempt to examine the pre-electoral violence on the HDP with empirical support. It entails a unique data set, which has been coded based on the hard facts of news pertinent to the attacks on the HDP before the June 2015 general election in Turkey. I believe that my thesis provides significant clues for creating useful policies to wipe out election violence in Turkey.

Empirical analyses show that spatial variation across the provinces is associated with the following: higher security force casualties, higher urbanization rates, and lower differences between the vote shares of the AKP and HDP are supportive to the eruption of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. On the other hand, level of economic activity,

unemployment rates, percentage of Kurdish population, and vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties did not produce statistically significant results at the province level. All in all, the armed struggle between the Turkish state and the PKK has a strong impact on the number of attacks. In this respect, the core empirical results of this thesis mainly support the existing works on the ethnicity school of electoral violence.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA**

#### **4.1. Data Collection**

In this section, I am going to introduce the PEV Dataset. I assembled a novel dataset on the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP and collected data from the following online news agencies and news portals: [www.trthaber.com](http://www.trthaber.com), [www.milliyet.com.tr](http://www.milliyet.com.tr) and Doğan News Agency (DHA), Cihan News Agency (CHA); Dicle News Agency (DİHA) and [www.evrensel.net](http://www.evrensel.net). I used the online databases of these agencies and portals because many newspapers publish news based on the information provided by them. Also, the use of datasets created by the content analysis of the news is a widely-used method in micro-level studies (Weidmann, 2014). My dataset comprises of the news for the period between Feb 1<sup>st</sup> (the date that YSK announced the election schedule) and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 (election day). I have searched through the websites of each news agency and portal using two keywords “seçim şiddeti” and “HDP saldırı” (“election violence” and “HDP attack”). To this end, I collected news on the fights, quarrels, skirmishes, verbal attacks, damages to campaign materials and physical attacks against the members, election staffs, administrative authorities, MPs, the candidates of the HDP.

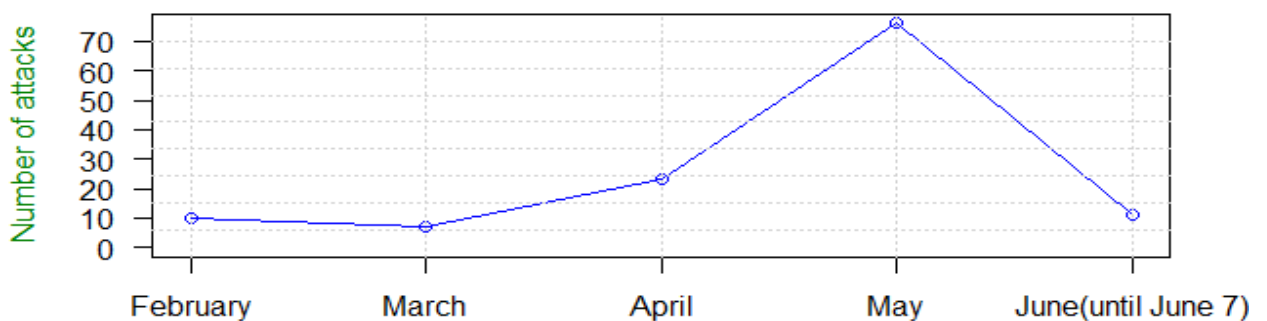
The keyword searches produced hundreds of news items, and I eliminated some of them by looking at whether they clearly indicated the hard facts of news. Eventually, I obtained a total of 127 reports. Next, I carefully assessed the contents of the news to control whether they are precisely compatible with the criteria given above. Concerning the time scope of my study, as indicated in the previous paragraph, I focused on the period between February 1<sup>st</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 since attacks on the HDP had erupted

and their visibility in the press began to increase in February. Also, my analysis only concerns the attacks in the pre-election period. It means that election day and post-electoral period fall beyond the scope of my thesis.

My thesis concentrated on mainly visible and verbal attacks against the HDP. To make sure that my data includes reliable and objective reports, I paid special attention to concentrate on the hard facts of the news. Thus, I sought to find answers the Four Ws questions (“when, where, what, how”). I think that focusing on only these questions would be useful to tackle with biased reporting. Equally important is the use of ideologically different news agencies and websites. The dataset prepared from them will help me to dampen the effects of biased media coverage on the attacks.

#### 4.2. Data Characteristics

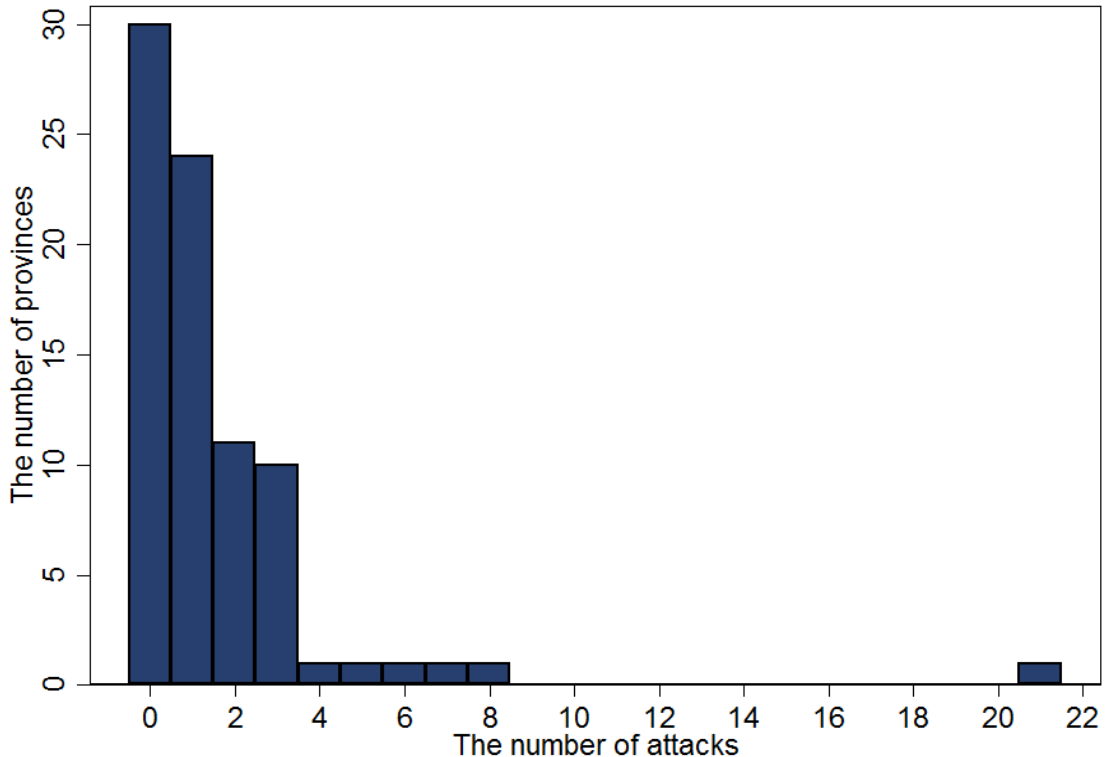
I present the overview of my data in Figure 3. Although the focus of my research is to observe how pre-electoral attacks on the HDP are distributed across the country, it would also be informative to see the type of temporal variation in attacks. At this point, I want to emphasize that attacks became more frequent towards the election day. The dataset gives me an opportunity to validate the claim mentioned above because we have an outbreak of pre-electoral attacks in May. Approximately, 76 of the total 126 attacks took place in May. A closer look at the other months reveals that they shared a similar trend regarding the number of attacks. They range from 10 to 7 and 11 attacks in February, March, and June, respectively. As it is illustrated in Figure 2, April seems to foreshadow the outburst of attacks in May since it has a total of 23 attacks.



