WAITING FOR THE PEACE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PEOPLE WHO
LOST FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE CONFLICT IN THE SOUTHEAST AND
EAST OF TURKEY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

DECEMBER 2009

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

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December 2009, 124 pages

This thesis aims mainly to understand the dynamics behind the way in which people who lost family members in the conflict in the Southeastern and Eastern parts of Turkey between the years 1993 and 2006 are positioned as oppositional to each other. It inquires whether their common grief of loosing someone in the family might enable them to act collectively and to ask for peace in Turkey. How are they represented as oppositional groups despite their common grief? Why do they consider each other as belonging to the "other side"? How does this kind of representation prevent them from coming together and asking for a peaceful termination of conflict in Turkey? In discussing these questions, the concepts of peace, violence, security, inequalities, terrorism, religion, martyrdom, ideology, and hegemony are drawn upon. Galtung's approach to peace is taken as the general framework. Moreover, martyrdom is considered as key concept that interlinks the other concepts as interviewees conceptualize them.

Keywords: Peace, Conflict, Kurdish Problem, Hegemony, Martyrdom

ÖZ

BARIŞI BEKLERKEN: TÜRKİYE'NİN GÜNEYDOĞU VE DOĞUSUNDAKİ
ÇATIŞMADA AİLE BİREYLERİNİ KAYBEDEN KİŞİLERLE
KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Yüksek Lisans, Sosyoloji

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof.Dr. Yakın Ertürk

Aralık 2009, 124 sayfa

Bu tez temel olarak Türkiye'nin Güneydoğu ve Doğu bölgelerindeki çatışmada 1993-2006 yıllarında aile bireylerini yitirmiş kişilerin karşıt gruplar olarak konumlanmalarının arkasındaki dinamikleri anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Aile bireylerinin ölümünün yarattığı ortak acı bu kişilerin ortak hareket etmelerine ve barış talep etmelerini sağlayabilir mi? Bu kişiler, ortak acılarına rağmen nasıl karşıt gruplar olarak sunuluyorlar? Neden birbirlerini "öteki taraf" olarak düşünüyorlar? Bu tarz bir sunum onların bir araya gelmelerini ve Türkiye'deki çatışmanın barışçıl olarak bitirilmesini talep etmelerini nasıl engelliyor? Bu soruları tartışırken, barış, şiddet, güvenlik, eşitsizlikler, terrorizm, din, şehitlik, ideoloji ve hegemonya kavramlarına değinildi. Galtung'un barışa yaklaşımı genel çerçeve olarak alındı. Şehitlik ise diğer kavramları birbirine bağlayan ve katılımcıların bunları kavramsallaştırdığı anahtar kavram olarak görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Barış, Çatışma, Kürt Sorunu, Hegemonya, Şehitlik

To all who suffer from conflicts and inequalities.... With a hope for a peaceful world...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In September 2006, I visited my friend at his house in Yenipazar in Mersin, the inhabitants of which are mostly Kurdish people who migrated there in the 1980s. We were watching the evening news, which dealt to a large extent with the armed conflict between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the *Mehmetçik*[1] in the rural area of Şırnak. As usual when news of martyrdom is presented in the media, the images of families of martyrs crying after the sudden death of their sons were projected on the screen. As people are accustomed to "usual" martyrs' families being mostly from the lower classes, the exhausted impression of the families in the funeral of their sons and the composition of their poor houses, which lack many equipments and facilities, were also shown. All this was to prove the devotion of the family of the soldier. The message of such TV shows is that despite of suffering from harsh economic conditions, these families devote their sons to the sake of the nation.

I was accustomed to this kind of representation of families of dead TAF soldiers. However, what made me think again about the conflict in Turkey and possible ways for its resolution was the reaction of the mother of my friend when she watched the news. She was an old, illiterate, Kurdish woman who migrated to Mersin from Siirt 20 years ago, had ten children, and lost one of her sons in a tragic traffic accident. She had many relatives and neighbors whose sons or daughters joined the PKK. She did not speak Turkish, so she was unable to completely understand the news and the words of the family portrayed.

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[1]The word *Mehmetçik* derives from the male name *Mehmet*, which is a common male name in Turkey and used for the brave men in the Turkish military. But the connotation of *Mehmetçik* goes beyond that. The term is defined as the name for the soldiers with a sympathy towards them (Dictionary of the Institute of Turkish Language (www.tdk.gov.tr)).

Nevertheless, the Turkish language that she could not understand did not prevent her from empathizing with the mother crying on the TV screen. She also started to cry and utter something in Kurdish. I asked my friend to kindly translate her words to me. She had said: "I wish nobody lost their children, I am sorry for all of them".

This was like a film scene in which people from completely different segments of society with different backgrounds were crying about the tragic outcomes of a conflict that had caused many young people to die. This kind of simultaneous grief of people seemed noteworthy in terms of thinking about possible ways for a peaceful resolution. When the family members of the soldier spoke about their grief, they emphasized how much effort they had placed in raising their son and how they had tried to keep him away from any kind of danger. I assumed at the time that the mother of my friend had many similar memories of her son who had died some years ago. It was their common pain, created by the loss of a family member, which made them cry. Thus, this common pain may potentially provide a basis for families of the two sides of the conflict to come together for joint action for peace. This idea motivated me to explore the extent to which the experience of common suffering shared by the families of TAF (Turkish Armed Forces) soldiers and PKK militants can serve as a bridge to unite the opposing sides for a common cause.

Esra Gedik (2008),who wrote her masters thesis on the mothers of TAF soldiers who died in the armed conflict in the East and Southeast of Turkey, focused on the self-perception of these mothers as "mothers of martyrs" and their self-transformation after the sudden death of their sons. This is a very important study for two reasons. First, it is based on the narratives of mothers who are directly affected by the outcomes of the armed conflict in Turkey. Second, it shows the effect of militarist and nationalist discourse on the identity formations of "ordinary" people. Özlem Aslan (2007) focuses on the Initiative of Mothers of Peace and examines how their motherhood is marginalized since their sons or

daughters are considered "terrorists". She questions the assumption that the universality of motherhood is sufficient for gaining popular support for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Orhan Miroğlu (2007) worked on the narratives of women whose sons or daughters were PKK members and died in the armed conflict. These studies mainly focus on motherhood and attempt through this to understand identity construction, perception of violence, and conflict in Turkey. Besides, the work of Ortadoğu Tarih Akademisi Kollektifi (Collective of Middle East History Academia) (2006) should be mentioned. This collective works with people whose family members died in the armed conflict. Rather than focusing on motherhood or identity construction, it tries to read the armed conflict in Turkey through the life-stories of these people. Furthermore, Berat Günçıkan's (1996) study, which entails a focus on political activism originating from the loss of a family member, needs to be mentioned in the context of this thesis. The study focuses on the Saturday Mothers who gathered every Saturday in front of Galatasaray high school in Istanbul to ask for the whereabouts of their family members who disappeared under custody.

Selek (2004), who has examined peace initiatives and movements in Turkey since the 1960s, analyzes associations such as Barış Derneği, Türkiye Barışseverler Cemiyeti, Türkiye Barış Derneği in regard to their approach to nationalism, militarism, violence, and wars. According to her, the attempts of these associations were very valuable insofar as they challenged Turkish state authority and developed an oppositional discourse. However, they did not question militarism and nationalism. Besides, since they did not oppose the use of violence and all wars – they distinguished between unjust the wars and just wars – Selek states that these associations failed to create a new language for peace. While the activities of these associations were banned by the state, after the 1980s some of the activists tried to reshape the peace movements. In the 1990s, with the emergence of the Associations of Anti-War and the İzmir Savaş-Karşıtları Derneği, peace movements started to question the use of violence, militarism, and nationalism. In

this context, Selek argues however that there was a lack of feminist analyses of patriarchy. This is an important problem for her, since she expects peace movements to understand the dynamics of violence and militarism better on the basis of such an analysis.

While thinking about the contribution of grassroots peace initiatives to the peace-building process, Cockburn's (2007) book Mesafeyi Aşmak Barış Mücadelesinde Kadınlar (The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict) inspired me. Her study is on women peace activists in conflict areas. She analyzed the Women's Support Network in Northern Ireland, Bat Şalom in Israel, and Medica in Bosnia. As Cockburn argues, the women in these three organizations come from different ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds, but they make an effort to act collectively without erasing their differences. The other common feature of these groups is their objective to show that the notion that "we cannot live together" is just a myth.

Besides these organizations discussed by Cockburn, there are other organizations initiated by peace activists, some of whom are people who are directly affected by armed conflict and whose family members died in the conflict. For example, the Parents Circle Families Forum is an organization founded by Palestinians and Israelis who lost family members in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This forum believed that "to move beyond silent despair and isolation, people must begin talking again-especially with people on the other side" (Barnea and Shinar 2005: 496). In order to enable people from different sides of the conflict to communicate, they initiated a "Hello Peace" project and provided a phone line to make people talk with each other across the two sides. Another example is the group Women Making Peace. In 1997, it initiated a Reunification Exchange program between North and South Korea. This program makes women from North and South Korea meet and help each other with the aim of reducing the antagonism and tension between both sides (Prasad 2005: 517). The Nansen Dialogue Network, studied by

Bryn (2005), was founded in Norway and initiated by the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer. It has nine centers in Kosovo and seeks to "empower people who live in conflict situations to contribute to peaceful conflict transformations and the promotion of human rights" (Bryn 2005:488).

The Mothers of Plaza del Mayo in Argentina, although not a peace movements as such, is important for two reasons in the context of peace movements. First, it is a grassroots organization initiated in 1977 by mothers and wives of men who had disappeared who had never taken part in any public action before. Second, their activism became an example for other non-violent groups in Latin America (Agosin and Frazen 1987). Besides the Mothers of Plaza del Mayo, Agosin and Frazen (1987) wrote about other non-violent organizations founded by women in Latin America. For example, women formed the Asociation de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (Association of the Detained-Disappeared) in 1975 in Chile and the Grupo de Ayuda Mutual (Mutual Aid Group) in Guatemala in 1979. Both groups were founded mostly by housewives who wanted to find their family members who had disappeared.

Guelke (2005: 89) wrote about people who suffered in armed conflicts and lost their family members but do not ask for revenge since they know that it would cause more tragedy. He argues that this kind of attitude towards the loss of family members has a reducing effect on reprisals and massacre. In that regard, Kaufman (2005) moreover emphasizes the importance of dialogue between the parties in times of conflicts, especially in the realms of civil society and unofficial contacts. According to him, such dialogue has the capacity to advance conflict resolution efforts.

In the light of all these valuable studies, I listened to the life stories of people whose family members died in the armed conflict in Turkey and searched for the possibility of a collectivity that may generate a common peace discourse for a

non-violent solution of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. I conducted interviews and visited *Şehit Aileleri Dernekleri Federasyonu* (ŞADF- Federation of Associations of Families of Martyrs) and Ankara Cebeci cemetery in order to reach the families of deceased TAF soldiers. For meeting families of PKK members, I went to Diyarbakır to contact the *Barış Anneleri İnisiyatifi* (Initiative of Mothers of Peace) and to Adana to contact PKK members' families through the reference of *Barış Anneleri İnisiyatifi*. I conducted thirty in-depth interviews. Seven interviews were held in Kurdish with the help of an interpreter since the interviewees could not speak Turkish.

In this study, the termination of armed conflict in Turkey is discussed on the basis of the concepts of peace, violence, security, and social inequalities. After the chapter on the field and method of this study, the concept of peace is also discussed in relation to concepts such as violence, conflict, security, and social, political, and economic inequalities. Discussing peace in this light is necessary since sustainable peace can only be achieved on the basis of a social transformation that eliminates conflicts and possibilities for conflicts (Galtung 2007). Relying on Galtung's theory, peace is understood as the absence of violence which prevents people from accessing resources equally and realizing their own potential. Furthermore, the concept of violence is brought into focus and Galtung's typology of violence, which includes direct, structural, and cultural violence, is discussed. It is argued that these different forms of violence prevent people from accessing resources equally and from fulfilling their own potential. As Marx argued as well, conflicts form part of struggle that is the product of inequalities among human groups. Thus, the elimination of social inequalities appears indispensable for conflict resolution and for a peaceful settlement. However, as mentioned in the second chapter, the dominant approach to conflict resolution prioritizes security concerns. Within this approach, social, political and economic inequalities are ignored. Instead, the aim is to eliminate the "evil" side of the conflict in order to attain peaceful resolution. Moreover, peace is regarded

as a means for security. In this kind of approach, the sides of a conflict are represented as "just" or "evil", and the elimination of the evil one is taken as the only way to terminate the conflict (Galtung 1969). The violent methods used for eliminating the "evil" are legitimized and normalized through cultural violence. This discussion leads us to Butler's (2006) questions: "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And finally, what makes for a grievable life?." In the light of these questions, it is argued that the marginalization of one side of the conflict and its demands creates more problems. In this sense, the elimination of the "evil" side does not provide sustainable peace in which non-violence and the potential for violence could be attained. Therefore, rather than defining one side as "evil" and eliminating it in the conflict, peace should be approached from a more holistic perspective. That is, a peace-oriented approach should aim at social transformation for removing violence, the potential for violence, and inequalities among people in terms of accessing resources.

Subsequent to this discussion, the Kurdish problem and the conflict between the TAF and PKK are brought into focus. The study shows that this armed conflict is generally perceived from of a security-oriented approach by the mainstream society. Within this context, PKK and pro-Kurdish activists are considered as the "evil" that is to be eliminated for the sake of security. The violation of the human rights of these activists as well as of the Kurdish population in the Southeast are legitimized culturally and politically. These human rights violations are regarded as necessary within an agenda of counter-terrorism. Although it is commonly acknowledged in the literature that the terrorism can be used as a method by individuals, groups of people, as well as states (Köker 1994, Webel 2007). The anti-terror law of Turkey defined terrorism as activities that challenge the regime and authority of the Turkish state. Thus, Selek (2004) argues that the violence of the powerless is represented as terrorism whereas the violence of the powerful is presented as fight against terrorism.

While the Kurdish problem, which is the underlying reason of this armed conflict, is reduced to the problem of terrorism by the Turkish state, the demands and needs of the Kurdish people are marginalized. According to Beşikçi[2], everything related to Kurdishness, such as the Kurdish language, literature, or clothing, is banned and suppressed. Yeğen (1999) argues that this problem is represented as "something other than it is" and the Kurdishness aspect of the problem is ignored by the Turkish state. This representation of the problem creates a feeling of being excluded and ignored among Kurdish people in Turkey.

As mentioned earlier, the main research question of this study concerns the possibility of collective action between families of dead TAF soldiers and PKK members due to their common pain of loosing a family member in the same armed conflict in Turkey. In order to understand how these families give meaning to their pain and how their narratives on the death of their family members differ, the concepts of hegemony and ideology are used. Starting from Gramsci, the concepts of hegemony and ideology are discussed through the arguments of Althusser, Laclau and Mouffe, Thernborn, Sancar, and Eagleton and Larrain.

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[2]Beşikçi, who is not ethnically Kurdish, has become a powerful and important symbol for the Kurds and for the human rights movement of Turkey. For many years, Ismail Beşikçi was the only non-Kurdish person in Turkey to speak up in defense of the rights of the Kurds (Bruinessen 2009). He suffered from legal sanctions due to his academic studies on the Kurdish population and Kurdish question. In 1971, he was on trial in military commissions martial law courts and fired by his university. Throughout his life, he has been imprisoned eight times for 17 years in total due to his ideas and studies on the Kurdish issue. There is still pressure on social scientists who study or talk about the Kurdish problem in a manner incompatible with official state ideology. For example, Göral, who was a lecturer at a university in Turkey, was not assigned the academic position she deserved due to her ideas on the Kurdish issue. She had talked in a TV program about the human rights violations committed against Kurdish people in Turkey and criticized the state's violent methods. Subsequently, the university she worked for declared that she was not qualified for the academic position that she had applied for because " [she] cannot contribute to students' loyalty to Kemalist nationalism and fulfill the mission of enabling students to acquire consciousness of national unity (http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetay&ArticleID=958179&Date=08.10.200 9&CategoryID=77&ref=bulten). Thus, even social scientists do not have freedom of expression on the Kurdish issue, as they are exposed to sanctions of the state. Consequently, there is a lack of academic research in this area.

After presenting a framework on peace and conflict and the armed conflict between the PKK and TAF to analyze the narratives of families of dead TAF soldiers and PKK members, the concept of martyrdom[3] is discussed in the chapter on "Representation of Self-sacrifice in Turkey". This part of the study also serves to present a slice of the lives of families of TAF soldiers and PKK members. The notions of the state, religion, PKK, and oppression by the state are chosen since the interviewees mostly construct their narratives on the conflict between the PKK and TAF as well as martyrdom through these concepts. Since martyrdom etymologically refers to "witnessing" and since this concept plays a role in illustrating which side is considered "evil" and which one "just", the discussion of martyrdom is crucial in the context of armed conflict in Turkey. In brief, two groups of families consecrate martyrdom and talk about martyrdom in order to show their "rightfulness" as well as the "cruelty" of the oppositional side. Thus, it can be argued that the use of martyrdom also serves to prove the legitimacy of one side of the conflict. As Cook (2007) argues, since the martyr is accepted as the witness of the rightfulness and faith of the cause for which s/he sacrifices his/her life, s/he becomes an instrument for a belief system in order to persuade people of its rightfulness. As this study shows, while the families of dead soldiers take Islam and loyalty to the state as their reference points for martyrdom, the reference points for families of PKK members are the PKK and oppression by state. Thus, both sides use the notion of martyrdom, but define it in relation to different concepts.

First, martyrdom is examined through Islam, since the concept takes a huge place in this religion and also because families of dead soldiers of TAF refer to Islam in their narratives about martyrdom. Second, the notions of ideology and hegemony are introduced in relation to the construction of those families as the "families of

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[3]I abstained from using the word "martyr" during the interviews because the connotation of this word is ambivalent. Moreover, since the families did not regard the deaths of the other side as martyrdom, using this term could have endangered the impartial position of the researcher. Throughout this study, the concepts "TAF soldiers" and "PKK members" are used in referring to these two groups. I chose these expressions because the families used them for their children.

martyrs" on both sides and in their self-perception. In addition, these two main concepts will be brought into focus in order to examine their articulation by opposing "sides" of the conflict. However, the main concern of this part is to explain how people are persuaded of the "legitimacy" of killing someone for the sake of a "sacred" body and of being killed in the same conflict. It is argued that families of TAF soldiers start to talk about martyrdom and armed conflict through Islam, while questions about the martyrdom of PKK members makes them rethink this and refer to the state and the loyalty to the nation. Taking Cook's (2007) argument that martyrdom plays a role in persuading people of the rightfulness of a belief system into account, the concept of hegemony seems crucial in this process.

In the chapter on the families of PKK members, the narratives of these interviewees are situated within the framework of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. In this context, the human rights violations against Kurdish people in Turkey as well as the social, economic, cultural, and also political inequalities that Kurdish people suffer from are touched upon. These inequalities and human rights violations make Kurdish people, especially families of PKK members, feel being excluded and ignored. It is clear from their narratives that they suffer from all these since they are Kurdish, however this aspect is always neglected in the state perspective on the Kurdish problem (Yeğen 1999). Besides, the bias of the Turkish state to reduce this problem to the problem of terrorism exacerbates the marginalized position of families of PKK members and makes their demands more illegitimate.

It should be acknowledged that interviewees among the families of PKK members mostly talk about their experience with the Turkish state, which they claim suppresses and oppresses them violently. They also define martyrdom through the struggle against the "evil". This conceptualization of martyrdom is not so different from the way that families of dead soldiers define it; however, for the families of

PKK members, the evil is the Turkish state. For them, to be called martyr, a person has had to be oppressed and killed in his/her struggle against this "evil".

In the discussion of the armed conflict in Turkey and the Kurdish problem through the narratives of families of TAF soldiers and PKK members, AKP's (Justice and Development Party) Kurdish opening is discussed. It is argued that in this context some changes occurred in the state's official ideology, which denies the existence of the Kurdish people. The most concrete signifier of this change is the Kurdish broadcasting state TV channel, TRT 6. It should be acknowledged that this opening of the AKP government creates some hope for a peaceful solution to the armed conflict and a viable atmosphere to speak about the Kurdish problem. However, these attempts can also be considered a project on part of the AKP to create its own "Kurds" and to recreate Kurdish identity in a manner which is compatible with the present political system. Nevertheless, as was mentioned during the Barış Konferansı 2009, this viable atmosphere for discussing the Kurdish problem can constitute a chance for grass root organizations such as Mothers of Peace, NGOs, peace activists, and oppositional groups to advocate a peaceful and non-violent resolution of the armed conflict between the PKK and TAF.

Finally, as a conclusion it is claimed that negotiation between the sides of this armed conflict in Turkey is inevitable for a peaceful settlement of armed conflict. Reinforced by militarism and the security-oriented approach, the elimination of the "evil" side - in this case the PKK - has been seen by the Turkish state as the only solution for ending the armed conflict. However, rather than seeing security as ultimate aim and considering peace as a means, the peace is to be the ultimate aim (Galtung 2007) and it is to be attained through non-violent methods. While the negotiation between sides of the conflict is indispensable for establishing peace, it is claimed that the possibility of coming together and of emerging with a common will for peace is inhibited by discourses and ideologies which position

these two groups of families as absolutely opposing sides. However, when people have the chance to discuss the Kurdish problem somewhat more freely, the fact that these two groups of families suffered from the same kind of pain as an outcome of the same conflict should be emphasized. In that sense, grassroots movements, peace initiatives, NGOs, oppositional groups, journalists, and academics may collaborate in publicly announcing that people for years suffered from the pain of losing family members in the same conflict and advocating for a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict between the PKK and TAF in Turkey.

CHAPTER 2

The Field and the Method

2.1 The Research Problem

This research focuses on the families of TAF soldiers who died in the armed conflict between the PKK and TAF and on the families of PKK members who have joined the armed struggle, some of whom have also died. The problematic of this research is to understand why these families, despite their common pain of having lost a family member, fail to unite, act collectively, and ask for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

2.2 The Research Thesis

It is difficult but not impossible to construct a bridge between these families which are represented politically as antagonistic groups. Their commonality consists in their experience of pain in face of the loss of a loved person, a loss that is framed as "martyrdom." However, at the same time, these families are articulated by different ideologies and discourses, and their identities are reshaped and organized around them. These ideologies may constitute the main obstacle for the collaboration of these families on equal terms.

