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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper aims to observe the role of the Turkish state in conflict resolution (CR). The validity of conflict resolution depends on implementing immediate or time-sensitive measures toward a temporary or lasting solution. The state's conflict resolution roles emanate from the state's capabilities, usage of power, and strategic environment. This paper addresses the following questions to make sense of the role of state in conflict resolution in Turkey: What is the role of state in conflict resolution? What defines this role? In what ways do the state's conflict resolution roles differ in domestic and foreign policy? What are the repercussions of these roles? It concludes that the need for change in the state's CR role is essential and in many ways paramount to the provision of basic public goods such as security and stability. The current approach harms Turkish interests and deprives Turkey of its ability to solve deep-rooted socio-political problems. It would be wise for policy makers to work toward the consolidation of democracy and rule of law in order to set the stage for a more constructive and results-oriented, state-led CR effort in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

In general, states are considered consequential actors in conflict resolution (CR). The binary analysis of success/failure in analyzing CR fails to explain the dynamics behind the state's CR roles. The motivations, persisting attitudes, flexibility and adaptability, and learning process, among others, should be taken into account in order to grasp the dynamics of the state's wider CR role and its conflict transformation capability. In the Turkish case, the fact that the Turkish state is a "strong state" relative to all domestic actors would imply that the state is easily able to settle conflicts. Yet in practice, this assumption is not verified when it comes to addressing major political, social, ideational and ethnic conflicts. This is largely due to the state elite's failure to grasp the dynamics and complexity of CR, which has resulted in the state imposing either co-optation or coercion as exclusive formulas in the domestic arena. More nuanced approaches in foreign policy fail to be implemented due to domestic constraints.

Against this backdrop, this report aims to observe the Turkish state's role in CR. It attempts to address the following questions: What is the role of the state in CR? What defines this role? In what ways do the state's CR roles differ in domestic and foreign policy? What are the repercussions of these roles? This brief underlines the need for change in the state's CR role in order to provide vital public goods such as security and stability. It offers constructive steps toward formulating a political and cultural shift in approaching Turkish CR.

The Turkish state tradition was largely shaped by early modernization attempts that aimed at building a capable state authority. In a continuum, the process of state-building (or nation-building) not only defined the political direction of the country but also shaped the very dynamics of the state system, which eventually gave rise to a modern nation-state. Overall, the patrimonial belief that "the well-being of the society depended upon the well-being of the state"[1] was largely held as a founding premise in Turkish political thought.

This state-centric outlook, having sought to empower the state vis-à-vis domestic and external actors, has given the state elites major if not exclusive roles as agents of change in Turkey. Historically, the leader of the state has had exclusive rights over the realm to the degree of assuming divine authority,[2] which reflexively also elevated the future role of executive leaders beyond the limits of constitutional and electoral politics. Following modernization, the bureaucracy aptly gained an upper hand in duplicating Western reforms and turned into agents of further centralization of state authority.[3] The rise of what has been called the modern administrative state[4] paved the way for centralization and, more precisely, competitive hold of state authority between the political leadership and civil bureaucracy, the latter assuming an expanding, self-assigned role as the guardian of the state.

Owing to the innate populist characteristics of the Republican regime and the ensuing democratizing reforms, popular legitimacy has been a defining element of the system. Therefore, the inherent center-periphery dichotomy[5] in Turkish politics between the ruling strata and the populace necessitated the integration of public grievances in the political system. Policymaking remained a privileged mandate for the state elites, who sustained their hold on state authority in the name of "the state's (supreme) interests." In any case, civil society or pluralistic pressure groups were either

too vulnerable under the state's command or opted to embed themselves in the state apparatus whenever they felt powerful enough to influence policy.

