The Tragedy of Youth in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings: Preventing Youth Participation in Violence and Assessing Their Role in Turkey’s Southeast (2009-2015)

Murad Duzcu
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The Tragedy of Youth in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings: Preventing Youth Participation in Violence and Assessing Their Role in Turkey’s Southeast (2009-2015)

By

Murad Duzcu

PhD

September, 2016
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Coventry University

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University’s requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
**REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT**

**ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM**
(Review feedback should be completed within 10 working days)

**Name of applicant:** Murad Duzcu  
**Faculty/School/Department:** [Business, Environment and Society] BES International Studies and Social Sci  
**Research project title:** Youth, identity and peacebuilding in Turkey

**Comments by the reviewer**

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**Name of reviewer:** Anonymous  
**Date:** 11/07/2012  
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Murad Duzcu
September, 2017
Coventry
ABSTRACT

Among the greatest dilemmas faced by administrations in Ankara is youth involvement in political violence, first appeared in the student movements in the late-1960s, and gained new relevance during the recent political initiatives (2009-2015). From July 2009 onwards, the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) government embarked on a new Kurdish policy, a political settlement and reconciliation process for the permanent resolution of the Kurdish issue. The management of the peace process has involved ebbs and flows since the acknowledgment of the Kurdish issue in 2005. A socio-politically fragile situation persisted after the formal inception of political initiatives in July 2009 and onwards, in which young people played a major role in the instigation of overt violence. As a result, the incumbent government was highly alarmed by the rise of radicalisation to and the level of violence fomented by conflict-affected youth when a political settlement was underway and a consensus was being reached amongst political actors.

Therefore, this research study of the important roles assumed by young people during and in the aftermath of peace processes provides an evidence-based analysis of key issues and questions related to youth in the conflict-affected areas of Turkey's southeast and presents a set of recommendations for post-conflict programmes to support young people's role in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in the potential transition from conflict to peace situation. Data collected on the lived experiences of non-combatant youth by field research undertaken in Turkey's southeast and the information gathered from secondary sources are used to gain a better understanding of the complex issues related to conflict-affected youth. Thus the main argument in this study is that although the political environment since the inauguration of a solution process (2009-2015) offered the incumbent government the opportunity to settle the Kurdish issue peacefully, the presence of a disillusioned and frustrated youth cohort, coupled with the limited capacities of conflict prevention and peacebuilding instruments, restrained the government's policy options and affected the outcome of its political initiatives. Also, it can be argued that without a conflict-sensitive peace project and a framework for addressing conflict drivers and issues related to young people at the individual, relational and structural levels, it is not likely to prevent young people's radicalisation into violence and violent extremism in Turkey's southeast with the existing youth
policy or mechanisms. This argument is partly about the changing characteristics of the youth cohort in the 2000s, whose mobilisation was not caused solely by the structural deficiencies, past policies or socio-economic inequality in society, but was a result of the interplay between structural and proximate factors, and shaped by their lived experiences of the conflict environment since early childhood.
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INTRODUCTION

This research study of the important roles assumed by young people during and in the aftermath of peace processes provides an evidence-based analysis of key issues and questions related to youth in the conflict-affected areas of Turkey’s southeast and presents a set of recommendations for post-conflict programmes to support young people’s role in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in the transition from conflict to peace. Data collected on the lived experiences of non-combatant youth by field research undertaken in Turkey’s southeast and the information gathered from secondary sources are used to gain a better understanding of the complex issues related to conflict-affected youth. This study first, therefore, provides an assessment of the implications of the violent environment on youth marginalisation in the wider society in the 2000s at the structural level (see Chapter 4) and presents an analysis of young people’s perceptions of the conflict and the on-going peace process with an emphasis on inter-ethnic relations and views towards the out-group (see Chapter 5). Second, the aim of this research is to improve policy options and in particular identify ways to prevent youth participation in conflict by proposing a conflict-sensitive lens and programming guidelines for existing and future peacebuilding instruments (see Chapter 6).

Peacebuilding refers to a process of recovery from the ravages of violent conflict to the foundation of conflict-resilient persons, relations and institutions. These efforts are twofold: (1) preventing a relapse into violence, and (2) recovery from and the removal of the underlying causes of war (Miall et al., 1999). In other words, post-conflict peacebuilding first covers “a period of conflict resolution in which the focus is on the nuts and bolts of settlement – getting the conflicting parties to a sustainable agreement, and achieving and maintaining ceasefires”, and second, it is about “the larger project of national rehabilitation, constructing a sustainable peace by addressing cultural violence (beliefs and values that support and sustain or justify violence) and structural violence (such as poverty, discrimination, and institutionalized inequality) as well as preventing a return to direct violence (immediate physical harm)” (McEvoy-Levy, 2001: 89).
Specifically, an interest in constructing and maintaining sustainable peace draws attention to conflict transformation theory (see Lederach 1995; 1997; Varynen, 1991; 1999) in order to develop an agenda for peace in conflict-weary societies for relevant peacebuilding actors. In this regard, young people’s participation in peacebuilding efforts to promote peace and to contribute to justice and reconciliation is an important aspect of any comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction strategy. In spite of academic attention and evidenced instances regarding young people’s contribution to the promotion and maintenance of peace (see McEvoy-Levy, 2001; 2006), the acute problem facing peace-builders is the fact that radicalisation to violence and violent extremism amongst youth is on the rise, in particular since the mid-1990s and following the 11 September 2001 attacks (see UNDP, 2006). Young people’s radicalisation to violence poses a specific security threat to sustainable peace in war-to-peace transitions. Often identified with a negative role during and after peace processes, relapse into violence is, for the most part, instigated by conflict-affected young cohorts, in particular during the peace negotiations between conflicting parties and against order and stability in the immediate post-peace accord era.