There are many authorities who claim principal responsibility for solving the "PKK problem," such as the military, parliament and political parties, whereas families of soldiers are seen as victims and excluded from taking part in politics and families of PKK members are represented as the families of separatist terrorists. This situation prevents families from recognizing their common experience and from engaging in the problem-solving process. While one group is presented as families in tears who are under the protection of the state, the other one is considered to be families of terrorists having failed to raise their sons and daughters properly. It can be argued that a hierarchy is created between these

families from the perspective of state ideology, presenting the sons of one group as the killers and those of the other one as sacred martyrs of the homeland. As a result, families of TAF soldiers are predominantly represented as the poor victims of terrorism who are removed from politics, while families of PKK members are marginalized through this representation. Thus, they are all kept from finding solutions for the conflict and ignored as if they, regardless of their differing representations, had not been the ones suffering from this conflict for 30 years. Against this exclusion of families from the war and peace policies, families must urgently come together on the basis of their common grief and pain. They must state their position against the armed conflict in order to prevent the continuation of deaths of young people in Turkey. Despite the ideologies that interpellate these families, which deepen the opposition, difference, and hostility between them, commonalities in terms of the pain of having lost a loved one should be emphasized in order to make them engage in settlements of peace.

2.3. The Aim and Significance of the Research

The decisions on armed conflict and peace are always taken by the high authorities who are not usually directly affected by the outcomes of their decisions. While they are doing their jobs, it is the masses who bear the consequences of their decisions and policies. For example, in Turkey in a high school history textbook, one can find the names of the emperors, kings, and commanders who led the armies or signed the agreements, whereas there is no track of the existence of those individuals directly exposed to the actual results of these decisions and policies.

For thirty years, many decisions have been taken by the authorities of the Turkish Republic and the PKK; however, many soldiers and PKK members pick up the bill in loosing their lives in the conflict. As these people die, their parents continue to suffer from the conflict and mourn their children. One aim of this research is to

make the voices of the ignored subjects of this conflict heard as they are excluded from the decision-making process. Beside the general views of the state, TAF, and PKK on the Kurdish question and the conflict, the perspectives and experiences of the families whose sons or daughters died in the conflict should be heard, and it should be shown in which ways their pain is similar in order to open ways for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

The main significance of this work is its focus on the narratives of people who have been directly exposed to the effects of the conflict: the families of the soldiers of the TAF and of members of the PKK. In line with principles of qualitative research, which is based on text and writing –from field notes to descriptions and interpretations and to the presentation of the findings of the research (Flick 2007) -, the main sources of data on which this study is based are the narratives of interviewees and the field notes of the researcher. While there have been a number of good studies in the context of this particular conflict between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state, most of them deal with the position of the state or of the PKK as an institution and with possible ways of overcoming the PKK. However, the actors who are directly exposed to the unwelcome outcomes of the conflict are missing in most of these works. Thus, in dealing with the conflict in Turkey, the voices of the people at the bottom are not heard, whereas the voices of the authorities enjoy dominance. This absence conceals the destructiveness of the conflict and represents it as if it were removed from the daily lives of people. Thus, as Sirman(argues,

> stopping the war means diminishing the voices of war. These voices are very loud and also dominate the other voices of the people at the bottom of the social hierarchy…..If we listen to those people, we hear about concrete processes. In their words, we cannot hear abstract words such as "development, population, immigration, mortality rate," which are disconnected from the daily life and function for governing. When those voices talk about death, they say 'I was setting the table for breakfast and suddenly…' They talk about the daily meaning of death. But other [dominant] voices ignore those

> voices and claim that these are so emotional and fail to realize
> the truth.
> (http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=HaberYazdir&
> ArticleID=948797)

The originality of this work thus consists in the fact that, besides touching on the positions of the Turkish state and PKK, it focuses on the "people at the bottom" who suffer from the existence of the conflict. It examines how they are articulated by ideologies which construct an identity of a "family of a martyr" for them and also inhibit the possibility of a collectivity among the families from the two sides of the conflict.

2.4. The Research Site

This research focuses on the families of soldiers who died in the conflict between the PKK and TAF and of members of the PKK who died, are missing, or are still alive. My sample covered the families of soldiers who died between the years 1993 and 2006 and the families of PKK members who participated in the PKK in the same period.[4]

The primary data for this study are the narratives of these families obtained in thirty in-depth interviews. Nine of the interviewees were mothers and six were fathers of TAF soldiers, while one of them was a wife of a TAF soldier. Besides, eight mothers and three fathers of PKK members, one wife of a PKK member, and one son and one brother of a PKK member were interviewed.[5] Seven interviews out of thirty were conducted in Kurdish with the help of an interpreter, since these interviewees could not speak Turkish. The minimum duration of an interview was

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[4] However, the sample also includes one son of a PKK member who left his family in 1983 and died in 1985.

[5] The classification of interviewees according to their kinship relation with the family member who participated in the PKK is somewhat problematic, since in most of the families there is more than one PKK member. Consequently, a person could be classified as father as well as as brother or cousin of a PKK member.

half an hour and the maximum duration two and a half hours. Most interviews however took approximately one hour. I conducted the interviews from mid-December 2008 through February 2009.

For contacting the families of TAF soldiers, I visited the ŞADF. During my first visit, the head of this federation, who is a retired soldier as well as a father of a soldier, greeted me in a very friendly, kind and sincere manner and promised to help me in networking with the families of martyrs. Possibly, the fact that a daughter of teachers was interested in the "families of martyrs," for whom, it is assumed, nobody cares, made a good impression on him. Although it was our first meeting, he immediately made a phone call to a mother of a dead soldiers of TAF to plead her to speak with me, and we arranged a meeting at her house the following week. His reaction might be attributed to his perception of me as innocent and in need of help for her "homework," and most importantly, as close in terms of class status, because similar appearance and way of speaking and clothing indicated a daughter of a middle class Turkish family. He told me that he was intentionally introducing me to this particular mother since we could easily develop a good relation, given that she had been a teacher for a limited period of time just as my parents. My interview with her at her house gave me the impression that she is the "screen" of the organization, in the sense that the latter could be sure that she would give acceptable answers and that her narrative would be compatible with state ideology and the perspective of the organization. She knew well "how to speak" with a person asking about martyrdom, how to avoid "unacceptable" words on the state and the military. She was replying to questions about the political life and the role of the military in Turkish politics by saying: "It is up to our state and military, nobody should say anything, nobody should interfere in the affairs of the TAF, all is to be decided by them." Besides, when compared to other mothers, her story as well as her house indicated that she had a high economic status. Furthermore, she had been the only female person among the constitutive board of ŞADF. However, after having worked several years, she decided that this work was not suitable for women anymore and left it to men. She

was quite experienced in giving interviews and knowledgeable of studies, documentaries, and even TV programs focusing on martyrs. A day after our meeting, as she had proposed, we went to the cemetery where I encountered most of the mothers together. Going to Cebeci cemetery with her as well as her efforts in introducing me to the other mothers was an important opportunity for my study, because it allowed me to contact other families of soldiers and to build up a relation based on confidence. She made the process easier for me, since she persuaded some mothers to speak with me in order to "help a student in completing her homework given by the professors." After I had conducted two to three interviews, explaining myself and persuading other mothers to speak with me became much easier. Furthermore, except on the 18th of March, the Day of Martyrs, it is strictly forbidden for journalists to enter Cebeci cemetery and interview. Although the place is open to everyone, the entrance of press is forbidden by the Turkish General Staff, as I was told by the mothers, due to some experiences in previous ceremonies.[6] As a newcomer to the place carrying a tape recorder, I ran the risk of being perceived as a journalist and of being kicked out. Once I was questioned by a soldier who made his regular visit to the cemetery. When he and other employees of the cemetery realized that the mothers were content with me and that I was not likely to create a "problem", they let me free to conduct my research. During the soldier's questioning, the behavior of the mothers was worth observing; they expressed their good impression of me and told him that they consider me their daughter, so there would be no problem caused by my interviews.

In the period from mid-December 2008 through February 2009, I visited ŞADF more than 10 times and the cemetery on five or six Fridays when most of the families got together there given that it is a holy day by for Muslims. The cemetery constitutes a place for social networking for the families and especially for the

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[6] This point will be touched upon in later chapters of the thesis.

mothers. The fathers were mostly getting in touch at the office of ŞADF, where they were involved in affairs like keeping contact with institutions, greeting the visitors, organizing social activities, and accounting. Although the mothers regularly go to ŞADF, they do not take any responsibility seen as male activity, as fathers constitute the major visible "community" of the place. Thus, the place was like a public sphere for men, like an ordinary coffee house in which mostly retired old fathers come together, drink tea, read newspapers, and watch TV.

In turn, the cemetery in Cebeci, especially on Fridays, was a space reserved for mothers (and some wives), despite the fact that it is not surprising to meet some fathers there. It is not unusual to see a woman on each bench of the cemetery, reading some religious pieces, praying, or chatting with others. There was just one building for the administration with a room for visitors. Depending on the weather conditions, mothers and wives met in that room, prayed together, drank tea, etc. Although there were no definite or written rules, men could not enter. This absence of men combined with the existence of children, so that the room functioned like a "private sphere" of the cemetery. Thus, I contacted the wives and mothers of soldiers in the cemetery and interviewed them either at their houses or in the cemetery, whereas the fathers were contacted and interviewed in the office of ŞADF.

In order to reach the families of PKK members, I first contacted the group of Mothers of Peace in their office in Diyarbakır. It was possible to meet many of the mothers since they had a work chart which showed who is available at the office at any time. Contrary to ŞADF, the office was a place of mothers in which men were rarely seen. I spent a week with them at that office, staying there the entire day. In that way, I had the chance to interview six women and to get a general view of their organization. The women I interviewed were quite eager to speak with me, and it was obvious that they were familiar with expressing their ideas publicly on the Kurdish question, martyrdom, the TAF, and so forth. This might be a result of the fact that these women had actively taken part in political movements since their

early ages, and it was not the first time that they were asked about their children and "ideological" issues.

Since families of PKK members could scarcely get information about their sons or daughters and were usually informed of the death of their children some years after the fact, it was hard to categorize them as families whose son or daughter had died or was alive. Thus, in this study, the families of PKK members, whether their sons or daughters are dead or alive, are covered together and are referred to as the families of PKK members.

The site of Diyarbakır where I started to interview mothers of PKK members is unique in two senses. First, as mentioned earlier, it is one of the cities in which the mothers of PKK members are organized, have an office, and actively participate in political life under the name of Mothers of Peace. Second, the majority of Diyarbakır's population consists of Kurdish people, and there are many pro-Kurdish activists and organizations in Diyarbakır. Since the narratives of the families are situated within the framework of discourse on martyrdom and peace in the Kurdish movement and the ideology built around these concepts, this situation of Diyarbakır enriched the study.

Beside Diyarbakır, I also interviewed families in Adana through the reference of the members of Mothers of Peace. I chose to go to Adana because Mothers of Peace in Diyarbakır offered me this opportunity, since I could find many families of PKK members there due to the fact that many Kurdish people migrated there. The families of PKK members in Adana are not organized under Mothers of Peace as was the case in Diyarbakır, however, most of them lived in the same district of Adana called Şakir Paşa Mahallesi and known as a district for migrants. Moreover, despite of the absence of such an organization, both the mothers and other

members of the families were keeping close contact with the DTP (Democratic Society Party)[7] and took part in the Kurdish Movement.

2.5. Research Method

As the previous discussion showed, this research used the snowball technique for sampling. This technique is a method that "yields a sample based on referrals made by people who share or know others who present the characteristics that are of research interest" (Biernacki P, Waldford D. 1981 cited in Lopes, C., Rodrigues L., Sichieri, R. 1996). As Bailey (1994:96) mentions, snowball sampling is useful for the study of groups where respondents may not be visible and routine sampling procedure may be impractical. In fact, in the case of this study, it was hardly possible to prepare a sample of families of PKK members other than using a snowball technique, due to the absence of any accessible records of those families.

In contrast, it could have been possibly to select interviewees among families of soldiers randomly after requesting a list of these from the municipalities. However, for two reasons I decided to also get in touch with the families of soldiers on the basis of the snowball technique. The first concerns the consistency in sampling. Since using a technique other than snowballing seemed impossible for the families of PKK members, I needed to use it for the families of soldiers as well in order to use the same way of communicating for both groups. Second, contacting families directly rather than through a formal institution would make our communication closer and more sincere and direct. It was obvious that my going to their association and contacting them there and at the cemetery enabled them to accept my request to speak. Since they had the chance to get to know me directly, they spoke more freely.

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[7] The DTP is mostly voted for by the Kurdish population in 2009. It had 98 majors and 21 parliamentarians.

During the interviews, I used a semi-structured questionnaire which consisted of a set of concepts on the basis of which I could lead the conversation and let the interviewees talk freely within the framework established. Prominent concepts among these were martyrdom, self-sacrifice, homeland, political participation, the Kurdish movement, patriotism,TAF, religion, state, the PKK, the Kurdish question, oppression, grief, collectivity, solution, terror, and peace.

In this study, the tracks of ideology and hegemony are followed in the narratives of people. It is examined how these people reconstruct and make sense of the death of a loved one by referring to a set of ideological values which they perceive as absolutely legitimate. The background understanding is that power is not limited to the army, police forces, parliament, and courts, but rather is a network dispersed in all parts of our lives, words, and behaviors and diffused in the "capillaries of daily routines" (Foucault 1979). This way of looking at power in relation to ideology informs the study of the articulation of mourning practices by ideology in both groups of families.

It can be questioned whether the findings of this study can be generalized. Since the study is not based on quantitative research, it is not possible to show the frequencies of findings and compare them to the population in general. However, as Schoenfield (2002) claims, qualitative research does not usually aim at generalizability and sometimes even rejects the latter altogether or gives it low priority. This tendency is linked to a different goal of qualitative research, namely, "to describe a specific group in fine detail and to explain the patterns that exist, certainly not to discover general laws of human behavior" (Schoenfield 2002: 201). Moreover, Denzin (1986), who also rejects generalizability as aim of a qualitative study, states that "every instance of human interaction represents a 'slice from the lifeworld'" (cited in Williams 2002:130).

In that sense, even the narrative of a single interviewee has value, even though it is not so possible to generalize the data collected through in-depth interviews. In light

of these arguments, this study aims less at generalizability than at finding patterns and examining the narratives of the interviewees in detail.

2.6 The Position of the Researcher

According to Flick (2007: ix), the position of the researcher is an important part of the research process "either in terms of their own personal presence as researchers, or in terms of their experiences in the field and with the reflexivity they bring to the role" in qualitative research. Thus, it is important to note that my position as a researcher in conducting interviews changed considerably depending on who I was speaking to. Despite the fact that I introduced myself in the same way to both groups of families, I was perceived differently by each. The families of soldiers saw me as a student who strives for completing the requirements of my graduate program, whereas for the families of PKK members I was a "messenger" who would listen to their problems, carry them to the authorities, voice the pain of these families and the "grief" of Kurdish people, and show their "suppression."

The families of TAF soldiers were hopeless about their situation and did not expect anything from academic studies. For them, as will be developed in later chapters, the solution for the armed conflict in Turkey was the execution of Abdullah Öcalan. Despite their efforts and demonstrations, they saw their desires ignored up to now. Since they recognize no solution apart from the execution, which is not performed, they declare that they lost their hope. They do not think that their voices are not heard, since they appear on TV and are invited by politicians and general staff. Rather, they complain that the authorities do not fulfill their desire that Öcalan is to be executed. Although they say that they have no hope left, they let me interview them in order to help me and also to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings.

The families of PKK members similarly felt that their desires and needs were ignored. The point that differentiates them from the families of soldiers is that they were not hopeless, but had a great deal of expectations from anyone approaching them. It was obvious that they were in need of expressing their grief, exclusion, suppression, and the control exercised over them. Contrary to families of TAF soldiers, they cannot make their voices heard. They are labeled as "families of terrorists," and their requests for meeting with authorities such as the general staff were rejected many times. Instead of "helping a student to complete her study," they wanted to participate in my research in order to raise their voice. For example, Salih, whose daughter joined PKK at the age of sixteen, said: *"Everybody should know about what happened to us and talk about it in the universities. Academicians have great responsibilities to announce the pain of Kurdish people to everyone."*

2.7. Limits of the Study

It is crucial to be careful about the limits of this research. First of all, the fields were Diyarbakır, Ankara, and Adana, all of which are prominent cities in their geographical regions in Turkey. In Adana and Diyarbakır, there were many families of PKK members. They did not live in an isolated way and usually had a social network and political atmosphere to express themselves. This was also the case in Ankara for families of soldiers, since they come together frequently, have organizations, and collaborate. It could be argued that families of soldiers or PKK members in small cities or even in villages where they cannot communicate and share their grief with similar families would express their experiences and perceptions in a different way.

Whether an interviewee has the possibility to be together with other families who share similar experiences of loss of a loved one is a very important aspect when assessing her/his narrative. This is because these families - of soldiers and of PKK

members - feel themselves very close to others in a similar situation of loss. Moreover, their perspective towards the armed conflict between the PKK and TAF is mostly shaped in their own community, where they were socialized. Since my research question aims at "common experiences," it was crucial to speak with people who had socialized among others sharing the experience of having lost a loved one.

Second, and probably most importantly, for the researcher it was nearly impossible to reach the families who do not perform "acceptable" forms of behavior in terms of the conventional perception of families of soldiers as well as of PKK members, because they are usually not included in the community. For example Families of soldiers were talking about mothers who did not like receiving and hosting the military personnel that held regular visits at their homes on particular occasions. Such families were mostly excluded by other families of soldiers and also did not want to be members of ŞADF and participate in ŞADF activities. Moreover, members of ŞADF think that families who do not behave in an "acceptable" way harm the other families of dead soldiers. As Türkan, a mother of a soldier, explained:

> I could not understand some families. Nobody visits them, but they [military staff] visit them at Bayrams. But they reject them, "we do not want you and your present". The military contact each of us; however, nobody else visits us. Even the state only sends a letter of condolence. When the soldiers come here [the cemetery], these people [say] "why did you kill our sons?". Now, the journalists are not allowed to come in because of those families' inappropriate behavior. Only on 18th of March, they are allowed if they can get the permission. They alienate the military in that way.

The families who showed disapproval of the military were out of reach in this study since they were not active members of the ŞADF or not members at all, and also did not take part in the network of families of soldiers or participate in the occasions held by the military or by ŞADF.

On the side of the families of PKK members, it is quite usual to hear about but not to reach the families who were keeping distance to the Kurdish movement and did not want to take any active role in it. These families were the "unreachable families" of the families of PKK members. I asked the Mothers of Peace as well as other interviewees in Adana whether or not it was possible to reach and contact the families of members who did not keep in a touch with the Kurdish movement. According to their response, since the "unreachable families" were trying to cut their bond - if there used to be one - and kept away from the politically active families due to "security reasons," it was not a good idea for me to reach them through the reference of Mothers of Peace or other interviewees in Adana. Since it was impossible to learn their addresses from a legal institution, only way to reach them was again through the Mothers of Peace or other families that were politically active or at least closer to the Kurdish movement. Thus, because there was no possibility to reach them and because they even blocked communication, I could not try to interview such families.

Although this second point illustrates in which ways this study is restricted in terms of the composition of the families and the existence of "excluded and unreachable" families, this situation reminds of a very critical point about the formation of "acceptable" forms of behaviors for the families of a lost loved one. The inclusion and accessibility of interviewees as well as forms of "exclusion" and impossibility to establish contact are meaningful in terms of understanding ideology and discourse.

CHAPTER 3

Rethinking Peace in the Context of Inequalities, Security, Violence, and Conflict

Human needs are numerous. Humans beings are intrinsically motivated to make a better living for themselves. In order to survive, they need to search for food and shelter. In this respect, human beings strive to change their environment. Among human necessities, survival is probably most prominent; there is nothing more important than survival in a human being's life. As Rover (2003: 133) states in reference to Maslow's famous pyramid of human needs:

> Human beings seek food, shelter and security in that order. Only after their initial and basic needs have been fulfilled will individuals seek opportunities for development in terms of career, self-establishment and personal development.

Marx sees production for the purpose of meeting human needs as the first historical action. While humans are the agents of history, for them to make history, they first have to survive (Marx 2008: 52-3). Hence, it can be argued that the need of surviving precedes all other human needs and also becomes the motor of human civilization.

In turn, we are familiar with reading human history through the lens of wars and conflicts. As Sontag (2003:74) claims, in modern expectations and ethics, wars are considered deviations although they cannot be stopped, whereas peace, although it is unattainable, is regarded as if it represented the rule of human life. However, throughout history, peace has come to be an exception whereas war is the rule. "In the last 3.421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war" (Durant & Durant 2006:2). At the end of wars, states or groups are called losers or winners. However, regardless of such results of wars, their most obvious outcome is human casualty and destruction. For example, 16.5 million people were killed during the

First World War (including civilians). But the destruction caused by wars is not limited to the deaths of civilians and soldiers. Families are fragmented, people suffer from the great pain afflicted by these deaths, and many of them also suffer from strong traumas. The violent atmosphere of wars produces fear in society. In addition, wars cause the decrease in living standards of people. Recovery in the post-war phase, reducing and curing human trauma and compensating for the losses brought about by war, is a lengthy process.

> It is for sure that I do not say that all things that make people unhappy are caused by the wars, but let me say, most of those are about the wars. Wars are the death warrants of people. Wars are the death warrants of the land on which we live. (Kemal 2007:27)

3.1. Defining Peace

As wars mean mass destruction of human life, peace has always been among humanity's highest values - for some, its supreme value (Rummel 2009). Just as wars accompany human history, so does people's search for peace. But what is peace?

While humans call for peace in order to terminate wars, peace cannot be defined only through the absence of wars and conflicts. The times when there is no visible conflict or war may not be a state of peace, because the absence of open conflicts and wars does not always denote the absence of potential for violence. For example, armament facilities of groups and especially states in "peace" times can be considered the most visible potential for war.

According to Johan Galtung's leading peace research, peace should be studied in its relation to social justice/injustice, inequality, violence, and conflict. In Galtung's conceptualization, peace is to be understood as the absence of violence which prevents people's equal access to resources and fulfillment of their own

potential. Thus, peace is not the absence of war, as versions of conflict due to social injustice and inequalities may prevail at different levels even when there is no open confrontation.

