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Peace Process Pathologies: A Comparative Analysis of the Breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Kurdish Peace Processes

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Abstract

Despite the significant differences between the issues under contention, the Oslo peace process between Israel and the Palestinians and the “solution process” between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) were plagued by common dysfunctions that militated against their success. A comparative investigation points to several salient common denominators that rendered both peace processes susceptible to collapse, including the inadequate identification of the end goals of negotiations by the conflicting parties, mistrust and societal polarization. Over-reaching security measures enacted by the stronger side in each conflict (Israel and Turkey) that stifled freedom of expression, conflated lawful dissent with criminality, tended towards collective punishment and undermined the ability of the weaker parties to organize in the political arena and negotiate effectively also contributed to the breakdown of negotiations. Systematic analysis of these peace process pathologies will suggest critical “lessons learned” from which fellow researchers and policymakers can glean valuable insights.

Key Words: Turkey, Kurds, Israel, Palestinians, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Peace Process

The Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Kurdish peace processes have been among the most intractable and longest-lasting of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It almost defies reason why this pair of conflicts have been seemingly so unamenable to resolution when other identity-based conflicts, such as the Northern Ireland conflict and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, were resolved some decades ago. More puzzling is the fact that some of the prerequisites for a comprehensive resolution have been in place at various times, albeit in different ways, in each of these conflicts.

For one, there have been several times in the trajectory of each conflict whereby although not explicitly acknowledged, the protagonists recognized they had reached a mutually hurting

stalemate, a situation whereby a unilateral military escalation to victory is deemed either impossible or prohibitively painful.¹ For instance, some in Israeli security circles have taken to framing Israel's dominant military strategy against Hamas as tantamount to "mowing the grass". This refers to a strategy of Israel invading the Gaza Strip periodically with the aims of reducing Hamas' capabilities to more manageable proportions and restoring deterrence, a tacit acknowledgement that Hamas cannot be defeated at an acceptable price, if at all.²

Furthermore, each conflict witnessed periods where the conflicting parties' positions on sensitive issues or the parameters of an acceptable settlement converged to the point that a negotiated agreement appeared within reach. This was most manifest in the negotiations that took place in Taba, Egypt between representatives of Israel and the Palestinian Authority in January 2001 and to a lesser extent with the secret Oslo talks conducted between the Turkish national intelligence agency (the 'MIT') and the PKK (*Partiya Kerkeren Kurdistan*, or Kurdish Workers' Party) from 2006 to 2011. However, in neither case was the substantial progress made towards arriving at a formula or shared principles for conflict resolution adequate to prevent the renewal of a cycle of violence. In fact, some of the most intense periods of violence transpired in the wake of these promising yet ultimately unsuccessful negotiations.

With these striking similarities in conflict patterns in mind, this paper is designed to provide a comparative perspective on the breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Kurdish peace processes. One focal point of the investigation revolves around the structural features and components of the peace negotiations that have militated against success. At the same time, equal weight is accorded to relational and psychological factors, which it is argued, have served as formidable obstacles to a negotiated settlement to the conflict, even when there has been a significant lull in hostilities between the protagonists and the environment has been otherwise ripe for conflict resolution. In this context, the debilitating impact of mistrust and the growing animus between Israelis and Palestinians and Turks and Kurds at the societal level are examined, among other factors.

While this paper stresses the common denominators between the two cases, there are pronounced differences in the disparate structural positions of the weaker parties in each conflict. Though there are sharp disparities in relative power (military and otherwise) between the majority and minority ethnic groups in each conflict, the asymmetries in each conflict are not structurally equivalent. Undeniably, Turkish Kurds suffer from some of the same onerous military measures and restrictions (e.g., curfews) as their Palestinian counterparts. Moreover, both minority groups have experienced widespread property destruction and displacement as a result of repeated large-scale military operations carried out by the strong state in each conflict. However, Palestinians arguably confront greater structural disadvantages than their Kurdish counterparts, stemming from the over half-century-old Israeli military occupation of the predominantly Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. While the Kurdish provinces of southeastern Turkey

¹ Zartman, "The Timing of Peace Initiatives."

² Inbar and Shamir, "Mowing the Grass in Gaza"; International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 18. With respect to the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, according to the 2014 ICG report titled, "Turkey and the PKK: Saving the Peace Process", Turkish officials have acknowledged that "military victory has evaded both sides."

have long suffered from chronic under-development and neglect by the central government, Turkey's Kurds do not labor under the same ethnocentric system of settler colonialism and separate but unequal access to land, resources and infrastructure that Palestinians do under Israeli military rule.

The bargaining power of the Palestinians vis-à-vis Israel is also somewhat weaker than that of the Kurds vis-à-vis Turkey. This is due to the territorial fragmentation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the longstanding rift between the Palestinian Authority (dominated by the Fatah movement and President Mahmoud Abbas) and Hamas, both of whom portray themselves as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people. Not only do Fatah and Hamas remain as deeply divided as ever along ideological lines, but they are diametrically opposed on the fundamental question of recognizing and making peace with Israel, with Hamas refusing to endorse any solution that would legitimize Israeli sovereignty over any portion of historic Palestine. On the other hand, in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, the main actors on the Kurdish side, represented by the PKK and the KCK (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan*, or Kurdistan Communities' Union) are viewed by a wide cross-section of Turkish Kurds as the legitimate representatives of the Kurdish national movement. The high esteem which the PKK enjoys in the eyes of the public is overwhelmingly a byproduct of the charismatic authority of the jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

However, the differences in the relative cohesion of each non-state actor should not be overstated. On the Palestinian side, when the crucial Oslo negotiations that are analyzed in this article were commenced in 1993, the late Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) chief and subsequently, president of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Yasser Arafat, enjoyed strong legitimacy akin to Öcalan's status among the Kurds by virtue of his charismatic authority and guidance of the Palestinian armed struggle from the outset. At the same time, the PKK has nothing approaching a monopoly of representation on Turkey's Kurdish population. More conservative Kurdish voters tend to gravitate towards center-right Turkish parties, such as the AKP and its Islamist predecessors. Moreover, there are various independent Kurdish and anti-PKK factions (e.g., Kemal Burkay's Rights and Freedoms Party, or 'HAK-PAR') that embrace Kurdish movement demands, such as full mother-tongue language rights and regional autonomy yet view the PKK's ideological rigidity, draconian methods for suppression of dissent, and the cult of personality surrounding Öcalan as inherently incompatible with the democratic solution to the Kurdish problem they desire.

Nonetheless, the observation regarding the differences in the relative strength and cohesion between the two ethnic groups remains valid, as a strong case can be made that the Turkish Kurds represent a more united front than the Palestinians overall. In the Palestinian camp, Arafat's popularity waned as Arafat and the PA came to be identified by many Palestinians with the shortcomings of the Oslo Accords and its implementation, especially its failure to improve the depressed economic conditions of ordinary Palestinians, while Mahmoud Abbas has never inspired the same loyalty as his predecessor Arafat. In contrast, even figures, factions and branches within the Kurdish national movement who have occasional misgivings about decisions made by Öcalan tend to defer to him, such that it is highly likely that Öcalan and the PKK could deliver both the guerillas ensconced in the Kandil Mountains of northern Iraq as well as sympathizers and

grassroots movement supporters engaged in peaceful civil society activities in Turkey into a peace agreement.³

On the other hand, in the Palestinian camp, Fatah and Hamas can each at best lay claim to a third of the allegiances of the Palestinian people resident within the Occupied Territories.⁴ Furthermore, the chasm that separates the two parties on “final status” issues is so vast that unless Hamas’ own base in the Gaza Strip could be sold on the merits of a peace agreement with Israel, it is difficult to envision that any agreement negotiated by Fatah/the Palestinian Authority would win Hamas’ unqualified endorsement.⁵ These are among the differences that make the Kurdish negotiating position vis-à-vis Turkey at least marginally stronger than the Palestinian negotiating position vis-à-vis Israel.

Nonetheless, as significant as these differences may be, exploring the similarities of the two cases, both of which can be defined as protracted conflicts or “enduring rivalries”⁶, is still a worthwhile exercise from the standpoint of both theory and policy development. Detailed comparative investigation of both cases can yield important insights into the impact of flaws in the structural design of negotiating frameworks (especially the inadequate identification of end goals), mistrust, societal polarization and structural disparities on failed peace processes. These processes will be illuminated in the sections that follow.

³ *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 10-11. As the ICG report aptly states concerning Ocalan’s unmatched moral authority and stature in the eyes of Turkish Kurdish activists: “One lesson of the past fifteen years of imprisonment is that Turkey’s Kurdish national movement regards him as the only leader – embodying “the will of the Kurdish people” – who can unify and bless a compromise for peace. Most lasting initiatives of the Kurdish national movement only happen with his approval. The final instruction to lay down weapons has to come from him.”

