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Book Author(s): Mehmet Gurses
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Introduction

The Kurds, with an estimated population of thirty-five to forty million, are the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, but their division between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria has turned them into ethnic minorities in all four countries. Today, they make up roughly 20 percent of the total populations in both Turkey and Iraq and 10 percent of the total populations in Iran and Syria.[1] Their large, concentrated numbers dispersed across four political boundaries, coupled with repressive and assimilationist policies of the various governments, have resulted in numerous uprisings and rebellions.

Central governments have often labeled Kurdish revolts as feudal disturbances, banditry, or an obstacle on the road to forging mononationalist identities. Kurdish demands for equality have been dismissed as a foreign plot, a threat to the unity and order when they weren't ruthlessly suppressed. In the 1960s, the Syrian security police chief in the Kurdish province of Haseke (Jazira) described the Kurdish question as "a malignant tumor" that required removal (Gunter 2016, 101). The Turkish official discourse maintains that some unspecified "foreign power(s)" is behind the so-called Kurdish question (Guida 2008). Further, in 1987, the Turkish interior minister stated that the only people prepared to call themselves Kurds are "militants, tool of foreign ideologies" (McDowall 2004, 433). Nearly three decades later, in 2014, an official of the Islamic Republic of Iran warned the Kurds of the danger of an independent Kurdish state and accused them of playing into the "enemy's" hands.[2]

The Kurds received especially harsh treatment at the hands of the elites

of the new Turkish Republic. Upon the formation of modern Turkey in 1923, a country home to more than half of the total Kurdish population, Turkey's founding father Kemal Ataturk and his followers, intent on forging national unity around Turkish identity, pursued assimilationist policies and rabidly anti-Kurdish state practices. In order to suppress Kurdish identity and culture, these policies denied that the Kurds were a separate nationality, criminalized the Kurdish language, and diluted the Kurdish-populated provinces through migration. These oppressive and discriminatory strategies continued without respite throughout the twentieth century (Olson 1989a; McDowall 2004; Gunter 2004; Romano 2006).

A series of failed attempts for better status, betrayals, and broken promises has given rise to a widely quoted expression that "Kurds have no friends but the mountains," which have historically served as a refuge against foreign invasion and persecution.[3] A partial list of Kurdish uprisings, all of which were brutally repressed, includes the Kocgiri revolt of the 1920s; the Sheik Said rebellion of 1925; the revolt of Agri Dagh in the 1930s; the Dersim uprising of 1937–38 in Turkey; the Simko rebellion of the 1920s; the 1946 Mahabad Republic of Kurdistan in Iran; the Barzani-led revolts of the 1960s and 1970s in Iraq; and the short, albeit significant, 2004 uprising, Serhildan, in Syria. This bloody and repressive history illustrates the long history of violence surrounding the Kurds (Olson 1989a; 1989b; McDowall 2004; Jwaideh 2006; Lowe 2010).

Today, after surviving a "lost" century of denial and subjugation, Kurds are enjoying a political resurgence in part because of the dramatic changes taking place in the countries in which they reside. Most notably, the collapse of central governments in Iraq and Syria together with Kurdish organizational readiness and fighting prowess has ushered in a growing sense of optimism that the Kurds' time might have arrived.[4] The turn of the twenty-first century, as one scholar put it, has "marked a quantum leap" for the Kurds" (Bengio 2017, 84).

The Kurds in Iraq, who gained official recognition in the 2005 constitution, have not only solidified their gains of the 1990s but have also emerged as a key player in the new Iraq and an invaluable partner of the United States (U.S.) in stabilizing and democratizing the country (Romano and Gurses 2014). The onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, with the ensuing violence and state collapse, brought a hitherto largely unknown group, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat, PYD), to the forefront of regional and global politics.

The heroic resistance of Kurdish fighters from the People's Defense Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG) and the Women's Defense Units

(Yekîneyên Parastina Jin, YPJ), armed forces aligned with the PYD, during the months-long siege of Kobani in late 2014 against the onslaught of the Islamic State (IS)[5] proved to be a turning point for the Kurds in Syria. After months of intense street fighting in this Kurdish town in northern Syria, the Kurdish forces backed by U.S. airpower pushed the IS out and destroyed its aura of invincibility. The Battle of Kobani marked the beginning of a strategic partnership between the United States and the Kurds, an alliance that has become increasingly stronger over the years. It has turned the Kurdish PYD into the United States' most effective and reliable on-the-ground partner in the fight against the IS and a potentially useful force in bringing an end to the ongoing civil war.