For some scholars, conflicts are a stimulus for the establishment of a more peaceful situation. For example, Marx defined history as the "history of class conflicts" and saw class struggles as the motor of history. In his conceptualization, conflicts are the inevitable direct outcomes of structural inequalities between human groups (classes). However, these conflicts will lead humanity towards greater equality in the distribution of resources and ultimately towards a communist society, where there will be no conflict since there is no structural inequality. In addition to Marx's perspective on conflicts, Webel (2007:8) emphasizes that the "good faith" of parties in conflict can have a positive effect on developing possibilities for peace:

> Conflicts may, perhaps paradoxically, promote and increase peace and diminish violence if the conflicting parties negotiate in good faith to reach solutions to problems that are achievable and tolerable, if not ideal.

Rather than on the absence of conflicts, the focus is thus to be on the absence of open or potential violence, since threats of violence can also be considered violence. In its basic sense, violence is dependent on human vulnerability and entails "avoidable insults to basic human needs" (Galtung 1990:292) preventing people from satisfying their needs. Violence, at different levels, can cause the death of people and destruction of life spaces as well as bar access to resources.

> Violence is surely a touch of the worst order, a way a primary human vulnerability to other humans is exposed in its most terrifying way, a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, a way in which life itself can be expunged by the willful action of another. To the extent that we commit violence, we are acting on another, putting the other at risk, causing the other damage, threatening to expunge the other. (Butler 2006:29)

3.1.2 Galtung's Typology of Violence

Galtung distinguishes between direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence, which, despite their differences, should be taken into account together due to their interdependence.

In the direct form of violence, means of realization are intentionally and directly destroyed by a definite actor (Galtung 1969). Actions that can count as direct forms of violence can go far beyond killing people in large numbers or destroying their living spaces. Since there is an actor who commits violence intentionally, this form of violence is also called personal violence.

When the actor of violence is not apparent, we talk about structural or indirect violence. This type of violence includes systematic ways in which people are prevented from meeting their basic needs through social structures and institutions. For Galtung (1969), the origin of structural violence can be found in a social formation in which resources are unevenly distributed. This violence appears as unequal power which determines the uneven distribution of resources (Galtung 1969:171) and thus of life chances. Although structural violence is not directly targeted at killing people and although there is no specific actor intentionally committing violence, the result can be the systematic death of human beings. For example, Petra Kelly (1984) highlights the unequal distribution of resources especially in health facilities and illustrates the potential effect of those inequalities in causing the death of people in large numbers. Moreover, she argues that people systematically die as a result of structural violence, although it does not require much to eliminate these inequalities and increase life chances:

> A third of the 2,000 million people in the developing countries are starving or suffering from malnutrition. Twenty-five per cent of their children die before their fifth birthday […] Less than 10 per cent of the 15 million children who died this year had been vaccinated against the six most

> common and dangerous children's diseases. Vaccinating every child costs £3 per child. But not doing so costs us five million lives a year. These are classic examples of *structural violence*. (Kelly 1984:11-2)

Besides preventing people from satisfying basic needs, such as nutrition, safe living conditions, and accessible health facilities, structural violence can also occur as denial of the existence of a specific culture or ethnic group, for example by prohibiting them to keep their cultural values. People who are not allowed to speak in their native language, to wear their ethnic clothes, or to establish their own literature are structurally prevented from enjoying their own potential.

Structural violence cannot be dealt with independently from direct violence. In fact, they are highly interdependent. Although structural violence is different from direct violence, it inevitably creates conflict and often direct violence. As Galtung (1969) notes, in both cases individuals have the risk of being killed or mutilated, hit or hurt. While structural and direct kinds of violence are strongly interdependent, cultural violence appears as the sphere in which these two types of violence are justified. Galtung (1990:291) defines cultural violence as follows:

> By cultural violence we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence –exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)- that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.

It can be suggested that the most invisible and also overlooked type of violence is committed in the cultural sphere, whereas its invisibility does not denote the absence of violence. While the outcomes of direct and structural violence cannot be ignored due to the fact that they often lead to the death of people, the violence committed in the cultural sphere both encourages and justifies the other forms of violence. Following Kurtoğlu (2009:5), the existence of violence can thus be grasped by examining whether there are structural inequalities and cultural justifications for these rather than the existence of direct violence.

To sum up, conflicts are the outcomes of different kinds of violence, while violence means preventing people from equal access to resources and fulfillment of their potential. From this perspective, the elimination of social inequalities appears as indispensible for conflict resolution and peaceful settlement. However, within the dominant approach to conflict resolution, the problem of violence and conflict is seen in relation to the security concerns of states rather than the elimination of inequalities at various levels.

3.1.3. Security versus Peace

In the UN Charter and other international documents, the issues of peace and security tend to go hand in hand. Indeed, since they are taken as so close a union, one suspects that they would be lost with each other. It is usually assumed that whatever increases international security also makes the world more peaceful, and conversely, that whatever leads to peace also provides security (Dower 2003:997). Despite the "dangerous" unity of those concepts, approaches towards conflict resolution and peaceful settlement differ in the sense of their focus on either peace or security. As mentioned earlier, in the policies and literature on terminating conflicts, the approaches that focus on security enjoy dominance, whereas focusing on peace challenges this mainstream approach.

3.1.3.1 The Focus on Security

In the framework of approaches that give priority to security in conflict resolution and peaceful settlements, the problem is defined by determining different sides of the conflict and by characterizing one side as "evil" and to be "deterred and eliminated" (Galtung 2007). The focus for the termination of the conflict is then on the elimination of the evil side rather than on the violence that is created by social,

political, and economic inequalities. The "evil" is seen as a danger that has the capacity and potential to destroy and act violently. The existence and capacity of this evil side are assumed as evident, so that it becomes necessary to immediately and absolutely deter or eliminate it. In order to do so, the other ("good") side should be as powerful as possible. Therefore, the security approach presupposes superior strength, implying superiority based in inequality (Galtung 2007: 24). In this perspective, it is believed that security will bring about peace. In that way, security becomes the main goal of conflict resolution.

In this approach to conflict situations, one side is represented as evil, while the other side(s) present themselves as "just" and "legitimate". The binary representation of the different sides as "just" or "evil" requires a process of persuasion. In order to appear as "just", a side of the conflict has to persuade the masses of its rightfulness and of the evilness of the other side and in this way appear as the only legitimate power with the mission to destroy or eliminate the other side for the benefit of the people. Thus, the "just" side claims the legitimate right to use violent methods. Such a process of legitimization of one side and marginalization of the demands and necessities of the other side(s) may possibly go along with the legitimization of existing inequalities as well as with the use of violent methods in terminating the conflict. Both the existence of inequality and the violent methods of one side in the conflict are legitimized in the cultural sphere, that is, through cultural violence in Galtung's terminology.

The representation of one side as "just" and the other as "evil" can be considered an attempt to establish hegemony. As will be discussed later, hegemony is established through the use of both coercion and consent mechanisms. For hegemony to be maintained, people are to be persuaded of the rightfulness of the hegemonic power and to consider a set of values and beliefs of these hegemonic powers as natural. The prominent feature of hegemony is the persuasion of people of the legitimacy and rightfulness of power. Violence committed by the hegemonic

power is seen as "legitimate" by the masses of people; it is believed that violent methods are used only for the "evil" ones. Butler (2006: 59) regards the coercion mechanisms and violent methods of the hegemonic power as a necessity of governmentality that serves to construct "others" as evil and dangerous:

> They are, rather, part of the apparatus of governmentality; their decision, the power they wield to "deem" someone dangerous and constitute them effectively as such, is a sovereign power, a ghostly and forceful resurgence of sovereignty in the midst of governmentality.

The legitimization of using violence against the "evil" is situated in the cultural sphere, as mentioned earlier. In this context, the lives of "others" become dispensable and cannot be mourned. When the lives of "others" are attributed less importance, their death is deemed less sorrowful. It is assumed that they already deserve the violent actions of the "just" side.

> I propose to start, and to end, with the question of the human.... The question that preoccupies me in the light of recent global violence is, Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And finally, what makes for a grievable life? (Butler 2006:20)

Butler's questions are crucial in the context of this study in relation to the notion of cultural violence and the persuasion of masses of the binary opposition in conflict. As mentioned, the dominant approach to conflict resolution marginalizes the demands of one side and ignores the inequalities that give way to the conflict. The people on the "evil" side are considered to be not as "human" as the people on the "just" side. I argue that in the context of this study, this binary opposition of the conflicting sides is crystallized in the concept of martyrdom.

 As will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, the word martyr means to "witness". In its broader sense, the martyrs die for God, religion, the nation, land, or a political struggle, and they are a witness of the faith in the cause they die for. For Cook (2007), the concept of martyrdom constitutes the most powerful form of

advertisement since "it communicates personal credibility and experience to an audience." Martyrs sacrificing their lives for a cause demonstrate their strong commitment to that cause and also witness give a testimony of the faith in their cause. Thus, it can be suggested that, through the bodies of martyrs, the hegemonic power advertises its creed faith either in using violence or in taking a side in a war. Martyrs are represented as the brave sons who sacrificed their lives in order to eliminate the "evil". Since they struggle against those who have the capacity to behave violently – or presently use violent methods – the bodies of martyrs are so important. At the same time, they symbolize the faith in the use of violence by the hegemonic power.

In order to be called a martyr, it is not sufficient to die for a cause - one should also form part of the "just" side. On the other, "evil" side, those who die in the conflict are not seen as dead humans; in Butler's words, their death is not grievable. In this dominant representation, it is impossible to call their death martyrdom. Their reasons for participating in the conflict are not taken into consideration. They are seen to deserve the violence they are exposed to; thus, the violence exercised by the "just" side appears entirely legitimate.

In brief, while direct violence and structural violence go hand in hand, the inequality and injustice that are the origins of the conflicts are hidden in security approaches. As these approaches are dominant, it seems that the binary opposition between the just and evil sides and the violence used by the just side is legitimized in the cultural sphere, especially through the concept of martyrdom. All in all, calling a person from one side a martyr and a person from the other side "evil" can be regarded to constitute a form of cultural violence, since it hides present inequalities, legitimizes the violent methods of the "just" side, and finally restricts basic human needs – including even survival – of the "evil" side.

3.1.3.2. The Focus on Peace

In contrast to the security concerns dominant in dealing with conflict resolution, the peace-oriented approach emphasizes the elimination of inequalities in accessing resources rather than erasing "evil". Conflict is seen as the outcome of violence at different levels rather than as the violent acts or potential of destruction of the evil side. It should be resolved or transformed peacefully rather than through eliminating one side of the conflict. In this approach, security concerns are not ignored. Instead, security is seen as a byproduct of peace, while peace is understood as the best way to achieve security.

In the peace-oriented approach, no side of the conflict is ignored. Conversely, empathy plays an important role; the demands of all sides are taken into account in order to terminate the violence created by existing or potential conflicts (Galtung 2007). None of the sides is seen as evil or superior to the other. Instead, the focus is on the conflict itself. Conflict should be transformed since "an untransformed conflict will produce violence sooner or later" (Galtung 2007: 25). In that sense, a dialogue between the sides of the conflict is indispensible in a peace-oriented approach to conflict resolution. Through dialogue, empathy, and inclusion of all sides of the conflict, the demands and necessities of the human groups can be taken into account, and the conflict can be transformed by ameliorating life conditions and developing more equal opportunities for accessing resources.

> Our collective responsibility not merely as a nation, but as part of an international community based on commitment to equality and non-violent cooperation, requires that we ask how these conditions came about, and endeavor to re-create social and political conditions on more sustaining grounds. (Butler 2006:17-8)

3.1.4. Two Sides of One Coin: Positive versus Negative Peace

Despite the fact that narratives of war dominate human history, there can be times when there is no war. However, this absence of war does not yet mean the presence of peace. As stated earlier, since violence is committed at different levels through different methods, the peaceful settlement of conflict requires a more inclusive resolution.

> Peace is also not the mere absence of war in the Hobbesian world of unending violent conflict. Peace is both a means of personal and collective ethical transformation and an aspiration to cleanse the planet of human-inflicted destruction. (Webel 2007:7)

> The other concept is *positive peace,* an order which will gratify many of one's central values, especially self-esteem, and in doing so provide happiness, satisfaction, and justice. This is not only peace from violence, but also peace of mind. (Rummel 2009)

In his discussion of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, Galtung introduces the concepts of negative and positive peace. He links those concepts to the absence of personal violence and of structural violence, respectively.

> Just as a coin has two sides, one side alone being only one aspect of the coin, peace also has two sides: absence of personal violence and absence of structural violence. Negative and positive peace. (Galtung 2003:72)

Due to the fact that direct violence and structural violence are strongly interdependent and that structural violence entails the potential for direct violence, a peaceful situation cannot be achieved through the elimination of direct violence alone. The elimination of direct violence is classified as negative peace. For Galtung, the absence of direct violence does not bring about social justice, which is a "positively defined condition such as egalitarian distribution of power and equal allocation of resources" (Galtung 2003:72). Approaches that prioritize security

concerns in conflict resolution aim at negative peace. Actually, through elimination of the "evil" side – although this is mostly realized through violent methods -, direct violence can be eliminated. However, such strategies fail to establish a more sustainable peaceful situation in which there is no potential for conflict or violence.

In contrast, the concept of positive peace engenders a more holistic social project for the establishment and sustainability of non-violent conditions. It focuses on equality in access to resources and on equal opportunity for survival. For positive peace to be fulfilled, a total transformation is needed on many levels, such as international, national, regional, family, or sub-groups.

> Nor should be peace seen as something applicable only to the relations of states. Peace exists, or can exist, at all levels and as perhaps the source of real peace at all other levels, the inner quality of peace within any individual. (Dower 2003: 997)

Given the requirement of total transformation at various levels as well as various spheres such as the social, economic, and political, positive peace is usually seen as the "ideal" form of non-violence.

3.2 The Conflict between the Turkish Armed Forces and PKK

Up to now, the concept of peace has been discussed on the basis of conceptualizations of violence, conflict, and security. In the following, the conflict between the TAF and PKK in Turkey will be introduced through the same concepts, in order to present a framework on the armed conflict in Turkey and its representation. Moreover, theories of hegemony, counter-hegemony, and ideology will be discussed, in order to develop a framework for analyzing the articulation of families of PKK members by PKK ideology and of families of dead soldiers by official ideology.

3.2.1. Different Aspects of the Kurdish Problem

Mesut Yeğen (2006) draws attention to the fact that the Kurdish problem in Turkey has been dealt with from different perspectives. The Kurdish problem in Turkey is mostly discussed in the context of "regional backwardness," which is seen as the outcome of the feudal system, "lack of education," which can be eliminated through educating people, "underdevelopment," which requires investments, and, prominently, the problem of "terrorism," which can be overcome only through military operations.

It cannot be ignored that the Kurdish problem has an economic aspect. The citizens of Turkey living in its Eastern and Southeastern parts[8] – mostly Kurdish people - do not have equal opportunities in terms of economic rights. Among the seven geographical region of Turkey, the Southeastern and Eastern ones are ranked at the bottom in the index of socio-economic development (Albayrak, Kalaycı, Karataş 2004). Elvan (2009) states that the gap between regions in terms of their level of economic development is much wider in Turkey than in other countries in the EU and OECD. For example, between the years 1983-98, the average index value for the Gross National Product (GNP) of Turkey is 100, whereas the average value of the Southeast is 56 and of the East 41.[9]

In the same vein, it can be claimed that people living in Southeastern and Eastern Turkey have less opportunities in accessing resources.[10] Hence, they have lower

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[8] According to the census estimation of Kurdish population by province, Kurdish people form the following percentage of the total population in some provinces of the Eastern and Southeastern regions: Ağrı 70.45 %, Bingöl 76.63%,Bitlis 64.03%, Diyarbakır 72.78%, Hakkari 89.47%, Van 70.70%, Siirt 78.78%, Muş 67.75%, Tunceli 55.90%, Şanlıurfa 47.84%, Adıyaman 43.69%, Elazığ 43.15%. (Servet 1996)

[9] Average index values of GNP of other geographical regions in Turkey are as follows: Marmara Region: 156, Aegean Region: 125, Mediterranean Region: 95, Region of Central Anatolia: 91, Black Sea Region: 68. (Elvan 2009)

chances to survive and to improve their life conditions compared to people who live in other regions of Turkey. This situation can be associated with the concept of structural violence. When only this data is reviewed, it cannot be argued that direct violence is used against the, mostly Kurdish, people in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey in order to decrease their life chances and prevent them from having equal opportunities in access to resources. Nevertheless, these inequalities show us the existence of structural violence.

Despite these conditions, some scholars argue that we cannot grasp the Kurdish problem through a sole focus on economic problems in the region. For example, Yeğen (1999) argues that official state ideology represents the Kurdish problem as "something different than what it really is" by cutting its ties with the aspect of "Kurdishness". Since the early times of the Turkish Republic, Kurdish people were not allowed to speak, publish, and broadcast in their own language. Kurdish people could not register their children under Kurdish names. Not surprisingly, many Kurdish people in Turkey have two names; one is Kurdish and used among family and friends, and the other is Turkish and used in institutional relations. As Beşikçi (1991:244) states:

> People who speak Kurdish were used to be fined; they had to pay 5 *kuruş* for each word. The Kurdish names of villages were replaced with Turkish ones. It was banned to give Kurdish names to the children. Studies on Kurdish language and Kurdish literature were not allowed. The lyrics and the melodies of Kurdish songs were Turkified. Moreover, some

[10]When it comes to unemployment rates, the situation of the Southeast and East of Turkey is the same. According to ATO's (Ankara Chamber of Commerce) report, among the 26 statistical regions, the region of "Mardin-Batman-Şırnak-Siirt" is ranked as having the highest rate of unemployment with 35.9 %. This means that 36 persons out of 100 who can work are unemployed. The second region is "Şanlıurfa-Diyarbakır" with an unemployment rate of 34.8 %. These regions are mostly populated by Kurdish people, as illustrated in footnote 8. Finally, infant mortality rates can be examined in order to see the life chances of babies. According to data of TNSA 2003 (Turkey Demographic and Health Survey), the average rate of infant mortality of Turkey is 29 per thousand, while infant mortality is 41 per thousand in East Turkey, 34 in the Northern coast of Anatolia, 29 in the Southern coast of Anatolia, 22 in Western Anatolia, and 21 in Middle Anatolia.

parts on Kurdish people were eliminated from the historical documents.

The reduced economic and cultural opportunities in the Southeastern and Eastern regions were accompanied by direct violence, which included death in custody, torture, village evacuations, etc. The human rights violations perpetrated against Kurdish people[11] are so obvious that this situation often creates problems between Turkey and the EU especially in terms of Turkey's candidacy for EU membership (Kirişçi &Winrow 1997).

3.2 2. PKK 'Terrorism' and Cultural Violence

3.2.2.1. The Concept of Terrorism

Although the concept of terrorism is often mentioned in the context of conflict resolution and security issues, there is no consensus on a comprehensive definition of terrorism within the international community (Martyn 2002) or the academic world. However, this ambiguity does not prevent scholars, governments, or militaries from attempting to define and conceptualize terrorism.

In its broader sense, to speak of terrorism in academic literature generally requires, first, "actual or threatened violence against civilians or persons not actively taking part in hostilities" and second, that "the implicit or explicit purpose of the act is to intimidate or compel a population, government or organization into some course of action" (Maogoto 2003). In that sense, terrorism is not compatible with the concept of peace since it is obviously a form of violence.

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[11] According to the September 2004 report of the Diyarbakır Branch of İHD (Human Rights Association), 34 civilians died during armed conflicts, while 9 people died as a result of either unidentified murder and attacks or extra-judicial executions in Diyarbakır. There were 55 claims of torture and maltreatment. All in all, there were 168 complaints brought to the İHD Diyarbakır Branch in the period of September 2004, while the total number of human rights violations was 446. (http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/44811-ihd-diyarbakir-subesi-eylul-ayi-raporu)

In brief, terrorism comprises intentional violent actions aimed at creating fear among people who are mostly non-combatants. Following Köker (1994), terrorism (of some parts of society or organized entities) may also target the state directly. In turn, terror may have a systematic aspect and form a state tactic. On the basis of this dual conceptualization of terrorism, Webel (2007) categorizes terrorism as "from above" or "from below". The former refers to state terror whereas the latter refers to tactics of non-state actors. Tilly (2004:10) also emphasized that many specialized military forces in the world engage in "kidnapping, murder and mutilation in addition to their occasional pitched battles with other armed forces". He notes that these specialized military forces can be governmental, nongovernmental, or anti-governmental. However, regardless of the actor of terrorism, it is used "to induce fear in terrorized people for the purpose of influencing another, less vulnerable, population, such as government officials" (Webel 2007).

Despite the above definitions, there continues to be an ambiguity in the concept of terrorism due to its pejorative connotation. An organized group, a part of society, or a state might use terror as a tactic; however, they all reject the label of "terrorism" for their actions. For example, an organization or a segment of society which is declared terrorist by the international community could also be called an organization that uses terrorist tactics against the state. Based on the experiences of individuals with terrorism, their perception of whether states or none-state actors are "terrorists" differ. Nevertheless, the dominant perception of terrorism is based on the binary opposition between the state's authority and challenges against this authority. For example, the concept of terrorism is dealt with only in the sense of terrorism from below, as challenge to the authority of the Turkish state, in the first article of Turkish anti-terror law:

> Terror is composed of methods of repression, violence, and force, or the threat to use force, by one or several persons belonging to an organization, with the aim of changing the characteristic of the Turkish Republic, including its political,

legal, social, secular, and economic system; disrupting the
indivisible unity of the state with the land and the nation;
jeopardizing the existence of the Turkish state and Republic;
weakening, destroying, or seizing state authority; wiping out
basic rights and freedoms; destroying the state's domestic and
external security, public peace, and public health.

Thus, the concept of terrorism in Turkish anti-terror law includes only violent attacks of non-state actors against basic rights and freedoms and not the violation of those rights by state entities. Moreover, while the individual's basic rights and freedoms are mentioned, terrorism is mainly defined as challenge to the Turkish state authority and regime and to the features of the Turkish Republic. Moreover, Article 8 of the anti-terror law bans any written or verbal propaganda, demonstrations, or other acts which threaten the unity of Turkey, regardless of the methods, intentions, and ideas behind such activities.