⁴ Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, “Public Opinion Poll No (67) Press-Release.” According to a poll taken in March 2018 by one of the most authoritative Palestinian pollsters Khalil Shikaki, 31% of likely Palestinian voters who reside in the Occupied Territories said they would support Hamas and 36% said they would support Fatah in future elections, hardly a ringing endorsement of either party. Especially telling is the abysmally low levels of reported support for President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, with 68% of the Palestinian public expressing a desire for him to resign. Even in the West Bank, Abbas’ and Fatah’s nominal power base, only 40% of respondents expressed satisfaction with his performance.

⁵ Tahhan, “Hamas and Fatah.” Recent developments, however, suggest that Hamas may not be implacably opposed to a peace agreement with Israel as it once was, and the distance between its position and Fatah/the Palestinian Authority’s position has narrowed. Specifically, in 2017, it revised its charter to state that while “Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea”, it would accept the creation of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders (i.e., the East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza Strip, and excluding the remainder of “historic” or “mandatory” Palestine). The recent change of tone, though far being a ringing endorsement of territorial compromise, may be interpreted as being in alignment with several past statements by Hamas leaders, including the former head of the political bureau, Khaled Mashaal, that Hamas would not stand in the way of an agreement negotiated by the Palestinian leadership to establish a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, provided it was approved in a popular Palestinian referendum.

⁶ Goertz and Diehl, “Enduring Rivalries: Theoretical Constructs and Empirical Patterns.”

Structural Flaws in the Negotiating Processes and Frameworks

In both the Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Kurdish cases, one of the most fundamental deficiencies in the structure of negotiations has been the fact that the end goals of the process have been ill-defined and not explicitly articulated, partly due to disagreement among the protagonists over their substance. In the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, the entire framework supporting negotiations has remained rather rudimentary, as described aptly in the 2014 ICG report titled, “Turkey and the PKK: Saving the Peace Process”:

Just as there is no agreed phrase to describe the talks, the peace process also lacks a mutually agreed agenda, timeframe and means for engagement. It has only begun establishing a framework and ground rules. Constantly changing, neither side has fully committed to the few parameters already in place. A senior government security official described “a very flexible process”, less a plan than an avalanche of ad hoc initiatives.⁷

One of the most persistent problems in this respect is the absence of specific and agreed-upon objectives.

It is widely understood that the core of a durable and sustainable settlement will involve the PKK disarming and demobilizing in exchange for the Turkish government offering assurances that Kurdish parties and candidates, both within and outside of the PKK umbrella, will be able to compete in election and operate on a level playing field, free from the threat of legal harassment or closure, the abolition of remaining restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language, and some measure of administrative and fiscal decentralization. However, this ‘grand bargain’, the *sine qua non* of any workable agreement, has never been formalized or made explicit in any negotiations between representatives of the Turkish government and Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed leader of the PKK, and his intermediaries. In 2013, both sides agreed to a three-stage road map which involved the PKK initiating a ceasefire and withdrawing its armed insurgents from Turkish territory, the government’s enactment of legal and constitutional reforms to expand Kurdish cultural and political rights, and the complete disarmament and demobilization of the PKK. However, the implementation got bogged down in disagreements over the sequencing of these steps, leading the PKK to suspend the process of pulling their forces out of Turkish territory.⁸

Beyond the fact that each side’s desired end-goals have only been minimally addressed in the negotiations, there was a substantial ambiguity surrounding how those goals were to be fulfilled. Both the PKK as well as Kurdish political parties that oppose the PKK (e.g., Kemal Burkay’s Rights and Freedoms Party ‘HAK-PAR’) have espoused empowerment of local administrations or greater autonomy as a core element of a settlement package since the early 2000s.⁹ The PKK has initially promoted a secessionist and irredentist project involving the formation of a greater, independent Kurdistan that would unify the neighboring Kurdish-majority regions of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, comprising 25 million Kurds in total under one political roof. The PKK discarded this objective in the mid-1990s in favor of a federal structure closely

⁷ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 4.

⁸ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 4. Then-Turkish Prime Minister (and currently President) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reportedly refused to endorse an earlier roadmap in 2011 that his own negotiating delegation found reasonable.

⁹ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 25.

resembling the arrangements established by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq.¹⁰

From 2001 forward, the more modest objective of securing a high level of autonomy for the Kurdish-majority regions of southeastern Turkey gained ground. This shift can be partly attributed to Turkey's acceptance as a candidate for membership in the European Union in 1999.¹¹ Both respect for and protection of minorities and the concept of self-government at the local level are deeply ingrained as core values in the EU Accession Criteria. Therefore, under the pressure of fulfilling the exacting requirements for EU membership, Turkey had a strong incentive to concede a greater measure of autonomy to Kurdish-majority regions.

However, Turkey's approach towards the European Charter on Local Self-Government, which embodies the EU norm of decentralized governance, was arguably ambivalent at best. While the AKP government expressed support in its party platform for enhancing the financial autonomy of local governments and enshrining the right to local governance in its constitution, in practice, it placed reservations on several key articles of the European Charter on Local Self-Government, such as involving local authorities in the central decision-making process and granting them greater access to financial resources and assets.¹² To push back against what it regarded as a half-hearted Turkish government commitment to decentralization, the Kurdish national movement leaned on the charter to build international pressure on Turkey to lift these reservations and transfer greater responsibilities and decision-making powers to Kurdish municipalities.¹³ The Kurdish movement's adept use of EU conditionality vis-à-vis Turkey to enhance its leverage over the latter and secure a greater measure of autonomy illustrates how both side's changing demands and tactics in the late 1990s and early 2000s were shaped not only by internal debates but also by regional and international actors, such as the European Union.

However, the Kurdish national movement is neither monolithic in its views on the scope and substance of the powers to be devolved nor devolution is indeed the extent of their ambitions. Formulations of devolution offered by movement actors range from the assumption of modest additional powers and responsibilities by local governments, coupled with greater financial autonomy, to a federal solution modeled on the KRG of northern Iraq, in which the central government's presence is minimal.¹⁴ One development that has made this debate more fraught in recent years is Öcalan and other PKK leaders' adoption of the concept of "democratic confederalism" or "democratic autonomy". Shrouded in substantial ambiguity, it is unclear how expansive of a form of autonomy for Turkey's Kurds this model envisages, and whether it can be implemented without upending Turkey's territorial integrity or unitary state structure. Is this concept consistent with the PKK's stated commitment to secure the rights of Kurds within the framework of a democratic Turkey, or does it imply a desire for independence? The slipperiness of the concept has aroused suspicion among many Turks that the PKK is simply using artful

¹⁰ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 25.

¹¹ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 25.

¹² International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 25-26.

¹³ Kaliber and Aydın-Düzgit, *Is Turkey De-Europeanising?*

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 25-26.

rhetoric to sneak its old separatist aim of carving out a greater Kurdistan (encompassing adjacent portions of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran) through the back door.¹⁵

As for Turkey, it has yet to generate the appropriate incentive structure for members of the PKK to lay down their weapons and see peaceful participation in Turkey's democratic system as a promising alternative to the continuation of armed struggle. The Turkish government did take some steps to encourage a transformation, such as the democratization package enacted in September 2013 that allowed those previously convicted of terrorism charges and crimes against the state to join political parties.¹⁶ However, other measures need to be taken to make that change meaningful. These measures include a provision or pledge to remove the PKK from the list of terrorist groups contingent upon progress towards disarmament and demobilization, the enactment of a limited amnesty law for former PKK militants, the lowering of the threshold for parties to be represented in Parliament from 10 percent to 5 percent (which disproportionately disadvantages pro-Kurdish parties), and amendments to the anti-terror law that have had a chilling effect on non-violent, pro-Kurdish activism.¹⁷

Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations have displayed far more structural coherence than Turkish-Kurdish talks. The most serious and sustained efforts to achieve peace were carried out within the framework of the Oslo Accords, which were launched with the signing of the Declaration of Principles on September 13, 1993 between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The precedent for Israeli and Palestinian representatives engaging in face-to-face negotiations on a regular basis was established with the Madrid Conference, an international peace conference jointly sponsored by the U.S. and Soviet Union in October 1991 in the wake of Gulf War. From the Madrid conference emerged both a multilateral negotiations track whereby issues of concern to the region as a whole were deliberated (encompassing the topics of water resources, the environment, arms control, refugees and economic development) and a bilateral track for direct negotiations that was held in Washington between Israel and the neighboring Arab states with whom it was still formally at war, namely Lebanon, Syria and Jordan/Palestine.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ertegil, "Analysis of the AKP Government's Policy," 33; Kirschner, *Trust and Fear in Civil Wars*, 120. What often lends credence to Turks' fears that "democratic autonomy" or "democratic confederalism" is simply separatism under a new guise is the fact that some proponents of this concept mention in the same breath the proposal for Kurds to establish a local defense force, even after a peace agreement is signed. To many Turks, this proposal is anathema, as it smacks of an attempt to establish a separate armed formation that could be used to support a drive for complete independence for the Kurds.

¹⁶ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 15.

¹⁷ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*.