The Kurdish forces' competence and tenacity have earned them nearly celebrity recognition in the Western media (Toivanen and Baser 2016). In addition to their military gains on the battlefield, their progressive democratic ideals and practices place them in stark contrast to the IS, a group responsible for horrendous acts including relegating women to second-class citizenship and treating them as sex slaves. The PYD's women units, which make up close to 40 percent of Kurdish fighters and have been compared to the armed Mujeres Libres (Free Women) during the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s (Graeber 2014), were instrumental in pushing the IS out of Kobani in January 2015.

The PYD's emphasis on gender equality along with their calls for a secular, decentralized system in which different ethnic and religious groups might live together in harmony have made the Kurdish-administered cantons in northern Syria a beacon of hope in a region characterized by turmoil and bloodshed (Argentieri 2015; Holmes 2015; Knapp, Flach, and Ayboga 2016; Tax 2016a). One observer describes the emerging Kurdish entity in Syria as "the Syrian force with the most democratic, pluralistic, and feminist vision" (Tax 2016b).

The purpose of this book is to document, assess, and analyze the Kurdish struggle for equality and, more importantly, the role this struggle has played in transforming the Kurdish society, with an emphasis placed on the armed conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK) and Turkey.

The emphasis on the PKK insurgency, as one of the longest and most complicated ethnic armed conflicts[6] in the post World War II era, is justified on two main grounds. One relates to the PKK's impressive resilience and ability to survive and adapt to a constantly shifting environment over the course of four decades. The PKK, which was started by a small group of college students in the 1970s, has survived the Turkish government's

repression as well as the capture of its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999. It has grown into one of the most powerful nonstate actors in Turkey and the region. Through its affiliates in neighboring Syria, Iraq, and Iran, as well as a number of Western countries, the PKK has come to present the most serious challenge to the Turkish state since its foundation in 1923 (Barkey and Fuller 1998; Olson 2001; Somer 2005; Gurses 2015a; White 2015). It has also inspired and influenced groups[7] that have become the United States' most effective on-the-ground partners in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

The other justification is the equally remarkable social and political changes that the PKK has engendered over the years despite an unfavorable environment and culture. This aspect of the PKK deserves elaboration, as it separates the PKK insurgency from other cases that have been the subject of numerous studies seeking to delineate the link between conflict and change.

The PKK resembles such insurgent groups as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)), the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, FMLN) in El Salvador, or the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda, which were characterized by restraint, discipline, and control. The PKK lacks, however, what some rebel movements enjoyed during their often protracted wars: liberated zones. While territorial control ranges along a continuum (Kalyvas 2006), it entails engaging in a variety of governance activities such as providing security, regulating market transactions, meeting the education and health needs of the civilian population, resolving civil disputes, and addressing other social problems that commonly accompany conflict situations (Mampilly 2011, 4).

The administration of liberated territories can have significant outcomes. It provides a base to train, plan, and regroup; it greatly shapes the characteristics of postinsurgent political parties (Lyons 2016); and it allows insurgent groups to develop strong relations with civilian populations and enforce radical social reforms. For example, in Nepal the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the armed wing of the CPN(M), enacted radical social reforms aimed at forging cross-caste alliances and ending caste discrimination practices in several "liberated" villages during the civil war of 1996–2006. "Home entry" programs, which encouraged members of the lowest caste to enter the homes of higher-caste villagers; intercaste marriages; and "forcing" members of different castes to use a single tap, have produced mixed results (Bownas 2015). The control of these territories nonetheless provided the insurgent group with an important opportunity to introduce social change.

The PKK, as a powerful insurgency, poses a serious challenge to the Turkish state's control in the Kurdish countryside (Aydin and Emrence 2015). But unlike the Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka or the NRA in Uganda, the PKK lacks insurgent-controlled territory in Turkey, which has prevented it from developing a comprehensive governance system. In contrast to some civil wars fought against weak or deficient governments, the PKK has engaged in an armed conflict against a strong state with an army collectively ranked as the second largest military force in NATO. Turkey has also largely enjoyed European and American diplomatic, military, and intelligence support in its fight against the PKK insurgency.

Furthermore, this case does not have the prior domestic women's mobilization that was a factor attributed to postconflict women's rights in Uganda (Tripp 2000). It does have an Islamic culture and low levels of socioeconomic development that are negatively tied to developing a democratic culture and secularization (Inkeles and Smith 1974; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Gelner 1992; Huntington 1996). When the PKK armed struggle began in the early 1980s, the Kurdish region of Turkey was largely isolated from the rest of the country (and the world), resulting in a relative backwardness that has not changed over the years.[8] The Kurdish provinces are still predominantly agrarian and among the poorest in the country, resembling what Horowitz terms a backward group in a backward region (2000, 233–34).