3.2.2.2 The Perception of the PKK as Terrorism

The definition of terrorism is important in the framework of this study since the dominant tendency in approaching the Kurdish problem is to frame it as problem of terrorism from below. Official state ideology often situates the Kurdish problem as well as the Kurdish movement within the problem of terrorism. As Kirişçi and Winrow (1997:2) state, "in the opinion of some officials in Ankara, there is not a Kurdish issue or problem per se. Rather, the problem is solely one of PKK-sponsored terrorism. Atilla Kıyat, who is a retired vice-admiral, says that "Turkey excludes the people in the region by attempting to suppress terror, which is also not beneficial for the people of the region, rather than embracing the people living in the region." (Çakır 2004:52)

This study engages with the relation between the Turkish state and Kurdish population and the reconstruction and representations of the Kurdish question in terms of how this relationship constructs Turkish and Kurdish people as in

opposition and renders it impossible to construct a common voice for peace. The emphasis on terrorism in perceiving the Kurdish problem is considered to be the main obstacle for dialogue and collectivity between the Kurdish and Turkish population in Turkey as well as between the families of TAF soldiers and PKK members. Therefore, the dynamics behind the obstruction of collectivity between the families of dead TAF soldiers and PKK members constitute the main framework of this study.

The PKK is listed on the EU's list of terrorist organizations. This framing of the PKK as terrorist seems inevitable in international relations, given the security agenda of the state system. Moreover, the atmosphere of insecurity that evokes terrorism should not be ignored, since the failure of democratic institutions and the implementation of repressive policies creates an atmosphere in which the suspicion of the legitimacy of the legal system paves the way for the emergence of terror activities. These activities, which use violent methods against the state, resemble militaristic methods in terms of their violent character, whereas their ideological aspect necessitates democratic solutions (Ertürk 1994: 46).

While the situation of human rights in Turkey is not so bright in general,[12] the position of Kurdish people is particularly fragile. The Human Rights Watch report "The Kurds of Turkey: Killings, Disappearance and Torture," focuses on human rights violations perpetrated against Kurdish people in the 1990s. According to this report, Kurds in Turkey disappeared and have been killed and tortured at an appalling rate, whereas many of the villages with mostly Kurdish inhabitants have been brutally attacked by security forces and forcibly evacuated. It is stated in the

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[12]Turkey does not have a good record in terms of human rights violations. This negative reputation of Turkey always constituted an obstacle in its international affairs and especially in its attempts to obtain EU membership. According to the 2008 report of IHD (Human Rights Association), 448 people were tortured and mistreated under custody, whereas 333 people were tortured in prison. Moreover, 299 people were beaten or injured by security forces during social protests. These numbers cannot be ignored and can lead to distrust of the reliability and legitimacy of the legal authorities and system.

report that in 1992, 74 people – 34 in the Southeast - were shot and killed in house raids by security forces and that "the evidence suggests that the killings were deliberate executions." The same report states:

> Although some of the victims were last seen in the hands of police, the police usually deny having detained the victims or claim that they held them briefly and then released them. The Turkish government appears to have made no serious effort to find the murderers or to investigate possible police involvement in disappearances.

Taking these reports into account and viewing the Southeast of Turkey through the lens of human rights violation, an atmosphere in which people lost their trust in the Turkish government and in which the legal system has almost lost its legitimacy becomes apparent. Highlighting terrorism of the PKK has been the most significant factor, both domestically and internationally, that shaped and influenced Turkey's perception of the Kurdish issue and Kurds (Bayındır 2007: 92). However, focusing on terrorism in narratives on the Kurdish problem without mentioning the violent acts of security forces and human rights violations against Kurdish people conceals the violence that leads to the armed conflict.

On part of the Turkish state, terrorism has been presented as the main obstacle to and excuse for not initiating democratic reforms concerning the Kurdish issue. In addition to other forms of violence, this leads to cultural violence directed against the Kurdish people as well as the activists in the Kurdish movement. The insistence of the state on defining the Kurdish issue as a problem of terrorism and the fact that the armed conflict did not end are two main reasons for the marginalization of any voice proclaiming the state's responsibility in the Kurdish issue in Turkey (Aslan 2007: 30). When asked to take responsibility for abuses, Turkish officials are quick to blame escalating terrorism in Turkey (Human Rights Watch Report[13]).More important, in this discourse, human rights violations affecting Kurdish people and

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[13] http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/TURKEY933.PDF

activists are attributed less importance, while the Turkish government fails to take measures and to investigate the human rights violations in the Southeast. Since ordinary Kurdish people as well as pro-Kurdish activists in the legal-political sphere are considered to be supporters of terrorism, they are labeled as the "evil". This recalls Butler's question: Whose life counts as a life and whose death is grievable? The situation in which human rights violations become less visible and important can be understood through the concept of cultural violence, which justifies structural and / or direct violence.

As the Kurdish problem and Kurdish movement are equated with the problem of terrorism by the Turkish state and as the calls for peace by Kurdish people and activists are disguised by the "counter-terrorism" agenda of the Turkish state, they cannot get away from being labeled "terrorist". As Selek (2004) argues, in the new world order, wars are renamed "counter-terror struggles," and counter-terrorism is advocated as a requirement of modern civilizations. Since terror is defined as the violence of the powerless, civilization comes to be the power of the powerful. According to her, while the violence of the powerful is regarded "natural," the violence of the weak is declared to be terrorism.

3.3 The Hegemony of the Turkish State and the Emergence of the PKK

In the context of representations of the Kurdish movement as terrorism and of the state's violent methods as counter-terrorism, the concepts of hegemony and ideology are important. Furthermore, in the framework of this study, the fact that people, and especially the families of dead soldiers of TAF and PKK members, take oppositional positions is being explained on the basis of these concepts. In brief, in the context of this research, the concepts of hegemony and ideology are used in order to understand how the masses are persuaded of the existence and continuity of the conflict between the PKK and TAF and of the just position of the TAF in this conflict.

3.3.1 The Concepts of Hegemony and Ideology

Although the concept of hegemony[14] is used in different contexts and meanings, it basically refers to the dominance of a particular social group, class, nation, or state over other social groups, classes, nations, or states. In its broader sense, Gramsci used the term hegemony for the predominance of one social class over others. It entails not only political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world, so that those who are subordinated by it accept it as 'common sense' and 'natural' (Chandler 2009).

According to Gramsci, hegemony cannot be maintained only with coercion; the consent of the masses is also necessary. The role of the military and police forces play a role in the construction and maintenance of hegemony, but are not sufficient for the latter. Gramsci (2007) argues that besides institutions of coercion, civil society institutions such as religion, mass media, or education are indispensable for the creation of hegemony. Thus, hegemony refers to the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates (Eagleton 1991). In brief, the first crucial point about hegemony is the construction of consent.

The second important point is that the masses take the world view of dominant group as "common sense" and "natural". For hegemony to be maintained, people are to be persuaded of the rightfulness of it and to consider a set of values and beliefs of hegemonic powers as natural. According to Aydın (2005), the legitimacy of consent and coercion is determined in the relation between the masses –the subjects and the citizens- and the state. If the masses do not consent to the sovereignty of the state, the state's use of coercion becomes illegitimate. Aydın's argument is compatible with Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony, since the use of violence on part of the

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[14]The word hegemony derives from the Greek word (ἡγεμονία) *hēgemonía*, which means leadership, whereas *hegemon* means "leader" and *hegeisthai* "to lead." It originally referred to the predominance of one city state over others in Greek history.
(http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=hegemony)

hegemonic power is made legitimate on the basis of the consent given by people in general.

3.3.2. Attempts at Counter-Hegemony by the PKK

While hegemony is based on the persuasion of people of the rightfulness of a belief system, counter-hegemonic movements try to do the same. According to Gramsci, they also use consent and coercion mechanisms to persuade people. The following chapters on how the families of PKK members are articulated by PKK ideology and become the "opponent" of the families of dead soldiers of TAF draw on the conceptual framework of counter-hegemony in regards to the PKK's violence and its acts in the ideological sphere.

3.3.2.1. A Brief History of Kurdish Resistance Movements

By the end of the 19th century, modernization and westernization became the determinant elements of state policies in the Ottoman Empire and the constitutive elements of the official state ideology of the new Turkish Republic. Working in a continuous line with the modernization movements from the Ottoman period, the new nation-state attempted to create a new form of "Turkish" citizenship and impose new regulations in order to render its project possible. The citizens of the new republic had to be differentiated from the "backward" Ottoman subjects and to turn their faces to the Western world. The new Turkish nation-state even aimed to reshape the daily lives of citizens, as they had to wear a hat rather than the fez that was obligatory in the Ottoman period, use the Latin alphabet and Western forms of measurement, and so forth.

The strategies for empowerment of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish nation-state were different from each other. The former's survival and empowerment strategy was based on enlarging the territory, whereas the latter required intensifying its own power over individuals within the territory. Thus, the nation-state's focus is on strict control over individuals and on shaping them through citizenship, rather than on the expansion of territory. Modernization was accompanied by centralization as empowerment strategy of the modern Turkish nation-state. Consequently, the position of the Kurdish governors as well as of the Kurdish population was to be transformed. In the era of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish *Beyliks* were used to keeping their status within the borders of the Ottoman Empire and were recognized by the central government. That relationship with the central government was compatible with the empire's style of government, which required enlarging the territory, whereas modern states are in need of intensified implementation of power (Yeğen:2006b). Hence, when the Ottoman Empire was replaced by the Turkish nation-state, the position of Kurdish *Beyliks* became incompatible with the survival strategy of the new Turkish Republic.

> … the westernization attempts of the Ottoman state had the effect of repressing the periphery, as the politics of westernization in the Ottoman Empire aligned with the politics of centralization. The co-existence of these two political practices has had a defining impact on the formation of contemporary Turkish politics and Turkish state discourse. (Yeğen 1999: 558)

Most importantly, the rules and regulations that were to design the relations among the population and determine their ties with the state authority were changed. During the Ottoman period, religion determined the relation among subjects and their relation to the state authority. This is also associated with the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire.

> According to the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire, non-Moslem communities were allowed a measure of self-government, but the Moslem inhabitants were considered to be

united as members of the 'nation of Islam' and were thus subjects of the Sultan who was also their Caliph. The Kurds, along with the Albanians, Arabs, Bosnians, Circassians, Laz, Pomaks, Tatars, and Turks, were grouped together within the single nation of Islam."(Kirişçi &Winrow 1997:1)

When the empire was replaced by the nation state, religion was replaced by the notions of nationhood and citizenship for binding individuals to the state authority. In this sense, the abolition of the Caliphate can be understood in the sense that the unification and loyalty of people should not be based on the symbols and references of Islam. Instead, the members of the republic had to be loyal to the newly emerged state through citizenship (Yeğen: 2006a). Especially for the religious segment of the Kurdish people, the end of the Caliphate meant breaking the existing ties with Turkish people as their religious fellows. In the Ottoman *millet* system, both Turkish and Kurdish populations belonged to the same state category of the Islam nation. However, speeches of the new "irreligious" and "strange" government considered them to be "Turkish" rather than Kurdish or Muslim afterwards (Jwaideh 1999: 406).

The Caliphate plays a great role in Ottoman society. It had the function to link different people and to unify them. (Beşikçi 1992:411-2)

...The sudden abolition of the Caliphate had a deep and negative impact on the landlords. As used to be the case in the war years, they thought that Mustafa Kemal was the guardian of the Caliphate and Sultanate and the savior of the Islam world. Thus, the abolition of the Caliphate brought about anxiety among the Kurdish population who believed in the Sultanate and Caliphate. (Beşikçi 1992:413)

In brief, the idea of national unity, which replaced religion as the prominent source of legitimization of state power in Turkey, necessitated the proof that Kurdish people are indeed Turkish (Bruinessen 1995:339). In that respect, the strong emphasis on Turkishness in the constitution of 1924 was not a coincidence. It was believed that the Kurdish people can be Turkified.

Yıldız (2005:15) sees the policies of the newly formed Turkish state as being informed by ethnic nationalism, and this tendency of the state as reflected in the Turkification of the Southeast. Beşikçi (1992) argues that the state aimed to make changes in the institutions in a top-down imposing way without changing the relationships and institutions in the structure:

> The feudal mode of production and the feudal society formation based on this mode of production continued. However, the central government established an organic relation with landlords and in this way attempted to completely unite them with the central authority. In addition, it was required to impose reforms in the institutions of the superstructure on Eastern Anatolian. The prominent ones were: text collectors, gendarmerie, obligatory education, speaking Turkish, military service and so forth. (Beşikçi 192:419)

The Kurds' response to these dramatic changes was an uprising led by Sheikh Said in 1925, which was brutally suppressed by the central government. Since the Ottoman period, Kurdish oppositional movements continue to respond to the state's Kurdish policy with different strategies and groups. The uprising of the PKK is referred to as the 29th attempt of a Kurdish rebellion in Turkey.

> It was the 29th attempt subsequent to the previous 28 attempts, whereas the most recent revolt took place in Dersim province in 1937 to 1938 ... The sudden appearance of the Turkic face of the "new state" engendered three big Kurdish armed uprisings in 1925, 1930, and 1937, all led either by religious figures or tribal chieftains. The quiet years followed the suppression of 1938 and continued until the 1960s. (Özcan 2006: 84)

The period between 1938 and the 1960s can be regarded as the silent years of Kurdish rebellions. Bozarslan (2007) identifies two sources that nourished political ideas based on Kurdish identity in the beginning of the 1960s. The first one is the rebellion initiated by the leader of KDP, Barzani, in Iraq. The second one is left-wing dynamism in Turkey, which emerged in parallel with a world-wide leftist atmosphere. Gunter (1997:23) also supports this argument by stating that although

the PKK announced itself in 1978, it is accepted that it grew out of the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Marxist movements of the 1960s.

3.3.2.1.2. The Emergence of the PKK

Before the foundation of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, the head of the organization, was engaged with Turkish leftist groups in Ankara. However, he and his followers were planning to found an illegal political party which would promote the rights of the Kurdish population. In 1977, Öcalan's article "Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu" (The Path of Kurdistan Revolution) was accepted as the party program, and in late November 1978, the PKK was established in Fis, a village of Diyarbakır. By 1978, the founders of this party had been together for five years. They had met in a student association in Ankara in which people from different left-wing factions gathered (Bruinessen 1995). For the founders of the party, the fascists (the Grey Wolves[15] and similar groups), agents of the state and those who supported them, the Turkish Left which subordinated the Kurdish question to the leftist revolution, and finally the exploitative Kurdish landlord class were the primary enemies of the Kurdish people (McDowall 2007:421).

As in PKK ideology, Kurdish landlords were considered to be one of the obstacles for the emancipation of the Kurdish population, the PKK was seen to have the mission to destroy that class.[16] Moreover, this Kurdish landlord class was considered to be the "collaborator" of the "fascist" Turkish state. Thus, it is not

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[15]"The Grey Wolves, a Turkish nationalist right-wing group, was formed in the early 1970s with the purpose of fighting communism and democratic institutions. Colonel Alparslan Turkeş founded the Grey Wolves as the paramilitary and terrorist wing of his Nationalist Action party and used the groups to fight what he perceived to be his left-wing enemies" (Atkins 2004:110).

[16] While the Kurdish problem is usually reduced to the problem of "terror" in the state perspective on the PKK, this organization is also very often read through the lens of the "landlord class" and "feudal relations" in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey.

surprising that in 1979, PKK militants assassinated Mehmet Celal Bucak, who was a local landlord and Justice Party deputy for Siverek.

From 1984 on, the PKK transformed itself into a paramilitary organization, establishing relations with other armed groups in Syria and Palestine, and sending many militants to training camps. The PKK became prominent among other Kurdish political groups, because it voiced the feeling of exclusion and oppression in its discourse, self-representation, and way of organization. Thus, Bruinessen (1984) sees the PKK's considerable influence on the Kurdish population relative to other Kurdish groups as related to its emphasis on oppression, exclusion, and marginality. According to him, the PKK does not represent the Kurdish tribes, on the contrary, the organization aims at those who are most marginal and feel themselves oppressed and excluded in terms of their economic and social conditions. It can be argued that the PKK's primary aim is to persuade the Kurdish people of the cruelty of the state and the rightfulness of the PKK's actions. Furthermore, the organization had to show that it had the capacity to challenge the hegemony of the Turkish state. The PKK was in need of constructing counter-hegemony, and this construction required the persuasion of the Kurdish people. As is the case in the construction of hegemony, the PKK uses both coercion and consent. The violent attacks of the PKK can be analyzed within the conceptualization of counter-hegemony. In the face of the hegemony of the Turkish state, which is maintained by the dialectical relation between coercion and consent, the PKK attempts to establish its own counter-hegemony among the Kurdish population. As the founding members of the PKK states, they were used to visit all Kurdish villages and to organize meetings in order to talk about the PKK, its activities and aims (Marcus 2007).

3.4. Negotiations

When the Kurdish problem is reduced to the problem of terrorism by the Turkish state, the sides of the conflict are represented as just or evil. In that binary, the Turkish state presents itself as the just side and the only authority to solve the problem with its own techniques and through eliminating the PKK, the evil side. However, it is obvious that the state's policy of "I know everything, I will solve it, I did it" has not solved anything until today (Amnesty International).[17]

The armed conflicts are not limited to the conflict zones; on the contrary, they sharply affect society: they might lead to hatred among people from different ethnic groups living in the same nation-state. They can become the "people whose death is not grievable" for each other. The most obvious example of this situation is the notion of martyrdom. As will be discussed in following chapters, despite of some differences due to different socialization processes and political orientations, both sides of the conflict in Turkey call those of their own people who died in the conflict "martyrs". The attribution of sacred meaning to these deaths goes hand in hand with the marginalization of deaths as well as of violations of human rights on the other side, since those other people are conceived as "evil". When the death of some people is not grievable and their lives are not counted as life, then human rights violations against them become less visible and more justifiable. In the dominant, security-oriented approach to conflict resolution, there is need for a powerful authority to eliminate the evil side seen as the cause of the present or potential conflict. Due to this necessity, challenges to the authority are to be punished for the sake of maintaining or constructing a peaceful situation.

As shown earlier, violence is usually caused by conflict which in turn usually stems from inequalities. In order to terminate the conflict with non-violent means, attempts

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[17] http://www.ihd.org.tr/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=532:kurdish-question-is-not-only-political-but-also-a-human-rights-issue&catid=13:headquarters&Itemid=29

to include the demands of the different sides are indispensible. However, such calls for dialogue and negotiation processes become impossible in the context of the representation of the different sides as evil or just. Thus, in the absence of a dialogue and negotiation initiatives between the sides of the conflict, conflict resolution is planned mostly through direct violence aimed at eliminating the "evil." As a result, a non-violent termination of the conflict becomes impossible.

All in all, for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, a dialogue between the different sides is required. While the socio-economic conditions and cultural structures of the people at opposite sides should not be ignored, they can come together despite major differences, because they all suffer from the effects of violence and conflict.

CHAPTER 4

Representations of Self-Sacrifice in Turkey

The concept of martyrdom initially is associated with self-sacrifice for a cause. Rosoux (2004:84) suggests: "On the political stage, the use of the word martyr ceases to be literal and becomes metaphorical, the definition of martyrdom depending not upon the manner of death but upon the present context." In this study, the focus will be on the representations and usage of the concept in different political contexts rather than on its definitions and history. In that sense, the potential representations and political uses of martyrdom and the purposes of those who declare the demise of a person to be the crowned death of a martyr need to be taken into account (Rosoux 2004: 84). From this perspective, it is assumed that the concept of martyrdom has an ambiguity in meaning; it can be reinterpreted in any given political context and power relations. A person can be declared a sacred, honored martyr by some people while being considered a traitor, poor person, terrorist, deceived, or occupier from the perspective of other people.

> Martyrs' embodied reputations are evoked at various historical moments, places and contexts by interested agents as reverential and referential models of a communicable past; they can be used both for and against the same institutions against which the martyr one struggles. (DeSocuey et al 2008:110)

In other words, the meaning and values of this concept are changed and reinterpreted according to the political necessities at the time. Taking into account the inconsistencies and ambiguities that the meaning of martyrdom might entail, I am hesitant as a researcher to use the word "martyr" when inquiring about the children of my interviewees.

In the context of this study, one can expect significant differences in terms of which actors in the conflict are seen as martyrs by interviewees from different

backgrounds and in the way in which the latter construct, redefine, and make sense of the concept of martyrdom. Despite these differences, the central point of this inquiry are the similarities in the role of martyrdom in shaping interviewees' political agenda and in the identity construction of people who are positioned as two opposite sides of the armed conflict in Turkey. In the narratives of interviewees, the state, religion, victimhood, and struggle against the enemy appear as the prominent frameworks through which they perceive martyrdom. Hence, the concept of martyrdom is analyzed in relation to institutions such as Islam, the state, and the PKK as well as loyalty to the state and nation and oppression by the state. This focus is due to the fact that the families of soldiers and PKK members strongly emphasize these concepts in their narratives and "legitimize" deaths in the armed conflict in reference to the state, Islam, loyalty to the state, and oppression of the Kurdish people and of the PKK as an "organization of people". Thus, these situations and institutions can be seen as instruments for legitimizing and consecrating some losses while marginalizing and excluding those on the other side of the conflict.

The main concern of the following is to explain how people are persuaded of the "legitimacy" of killing someone for the sake of a "sacred" body and of being killed in the same conflict. Finally, it will be discussed how the different processes of legitimization on different "sides" of the conflict construct these as "in opposition to each other" and engender barriers for them to come together and speak out jointly for peace.

Among the families of dead soldiers of TAF, martyrdom is most of the times clearly perceived in its relation with the state and religion. When it comes to the martyrdom of their sons, it is interesting to see that for these families, religion and loyalty to the state as well as to the Turkish military are interlinked. When they were asked what the concept of "martyrdom" means to them, they first replied in the framework of Islam and *öteki dünya* (other world). Then, their responses to the

questions about the death and "martyrdom" of PKK members drew attention to the importance of loyalty to the state and dominant ideology in their narratives. In the discussion of the "martyrdom" of PKK members, they redefined the concept and related it to loyalty to the state, military, and nation.

4.1. Martyrdom on the Basis of Islam

As mentioned, Islam constitutes the first step in the realm of glorification and interpretation of "martyrdom" of soldiers of the TAF and of the exclusion of the possibility of martyrdom for PKK members.

"Martyr" is derived from the Greek word *mártys,* which stands for witness; its semantic parallel in Arabic is *shahid* (Firestone 2004:136).

> The Arabic word for martyr is 'shahid' and it is derived from the Arabic verbal root 'Shahada' which means to 'see', 'to witness' and to become 'a model or a paradigm'. (Abedi and Legenhausden 1986,3-5, cited in Saloul 2009:5)

In a very general sense, martyrs are the witnesses of the faith in the cause they die for:

> In Arabic, the word 'shahid' is usually taken to mean that the martyr is the one who witnesses the sincerity of his/her faith through the ultimate proof :that is sacrificing his/her life. (Ezzati 1986:9, cited in Saloul 2009:5)

Witnessing the sincerity of faith in a cause is important insofar as "witnessing is the most powerful form of advertisement because it communicates personal credibility and experience to an audience" (Cook 2007:1). By sacrificing their lives for a cause, martyrs demonstrate their strong commitment to it and also witness the sincerity of his/her faith.