**Figure 2: Monthly pre-electoral attacks on the HDP, February-June 2015.**

In Figure 3, we see the relationship between the number of provinces and the number of attacks in each province. This figure shows us that almost half of the

provinces, which are 30 out of 81, did not experience any violent attack on the HDP. Thus, I argue that attacks did not diffuse into all provinces but clustered in some places. On the other hand, the overview of the attacks interestingly depicts that the number of attacks in each province ranges between 1 and 5. Only Istanbul, Erzurum, Ankara, Antalya, Mersin experienced more than five attacks. Istanbul comes to the fore in terms of the number of attacks vis-à-vis other provinces. Considering the demographic characteristics of this province, like its huge population, this is not surprising.



**Figure 3: The overview of attacks on the HDP prior to the June 2015 general election in Turkey**

Regarding the attacked venues, we have a variety of targeted places. Attacks mostly targeted campaign related locations. Most of them have targeted campaign offices, stands, cars and even party flags, whereas 39 (out of the total 127) targeted individuals like party supporters and members including the election staff, candidates, MPs and party’s provincial administrative authorities such as provincial co-chairmen. In the light of the PEV dataset, I can say that attackers mainly focused on the campaign materials of the party. One motivation behind the attacks on the property might be to mitigate the efficiency of campaign activities because it would take some time to recover damaged materials or to get new equipment.

Concerning the types of the pre-electoral attacks, the dataset has 23 kinds of



attack. Expectedly, the severity of these attacks changes and yet the most common form is the attacks with stone. Specifically, a quarter of the total attacks has been done whereby perpetrators stoned the HDP's party offices, campaign offices, stands, cars. Besides, the dataset includes, among other things, pounding, physical attack, burning campaign materials, armed attack, and so on.

A more detailed analysis of the data reveals that 17 of the attacks were carried out with weapons and explosives and as such could have led to casualties. Fatal attacks encompass armed attacks (12), knife attacks (7), and attack with Molotov cocktails (3). More importantly, there were two simultaneous bomb attacks in the provincial co-chairmanships of Adana and Mersin. Besides, as indicated in Chapter 1, a very dramatic bomb attack carried out only few days to the election day in the grand Diyarbakir meeting, and it led to the death of 5 citizens.

<b>Damage</b>	<b>The number of related attacks</b>
Casualty	1
Injury	20
Casualty and Injury	1
Property	52
Property and Injury	3
None	50

**Table 1: Types of damage to the HDP supporters and properties (N: 127)**

Above, different types of damages to individuals and properties are shown. If we are to look at the general trend, campaign materials have been targeted in approximately half of the total attacks. They are followed by the categories: physical injuries, property damages and physical injuries simultaneously and lastly casualty and physical injury again simultaneously. Except the bomb attack in Diyarbakir, casualties have been very limited. It should be noted that although people engaged in violent activities against the HDP, they ostensibly did not achieve their goals. I have noted 50 attacks without any damage to party members and campaign materials. Therefore, I would say that the

percentage of failed attempts indicates that attackers are likely to have experienced some organizational problems while they were planning these attacks or the majority of the attacks have erupted without any preparation.

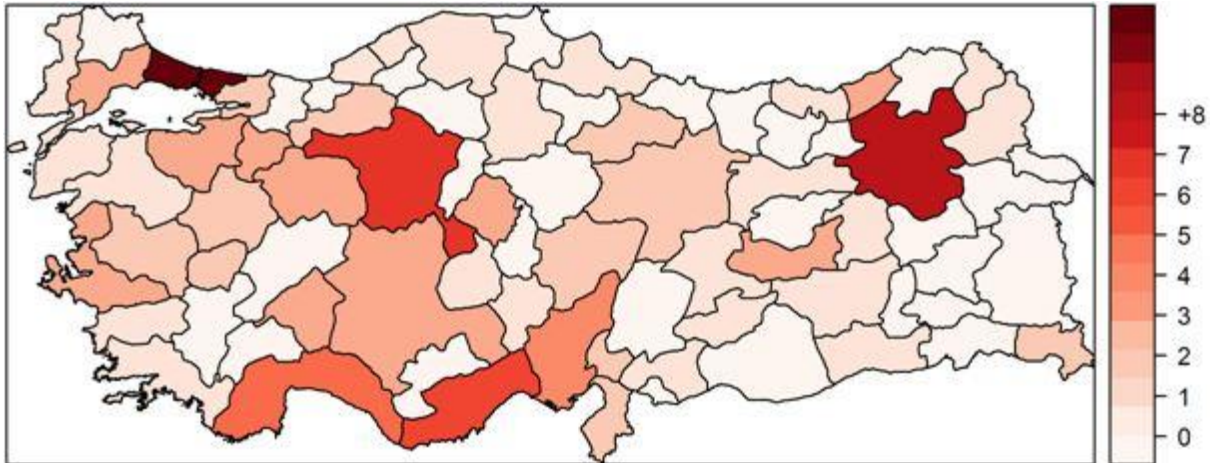
In the following chapter, I am going to discuss the spatial variation of pre-electoral attacks using the electoral, historical and socio-economic determinants. To do that, I established my theoretical foundation drawing on the existing works related to the logic of rebel recruitment. Next, I will present my empirical findings and the main results.

## CHAPTER V

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

#### 5.1. Spatial Variation of Pre-Electoral Attacks on the HDP

In the previous chapter, I presented PEV Dataset and indicated that attacks were not evenly distributed across the country. So, why have some provinces experienced more attacks vis-à-vis the others? To this end, I plan to capture the origins of spatial variation explaining the logic of participation. By doing so, I will formulate my hypotheses by the existing theoretical works. In the following chapter, these hypotheses will be tested and analyzed by the statistical method.



**Figure 4: Total number of pre-electoral attacks between February 1<sup>st</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in each province.**

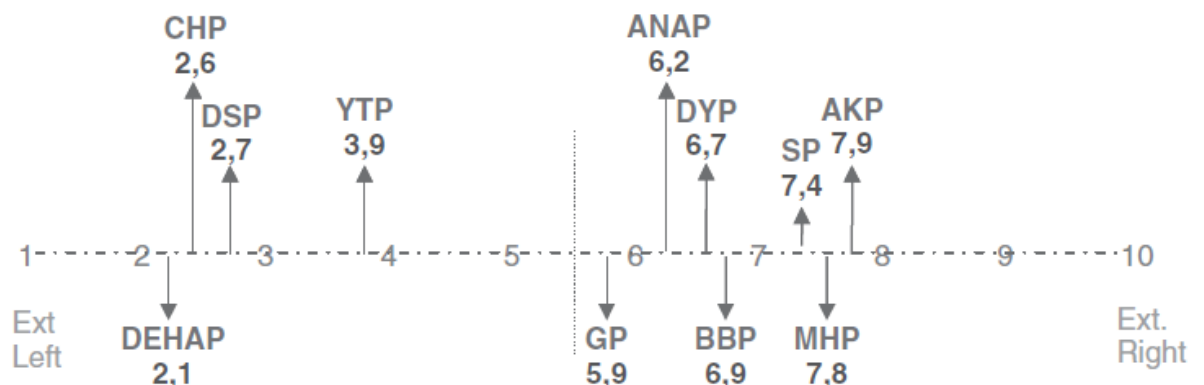
In my research, the unit of analysis is the province and my dependent variable is the total number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP in a province between February 1<sup>st</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup> (election day), 2015. Each hypothesis will introduce an independent variable that will help explain province-level variation in the empirical analyses. These independent variables represent a set of socio-economic, electoral and historical determinants. The data for socioeconomic and electoral indicators come from the TUIK

(Turkish Statistical Institute) and YSK (Supreme Election Council of Turkey).