The Turkish state has been largely successful in integrating majority groups into its fold, never turning itself into a post-colonial type minority regime. The early Republican years saw a relatively smooth transition from the *millet* system to the collective identification of the Muslim majority in Turkey as (Muslim) Turks, including major immigrant groups from the Balkans and Caucasia. The founding fathers of the Republic were largely former Young Turks; their immigrant roots were juxtaposed by their elite status thanks to their educational backgrounds in the Ottoman academies. They embarked on a civilizing mission to modernize the Anatolian people with transformative steps towards Westernization and Turkification. Later on, the Republic, in different phases, came to integrate the Anatolian peasantry and Muslim petit bourgeoisie either through urbanization or education. In the end, regardless of their ethnic or rural background, the cultural center defined by the state elites picked up capable and willing peripheral elements, who later on became the stalwarts of the Republican regime either in politics, military, or bureaucracy. Yet, this openness to personal vertical mobility did not amount to integration of peripheral culture into the center. In political terms, a formidable exception has been Islamists and minority groups such as the Kurds, non-Muslims, and heterodox Muslim subgroups, which have been major nuisances for defining an all-encompassing secular Turkish identity.

Overall, the tone of political competition was set by the contest for power among state elites. Against the backdrop of shifting alliances of state elites, elected governments faced the formidable authority of the civil and military bureaucracy. The relative weight of these two major actors defined the autocratic or pluralistic character of the political regime. Unless a strong party/government/leader with ample political legitimacy pushed the political system to its limits, the bureaucratic apparatus shied away from forfeiting its guardian role. With a claim to ideological ownership of the regime, the bureaucracy would also opt to settle for a seemingly behind-the-scenes role in a balance of power setting. Yet, the quest for political hegemony would open up the possibility of autocratic administration, which would again occur either in the form of strong political leadership or uncontested bureau-

1 Metin Heper, "Ottoman Legacy and Turkish Politics," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 66.

2 Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı'da Devlet, Hukuk ve Adalet* (Kronik Kitap: İstanbul, 2016).

3 Metin Heper, "19. yy'da Osmanlı Bürokrasisi," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 245–258.

4 Musa Çadırcı, "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Ülke Yönetimi," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 230.

5 Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 169–190.

cratic regimes. In the modern Turkish experience, the bureaucracy would seek to set the constitutional limits of the system following major political adjustments, i.e., military coups almost every decade, in which the military put binding checks in place and withdrew to its supervisory role afterwards.

The tension between the state elite's centralizing reforms and the periphery's quest for autonomy also determined the cooperative or coercive tone of the relationship between state and society. The Republican ideals of modernizing the nation in a top-down fashion, which at the end of the day isolated Islam as a "backward" belief of the periphery, aggravated the dichotomy between what Mardin called "the bureaucratic center" and "the democratic periphery."[6] Thereafter, Turkish political parties entered into an unending power struggle. With the bureaucracy's unwavering hold on Republican values, above all *laicite* and nationalism, the periphery's "democratic" (or rather, popular) strive for legitimizing its worldview through electoral politics largely hit a wall. A series of military coups under the straitjacket of the Cold War sustained this bureaucratic hegemony in defining the state ideology, hence the rules of the game.

Only in a post-Cold War setting could the periphery take incremental steps to turn around this equation. Beginning with the liberalist reforms of former President Turgut Özal, conservative-nationalist parties vying for peripheral support paved the way for integrating symbols of Islam, more precisely Islamism, into mainstream Turkish politics. On that note, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), along the lines of the Democrat Party (DP) of the 1950s and Justice Party (AP) of the 1960s, made yet another attempt to democratize the bureaucratic center. The party found international backing thanks to a series of favorable developments, above all the EU accession process as well as the post-9/11 international conjuncture. However, against an entrenched political regime, the political struggle did not end up winning consequential electoral support but carried on against military ultimatums, threats of party closure, and alleged coup plans.

Yet, the AK Party's response to this undemocratic resistance has not been exclusively "democratic" as its proponents claim. On the contrary, it committed a cardinal sin to co-opt the unruly elements in the security and judicial apparatus on a common platform to rollback what they called "bureaucratic tutelage."