> Besides the religious dimension of the application of the word "shahid" in the sense of witness, this application also adds a political dimension to the role of the martyr in society. In witnessing the ultimate truth of God, the martyr becomes the most effective agent in pursuit of God's cause, and he/she testifies to the legitimacy of this cause by his/her religiously internalized goal. (Saloul 2009: 5)

Martyrs, as mentioned, are attributed personal credibility and entitled to high positions and rewards in afterlife in Islamic belief. As the Qur'an states:

> So their Lord accepted their prayer: That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other; they, therefore, who fled and were turned out of their homes and persecuted in My way and who fought and were slain, I will most certainly cover their evil deeds, and I will most certainly make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow; a reward from Allah, and with Allah is yet better reward. (Ali İmran, 3/195)

It is clear here that martyrdom is defined through self-sacrifice in the way of God. Although the families of dead soldiers of the TAF give meaning to martyrdom through Islamic references, they did not say that their sons fought and died "in the way of God". But in the context of religious attributions to the martyrdom of their sons, their narratives focused on the rewards from God for their children in afterlife. Moreover, despite their deep grief about the loss of their sons, they consoled themselves with the position of their sons in the eye of God.

Besides, some mystic elements about the "martyrdom" of their sons accompanied these families' narratives about Islam. Most of the mothers of soldiers told me that they had had dreams about the "martyrdom" of their children. They said that they were revealed the upsetting event by God even though they did not realize it at the time:

> I saw him in my dream 15 days before his martyrdom, he was shouting at me and saying 'mother, give me a glass of water'. I could not give him water. I opened my eyes and realized that he would be a martyr because I could not give him the water. If I

> could have done it, it would be a hope. But I realized all of this
> after his martyrdom. (Asiye, founding member of ŞADF)

A few fathers and nearly all of the mothers of soldiers had a story to tell about their sons that entailed some surreal features. They saw the death of their sons in their dreams beforehand, or they knew just a few seconds before they were being informed about the death of their sons. Thus, they thought they had a revelation or were warned by God. Three mothers of soldiers claimed that their dead sons give information to them about daily life and that their sons tell them all they know in their dreams. Moreover, one mother, Fatma, argued that her son had knocked at her door for five years and then stopped doing so:

> After he was martyred, he had knocked on our door in the
> village for five years. The martyrs cannot realize that they are
> dead. They think that they are alive.

It seems that these mystic elements function as a proof of their approval by God as the "mother/father of a martyr." I argue that this form of narrative of families of soldiers is strongly associated with the belief in Islam that martyrs are actually not dead. As the verses 169 and 170 of the Qur'an say:

> Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay,
> they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord;
> they rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah. And with regard
> to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their
> bliss), the (martyr's) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor
> have they (cause to) grieve.

Families of soldiers are content with the high status of their sons who deserved to be a "martyr" in the eye of God; they also think that they themselves acquire an important status as the mothers/fathers of a "martyr." Thus, they often talk about *öteki dünya* and idealize martyrdom in the sense that their sons were granted high status as *şehit mertebesi* (status of martyr) in *öteki dünya*. Especially the mothers perceive themselves as if they were also attributed a high position in other world, just like their sons. The following expression was frequently uttered by the parents

of dead soldiers: "How happy we are that thanks to our kids we reach the highest level and become the mothers of martyrs."

Because of the ambiguity of the concept of martyrdom, which is used for both dead soldiers and PKK members, I asked family members of dead TAF soldiers about the martyrdom of PKK members. When the families of soldiers were told that the families of PKK members called their sons or daughters martyrs, they were very disturbed. They strongly disagreed and challenged it in referring to the divinity of the state, with only a slight mention of Islam, which was the prominent sphere on which they constructed their identity as mother or father of a martyr. According to all of the parents and wives of soldiers interviewed, the death of PKK members cannot be considered martyrdom; on the contrary, they referred to them without hesitation as terrorists.

In their rejection of the "martyrdom" of PKK members, some of the interviewees claimed that PKK members are not Muslims at all[18] and that they cannot be called martyr for this reason. The claim that members of the PKK cannot be Muslim is generally based on the belief that PKK members are *sünnetsiz* (uncircumcised) and Armenian. As Salih, the 60 year old father of a soldier, said: "They may kill, sure, they are not believers, most of them are Armenian." And Suna, the mother of a soldier, declared: "Most of them are not [Muslim], they [PKK members] are *sünnetsiz.*"

As being Muslim is absolutely required for being entitled a martyr, some interviewees among the families of dead soldiers said that members of the PKK cannot be counted as martyrs because they are not Muslim. This perspective on martyrdom depends on the general view of martyrdom in Islam: "Shahadah is the

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[18]As those families think that PKK members are not Muslim, a salient point in their narratives are attributions of being "non-Muslim" to Kurdish politicians. The families used the word "Jewish" and, most often, "Armenian" for such attributions. Some parents who think that PKK members cannot be Muslim also suggest that most of the parliamentarians of the DTP are Armenian or Jewish people.

word for the Muslim declaration of faith of which, even without stating it outwardly, entitles a person to be a called Muslim" (Haleem 2006:52).

It is likely that representations of the PKK in TV programs and in particular in TV serials are influencing the views of families of TAF soldiers on PKK members and TAF soldiers. Almost all of the mothers and some of the fathers told me that they regularly watched *Ölümsüz Kahramanlar* and *Tek Türkiye*, which are famous TV series of STV, an Islamist TV channel. These TV series are about the conflict between the Turkish military and the PKK. Mothers gathering at the cemetery usually talk about those programs. Although they criticize the visualization of a sacred situation like martyrdom, it can be suggested that they rethink and reshape their ideas about the conflict and the profile of the TAF and PKK through those soap operas. In two of these serials, PKK militants are represented as a group of cruel and non-Muslim people who rape women, harm people who pray, kill babies, trap TAF soldiers and villagers, and pretend to be Muslim in order to win villagers over. In turn, the members of the Turkish military are represented as religious men who pray and use religious words in their speeches. The emphasis of these serials on the religiosity of TAF soldiers can be observed in the narratives of families of TAF soldiers. They emphasize this message of the TV serials with the following famous slogan: "We send our kids to the military service since we think that the military is the arm of the prophet."[19] In that sense, the parents of TAF soldiers also generally think that doing service in the military and defending the territory is an indispensable duty of a Muslim.

Apart from these families of soldiers who believe that PKK members are not Muslim, there are others who mention that PKK members can be Muslim, but question their religiosity since they are shooting at people. In their view, being Muslim is not enough to call a dead PKK member a martyr, because they use guns

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[19]The Turkish version of this statement is: "Biz çocuklarımızı asker ocağı peygamber kucağı diye gönderiyoruz askere."

and kill people. However, when they consider that soldiers are also shooting at "enemies," they reshape their narrative by adding "shooting at the men of the state." As Kaya, a father of a dead soldier, said:

> Well, they are Muslim, they call themselves Muslim, but in Islam, someone who kills someone and shoots at the state and kills state men cannot be a martyr. In Islam, it is not acceptable to kill state men.

When the families of TAF soldiers are asked about the "other" and the "enemy," they use some religious elements with a strong emphasis on the divinity of the state and military. This can be regarded as a success of the military in incorporating religious holiness into nationalism by attributing some religious values to the nation (Bora & Altınay 2003: 146). In their responses to the martyrdom of PKK members, the military and religion –Islam – collaborate and constitute the sphere of justification for both the martyrdom of their sons and the terrorism of the PKK members who passed away in this conflict. When it is considered that the TAF represents itself as an institution that protects laicism in Turkey, that harmony deserves attention.

In brief, although none of the mothers, fathers, or wives of dead soldiers claim that their sons or husbands fought in the way of God, the first ground for the construction of martyrdom by the family members of dead soldiers of TAF is Islam. The meaning of martyrdom in Islam also relieves and consoles them as their children are granted a high position in the eyes of God. As Sancar (2001:26) argues:

> Martyrdom is sacred and glorified in religion. The martyr and his/her extended family will be comfortable in afterlife and will be rewarded by God. It is a way of compensation for loosing a son: succeeding in something which is glorified and attributed special importance and prestige to by religion.

However, the soldiers' families' understanding of martyrdom is not only bound up with Islam; deserving to be named martyr also requires loyalty to the Turkish state. It can be argued that in the discourse of national unity, victimhood and sacrifice work together in giving meaning to the death of their sons (Aslan: 2008). Although some families explain martyrdom only in terms of Islam, the meaning of the statement "having a status on both sides of the eternal life" goes beyond the religious framework. The narrators here refer to their "status" in the eyes of the state, society, and often also military. Thus, they construct "martyrdom" in the context of Islam, afterlife, and loyalty to the Turkish state and nation.

As will be discussed later on, in contrast to families of TAF soldiers, none of the families of PKK members mentioned foreseeing the death of their children, dreams, and other mystic elements in their narratives on martyrdom. They glorified the death or "disappearance" of their children as rebellion against oppressive powers. Despite of the absence of religious references such as *öteki dünya*, "aspiring to the level of martyrdom in the eye of God," or mystic elements in their narratives on the "martyrdom" of PKK members, they do not think that their children are non-Muslims. The crucial point is that religion is not a key concept through which families of PKK members construct martyrdom. However, as will be shown later, this does not mean that martyrdom does not play a key role in marginalizing the deaths of the other side and in consecrating the death of the own family members.

To sum up, there are some differences in the conceptualization of martyrdom in terms of references to Islam and mystic elements. However, in both the case of families of TAF soldiers and of PKK members who died in the armed conflict, martyrdom is conceptualized in the same way as the proof of the sincerity of the faith of a cause.

4.2. The Turkish State in the Context of Hegemony and Ideology

Starting from Gramsci, different perspectives on ideology and hegemony were presented in previous chapters. Despite variations in defining hegemony and in explaining its relation with the concept of ideology, there is a consensus that hegemony is about persuading people of the legitimacy of a belief system. This aim of persuading people can be fulfilled through consent and coercion mechanisms. It is obvious that, when people challenge the hegemonic power, they will have to face the use of violence by the latter. However, since coercion is not sufficient to make people believe in the rightfulness of a system, ideology works for the articulation of people and for making them give their consent to the hegemonic power.

Cook (2007) argues that martyrdom and the body of a martyr, since s/he is known as the witness of the rightfulness and faith of the cause for which s/he sacrifices his/her life, become instruments for a belief system to persuade people of its rightfulness. In the context of the conflict between the PKK and TAF, the martyrdom of soldiers of the TAF becomes one of the means through which people demonstrate their consent to the existing hegemony. While martyrdom proves the faith in one system, it also shows the cruelty of the opposing one. In this sense, Cook (2007) claims that the bodies of martyrs differentiate one system from others in terms of its legitimacy. Drawing on this argument by Cook (2007), I argue that martyrdom serves to empower the security-oriented approach towards conflict resolution. This is due to the fact that calling the deaths of soldiers "martyrdom" presents the TAF as rightful, whereas naming the dead PKK members terrorists evokes the cruelty of that side of the armed conflict.

The audiences are to be persuaded with this binary to consent to the dominant approach towards the conflict. For example, in the commemoration ceremony of martyrs of the Çanakkale Battle on March 18, 2009 at the Cebeci Cemetry in Ankara, the main theme of the speeches given by high-ranking soldiers was that "these brave

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soldiers of TAF sacrificed their lives for the sake of the Turkish nation and the state; so we have the responsibility to protect their inheritance and that which they died for." In addition, İlker Başbuğ, the chief of staff, declared in his message on the same day, the Days of Martyrs, that "the power, prestige, honor, peace *(huzur)*, independence, and future of our great nation lie behind the notion of martyr." These declarations by the military present "martyrdom" as a proof of the faith in and loyalty to the Turkish nation. Thus, the audiences are given the mission to be respectful of the inheritance of the martyrs, which requires loyalty to the state and homeland.

As has been shown, despite variations in the connotations of the notion, hegemony is mainly based on acquiring the consent of people. Additionally, people's subject positions, which are related to how they respond to social and political affairs, are emphasized, since they are mostly shaped by and through discourse and ideology. This relationship between hegemony, ideology, discourse, and subject positions is crucial in the context of this research, because the families of people who die in the conflict are transformed into the "devoted families of the Turkish nation" and into the "families of guerillas," and their subject positions are determined in this framework. Since the perceptions of families of TAF soldiers and PKK militants of the armed conflict are also shaped by different, mostly conflicting, discourses and ideologies, their demands, responses, and solutions in relation to the termination of the armed conflict are incompatible.

4.2.1 'Devoted' Families of the Turkish Nation

It can be suggested that the sudden death of their sons transforms families of TAF soldiers into the "devoted families of the Turkish nation." As Laclau & Mouffe (2008) argue, subjects occupy instable subject positions, they can be interpellated by various ideologies, and they can possibly come to occupy other subject positions.

The sudden death of their son for the "sake of the nation" became the central event through which family members of TAF soldiers were reconstructed as mother/father of a martyr, and they answered to this interpellation. There are several reasons for this identity reconstruction, such as their socialization process through other similar families, the great emphasis of the Turkish state as well as the media on families of martyrs, and last but not least, the close contact between the TAF and those families.

These families were ordinary citizens who had never communicated directly with any politician or military member at high ranks or participated in any kind of political activity and public demonstration before the death of their sons.[20] Nevertheless, after the death of their sons, they were suddenly transformed by dominant state ideology into "devoted families of the Turkish nation." This does not mean that they were not addressed by dominant ideology before the death of their sons; however with that loss, they were called upon directly by this ideology and came to act in the framework of "devoted families of the nation" and as icons of the "love of country". They were used to being interpellated as good Turkish citizens of the nation by official ideology; however, the death of their sons deepened their relation with the Turkish state as well as with official ideology. Henceforth, they formed direct relations with the state and military and became a "screen" for the latter. In brief, on the basis of nationalist discourse in which male citizens are expected to defend the national territory at the expense of loosing their life, the "families of martyrs" take the subject position of the devoted families of the Turkish nation.

When it comes to other possible subject positions, it seems important to note that families of TAF soldiers started to primarily refer to themselves as the families of a martyr and to express their ideas or demands through that identity. Rather than placing emphasis on being a woman, Turkish, Muslim, mother, father, poor, citizen,

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[20] There was only one mother of a soldier who said that she used to be an active member of the MHP (Nationalist Action Party), which is a nationalist, right-wing party in Turkey.

worker, and so forth, they gave meaning to all their experiences on the basis of being a mother or father of a martyr. When I participated in their daily conversations in the administrative building at Cebeci cemetery, where they gathered, read religious pieces, prayed, and chatted, it was interesting to witness how they explained injustice and any negative experience through being a mother or father of a martyr. For example, they felt that it was unjust that they were kept waiting in a hospital for treatment, since they were the parent of a martyr. They attributed their difficult economic conditions and inability to meet basic needs to the "luxurious" life conditions of Abdullah Öcalan,[21] "who is maintained by the Turkish state." Their point here was not that they were sacred persons in terms of religion because they are the families of martyrs who "witness the faith of God." Rather, they thought that they deserved a high status because they sacrificed their sons for the sake of the state, nation, and flag.

When families of soldiers are asked about their primary demand from the state, their most common answer is the execution of Abdullah Öcalan, because for them he has caused all of their children to die at a very young age. Among the interviewees, there are two fathers and two mothers whose sons did not die in the armed conflict with the PKK; however, this did not prevent them from demanding the elimination of the PKK and the execution of Abdullah Öcalan. Although the conflict between the PKK and TAF did not cause the death of their sons, they had identical narratives with those who lost their sons in that conflict. This situation is not surprising, because for "martyrdom to succeed there must be an absolute evil upon which the audience can focus their revulsion" (Cook 2007:3). Selime, whose son drowned, said that she also participated in the court case of Öcalan in order to demand his execution:

> What could we demand from the state? All our aim is to punish
> the person in Imrali, I do not want to mention his name. We do
> not have any other demand. We have already sacrificed what
> we could, sending condolences is not enough.

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[21]Abdullah Öcalan is the head of the PKK. He was imprisoned in 1999. He lives on the İmrali island as the only prisoner of the institution. In Turkey, there is a hot debate about his prison conditions due to the high cost of reserving a prison for just one person.

Since the Turkish state "fails" to fulfill the demand of executing Öcalan, which all families of dead TAF soldiers shared regardless of the way their sons had died, its legitimacy, reliability, and power are being challenged. Mahmut (the assistant of the head of ŞADF), whose son was a lieutenant who had died, said:

> I demand implementation of the death sentence from this society, the Turkish Republic, non-governmental organizations, and also the military. When this death sentence was abolished, the Turkish Republic is now invalid for me.

Such hate towards the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan as well as towards Kurdish politicians, based on perceiving them as the "absolute evil," can be partly attributed to the way that the families socialize in the community of families of martyrs. What makes all the families of dead soldiers come together, is the pain resulting from the loss of their sons. For these families, the main reasons for their loss are the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan as its leader, and Kurdish politicians and other supporters of the Kurdish oppositional movement. The hate toward them needs to be considered in the framework of the binary opposition between the "just" and "evil" sides of armed conflict. In the case of Turkish state ideology, the "evil" side appears as pro-Kurdish activists, politicians, and Öcalan, and their elimination is seen to be required for the ending of conflict. In that respect, the family members of dead soldiers usually say that they do not give their blessing to those who support the Kurdish movement. Because their pain is caused by the PKK, they are closely attached to one another. As Fatma said: "It hurts us to see other people laughing; however, if the families of martyrs laugh, we say they are the family of a martyr, and we become very happy."

Beside this socialization within the families of martyrs, their stance towards the issue is also an outcome of the "interpellation" by dominant ideology and of their subject positions. Regardless of the reason for loosing their sons, due to the fact that they are named "families of martyrs," they are expected to act as subjects who are the "devoted families of the nation" and do not hesitate to sacrifice their son for the sake of the Turkish nation. As all the families of TAF soldiers are the icons of "the self-

sacrifice for the Turkish nation," regardless of the way their sons were "martyred," they strongly oppose the "evil" side of the Turkish nation, as this evil caused the death of their sons. In that sense, it can be claimed that hating the "evil" enables people on the "just" side of the armed conflict to develop solidarity amongst each other.

As was mentioned, being a mother or father of a martyr is sufficient for legitimately expressing demands of the state. In addition to being legitimized, the demands of these subjects are rationalized. While other people, especially the sons of politicians, were sleeping in their warm beds, their sons were fighting under harsh conditions for a sacred cause, one that aims to eliminate evil through coercive methods. They would never have preferred such a death of their sons; however, because of the positive attributions of the dominant ideology to the "defense of territory" and the "sacrificing of one's life for the nation," the demands of these families become incontestably rational. Thus, ideology goes beyond simply 'expressing' social interests, it also rationalizes them (Eagleton 1991:84).

4.2.2. The Significance of being Families of Martyrs in Hegemony

The families of the "martyrs" are important for the enhancement and continuity of hegemony in two senses. In the first place, their sons are the "martyrs" of the nation and thus demonstrate a strong commitment to the nation and Turkish state. With the martyrdom of soldiers, the faith in and loyalty to the Turkish state and the obedience to its hegemony become more concrete, whereas any ideology or action opposing the Turkish state is condemned. As Cook (2007:2) states:

> The martyr must have belief in one belief system and possess a willingness to defy another belief system. He or she will stand at the defining point where belief and unbelief meet and define the relationship between the two.

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Moreover, as the soldiers fought the PKK for the Turkish nation-state, their "martyrdom" constitutes a bridge between the past, which is a source of pride, and the contemporary situation. March 18, the Day of Martyrs, is celebrated as the memorial day of the "Martyrs of Gallipoli". The Battle of Gallipoli was fought during World War I (1914-1918). It cost the Allies 141,113 and the Turks 195,000 men killed and wounded and proved to be the Turks' greatest victory in the war.[22] However, the participants in the ceremony were not the family members of the martyrs of the Battle of Gallipoli, but families of soldiers who either died during the armed conflict with the PKK – or other political armed groups which challenged the Turkish state and military[23] - or for other reasons while they were on duty.[24] Nevertheless, the speeches and messages of both generals and the chief of staff emphasized the martyrs of the Battle of Gallipoli. Similarly, it is interesting that in the web messages of the chief of staff, the soldiers who fought the PKK are not mentioned. This identification of two moments of "martyrdom" recalls Hobsbawm's (1992:7) concept of "invented traditions":

> Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.

According to Hobsbawm, invented traditions are attempts to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. The reference to the Battle of Gallipoli links the formation of the Turkish nation-state to the contemporary conflict with the PKK. As ancestors of

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[22] http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/worldwari/p/gallipoli.htm

[23] Due to the context of this research, I only mention the PKK as the armed group which challenges the TAF and Turkish state. However, there are some families whose sons died in the armed conflict between the TAF and other armed groups such as TIKKO (Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army) which is an armed faction of an illegal political party called Maoist TKP-ML (Turkish Communist Party- Marxist Leninist)

[24] Four interviewees said that their sons did not die in the armed conflict. One of these soldiers died as a result of a defect in a helicopter, two of them drowned, and one died in a traffic accident.

the Turkish nation proved their loyalty and love of the country to the world by beating its enemies, the contemporary soldiers fighting the PKK do the same. This perspective is also effective in the narratives of families of soldiers. As Gönül, the mother of a soldier who died during an armed conflict in Hakkari Çukurca, said: "The grandfather of my son was martyred in the Battle of Gallipoli. Now, I see the grandchild and the grandfather united."

In this regard, Rosoux (2004:86) argues that martyrdom attaches present events to the past in the context of official memory:

> Official memory is dependent on the way in which the past is adjusted to present circumstances. The events described in official speeches or texts often occurred long ago. While the aim of these official representations is rarely to inform the listeners of past events, they nevertheless contain interesting clues regarding the author's position towards the past.

While the first reason of the importance of families of soldiers concerns the bodies of their children, as these illustrate the rightfulness of and loyalty to the Turkish nation, the second reason of their significance is about the self-representation of these families. They are the families of "brave, selfless, devoted" men who protect *womenandchildren*[25] and the motherland. Their families have to be worthy of them. Most of the mothers and fathers of TAF soldiers said that they usually abstain from crying in public in order not to make the "enemy" laugh in the face of their "success." For them, the families of soldiers who cry publicly harm their own sons. Thus, they try to present themselves as the icons of self-sacrifice and love of nation. They try to appear proud of the self-sacrifice of their sons. This attitude of the families of dead soldiers provides approval for the decisions and actions of the TAF and the state. Despite loosing their son in the conflict, they express their pride in their son and trust in the TAF. Through such attitudes, the families of soldiers show that

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[25] This expression is coined by Enloe (2000).

they consent to and obey the existing hegemony and that the authorities are legitimate for them.