## 5.2. Hypotheses

**5.2.1. Hypothesis 1:** *Attacks on the HDP are more likely in provinces with higher vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties.*

This hypothesis aims to demonstrate the association between the ideological polarization of the electorate and the number of attacks in a given province. As we have previously seen in the ethnicity approach to electoral violence, due to the polarizing role of instrumentalized ethnic differences, violence can erupt among ethnically different communities (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Horowitz 1985). As for ethnic cleavages in politics, parties having exclusionary ideologies towards other ethnic groups can polarize their voters against the out-group members. Moreover, as these parties advocate the supremacy of their ethnic group over the rest, they can even preach and legitimize possible violence inflicted upon voters from ethnically different groups. In a pre-election period, supporters of nationalist parties can resort to violence against voters of rival parties from different ethnicities to hamper any possible victory of the rivals electorally (Wilkinson 2004; Wilkinson and Haid 2009). By empirically analyzing how the ethnic conflict in Turkey affects the vote shares of the Kurdish and Turkish ethnic nationalist parties, Kıbrıs (2014) found that the ongoing ethnic conflict raises the salience of ethnic nationalism. By doing so, it leads to the polarization of the voters with ethnic nationalist ties. Therefore, as ideological polarization based on ethnic-nationalist sentiments increases among the members of different ethnic groups, inter-group tolerance decreases and begets violence between the groups.



**Figure 5: Political parties in the eyes of voters in October 2002.**

Source: Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, “Electoral Realignment or Protest Vote: November 2002 Elections in Turkey,”

Using the ideological polarization of voters in election violence, I derive my

hypothesis that higher numbers of attacks on the HDP occur in cities where Turkish nationalist parties have higher vote shares. To this end, I take the classification of parties from Kalaycıoğlu (2005) 's book *Turkish Dynamics: Bridge across Troubled Lands* in which he referred to the ideological status of parties according to Turkish voters. As can be seen in Figure 5, ideological points of the parties range from 1 (Extreme Left) to 10 (Extreme Right). In this research, for example, the DEHAP, one of the predecessors of the HDP, is rated furthest to the left at 2.1. The most rightist parties are the Justice and Development Party (AKP) at 7.9 and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) at 7.8. To understand how ideological polarization has an impact on the attacks, I used the latest data on the vote shares of the HDP, AKP and MHP in the 2014 municipal elections of Turkey.

**5.2.2. Hypothesis 2:** *Provinces with a significant ethnically Kurdish population are more likely to have pre-electoral attacks on the HDP.*

The reason for this hypothesis is to explain the relationship between the percentage of Kurdish population in each province and the number of attacks on the HDP as a pro-Kurdish party. This hypothesis aims to measure whether and how the ethnic distribution of the population across the country influences the number of attacks. Brown (1996) argues that countries with ethnic minorities tend to be less resilient towards conflicts, even though being ethnically homogenous does not guarantee a peaceful order in countries. He further explains that the geographic distribution of ethnic communities determines whether an internal war breaks out in these countries. Due to irreconcilable features of ethnic differences based on past relationships, ethnicity based grievances lead to the eruption of inter-ethnic violence (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008). This is why I used a unique data created by Kıbrıs (2014) showing the percentage of Kurdish population in each province. As the 1965 population census is the last census consisting of questions concerning the mother tongues of citizens, Kıbrıs (2014) estimated city-based Kurdish population by combining the provincial percentages of Kurdish population in the 1965 census, which is readily available by Mutlu (1996), with the 1990 and 2000 population censuses. Based on this hypothesis, I expect provinces, where the Kurds constitute a majority, to be more likely to experience attacks.

**5.2.3. Hypothesis 3:** *Attacks on the HDP are more likely in provinces with higher numbers of security force casualties.*

The rationale behind this hypothesis is to show how grievances coming from the

intensity of armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK affect the number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP in each province. To measure conflict intensity, I use the number of security force casualties in each province. In the literature on the logic of participation in rebel organizations, the grievance approach has received much scholarly attention to date. For example, Brubaker (1998); Humphreys and Weinstein (2008); and Wood (2003) attach huge importance to grievances and atrocities among ethnically different communities. They claim that grievance emanating from past relationships is one of the underlying factors to facilitating violent confrontations.

While Kıbrıs (2010) shows the effects of terrorism on voting behavior for the 1991 and 1995 general elections in Turkey, she explains the reason why martyr funerals affect the Turkish population's attitude against the PKK as follows:

“...The security force terror casualties from their hometowns constitute the most tangible and important cost of terrorism for the Turkish people living outside the terror-stricken southeastern part of the country and the funeral ceremonies are the occasions when they really feel this cost... Thus, the number of state funerals of security force terror casualties, held in a district in a certain period of time, provides a good measure of the costs of terrorism that the people of that district suffer within that period.” (Kıbrıs 2010, p.5)

This is why I use the information as to which of the provinces have higher numbers of martyr funerals<sup>19</sup>.

In the past, the TCC dissolved the pro-Kurdish parties because they helped and supported the PKK, these decisions may have led the Turkish population to perceive the HDP as the PKK's political branch - as I explained in Chapter 2. By empirically analyzing the number of SFCs, I seek to identify whether the existing conflict has any influence on the number of pre-electoral attacks for all 81 provinces.

**5.2.4. Hypothesis 4:** *Attacks on the HDP are more likely in provinces having higher unemployment rates.*

This hypothesis aims at establishing a connection between economic grievances and the number of attacks in each province. When we examine the extant literature on rebel recruitment in the context of civil war, high unemployment seems to be very conducive to higher participation in rebel groups. This is because of the emergence of private benefits and individual interests (Azam 2006; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Weinstein 2007; Olson 1965). To explicate, higher rates of unemployment can open doors for the organizers of these attacks to attract the unemployed. Thanks to the

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<sup>19</sup>The data has been acquired from the following source: “Hangi il ne kadar şehit verdi?”, *Haber3*, Retrieved from <http://www.haber3.com/hangi-il-ne-kadar-sehit-verdi-506004h.htm>

lucrative nature of participation, the unemployed have a higher propensity to loot and engage in banditry than other groups. By collecting province-based unemployment rates from 2013, I test this hypothesis.

**5.2.5. Hypothesis 5:** *Attacks on the HDP are more likely in provinces with lower levels of economic activity.*

This hypothesis also conjectures an association between economic conditions and participation in electoral violence. As Brown (1996) stresses a low level of economic development in a region provides fertile circumstances along with unemployment, financial issues and resource competition for the eruption of internal conflict. In the light of Brown's idea, I think that if a province experiences low levels of economic activity, then this province is likely to have pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. In other words, people, who are heavily affected by stagnation, are more likely to join attacks. To capture the levels of economic activity for all provinces in Turkey, I have collected data on the province-based net numbers of opened and closed companies between February 2014 and 2015 before the outbreak of attacks. The data for the numbers of opened and closed companies comes from TOBB (The Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange).

**5.2.6. Hypothesis 6:** *Attacks on the HDP are more likely in urbanized provinces.*

In the literature concerning urbanization and population growth, scholars have recently touched upon an important relationship between population growth and the risk of political instability in cities (Goldstone 1991; Gizewski and Homer-Dixon 1995; Cincotta et al. 2003; Kahl 2006). For example, Gizewski and Homer-Dixon (1995) argue that population growth and higher rates of urbanization pave the way for collective action with the help of the segregation of ethnic groups, higher levels of ethnic fractionalization, poor governance and low level of hiring. With this in mind, I suspect that higher urbanization rates are more likely to produce increases in the number of attacks per province. According to the new metropolis law, all metropolitan cities are accepted as fully urbanized, even though they have still some rural regions (*Kır Nüfusu*). Consequently, I calculated the urbanization rate per province in 2012 which is the last year that TÜİK entered the number of people living in urban and rural areas. To make this calculation, I divided urban population by total population for each province.