The changes described here have taken place in a Muslim majority society often characterized by patriarchy, political submission, and obedience. The traditional Muslim attitude toward politics, as Brown (2000, 60–61) aptly observes, is "pessimistic" and "submissive." The long history of Islamic political thought, Brown points out, has largely resulted in preferring "suffering in silence" to "bringing the matter to the attention of political authority," which has in effect "fostered a de facto separation of state and society." Thus, inaction or the lack of belief in bringing about change, rather than "an affirmation that things can be corrected by group political activity," better describes the Muslim approach to change. Moreover, Turkey is located in a geographical area described as "the patriarchal belt" (Caldwell 1982) or the belt of "classic patriarchy" (Kandiyoti 1988), characterized by strict sexual division of labor, male domination, early marriage, and sex segregation.[9]

Clearly these attributes make this case an unlikely candidate for experiencing the sociopolitical changes described in this book. These developments, however, are noteworthy and point out the consequences of three

decades of armed insurgency. As the PKK evolved, so did the society it claimed to represent and defend. Tactics, ideology, framing, and discourses all changed along with the world and the reality in which the insurgents operated. The outcomes of such a remarkable transformation, the sociopolitical changes that have arisen out of this decades-long struggle, are what this book attempts to explore. Below I first outline a short history of the PKK,[10] followed by the chief social and political consequences this insurgency has engendered over the course of three decades.

The PKK in Brief

During the formative years of modern Turkey (1923–1938), the Kurds failed to forge a state of their own or to redefine their relationship with the Turkish state. This produced a long, coerced tranquility in the Kurdish East. While a number of Kurdish organizations peacefully occupied the political arena throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of the PKK in the late 1970s, along with subsequent armed conflict in 1984, disrupted the outward calm. The government responded by deploying hundreds of thousands of regular troops and special operations forces to the region. The armed conflict peaked in the early 1990s and to date has generated nearly fifty thousand deaths. Following the capture of the PKK's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999, the PKK announced a unilateral ceasefire and sought a negotiated peace settlement with the Turkish government.

While some progress was made in addressing the restive Kurdish minority's grievances in the early 2000s, there was general dissatisfaction with the pace and depth of reforms (Gurses 2010). Furthermore, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 strengthened the ten-year-old Kurdish autonomous region in the North and created opportunities for the PKK to attack Turkish targets across the border. The result was sporadic yet intense armed clashes between the PKK and Turkish armed forces. Ultimately, the unilateral ceasefire came to an end and the death toll quickly reached 167 in 2004, climbing to 349 deaths in 2008. The transborder linkages among the Kurds who live in Syria and Turkey coupled with the onset of civil war in Syria in 2011 complicated the conflict in Turkey. Clashes between the Turkish military and the PKK intensified, resulting in at least 541 casualties in 2012 (Tezcur 2014; Gurses 2015a).

In December 2012, in a renewed effort to resolve the conflict peacefully, the governing Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma

Partisi, AKP) initiated talks with the PKK's jailed leader Ocalan. These talks, in contrast to the PKK's earlier unilateral ceasefires, resulted in a period of calm that was largely observed by both Turkey and the PKK. The ceasefire that began in early 2013, which many hoped would be a prelude to comprehensive peace negotiations, came to an end in July 2015. This has resulted in the bloodiest and most destructive phase of the three-decade rebellion. Intensification of the armed conflict, with the Turkish army laying siege to several Kurdish cities and towns, has produced thousands of casualties as well as widespread destruction of buildings and property, and alleged Turkish military abuses.[11] The surge in violence has ended the peace process and rekindled fears that armed conflict may engulf the entire society and become a full-blown civil war between the two peoples.

Whether the protagonists will answer the calls for negotiating peace has yet to be seen, but the conflict that started in 1984 and peaked in the mid-1990s has had profound effects on the socioeconomic and political fabric of the society. The three-decades-long armed conflict has generated tens of thousands of deaths, ravaged the economy in the Kurdish region, and resulted in a migration of internally displaced rural Kurds to major Turkish cities and beyond.