This diversion to extralegal and in general illegitimate methods undid the AK Party's founding ethos to represent a universal appeal for democratizing the regime. The shaky and unsustainable coalitions working toward mostly short-term goals derailed the party's unique chance to liberalize the system. In the end, rather than solidifying a consensual democratic center, the AK Party came to redefine and own the bureaucratic center on its own terms, especially following the July 15 coup attempt in 2016.[7] With the rise of multivectoral security threats, the AK Party government came to co-opt the security state and chose to coerce centrifugal and oppositional elements, mainly the secularists and the Kurds, into submission.

The major question for Turkey's future conflict map is whether the newly defined center would inadvertently solidify a democratic or rejectionist periphery. The answer to this question would also be telling about the direction of democratic politics in Turkey. In case of a sustained legitimacy problem, the loss of a delicate balance in center-periphery dichotomy could turn Turkey into what Holsti called a "weak state"[8] and push the door wide open for internal conflict. Again, one could reemphasize Holsti's advice to "strengthen (of) the states"[9] to reestablish both the eroding state capacity and political legitimacy in Turkey.

6   Ibid., 186.

7   Bülent Aras, State, Institutions and Reform in Turkey after July 15, Istanbul Policy Center, Istanbul, March 2017.

8   Kalevi J. Holsti, *The State, War and the State of War* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

9   Ibid.

Against this background of political competition in Turkey, the state has assumed definitive conflict resolution (CR) roles in domestic and foreign policy. The variance in tone and methodology stemmed naturally from the differences in jurisdiction and sovereignty rights at home and in the foreign policy realm. Examining the choices of policy makers and their varying roles provides additional information about the principles and mechanisms of the Turkish state's CR efforts. Although the state's CR role is dynamic in nature, state choices rely on deep-seated preferences and necessities and are contingent upon developments in domestic, regional, and international fronts. Turkey's state tradition and national security agenda also prevail in the determination of the state's CR roles.

The state's traditionally predominant role in the domestic sphere is thought to assign it an all-out role in conflict resolution. However, the major determinant of CR efforts is not the conventional role assumed by the state, but the autocratic or pluralistic character of the regime, which is, as explained above, largely a function of the government-bureaucracy relationship. The better the accord between the two, the better the chances of the state's capacity to transform the conflict situation, which would seal the efficiency of CR efforts. The idea behind transforming the situation is to achieve a lasting and participatory solution to the conflict. In case of what was earlier called autocratic administration, i.e., strong political leadership or an uncontested bureaucratic regime, the state is less likely to be open for dialogue, compromise, or integration of public grievances. Therefore, absent the magic formula to create a pluralistic government-bureaucracy-society relationship, the Turkish state's CR role is predominantly defined under the binary choices of co-optation and coercion.

Overall, the Turkish state's defining approach to internal conflicts is to defy and delegitimize peripheral activity. There is a thin line between co-optation and coercion as defining alternatives, since both utilize either threats or means of violence as leverage. Given that political competition is deemed a zero-sum game, the deep-rooted state tradition is intolerant of opposition of any kind. This equation allows no exceptions in times of crisis, and even decent attempts to contribute to CR roles by third parties carry the risk of being construed as undermining state authority. As one media representative underlined: "Although civil society attempts to open a maneuvering space in the political arena, it would only be possible by the will and consent of the state, which is the determinant actor [in Turkey]."[10] In this sense, civil society and citizens are taught to help themselves out of conflict situations within the straitjacket of existing state institutions and boundaries set by the state apparatus.