**5.2.7. Hypothesis 7:** *Attacks on the HDP are more likely in provinces where the HDP is in close competition with at least one right-wing party.*

It has also been argued in the electoral violence literature that when parties having

substantial ethnic, social, economic and ideological dissimilarities compete in highly competitive settings, these parties are more likely to commit violence against each other (Höglund 2008; Höglund and Piyarathe 2009; Fischer 2002; Bratton 2008). This is why I have incorporated electoral competition as an independent variable. As the HDP only ran against the AKP –especially in the eastern provinces when one looks at the provincial vote shares of both–, I have calculated electoral competition by subtracting the vote shares of the AKP from those of the HDP and took the absolute value of them based on the 2014 local election results.

<p>The number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP (dependent variable).</p> <p>The unit of analysis is province.</p> <p>Determinants of attacks are clustered as follows</p>		
<p>Electoral Determinants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The vote share of Turkish nationalist parties.</li> <li>- The level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP.</li> </ul>	<p>Historical Determinant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of security force casualties.</li> </ul>	<p>Socio-economic Determinants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Urbanization rate.</li> <li>- Unemployment rate.</li> <li>- The level of economic activity.</li> <li>- Ethnic composition of the population</li> </ul>

**Table 2: The overview of theoretical foundation**

Above you can find a summary of my theoretical model including the independent variables, dependent variable and the unit of my analysis. Besides, in order to see what sort of an association between a province’s population and the number of attacks, I will control for a province’s population by incorporating province population (2015 values from TUIK) into my empirical analyses. While testing these hypotheses, I will use the standard Poisson regression analyses to examine the event count outcome since the attacks have highly skewed distribution. In other words, although my dataset includes numerous observations with violent attacks on the HDP, a considerable number of the observations do not entail any attack, coinciding with 30 out of 81 provinces, as shown in Chapter 4. Also, I looked at model robustness where I made comparisons between the standard Poisson and the other count models such as zero-inflated or negative binomial – see Appendix A. Statistical analyses showed the prevalence of the Poisson over the other count models. In the following chapter, I will share the main results and analyses.



## CHAPTER VI

### ANALYSES

#### 6.1. Results

In this chapter, I am going to look at whether the data support my hypotheses. Table 3 introduces the descriptive statistics of a set of predictor variables, the population variable, and the dependent variable. In my base model, the dependent variable is the number of pre-electoral attacks across all provinces. I have already presented the frequency distribution of my dependent variable in Chapter 5. Also, it has been indicated that distribution was skewed to the right. In this way, I estimate the parameters of the standard Poisson regression model:

$$E(Y_i) = \exp(\alpha + \beta_1 X_{i1} + \beta_2 X_{i2} + \beta_3 X_{i3} + \beta_4 X_{i4} + \beta_5 X_{i5} + \beta_6 X_{i6} + \beta_7 X_{i7} + \beta_8 X_{i8})$$

$Y_i$  is the number of pre-electoral attacks in province  $i$  between February 1<sup>st</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015.  $\alpha$  is the constant estimate of the Poisson regression in case that all variables are evaluated at zero.  $X_1$  is the total vote share of Turkish nationalist parties (AKP+MHP) in province  $i$ ;  $X_2$  is the percentage of Kurdish population in province  $i$ ;  $X_3$  is the number of security force casualties of the armed struggle with the PKK in province  $i$  between 1984 and 2009;  $X_4$  is the unemployment rate in province  $i$ ;  $X_5$  is the net number of opened and closed companies in province  $i$ ;  $X_6$  is the urbanization rate in province  $i$ ;  $X_7$  is the absolute difference between the vote shares of AKP and HDP in province  $i$ .  $X_8$  is province  $i$ 's 2015 population in ten thousand. Besides, bivariate correlations among my independent variables are shown in Appendix B.

Table 4 presents the results of regression analysis in which I use incidence rate ratio (IRR) which is the natural log of estimated parameters. Besides, Figure 6 visualizes these results. If we have one unit increase in the predictor variable, this yields

a multiplicative change in the number of pre-electoral attacks in provinces as my dependent variable. In the next paragraphs, I am going to explain which of the hypotheses are supported by empirical analyses.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of observation</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Number of attacks	81	1.56	2.71	0	21
Vote shares of AKP + MHP	81	63.75	16.98	16.23	89.28
Number of security force casualties	81	97.24	65.70	7	303
Unemployment rate	81	8.80	3.87	4.2	23.4
Level of economic activity	81	54.39	179.94	0	1502
Urbanization rate	81	65.30	13.73	35.18	98.95
Percentage of Kurdish population	81	16.26	25.25	0.02	89.47
Level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP	81	40.36	15.46	3.24	63.58
Province population in ten thousands	81	97.20	176.66	8	1466

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics**

### **6.1.1. Electoral Competition**

I initially test  $H_7$  and the estimated IRR demonstrate the support for competition between AKP and HDP. It shows us that one percent increase in the absolute difference in the vote shares of these parties leads the number of attacks to be multiplied by 0.973. In other words, the electoral rivalry between these parties is significantly associated with a 2.7% decline in the number of attacks. Taking into consideration that higher levels of competition between two or more parties trigger violent confrontations during election processes,  $H_7$  is supported by empirical evidence. I also looked at whether there is a statistically significant association between the level of ethnic party competition (MHP vs. HDP) and the number of pre-electoral attacks – see Appendix D. In this case,

I did not find any empirical support for that kind of a relationship.

### 6.1.2. Security Force Casualties

Consistent to  $H_3$ , additional SFCs lead the number of attacks to be multiplied by 1.005. As can be seen in IRR, one unit increase in the number of SCFs for a province is significantly associated with a 0.5% increase in the number of attacks on the HDP. As I indicated in previous chapters, when we consider (1) the grievances of Turkish population emanated from their losses to the armed struggle between the Turkish state and the PKK and (2) the perception that HDP supports the PKK in the eyes of the Turkish population, this is not very surprising result. Therefore, this hypothesis is empirically supported.

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP
Vote shares of AKP + MHP	1.020 (0.014)
Number of security force casualties	1.005 (0.001)***
Unemployment rate	0.949 (0.034)
Level of economic activity	1.0005 (0.001)
Urbanization rate	1.029 (0.007)***
Percentage of Kurdish population	0.994 (0.008)
Level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP	0.973 (0.012)**
Province population in ten thousands	1.0003 (0.001)
Number of observations	81
Log -likelihood	-113.935
Constant	0.130 (0.121)**
AIC	245.871