As they usually involve political deliberations amongst elites, peace processes and post-peace accord stages are conducive to the alienation of young people from peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes. Likewise, years of ravage inflicted on the socio-economic and political fabric of conflict-weary societies leave young people deprived of opportunities and they are prone to structural exclusion. In other words, young people are at the centre of an unfolding crisis in most conflict-affected and fragile situations, which is also widely acknowledged by the international community (for instance, see the UNSC Resolutions, especially UNSCR 2250). However, what is meant by ‘youth crisis’ can be contradictory and misleading in different conflict contexts. Referring to the potential uses of the term, the UNDP (2006) report on Society and Development in Crisis?, for instance, distinguished two different meanings of the concept: (1) a crisis of society impacting on youth; and (2) a crisis originating from youth and impacting on society at large. Defining youth as a socially and historically constructed concept and a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, the “… ‘youth crisis’ might best be understood as being due to this transition being blocked or prolonged” (Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 18).
In short, the focus of this current study is to examine one of the most important predicaments of post-conflict situations by identifying specific youth-related issues in transitional and fragile societies and to propose a conflict-sensitive model to respond these issues in conflict-affected areas in Turkey’s southeast with the aim of preventing young people’s involvement in violence and providing the instruments to enable them to participate meaningfully in peacebuilding efforts. Expressing concern that young people account for an adversely affected and a unique and important demographic dividend, and that the disillusionment and exclusion of young people from the foundations of society jeopardize peace and security during the implementation of peace processes and in post-conflict situations, an urgent necessity to identify and address issues related to conflict-affected youth arises as a result of the following developments and an assessment of the current situation in Turkey:

1- The management of the Kurdish crisis in the past decade (that is, the implementation of the peace process – 2009-2015) has involved ebbs and flows since the acknowledgment of the Kurdish issue in the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech delivered to the public in Diyarbakır in 2005. A socio-politically fragile situation persisted after the formal inception of political initiatives in July 2009 and onwards, in which young people played a major role in the instigation of violence. As a result, the incumbent government was highly alarmed by the rise of radicalisation to and the level of violence fomented by conflict-affected civilian youth when the peace process was underway and a political consensus was being reached amongst political actors.

2- As distinguished from the youth referred to in conflict and peacebuilding literature, young people’s important role in peacebuilding is often shaped by specific programmatic responses implemented by local, national or international actors. In contrast to the prevailing alarmist language and the simplistic and poorly-developed programmes available for young people, identifying and addressing issues related to youth in context-specific programmes is consequential for the promotion and maintenance of peace, order and stability in post-conflict situations. This notion affirms the need for a holistic, multi-dimensional and conflict sensitive approach to managing and transforming the growing youth crisis in Turkey’s southeast. Moreover, such a perspective requires the development of strategic and policy-level recommendations for the relevant peacebuilding actors.

3- Bearing in mind the rise of contentious issues and the dominance of ‘identity politics’ in Turkey’s socio-political landscape over recent decades, the social relations aspect is the most neglected and
under-studied topic in the literature on the Kurdish issue. Not only is the deterioration in social relations posing a threat to peace-making and derailing the peace process at present, but it can also subvert efforts to maintain social cohesion and post-conflict stability in the long-term. Young people’s structural exclusion and the lack of opportunities for youth mean that the conditions conducive to the growing radicalisation towards violence and violent extremism amongst youth are central to this debate. However, there is a paucity of research on the issue of conflict-sensitive policies in the sense of enabling young people’s meaningful participation in peacebuilding efforts. As a result, identifying and addressing the factors and conditions leading to the rise of radicalisation towards violence and violent extremism, and the potential ways of dealing with this issue, must be a major concern for the relevant peacebuilding actors at all levels.

1.1. The Issue and Importance of the Youth Crisis in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations

In the post-Cold War period, young people’s presence in many developing countries in the world has become a central issue. Today, more than 600 million young people live in conflict-affected areas across the world (UNDP, 2014). More than 50% of the population is composed of young people in war-torn countries and territories, such as Afghanistan, Gaza and the West Bank, Guatemala, Kosovo and Northern Ireland (World Bank, 2007). Likewise, 63% of the population was under the age of 25 at the end of the civil war in Sierra Leone (IRIN, 2007). The proportion of young people under the age of 15 was 40% in West Africa (Florquin & Berman, 2005). Not only do young people constitute a large proportion of the total population in conflict-affected societies but also the existence of a relatively large youth presence in conflict societies poses risks of subverting order and stability if inclusive policies are not in place. However, despite the fact that most of the youth population in conflict-affected countries are in fact victims or bystanders; a significant number of young people are exposed to the risks of involvement in violence as a result of structural and proximate ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors (see Özerdem & Podder, 2011; 2015).

Given the concern about the functions assumed by young people in conflict and post-conflict situations, whether they are witnesses, perpetrators or victims of armed conflict, young people’s important roles for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security are more pronounced today than in the past decades. As a result, with regard to the capacity of young people to act in conflict and the impact of youth on peace negotiations and dispute settlement, the United Nations Security
Council (UNSC) has recognised young people’s (negative/positive) roles in post-conflict situations. Noting the threat to peace and global security posed by the rise of violent extremism amongst young people in Resolution 2250, the UNSC urges the relevant actors at all levels to adopt inclusive policies in order to curb youth involvement in violence and to enable meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding efforts. That is, the UNSC:

- Re-affirms the duty of governments to protect young people affected by conflict, and to address their needs during rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction
- Calls on all relevant actors to introduce and strengthen mechanisms to promote youth participation in peace-making and peacebuilding, at every level of decision-making
- Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the needs of youth affected by armed conflict, and
- Affirms the importance of providing opportunities and education to equip young people with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures, dialogue, and inclusive political processes.