4.2.3. Suspicion about the State

The Turkish constitution of 1982 states in section 5, article 72 that national military service is both a right and a duty of every Turk. For a man to fulfill his manhood in the patriarchal community as a breadwinner of the house, he is obliged to do his national duty, military service. It is not possible for a man in Turkey to be employed for a regular job unless he completes his military service first. Additionally, it is hard for him to get married and become the "head" of a nuclear family as the breadwinner: a family of a woman would usually not agree to their daughter's marriage with a man who has not completed his military service and is thus considered to be not yet a "real man". According to widespread belief, a young man cannot occupy his expected role in social life before the military service. This is the reason behind the typical postponements of marriage and the difficulties of getting a stable and well-paying job before the military service (Altınay 2004:67). In brief, the military service is an obstacle for males to fulfill their expected roles as breadwinners and in social life (Altınay 2004: 67).

The military service and being a soldier is not only presented as a service to the state, but as a "right". This aspect of the military service is related to its function in defining forms of masculinity. It is seen as "a rite of passage to manhood, and those men who have not been through it are made to experience a "lack"" (Altınay 2004:82).

The military service is promoted as an indispensable part of manhood, and the fact that the "right" to it is accorded only to men defines males as the "real" citizens and main members of the national community. Nevertheless, the need for human

resources for the army cannot be met unless it is a forced duty. Only in this way it is possible to gather a sufficient number of men for the service. Thus, I argue that despite the prominent discourse on masculinity and its relationship with the military, it requires further controls and force to persuade men to do their military service.

Soldiering, which becomes an exam for manhood and for the internalization of militaristic practices, transforms men into combatants ready for killing and being killed. It also depends on the existence of such an "exam" (Sancar 2009: 155) for assessing manhood. While military service is defined through rights and duties and perceived as a rite of passage to manhood, soldiering in conflict zones is presented as a proof of bravery for males. Since the manhood of soldiers is also examined through "killing and being killed," soldiering in conflict zones and martyrdom become the main part of the "exam."

> Many masculinities in the world's varied cultures are constituted in the practice of fighting: to be a real man is to be ready to fight and, ultimately, to kill and to die. That for which men are often encouraged by their leaders to sacrifice themselves is the safety and honour of women and children. (Cockburn 2001:20)

However, in the interviews it was obvious that none of the parents had been willing to send their sons to the "heart of fire". The interviewees among families of TAF soldiers told me that they were scared and sad when they learned that their sons were being sent to the conflict zone in the Southeast of Turkey. Most of the parents said that they tried to pull strings for their sons to arrange an easier and safer period of military service. However, their propositions were strongly rejected by their sons because of their feelings about the "nation" and "being a Turk". The families of soldiers were shocked by the sudden death of their sons and defined the "martyrdom" of their sons as "injustice" inflicted by ("evil") "terrorists." At the same time, however, the fact that they had died as martyrs became a source of pride for them.

The death of their sons, which brings them high positions at each period of the eternal life, is usually understood through the concept of fate. For most of the parents, however, the death of their sons goes beyond fate, although it is God who "takes back and gives life." They did not reject the role of fate in the death of their sons, because this would go against their belief in God and entail the risk of abandoning religion. However, without rejecting the great role of God and the destiny ascertained by God, they usually also acknowledged the role of social, economic, and political factors that resulted in their sons being sent to dangerous zones.

For them, it is clear enough that the sons of parliamentarians, soldiers at high ranks such as colonels, rich people and business men, etc., do not die in the conflict. Moreover, they assume that the sons of such "privileged" people have a very comfortable time during their military service. The most common example given by the interviewees is the son of Tansu Çiller, Mert Çiller, who did his military service when Çiller was the prime minister. He was soldiering "in front of his mother's house" and was known to have had the "chance" to spend his weekends at home. The families mentioned that he spent the military service like a holiday.

In her research about the mothers of soldiers and PKK members, Sancar (2001:26) points out:

> For the mothers of martyrs, the death is not just; the children of the poor die but the children of the riches are safe. This injustice sometimes causes them to rebel. Their anger is directed at the "politicians" who become the only ones which the mothers of martyrs can blame.

The "rebellion" against this injustice was also noticeable in the narratives of the interviewees in my research. As Mahmut stated: "All martyrs are the sons of *ayağı çarıklı* (very poor) people, there is no son of a factory-owner or a parliamentarian."

Moreover, Naime (56, lost her son in Hakkari Çukurca) said: "There is also a song about this. The rich pay and all our martyrs are among the poor."

Thus, according to their narratives, there is a clear discrimination in the distribution of soldiers to the dangerous zones where a conflict is possible. This discrimination creates many questions and suspicions about the reliability of the state. When I asked the interviewees whether they would say *vatan sağ olsun*,[26] none of them responded "Yes, *vatan sağolsun*" without hesitation. What is remarkable is that they felt angry about this expression. Selime said: "Why should I bestow my son to this nation? While everyone is enjoying their time, I am caressing my son's gravestone."

Wile their answer was "no" to this question, they tried to rationalize and find some explanation for their negative answer. In doing so, their primary emphasis was on affairs of the state and parliament. They were blaming politicians who "sell the country to the foreigners" and let Kurdish parliamentarians speak in the parliament, "feed Abdullah Öcalan," and do not punish Kurdish people who demonstrate against the state. It can be argued that the families of soldiers expect the Turkish state to be as powerful as possible in the face of the "evil" in order to eliminate it.

As mentioned previously, the attitudes of the authorities are considered since they take into account the social, economic, and political positions of families of soldiers in allocating them to the service. As a result, the sons of "privileged" people have a comfortable military service, while the *halkın çocukları* (people's sons) die for the benefit of the nation. Although the parents felt a sort of pride for being a father or mother of a martyr, they asked for a fairer allocation of soldiers and did not disguise that they had tried to pull strings in order to secure a safe place for the military service of their son. In addition, they tried to find "help" for protecting their sons from the danger of "martyrdom," which they consider the highest position on either

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[26]The expression means: "Do you bestow your son to this nation?" (I take this translation from Gedik 2008)

side of life. However, despite this, and although none of the families of soldiers said *vatan sağolsun* in the interviews, their declaration on their website and magazine is completely different:

> We are the families of martyrs who died for the unity of the homeland, flag, *ezan* and the continuity of the state. Our children struggled against the PKK terror organization in order to fulfill the command given by the state. Even when we see the case of our children on which there is a Turkish flag, all of the families of martyrs say *vatan sağolsun*.[27]

In brief, although the families of soldiers actually do not sacrifice their sons for the nation, they have to declare that they do. These contradicting attitudes of the families recall the manservant example given by Eagleton (1991:88) in his discussion of practical consciousness and official ideology, which are usually seen together and also as in conflict with each other:

> But a manservant might swing with such bewildering rapidity between admiring his master and betraying withering contempt for him that we might conclude that he held, in effect, two mutually contradictory beliefs at one and the same time. The admiration no doubt belongs to his 'official' ideology, whereas the contempt arises from his 'practical consciousness.'

Although the families critiqued the unjust acts of the state, such as sending the sons of poor people to conflict areas while protecting the sons of the "privileged," they could not fully blame the state –despite many suspicions about it – and the "military" for the death of their sons. From their perspectives, despite all, the existence and continuity of the Turkish unitary nation-state was more important than anything else, since the existence of the "homeland" is indispensable for their own survival. As Aydın (2005) argues, the state as an institution can be criticized, however, the absence of it is unimaginable due to its "father" role of keeping things and people

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[27] http://www.sehitler.org/

together. In its absence, there is no guarantee for survival, as the state guarantees their existence.

In the contemporary situation of Turkey, the PKK is represented as the prime enemy of the Turkish Republic which urgently needs to be eliminated by the armed operations of the Turkish military. The existence of such an enemy and the continuous discourse on the danger constituted by the PKK mobilize people's nationalist emotions and legitimize the operations by the Turkish military in which *halkın çocukları* have the risk to be injured and to die. As the families of soldiers would feel "insecure" in the case of a powerless country, they have no choice but to obey the authority of the Turkish Republic, even if their sons die to "promote" its interest. Families of soldiers sharply criticize the state's indifference and injustice and at the same time have the desire for a strengthened Turkish nation-state. This state-oriented perspective is shaped by the dominant ideology which conveys that there is no better alternative to the present system. Following Aydın (2005:21), the nation is the cultural idea which is the origin of the uniqueness of each unique state. Thus, "the primary responsibility of the members of the nation is to protect the state which is the guarantee of their own existence, believe its eternality and work for its maintenance." Therefore, people internalize that "the society is for the state" (Clastres 2000:174) and want to protect their state even though it sends their children to the conflict. Moreover, this desire of families of TAF soldiers for a strengthened state is compatible with the security-oriented approach of the Turkish state towards the conflict between the TAF and PKK.

The unwelcome outcomes and features of the present system are represented as inevitable. The Turkish nation has some enemies; for the benefit of the nation, for all people, the military has the mission to eliminate the enemy, and during this struggle it is not surprising that some people are "martyred". In this way, dominant ideology helps to reconceptualize the unwelcome outcomes of the present system and to deny that anything better could be conceived (Eagleton 1991). As Fatma said: "I have

never said that I bestow my son to the nation. Well, of course the state and the homeland should exist, otherwise we will be slaves."

Eagleton (1991:27) suggests that "the majority of people have a fairly sharp eye to their own rights and interests, and most people feel uncomfortable at the thought of belonging to a seriously unjust form of life." In that regard, the dominant ideology works to eliminate the possibility of any challenge to the present system that may emerge from the families of martyrs by reconceptualizing the interests of people as well as its unwelcome results. For example, the continuity of this system may require solving the Kurdish problem by using direct violence, although this brings about the death of many young people. It is obvious that many people should take a position for the termination of armed conflict on the basis of their own interest; however, the dominant ideology here reminds people that the state's and the military's interest is also the interest of the people. This recalls the concept of hegemony, as the latter requires the representation of the interest of one group as the interest of all. Moreover, the notion of martyrdom serves dominant ideology as it promises high positions both in this life and in the afterlife.

The dominant ideology may falsify social reality, suppressing and excluding certain unwelcome features of it, or suggesting that these features cannot be avoided (Eagleton 1991: 27). In the context of this study, the soldiers died at a very early age, during what is called "the spring" of their lives (*hayatlarının baharında*). They had many plans about their families, fiancées, children, and careers. Similarly, their parents reserved the greatest part of their narratives to their plans for their sons. Thus, the sudden death of their sons brought about a significant absence in their life cycle. Their sons sacrificed their life on behalf of the Turkish state and the nation. The parents are not questioning the good faith of the state's reasons for protecting the borders of the nation and eliminating the "enemy." They only ask: "Why my son?" The male members of the nation bear the inevitable mission to protect the country against the present as well as the possible enemies of the state.

While the sorrow and pain of the families provokes some form of "rebellion" on their part, they do not raise their voices in order to ask for peace and a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in Turkey. In fact, when they were asked about ways of resolving the problem in Turkey and preventing *halkın çocukları* to die, none of the interviewees mentioned the word "peace". Instead of a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict, they were suggesting "powerful" governors who would be honest and work only for the welfare of the nation and state rather than their own interest, just as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had done during his era. Furthermore, the stated necessity for big military operations against the PKK –which in fact requires the military to send more soldiers to the dangerous zones – is remarkable in their narratives.

4.2.4. The 'Above Politics' Position of the TAF

In the context of the perception of families of TAF soldiers of the Turkish state and the TAF, it is crucial to note that families of soldiers do not criticize the Turkish military, although they are resentful and furious about some state affairs. When they explain why they cannot say *vatan sağolsun*, they say that it is due to their negative views of the acts of the state. They do not perceive the acts or decisions of the TAF, which is seen as the most respectful institution in Turkey, in a negative light. Even the parents whose son died in a military operation in Iraq did not criticize military affairs. Sinclair (2000: 80) sees this respectful position of the army as its ultimate success:

> Perhaps the ultimate success of the army in controlling responses to and inducing consent among much of the population becomes evident in the lack of criticism of the army by even those who have lost conscript sons.

According to the results of the World Values Survey 2006, the Turkish army is seen as the most trustworthy institution in Turkey, as 65.3 percent of the people state that they trust the army "quite a lot" or "a great deal." The position of the TAF is seen the

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same by all my interviewees among family members of TAF soldiers who died in the armed conflict. Clearly, the TAF is for them the most influential institution, which tries to make them feel "special."[28] In my interviews with these families, all of the respondents considered the TAF and the Turkish state as separate entities, and in that separation, the TAF had an honorable position (Sancar 2001: 35) beyond criticism. For the families of soldiers, the TAF is an institution which does not have close relationships with the state, at times conflicts with the state, and works for the benefit of the nation. In turn, the state, especially the parliament, is seen as always attempting to withdraw the existing rights and privileges[29] reserved for the families of martyrs, unless the military protects their rights and privileges. Moreover, according to their narrative, the Turkish state does not show any kind of interest towards them, the only formal institution who preserves their rights is the TAF. Rather than criticizing the military, they have the impression that the TAF is the only

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[28]As I learned from the families, the members of the Turkish military regularly visited them at home on special days such as Bayrams, New Year, and Mothers' Day. Moreover, they claim that the members of the military regularly call them on the phone and ask about their needs. For these families, the members of the military care about every detail of their lives, which makes them feel very special. Since the families of soldiers feel "excluded" and not cared about by anyone, feeling special is crucial in their lives. On March 18, 2009, which is the Day of Martyrs, the ceremony was attended by students from primary schools, high schools, military schools with their teachers leading them, the military band and military staff, and each of these groups of people stood in the places reserved for them at Anıtkabir. While there were no particular places reserved for the families of martyrs, one could clearly identify them just by looking at their appearance, behavior, and attitude. Several military cars were reserved for the families of martyrs to take them to the cemetery for the rest of the ceremony. I was also in one of them to go there together with the families. It was snowy and cold, so many students were complaining about the cold, beckoning the families in the cars, and asking each other why these families were special. Those questions were easily hearable from inside the car. The reactions of the families were noteworthy; they were smiling with pride and saying: "We are here, so there really must be something special about us."

[29]After loosing their sons in the conflict, their families are provided a salary and *kan parası* (blood money) in line with the rank of their sons in the military and the cause of death. Moreover they are granted rights such as paying a reduced rate for public transportation. One of the family members is employed in a public institution, and the brother of a martyr is exempted from the military service. Although such privileges can provide relief for those families, especially the poor ones, rather than economic returns, the families more appreciate other "advantages" which cannot be bought with money, such as having a meal with generals, being invited to a lunch by the wife of a general, visits by high-ranked military staff, or special transportation reserved for families of martyrs on the ceremonies of the Day of Martyrdom. Their words about and attitudes towards military staff show clearly that such events are extremely important for them and have a significant effect on their identity construction as "*şehit ailesi*" (family of martyr). One of the mothers of a soldier, Gülten, said: "I am proud of my son. Thanks to my son I can have a meal with the generals at the same table".

institution that takes the side of martyrs and sympathizes with them. The statement "we have only the military, in the case of its absence, we cannot do anything, the state will take everything from us" is quite common among them.

4.2.5. A Brief Overview over the Position of the TAF in Turkish Political Life

Despite of the representation of the Turkish military as not having close ties with the state, Narli (2000:108) argues that since Ottoman period the military has an important position in politics :

> Ottoman society was divided into two categories: the sultan, the military and, the ulema at the top, and subjects (reaya), comprising a large proportion of peasants, at the bottom. The civil and military bureaucracies acted as intermediaries between the two classes. The Ottoman tradition of close military-state ties continued into Republican era, giving the armed forces a preeminent role in society extending into the civil sphere.

From the beginning of the Turkish Republic, the Turkish army was attributed great responsibility and centrality in Turkish politics. As Atatürk declared in his speech on May 2, 1960 at TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey): "The military organization is closely attached to domestic and international political affairs –as well as martial affairs - for protecting the homeland" (cited in Bayramoğlu 2004).

The TAF declares itself the "guardian" of laicisim and Kemalist principles in Turkey. Even primary school textbooks from the early years of the Republic strongly emphasize how Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who was a soldier, initiated secularist changes such as the abolishment of the Caliphate and the banning of religious places such as *tekke*s and *zaviye*s in 1925. Before the establishment of the Republic, especially in the period 1913-1918 in which Mustafa Kemal consolidated his power, he pushed through a program of modernization and secularization (Zurcher 2002:251). The "success" of this program cannot be separated from the support from

the military. Although both Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü seemed to be separate from the military in appearance, their power was always based on the military (Demirel 2002:360).

When it comes to the issue of "martyrs", especially the ones who died in the struggle with the PKK, it can be argued that the military, the state discourse, and Islam are in unprecedented collaboration. This collaboration and the military's sympathy for Islam in this particular case needs to be discussed in relation to the unique relationship between the state and religion in the context of laicism, that is, the Kemalist version of secularism. While secularism refers to a distinction between the state and religion, in the Turkish experience with secularism, it meant less the separation of those authorities than state control over religion (Zurcher 2002:272). In addition, religion is manipulated according to political necessities, while the aim is to prevent the manipulation of religion by challengers of the new system as well as to impose a form of Islam that is compatible with modernity (Demirel 2002: 362). The TAF, in its messages about martyrdom, often makes references to Islam, since martyrdom is sacred in this religion. Bora (2004) emphasizes the inclination of the Turkish Military to incorporate religious conceptions of holiness into nationalism by attributing religious values to the nation:

> The war and national mobilization atmosphere and militaristic practices play a prominent role in the process of transformation of Islamic identity as well as in the references to the new nation state's system of ideals. The holiness of "Jihad and Martyrdom" is confined to "defending the homeland" and "national independence". Moreover, the occasions of enthusiasm, emotions, mourning and the losses which can be understood in a nationalist framework emerge in this practice. In addition, all are aesthetized through emphasizing this practice. (Bora 2004:168)

Since the early years of the Turkish Republic, the "strained" relationship between the TAF and religious institutions as well as mostly Islam-oriented political parties has been on the agenda and determinant in Turkish political life. First, it can be

suggested that the military and the governing party AKP today have a strained relationship since AKP is a religion-oriented party and comes from the tradition of National View (Milli Görüş).[30] I argue that the families of soldiers consider the state and the military as completely separate due to the lack of conformity between these institutions. Second, beside the incompatibility with the governing political party, the "above politics" position of the TAF might make them think that the military is separate from the state.[31]

As regards the TAF's guardianship of secularism and Kemalist principles, Cizre (2006) draws attention to the relation between the TAF military and official ideology. According to her, there are two axes through which the TAF and official ideology are connected. The first one is the "above politics"[32] position of the TAF, which represents itself as removed from any political affair or type of ideology. Its representation as "above politics" is crucial in the perception of the military by the people, as in general people do not criticize the legitimacy of the TAF's affairs. Cizre (1997) argues that "the ultimate justification for the military's political predominance rests on its 'guardianship of the national interest,' of which maintaining national unity is considered to be the most important component." Birand (1986) also mentions that soldiers in Turkey "are taught that being soldier is different from other

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[30] Nationalist View is a political movement initiated by Necmettin Erbakan who established Milli Nizam Partisi in 1970. His discourse was shaped around industrialization, development, and economic independence as well as a critique of Western norms. The movement remains associated with a religious-political movement and a series of Islamist parties inspired by Erbakan. Those parties were banned for violating Turkey's laïcité legislation. They are the Welfare (Refah) Party abolished in 1998, the Virtue (Fazilet) Party banned in 1991, the Felicity (Saadet) Party, which still represents Erbakan's old guard, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is the present governing party.

[31] The main difference between the TAF and AKP government used to be on religion issues such as the problem of headscarf. However, from the beginning of 2008, the Kurdish problem and AKP's Kurdish opening has become the second prominent point where the different positions of the TAF and AKP crystallize.

[32] In contrast to the TAF's self representation as "above politics," Beşikçi (1993) argues that the state and government are separate institutions, while the Turkish military forms part of the state. In this separation, Beşikçi (1993) mentions, it is the TAF who determines Turkish political life, whereas the Turkish Assembly has not the capacity to criticize the "state's" decisions and instead has to obey to and approve of them.

jobs in the sense that soldiers are the key responsibles for the continuity of the state and the guardians of the homeland and the state" (cited in Demirel 2002: 348).

The subjects of ideologies do not necessarily have to admit that their behavior is shaped by some sort of ideology. Moreover, people usually declare that they are removed from and not affected by ideologies, that they are telling the "truth" and talking about the "facts". This is strongly related with the pejorative meanings and connotations of the term ideology. According to McLellan (2005), being ideological pertains to "the other". The suggestion that our ideas can be ideological is always refused, since this possibility challenges the foundations of what we value. This perception of ideology is apparent in the narratives of families of martyrs since they claim that they keep away from political parties and any form of ideology. They further state that "we support every political party who works for the welfare of the nation and our door is open for everyone except the traitors." This discourse is very similar to the the TAF's self-representation, as they are known as "the guardian of the nation's interest." From a different perspective, "promoting the nation's interest" or naming someone a "traitor" can be seen as ideological attitudes. Briefly, just as the TAF represents itself as above-politics, so the families of soldiers see themselves as not connected to any ideology or political institution.

According to Cizre (2006), the second point of connection between official ideology and the TAF is about the reproduction of the official ideology by the TAF. As Cizre (2006:156) argues: The "Turkish Military reproduces the official ideology by dispersing it to the fabric of the institutions, system, actors and also hearts of the actors and consciousness."

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the military is in an honorable position and above politics from the perspectives of families of soldiers as well as the majority of the population. However, that does not mean that the families of soldiers think that the military must not interfere in political affairs. To the contrary, they

attribute an authoritative mission to the TAF, namely, that it should interfere in politics while none of the other institutions should intervene in the Military's decisions. Thus, what Narli observes about the majority of the Turkish population is also true for the families of soldiers, namely, that they "accept the military as the guardian of democracy, secularism, and national unity and approve of the military's involvement in politics" (2000:116). The privileged position of the TAF is acceptable for them (Demirel 2002). As families of soldiers think they cannot do anything to solve the problem and stop the conflict, they ask for justice, which is the business of others (Solomon 2004:23), namely, of the TAF. The perception that the TAF must be engaged in politics and take responsibility if there is a problem can be attributed to the internalization of a militarist perspective in which the problems are to be solved through coercive methods and elimination of the "evil." All of the families think that the politicians should be controlled and should not be let to do anything they want, especially in terms of the Kurdish question and conscription laws.[33] Asiye, one of the mothers of a soldier, briefly explained the role of the TAF as follows: "The solution (for the conflict) is the job of the military, they will do best, and none of us, including the parliamentarians and politicians, should interfere in their decision".