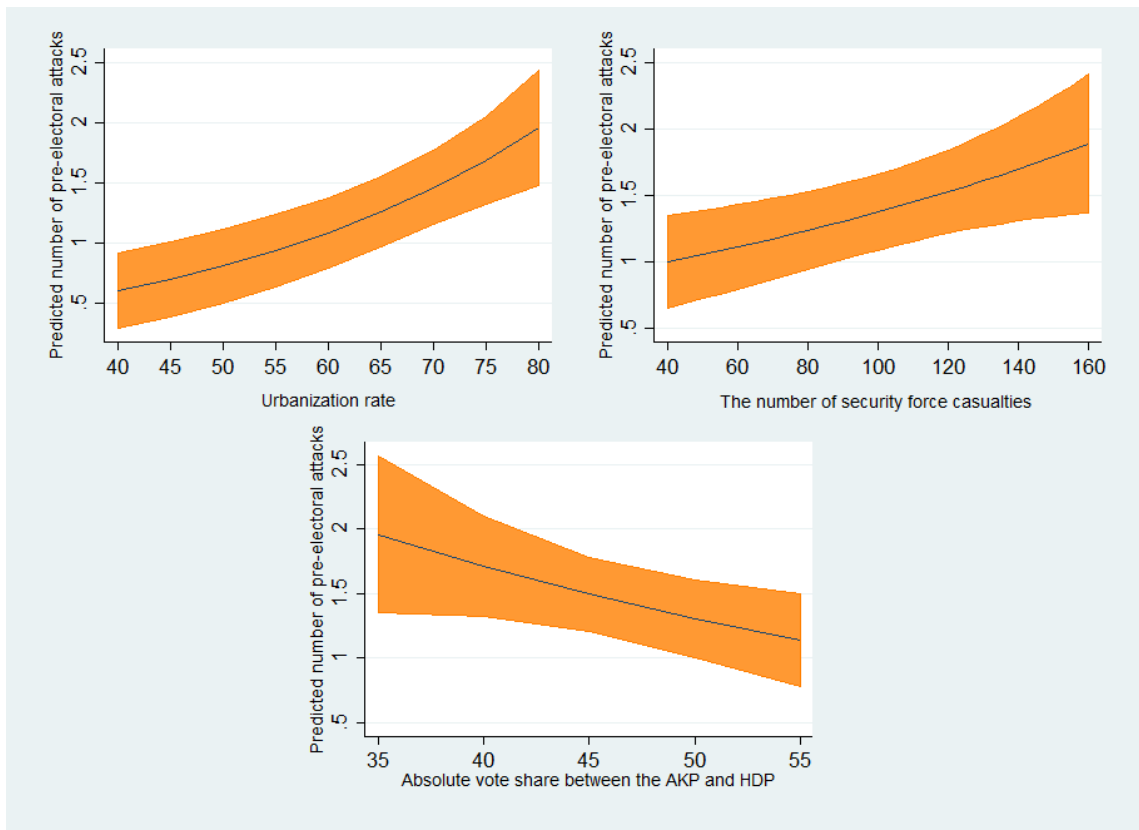
\*\*\*: significant at  $p < 0.01$  \*\*: significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 4: Results of the standard Poisson regression. (Reported coefficients are incidence rate ratios –IRR-)**

### 6.1.3. Urbanization Rate

Consistent with  $H_6$ , urbanized cities are strongly significant in both a statistical and a substantive sense. This is because the estimated IRR tells us that one percent increase in urbanization rate causes the number of pre-electoral attacks with the

multiplicative change by 1.029. In other words, one percent increase in urbanization rate is related to a 2.9% increase in the number of attacks. Compared to other variables, empirical evidence tells us that urbanization plays a tremendous role in the outbreak of attacks on the HDP. Thus, what I have hypothesized about the positive relationship between urbanization and the number of pre-electoral attacks in the previous chapter is supported by statistical analyses. Further discussion on this subject will be provided in the discussion part of this chapter.



**Figure 6: Predicted association between the number of pre-electoral attacks and statistically significant explanatory variables.**

#### 6.1.4. Unemployment Rate

Contrary to  $H_4$ , the estimates for one of the economic approaches to pre-electoral attacks on the HDP in my model are substantively and statistically insignificant. When we consider unemployment rate, I would say that this hypothesis did not get empirical support in the Turkish case. In other words, unemployment, which is seen as an important motive for the logic of participation in violent attacks in the literature, does not incentivize voters to inflict violence upon the HDP members and the party's campaign-related materials.

### **6.1.5. The Level of Economic Activity**

Contrary to  $H_5$ , the estimates for the other economic approach in the model do not bring out statistical significant and substantive result. Therefore, this means that change in the net number of companies does not create an influence on the number of attacks at the provincial level.

### **6.1.6. The Vote Shares of Turkish Nationalist Parties**

Contrary to what we expected in  $H_1$ , the vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties measured by the total vote shares of AKP and MHP in the 2014 municipal election did not produce statistically significant results due to its higher probability value at 5% level of alpha. Also, I made a similar analysis by which I only used the vote share of MHP as the ultra-nationalist party - see Appendix C. Yet, I came up with the same result that there was no essentially statistically significant association between the vote share of MHP and the number of attacks.

### **6.1.7. The Percentage of Kurdish Population**

In contrast with  $H_2$ , which states that attacks are more likely in provinces with a significant Kurdish population, statistical results do not allow me to reject the null hypothesis on this independent variable. Therefore, as opposed to my claim, ethnic map of the country did not turn out to be an important factor to predict the number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP.

Lastly, after controlling for province population, empirical evidence demonstrated that there is no statistically significant negative or positive association between the size of provinces and the number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. When looked at Figure 4, abovementioned result is correct to a certain extent. Inner-Central Anatolian provinces like Bilecik, Kütahya, Eskişehir, Uşak and even Bolu experienced higher number of attacks, despite their lower number of population. Also, other provinces with higher numbers of population like İstanbul, Antalya, and Ankara have witnessed higher number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. In this respect, no certain trend seems in terms of province population and empirical results are consistent with the news in the dataset.

## **6.2. Discussion**

Prior to opening up a discussion on the afore-stated empirical results, it would be better to look at the conflict-events recorded by the PEV Dataset. The data noticeably suggests many incidents occurred in provinces where statistically significant variables

have higher values. On 10 March, 2015<sup>20</sup>, people attacked with stones and tried to break the door of provincial chairmanship in Torbalı, a district of İzmir. In the city center of Erzurum, on 11 May, 2015<sup>21</sup>, HDP's campaign bus was surrounded and later on attacked by the people who were targeted to attack the election staff of HDP inside of the bus. Considering the number of SFCs in afore-stated provinces, İzmir (182), Erzurum (147) - especially Erzurum which experienced 8 attacks and took the lead among other provinces- these are some vivid examples of how the grievances emanated from the intensity of the armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK affect people's propensity to inflict violence upon the HDP.

Istanbul and Ankara with more than 97% urbanization rates might present the best examples to portray in what ways urbanized cities play increasing role in the number of attacks. These two major cities experienced a considerable number of total attacks (28 out of 127). For example, election offices in Küçükçekmece<sup>22</sup> on 24 April, a representative office in Esenler<sup>23</sup> on 22 February, and again election office in Kadıköy<sup>24</sup> on 10 May were exposed to violent attacks such as attempting to set fire to election offices and campaign materials. When it comes to Ankara, HDP's headquarter was exposed to armed attack on 18 May<sup>25</sup>. Fortunately, this has not been resulted in any casualty or injured but only material damage.

News included in the PEV Dataset give striking examples on the role of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP. In Mersin, Adana and Antalya, we have witnessed a total of 15 attacks. When we delve into the reports in these provinces, election offices in Mersin<sup>26</sup> and campaign staff in Adana<sup>27</sup> on 08 May, and lastly election

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<sup>20</sup> See "HDP Torbalı ilçe binasına saldırı", *Evrensel*, 10 March 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/107337/hdp-torbalı-ilce-binasına-saldırı>

<sup>21</sup> See "Erzurum'da HDP otobüsüne saldırı!", *Milliyet*, 11 May 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/erzurum-da-hdp-otobusune-saldırı-siyaset/detay/2057120/default.htm>

<sup>22</sup> See "HDP seçim bürolarına saldırı", *Radikal*, 25 April 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/hdp-secim-burolarina-saldırı-1343521/>

<sup>23</sup> See "Esenler'de HDP mahalle temsilciliğine saldırı", *Evrensel*, 22 February 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/105651/esenlerde-hdp-mahalle-temsilciligine-saldırı>

<sup>24</sup> See "HDP'nin Kadıköy'deki seçim bürosu ateşe verildi", *Evrensel*, 11 May 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/112457/hdpnin-kadikoydeki-secim-burosuna-ateşe-verildi>

<sup>25</sup> See "HDP binasına silahlı saldırı", *Milliyet*, 19 April 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/hdp-binasına-silahlı-saldırı-gundem-2046308/>

<sup>26</sup> See "Mersin'de HDP seçim bürosuna saldırı", *Evrensel*, 09 May 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/112320/mersinde-hdp-secim-burosuna-saldırı>

<sup>27</sup> See "Adana'da HDP'li gençlere ırkçı saldırı", *Evrensel*, 08 May 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/112306/adanada-hdpli-genclere-irkci-saldırı>

office in Kumluca, a district of Antalya,<sup>28</sup> on 28 May were attacked. This is not surprising in that electoral competition between the AKP and HDP in these cities is higher compared to other provinces. Furthermore, we have three-party-competition (MHP+AKP+HDP) in Mersin and Adana. Expectedly, this makes electoral stakes more important for both politicians and voters. Equally important is the armed attack against the driver of HDP's campaign bus in Karliova<sup>29</sup>, a district of Bingöl, on June 3. The driver lost his life aftermath of the attack. In this context, it should be said that Kurdish provinces like Bingöl, where AKP and HDP highly compete electorally, were more or less exposed to pre-election violence.