The state's non-conciliatory CR roles of co-optation and coercion are mainly due to a perpetuated refusal to establish and manage a working relationship with society under an inclusive social order. In theory, co-optation creates opportunity for the accommodation of differences and ideally embeds peripheral demands in relevant institutions. Repression is the state's capacity for coercion. Although the Turkish state has exhibited an integrative capacity in a number of cases, i.e., the Kurdish peace process and the Alevi (Alawite) opening, these attempts did not go beyond tactical steps and played into political exigency rather than symbolizing strategic orientation towards reconciliation. Early hopes at the outset of these CR efforts have turned into further disappointment without substantial improvement to change the conflict situation. Regardless of the initial choice of co-optation or coercion, the state reserves the penal right to criminalize its domestic interlocutors and write them off as non-players in CR processes at any point. On the other hand, the state's incoherent and haphazard application of coercion, together with insufficient capacity for addressing peripheral demands, has resulted in protracted and, in most cases, frozen conflicts in Turkey. Turkish administrations in general and the AK Party governments in particular have demonstrated that they may not prioritize conflict resolution in their political agenda unless the conflicts escalate into a potential threat to survival.

There has been a cycle of securitization and de-securitization in terms of the state's approach to so-called internal enemies. The enemy-threat chain and repudiating peripheral demands is the state's preference—it could almost be considered its default mode. The state's failure to build up societal consent for policies through participation and good governance results in the reproduction of partition (*bölünme*) paranoia and imposing a perpetual mood of

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10 Interview with a media representative by Pınar Akpınar in correspondence with the author, Istanbul, October 17, 2017.

a state of emergency in daily life.[11] Exceptional periods of relative de-securitization result in de-escalation of the conflicts and provide the state relief in its domestic and international CR roles. Such eras of lowered threat perceptions have largely been periods of Turkish realignments in foreign policy to accommodate pressing needs for harmony with the ascending international order. Absent foreign pressures for change or during international periods of upheaval, the dominant mode of a national security state duly sets in. There is no nuanced understanding of conflicts in a healthy and pluralistic center-periphery relationship. This also empowers the unitarian understanding of politics and leads to labeling the opposition as a threat to national security. It is a matter of time before the forces of opposition face reprisals without an objective understanding of either their crime or as to why some entities are exposed to state measures while others are spared.

For the Turkish state, it does not matter whether the conflict is societal, ethnic, or of any other nature. There are no signs of a learning process taking root, considering the fact that the national security state apparatus has sustained a non-conciliatory approach without much success in defusing crises. An orthodox loyalty to the state's traditional CR roles can be seen in the state's attitude toward the Kurdish problem, namely the resuscitation of 1990s policies following a short-lived "peace process." A similar detour from peace to national security measures was witnessed under Özal after he granted some recognition to the Kurds and proposed the prospect of peace. However, after his death the talks on ceasefire and solution were replaced with harsh security measures.[12]

The assumption in the literature on CR is that for states "in a prolonged conflict, learning takes place as changes in beliefs, in behavior, and in policy [occur], due to the extent of time and the variety of events included in this type of conflict."[13] The recurrence of resistance to change and revival of the security state is both structural and cultural. First, it is due mainly to the state's lack of capacity to control various conflict situations backed by institutionalized measures. Fikri Sağlar, Member of Parliament from the Republican People's Party (CHP) pointed out the overlapping attitudes of the ruling AK Party with the post-1980 coup authoritarian understanding of CR. He explains how this led to the exclusion of the Kurds and other peripheral groups and the rise of authoritarian tendencies in politics.[14] The resultant binary approach of co-optation and coercion is far from securing the population's cooperation through enforcing rule of law and building legitimate, reliable institutions.[15] Second, the state does not have a culture of appropriating a strategy of inclusiveness and openness and does not provide any room for integrating peripheral grievances into the political system. This attitude blocks negotiation channels, even if there would emerge an opportunity to co-opt certain groups. Talip Küçükcan, Member of Parliament from the ruling AK Party, challenges this view stating, "Today, there is more opportunity for expressing one's identity (in the public sphere) in comparison to the past."[16] However, even if it is so, the state's domestic CR roles are far from addressing the dynamic nature of the societal, identity, and ethnic conflicts in Turkey.