¹⁸ Kreisberg, "Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", 380. Palestinian representatives from the Occupied Territories participated as junior partners in a Jordanian-led delegation in the bilateral negotiations held in Washington. The entire arrangement surrounding the composition of the Jordanian delegation was in effect an elaborate diplomatic sleight of hand designed to fulfill the Israeli government's need not to be seen as engaging directly with the PLO, which was at that time prohibited under Israeli law. The umbrella that the Jordanians provided to the Palestinian members of the delegation furnished the necessary legal cover for Israel, while the fact that the Palestinian members were separately vetted by Israel and the PLO, and coordinated their negotiating stances closely with the PLO executive

The discussions that began in Oslo in January 1993, which originated as informal, secret, back-channel negotiations between a small group of Israeli academics and PLO figures, with Norwegian facilitation, was originally conceived of as a means of breaking the logjam in the official bilateral negotiations. Progress in the Washington talks was stymied by the combination of the public nature of the discussions, which made it difficult for either the Israeli or Palestinian negotiators to propose compromise formulas without exposing themselves to a severe backlash from their opposition at home, and the limited room for maneuver of the Palestinian delegation, which though nominally independent, was politically constrained from making or accepting concessions without the PLO's approval.¹⁹ The Oslo negotiations rapidly gathered momentum and soon eclipsed the bilateral negotiations in Washington as the aforementioned obstacles to the success of the latter proved insurmountable.

Nonetheless, the Madrid Conference and the negotiations it spawned represented a milestone for Arab-Israeli diplomacy as it brought Israel and its Arab adversaries into direct contact with each other in an international forum for the first time. The American-brokered Camp David Accords concluded between Egypt and Israel in 1978 also gave rise to concepts that were pivotal in shaping future negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, especially the notion of phased-in Palestinian autonomy that was at the core of the approach established by the Oslo Accords. The terms of reference for all three sets of negotiations - the Palestinian autonomy talks that followed the Camp David Accords, the post-Madrid bilateral talks and the Oslo Accords – were the “land for peace” resolutions, namely UN Resolutions 242 and 338.

As the most advanced Israeli-Palestinian negotiating framework to date, the Oslo Accords were accompanied by elaborate, agreed-upon protocols for the completion of specified interim steps by each party within strict timeframes. In other words, Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations in the 1990s did not have the same kind of ad-hoc character that has hampered Turkish-Kurdish negotiations. Nonetheless, procedural rigor did not yield the expected payoff, as judged by the spectacular collapse of the Oslo peace process in late 2000 and the outbreak of a second Palestinian *intifada* or uprising.

The breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been attributed to a wide variety of factors, including the pervasive mistrust between the two parties, which is explored extensively below. However, at least some of the failure rests with some inherent design flaws of the Oslo framework that became more consequential as the process evolved. The critical deficiency – though one which was a product of deliberate design – was the logic of gradualism built into the core of the agreement. Based on the underlying premise that mutual mistrust was too entrenched among Israelis and Palestinians to permit the thorniest issues of the conflict to be dealt with upfront, the Oslo Accords set forth a step-by-step process that “deliberately deferred decisions on all of the difficult substantive questions”.²⁰

body in exile in Tunis allowed the PLO to claim that their needs and interests were being safeguarded at the negotiating table as well.

¹⁹ Putnam and Carcasson, “Communication and the Oslo Negotiation”, 255; Kreisberg, “Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, 382.

²⁰ Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 760.

Unlike the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, the “final status issues” that comprised the end game of negotiations, including the status of Jerusalem, the fate of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, the disposition of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, borders and security, were explicitly recognized by the parties at the outset of the process. However, the incrementalist logic of the Oslo framework, and the perception that there was too big of a trust gap at the outset of the process to permit a healthy discussion of these fundamental issues,²¹ inhibited efforts to define and outline areas of consensus that could have guided discussions when final status negotiations did commence in 1999. There were sporadic efforts in this vein, such as the Roadmap for Peace announced by the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush in 2002. However, this initiative foundered in large part on various provisions that the Palestinians regarded as a non-starter, especially the proposal for the Palestinian state to be based initially on “provisional borders” and excluding East Jerusalem, the intended capital of a future Palestinian state.²²

Conflict resolution would have been aided immeasurably had the parties conducted even a preliminary exercise at the outset of the process to delineate the contours and principles of a workable agreement for each of the topics on the final status agenda. In December 2000, just such an exercise was performed when then-U.S. President Bill Clinton laid down detailed parameters for the resolution of these issues. The Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams drew heavily on these parameters in the talks held in Taba, Egypt in January 2001, an occasion at which the parties claimed they had come closer than ever to reaching a final agreement.²³ However, by then, large-scale violence had flared up and the constellation of political conditions – especially a lame duck American president and an Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, in which much of the Israeli public lost confidence – conspired against progress.

Mistrust and Missed Opportunities

Deep-seated distrust has been among the most seemingly impenetrable barriers to the achievement of a comprehensive resolution in each conflict. The profound distrust the conflicting parties have towards each other is reflected in the fact that in each conflict dyad, the parties harbor deep-seated suspicions of the other side’s ambitions. The parties put little credence in their adversaries’ declared end goals, believing that their true objectives are far more expansive and ambitious than they claim, and in fact pose a threat to their very existence. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this is manifested in the oft-stated concern of Israeli officials that despite the professed aim of the Palestinian Authority to settle for an independent state on 22% of the territory of historic Palestine (as defined by the boundaries of the former British Mandate), and to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the remainder, talk of territorial compromise by the Palestinians is a ruse designed

²¹ Benn, “Shimon Peres, as Captured in a Confidante’s Diary.” In a fascinating interview recently published in the Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz*, Avi Gil, who served as senior aide to Shimon Peres, the then-Israeli foreign minister at the time the Declaration of Principles was signed (and one of the architects of the Oslo Accords), justified this gradualist logic succinctly: “It was impossible to go further at Oslo. There is an in-built hitch in every interim agreement. Why do those agreements exist? Because it’s impossible otherwise. To take Israel and the Palestinians during that period to a final-status agreement was impossible.”

²² Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*, 296.

²³ Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 817.

to lull Israel into a false sense of security and grant Palestinians an independent mini-state, only for it to be used as a launching pad to attack Israel and “drive the Jews into the sea”. This persistent Israeli fear of the Palestinians’ allegedly ulterior motives, commonly referred to as the “plan of stages”, has been voiced by leaders of political parties who supported and opposed a two-state solution alike.²⁴ As Ben-Ami (2007) explains, the non-negotiable demand that Israel has set forth that a future Palestinian state be demilitarized is based on an enduring fear of “potential Palestinian revisionism” and “a subsequent renewed belligerency by the future Palestinian state.”²⁵

The Turkish government, along with much of Turkish society, harbors a similar type of phobia concerning the ambitions of the Kurdish national movement, one that is also borne of mistrust. In their eyes, a separatist agenda lurks behind the relatively modest Kurdish demand for mother tongue education in public schools, a demand almost universally shared by Kurdish rights activists both within and outside of the PKK/KCK structure. According to this mindset, if Turkey were to undertake such language reforms, this would inevitably whet Kurds’ ambitions, and embolden them to demand a robust form of autonomy or a federal solution. As these demands escalate, Turkey’s territorial integrity and national unity would be increasingly endangered, potentially culminating in the unraveling of the state itself.²⁶ A twist on this phobia, commonly known as the “Sevres syndrome”, holds that Kurdish demands to expand Kurdish language education and for the delegation of greater decision-making powers to local administrations are not an authentic reflection of homegrown Kurdish grievances, but rather have been manufactured by Western/European powers intent on weakening and destabilizing Turkey.²⁷

Another manifestation of the extreme mistrust between the main parties in each conflict is a deep-seated pessimism regarding the prospects of conflict resolution. In both the case of Turkey and the Kurds and Israel and the Palestinians, a strong yearning for peaceful conflict resolution is paired with an equally strong lack of faith in the adversary’s willingness to honor the terms of any peace accord and to coexist peacefully with one’s own ethnic group. This creates a paradox: while each side is convinced of its own commitment to peace, the overarching belief that its adversary will not accept the compromises necessary to achieve peace causes it to balk at making the fundamental concessions that the latter insists upon as the price for an acceptable settlement. For instance, with respect to American Jewish attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Waxman (2017) observes,

²⁴ Shamir and Shikaki, *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion*, 66.

²⁵ Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*, 247-248.

²⁶ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 26; Kirschner, *Trust and Fear in Civil Wars*, 120-121. An excerpt from the ICG report encapsulates well many Turks’ beliefs that Kurdish activists’ demands for language reforms and equal citizenship mask a more sinister agenda: “Important figures in Turkish politics, the media and the Ankara bureaucracy now acknowledge many of the grievances underlying these demands. However, they worry about the vagueness of the latter and do not agree on how to address them. The PKK’s lack of clarity, critics say, disguises the hardliners’ intention to secure these reforms first but ultimately to seek at least a small patch of territory where they can reign supreme.”

²⁷ The “Sevres syndrome” evokes traumatic memories of the abortive post-war settlement that the victorious European powers sought to impose on the prostrate Ottoman Empire in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres.