In this part, I will assess the evidentiary strength of my empirical results. Statistical analyses have brought out several factors that played an important role in the explanation of provincial variation for the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. Evidence presented in this study shows that the ongoing ethnic conflict between Turks and Kurds has an association with the number of attacks on the HDP. One possible explanation follows that increasing number of SFCs and martyr funerals appearing everyday in the press might create a high level of resentment against the HDP, which has been seen as a political arm of the PKK. That is to say; due to the intensity of armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, grievances of Turkish population can facilitate violence on the HDP.

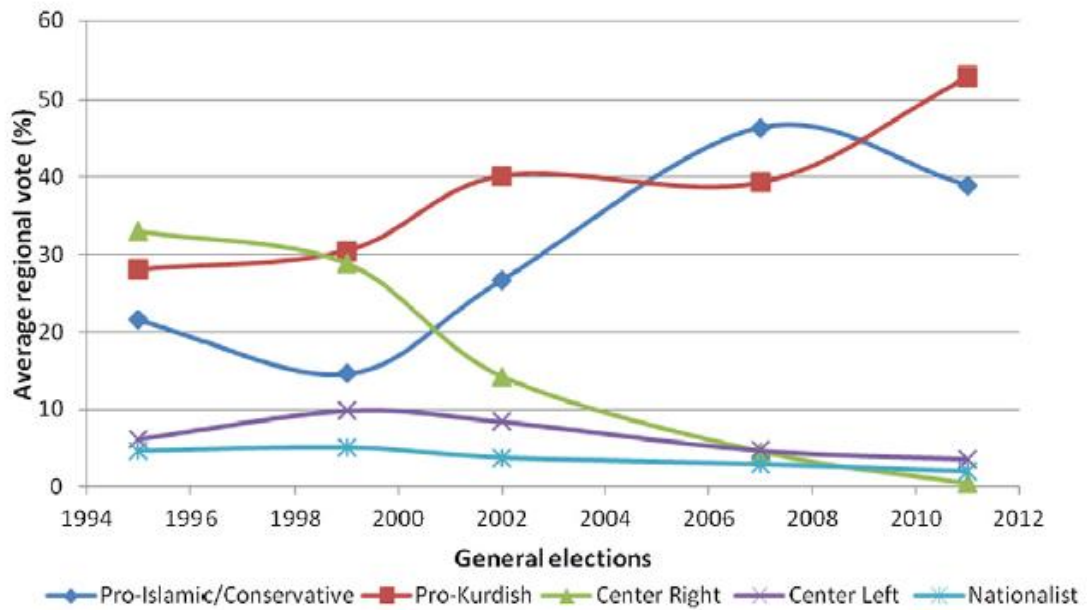
Armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state has been a much stronger precursor of the pre-electoral attacks rather than the unemployment and the level of economic activity. Considering the ethnicity factor of election violence, this is not striking. Especially, the armed conflict has escalated the existing hostilities between these two different ethnic groups. One might argue that pre-electoral attacks can be tied to the intolerance of Turkish nationalists towards the Kurds. Drawing on the intolerance of the ultranationalist party (MHP) towards the Kurds, Sarıgil and Karakoç (2016) argue that the effect of nationalist orientation is associated with the intolerance towards the Kurds. Therefore, it is more likely that higher level of intolerance towards the Kurds might easily be translated into violence.

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<sup>28</sup> See "Antalya Kumluca'da HDP seçim bürosuna saldırı", *Evrensel*, 28 May 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/113952/antalya-kumlucada-hdp-secim-burosuna-saldiri>

<sup>29</sup> See "HDP seçim aracına silahlı saldırı: 1 ölü", *Milliyet*, 04 June 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/hdp-secim-aracina-silahli-siyaset/detay/2069067/default.htm>

Consistent with the literature (Höglund 2009; Höglund 2008; Fischer 2002; Wilkinson 2004), empirical evidence concurs that competitive electoral settings between the AKP and HDP were one of three significant factors. Although this competition exists in the southeastern cities of Turkey except for some provinces taking place in the Mediterranean region and metropolitan cities like Istanbul, AKP, which is the only party with conservative Turkish nationalist ideology, genuinely competes against the HDP. This electoral competition takes a crucial part in the spatial variation of attacks as shown in Figure 7. Additionally, this figure illustrates that no party ventures to compete with the pro-Kurdish parties but only conservative parties. A focus on the AKP's performance reveals an uptrend between 2002 and 2007. The party even succeeded to get ahead of its electoral rival in 2007 general election. Therefore, pre-electoral attacks may have erupted in the eastern provinces for the sake of receiving higher vote shares from the Kurdish cities.



**Figure 7: Electoral popularity of major political parties in the Kurdish provinces (1995–2011).**

Notes: Pro-Islamic and Conservative: RP/FP/SP, AKP; Pro-Kurdish: HADEP/DEHAP/DTP/BDP/Indep.; Center Right: ANAP, DYP, DP; Center Left: CHP, DSP; Nationalist: MHP. Kurdish provinces: Batman, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Hakkari, Mardin, Mus, Siirt, Sanliurfa, Sirnak, Van. Data Source: TÜİK (<http://www.tuik.gov.tr/>).

Source: Zeki Sarıgil and Omer Fazlioglu (2013), “Religion and ethno-nationalism: Turkey’s Kurdish issue”

Historically speaking, Tezcür (2009) argues that the participation of pro-Kurdish parties in elections did not only provide Kurdish nationalists with many facilities to



articulate their problems in political arena but also put these parties into the harsh electoral competition. Particularly, as of 2004, the AKP has become a threat to these parties because it was able to receive the votes of Kurdish voters and became dominant in some of the Kurdish provinces. Tezcür further argues that the PKK's aggressive and moderate attitudes determined both the results of elections and the competition between the AKP and DTP in the 2007 local election and the 2009 general election. This makes more sense to underscore a possible explanation that high competition between the AKP and pro-Kurdish parties over the Kurdish electorate in the last decade might pave the way for the outburst of pre-electoral attacks

Considering the electoral violence on the Muslim community by Hindu nationalists as campaign technique in India (Wilkinson and Haid, 2009), attackers in the southeastern cities might have engaged in violence on the HDP to reduce campaign performance of the party and thereby take the lead aftermath of the election. That is to say; perpetrators could have behaved rationally to eliminate their potential rivals in campaign period. Thus, this sort of violence might be translated into campaign technique in the pre-election period as opposed to the traditional way of electioneering.

Based on the empirical results presented above, higher urbanization leads to an increase in the number of attacks. In other words, violent and criminal activities culminate in urbanized cities. Gizewski and Homer-Dixon (1995) have a cogent argument that urban settings mingled with unemployment take active role in the occurrence of violent incidents. Especially, youth unemployment in the cities prepares ground for violence since the mobilization of the young population is easier in urban life. Marcelin and Willman (2010) find evidence in the Haitian case about why the young unemployed have higher tendencies to engage in violent activities. Due to harsh economic conditions and social deprivation, Marcelin and Willman argue that youth is marginalized and enroll in criminal groups. More importantly, urban life expedites the communicative side of mobilization since it has a more interactive atmosphere to ease collective meetings (Gizewski and Homer-Dixon, 1995).