Today’s conflicts, however, regardless of the type of the conflict, are not the same as conflicts in the twentieth century (World Bank, 2011). Despite the facts that armed conflicts are fewer in number and the overall death toll in modern-day conflicts is declining (Harbom & Wallensteen 2010), new factors associated with contemporary conflicts pose major risks to peacebuilding actors. A report by the World Bank (2011) on conflict and development stated that “conflicts often are not one-off events, but are ongoing and repeated”; “new forms of conflict and violence threaten development”; “different forms of violence are linked to each other”; and “grievances can escalate into acute demands for change” (2-3).

These new aspects of contemporary armed conflicts are detrimental to normal youth functioning due to the ramifications of violence on the existing structures of conflict-affected societies. Taking into consideration the role of repetitive violence in subverting an established system or institution by undermining the power and control in the political or administrative spheres, conflict-affected countries often fail to function normally or properly after the collapse of the socio-economic infrastructure, rising political tensions and instability, and weak governance (see World Bank, 2011). Therefore, a 'formal' end to armed conflict is most likely to be followed by a 'fragile' transition from war to peace due to the after-effects of repetitive violence on the normal functioning of societies.
With regard to the repetition of violence to this end, one study, for instance, has shown that nine out of ten intra-state conflicts in the 1990s had a history of an on-going conflict in the last three decades (OAS, 2001). Rather than being an exceptional case, fragile shifts in war-to-peace transitions have almost become the norm. This issue constitutes one of the most difficult conundrums for peacebuilders as the post-conflict landscape involves the risk factors to provoke overt violence at any particular moment after the formal settlement of a dispute.

Likewise, recent evidence has shown that violence in post-conflict situations is a serious setback for the implementation of peace accords and the development and maintenance of post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The perils of repetitive violence in the post-conflict period arise from changes in the form and level of violence. Young people are a major human resource in armed conflicts regardless of the nature of recruitment, forced or voluntary participation or various roles attributed to young people within armed groups. Equally important is the role of young people during the negotiations stage and the implementation of peace processes and in post-conflict situations in which violence is conceived and executed in many different forms. Youth involvement in violence is, therefore, not only confined to political violence but also involves several different forms of violence, including criminal and interpersonal violence. This fact is a major problem and poses risks for the implementation of peace processes and the maintenance of post-conflict order and stability. Post-conflict situations in El Salvador, Guatemala and South Africa, for instance, are some examples in which criminal violence surged shortly after successful peace negotiations and peace agreements (see World Bank, 2011). In short, young people's participation – regardless of the positive or negative nature of the roles, which they play – in transitional periods (such as peace processes and post-peace agreement stages) is one of the most puzzling subjects of peace and conflict research.

1.2. The Relationship between Young People, Conflict and Peacebuilding

The role of young people has become central to peace and conflict research and the focus on young people stems from the risk factors and contradictions associated with war-to-peace transitions and post-conflict situations. Three major themes have been identified in framing the place of young people in conflict and post-conflict situations: victims, threats (or perpetrators), and peace-makers. This
variance expands to a debate in peace and conflict research. Specifically, authors such as Graça Machel (1996; 2001; 2006) have long paid attention to young people as 'victims' of war and this has led to an 'advocacy' or 'rights-based' approach with regard to young people's engagement in post-conflict situations, particularly young persons who are at the early adolescence stage (less than 18 years of age). That is, young people's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations are considered as a human security matter, which needs to be regulated and protected by legal norms and conventions, as in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 (Kemper, 2005). Likewise, Machel's reports have emphasized the unique challenges facing young people by establishing the relationship between them and armed conflict, and have described it as in the following excerpt:

All cultures recognize adolescence as a highly significant period in which young people learn future roles and incorporate the values and norms of their societies. The extreme and often prolonged circumstances of armed conflict interfere with identity development. ... Moreover, sudden changes in family circumstances, such as the death or disappearance of parents, can leave youth without guidance, role models or sustenance. During conflicts, some adolescents become responsible for the care of younger siblings. ... Despite all of this, adolescents, during or after wars, seldom receive any special attention or assistance. This is a matter of urgent concern. (Machel, 1996: 170)

Following this, recent studies have characterised young people as independent actors in addition to the early portrayal of young persons as victims in times of war and in its aftermath. However, the term 'independent actors' suggests a positive meaning if young persons are engaged meaningfully, on the one hand, and a negative one if they are frustrated and disillusioned, on the other. In other words, academic studies of young people emphasise that conflict-affected youth may assume roles as agents of peace – ‘peacemakers’ or as ‘instigators’ of violence (see McEvoy-Levy, 2006). A relapse into violence can derail peace negotiations and lead to a collapse in conflict settlement efforts (see Darby, 2001). This fact in post-conflict situations necessitates an imperative focus on the function of young people as they occupy a central position in relapses into overt violence. In such post-conflict predicaments, young people are perceived as an important factor in the generation and perpetuation of violence, particularly in opposition to on-going peace negotiations and to the implementation of peace agreement situations. To this end, the negative role, which young people can play has been the subject of several UN resolutions and is part of its conflict prevention agenda. The UN High Level
Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, for instance, referred to how a “surging youth population” faced by a multitude of factors such as unemployment and urbanisation can lead to violence or a relapse into conflict (UN, 2004). UN missions to West Africa have similarly reported the link between unresolved socio-economic situations and young people as potential risks to sustainability and security (UN, 2004). The 2001 UN Secretary-General’s report on armed conflict stated that:

> Young people with limited education and few employment opportunities often provide fertile recruiting ground for parties to a conflict. Their lack of hope for the future can fuel disaffection with society and make them susceptible to the blandishments of those who advocate armed conflict. This problem can be especially acute in countries that have a ‘youth bulge’, a population comprised of a large number of youth compared to other age groups .... Addressing the needs and aspirations of adolescence is therefore an important aspect of a long-term prevention strategy. In addition, youth can also be an important resource for peace and conflict prevention. (Prevention of Armed Conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2001: 124)

Similarly, young people are also perceived by academic researchers as a security threat in many developing and post-conflict countries and are often discussed by the proponents of the youth-bulge theory (see Hendrixson, 2003; Huntington, 1996; Kaplan, 1996; Urdal, 2004). With its origins in the early works of Heinsohn (2003), Fuller and Pitts (1990) and Goldstone (1991), a ‘youth bulge’ is defined as “extraordinarily large youth cohorts relative to the adult population” (Urdal 2004: 1). In this stream of research, proponents of the theory conceptualise young people as a demographic raison d’être for a vulnerable society, a threat against its well-being and normal functioning. Similarly, a precursor of debate about young people as a demographic debate in the 1990s was Samuel P. Huntington (1996), who defined 20 % or more young people (between 15-24 years of age) in the population composition of a country as a sign of vulnerability to violence. In Clash of Civilisations, Huntington (1996) contended that youth demographics play a crucial role in the instigation of violence, focusing particularly on the Muslim world and on radicalisation trends, stating that: “but the key factor is the demographic factor. Generally speaking, the people who go out and kill other people are males between the ages of 16 and 30. During the 1960s, 70s and 80s there were high birth rates in the Muslim world, and this has given rise to a huge youth bulge” (interview with Huntington in Steinberger, 2001).
Robert D. Kaplan described youth cohorts in West Africa as “out of school, unemployed, loose molecules” (1996: 16). Hendrixson (2003) referred to dissatisfied and angry young males in mostly underdeveloped and developing countries (such as those in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East) as a deviant population and an uncontrolled demographic force in society.

Despite the alarmist language and weak causality (between large youth cohorts and violence) evident in the portrayal of young people in the 1990s, recent academic studies in this stream have found that the presence of youth-bulges in (economically and politically) distressed societies correlates highly with the instigation of violence. Hendrik Urdal (2004) pointed to “intermediary political regimes and negative or stagnant economic growth” in countries such as “Zambia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Yemen, Niger, Togo, Iran and Jordan” as examples of the causal relationship between a youth-bulge and violence (17). Moreover, Urdal (2004) also suggested a positive link between political change processes (towards democratic governance) and the eruption of violence, particularly in the Arab world where autocratic regimes are able to curb violence despite economic problems and large youth cohorts. A World Bank (2011) report in the aftermath of Arab uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa pointed to a similar notion with anecdotes of popular demands and protests for economic, political and social change as underlying factors in the sudden outbreak and escalation of street violence.

Given that there is a tendency to identify young people as ‘perpetrators of violence’ or ‘peace spoilers’, the contribution of young people to the promotion and maintenance of peace is often disregarded and an academic interest in this issue has only developed in the last decade (see McEvoy-Levy, 2013). In contrast to the portrayal of youth as a demographic factor and an agent of violence instigation, recent studies have shown that when they are empowered, young people can contribute to peace and reconciliation efforts. In this context, a stream of research has emerged at the intersection of youth and peacebuilding (see Del Felice & Wisler, 2007; Kemper, 2005; Kurtenbach, 2005; 2008; McEvoy-Levy, 2001, 2006, 2011a, 2011b; Özerdem & Podder, 2015; Pruitt 2008; Schwartz, 2010). Recognising the positive role that young people can play in peacebuilding, contrary to the previous dispositions, young people refrain or prevent others from involvement in violence and from disturbing the post-conflict order and stability. This fact is evidenced through field research and eth-
nographic studies on young people’s unique experiences of conflict (for instance, see Boyden & DeBerry, 2004; Collins, 2004; Dauite et al., 2006; Hart, 2006; Richards, 1996; Shepler, 2005; Sommers, 2006).

Even so, the presence of a relatively large youth population – a unique and important demographic dividend in most conflict-affected societies – is detrimental to conflict prevention and transformation, in general, if inclusive policies are not put in place. In this regard, young people's mobilisation to armed conflict and recruitment to violent groups as combatants constitutes the first layer of academic research on youth and peacebuilding (see Özerdem & Podder, 2015). The second part is about “resilience, nonviolent coping strategies, care-taking, meaning-making and the social reproduction roles of young people, not just combatants, who are experiencing war” (McEvoy-Levy, 2013: 300). In short, the important role of young people in conflict and post-conflict situations is closely linked to the protection of youth and to young people's representation and empowerment in peacebuilding efforts as part of a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy with the aim of encouraging young people to shape lasting peace and to contribute to justice and reconciliation.

1.3. Framing the Youth Crisis in Turkey with Reference to the Kurdish Issue

From July 2009 onwards, the Justice and Development Party (JDP, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, abbreviated to AK Parti in Turkish) government embarked on a new Kurdish policy, a political settlement and reconciliation process for the permanent resolution of the Kurdish question. Referring to the significance of political developments, then President Abdullah Gül rightly noted the urgency of finding a solution to one of the most intractable questions that modern Turkey since 1923 has faced in an interview prior to the inception of governmental initiatives, stating that

*Some call it terror, some call it the Southeast problem, some call it the Kurdish problem – whatever you call it, we will find a solution because this is the first and foremost important issue of this country* (The Guardian, 16-08-2008).