Societal and non-state actors "strategically navigate the institutional, spatial, and knowledge politics that produce and transform"[17] conflict situations, which go beyond the predetermined worldview of the state's CR roles. Sırrı Süreyya Önder, Member of Parliament from the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) responded to a question about what the state apparatus can do for the solution of Kurdish problem: "What we want from the state is for it to stay away from feeding the conflict for a little while."[18] As a result, the state's strategies fail to produce counter narratives against societal actors, who define the conflict situation and perpetuate their claim outside the purview of the political system. The history of Islamist, leftist, and Kurdish movements epitomize this cycle of repudiation followed by cycles of co-optation or, more often than not, coercion, while only the former Islamists found a way of redefining the bureaucratic center as a result of their later co-optation in the 2000s.

Thus, state employed CR measures have been far from able to provide transitional justice in Turkey, while

11   Interview with Sırrı Süreyya Önder by Pınar Akpınar, Member of Parliament, in correspondence with the author, People's Democratic Party, Ankara, November 21, 2017.

12   Mesut Yeğen, *The Kurdish Peace Process in Turkey: Genesis, Evolution and Prospects*, Global Turkey in Europe Working Paper 11, IAI (May 2015), 3.

13   Rachel Suissa, "Conflict as a Learning Process: States Conflict Versus State and Non-State Actor Conflict," *Defence Studies* 11, no.2 (2011): 325.

14   Interview with Fikri Sağlar by Pınar Akpınar, Member of Parliament, Republican People's Party, in correspondence with the author, Ankara, November 21, 2017.

15   Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004)

16   Interview with Talip Küçükcan by Pınar Akpınar, Member of Parliament, Justice and Development Party, in correspondence with the author, Ankara, November 21, 2017.

17   Sarah Elwood, "Beyond Cooptation or Resistance: Urban Spatial Politics, Community Organizations, and GIS-Based Spatial Narratives," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, no. 2 (2006): 693–708.

18   Interview with Önder.

certain segments of society perpetuate, either actively or passively, polarized and deepening memories of conflict. What comes forward instead is the state's commitment to survival at all costs. This existential approach again sets the stage for the vicious circle of self-fulfilling threats and counter-moves towards a wide range of enemies in the country rather than beginning processes of reconciliation. The state puts forward a power hierarchy through formal means of oppression and expects the obedience and submission of peripheral groups. This also stems from an approach that automatically writes off peripheral demands as inferior and confers the state apparatus a blank check to bend these demands in its favor. The state's superiority complex leads to a dilemma in which the repeated escalation of threats again feeds into perception that these threats are matters of life or death. Although such enemy-threat chains with exaggerated presentation serve to vindicate the national security agenda of the state apparatus, what is most essential is the state capacity, or rather incapacity, to deal with conflict situations in the end.

In contrast to Turkey's traditional cautious foreign policy and non-involvement in third party conflicts, the AK Party era foreign policy has symbolized an era of daring strategies and risks, which have made—albeit haphazardly—use of CR instruments. The ultimate goal of Turkish CR efforts has been to prevent spillover from regional and international crises into Turkey, contribute to peace and security in the neighborhood and beyond, and help alleviate humanitarian disasters around the world including faraway territories in the underdeveloped parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Turkey's immediate threats are transnational terrorism and the global refugee flow, which are international challenges in nature. For this reason, Turkey's international conflict resolution engagements aim to not only contribute to international peace-making mechanisms but also eliminate direct and indirect threats to Turkey.

Diplomacy is supposed to be the major component of Turkey's international CR role. Yet, there are two major impediments before the diplomatic track. First problematic is the increasing overlap of domestic and foreign policy agendas. While the former has overshadowed the latter with the ongoing political transition, both have contributed to the increasing polarization process in Turkey. Second, Turkey's state tradition dictates that domestic security is attached to foreign policy. Thus, Turkey's search for a CR role in the region and international arena takes priority over establishing a security framework for Turkey. Although

Turkey's NATO/Western alliance has traditionally been at the center of its international security orientation, Turkish policy makers have sought alternative alignments dependent on the complexity of security threats. Turkey's engagements in the UN, its search for an international profile in promoting mediation and humanitarianism, and its CR attempts in different geographies have also been directly linked with the domestic urge for gaining moral high ground. As a result of this instrumentalist approach in foreign policy, Turkey's ability to make optimum use of diplomacy in CR efforts has been widely handicapped.