Most American Jews are therefore deeply ambivalent in their attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They want peace and favor some Israeli territorial concessions, but they also worry about Israeli security and are highly suspicious of Palestinians' intentions . . . They want Israel to end the occupation, but they do not want Israel to take any security risks. They want Palestinians to have a state of their own, but they do not want this state to be a threat to Israel in any way.²⁸

This risk-averse mindset proves to be problematic, even fatal to peace efforts for two reasons. First, an extreme reluctance to make meaningful concessions that an adversary identifies as the bare minimum required for an acceptable settlement can severely diminish the latter's confidence in one's good faith to the point that the peace process itself is jeopardized. This was clearly the case with the peace process that followed the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians in September 1993. The Oslo peace process, which was in effect until approximately January 2001, was based on a logic of gradualism whereby Israel took incremental steps to relinquish control over civilian affairs to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in exchange for the Palestinians taking measures to guarantee Israel's security. This step-by-step process suited the preferences of an Israeli public that, while hungry for peace, cast a wary eye on Yasser Arafat, the president of the Palestinian Authority, and other leaders of his Fatah movement, due to the long history of terror attacks Israel suffered at the latter's hands.

Israel's excessively risk-averse posture towards peace with the Palestinians, which was rooted in the enduring apprehension that the Palestinian Authority was not a suitable peace partner, eroded Palestinian goodwill and contributed to the collapse of the Oslo Accords and the outbreak of a second intifada in 2000. These negative consequences were especially evident in the dynamics and outcome of the final status negotiations that took place at the Camp David summit convened by then-American President Bill Clinton in July 2000. Fearing that the Palestinians were prone to pocketing Israeli concessions without offering anything of substance in return, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak repeatedly misrepresented his early positions on the final status issues as unmovable bottom lines. Though Barak was prepared to compromise at a point much closer to the Palestinians' ideal positions on the issues in dispute, he reasoned that displaying firmness bordering on rigidity would place the onus on the Palestinians to make concessions, whereas a flexible posture would only embolden the Palestinians to demand more. In other words, harboring great mistrust of Arafat's ultimate intentions, Barak found it prudent to err on the side of being too firm rather than being too flexible. However, the ironic result is that the Palestinians accused Israel of negotiating in bad faith and reverted to a hardline stance in response when it became clear that Barak was systematically misrepresenting his true preferences.²⁹

Secondly, an unwillingness to take substantial risks for peace based on mistrust of the adversary's intentions can lead one to backtrack on an emerging peace process at the slightest sign of public dissatisfaction with the process. This was evident when the governing AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, or the Justice and Development Party) virtually walked away from the Democratic Opening (otherwise known as the "Kurdish Opening"), a reform-minded initiative that

²⁸ Waxman, "American Jews and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 328. As the author makes clear, the same can be said of Israeli Jews' opinions.

²⁹ Malley and Agha, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors."

was spearheaded by then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to address Turkey's Kurdish question in 2009. The Democratic Opening included groundbreaking measures to expand avenues for Kurdish linguistic and cultural self-expression, including granting a license to a public satellite television channel (TRT-6) offering exclusive programming in the Kurdish language, and relaxing long-standing restrictions on its use in election campaigns, prisons, universities and mosque sermons.³⁰

However, the process hit a major roadblock and the Turkish government's will to go the distance waned in the wake of a botched amnesty for PKK militants at the Habur crossing along Turkey's border with northern Iraq on October 22, 2009. In this incident, a limited amnesty that was pre-arranged between the Turkish government and political representatives of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey went awry when the returning Turkish citizens, eight PKK guerillas dressed in their combat fatigues, and twenty six refugees, were given a hero's welcome by a Kurdish crowd. Some analysts and observers assert that the crowd's reaction was simply a spontaneous burst of euphoria rooted in an optimistic expectation that a new era of peace and reconciliation was at hand.³¹ However, Turkish nationalist sentiment was aroused when, subsequently, representatives of the pro-Kurdish party, the DTP (Turkish acronym for the Democratic Society Party) paraded the returnees around several cities in the Kurdish southeast.³² The Turkish media portrayed this move as a victory lap by the PKK, designed to underscore the PKK's message that nothing short of violence would have compelled Turkey to come to grips with Kurdish claims and demands.³³

The optics of the event thus turned what was supposed to be a confidence-building measure aimed at catalyzing a broader reconciliation into a public relations fiasco for the Turkish government. In tandem, the Turkish public quickly soured on the Democratic Opening in the aftermath of the Habur episode, with general support for the reform initiative plummeting from 45.6 percent to 32.1 percent, along with an even more precipitous drop in support among AKP voters.³⁴ To shore up its flagging support among the swing nationalist voters as well as the traditional AKP base, and reassure them that the state had not simply caved in to the PKK's demands, Erdoğan's government had 10 out of the 34 returnees at Habur arrested and indicted, while the remainder fled back to Iraq.³⁵

³⁰ Weiss, "From Constructive Engagement to Renewed Estrangement," 7.

³¹ Başaran, *Frontline Turkey*, 74-75; International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 3 (fn. 25).

³² Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 11 (fn. 91).

³³ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 3; Karaveli, "Reconciling Statism With Freedom."

³⁴ Karaveli, "Reconciling Statism With Freedom," 19, 25. The volatile nature of Turkish public opinion illustrates well my earlier observation that in the presence of sharp mistrust towards the opposing ethnic group, each of the conflicting parties values peace as inherently desirable as long as they do not have to pay a significant cost or bear an inordinate risk to obtain it. However, the threshold for what they consider to be an excessive cost or an inordinate risk is rather low. Karaveli aptly summarizes this mindset in his discussion of the Turkish public's reaction to the Democratic Opening: "the opening appealed to widely different political constituencies as long as its specifics, beyond silencing the guns, remains unpronounced or poorly appreciated."

³⁵ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, 2.

The Habur event is instructive for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that in the absence of minimal levels of prior trust between two conflicting parties, a peace process can be perched on a knife-edge equilibrium, easily susceptible to reversals at the slightest sign of difficulty. This is evident in the fact that ordinary Turks' support for the Democratic Opening almost instantly evaporated in the wake of the Habur episode or more appropriately, due to their prevailing *perceptions* of the episode. Ordinary Turks were overwhelmingly swayed by the Turkish media's nationalist-tinged depiction of the event (namely, that the PKK had exploited the return to flex its muscles and symbolically declare victory, while deliberately humiliating the government and wounding Turkish national pride in the process) and seized upon it to register their overwhelming disapproval of the peace process. Stung by the unexpected nationalist backlash, the Turkish government applied the brakes on the Democratic Opening shortly thereafter.³⁶

The governing AKP's handling (or mishandling, depending upon one's perspective) of the Habur event and its diminished enthusiasm for pursuing the Democratic Opening in the wake of the incident points to another significant observation concerning the corrosive impact of mistrust in peace processes. Specifically, the mere fear of triggering a groundswell of nationalist objections prompted the AKP to be deliberately vague in its communications with the Turkish public and opposition parties about the goals of the opening and where it was ultimately headed.³⁷ However, this strategic, guarded approach towards the opening created a fatal paradox: the very failure to shape and manage public expectations about the opening and to articulate the logic behind controversial steps, such as the limited amnesty at Habur all but guaranteed that such steps would become mired in controversy and invite the focused opposition of nationalist circles. As Karaveli (2010) states:

If the government was indeed trying to avoid provoking a nationalist backlash – which seems probable --by choosing to remain somewhat opaque about the ultimate direction of the opening, in a sense enticing the Turkish nationalist public to believe that there was nothing to worry about, it failed. The nationalists were not fooled. Ultimately, the very “openness” of the Kurdish initiative of the government had the adverse effect of fueling suspicions and inviting the wildest of speculations and conspiracy theories.³⁸

In short, the Habur debacle demonstrates that peace processes in societies characterized by entrenched mistrust towards the rival ethnic group will often founder due to the conflicting parties' hyper-sensitivity to skeptical publics. Failure can result from a combination of hesitation, born of an overabundance of caution, to condition properly the public for the concessions required for peace, or from sharply pulling back when nationalist sentiment in opposition to the peace process reaches a fever pitch. Both were operative in the Turkish case.

The Democratic Opening represents just one missed opportunity for conflict resolution in the thirty-five-year-old conflict between the PKK (and its political/civil society wings) and the Turkish state, and arguably not even the most consequential one. The political ground surrounding Turkish-Kurdish conflict resolution efforts shifted considerably in the years following the Democratic Opening. This is due in large part to the fact that Erdoğan who transitioned from prime

³⁶ Pusane, “Turkey’s Kurdish Opening,” 86, 89.

³⁷ Karaveli, “Reconciling Statism With Freedom,” 28.

³⁸ Karaveli, “Reconciling Statism With Freedom,” 28.

minister to becoming Turkey's first directly elected president in 2014 underwent a sea change in his preferences towards peace. This is most evident in his controversial response to the issuance of the Dolmabahçe Declaration in February 2015.