Likewise, early in 2005, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan first acknowledged the existence of a Kurdish problem and delivered a strong message for 'coexistence' to the Kurds in Turkey in a public speech in Diyarbakır.
As the Kurdish issue is one of the most important and multifaceted questions in modern Turkey’s political history, recent policy changes regarding finding a political solution to the problem in the past decade provided the impetus for the settlement of an almost four-decades-long conflict. The recent political initiatives not only managed to make the transition away from violence for a short period of time in the course of the 'peace process' (2009-2015) but also unveiled an interest in peace and reconciliation efforts after facing repetitive violence for a long period of time. Therefore, with the start of political initiatives in July 2009 led by the JDP government, Turkey's lengthy Kurdish issue entered into a 'new' phase since its onset in the late-1970s. In this phase of the conflict, the JDP government’s political initiatives marked the beginning of an era, which is centred on efforts to find a political solution to the Kurdish issue in contrast to long-held security-oriented approaches to put an end to the problem.

The JDP's peace process (2009-2015), however, faced internal and external pressures in that the process itself unfolded a spiral movement from violence to resilience, repeated over time as the country went through successive war-to-peace transition moments. In terms of implementing the peace process, the government’s initiatives involved political deliberations at the top level between the Kurdish political elites and state officials, legal amendments to settle conflicting issues, and public relations campaigns to raise awareness and to maintain a favourable public image. Turkey’s pursuit of peace; however, was discontinued when a relapse into violence completely derailed the peace process in June-July 2015. After a return to the conflict situation, the two interlinked phases (2009-2012; 2013-2015) of the JDP's political initiatives produced no significant changes to put an end to the cycle of violence and to settle the prolonged Kurdish issue.

In this politically fragile situation, young people played a negative role, instigating violence in majority Kurdish-inhabited neighbourhoods, towns and cities during the second phase of the peace process (2013-2015). The following inventory of news items related to instances of youth-led violence appeared frequently in the issues of daily newspapers, and give an indication of the type of roles, which young people played during the implementation of the peace process:
Members of the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) attacked four schools in the southeastern province of Şırnak late on Sept. 16, in protest at the closure of a school that had planned to provide instruction in the Kurdish language (Hürriyet Daily News, 17-09-2014).

Police have arrested 16 suspects for the murders of four people killed on Oct. 5 during the countrywide protests in support of Kobane, Syria ... Attackers reportedly armed with machetes and guns killed four friends on Oct. 5, 16-year-old Yasin Börü, 26-year-old Hakan Gökgöz, Hüseyin Dakak, 19, and Riyat Güneş in southeastern Diyarbakır province. Their bodies were mutilated by the attackers after their deaths (Daily Sabah, 04-12-2014).

The militants from the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) staged a protest on Sunday over the prison conditions of the imprisoned leader of the terrorist PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, who is serving a life sentence in the prison on İmralı Island (Daily Sabah, 13-07-2015).

A group of locals of Yenişehir district in southeastern city of Diyarbakır were raided during a wedding late on Thursday by the members of the Patriotic Revolutionist Youth Movement (YDGH) terrorist organization, which is the youth wing of the PKK (Daily Sabah, 07-08-2015).

The PKK Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) youth branch recently released a brochure threatening teachers and academics working in educational institutions at Turkey’s Kurdish-populated southeastern Hakkari province, prompting several staff members to flee the province ... The YDG-H pamphlet threatens that “they will be suffocated in the bloodshed” (Daily Sabah, 28-10-2015).

One of the two suspects behind the murder of the Chairman of Diyarbakır Bar Association Tahir Elçi has been identified as YDG-H member (Daily Sabah, 29-11-2015).

Noting the role of young people in the second stage of the peace process, there is an urgent need to identify the prevailing conditions and factors, which give rise to radicalisation to violence and violent extremism amongst Kurdish youth. Indeed, the implications of a lengthy and repetitive cycle of violence on social relations and harmony are one of the most neglected aspects of the Kurdish issue (see Çelik & Blum, 2007; Çelik, 2012). This is a particularly valid argument for young people affected by the conflict in Turkey's southeast. The nature of young people's role is closely related to the deleterious effects of destructive changes in the existing structures, perceptions of and relations with young people in Turkey's conflict-weary society. Growing up with the ramifications of violence since early childhood, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the role of young people in both the perpetuation and the resolution of the Kurdish issue. Despite the fact that agents of socio-political change were mostly urban and university-educated young people in the 1960s-1970s, and the majority of human resources of armed groups were peasant youths with no or little education in the
1980s-1990s, the mobilisation of the young cohort in the 2000s is an exceptionally different issue from what was usual in the previous generations.

Despite the grievances of early generations and the conversion of young people's frustrations into ideological pretexts for mobilisation by Kurdish conflict entrepreneurs (see Tezcür, 2015; Yavuz 2001) as a result of, for instance, structural inequality, past policies and political alienation, proximate factors, such as trigger events (Öcalan's prison conditions and health) and external political developments (the Syrian civil war) started to become principal causes of mobilisation in the 2000s. These facts necessitate an assessment of the factors that led to youth marginalisation in the 2000s as a result of the conflict environment in Turkey's southeast and an inquiry into existing patterns of radicalisation to violence and violent extremism. Apart from young people's role in instigating violence over the past decades since the late-1970s, the motivations for and perceptions of young people's participation in violence is more complex today than in the past. This is why a solution to participation in conflict issues and researching the dynamics of youth roles, such as young people's appearance in urban rioting when a political solution process (2009-2015) is underway, is problematic.