The second CR role of the Turkish state in regional and international relations is peacebuilding/mediation. This role is similar to the role of diplomacy in CR, with humanitarian and NGO dimensions as integral parts of it. This CR role includes humanitarian aid, reconstruction, and capacity-building in conflict and disaster zones in different parts of the globe but mainly in Africa and the Middle East. Official actors have the upper hand and facilitate the work of civilian actors as long as they follow the state line in their humanitarian interventions.[19] This cooperation aims to improve the socio-economic situation in these countries and provides no-strings-attached aid in conflict geographies. This CR role uses Turkey's official and civilian assets to bridge the gap between conflicting sides to alleviate the suffering caused by disasters. Turkey's multi-sector involvement in Somalia epitomizes this role, with actions ranging from mediation between Somali and Somaliland to humanitarian and development aid and construction of the public service infrastructure in Somalia.

Turkey's third CR role is military engagement. Turkey has deployed peacekeeping forces under the UN and NATO mandate to conflict zones like Bosnia, Lebanon, Kosovo, Somalia, and Afghanistan. Turkey has a successful record of peacekeeping missions abroad. For example, Turkey commanded NATO missions in Afghanistan several times. Turkey has also provided military trainings as a contribution to the post-conflict resolution process in an increasing number of countries and has established military bases on bilateral security agreements like in Qatar and Somalia. In the most extreme cases, the last tenant of this CR role is military intervention in order to directly engage with conflict situations. This has been the case in the Turkish military incursion into Syria and continuous operations in Northern Iraq.

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19   Interview with a bureaucrat from Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Pınar Akpınar in correspondence with the author, Ankara, November 23, 2017.

PROBLEMS WITH TURKEY'S CR

The validity of conflict management depends on implementing immediate or time-sensitive measures toward a temporary or lasting solution. As discussed in the previous section, the Turkish state's CR roles emanate from its capabilities, use of power, and strategic environment. However, there are a number of problems in delivering the desired results vis-à-vis conflicts.

First, the Turkish state's resistance to understanding both sides of societal conflicts is the main reason behind the confusion vis-à-vis recent urban riots. Urban demonstrations are seen as a secondary challenge on the state's CR agenda, which often criminalizes, others, and oppresses protestors. For example, the protest of a small environmental group defending the preservation of Gezi Park, a small green area in central Istanbul, after rumors that a shopping mall would be built upon it escalated to widespread riots in major cities in Turkey escalated into a show of the state's use of coercive measures against the protesters. The spillover of the riots across the country, escalation of violence, and deepening polarization were altogether a non-issue in the eyes of policymakers. Interestingly, the rising violence on the side of protesters was used to construct a narrative that enemies of the state were joining their forces to overthrow the Turkish government, and this narrative had been utilized to justify measures against the protesters. This behavior was similarly witnessed during the protests after a deadly explosion in a coalmine in the town of Soma. The worst mining disaster in Turkish history resulted in anger and grief from people in Soma and nationwide. The protests resulted in state-sanctioned attacks against the protestors, the same response as exemplified in other cases where the thin line between co-optation and coercion by the Turkish state were used as means of conflict resolution.