The declaration was the culmination of talks held between a Turkish government delegation made up of Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan and the Minister of Interior Efkan Ala and three deputies of the pro-Kurdish HDP (Turkish acronym for the "People's Democratic Party"), Sırrı Süreyya Önder, İdris Baluken and Pervin Buldan, whereby they achieved a consensus on a ten-article road map for a resolution of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict.³⁹ The Turkish government's supplanting of the Turkish intelligence agency (MİT) as the primary interlocutor in negotiations with the Kurdish national movement was symbolic in its own right.⁴⁰ However, the development that lent a historical aura to the gathering at Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul and signaled that peace was just over the horizon was the narration by the HDP deputies present of a statement by Öcalan calling for an extraordinary PKK congress to be convened with the aim of declaring an end to the armed struggle.⁴¹ Various accounts also indicate that agreement was reached concerning the formation of a joint monitoring committee,⁴² which was widely recognized as an important step in putting the negotiations on a firmer legal footing and signaling a seriousness of purpose.⁴³

The sense of promise spawned by the Dolmabahçe Declaration, however, almost immediately evaporated as Erdoğan distanced himself from the agreement and ultimately renounced it altogether. Erdoğan insisted that the Turkish government did not properly consult him in advance of the talks that laid the groundwork for the agreement, a claim contradicted by leading representatives of the Turkish government and members of his own AKP, especially former Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç.⁴⁴ Many plausible reasons can be cited for Erdoğan's repudiation of the Dolmabahçe Declaration. However, the emergence of the HDP and its co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş as the most vociferous opponent of Erdoğan's overarching ambition to hold a constitutional referendum that would change Turkey's political system to one where the presidency was vested with the lion's share of power offers the most compelling explanation for why Erdogan soured on the peace initiative so quickly and sought to discredit the HDP as a legitimate interlocutor.⁴⁵

³⁹ *Daily Sabah*, "Erdoğan Renounces Dolmabahçe Declaration."

⁴⁰ Başaran, *Frontline Turkey*, 134.

⁴¹ *Hürriyet*, "Turkish intel services 'would even meet devil,' says Deputy PM."

⁴² Başaran, *Frontline Turkey*, 136-137.

⁴³ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 234*, i.

⁴⁴ Akyol, "AKP Moderate Declared 'Traitor'".

⁴⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, "Seni başkan yaptırmayacağız"; *Daily Sabah*, "Erdoğan Renounces Dolmabahçe Declaration." Demirtaş' speech to an HDP parliamentary delegation on March 17, 2015, in which he vowed to thwart Erdoğan's bid to install an executive presidency, uttering that "we will not let you become the chief" (in Turkish, "Seni başkan yaptırmayacağız") placed the HDP and Erdoğan on a collision course. That Erdoğan started to speak disparagingly of both the agreement and of HDP's role in it within days of Demirtaş' speech was almost surely no mere coincidence. Of the HDP's involvement, Erdoğan harshly remarked that "An agreement cannot be made with those who lean their backs on the terrorist organization [PKK]."

In contrast to the Habur episode, there is no discernible role that trust, or the lack thereof played in the unwillingness of the Turkish government (or at least Erdoğan himself) to bring the Dolmabahçe initiative to fruition. Rather, parochial considerations related to Erdoğan's grand design to alter the Constitution to concentrate authority in the hands of the presidency, as discussed above, played the dominant role. However, the consequences of what was widely perceived to be a missed opportunity for conflict resolution had a profoundly negative effect on Turkish Kurds' perceptions of the Turkish government's commitment to peace and reconciliation. Tangible gestures that the Turkish government undertook in the run-up to the Dolmabahçe meeting to create a more robust framework for negotiations, such as the construction of a large meeting room in the İmralı prison where Öcalan is based, which was built to accommodate a joint monitoring committee, raised Kurds' expectations of the Turkish government's determination to pursue a peaceful settlement and exacerbated the sense of betrayal they felt when Erdoğan abruptly disavowed the Dolmabahçe understandings.⁴⁶

Secret Peace Negotiations: The Exception to the Rule

Both the Turkish-Kurdish and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts featured periods of backchannel, secret negotiations in which the conflicting parties were able to circumvent many of the aforementioned structural and psychological obstacles, especially those stemming from a paucity of trust. In some respects, the parties made significantly greater headway in reaching common ground on the core issues in contention than they did in open negotiations due to the unique atmosphere facilitated by the covert nature of the discussions. Therefore, these negotiating episodes warrant brief discussion.

In the Turkish-Kurdish case, the secret talks were conducted in Oslo from 2006 to 2011 between the undersecretary (head) of the Turkish national intelligence agency (MİT), Emre Taner (and his successor Hakan Fidan), the deputy undersecretary of the MİT, Afet Güneş, and the leading members of the PKK: Sabri Ok, Mustafa Karasu, Adem Uzun and Zübeyir Aydar.⁴⁷ Mediation was provided by representatives of the British intelligence services, while the Norwegian and Swedish governments managed the logistics of the meetings. The talks continued until crucial details, including meeting minutes, were leaked to the press in 2011. According to Kadioğlu, the negotiations yielded substantial progress, with the parties reaching mutual understanding on the way forward for 90-95 percent of the core issues (according to Hakan Fidan), including making amendments to the Constitution to strip out any articles that promote ethnic discrimination and privilege the Turkish identity at the expense of Kurdish and other minority identities.⁴⁸

Among other benefits, the secrecy surrounding the negotiations allowed the Turkish and Kurdish representatives to be insulated from what Kadioğlu terms "audience effects", or the negative attention and reaction of skeptical domestic political opposition and public opinion.⁴⁹ Negotiators enjoy far greater latitude to offer far-reaching concessions and compromises and probe

⁴⁶ Başaran, *Frontline Turkey*, 139.

⁴⁷ Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 7.

⁴⁸ Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 10.

⁴⁹ Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 10.

the other party's intentions when the intense media coverage and scrutiny associated with public negotiations is absent, as was the case in the secret, backchannel talks in Oslo. The aforementioned Habur debacle, which was one of the byproducts of the Oslo talks,⁵⁰ exemplifies how susceptible confidence-building gestures that were laboriously negotiated in secret, backchannel talks are to reversal when the veil is lifted and concessions are exposed to the harsh glare of the media.

The discussions that took place in 1993 that culminated in the signing of the Oslo Accords (or the Declaration of Principles) between Israel and the PLO on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993 shed light on other advantages of secret talks. One of the benefits of the secretive, backchannel process pursued in Oslo was the fact that the leaders (or 'principals') of each party (Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the case of Israel and Yasser Arafat in the case of the Palestinians) were detached from the negotiations process. This endowed the 'agents' who represented them at the bargaining table with substantial flexibility to explore options and test the other side's reaction without irrevocably committing to them.⁵¹ This flexibility could not have been replicated in a transparent, public negotiation process where the principals are automatically and visibly identified with any proposals and concessions that the negotiators may make on their behalf, such that the former's reputations will be at risk in the event that such concessions prove to be unpopular.

In many respects, the Oslo negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians engendered greater success than the secret talks between the Turkish government and the PKK, as the former led to a signed agreement, the Oslo Accords, or Declaration of Principles, in which the PLO and the Israeli government exchanged letters of mutual recognition. One factor that likely contributed to the difference in negotiating outcomes is the more active and varied roles assumed by the Norwegian intermediaries in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, as contrasted with those undertaken by the British intelligence services in the clandestine Turkish government-PKK talks. In the Turkish-Kurdish talks, the British intelligence representatives settled for a rather passive facilitative role of enabling the conflicting parties to understand each other's positions better, while refraining from offering any proposals or formulas to bridge the gaps.⁵² In contrast, in the Israeli-Palestinian talks in Oslo, the contribution of the Norwegian intermediaries went beyond facilitation. By nudging both sides to make concessions and at times, offering compromise formulas to break the logjam, the Norwegian mediators actively assisted in crafting the agreement that emerged from the talks.⁵³

In both of the secret negotiations episodes, the presence of third party mediators was vital to building trust and cultivating interpersonal relationships between the parties. However, in both cases, there was an apparent tradeoff between the positive interpersonal chemistry and relatively congenial atmosphere fostered within the negotiations, on one hand, and the challenge of managing

⁵⁰ Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 11.

⁵¹ Putnam and Carcasson, "Communication and the Oslo Negotiation", 261.

⁵² Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 9.

⁵³ Kreisberg, "Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", 380; Putnam and Carcasson, "Communication and the Oslo Negotiation", 269-270.

the impressions of the broader public, on the other.⁵⁴ The insular small group dynamics of both negotiations fostered a self-affirming belief that the road maps worked out by the negotiators were the only viable and legitimate path forward. However, the shrouding of the negotiations in secrecy generated mistrust, if not outright opposition, among key stakeholders and politically significant constituencies who chafed at their exclusion from the process after the negotiations were publicized.⁵⁵

Increasing Societal Polarization and Its Impact

A sharp increase in antagonism towards the opposing ethnic group among ordinary citizens in recent years constitutes another common denominator in the Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Kurdish cases that poses a serious impediment to peace. In the Turkish-Kurdish case, it was an article of faith for many years that the bloodshed resulting from military operations waged by the Turkish Armed Forces and terrorist attacks perpetrated by the PKK that has cumulatively claimed over 40,000 lives would not spill over into the realm of inter-communal relations between Turks and Kurds. Ironically, the dominant narrative of the conflict proffered by the state, namely that the PKK was a fringe organization that could boast of few supporters within Turkey and was in fact a stooge of outside powers, helped insulate ordinary Kurds from a popular Turkish backlash,⁵⁶ even as it undermined the prospects of conflict resolution through the Turkish state's refusal to acknowledge that the PKK's violent insurgency was a byproduct of the long-standing official policy of denial of Kurdish identity.