Similar to the abovementioned argument, Moser (2004) accentuates the importance of city growth rate, and he directs his attention to the young male population within the context of poor and unequal economic conditions. Furthermore, he attributes to an important point that the cities, where security forces are not able to maintain the safety, raise an issue of security. So, states cannot show their existence in violent urbanized areas. The World Bank research report called *Violence in the City* by Marc

and Willman (2011) professes ‘the absence of a political authority’ argument. The report argues that violence entrepreneurs make use of the absence of a political authority and mobilize groups to increase the participation in collective violence. They use these pulling factors which appeal to young male groups. In doing so, these entrepreneurs can maintain the cycle of recruitment. On top of it, according to the World Bank economists, the outburst of attacks is more likely in urban areas tainted with the bloody history of the existing conflicts.

To take the discussion further, I want to touch upon the motivation of the HDP in campaign period. Before the June election, the HDP began to expand the area of its campaign. Apart from a set of Kurdish cities, campaign teams were sent out every street, neighborhood, and square that are known as very popular and crowded meeting points. Also, members and supporters hired many temporary offices to introduce the HDP and candidates. It is for this reason that they were more likely to come across with the people having grievances against the PKK, the HDP, and the Kurds. Therefore, violent confrontation between these people and the campaign staff has been possible.

When looked at the map of urbanized cities, most of them fall within the western provinces of the country where the vote shares of Turkish nationalists are higher. Contrary to the World Bank 2011 report and Moser (2004), these cities possess lower rates of youth unemployment and higher urbanization rate compared to the eastern cities. At first, I wanted to incorporate the percentage of youth population into my model. However, it was highly correlated with the percentage of Kurdish population. To avoid multicollinearity problem<sup>30</sup>, I opted not to use youth population as an independent variable. Besides, I checked whether ‘the absence of a political authority’ argument works in the Turkish case. Especially, the southeastern provinces, where the PKK pursues its secessionist activities, can be counted as less secure and less stable compared to other provinces. On the contrary, they experienced fewer attacks in comparison to western provinces. In other words, we observe an increase in the number of attacks for the central and western Anatolian provinces. Thus, pro-argument about the state’s non-existence for violence does not work in the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. As a result, urbanized cities that are highly affected by the remnants of the armed conflict in Turkey fostered a significant number of pre-electoral attacks.

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<sup>30</sup> The percentage of Kurdish population is highly correlated with the percentage of youth population at 81%.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this thesis, using socio-economic, historical and electoral determinants, I have explored why some provinces experienced more attacks against the HDP compared to others. Based on the logic of participation in rebel organizations, I have established my theoretical framework with 7 hypotheses focused on the following: the vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties, the number of SFCs, the percentage of Kurdish population, unemployment rate, the level of economic activity, urbanization rate and the level of competition between the AKP and HDP. Quantitative evidence suggests that ethnic conflict in Turkey exerted an overwhelming influence in spurring pre-electoral violence on the HDP, whereas economic grievances have not been a significant predictor of the increase in the number of attacks for a given province. In other words, the spatial variation of pre-electoral violence on the HDP has been explained leaning towards the ethnic-based grievance approach. Equally important follows that urban dynamics produced the most substantive effect as compared with other predictors.

Commenting on the significant role of the ongoing ethnic conflict in Turkey, the findings presented in the previous chapter suggest that the saliency of ethnic differences and traumatic history of the armed struggle between the Turkish state and the PKK surpassed those of the socio-economic determinants except for urbanization rate. In this regard, this will be the first study that links the long-running ethnic conflict to election violence in Turkey. My thesis is a case in point that in-depth studies are needed to investigate the validity of macro arguments about election violence. Studies combining different cases from different regions like the Middle East and Africa will provide a more nuanced understanding of electoral violence. Additionally, by focusing more on

the micro-foundations of this phenomenon, scholars will fare better in accounting for why we come across election violence in some places but not others.

So, why do we not see support for some socio-economic and electoral determinants in the Turkish case? As for unemployment rate, even though Turkey with its all cities suffers from unemployment to a certain extent, the existing rates do not reach the extreme levels that might be conducive to contentious actions. The same applies to the level of economic activity. All other factors being equal, current stagnation may not incentivize to commit violence on the HDP. At this point, my measure might not be a perfect one to understand the role of stagnation which affects the number of pre-electoral attack on the HDP.

More importantly, my data does not show a scintilla of evidence on the relationship between the percentage of Kurdish population and the number of attacks. As the HDP is a pro-Kurdish party, cities with higher Kurdish populations bring more support and votes for the party. In this respect, a possible explanation is that the masterminds of pre-electoral attacks might not be able to attract their potential attackers to organize collective violence on the HDP. People, who have ethnic grievances against the Kurds, may be indecisive about attacking the HDP since a possible attack would be costly in the Kurdish provinces. Strictly speaking, the Kurds living in these cities might retaliate against the attackers for violence inflicted upon their co-ethnics. This is why potential attackers may not comply with the call of violence entrepreneurs. Therefore, the hypothesis related to significant Kurdish population might not yield empirically significant results.

Some scholars point out that the existing armed conflict makes an important contribution to the increases in political polarization and the vote shares of ethnic parties positively (Kıbrıs, 2014) – especially the conflict worked for nationalist parties in the 90s (Tezcür, 2015). Stunningly, empirical evidence throws light on the claim that ideological polarization did not lead to the outburst of pre-electoral attacks against the HDP. At this point, one might argue that the existing dichotomization of voters as the right-left camp did not foment an unrest in the eyes of the rightist voters (AKP and MHP) to commit violence against the HDP in the pre-electoral period. Thus, we might see that electoral competition regardless of ideological polarization might be embedded into the determinants of pre-electoral attacks.

Lastly, a caveat for urbanized cities is as follows. As I indicated earlier, although the HDP conducted a successful campaign across the country, party members and

supporters may not have conducted very effective campaigns in some cities. To put it differently; they might not have shown up in the streets and avenues of these cities. Notably, we do not observe any pre-electoral attack in some of the urbanized western and central Anatolian cities. This is because the campaign performance of the HDP such as opening temporary election offices might play an important role in the spatial variation of attacks. However, analyzing the association between the campaign style of the HDP and the number of attacks falls beyond the scope of my thesis.

Media-based conflict event dataset and the province as my unit of analysis bring out two major limitations that might influence the quality of my results and also my ability to duly answer the research question of my thesis. Although assembling a media-based dataset is a good way of revealing the hard facts of conflict events, the records kept by police forces would provide a more detailed and reliable information about the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. Yet, I could not have access to these archives. To clarify, due to bureaucratic reasons, researchers in the Turkish academia may feel difficulty in reaching the archives including the records of conflict events kept by the general directorate of security affairs or general commandership of the gendarmerie. As such, the best alternative for me was to collect my data from online news.

Secondly, the unit of my analysis might seem to be limited to explain the spatial variation of attacks on the HDP. Alternatively, district (*ilçe*) as the unit of analysis would change the order of significance of independent variables given the existing empirical results. In this way, it might demonstrate other independent variables, which have been insignificant in my analysis, as significant or vice versa. To give an example, urbanization has been a much stronger precursor of the number of attacks on the HDP compared to the other predictors. However, if attacks had occurred in relatively more rural districts of provinces, urbanization could have created the exact opposite situation vis-à-vis the existing results. Unfortunately, due to lack of district-based data on my independent variables like the percentage of Kurdish population per district, I did not have any opportunity to make my unit of analysis district.