The second problem brought on by Turkey's CR role is the absence of a peace plan under the umbrella of the state apparatus. The violence-prone and often militarized CR methods of the Turkish state dominate the field of conflict resolution, from urban riots to ethnic insurgencies. The state's lack of comprehensive and multifaceted CR roles, to a certain degree, bear responsibility for missed opportunities to pursue a reconciliatory track. This can be seen in the brief period of negotiation between the state and the PKK ending in summer 2015. This so-called peace process found political and social support across the board as many hoped that this process would make the Kurdish problem a matter of the past. Yet, coming to terms with the process was dubious from the beginning. For one, the state elites refrained from calling negotiations with the Kurdish groups a peace process and instead preferred to refer to the process as a "solution process." Some would say that the state lacked concrete plans for peace from the very beginning. On the other side, while the hardliners prevailed among the Kurdish groups in favor of expansion in Syria and terror attacks in Turkey, there was discernible resistance from the state establishment and nationalist groups to tolerate the idea of a possible auxiliary role for both the eminent persons and the Kurdish negotiators.

The narrative of how the negotiations ended is another source of conflict. According to Sağlar, the ruling AK Party exploited its governing position to manipulate the political agenda of transition to elevate its party leader to a strong presidential position. Sağlar argues that the state elites lacked a conclusive peace plan, specifically about the Kurdish issue, and the limited number of peace attempts only served particularistic political agendas in Turkey.[20] Mesut Yeğen, a scholar at Istanbul Şehir University, opposes this view and details the role of mismanagement by the parties, i.e., the AK Party and the PKK, which led to the eventual failure in concluding the peace process.[21] The strong belief in the need to have the upper hand with an aura of superiority vis-à-vis peripheral demands prevented both the government and bureaucracy from taking nuanced steps in conflict management, which reinforced the negative results of the "peace plan."

The deficiency of the state's peace plan is also reflective of a third problem—the lack of institutions in the conflict management process. For example, the Undersecretariat of Public Order and Security (Kamu Düzeni ve Güvenliği Müsteşarlığı) operating under the Ministry of Interior was established in 2010 to strengthen official capacity for conflict management in Turkey. It has, among others, the duty of "informing public opinion through national and international works and gaining public support" for counterterrorism activities.[22] The Undersecretariat organized the Wise People Commission—who were selected with the approval of both the state authorities and to some extent Kurdish groups to popularize and legitimize peace talks

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20 Interview with Sağlar.

21 Yeğen, *The Kurdish Peace Process in Turkey,* 13-14.

22 For more information see, Turkish Ministry of Interior Website, http://www.kdgm.gov.tr/?ax=kdgmalangsmainpage&l=en.

across the broader public—to work all around Turkey in the later months of 2013 and first half of 2014. After the impasse and eventual eruption of violence in Kurdish-majority areas, this institution was sidelined and has not played any conflict management role to date. The second example is that of the General Directorate for Conflict Management and Mediation, which was created by Law 6004 on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010. Despite the critical role of CR in Turkish foreign policy and a number of mediation initiatives abroad, this general directorate of the ministry has not been operational, and the related issues are still being handled by the policy-planning unit. The lack of institutionalization appears to be a direct result of the state's preference to treat conflict management as an overwhelming security issue and strong belief in state's supremacy within the domestic realm. The choices of co-optation and coercion do not require nuanced and institutional involvement. In fact, the state would consider such involvement as a challenge and barrier to the conflict situation. In foreign policy, with growing need for alternative and specialized processes in CR, the absence of institutions in policy making is a reflection of the lack of capacity and expertise on the issues of conflict resolution and mediation.

As a fourth problem, the Turkish parliament has not played a prominent role in conflict resolution in Turkey. Aside from political representation issues due to political party law and electoral thresholds, among other reasons, the major weakness of the parliament is a long-standing characteristic of Turkish political culture. In general, the parliament cannot reach accommodation and consensus even on issues of utmost importance. The Turkish parliament has the potential to create institutional mechanisms to widen the scope and function of state CR mechanisms. Yet the absence of political will, short-term political agendas, contentious political culture, and state elite's dominant attitudes, inter alia, prevent it from playing up to that role. There is a tendency among politicians from different sides of the political spectrum to identify their positions in line with the state apparatus's approach. Therefore, the state elites have had no problem in finding allies in the parliament in their endeavor to pursue a national security first approach in politics. For example, the parliament established a steering committee on peace process in 2013, the Resolution Process Assessment Commission, in order to analyze the ongoing Kurdish process and alternatives for different groups' increased political participation in this process. The Commission consisted of 11 members from the AK Party and HDP. Two other parties, CHP and Nationalist Action Party