However, as Saraçoğlu (2009) explains, the confluence of several developments has altered the fabric of Turkish-Kurdish relations in the cities of Western Turkey and generated growing antipathy towards the Kurds.⁵⁷ The most important driver of these dynamics is the influx of Kurdish migrants from the southeastern provinces - mainly as a result of displacement in village clearing operations undertaken by the Turkish military - into the shanty towns of cities of Western Turkey. Rising anti-Kurdish prejudice emerges from a bottom-up process whereby superficial interactions with Kurdish migrants in everyday urban life prompt ordinary Turks to produce and reproduce negative stereotypes, including associations of Kurds with ignorance, cultural backwardness, separatism and criminality.⁵⁸ This mentality assumes an ethnic cast, claiming these negative attributes to be an integral part of Kurdishness itself.⁵⁹ Kurds have also been accused of colluding with each other in illegal mafia-like schemes to monopolize economic opportunities and deprive Turks of their fair share of wealth.⁶⁰

Even the high rates of Kurdish participation in the informal economic sector – a sector universally associated with marginality, insecurity and depressed standards of living - have been

⁵⁴ Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 8; Putnam and Carcasson, "Communication and the Oslo Negotiation", 265-266.

⁵⁵ Kadioğlu, "The Oslo Talks," 13; Kreisberg, "Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", 383; Putnam and Carcasson, "Communication and the Oslo Negotiation", 273.

⁵⁶ Saraçoğlu, "Exclusive Recognition," 654.

⁵⁷ Saraçoğlu, "Exclusive Recognition".

⁵⁸ Saraçoğlu, "Exclusive Recognition," 642, 652-653.

⁵⁹ Saraçoğlu, "Exclusive Recognition," 653.

⁶⁰ Saraçoğlu, "Exclusive Recognition," 651-652.

re-interpreted by some Turks as a form of rent-seeking, self-dealing behavior.⁶¹ Saraçoğlu (2009) labels this constellation of attitudes “exclusive recognition”.⁶² On one hand, as a point of departure from the traditional state discourse that sought to deny the existence of a distinct Kurdish ethnic identity until early 1990s, it explicitly recognizes Kurds as a separate ethnic group. On the other hand, instead of embracing these differences, a growing percentage of urban Turks adopt a discourse that stigmatizes Kurdish identity and portrays Kurds as a threat to their economic status, and even to general morals and public order.⁶³

Ergin (2012) adopts a complementary perspective, pointing to the growing tendency of Turks to recognize Kurds as a distinctive ethnic group while simultaneously expressing and demonstrating contempt for such differences.⁶⁴ Paradoxically, now that the state-sanctioned assimilationist mindset that denied the uniqueness of the Kurdish people has crumbled, Turkish society is forced to reckon with diversity and the modal response has been one of adamant rejection of multiculturalism.⁶⁵ This rejection is manifested in a process that Ergin (2012) terms “the racialization of Kurdish identity, which possesses four attributes: 1) an emphasis on physical characteristics as a marker of Kurdishness; 2) the association of Kurdish identity with a lack of cultural refinement and moral probity; 3) the increasing assignment rather than self-assertion of Kurdish identity; 4) the fear of Kurds overtaking Turks demographically and economically.

Various anecdotal evidence of overt discrimination carried out by Turks against Kurds confirms the impression of a conflict that has acquired racial overtones. One notable incident involved the harassment of Kurdish students, donning traditional attire, who, in the process of organizing a picnic at a university near Izmir, were attacked by a lynch mob of Turks. Despite being the victims of the attack, they were indicted by a public prosecutor for promoting the symbols of a banned terrorist organization (the PKK), based on seemingly spurious evidence.⁶⁶ At times, racialization of the Turkish-Kurdish fault line has shaded into calls for the annihilation of Kurds, as when in 2012, in the midst of a popular backlash against the Turkish government’s overtures to the Kurds following a new wave of PKK attacks, one of the top Twitter expressions in Turkish became: “we don’t want an opening; we want a massacre.”⁶⁷

The hardening of intolerant attitudes on the part of Turks towards any outward signs or symbols of ‘traditional’ Kurdish cultural identity has been paralleled by signs of a fraying commitment to peaceful co-existence with their Kurdish neighbors. Indicators of this attitudinal shift abound. An on-line survey conducted in August 2012 found that one in four Turks did not want to live with Kurds, compared to only 2 per cent of Kurds who did not want to live with Turks.⁶⁸ Kirschner (2012) mentions in the same vein how many Turks in urban areas refuse to rent apartments to Kurds and how despite the high rates of intermarriage between Turks and Kurds, the

⁶¹ Saraçoğlu, “Exclusive Recognition,” 652.

⁶² Saraçoğlu, “Exclusive Recognition”.

⁶³ Saraçoğlu, “Exclusive Recognition,” 642.

⁶⁴ Ergin, “The Racialization of Kurdish Identity in Turkey”.

⁶⁵ Ergin, “The Racialization of Kurdish Identity in Turkey,” 327.

⁶⁶ Kirschner, *Trust and Fear in Civil Wars*, 111-112.

⁶⁷ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 6.

⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 222*, 24.

decision to intermarry increasingly opens up rifts in the extended Turkish families of intermarried couples.⁶⁹

Rising Turkish antipathy towards Kurds and the inter-communal tensions that follow from this have been and continue to be detrimental to the peace process and prospects of reconciliation in a multiplicity of ways. First, as discussed above, the diminished willingness of Turks to accept Kurds as neighbors (though not evidently *vice versa*) threatens to erode the very basis of reconciliation, which relies upon mutual amity between the two ethnic groups and a belief in a shared future on the part of ordinary citizens. Secondly, the visceral prejudice that a growing number of Kurds experience and report in the urban environment contribute to a growing sense of marginalization and disenchantment. In turn, an angry and disaffected Kurdish population provides fertile ground for PKK recruitment. As stated in the International Crisis Group's (2012) report titled, "Turkey's Kurdish Impasse: The View from Diyarbakir", "The sharpening atmosphere of discrimination is again strengthening support for the PKK, just as the PKK offensive since 2011 has brought back polarisation reminiscent of the worst years of violence in the 1990s."⁷⁰ Finally, the increasing tendency of Turks to equate Kurdishness itself with the objectives and violent tactics of the PKK⁷¹ is a dangerous development that risks turning into a self-fulfilling prophesy if restive Kurdish youth become convinced that even peaceful methods of Kurdish rights advocacy will be automatically branded as illegitimate by Turks, and subsequently embrace violence out of a sense of despair. In this vein, Başaran (2017) frames the rise of the YDG-H (Turkish acronym for the Revolutionary Patriotic Youth Movement), the youth wing of the PKK which spearheaded the urban warfare campaign against Turkish security forces in late 2015, as emblematic of an "outraged generation" animated by vengeance and possessing a bleak outlook on prospects for future reconciliation with Turks.⁷²

Israeli and Palestinian/Arab attitudes towards the rival ethnic group in the conflict have also evolved in ways that do not bode well for prospects of peace, with a commitment to co-existence decreasing on both sides, albeit with a more pronounced shift on the part of Israeli Jews. It is important to note that the attitudes being surveyed on the Palestinian side concern those of the Arab population of Israel proper, who comprise approximately 20% of the country's population, rather than those who live under Israeli military rule in the occupied territories of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Even though Israeli Arabs have concerns and interests that diverge from those of their Palestinian counterparts,⁷³ they do confront some of the same structural problems (e.g., discrimination and unequal access to resources, services and infrastructure, among others). Moreover, ebbs and flows in tensions between Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews tend to reflect

⁶⁹ Çelik, "I Miss My Village!", 142; Kirschner, *Trust and Fear in Civil Wars*, 115-116.

⁷⁰ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 222*, 24.

⁷¹ Saraçoğlu, "Exclusive Recognition," 654.

⁷² Başaran, *Frontline Turkey*, 155-156.

⁷³ Maltz, "Most Israeli Jews Would Deny Voting Rights." While Israeli Arabs overwhelmingly express sympathy towards the Palestinian cause, their shared ethnic roots with the Palestinian inhabitants of the Occupied Territories do not dominate their identity. A survey conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute found that only 14 percent of Israeli Arab respondents consider Palestinian their primary identity.

the prevailing conditions on the ground in the Occupied Territories, with Israeli-Arab tensions often flaring up when unrest and violence between Israelis and Palestinians spikes.