So, how could we overcome these limitations in the future? Firstly, computational tools like LexisNexis<sup>31</sup> can provide a more reliable media-based data collection on election violence in Turkey. Yet, online tools that seek to find news on

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<sup>31</sup>This online tool provides researchers and firms with the electronic versions of legal and journalistic documents. For more information, please visit <http://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/gateway.page>

violent clashes in Turkish is yet to be out. In this case, researchers will wait for prospective technological advancements on automated text analysis. Secondly, the conduct of elite interviews with selected politicians, party members, and even state officials might provide more insightful information on the pre-electoral attacks. For instance, interviews with the provincial co-chairmen of provinces like Istanbul or Erzurum which experienced more attacks compared to others can provide important details and enrich our ability to discuss statistical results further.

This study also paves the way for several questions and research venues. Considering the importance of the ongoing armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, future predictions about pre-electoral attacks on the HDP will depend on the fate of the conflict. In the coming local and general elections, we will look at whether pre-electoral attacks will continue to increase depending upon the case of the conflict. If the long-lasting conflict between the Kurds and Turks plays a determining role in the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP, a possible question might be the following: will the HDP make itself disconnected from the ongoing ethnic conflict? A detailed answer to this question is three-pronged: As (i) the party's *raison d'être* is to offer peaceful ways for the resolution of the Kurdish issue and represent the existing problems of Kurds in Turkey; (ii) it plays an intermediary role between the hawks and doves of the Kurdish political movement; and lastly, (iii) it receives considerable votes from Kurdish voters, who sympathizes with the PKK, it appears unlikely that the party will successfully disaffiliate itself from the ongoing ethnic conflict. Secondly, apart from single case studies, comparative studies across different time periods might take place related to the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. Therefore, we will be able to make process tracing analysis while looking for the association between the conflict and the pre-electoral attacks on the HDP. Thirdly, scholars might study post-electoral violence on the HDP and also explore different mechanisms behind the outburst of pre- and post-electoral violence.

Related to the policy recommendation to prevent future violence on the HDP before and after the elections, domestic or international electoral observation teams can mitigate the level of electoral violence by monitoring the electoral process. By these teams, we would have not only signaling mechanisms but also have an opportunity to eradicate leading circumstances for electoral violence. Secondly, the safety of the places where the HDP conducts its campaign should be provided by the security forces like the police or gendarmerie. In particular, in urbanized cities with big populations, security

officers should take more preventive measures while the HDP pursues its campaign activities like grand rallies, election offices, and stands.

**APPENDIX A  
MODEL ROBUSTNESS**

**Zero-inflated Poisson regression model:**

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP
Vote shares of AKP + MHP	1.021 (1.81)
Number of security force casualties	1.004 (2.11)**
Unemployment rate	0.961 (-0.94)
Level of economic activity	1.001 (0.59)
Urbanization rate	1.026 (2.74)***
Percentage of Kurdish population (inflated variable)	0.992 (-0.96)
Level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP (inflated variable)	0.977 (-2.08)**
Province population in ten thousands	0.999 (-0.09)
Number of observations	81
Log-likelihood	-113.042
Constant	0.145 (-1.90)**
AIC	250.084

\*\*\*: significant at  $p < 0.01$  \*\*: significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Z-scores are in parentheses.

Zero-inflated Poisson vs. Standard Poisson	Prob= 0.29 (0.55)
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**Negative Binomial regression model:**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Dependent variable: Number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP</b>
Vote share of AKP + MHP	1.020 (0.014)
Number of security force casualties	1.005 (0.001)***
Unemployment rate	0.949 (0.034)
Level of economic activity	1.0005 (0.001)
Urbanization rate	1.029 (0.007)***
Percentage of Kurdish population	0.994(0.008)
Level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP	0.973 (0.012)***
Province population in ten thousands	1.0003 (0.001)
Number of observations	81
Log -likelihood	-113.935
Constant	0.130(0.121)
AIC	247.871

\*\*\*: significant at  $p < 0.01$  \*\*: significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Caveat: Pseudo R-squared has been 0.18 which shows that 18% of the variation in the number of attacks that is explained by these explanatory variables in the Negative Binomial model. In the case of the standard Poisson regression, Pseudo R2 is 0.35 which demonstrates that variability in the dependent variables has been explained better in the standard Poisson model.

**APPENDIX B**  
**BIVARIATE CORRELATION**

	Vote shares of AKP + MHP	Number of security force casualties	Unemployment rate	Level of economic activity	Urbanization rate	Percentage of Kurdish population	Level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP	Province population in ten thousands
Vote shares of AKP + MHP	1.0000							
Number of security force casualties	-0.3329	1.0000						
Unemployment rate	-0.4960	0.4868	1.0000					
Level of economic activity	-0.1156	0.4430	0.1265	1.0000				
Urbanization rate	-0.6583	0.2749	0.1861	0.4572	1.0000			
Percentage of Kurdish population	-0.6583	0.4198	0.5917	-0.0724	-0.1832	1.0000		
Level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP	0.7037	-0.0381	-0.3768	0.0128	0.2014	-0.5113	1.0000	
Province population in ten thousands	-0.1373	0.5311	0.1724	0.9740	0.5056	-0.0515	0.0189	1.0000

## APPENDIX C

### MHP AS ULTRA-NATIONALIST PARTY

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP
Vote share of MHP	1.023 (0.014)
Number of security force casualties	1.005 (0.001)***
Unemployment rate	0.944 (0.036)
Level of economic activity	1.0006 (0.001)
Urbanization rate	1.029 (0.007)***
Percentage of Kurdish population	0.997 (0.009)
Level of electoral competition between the AKP and HDP	0.986 (0.009)
Province population in ten thousands	1.0003 (0.001)
Number of observations	81
Log-likelihood	-113.933
Constant	0.184 (0.133)**
AIC	245.867

\*\*\*: significant at  $p < 0.01$  \*\*: significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

I have already used Kalaycıoğlu's (2005) work in order to construct a spectrum showing the ideological stances of Turkish political parties ranging from extreme left (0) to extreme right (10) in 2002. However, considering the self-identification of these parties, as is evident from its name, MHP seems to be a genuine Turkish nationalist party vis-à-vis others. It is for this reason that I wanted to subtract the vote share of AKP from the aggregate vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties (AKP + MHP). So, MHP's vote shares in every province have been used to illustrate the effect of Turkish nationalist party on the number of pre-electoral attacks. As a result, this change did not make the vote share of Turkish nationalist party (MHP) statistically significant variable. This is very similar to what I have shown for the vote shares of AKP + MHP in the analyses section. Therefore, it has been reinforced that the vote shares of Turkish nationalist parties (jointly or separately) do not play a determinant role in the eruption of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP.

## APPENDIX D

### ETHNIC PARTY COMPETITION

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP
Vote shares of AKP + MHP	1.008 (0.012)
Number of security force casualties	1.003 (0.001)**
Unemployment rate	0.991 (0.038)
Level of economic activity	1.00006 (0.001)
Urbanization rate	1.023 (0.007)***
Percentage of Kurdish population	0.998 (0.007)
Level of electoral competition between the MHP and HDP	0.986 (0.010)
Province population in ten thousands	1.0008 (0.001)
Number of observations	81
Log-likelihood	-116.502
Constant	0.145 (0.134)**
AIC	251.005

\*\*\*: significant at  $p < 0.01$  \*\*: significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Robust standard errors are in parenthesis.

Although I looked for the electoral competition between the AKP and HDP, I also opted to see whether ethnic party competition, which is between the MHP and HDP, is related with the increase in the number of pre-electoral attacks on the HDP – similar to what Wilkinson (2004) analyzed in the Indian case. This is why I replaced the independent variable about the level of electoral competition with the new variable which shows the level of ethnic party competition between the MHP and HDP using the vote shares from the 2014 local elections. Empirical analysis yielded statistically significant results on the urbanization rate and the number of security force casualties. Contrary to the significant role of the electoral competition between the AKP and HDP in my original model, ethnic party competition did not become an important predictor of the pre-electoral violence in Turkey.

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