4.3. The Identity of Families of the PKK and Martyrdom

The relation between Kurdish people of Turkey and the Turkish Republic can be studied on different levels and read from different perspectives. The Kurdish problem can be read as backwardness of the Kurdish population, as an obstacle for real development which can be eliminated through education, as a problem of terrorism which can be overcome by military operations, or as an ethno-political

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[33] In addition to the acts of parliament on the Kurdish question, the families of dead soldiers sharply criticised their policies on conscription law. In the context of this law, they emphasized the aim of the parliament to legislate paid military service. This aim of the parliament is considered by them to be a betrayal of the nation.

issue (Yeğen 2006). As discussed in the first chapter of this study, the armed conflict in Turkey is mostly dealt with in the context of terrorism and its termination is pursued through eliminating the "evil" part. This perspective on the armed conflict in Turkey and the Kurdish movement plays a major role in marginalizing Kurdish people's demands, in relegating them to the position of the "other," as well as in categorizing Turkish and Kurdish people as "opposite" sides. For this reason, although there exists a wide range of frameworks, this study approaches the relation between the Turkish state and Kurdish population and the reconstruction and representations of the Kurdish question in terms of the points where they construct the Turkish and Kurdish people as in opposition to each other and render it impossible to develop a common voice for peace.

In this part, the focus will be on the strained relationship between the Turkish state and the Kurdish people in order to understand the latter's feelings of being ignored, oppressed, and excluded. Besides, the politics and representation of the PKK and its significant role in shaping the Kurdish population's perspective on the Turkish state will be touched upon. This second point is taken as very important since it is closely associated with the identity construction of families of PKK members and their perspectives on families of TAF soldiers who died in the armed conflict.

The points of view of families of PKK members differ sharply from those of families of TAF soldiers in the sense that the latter place strong emphasis on loyalty to the state and Islam whereas for the former, the loyalty to the state and nation is replaced with "being oppressed by the state". This opposition is not unexpected due to the decades-long and continuing harsh conflict between the Turkish army and PKK. The families' positioned in this conflict are not limited to the conflict zone and include both families of PKK members and ordinary people. It can be argued that the perspectives of these families on the conflict are reflected in their perception of martyrdom. While the previous part was reserved for a discussion of how families of TAF soldiers who died in the conflict conceptualize martyrdom, the conflict

between the PKK and TAF will be read in this part through the martyrdom perceptions of families of PKK members.

The conflict is not limited to the conflict zones between the TAF and PKK, but also distinctively affects the world view of ordinary people. Since the families of soldiers and PKK members are directly affected by the outcomes of this armed conflict, their points of view are obviously shaped by it. Moreover, because they are "situated" as opposite sides, their ways of regarding the conflict and martyrdom differ. However, the common point between these families, namely, the loss of family members, should not be disregarded. Both groups of families need to rationalize the deaths of their children –and of other members of the family – through martyrdom, although the ways in which they construct the concept of martyrdom differ. Furthermore, they engage in circles of other families who lost family members and reconstruct their identity within the ideology that interpellates them.

The first difference in the perceptions of martyrdom of these two groups of families concerns their completely different references to Islam. All the interviewees in the sample of the families of PKK members were Sunni. For example, all the women in the same sample were wearing headscarf, and those organized in *Bariş Anneleri* had reserved a room for prayer. However, unlike families of soldiers, they did not refer to any aspect of Islam in their narratives on martyrdom, a concept which occupies a major place in religion. Neither mothers nor male family members of PKK members expressed anything related to Islam. Despite of Islam's references to the status of martyrdom, all the respondents in Adana and Diyarbakır said that martyrdom is not associated with *öteki dünya* and religion. It seems that martyrdom is a mundane status for the families of PKK members. All of them define the death of PKK members through the concept of martyrdom; however, what makes them martyrs are their "efforts" for the rights and independence of the Kurdish people. Thus, the martyrdom of PKK members originates from how they shape their lives. While

"witnessing" is the substance of martyrdom, in their perception of it, the martyrs of the PKK witness the faith in the PKK's as well as Öcalan's actions and ideology.

Second, while loyalty to the state, military, and national unity were the key concepts through which the families of soldiers define martyrdom, these notions are replaced by the families of PKK members with "oppression" and "suffering" as the ultimate framework to give meaning to the death of their sons or daughters. Thus, the field in which they construct their narratives on martyrdom is constituted by "exclusion," "being ignored," "suffering," and "oppression" of the Kurdish people by the Turkish state. From the perspectives of families of PKK members, the Turkish state has violently oppressed the Kurdish population for years and the PKK is the only organization which strives for the rights of the Kurdish people. In that sense, dying for the PKK is sacred for them and suffices to be called a martyr.

4.3.1. The Feeling of Exclusion and Oppression

The narratives of interviewees in Adana and Diyarbakır were clearly marked by the expression of their feelings of exclusion, oppression, and being ignored. Both in Adana and Diyarbakır, all of the interviewees were migrants. Most of them had come to either Adana or Diyarbakır as a result of forced displacement. Twelve out of fifteen interviewees among the families of PKK members were forced to either accept being *korucu* (village protector)[34] or to leave their home due to their political ideas or activism. They claimed that they had been exposed to many forms of compulsion, torture, or offensive behavior of the Turkish state before they came to Adana or Diyarbakır.

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[34] *Korucu*s are village guards who are paid by the Turkish state to counter and/or contain the PKK's attack on their villages (Manfy 2005:109). If the villagers do not accept being *korucu*, they are considered to be "dangerous" people who might have close relations with the PKK. However, if they become *korucu*, they have the risk of being killed by the PKK, since according to the PKK, *korucu*s are the collaborators of the "oppressive" Turkish state.

My husband did not have any relation with the PKK, he only said publicly that there were Kurds and Turks and that Turks discriminate us. They [soldiers] attacked our houses in the village. They took my husband to the center of the village and beat him violently. My children [one is a PKK member] were really affected by those attacks of the Turkish state."(Züleyha, 48 year-old member of *Barış Anneleri*)

They told my husband: 'You have to leave this city, otherwise you will be arrested.' He was not politically active, but everybody knew that he did not accept the injustice, but he did not do anything for political affairs. (Rabia, a Kurdish movement activist and a mother of a PKK member)[35]

Due to the violent atmosphere in their villages, these families felt that the future of their children was in danger. Some of them sent their children to bigger cities to keep them away from violence. However, most of the interviewees clearly stated that the family members and especially the children were shocked by the violent attitude of the Turkish state, which they could not understand. The dangerous atmosphere of their villages created a feeling of hatred and revenge in their children:

My daughter was shocked. She was always asking me, 'why did they do this mother? What is the reason for all this?' One day, when she was at the age of 14, she joined the PKK with her cousins. (Kiraz, member of *Barış Anneleri,* mother of a PKK member)

When they migrated to Adana/Diyarbakır, the violence of the state did not stop at their new home. According to them, in most cases the police spy on them, watch their houses, beat the children, and destroy their houses in order to get information about the "lost" members of the family, who might be PKK members, as well as about their possible "dangerous" activities and relations. Their narratives show that their entire lives were sharply affected by the state's Kurdish policy. They stated that what motivated their kids and other members of the family to join the PKK in

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[35] Interestingly, female interviewees in Adana and Diyarbakır had not been engaged in any political activities before they immigrated to those cities. It can be suggested that the violation of rights and oppression that their family members suffered also very much affected their daily lives, and that this situation motivated them to participate in the Kurdish oppositional movement (Çağlayan 2009:168).

the mountains was the fact that they had witnessed offensive attitudes and violent methods of the Turkish state. Hafize (a member of *Barış Anneleri*) explained why her 16 year-old daughter joined the PKK and actively participated in the Kurdish movement:

> We witnessed all of it. We saw how our people were oppressed and how they suffered.
>
> We are Kurds. We are not recognized in Turkey because we are Kurdish. They say the Kurds do not exist despite of the fact that there are many Kurds. Kurds devote their lives to this struggle. They reject [us]. We will bring this across. (Neşe, member of Barış Anneleri, mother of a PKK member)
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> If a child could not speak in her own language, if her own people are exposed to continuous violence and live in a state of war ... She [my daughter] also lived in a state of war. Although we live in Adana, they grew up in a war. Sometimes all the windows of all the houses in this district are destroyed. It happened many times. All the doors and windows of the houses were destroyed by police. (Murat, Kurdish movement activist, father of a PKK member)

For them, the only reason for sustained oppression was that they were different and that they were Kurdish, which they were born as and could not get away from. In this regard, their perspective on being a Kurd is not essentialist and based on cultural and biological differences; rather, they shape their Kurdish identity through their intensive political experiences (Çağlayan 2009:184). Their proclamations about the existence of Kurds and the struggles for rights of the Kurdish people also constitute the inevitable part of their Kurdish identity.

Yeğen (2006b) argues that in the context of Turkish state discourse, the Kurdish question has been treated as an issue of political reaction, tribal resistance, regional backwardness, or *foreign agitation*, but never as "an ethno-political question" and that this was a reconstitution of the Kurdish problem rather than a

misrepresentation[36] by the Turkish state. Thus, the Kurdish problem has not been regarded as an ethno-political case and the "Kurdishness" of the Kurdish people has been concealed and ignored. Instead, regional and economic backwardness, terrorism, foreign agitation, or tribal resistance have been highlighted by dominant ideology in examining the Kurdish problem. Such emphases reconstruct the Kurdish question as 'something other than it is' (Yeğen 1999: 2). This mode of reconstructing the Kurdish problem conceals the exclusion of Kurdish identity and the "Kurdishness" aspect of the problem. One can also observe the importance of "Kurdishness" in reading the Kurdish problem through the narratives of interviewees among families of PKK members. What they primarily complain about is the rejection of their Kurdish identity. This bias, combined with exclusion practices of the state, seems to have boosted the Kurdish people's feelings of exclusion. Thus, taking into account all these aspects, it is not surprising to hear statements from families of PKK members such as "the existence of Kurds should be acknowledged by the constitution. We are the Kurds, everybody must recognize this" when asking about the real problem for Kurdish people.

Rather than on economic underdevelopment, regional backwardness, lack of education, terrorism, and other perspectives predominantly used in explaining the Kurdish question, the focus of the interviewees was on the "recognition of Kurdishness." For them, Kurdishness is the most determining aspect of their lives. They argued that even if one is educated and rich, being a Kurd creates obstacles for a peaceful life for Kurdish people in Turkey. Thus, they had the impression that even when Kurdish people have upper socio-economic positions and good jobs and are educated in universities, oppression continues and they cannot escape this "humiliation" by the state. In brief, families of PKK members do not see economic

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[36] In the context of the Turkish state's misrepresentation of the Kurdish problem, one should note that families of TAF soldiers who died in the conflict share the same perspective on the Kurdish problem. When they are asked about the Kurdish problem, they initially reject it by saying: "We don't have a Kurdish problem, it is a problem of terrorism." Thus, they also reduce the Kurdish problem to the problem of terrorism. In the second place, when they talk about the "problem of terrorism," they emphasize foreign agitation, lack of education, underdevelopment, and feudalism.

problems and "backwardness" as the main reason for the Kurdish question in Turkey. As Hafize stated:

> They become lawyer, they suffer. They become a doctor, they are suffered. They do not have the right for anything good in this country in which we live and they cannot do anything right.

Their narratives show that their views on the Turkish state are shaped through the state's violence, in the sense of oppressing and humiliating Kurdish identity. In his writings about the Kurds and the Turkish Republic, Bruinessen (1995: 340) mentioned the total prohibition of the Kurdish language, their style of clothing, and folklore after 1930. Manafy (2005) also touched upon some Turkish state policies in the Southeastern and Eastern parts of Turkey since the 1930s:

> The Turkish government has continuously and consistently denied the existence of Kurds as Kurds. PKK forces did not create assimilation, dispersal and forced resettlement policies. The Turkish government wishes to create a nation state with a single Turkish language and culture, and used the policies of destruction, evacuation and forceful assimilation to achieve that end... The de-Kurdification of Kurdistan and assimilation of the Kurds into Turkish politics and culture has been the political plan of the Turkish government. (Manafy 2005:110)

The narratives of the interviewees in Adana and Diyarbakır clearly show that the entire lives of interviewees and their family members are sharply affected by the Kurdish policy of the Turkish state. Although state discourse and policy on Kurdish movements changed in different political contexts, the interviewees talked about a series of violent actions of the Turkish state. They declared that their sons, daughters, husbands, and other family members who joined PKK either have witnessed the violent actions of the Turkish state or were themselves exposed to direct violence by the Turkish state. In addition, they lost their hopes about a humanitarian atmosphere in which they are not humiliated and exposed to state violence in Turkey. As a result, the Turkish state appears to them as the ultimate enemy of the Kurdish population, whereas they clearly express that they do not have

a problem with the Turkish population. In this sense, what they oppose is the Turkish state, not Turkish society. As Çağlayan argues (2009:184), Kurdish people do not consider any other ethnic group living in Turkey as "the other;" rather, the "other" of the "us" of the Kurdish people is the state and the system in its general sense.

> For me, Turkish people are innocent and they pay the price [for this armed conflict]. We can understand this at least. If we take them as enemies, a problem emerges between two people and automtically we separate from each other. But the Kurdish liberation movement has no problem with the Turkish people, its problem is about the Turkish state. (Oğuz, the son of a dead PKK member, without any political engagement)

4.3.2. The Significant Position of the PKK

The state's approach to the Kurdish issue and population has had a significant effect on the construction of the Kurdish identity of families of PKK members especially in terms of their strong feelings of exclusion, oppression, and being ignored.[37] Additionally, struggling against the oppressive state – perceived as "the enemy" – becomes sacred, as feelings of exclusion and oppression establish a legitimate field on which they build up a narrative of martyrdom. When the families of PKK members are asked about martyrdom, they refer to the "oppression" by the Turkish Republic under which they suffer and are exposed to extreme deprivation. In this part, it will be argued that the PKK becomes legitimate for them because it centers its discourse on the feelings of exclusion of the Kurdish people and challenges the state's authority; as a result, dead PKK members are considered to be martyrs.

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[37] It can be argued that without touching upon the forced displacement of Kurdish people in Turkey, the construction of Kurdish identity cannot be properly examined. This aspect is not much emphasized in this study because its focus is not on Kurdish identity construction, but on the identity construction of families of PKK members and how they are articulated by PKK ideology. Furthermore, when the interviewees were asked about forced displacement, they did not separate it from other violent methods of the Turkish state. As a result, forced migration, which is one of the key factors in the identity construction of Kurdish people, is dealt with under the rubric of state violence.

For most people, legitimization is based on the concept of justice (Bové & Lunea 2006:170). As regards the Kurdish problem, the narratives of family members of PKK members focused on the themes of rights and injustice. As for them, the Turkish state's attitude and oppression constitute total injustice, they did not considered it legitimate. While the Kurdish people feel very weak in the face of the Turkish state, the PKK emerged as an organization which challenges the offensive sanctions of the state.

The PKK became prominent among other Kurdish political groups, because it voiced the feeling of exclusion and oppression in its discourse, self-representation, and way of organization. Thus, Bruinessen (1984) sees the PKK's considerable influence on the Kurdish population relative to other Kurdish groups as related to its emphasis on oppression, exclusion, and marginality. According to him, the PKK does not represent the Kurdish tribes, on the contrary, the organization aims at those who are most marginal and feel themselves oppressed and excluded in terms of their economic and social conditions. For example, it was often stressed that Abdullah Öcalan "came from depressed surroundings unlike many earlier leading Kurdish figures , who often were linked to large tribal or wealthy landowning families" (Marcus 2007:15). The Kurdish people felt excluded, ignored, and oppressed due to the violent actions of the Turkish state. The PKK highlighted this feature of the Kurdish population and succeeded in persuading Kurdish people that the PKK struggles for the benefit of the Kurdish people. In emphasizing the oppression of the Kurdish people, the PKK fulfilled its aim to reach them and to gain the support of the Kurdish masses. This success of the PKK can be observed in the words of Kamile (a 38 year-old Kurdish activist in Diyarbakır), whose husband was an ex-PKK member and prisoner at the time of the interview:

> The PKK cannot be considered something different [from the Kurdish people], they are inseparable. The PKK and the people are the same. They oppress the PKK, so the people.

It can be argued that the PKK gains the support of Kurdish people and that its actions are considered legitimate and just from the perspective of the families, despite of its acts of violence. High-ranking PKK members declared that they never aimed to act violently, but that for them the use of violence was a proof of their willingness and power to face the Turkish state.

> The PKK often said that its initial phase was a propaganda battle, in which rebels tried to gain the trust and respect of the people and prove that they could stand up to the state." (Marcus 2007 :119) ... Our goal really wasn't to kill a lot of soldiers" explained Baran. 'The attack was more intended to gain people's support and get them to join us. At the same time, we wanted to stage an attack that would give people trust [in the PKK's abilities]. (Marcus 2007: 79)

It can be argued that the PKK's primary aim was to persuade the Kurdish people of the cruelty of the state and of the rightfulness of its own actions. Second, the organization had to show that they had sufficient power to challenge the hegemony of the Turkish state. The PKK was in need of constructing counter-hegemony, and this construction required the consent of the Kurdish people. As was the case in the construction of hegemony, the PKK used both coercion and consent. The violent attacks of the PKK can be analyzed through the conceptualization of counter-hegemony. In the face of the hegemony of the Turkish state, which is maintained in the dialectical relation between coercion and consent, the PKK attempts to establish its own counter-hegemony among the Kurdish population. As the founding members of the PKK stated, they used to visit Kurdish villages and organize meetings in order to talk about the PKK, its activities and aims (Marcus 2007). Thus, it can be suggested that they tried to persuade the people of the rightfulness of the PKK and to obtain the consent and support of the Kurdish people. Moreover, the PKK needed to show people that it is powerful enough to challenge the state's authority. In addition to the persuasion of people by propaganda, as mentioned before, the PKK used violent methods in order to get the support of the Kurdish

population. In the case of collaborating with the Turkish state, Kurdish villagers were violently punished. Moreover, the majority of violent attacks were directed at the TAF. But again, as declared by the founding members of the PKK, the aim of those attacks was not to kill as many TAF soldiers as possible (Marcus 2007). Rather, they aimed to prove to the Kurdish population that they had the power to overcome Turkish hegemony and to achieve their goals by constructing counter-hegemony.

Marcus' (2007) comment that the PKK seemed to fulfill its primary goal concerns the persuasion of the Kurdish people. Within that process, a non-negligible part of the Kurdish population in Turkey is inevitably articulated by PKK counter-hegemony and its ideology. In that sense, the life stories of my interviewees, which are strongly shaped by the state's Kurdish policy, are politicized by PKK ideology. In that representation of the PKK, the state is seen as the ultimate "enemy" which is against Kurdish language and traditions and "beats the Kurdish people." In contrast, the PKK is presented as an organization that struggles against this "violent enemy". Consequently, families of PKK members accept the PKK's activities as legitimate without any hesitation and consider any action against the PKK as directed against the Kurdish people. Besides such incontestable perceptions of legitimacy of the PKK, the organization is also considered very reliable, in the sense that families trust that they will take care of their children better than the families themselves could. For example, when interviewee Kiraz talked about the day on which she had learned that her 14 year-old daughter had joined PKK together with her five cousins, she said:

> One night she left the house to go to her uncle's house, but she never came back again. We searched everywhere. After a week, they [she and her cousins] called us and told us: 'Do not search for us.' I could not say that I was not sorry. But I was also relieved. I said to myself that it is enough for me that nothing is wrong with her and that she was not kidnapped or killed. When she said that she participated in the party [PKK], I became very happy. I was thankful that she was not in a wrong place.

In addition, the prominent emphasis of the PKK on the recreation of a Kurdish identity that they felt they had lost (McDowall 2007: 421) can be seen as an accelerating factor for the PKK in acquiring the support of the Kurdish population against the state, which is taken as an "enemy" that has forbidden everything related to Kurdishness, especially the Kurdish language. Kurdish people among the interviewees seemed to complain about the loss of their identity, being "invisible" as Kurdish, and being suppressed due to their ethnicity in the nation-state. Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK remind them that they are Kurds and give them the motivation to fight for their rights which had already been taken from them.

> The PKK's fight, whether one thinks it is good or bad, put the Kurdish problem on the agenda in Turkey and in front of the world. It helped Kurds define themselves as Kurds. It gave them a sense of honor. ...PKK survives because it is popular among Kurds in Turkey. It is popular because it fought for so long and the PKK's fight tied people to the party and gained it Kurdish respect. Now, Kurds in Turkey are loathe to turn against it, because this smacks too much of betraying their dreams. Ocalan has turned into a symbol of Kurdish desires. What he says or what he does is not that important, because he is a symbol. So is the PKK. (Marcus 305)

4.3.3. Socialization within the Kurdish Movement and PKK Ideology

Preceding chapters mentioned the importance of the socialization of families in a circle of families similar to themselves and of the ideology that they are articulated by. In the case of Turkish martyrs, it was the sudden loss of loved sons which politicized these families, articulated them to nationalist discourse, and made them visible in political affairs such as in participating in meetings and court trials of Öcalan. They unified as result of this collectivity. In contrast, the participation of their sons or daughters and other family members in the PKK did not constitute a turning point in the lives of families of PKK members, since these families were

already engaged in the Kurdish movement beforehand. All of the families had been either already engaged with the PKK or stigmatized by local governments due to their ideas on the Turkish state and the Kurdish language and movement. In considering this difference between the two groups of families as well as the way in which the families of PKK members became engaged in the Kurdish movement, one can understand why the question "when and how did you begin your active political life" was "irrelevant" for my interviewees. Their active political life did not "start" at a particular "point" in time; rather , their life stories clearly show that they have been socialized in an atmosphere in which the participation of their children in the PKK is just one aspect.

It can be argued that these families' feelings of oppression and exclusion by the state and their ideas that challenged state ideology were not created by the PKK; rather, the PKK organized their feelings of exclusion based on the oppression by the state. According to their narratives, their life stories as well as the life stories of their family members in the PKK have been shaped by the violent actions of the Turkish state against Kurdish people.