Taking these disclaimers into account, signs of polarization are increasingly evident on both sides of the Arab-Israeli divide. According to “the Index of Arab-Jewish Relations”, a regular survey taken by Haifa University professor Sammy Smooha, as of 2017, similar to the evolving Turkish attitudes towards Kurds, Israeli Jews’ commitment to co-existence with their fellow Arab citizens has waned. Some 48 percentage of Israeli Jews do not want to have Arabs as neighbors, an increase of seven percentage points from just two years earlier, while their willingness to allow Arab children to attend the same school as their own children sharply declined from 57.5 percent to 51.5 percent.⁷⁴

Increased support for ethnic segregation has been accompanied by a rise in illiberal sentiments, as evidenced by the fact that the percentage of Israeli Jewish respondents acknowledging that Arab citizens should have full rights dropped from 80 percent to 74 percent.⁷⁵ Likewise, according to a different poll taken by the Israeli Democracy Institute, more than 40 percent of Israeli Jews said that Arabs should not be allowed to purchase land outside of their neighborhoods and communities.⁷⁶ These attitudes extend to the question of shared governance, as indicated by high levels of support for perpetuating the existing inequities in the Israeli political system that ensure the dominance of Jewish parties and largely freeze out Arab parties. According to the Israeli Democracy Institute poll, two-thirds of Israeli Jews are opposed to including Arab parties in the government and appointing Arab ministers, while over 75 percent are opposed to the participation of Arabs in important policy decisions.⁷⁷

A parallel rise in Israeli Arabs’ intolerance of their Jewish counterparts can be witnessed in the fact that according to “the Index of Jewish-Arab Relations” poll, the percentage of Arab respondents who acknowledge Israel’s legitimacy as a Jewish and democratic state diminished from 53.5 percent in 2015 to 49 percent in 2017.⁷⁸ This finding should not necessarily be equated with hostility to the very notion of Arab-Jewish co-existence. It should instead be interpreted

⁷⁴ Shpigel, “The Rift in Society.”

⁷⁵ Shpigel, “The Rift in Society.”

⁷⁶ Maltz, “Most Israeli Jews Would Deny Voting Rights.”

⁷⁷ Maltz, “Most Israeli Jews Would Deny Voting Rights.”

⁷⁸ Maltz, “Most Israeli Jews Would Deny Voting Rights”; Shpigel, “The Rift in Society.” Though based on a somewhat different question, the Israeli Democracy Institute finds evidence of a similar attitude in its poll, with two out of every three Arab citizens being unwilling to recognize Israel as the national home of the Jewish people. This finding should not necessarily be equated with hostility to the very notion of Arab-Jewish co-existence. It should instead be interpreted against the backdrop of the exodus of Palestinians who were displaced from their homes and communities in the wars of 1948 and 1967, which marked the advent of the Palestinian refugee problem. In the eyes of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians alike, the phrase “national home of the Jewish people” arouses the specter of subsequent waves of expulsion or discriminatory measures meant to preserve Israel’s Jewish majority at all costs. Responses to other items in the survey suggest that Israeli Arabs are more open to integration and contact with the other ethnic group than is the case for Israeli Jews. For example, while more than half of Israeli Jews (52 percent) said that it was preferable for Jews and Arabs to live separately, only 23 percent of Arabs expressed a desire to live separately from Jews.

against the backdrop of the exodus of Palestinians who were displaced from their homes and communities in the wars of 1948 and 1967, which marked the advent of the Palestinian refugee problem. In the eyes of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians alike, the phrase “national home of the Jewish people” arouses the specter of subsequent waves of expulsion or discriminatory measures meant to preserve Israel’s Jewish majority at all costs. References to the Jewish character of the Israeli state have aroused even more acute concerns since the passage of the Jewish nation-state law by the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) in July 2018. This piece of legislation, which confers the exclusive right to national self-determination upon the Jewish people and eliminates Arabic as an official language, has been widely criticized by Israeli Arabs of all political stripes as equivalent to codifying discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel into law and according to some, marks a significant move in the direction of a separate but unequal apartheid-like system.⁷⁹

Perceived rejection by Arabs of what an overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews define as the essence and *raison d’être* of their state reinforces intolerant and exclusionary attitudes on their part. This is evident in the fact that according to the Israeli Democracy Institute poll, 58 percent of Israeli Jews favored revoking the voting rights of those Arabs who challenge the basic Zionist narrative of Israel as the homeland and universal refuge of the Jews.⁸⁰ The question remains to be answered, though: to what extent does rising Israeli Jewish prejudice or intolerance towards Israeli Arab citizens spill over into attitudes towards peace with the Palestinians? It would be a gross over-exaggeration to state that there is a direct line that runs from anti-Arab sentiments to the degree of Israeli Jewish support for a two-state solution to the conflict and reconciliation with the Palestinians. In fact, the author of the “Index of Arab-Jewish Relations” survey and study, Sammy Smooha, takes pains to emphasize that in his view, the diminished willingness of Israeli Jews to live, work, and go to school with their Arab neighbors is not synonymous with anti-Arab racism.⁸¹

However, Israeli Jews’ growing wariness of mixing with Israeli Arabs comes at a time that Israeli society is showing increasing apathy to incidents of harassment, property destruction and violence perpetrated by Jewish vigilante groups drawn from the ranks of the settlement movement against Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank. As stated by Beauchamp (2014),

While anti-Arab racism is not rising among Israelis as a whole, according to research by Haifa University, what has happened is that, since the violence of the Second Intifada, Israelis have become much less eager to challenge anti-Palestinian racism on the Israeli far-right - they've become, in other words, more tolerant of intolerance. This has allowed far-right anti-Arab movements to fester, even as they've remained small minorities within Israeli society.⁸²

The same article points out that the climate of impunity within which anti-Arab vigilante groups operate, made possible by the prevailing attitude of indifference to Palestinian suffering among much of the Israeli public, helped set the stage for some especially violent incidents, including the burning alive of a 16 year-old Palestinian, Mohammed Abu Khdeir, and a rampage

⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, “Israel Passes Controversial ‘Jewish Nation-State’ Law.”

⁸⁰ Maltz, “Most Israeli Jews Would Deny Voting Rights.”

⁸¹ Beauchamp, “Why Israel’s Racist Violence Problem Is Getting Worse.”

⁸² Beauchamp, “Why Israel’s Racist Violence Problem Is Getting Worse.”

by a Jewish mob targeting Arabs in the streets of Jerusalem, both of which occurred in 2014.⁸³ In sum, negative Jewish attitudes towards Israeli Arabs and/or Palestinians may well be contributing to a broader breakdown in inter-ethnic relations and patterns of tit-for-tat violence that will further complicate the path to peace.

Structural Disparities and Their Negative Impact on Peace Prospects

Over-reaching security measures enacted or authorized by the stronger side in each conflict (Israel and Turkey) that stifle freedom of expression, conflate lawful dissent with criminality, and tend towards collective punishment have also contributed to an environment that is un conducive to the achievement of a durable peace. The heavy-handed measures undertaken by the stronger states in each conflict are detrimental to peace for two principal reasons. First, by suppressing legal, peaceful outlets for the advocacy of minority group rights and demands, Israel and Turkey impede the ability of the Palestinians and Kurds respectively to organize in the political arena and negotiate with them. Secondly, by stigmatizing or criminalizing nonviolent methods of struggle, they send a signal to the weaker party that nonviolent opposition will be dealt with just as forcefully as terrorism and other acts of violence. This generates few incentives to moderate and lends ammunition to the arguments of militant groups (e.g., Hamas in the Israeli-Palestinian case and the PKK in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict) that violence is only the effective strategy for compelling the stronger party to accede to the weaker side's demands.

In the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, vague provisions of the Anti-Terror Law and the Penal Code have been invoked by Turkish authorities to stifle Kurdish activists' freedom of expression, and criminalize political speech and activities, such as participation in mass demonstrations, with no demonstrable violent intent. In April 2009, at the same time that the Erdoğan government launched the 'Democratic Opening', it authorized a broad crackdown against Kurdish activists, accusing them of links with the Kurdish national movement's umbrella organization, the Kurdistan Communities Union (the 'KCK', or *Koma Civakên Kurdistan*). Thousands of arrests were made, often on dubious charges of spreading propaganda on behalf of a "terrorist organization". Among those ensnared in the KCK operations were a variety of Kurdish politicians, activists, intellectuals, students and journalists, almost all of who agitated for Kurdish rights and recognition through legal, civil society and political channels.⁸⁴

The aforementioned arrests embody a broader pattern whereby Kurdish rights advocates with no track record of violent activities have been routinely painted with the same broad brush of criminality as PKK militants. According to PKK/KCK leader Murat Karayılan, at least 85% of the detainees were not even members of his organization.⁸⁵ As the height of the KCK operations coincided with the Democratic Opening, Turkey's Kurds received mixed messages about the extent to which the Turkish government was prepared to make a clean break with the repressive policies of the past. In addition to casting doubt on the Turkey's commitment to resolving the

⁸³ Beauchamp, "Why Israel's Racist Violence Problem Is Getting Worse."

⁸⁴ Çandar, *Dağdan iniş*, 97; Gunter, "The Kurdish Issue," 443. According to Çandar, that the vast majority of the 3200 suspects detained following the June 2011 general elections were registered members of the legal pro-Kurdish BDP strengthens the impression that the KCK arrests were politically motivated.

⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 22.

