

Understanding Insurgency

No insurgent movement can survive without some degree of popular support, but what does it mean to support an armed group? Focusing on the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), which has come to global attention in recent years for its efforts in resisting ISIS in Iraq and Syria, but has been present and active in the region for much longer, Francis O'Connor explores the first three decades of the PKK's insurgency in Turkey. Looking at how the relationship between armed groups and their supporters should be conceptually understood, how this relationship varies spatially and what role violence has in their relationship, he draws on Civil War, Social Movements and Rebel Governance literatures to outline how the PKK survived a military coup in 1980 and slowly won popular support through incipient forms of rebel governance, the targeted use of violence and a nuanced projection of its ideology and objectives. In doing so, it provides an historical narrative to an organisation which has managed to successfully resist NATO's second largest army with limited weapons for decades and has become a key player of Kurdish rights in the wider region.

Francis O'Connor is an NUIG, SOAS and EUI graduate and an accomplished scholar working on contentious politics and civil wars, covering subjects as varied as anti-austerity protest, nationalism and conflicts in Colombia, Mexico and Turkey. His co-authored books include *Social Movements and Referendums from Below* (2017) and *Late Neoliberalism and Its Discontents in the Economic Crisis: Comparing Social Movements in the European Periphery* (2016).

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Popular Support for the PKK in Turkey

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Bijī Biratiya Gelan

Contents

<i>Map</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xii
Introduction	1
1 Kurdistan in Twentieth-Century Turkey	25
2 Theories of Insurgent Support	39
3 PKK Pre-conflict Mobilisation (1974–1984)	66
4 The PKK and Rural Insurgency	107
5 PKK Insurgency and the City	146
6 The PKK in Western Turkey	183
Conclusion	219
<i>Appendix: Interview Index</i>	230
<i>Bibliography</i>	238
<i>Index</i>	277

Map

I.1 Kurdistan map

page 9

Acknowledgements

This book is based on my PhD, which I began in 2010 at the European University Institute in Italy. Since then, I have accumulated many professional and personal debts: this book would simply not exist were it not for the practical support, encouragement and patience of many friends and colleagues.

The book deals with the conflict in Kurdistan and its primary source of data was periods of fieldwork conducted in Turkey and Kurdistan from 2011 to 2013, alongside interviews conducted with members of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. As an outsider working on a conflict that is not ‘my own’, I have worried that my research has been an intrusion on peoples’ lives, swooping in for periods of time, gathering the information I need, before safely retreating abroad. Undeniably there is an element of unfortunate truth to my concerns: the hierarchies between the research and researched – regardless of bonds of empathy, friendships and shared experiences developed over the years – are real. Nevertheless, I can only hope that I have done a competent and fair job in using my academic platform to further a better understanding of the conflict they endured. Inevitably due to the focus of the book, it entailed the reviving and re-telling of some of the worst and most traumatic moments of many of the interviewees’ lives. Many years later, I remain astounded that so many people were willing to talk to me about these things, and to risk re-opening personal wounds, and I remain forever in their debt. Beyond the formal interviews, the broader experiences of spending time with people in places previously unknown, over the many cups of çay, lifts to-and-from places, shared bus journeys and many hours just chatting, I encountered incredible resilience, courage, humour and an indefatigable humanity. These experiences have shaped me as a person, and I will always remember them with great fondness. I would like to thank everyone who helped or supported me in any way from the bottom of my heart.

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Finally, this book is dedicated to the memory of my father Francie O'Connor and in honour of my truly marvellous and inspirational mother Alice O'Connor.

Abbreviations

Acronym	Original Name	English Translation
ADYÖD	Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği	Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi	Justice and Development Party
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi	Motherland Party (Est. 1983)
ANC	African National Congress	
AP	Adalet Partisi	Justice Party (Est. 1961)
AYÖD	Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği	Association for Higher Education in Ankara
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi	Peace and Democracy Party (Est. 2008)
Bir-Kom	Birlik Komitesi	Common Committee
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi	The Republican People's Party (Est. 1923, Re-est. 1992)
CKMP	Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi	Republican Peasants' Nation Party (Est. 1958)
CUP	İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti	Committee of Union and Progress
DBP	Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi	Democratic Regions Party (Est. 2014)
DDGB	Devrimci Demokratik Güç Birliği	Revolutionary Democratic United Force
DDKD	Devrimci Demokratik Kültür Dernekleri	Revolutionary Democratic Culture Association
DDKO	Devrimci Doğu Kultur Ocakları	Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths
DEV-GENC	Devrimci Gençlik	Federation of Revolutionary Youth
DEV-YOL	Devrimci Yol Hareketi	Revolutionary Path
DEV-SOL	Devrimci Sol	Revolutionary Left
DHKP-C	Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front
DISK	Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu	Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Unions

List of Abbreviations

xiii

(cont.)