> They used to make sudden attacks on our houses. Sometimes they did it twice a day. Since they beat him [my husband], at each attack his body bled. My son who is a PKK member right now turned crazy when he saw all this. At the end, he could not bear it and left the village to join PKK. (Züleyha, a member of *Barış Anneleri İnisiyatifi*)

It can be argued that due to their negative attributions to the Turkish state, it was impossible for them to be articulated by Turkish official ideology.[38] It seemed as if they had already lost their trust in the existing state system and believed that within

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[38] As mentioned earlier, Laclau & Mouffe (2008) suggest that subjects occupy instable subject positions, therefore, they can be articulated by various discourses, and politics is only possible through discourse. However, when the narratives of families of PKK members are taken into account, rather than discourse, their life experience becomes determinant in their subject positions. What makes them be articulated by PKK ideology is their own life experience shaped by state violence. It is true that PKK discourse reflects their feelings and pains; however they were ready to be articulated by PKK discourse due to their objective conditions.

this system, the state would not make policies for the benefit of Kurdish people. The time of the interviews coincided with the Kurdish opening of the AKP government and of the state TV channel which would broadcast in Kurdish. This was the first time that a Kurdish TV channel was allowed, and moreover, it was opened by the Turkish state. However, the interviewees in Adana and Diyarbakır did not see this TV channel positively. For them, it was a new tactic of the Turkish state to disperse its own ideology and to cheat the Kurdish people.

> We already had our TV channel, Roj Tv.[39] We do not need this channel of the state. And it was such a short time ago that my husband was sentenced to six months because I spoke to him in Kurdish on the phone when he was in prison. (Kamile, a member of *Barış Anneler İnisiyatifi*)

> Yesterday, five of the DTP members were punished because they said *Biji Yek Gulan!* (Long Live the 1st of May!) on the 1st of May. They just deceive us. (Kemal, a Kurdish activist and father of a PKK member)

Thus, it is not surprising that these people who lost their belief in the Turkish state can be articulated by the PKK, which proved its power against the Turkish state and presents itself as the only organization that strives for the rights of Kurdish people.

4.3.4. Martyrdom in Relation to Oppression

While these families see the state and the TAF's affairs as entirely illegitimate and consider the PKK to be the only organization that struggles against these forms of injustice, they perceive it as legitimate to die in the struggles of the PKK. Therefore, it can be said that from the perspective of the families of PKK members, the unique

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[39] Roj TV is an international Kurdish satellite television station that broadcasts from Denmark and has some studios in Belgium. It broadcasts programs in Kurmanci, Sorani, Zazaki, and Hewrami - dialects of the Kurdish language -, as well as in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish (www.wikipedia.org). The access to the official website of Roj TV was banned by the Turkish state. Moreover, since Denmark does not prevent Roj TV's broadcasting, it sometimes creates tension between Turkey and Denmark.

criteria to be considered a martyr is to be oppressed and to suffer from cruelty and injustice. Züleyha (*a member of Barış Anneleri İnisiyatifi*) explains how PKK members struggle against injustice:

> If somebody lives under oppression...This state oppresses us, rejects our language, attacks our houses and kills our kids in front of our eyes. They torture us and imprison us for ten years for just one [Kurdish] word. Since we are oppressed, we are the martyrs. We are against oppression and we struggle for our language, land, identity, and names, while they reject all of them.

Although all the interviewees share the idea that one is called a martyr if s/he is an oppressed individual and died as a result of his/her struggle against this oppression, they have different perspectives on the martyrdom of TAF soldiers who died in the armed conflict in Turkey. Civan (28, brother of a PKK member), whose one brother has been a PKK member since 1999 while the other brother was doing his military service in Cizre at the time of the interview,[40] described the "criteria" for being a martyr as follows:

> Everybody has his/her understanding of martyrdom. If you fight for the values that form you, if your land is exploited, if your language is banned, if everything that makes you human is destroyed, you become a martyr. But they [TAF soldiers] are not a part of this. They become soldiers and fight [PKK] since they have to live in Turkey, so they are not considered martyrs.

As Civan's comparison of the martyrs of TAF soldiers and PKK members indicates, "the martyrs" of the Turkish state cannot be named as such since they are not the

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[40] I have to acknowledge that the story of Civan, who was a doctor, impressed me. His family migrated from a village of Muş to Mersin in 1984. He said that his family had nothing when they arrived in Mersin and that thanks to his hard-working brothers, they have a good living standard right now. He also started to work at the age of five in order to help his brothers in making a living. He has three sisters and seven brothers and is the only university graduate among his family. When we met, one of his brothers was a soldier in Cizre and another brother was a PKK member. He mentioned that he always anxiously followed the news bulletin of Roj TV and of other TV channels. He said:"If my brother, the soldier one, is killed by PKK, how can I explain it to his children and wife? Shall I say that my brother is killed by my other brother who is a PKK member?" In addition to his anxiety about his brothers, it was interesting to witness such three brothers: one is a doctor, the other a PKK member, and the last one is soldiering in the conflict zones of the TAF and PKK.

oppressed ones and not battling against a system of cruelty. In narratives about martyrdom of the families of PKK members, the martyrdom of PKK members who died in the armed conflict was uncontroversial, since they participated in the organization due to unbearable offences and oppression and died during a struggle against a system of cruelty which does not provide any opportunity for Kurdish people to lead a peaceful life. This kind of narration about martyrdom and modes of legitimization on the basis of the "cruelty", "oppression," and "offensive acts of the state" can be associated with their life story and the central points which mark and shape it.

However, while families of TAF soldiers absolutely disagree with calling the death of PKK members "martyrdom," for some families of PKK members the martyrdom of soldiers of "the other side" is not completely impossible. What opens the door for a status of martyr for the TAF soldiers is again their oppression by the state and their resulting deprivation, since these families believe that the soldiers are forced by the state to fight the PKK. In brief, regardless of the ethnicity or the "side" of the combatants, if they are oppressed, they can be called martyrs according to some families of PKK members. From the point of view of interviewees who accept that TAF soldiers can be martyrs, those soldiers did not fight for the sake of the Turkish state. They are the oppressed ones, just like PKK members. However, if a soldier supports the Turkish state's attitude, he is not a martyr for these interviewees:

> They call soldiers martyr. When they die, we become very sorry. He [TAF soldier] is also martyr. Let me explain, he is forced to be soldier. The state sent him forcefully. They are also under oppression. They do not want to be soldiering. They are conscripted forcefully. Since they do not become soldier willingly, they are also martyrs. (Zarife, member of *Barış Anneleri İnisiyatifi* and a mother of a PKK member)

4.4. Reconstituting the Kurdish Problem: The AKP's Kurdish "Opening"

While this study was being conducted, the resolution of the Kurdish problem and the Kurdish "opening" were put on the agenda of the AKP government. With the Kurdish opening of the AKP, the official ideology of the Turkish state began to be modified. The AKP recognized "Kurdish identity" by transforming the state's official discourse that denies the Kurdish problem in Turkey.

The relationship with the USA and EU should not be ignored in the political context of this opening. Human rights violations, military operations in Northern Iraq, and the strained relationship between the Turkish state and the Kurdish population have always had a negative effect on Turkey's relationship with international organizations and other states. Since Turkey is considered to be a relatively stable and western-oriented state, the US administration considers Turkey's strategic position in the region as crucial. Turkey can be presented as a "model" for other states such as the Turkic Republics formed with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Moreover, due to the fact that Turkey has a dynamic economy with more than 70 million consumers and expansive ties with Central Asian countries, it is crucial for the USA and EU to have relations with Turkey (Kirişçi & Winrow 1997: 177-9). Stability in Turkey is indispensable for that, as a "destabilized Turkey could become more vulnerable to extremist politics, which could in turn endanger Western interests in what was an unstable region" (Kirişçi&Winrow 1997: 174). In view of maintaining stability and security in Turkey, the USA and EU declare the PKK a terrorist group. In other words, the Kurdish problem is seen as a main obstacle for the stability of Turkey and should thus be solved as soon as possible.

Since the Kurdish problem is understood within the framework of the needs and demands of these actors and the demands of Kurdish people are ignored, the AKP, like former governments, does not take the "Kurdishness" aspect of the problem seriously. This attitude of the AKP should not be understood as a "failure" to grasp

this aspect, but rather as AKP's attempt to create a new type of "Kurdishness". In other words, the AKP attempts with its "Kurdish opening" to reconstitute the "Kurdish Question" by representing it as "something other than it is." In this new take on "Kurdishness," it is allowed to speak Kurdish in daily life, but not in political propaganda. Thus, members of Kurdish oppositional groups and political parties cannot speak Kurdish when they address their constituency, many of whom may not speak Turkish at all. In addition, while the state channel TRT (Turkish Radios and Televisions) started to broadcast in Kurdish, the private TV channels broadcasting in Kurdish were banned. The present government strongly demands from Denmark to prevent the broadcasting of the Kurdish channel Roj TV, which supports Kurdish oppositional groups and gains popularity among Kurdish people. The message behind these policies of the AKP seems to be: "Turkey has a Kurdish population. We can live together as long as they keep away from oppositional political groups which declare the suppression of the Kurdish people, and as long as they transform their unwanted Kurdishness into the appropriate one."

The AKP's attempt to make changes in Turkey cannot be ignored when it comes to normalizing the discussion of the Kurdish problem in the public sphere. Today, talking about the Kurdish problem is much less marginal when compared to the period before AKP. However, the latter's attempts as regards the Kurdish problem are restricted by their aim to define the limits of Kurdishness and the limits they place on the Kurdish identity of Kurdish people. In the context of the Kurdish opening of the AKP, Kurdish people can enjoy their rights as long as they are not the real "other." As Zizek (2005) argues:

> The other is tolerated with regard to customs which hurt no one. Tolerance is tolerance for the other in so far as this other is not an 'intolerant fundamentalist' which simply means in so far as it is not the real Other. We can see how this liberal tolerance reproduces the elementary 'postmodern' operation of having access to the object deprived of its substance: we can enjoy coffee without caffeine, beer without alcohol, sex without direct bodily contact, up to virtual reality, i.e. reality itself deprived of

> its inert material substance- and along the same lines we even
> get the ethnic Other deprived of the substance of its otherness.

The main shortcoming of the AKP's Kurdish opening is that rather than dealing with the Kurdish question in the framework of Kurdish demands, the AKP re-conceptualizes this question according to the state's, EU's, and USA's demands and needs. While stability is expected to be a result of a possible "solution" of this problem, this "solution" is to be consistent with the demands of the Turkish national capitalist class which searches for global integration. In addition, through the "solving" of this problem, the Kurdish movement is to be disbanded, a viable atmosphere for the assimilation of Kurds is to be created, and lastly, they are to be integrated into the present status quo. All in all, instead of asking for the opinions of different Kurdish organizations and of including them, AKP rule redefines the Kurdish problem in the context of the prerequisites of the state.[41] As Türközü (2009) mentions, rather than presenting an alternative to the Kurdish problem, the AKP objects to adapting Kurdish people to the existing political system.

Despite of the fact that the Kurdish opening of the AKP aims to "solve" the Kurdish problem without taking into account the demands of Kurdish people and their political representatives, it nevertheless creates some hope for a solution or at least a viable atmosphere for speaking about the Kurdish problem. For the first time, a mother of a PKK member and a mother of a TAF soldier who had died in the armed conflict came together in Mersin on World Peace Day. Those mothers, Menşure Özdemir and Kadriye Kuran, embraced one another and declared: "All those who die in the conflict are our kids. We suffer a lot. We need peace in Turkey."[42]

The AKP's primary objective is not the inclusion of the demands of the Kurdish people, as would be suggested from a positive peace perspective. Nevertheless, this

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[41]The AKP's attitude to the Alevi question is similar to its approach to the Kurdish problem in the sense of integrating Alevis by redefining the Alevi question. For more detailed analysis of the AKP's attitude towards the Alevi question see Yalçınkaya 2009.

[42] http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/40094.htm

atmosphere allows people in general to discuss the Kurdish problem relatively more freely than in other periods of the Turkish Republic. Thus, the NGOs, peace initiatives, oppositional groups, and grassroots organizations such as Mothers of Peace can form and express their own perspectives on a non-violent resolution of the conflict and inclusion of Kurdish people's demands and can direct this relatively relieved political atmosphere towards a non-violent resolution of the conflict. The intervention of such groups in this political atmosphere would also enhance democracy in Turkey. Moreover, their efforts might force the sides of the armed conflict to end it through negotiation as a non-violent method of conflict resolution. As was emphasized in the final declaration of the Conference of Dialogue for Peace,[43] this atmosphere in Turkey can be regarded as a turning point in terms of finding a peaceful and democratic solution of the Kurdish problem.

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[43]The conference was organized by Türkiye Barış Meclisi on June 6,.2009 at Bilgi University in İstanbul.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The motivation behind this study was to provide a profile of the families of TAF soldiers and PKK militants and to understand the obstacles for their joint action for peace. Both groups of families suffer from similar pain that is caused by the loss of family members in the conflict. Despite this similarity, their pain is shaped and constructed in different socio-political atmospheres. One difference in the experience of pain of families of deceased soldiers and PKK militants is that for the former, most often the pain appears as a consequence of the sudden death of their sons or husbands, subsequently causing these families to engage in political activism. However, for the families of PKK members, the pain and suffering associated with the armed conflict is multi-faced. The loss of their loved ones is only one element of a continuum of trauma experienced. It does not just constitute a sudden painful event; rather, they have suffered from the armed conflict for many years and most had participated in political activism before their family members left home and joined the PKK. In addition, the entire life stories of families of PKK militants are shaped through this armed conflict. Therefore, when interviewees talk about the life stories of their family members who joined the PKK, they are talking in fact about their own life story in relation to the conflict between the PKK and TAF. In brief, although the experiences of these two groups of families in the context of the armed conflict are not identical, their life stories are directly affected by the consequences of the conflict.

The ways in which these two groups of families give meaning to the armed conflict also show similarities and differences. The similarity in their perspective on the armed conflict is reflected in the concept of martyrdom. Both groups of families refer to their children who died in the conflict as martyrs, because of their belief that they are on the "just" side of the conflict and that the use of violence by this side is

legitimate. Needless to say, for the families of TAF soldiers, the just side of the conflict is the TAF, while the PKK and its head Abdullah Öcalan are the ultimate enemies of the Turkish nation. In contrast, for the families of PKK militants, the TAF is the source of the cruelty from which they suffer.

However, there are also ruptures in the identity constructions of families of TAF soldiers and PKK militants and in the representations of these identities. Kurdish and Turkish people are not as polarized as their politically represented identities may suggest. Common history, common religion and intermarriages between these ethnic groups cannot be overlooked. Moreover, the interviewees in my sample told me that they did not feel hatred towards the people on the other side of the conflict. They said that they opposed the organizations or individuals who created the conflict. All of the interviewees among the families of TAF soldiers stated that they had Kurdish relatives, neighbors, colleagues, or friends, and that they got along well. This was also the case for the interviewees among families of PKK militants. Furthermore, due to the universal conscription in the military, many of the TAF soldiers who lost their lives are ethnically speaking Kurdish.

Moreover, while the families of deceased TAF soldiers are represented as the devoted families of the Turkish nation, especially in the media, there are some ruptures in the construction of this identity. First, all of my interviewees among families of TAF soldiers stated that although they spontaneously said *vatan sağolsun* after the death of their sons, this was only the expression of their pain and an attempt to relieve it. Later, however, they changed their mind and now no longer say it. Although they respected and valued the martyrdom of their sons, they told me that they had tried to pull strings to enable their sons to have a more comfortable period of military service. Second, they sharply criticized the Turkish state and the government and did not think that these institutions work for the wellbeing of Turkish or Kurdish people.

When it comes to identities of families of PKK militants, there are also some ruptures. Although they all agree with the idea that the PKK is the "just" side of the conflict and that people who die for it are martyrs, none of them would send their children to the mountains. They said that they would prevent their children from joining the PKK if they had the capacity to do so. What is more important, none of the families thought that their children could return the fire in an attack and they did not want their children to do so. This shows that neither of the families from the opposite sides of the conflict wants their children to become the "combatant" that kills the enemy for the sake of the nation, state, PKK, or freedom.

This study argued that the polarization among the two groups of families was caused by the social circuits they belong to as well as by the ideology they are articulated by. Through ideology, people are persuaded of the legitimacy of the use of violence, and this persuasion is indispensible for both the formation and maintenance of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The families of PKK militants were articulated by PKK ideology before their family members' participation in the PKK. They had been persuaded that the use of means of violence by the PKK, as the "just" side of the conflict, is legitimate. For these families, this organization works for the rights of Kurdish people. As mentioned before, this persuasion of the Kurdish people was the first aim of the PKK and considered necessary for establishing counter-hegemony among the Kurdish people against the Turkish state.

The Kurdish problem and the armed conflict between the TAF and PKK are reduced to a problem of terrorism by the TAF and Turkish state. Families of TAF soldiers adopt this approach whereas the families of PKK militants strongly disagree with it. This discourse on terrorism obscures the social, economic, and political inequalities that produce conflict; in addition; the demands of Kurdish people become invisible. In official ideology, the TAF represents itself as the authority that will end the conflict through counter-terrorism. Thus, rather than struggling against inequalities,

injustice, and violence that caused the armed conflict, the TAF struggles against the terrorism of the PKK.

As was mentioned in previous chapters, with the attempts of the AKP government in relation to the Kurdish problem, official ideology has been transformed. The official ideology used to deny the existence of Kurds as well as the Kurdish problem. Now, with some small changes, official ideology is giving up this strategy. Despite the fact that the existence of the Kurdish population in Turkey has not yet been acknowledged formally or in the constitution, people in Turkey discuss the Kurdish problem in a freer political atmosphere. However, the AKP government does not include the demands of the Kurdish people in their policies on the Kurdish problem; rather, their attempts can be regarded as an effort to create their own Kurds and acceptable forms of Kurdishness.

In the theoretical framework of this study, it was claimed that for a sustainable peace situation, the demands of the different sides should be included in the process of conflict resolution. This inclusion requires a perspective in which none of the sides of conflict is seen as the "enemy" that is to be eliminated for the termination of conflict. Instead, the elimination of injustice, inequalities, and violence at different levels are to be pursued in order to prevent conflict as well as the possibility of conflict and to finally attain a peaceful situation. As Galtung emphasizes, such a peaceful situation is sustainable, but it requires a holistic social transformation.

Although the AKP government's Kurdish "opening" does not provide a response to Kurdish people's demands and fails to satisfy the requirements of sustainable peace, the relatively relieved atmosphere can be transformed into a dialogue and atmosphere for negotiation. In this process, NGOs, academics, intellectuals, journalists, and grass-root political organizations should collaborate. In their collectivity, a new discourse and a new language of peace can be created which

claims that the armed conflict destroys both Turkish and Kurdish people and that militarist methods for solution do not lead to peaceful settlement.

In the framework of such a project, platforms can be formed in initiation by NGOs, representatives of families of PKK militants and TAF soldiers, journalists, intellectuals, etc., which will allow people who are directly affected by the armed conflict to meet and talk with each other. If people from opposite sides of the conflict have this opportunity, they can form empathy with each other. Moreover, since these people are not as opposed to each other as they are being represented, they can be motivated to meet and talk. As has been stated, dialogue and collectivity among the different sides of the conflict is absolutely central to the process of peaceful resolution of the armed conflict. In that regard, the families of PKK militants and TAF soldiers are important in their positions on the armed conflict in Turkey. This armed conflict mostly destroys these two groups of families, since they lost their family members. Since they know this conflict and its destructive consequences better than anyone, they may also have the capacity to transform it. In addition, people who are active in these platforms may work for minimizing socio-economic inequalities. This attempt may diminish the risk of violence.

Moreover, the state can take further measures. For example, the losses of Kurdish people who were exposed to forced displacement can be compensated for. This is crucial for their rehabilitation. Moreover, Kurdish people should be able to enjoy their cultural rights in more spheres. This can include the abolition of prohibitions on the Kurdish language. It can be argued that not preventing Kurdish people from publishing, being educated, speaking, and broadcasting in Kurdish will help them to realize their own potential and enjoy their cultural rights. This abolition of prohibitions may also enable them to overcome their feelings of exclusion and being ignored. This is because – as interviewees declared – Kurdish people suffer from rejection of their Kurdish identity and the state's effort to represent the Kurdish problem as something other than it is (Yeğen 1999). Besides, the state should take

more measures against human rights violations in Turkey especially in the East and Southeast in order to foster a more viable atmosphere for a peaceful and non-violent resolution of this conflict.

As Gramsci emphasized, hegemony is constructed and maintained through consent and coercion mechanisms. The consent of people is achieved in ideological spheres such as education, culture, religion, language, or media. Through consent mechanisms, the militarist way of thinking and of resolving problems is normalized and considered a norm for people. In that regard, people should construct a counter-hegemony that focuses on peace and fosters consent for a struggle against the existing hegemony which promotes militarism. In the same vein, creating a new language, discourse, and culture is crucial for groups who challenge the hegemonic power. Viewing the Kurdish problem and the armed conflict between the TAF and PKK from this perspective, a new language is needed for explaining the armed conflict and proposing possible solutions for ending it. This new language can be created by the initiatives of groups mentioned earlier.

These days, people in Turkey talk about the Kurdish problem and can utter the word "Kurdish" more freely than in previous years, due to the Kurdish opening of the AKP. In this situation, as already mentioned, people from NGOs, pro-Kurdish groups, and academia can produce a new language and invent methods for gathering the families of PKK militants and TAF soldiers. They may approach the problem in different ways and have different positions on how the conflict may be resolved. Their collectivity does not mean that they have to take the same position and advocate the same idea. Rather, it might be sufficient for them to form a consensus on creating a new language through which they can address the families of PKK members and TAF soldiers and a new discourse through which they can achieve the consent of the masses to a non-violent and peaceful resolution of the armed conflict.

This study discussed possible reasons for the oppositional positions of families of PKK militants and TAF soldiers. Moreover, it stated that peace initiatives will be the product of the attempts of these groups. In this sense, groups and people such as NGOs, political organizations, journalists, or academics can take action. However, the study does not make propositions on the methods they can use or on the features of a new language through which the two groups of families can come together and the militarist perspective on the armed conflict can be destroyed. In this respect, the study opens the door for later academic research on the way or method through which people who deal with the Kurdish problem and conflict resolution can create a new language of peace, attempt to enable the families of PKK members and TAF soldiers to come together, and promote the consent of the masses to a non-militarist resolution of the armed conflict in Turkey.

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