Kurdish question through democratic means, the legal harassment of Kurdish activists has exacerbated mistrust in the judiciary, police and other Turkish institutions, and disempowered moderates. Such actions have also deepened the grievances of already disaffected Kurdish youth, pushing some of them towards violence.⁸⁶ According to a BDP district mayor in Diyarbakır quoted in the 2012 International Crisis Group report titled, “The PKK and A Kurdish Settlement”, the mass arrests of legal activists from 2009 forward aroused so much anger that it led to 2,000 or more young people “going up to the mountains” to join the PKK.⁸⁷

The resurgence of fighting between the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the PKK in 2015 has only reinforced Erdoğan’s tendency to neutralize the legal Kurdish opposition (the HDP, Turkish acronym for “The Peoples’ Democratic Party”) through repressive measures. This was embodied in legislation, passed by the Turkish Parliament (TBMM) in late 2016, which stripped HDP deputies of their immunity from prosecution, paving the way for all but four of the 59 members of the HDP parliamentary delegation, including the leadership of the party, to be tried for a host of politically motivated charges such as “supporting terrorism” and “disseminating propaganda on behalf of a terrorist organization”.⁸⁸ The wide net the Turkish government has cast appears to be part of a thinly-veiled effort to undercut the HDP’s ability to compete on a level playing field with the AKP in Turkish elections. Moreover, heavy-handed security measures have made it virtually impossible for even those Kurds who are most committed to a peaceful resolution to the conflict to organize and negotiate effectively. As stated in the 2012 International Crisis Group report titled, “The PKK and A Kurdish Settlement”,

Large-scale arrests of its parliamentary deputies, elected mayors, provincial party chiefs and ordinary activists have undermined the BDP’s capacities, challenging its ability to engage on an equal footing with the government on talks to end the conflict. An international sympathiser pointed out: “When does BDP have time to do politics? They are swamped. Half of them are in prison, the other half are trying to get the others out. How can AKP talk to the BDP if they don’t give them the political space to work?”⁸⁹

Israel has pursued a similar policy of suppressing nonviolent outlets for the expression of grievances by the minority group (in this case, the Palestinians) and imposing extensive curbs on freedom of association, freedom of expression, and other fundamental civil liberties. Some of the restrictions on political activity that Palestinians face are extreme, especially by the standards of liberal democracies (which Israel claims to be), such as the military law that bans the gathering of more than ten people for political purposes in the West Bank.⁹⁰ Parallel to Turkey’s treatment of Kurdish rights activists, Palestinian organizers of nonviolent demonstrations and civil disobedience actions, such as the leaders of the grassroots, nonviolent campaign against the

⁸⁶ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 25-26; Kirschner, *Trust and Fear in Civil Wars*, 111.

⁸⁷ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 12. The BDP refers to the Turkish acronym for the “Peace and Democracy Party” and was the previous incarnation of the current Kurdish national movement party in Turkey, the HDP.

⁸⁸ Mortimer, “How Erdoğan’s Personal Ambitions”; Weise, “In Erdoğan’s Turkey”.

⁸⁹ International Crisis Group, *ICG Europe Report No. 219*, 24.

⁹⁰ Alfred, “Amid a Wave of Attacks.”

Separation Barrier in the West Bank, which has severed Palestinian villagers' access to vast swaths of productive farmland, have been the targets of extensive surveillance, legal harassment, violent crackdowns and arrests by Israeli security forces.⁹¹ The draconian punishments Israel has meted out to nonviolent activists, including midnight arrest raids, successive terms of administration detention, deportation,⁹² dubious charges of inciting violence and in some cases, lethal uses of force,⁹³ are suggestive of a deliberate strategy by the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) to send a message that civil disobedience and nonviolent forms of protest against the Israeli occupation are futile endeavors. This hardly inspires Palestinians' confidence in the efficacy of nonviolent action and hence gives a boost to militant groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, who are resolutely opposed to territorial compromise with Israel.

Conclusion

A detailed examination of the Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Kurdish conflicts, both of which have eluded resolution despite the seemingly endless time and energies invested in diplomatic efforts, has yielded some key insights into the factors that contribute to failed peace processes. The analysis revealed that critical deficiencies in the design of negotiating frameworks (especially the lack of specificity of end goals) have been detrimental to peace efforts. Other factors that this study identified as being responsible for the breakdown of peace processes in both cases are deep-seated mutual mistrust, diminished tolerance of and willingness to co-exist with the rival ethnic group, and overreaching security policies and practices perpetrated by the dominant ethnic group that deny to the weaker ethnic group the space and incentives for nonviolent forms of activism.

Another research can more systematically explore the common structural deficiencies that rendered both peace processes susceptible to collapse. This study primarily examined attitudinal and psychological factors, while the structural dysfunctions associated with the negotiating framework of both conflicts and the process of negotiations received comparably little attention. One set of dynamics that merits far greater investigation is consensus-building strategies and whether the leaders of each party in conflict made sufficient efforts or acted effectively enough to mobilize support for the peace process from the general public and prominent opposition parties.

⁹¹ Alfred, "Amid a Wave of Attacks"; Boudreaux, "Palestinians Who See Nonviolence As Their Weapon"; Marom, "Military Court Sends Leading Nonviolent Palestinian Activist to Prison."

⁹² Mubarak Awad, the founder of the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, is one of the more prominent cases of a nonviolent activist being stripped of his residency permit in Israel on arbitrary, politically motivated grounds.

⁹³ Human Rights Watch, "Israel: Shooting Deaths after West Bank Protest"; Levinson, "Nearly 100% of All Military Court Cases". According to Human Rights Watch, "Israeli forces have on numerous occasions used live ammunition against Palestinians who posed no imminent threat during West Bank protests, and the Israeli military has a poor record of bringing soldiers to justice for such acts." Yesh Din, an Israeli human rights organization, maintains that the Israeli military justice system, which has convicted only six Israeli soldiers for unlawfully killing Palestinians (with seven-and-a-half months being the longest jail sentence handed down for such acts), has created a permissive environment for the excessive use of force by the IDF against peaceful Palestinian protesters.

Did they make sufficient inroads in public opinion to insulate the process against damage from ‘spoilers’?

In the Turkish-Kurdish case, the preliminary answer to this question would appear to be in the negative. The Turkish government established a “Wise Persons Commission” in 2013 tasked with explaining the merits of the “solution process” to the broader Turkish public and gauging their demands and expectations surrounding the process.⁹⁴ Comprised of 63 members, including opinion leaders, religious leaders, journalists, academics, activists and others, the commission was divided into seven sub groups corresponding to Turkey’s geographical regions, each of which organized meetings with various civil society organizations and gathered the views of ordinary members of the public.⁹⁵

A full assessment of the balance sheet of the Wise Persons Commission is beyond the scope of the article. On the surface, the commission appeared to be an optimal mechanism for ensuring that the peace process had a bottom-up dimension and was organically rooted in the aspirations and demands of Turkish society. According to one source, while some experts or commissioners regarded the commission as generally effective in broadening public participation in the peace process and mollifying the concerns of some Turks regarding the process, it was also widely faulted for having a mandate that was too short-lived (the commission expired after two months), a membership that was too large to issue anything more than lowest common-denominator conclusions, and for not being sufficiently representative of society as a whole.⁹⁶ Başaran (2017) is far more critical of the Wise Persons Commission’s performance, asserting that it was an exercise in public relations more than anything else.⁹⁷ In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ben-Ami similarly suggests that former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak was ineffective in rallying public opinion and key power centers such as the army bureaucracy behind his peacemaking moves towards the Palestinians at the Camp David summit in 2000.⁹⁸ However, a far more rigorous comparative investigation of both conflicts is required with respect to the public opinion dimension.

The monitoring mechanisms (or lack thereof) of each peace process are another aspect of the negotiating framework and process that would be useful to examine. A cursory look indicates that there was nothing even remotely resembling a rigorous, independent and impartial monitoring system in place to hold the conflicting parties accountable, and if warranted, imposes penalties, for violations of interim agreements and commitments they made to each other.

Another compelling line of investigation is to examine in greater depth the relationships and interactions between the factors identified in this paper as having contributed to the collapse of both peace processes. For instance, the absence of mutual trust between the two parties in each conflict may very well have played an influential role in the vagueness of the end goals they articulated for the peace negotiations. The logic behind this is that parties to a conflict will be reluctant to spell out objectives for ending the conflict that would satisfy the other side if they fear

⁹⁴ Democratic Progress Institute, *Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict*, 42.

⁹⁵ Democratic Progress Institute, *Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict*, 42.

⁹⁶ Democratic Progress Institute, *Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict*, 42-43.

⁹⁷ Başaran, *Frontline Turkey*, 102.

⁹⁸ Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*, 282.

that an untrustworthy adversary will simply “deposit” this as an ironclad commitment and fail to reciprocate with something of equal value. For instance, influential voices within the PKK are leery of the organization adopting an unequivocal commitment to disarmament for fear that the Turkish government will not reciprocate with a credible commitment to end all forms of state discrimination against the Kurds, leaving the PKK devoid of any means to combat ill-treatment at the hands of the state.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Kirschner, *Trust and Fear in Civil Wars*, 112.

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