Many examples in previous peace and conflict research point to post-conflict situations as a platform or stage on which young people are the key actors to perform the 'tragedy' of peace spoilers. It has also been shown that when they are not empowered, young people are the most potent targets of mobilisation into armed and extremist groups (see McEvoy-Levy, 2007). As the PKK started a localised urban conflict and abandoned its primary mode of fighting for a while (rural warfare in the mountainous areas in Turkey's southeast) on the inception of the peace process in 2009 and onwards, the position of civilian youth as potential agents of violence in cities and towns is likely to have a profound effect on the strategy of the outlawed organisation. Equally important is young people's potential role as agents of peace as part of the impetus gained by the inception of political initiatives to settle the Kurdish issue peacefully. This situation presents a dilemma for young Kurds, a trade-off for young people, between participating in the new type of urban violence and contributing to the peace process.

Likewise, in consideration of the developments regarding the resolution of the Kurdish issue, relevant peacebuilding actors are at a crossroads where existing policies, programmes to shape youth
functioning and young people's potential peacebuilding roles in post-conflict situations meet. A conflict-sensitive agenda for relevant peacebuilding actors in this regard must incorporate all available resources into young people's vast energy to engage them in peace projects. Accordingly, in order to promote and maintain peace and contribute to reconciliation in Turkey, peacebuilding efforts must have an understanding of youth-related issues in conflict-affected situations. Moreover, such efforts must consider and invest in the design and development of policy frameworks with broader peacebuilding and reconciliation objectives as a necessary first-step.

In short, the inclusion of a conflict-sensitive lens to solve young people's present dilemma is problematized in this research study by looking into young people's lived experiences of the conflict in Turkey's southeast, particularly during a period when hopes for a peaceful future hit an all-time high. How young people make sense of the conflict and what they can tell us about the recent peace process inform this current research to identify key issues, questions and dilemmas related to young people as entry points for peace projects and youth interventions.

1.4. The Research Question, Aim and Objectives

In order to examine the current and potential roles assumed by young people during the peace process (2009-2015) and onwards who have been affected by the ramifications of the violent conflict in Turkey's southeast since its inception in the late-1970s, the principal research question addressed in this thesis is as follows:

_In consideration of the special interest in peace and reconciliation efforts, in conjunction with the political initiatives of the incumbent government, to settle the Kurdish issue from 2009 to 2015; how can peacebuilding opportunities in this period and onwards be implemented to support the positive role of youth with the aim of preventing young people's involvement in violence and enabling their participation in peacebuilding that would lead to the promotion and maintenance of peace and reconciliation in a conflict-weary society?_

The main argument in this study is therefore that although the political environment since the inauguration of the peace process (2009-2015) offered the JDP government the opportunity to settle the Kurdish issue peacefully, the presence of a disillusioned and frustrated youth cohort, coupled with
the limited capacities of conflict prevention and peacebuilding instruments, restrained the government’s policy options and affected the outcome of its recent political initiatives. It can therefore be argued that without a conflict-sensitive peace project and a framework for addressing conflict dynamics and issues related to young people at the perceptual, relational and structural levels, it is not likely to prevent young people’s radicalisation into violence and violent extremism in Turkey’s southeast with the existing youth policy or mechanisms. This argument is partly about the changing characteristics of the youth cohort in the 2000s, whose mobilisation was not caused solely by the structural deficiencies, past policies or socio-economic inequality in society, but was a result of the interplay between structural and proximate factors, and shaped by their lived experiences of the conflict.

The following proposition therefore outlines the reasoning behind the rationale to explore the intersection between youth and conflict, and the development of conflict-sensitive peace projects as a starting point for further empirical analysis in this research study:

If post-conflict peacebuilding instruments in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, stipulated by the theoretical framework of conflict transformation, are

- targeted to deal with clearly identified youth issues, dilemmas and questions,
- appropriate to the local peacebuilding needs and conflict-related challenges, which emerged as a result of the prolonged conflict environment, and
- adapted to the fulfilment of the objectives of a conflict transformation-induced model at the personal, relational and structural levels,

These interventions can engage young people meaningfully in peacebuilding efforts and enable them to play a positive role in promoting and maintaining peace, and in contributing to reconciliation.

Although young people’s roles in peace processes are mostly related to the instigation of different forms of violence, the findings of previous studies suggest that conflict-affected youth are not a lost generation if inclusive policies are in place to engage young people in peacebuilding. The aim of this current study is therefore to identify perceptual, relational and structural aspects of the problem related to conflict-affected youth and to deal with the rising radicalisation to violent tendencies among young people in Turkey’s southeast. Thus a framework for peace projects is introduced as a conclusion of the field research to enhance youth policy and to offer conflict-sensitive programming.
guidance on the basis of findings regarding resilience to conflict and the engagement of young people in peacebuilding. This is not an attempt to analyse the impact of existing youth programmes and the findings of this current study do not provide a complete list of best practices or youth programmes, but they are expected to enable the development of a set of recommendations and programmatic guidelines. To this end, the following objectives pave the way for the development and realisation of the research question and objectives in this study:

1- To develop a theoretical understanding of youth involvement in violence and participation in peacebuilding by reviewing
   - The underlying theories in explaining youth violence, such as 'greed' vs. 'grievance' conceptualisations;
   - The relationship and interplay between 'structural' and 'proximate' factors, and youth violence;
   - The role of young people in peacebuilding; and
   - The concepts of peace, peacebuilding, conflict transformation and anticipated 'changes' at the personal, relational and structural levels.

2- To investigate the relationship between young people and violence in Turkey's southeast since the late-1970s.

3- To investigate the issues, dilemmas and questions related to youth in transition from war-to-peace with special reference to the Kurdish issue through an inquiry into:
   - Young people’s experiences of the conflict since the late-1970s; and

4- To examine and assess the conflict sensitivity of interventions through an evaluation of current peacebuilding instruments in Turkey's southeast designed to prevent young people’s involvement in violence.