The Evolving Insurgency

The PKK's evolution started when it parted ways with the Turkish leftist movement, morphing into more of a secessionist socialist organization. With its roots in the Turkish leftist movement of the 1970s, the PKK was formed in 1978 as a clandestine organization with the initial intention of establishing an independent, socialist Kurdish state. This goal was later replaced by "democratic autonomy" aimed at seeking solutions within the existing frame of Turkey. The classical Marxist notions of "class struggle" and "historical materialism" were progressively replaced by such terms as "individual emancipation," "humanization," and "self-production" in the second half of the 1990s (Grojean 2008; also see White 2015). With a focus on developing a pluralist, grassroots-driven democracy, new concepts such as "democratic confederalism" and "ecological democracy" were introduced to adapt to the changing environment in the post-2000 era (Ocalan 2011; for a summary see Leverink 2015).

Since its formation in the 1970s, the PKK has shown a remarkable ability to navigate between the complex and overlapping events of "social

movement" and "revolution," the ultimate goal of which ranges from a policy change to overthrowing the state (see, for instance, Goldstone 1998). While traversing between "revolution" and "social movement," the PKK has, for the most part, acted like a revolutionary movement by violently challenging the regime. At other times, however, it has denounced violence and sought reconciliation with the Turkish state.

The PKK's remarkable transformation resembles Charles Tilly's metaphor of repertoires as "claim-making routines." Tilly (2008, 14), a leading authority on social movements and contentious politics, compares the process of claim making to "jazz and commedia dell'arte rather than ritual reading of scripture." Drawing attention to both the learned and improvisational character of claim making, he concludes that "like a jazz trio or an improvising theater group, people who participate in contentious politics normally have several pieces they can play, but not an infinity. . . . Within that limited array, the players choose which pieces they will perform here and now, and in what order."

The PKK's motive for violence has been in line with the "learned" and "improvisational" character of claim-making routines. The group has primarily been reformist in using violence against the state. Despite its initial goal and the rhetoric of a united socialist Kurdish state, the group has in practice sought to redefine its relationship with existing institutions. It is nonetheless revolutionary in its relationship with the Kurdish society in that it pursues a substantial overhaul in the values, norms, institutions, and circumstances that facilitate or hinder its desired sociopolitical objectives, a process Gurr (1973, 362, 384) calls social change.

Although violence has remained a part of its "repertoire of contention" (Tilly 2008), the insurgency has engendered a number of nonviolent organizations at both the local and national levels. Akin to what McCarthy and Zald (1977, 1219) call the "social movement industry," the PKK insurrection has given rise to a number of political organizations including the Democratic Society Congress (Demokratik Toplum Kongresi, DTK), the Democratic Regions Party (Demokratik Bolgeler Partisi, DBP), and the Peoples' Democratic Party (Haklarin Demokratik Partisi, HDP).

The DTK, an umbrella organization for pro-Kurdish groups, "is not simply another organization, but part of the attempt to forge a new political paradigm, defined by the direct and continual exercise of the people's power through village, town and city councils" (Akkaya and Jongerden 2014, 193). The DBP commands great presence in local governance in the Kurdish-dominated East, and its sister party, the HDP, has been successful

in receiving support from millions of Kurds as well as a minority of Turkish liberals and leftists who lent their support in an effort to check the excessive power of the ruling AKP.

The insurgency has also stimulated a number of women's groups with radical feminist agendas and laid the groundwork for local committees to be formed and for women to effectively participate in their affairs (Acik 2014; White 2015; Gurses 2016). It is worthwhile to note that this grassroots-based sociopolitical paradigm is not only advocated by the pro-Kurdish political parties in Turkey but has also been an inspiration for the aforementioned PYD of Syria to create inclusive local assemblies in parts of the country under its control (Drwish 2016). Thus the social and political changes that the PKK has brought about have the potential to influence the sociopolitical dynamics of rapidly changing Syria and Iraq.

Outcome Variables

What is social and political change? Clearly, these concepts are multidimensional and difficult to define and quantify. I find the following definition provided by Gurr (1973, 362) useful in studying the effects of war on social change: "any collective change in the means or ends of human action," referring to changes in people's values, norms, situations, or institutions by which they organize or are organized for action.

In my application of the term "political culture," following Wood (2003, 219), I refer to attitudes toward different institutions as well as norms of group solidarity and collective identity. Wood's emphasis on "collective identity," defined as "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community," is particularly pertinent in describing the changes in political culture of Kurds as a result of violent conflict.