Acronym	Original Name	English Translation
DYÖKD	Diyarbakır Yüksek Öğrenim Kültür Derneği	The Cultural Higher Education Association of Diyarbakır
DP	Demokrat Parti	Democrat Party (Est. 2007, ANAP+DYP)
DP	Demokrat Parti	Democrat Party (Est. 1930)
DYP	Doğru Yol Partisi	True Path Party (Est. 1983)
EAM	Ethnikó Apeleftherotikó Métopo	National Liberation Movement
ERNK	Eniye Rizgariye Navata Kurdistan	National Liberation Front of Kurdistan
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna	Basque Homeland and Freedom
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army
FKBDC	Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi	Unified Resistance Front against Fascism
FLN	Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional	National Liberation Forces
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
GÖÇ-DER	Göç Edenler Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği	Mutual Aid and Culture Association for Migrants
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi	Peoples' Democratic Party (Est. 2012)
HRK	Hazen Rizgariya Kurdistan	Kurdistan Freedom Brigades
IRA	Óglaigh na hÉireann	Irish Republican Army
IP	İşçi Partisi	Workers Party (Est. 1992)
JITEM	Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele Gendarmerie	Intelligence and Counter-terrorism
KCK	Koma Civakên Kurdistan	Kurdistan Communities Union
KDP	Partiya Demokrata Kurdistanê	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Est. 1946)
KIP	Kürdistan İşçi Partisi	Workers Party of Kurdistan
KNK	Kongreya Neteweyî ya Kurdistanê	Kurdish National Congress
KOMCIWAN		Youth Wing of KOMKAR
KOMKAR	Yekitiya Komelên Kurdistan	
KTTC	Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti	Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress
KUK	Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları	National Liberation of Kurdistan

xiv List of Abbreviations

(cont.)

Acronym	Original Name	English Translation
Kawa		Kurdish Proletarian Union
LTTE	Tamiḻḻa viṭtalaip pulikaḻ	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MGK	Milli Güvenlik Konseyi	National Security Council
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi	Nationalist Action Party (Est. 1969)
MIT	Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı	Turkish National Intelligence Unit
MLKP	Marksist-Leninist Komünist Partisi	Marxist-Leninist Communist Party
MSP	Milli Selâmet Partisi	National Salvation Party (Est. 1972)
ORK	Ordiya Rizgariya Kurdistanê	
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde
PKK	Partiya Karkaren-i Kurdistan	Kurdistan Workers Party
PRK	Rizgari	Liberation
PLO		Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PSK	Partiya Sosyalist a Kurdistan	Kurdish Socialist Party
PYD	Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat	Democratic Union Party
RP	Refah Partisi	The Welfare Party (Est. 1983)
SHP	Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti	Social Democratic People's Party (Est. 1985)
	Stêrka Sor/ Beş Parçacılar	Red Star
	Têkoşîn	Liberation
THKO	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu	People's Liberation Army of Turkey
TIKKO	Türkiye İşçi ve Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu	Workers' Peasants Liberation Army of Turkey
TIP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi	Workers Party of Turkey (Est. 1961)
TKP	Türkiye Komünist Partisi	Turkish Communist Party (Est. 1920)
TKP-ML	Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist	Turkish Communist Party Marxist-Leninist
TKDP	Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê - Bakur	Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party
TKSP	Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi/ Özgürlük Yolu	Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan
TÖB-DER	Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği	Association of All Teachers Unity and Solidarity
TMMOB	Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
UKO	Ulusal Kurtuluş Ordusu	National Liberation Army
YCK	Yekîtiya Ciwanên Kurdistan	The Union of Kurdish Youth
YDG-H	Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareket	Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement
YJA-Star	Yekiniya Jinên Azad-Star	Free Women's Units

List of Abbreviations

xv

(cont.)

Acronym	Original Name	English Translation
YJWK	Yekîtiya Jinên Welatparêzên Kurdistan	Union of Patriotic Women of Kurdistan
YKWK	Yekîtiya Karkerên Welatparêzên Kurdistan	Union of Patriotic Workers of Kurdistan
YPG	Yekîneyên Parastina Gel	Peoples' Protection Units
YPJ	Yekîneyên Parastina Jin	Women's Protection Units
YPS	Yekîneyên Parastina Sivîl	Civil Protection Units