5- To analyse the findings of the field research to develop a set of recommendations and provide a framework for programming guidance for relevant peacebuilding actors on the basis of conflict transformation theory for current and future peacebuilding efforts.
1.5. The Scope and Limitations of the Research

In this study, the primary focus is on conflict-affected youth in Turkey's southeast. The term 'youth' is conceptualised in this research as a transitional stage between the two established phases of childhood and adulthood in the human life cycle, which is also viewed as a socially and historically emerged concept rather than as a construct of statistical considerations, which is derived from age-based categorisations (see Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 3). Therefore, investigating the role and involvement of youth in armed conflict is, before anything else, a highly contextual and localised issue. In the same way, young people's integration into society and the question of rehabilitation in post-conflict situations urge the relevant peacebuilding actors to take into consideration of a number of socio-economic, political and psychological issues and the development of the right measures. Thus when it comes to youth participation in armed conflict, the causes of young people's involvement in violence, the recruitment processes into violent and extremist groups and their various functions within these groups are the topics, which can be found in previous peace and conflict research (see Özerdem & Podder, 2015). However, the role and status of non-combatant youth in war-to-peace transitions is one of the important aspects of the youth and violence relationship and is an understudied issue (McEvoy-Levy, 2006; 2007).

In pursuit of a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue, this thesis addresses a gap in scholarly research regarding the issues and dilemmas of non-combatant youth affected by the armed conflict. In doing this, a further aim is to contribute to the management and transformation of potential post-conflict crises in Turkey by proposing possible peacebuilding strategies and measures to prevent youth participation in violence, and to integrate young people into society by enabling them to participate meaningfully in peacebuilding efforts. Despite growing concerns about worsening social relations and the consequently rising tendencies of civilian youth to get involved in violence after experiencing the consequences of a conflict environment since early childhood, paradoxically, scholars and policymakers made the conflict between the state and the PKK a primary focus of attention predominantly because of unresolved political issues at the elite-level. Although it is true that the political agenda was preoccupied with the demands of the Kurdish politicians when the peace process was announced, the Kurdish issue has had ramifications on Turkey's social and economic fabric beyond and as important as the issues discussed in elite-level political deliberations.
Few studies so far have adopted a conflict resolution perspective to have an understanding of the conflict and to explore different aspects of the Kurdish issue, which is a conflict which has been active for the past thirty years and has claimed more than 40,000 lives (for examples, see Arslan & Çapan, 2014; Beriker, 1999; Çelik & Blum, 2007; Özçelik, 2006). In addition to the negligence of scholars and policy-makers regarding the social aspects of the Kurdish issue, the deteriorating nature of social relations and cohesion have had and continue to have an impact on young people's roles in society. Some studies have focused on recruitment strategies and motivations for enlistment, often relying on data collected from the statements of sentenced militants. Likewise, there has been limited research interest in the life stories and narratives regarding the structural exclusion of Kurds, including young people, as an important dividend in the wider society (see Neyzi & Darıcı, 2014; Saraçoğlu, 2010; Yükseker, 2006).

It is not intended that this current study will propose to examine every aspect of the recent peace process, nor the Kurdish issue in general. Moreover, it is not a prescribed goal of this study to analyse the determinants of youth involvement in violence alone. Rather, the purpose is to develop a framework on the basis of issues, dilemmas and questions related to non-combatant youth in order to design and implement conflict-sensitive youth interventions in Turkey's southeast. To this end, the aim of this study is to contribute to the management of the youth crisis in Turkey's southeast and offer policy-level recommendations and programmatic guidelines for the transformation of the conflict with special reference to the important roles played by young people.

1.6. Research Methodology

Adopting an appropriate research philosophy is central to methodological concerns. This preference is closely related to the assumptions to define social reality and to determine ways to generate empirical knowledge (Creswell, 2007). A well-known dichotomy therefore exists in the context of adopting a research philosophy (that is, between positivist and interpretive explanations) (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). In order to adopt an appropriate research methodology, the methodological choices are often bound up with the research questions (Creswell, 2007). This methodological dilemma, therefore, refers to a quantitative analysis of research questions on the positivist side and a qualitative
approach on the interpretive side of the research methodology spectrum (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997).

For this current study, a qualitative research technique was adopted, which is a preferred way to analyse young people’s issues and roles in conflict-affected areas. In particular, the study investigated the implications of a prolonged conflict in terms of youth issues and lived experiences in Turkey’s southeast. In other words, the research examined the implications of the Kurdish issue on youth functioning and how this reality can be transformed into meaningful participation in peacebuilding through structural, relational and personal changes. So a number of structural and proximate factors were presumed to affect youth functioning in conflict-affected areas of Turkey. The research objectives set out in section 1.4 therefore require an analysis of the empirical data in available documents, reports and other materials with regard to the consequences of structural and cultural deficiencies in youth involvement in violence and as a factor to be addressed in peacebuilding efforts (see Chapter 4) (see Bogdan et al., 1980). The role of structural and cultural inequalities in society on youth violence is one of the main issues in peace and conflict literature (see Hilker & Fraser, 2009). In other words, the aim is to identify the ways in which grievances mobilise young people into violence as a consequence of structural deficiencies in society. This research purpose is realised through an assessment of secondary sources and triangulated with key-informant interviews. This data generation process and findings are presented and justified in detail in Chapter 4.