With a focus on violence committed against noncombatants, I look into the anatomy of a civil war and seek to explore several central questions regarding the social and political legacies of conflict at the micro level. More specifically, do wartime experiences engender positive attitudes toward women? Does exposure to conflict-related violence help forge an engaged citizenry and lay the groundwork for a democratic culture at the micro level? How does civil war help forge a national identity? Does a war between groups that hail from the same faith impact minority groups' relationships with the common faith? Can conflict dynamics facilitate a secularization process?

Plan of the Book

In the process of searching for answers to these complicated and multifaceted issues, I build on the growing literature targeting the transforming effects of civil war on civilian populations. Civil war kills and maims people, destroys the environment, disrupts economic production, and results in massive population displacements. The case studied here is no different. Part I demonstrates the destructive nature of war, ranging from the physical destruction to an array of psychosocial problems, and then to the detrimental effects of war on the environment. I document the dark side of conflict in chapter 1.

In part II, I offer an alternative, integrated theory of war and change that emphasizes the contextual nature of civil war violence along with its consequences. After summarizing divergent explanations and findings on the civil-war-change spectrum, I present an analytical framework that lays out the mechanisms through which social and political changes occur (chapter 2).

Despite the horrific aspects of war, evidence suggests that civil war as a complex event is likely to generate multilayered outcomes. In part III, I analyze these outcomes and examine how exposure to violence during civil war forces active and passive participants to re-examine their value systems. Civil war not only destroys lives and property but also dismantles the patriarchal social structure prevalent in most war-torn countries. Chapter 3 assesses the effects of war on creating new opportunities for women. It addresses the contingent nature of violent conflict and the changing roles of and attitudes toward women.

In chapter 4, I discuss the impact of war on political culture. Examining the democratizing potential of civil war, I argue that the war-democracy nexus is not limited to the macro level. Just as war dynamics have been shown to be associated with postwar democratization at the country level (Wood 2000, 2001; Wantchekon 2004; Gurses and Mason 2008; Joshi 2010; Huang 2016), wartime experiences also engender a democratic political culture at the individual level. Armed conflict often helps articulate social, economic, and political grievances in a society and paves the way for the rise of an activist identity. Next, this chapter examines the connection between war and nation building and its effects on creating a sense of belonging and a common consciousness that makes up an important part of political culture defined above.

In chapter 5, I examine the complicated relationship between civil war and religion. Significantly, this chapter tackles the secularizing potential

of ethnic armed conflicts that involve ethnic groups hailing from the same faith. I argue that ethnic conflict between coreligionists (as in the case of Muslim Kurds versus a government dominated by Muslim Turks) undermines religious ties and reinforces ethnic identities among members of minority group, leading to the rise of a national identity in which religion plays a subordinate role.

In part IV, I turn to the prospects for peace building. Chapter 6 discusses "the way forward" in light of the theories and observations presented in the first three sections. Building on the negative and positive changes of civil war previously discussed, this chapter considers the prospects for a lasting peace in an increasingly divided country and unstable region. I conclude with a summary of the argument and findings.

Research Design

To examine the multilayered outcomes of civil war, this book employs two main approaches. First, I draw on an original survey that documents individual war experiences from the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. The dataset consists of responses from randomly selected individuals from Diyarbakir, Van, and Sanliurfa, three major Kurdish-populated provinces in Turkey. These provinces were selected to represent the Kurdish-populated regions' diversity in terms of socioeconomic development, varying degrees of Kurdish ethnic concentration, and exposure to violent conflict.

Diyarbakir and Van provinces are known for their strong support for the PKK insurgency and pro-Kurdish political parties. These two provinces have been a primary site of the armed conflict between Kurdish rebels and the government and have become destinations for tens of thousands of internally displaced people from the countryside. Sanliurfa province is distinguished from Diyarbakir and Van by its heterogeneous ethnic composition that includes a significant Arab minority and support for center-right political parties. The pro-Kurdish political parties, despite making some inroads in the province, have not been able to win the greater municipality mayoral race in Sanliurfa. In the local elections of March 2014 the governing AKP scored a landslide electoral victory, while the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the predecessor of the aforementioned HDP, won approximately one-third of the total votes. Moreover, Sanliurfa, partly because of a geography unconducive to guerrilla warfare, has remained on the sidelines of the armed conflict that has greatly influenced the daily lives of ordinary citizens in Diyarbakir and Van.