(MHP), in the parliament refused to participate in the commission on the grounds that it espoused a separatist agenda and thus stood against national (state) interests. The short-term work of the Committee ended up with a comprehensive and progressive report on the analysis of the Kurdish problem and suggested new perspectives for resolution.[23] The suggestions provided insights for change and adoption of new bills to prepare the legal framework for addressing the Kurdish problem in 2014. Despite these radical moves, relative to the mainstream CR attitudes in Turkey, the parliamentary process did not provide substantial input to the peace process.

Last but not least among the major problems before the state's CR efforts is the eroding constitutional order in Turkey and difficulty in identifying a unifying ethos for political and social stability. Polarization has become the rule of thumb in Turkish politics. Politicians instrumentalized the failing social contract in order to polarize different segments of society and consolidate their electoral constituency. Although social groups largely managed to avoid conflict over differences among each other, political and state elites do not hesitate to magnify and deepen polarization as a means of hegemony and control over the state system and, reflexively, the society as a whole. This motive was largely the case behind the Gülenist attempts for takeover of the state institutions, which ended in the July 15 coup attempt that eventually brought the state to the point of collapse. The Gülenist understanding of politics has been a product of this polarization, which defied all definitions of rule of law and pluralist democracy. The terrorizing zero-sum logic in the end not only undermined the state institutions but also cultivated further mistrust among different segments of society. The poisonous political atmosphere has unwound all elements of the constitutional system in Turkey and urgently entails a broad based reconciliation in order for the Turkish state to weather the growing instability. Haldun Solmaztürk, Director of 21st Century Turkey Institute and a retired Brigadier General, points out the restraining impact of political polarization and resultant all-or-nothing tendencies in Turkish politics. He thus argues that there is no feasible room for constructive attempts for CR under the current political atmosphere.[24]

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23 For the full text of the report see, TBMM, Toplumsal Barış Yollarının Araştırılması ve Çözüm Sürecinin Değerlendirilmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu, Ankara, Kasım 2013, http://tbmm. gov.tr/komisyon/cozum_sureci/docs/cozum_kom_raporu.pdf.

24 Interview with Haldun Solmaztürk by Pınar Akpınar, Director of 21st Century Turkey Institute, in correspondence with the author, Ankara, November 23, 2017.

CONCLUSION

The Turkish state's binary CR approach of maintaining negative peace has fallen short of resolving complex political and social conflicts in Turkey. This paper made a preliminary attempt to depict the state's approach and exemplified general and specific conflicts to demonstrate the state's ingrained preference for either co-optation or coercion. This paper puts forth that this traditional approach, which considers state and society as exclusive interlocutors and builds on the belief that "state interests trump all others," has failed to comprehend that modern and post-modern conflicts are played and resolved before a wider audience of multiple domestic actors and international community with different stakes and priorities. With multiple actors involved the vectors of the conflict are not unidirectional, and even settlements entail multi-dimensional formulas.

As a result, the need for change in the state's CR role is paramount and in many ways essential for the Turkish polity to perpetuate its ability to provide basic public goods such as security and stability. The currently held approach harms Turkish interests and deprives Turkey of the ability to solve its deep-rooted social problems. An alternative approach could, first, change the framing of conflicts away from the "us vs. them" dichotomy; second, engage multiple actors interested in the conflict; third, seek out professional assistance from academia and experts; and last but not least, begin the process of developing institutional capacity in CR. To that end, it would be a wise approach for policy makers to work toward the consolidation of democracy and rule of law in order to set the stage for a more comprehensive, politically and culturally oriented approach to state-led CR efforts in Turkey.