Diyarbakir province has seventeen districts (*ilce*) with each district divided into dozens of smaller units (*mahalle*). These *ilce* and *mahalle* show an important variation. Study participants were selected using a multistage stratified cluster sampling with age and gender quotas applied to obtain a representative sample. Stratification was both appropriate and necessary because in all three provinces certain neighborhoods are known for their strong support for the insurgency and contain many internally displaced families. Baglar district in Diyarbakir, for instance, is a geographical area with frequent violent protests and clashes with the police; however, with its thirty-five *mahalle* and a population of more than 350,000 people, Baglar also displays significant variation. Thus, to ensure that each cluster is adequately represented, with probability proportional to population size, a total of ninety-two clusters (*mahalle*) were selected in Diyarbakir province: thirty-eight in the city of Diyarbakir and the remaining fifty-four from the thirteen rural districts. Participants were then randomly selected from these strata using comprehensive phone directories produced by major telecommunication service providers in the country. A similar strategy was followed to obtain samples from the other two provinces.

The survey was administered by Roni Research, a public-opinion research company based in Istanbul, between June and September 2014.[12] This professional public-opinion company has branches in the Kurdish-dominated provinces. Local teams[13] in each province were employed to carry out the survey. Upon obtaining participants' consent, members of the research teams met with the participants at their homes or at a location of their choice. The research teams conducted 700[14] face-to-face interviews that lasted about forty-five minutes from each of these three provinces, resulting in a total of 2,100 interviews.[15]

Civil war violence can take different forms: direct, indirect, physical, and nonphysical (Kalyvas 2006; Balcells 2010, 2012).[16] Exposure to violence, the central explanatory variable in this study, includes participants' experiences with the arrest, torture, or death of a family member as well as displacement because of the armed conflict. The responses show a high degree of exposure to violence; nearly half of the participants indicated they were exposed. This number for Diyarbakir, as a primary site of the armed conflict, was higher than that of Van and Sanliurfa (57 percent, 45 percent, and 33 percent, respectively).

Nearly 30 percent of the respondents stated that they know someone who was the victim of torture, 31 percent stated that they know someone who abandoned their home, while 12 percent said they fled because of the

conflict. The data also shows that 14 percent lost a family member, 12 percent were arrested, and 8 percent were tortured.[17]

These numbers are in line with findings from another study conducted in 2010. According to this nationwide survey, which also included Diyarbakir and Sanliurfa along with three other Kurdish-dominated provinces, 13.5 percent of the respondents that resided in Kurdish-populated provinces abandoned their homes and about 18 percent had a family member who died or was wounded because of the conflict (KONDA 2010). Thus, notwithstanding concerns and questions regarding survey data, these statistics confirm the assumption made earlier about a high prevalence rate and provide evidence for the sample's representativeness.

Clearly, the survey data provides a snapshot of changes the war has engendered. While the overall picture out of this large sample of 2,100 individuals is revealing, it might fail to capture the longitudinal aspect of the changes described here. These developments are likely to be a result of wartime traumas acquiring meaning during protracted conflicts and turning those traumas into valuable experiences from which significant sociopolitical changes arise. To provide further evidence for the mechanisms through which exposure to violence during civil war facilitates a cultural change, I conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with dozens of individuals whose lives were affected by the armed conflict. These lengthy interviews help infer valid causal inferences between key explanatory and outcome variables. The interviews took place over a few years, during which I took several field trips to Turkey, Canada, and Belgium.[18]

Interviewees were selected through nonrandom purposeful and snowball sampling[19] of a diverse group of people that included ex-combatants; civilians who were detained, tortured, or forced to flee their homes for their suspected links to the PKK; family members of PKK militants/supporters who sought refugee status in Canada and Belgium; and many others who have never been arrested, yet grew up in the conflict zone. I contacted pro-Kurdish political parties' local branches in the Kurdish region of Turkey to identify individuals who have been displaced or exposed to other forms of violence. I also relied on personal contacts to conduct face-to-face in-depth interviews with selected individuals and families at their homes. This enabled me to better observe changes in attitudes as well as behavior toward women. In Canada and Belgium, I primarily relied on Kurdish associations in these countries to identify potential interviewees.

As already mentioned, the primary focus of this book is to contribute to the literature on how wartime experiences facilitate sociopolitical

change. In joining others (e.g., Tripp 2015; Huang 2016), the arguments advanced in this study are aimed at enhancing our understanding of the war-change spectrum. They are not meant to glorify, promote, or condone violence. Using the case of the PKK in Turkey, an unlikely candidate for such change, I aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the war-change connection. The questions addressed in this book are not of academic significance alone. This is a particularly pertinent question at present, given the division of the Kurds between four countries of great geostrategic importance and the dramatic changes taking place in the region.