The second and third objectives stated in section 1.3.4 were designed to investigate the relational aspects between youth and family, community or institutions in general. In Chapter 5, the data collection process and data analysis is presented by employing a discursive interpretation of the data generated from the fieldwork in Turkey’s southeast. In other words, a number of emerging themes are generated from empirical data through semi-structured interviews with conflict-affected young people in order to understand the issues related to youth facing the consequences of the prolonged conflict after a recent peace process. In Chapter 6, the data were again generated at the individual level from key informants who were actively involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Selecting a research philosophy posits certain assumptions. The first assumption is usually an onto-
logical one which is about how researchers understand the nature of the social ‘reality’ under scrutiny (Burrell & Morgan 1979). A separation exists between positivist and interpretive ontologies in the context of explaining the nature of social reality. Positivist theory in the social sciences originates from the research philosophy in the natural sciences (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). In order to mimic the laws of nature, which govern the natural sciences, positivist researchers look into social reality as a measurable and observable fact independent of subjective interpretations (Bryman, 2001). According to which:

Social phenomena and their meaning have an existence that is independent of social actors. It implies that social phenomena and the categories we use in everyday discourse have an existence that is independent or separate from actors (ibid: 17-18).

Interpretivists, on the other hand, assume a subjective explanation of the social reality. From an interpretive perspective, an altered consideration of social reality is described as follows:

Social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision (ibid).

A second assumption is about the researcher’s epistemological position in a research study. Epistemology refers to the explanation of the nature of ‘knowledge’ (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). In selecting a research philosophy in order to realise objectives in a qualitative study, social constructivism is a common paradigm at the subjective end of the research ontology spectrum. Social constructivism contends that ‘knowledge’ and ‘social reality’ are constructed processes and that social relations and interactions are placed at the centre of this process (Crotty, 1998).

In this current study, a description of the world of knowledge is founded upon epistemological premises of social constructivism. ‘Conflict’ is part of the social and political change processes in society and a consequence of human relations and interactions. An interpretive research philosophy for explaining the social reality and the subsequent empirical knowledge generation process can be implemented in the analysis of contemporary conflicts. Social constructivism as a paradigm fits the analysis of complex relationships between concepts such as youth and violence. In fact, ‘youthhood’ itself
refers to a human development process, which is defined and influenced by social constructions of social reality and meaning-making processes regarding a young person’s experiences and relations in society (see Chapter 2). Analogous to the idea that the reality is a social construct, an interpretive research study of human behaviour and relations at the individual level builds upon how the research subjects understand the phenomenon under scrutiny. Predominantly, such justifications are at the centre of this current study in an attempt to shed light on young people’s issues when they are facing structural deficiencies and are affected by cultural and personal dilemmas to shape their roles in society.

1.6.1. Case Study Research Strategy

Qualitative research can be implemented by employing different strategies in the research design stage. Case study is a frequently used strategy in the social sciences (Yin, 2003). The choice of the case study strategy for this current study is justified by the need to conduct an in-depth analysis of the complex relationships between young people and violence. In addition, an exclusive time frame for the analysis of youth issues and young people’s roles in society (the peace process in Turkey, 2009-2015) and the socio-politically active topic in question are the secondary motivations for choosing the case study strategy.

Investigating youth issues and roles in terms of the repercussions of the Kurdish issue on perceptions and relations in society is significant at the structural and individual levels. At both levels of analysis, the roles of social and political actors are decisive aspects for determining the after-effects of structural and individual factors on the development of youth roles and issues related to young people in society. An example of this is the official discourse (security or socio-economic) to address the causes of conflict over many decades. Such a discourse development is also a significant factor for revealing the way to perceive youth roles (agents of violence or victims) and issues (socio-economic) in society. The way youth is represented in these discourses provides a potential framework of youth engagement in peacebuilding. Likewise, non-state actors (the PKK and Kurdish nationalists) have retained a number of discourses (ethnic nationalism) from the mid-1970s, which resulted in efforts to justify the use of violence. Portraying young people in the context of these discourses influences young people’s negative roles in society as ‘agents’ of violence.
Within the context of these discursive differences, post-violence political developments (that is, the recent peace process of 2009-2015), offer an opportunity to evaluate the consequences of the conflict on young people’s issues and roles in society. This new context requires an in-depth analysis of young people’s meaning-making processes in Turkey as they face rapid social and political changes. Despite the positive political ambiance, violent occurrences also necessitate taking into account the past and current dynamics and the sources of involvement in violence at the structural level and examination of its after-effects at the individual level. An assessment of the complex features of the issues discussed above and the need to carry out an in-depth inquiry into the subject fits the methodological rationale for using a case study strategy.

It is also a key research method to employ a case study strategy to analyse contemporary social issues (Yin, 2003). As youth-led violence in the urban centres is a phenomenon, which appeared during the implementation of recent JDP-led political initiatives (2009-2015), investigating a dynamic process can be a challenging research enterprise. In such challenging contexts, case study is considered to be one of the most useful research strategies (ibid.). In addition to the implications of the Kurdish issue, recent youth involvement in violence is also a contentious issue and a subject of popular debate.

As a key objective, therefore, this current study examines youth roles in society by looking into the meaning-making processes in order to identify the implications of the Kurdish issue. In the context of this research objective, the generations of the 1990s is an example which requires special concern as they have been growing up with the repercussions of the violent conflict without experiencing it directly. This cohort is regarded as a divergent group of young people who have been isolated from the wider society, especially in relation to belonging to a community and adhering to the foundations of the country (see Belge, Taraf, 29-05-2011; Aydıntaşbaş, Milliyet, 29-05-2011).

In fact, as soon as the data transcription process started in this research study, young people had already become part of large-scale violent protests and violence instigation in Turkey’s southeast. These youth-led violent events were later acknowledged as one of the factors, which caused the peace process to fail in 2015 (see Gürcan, Al-Monitor, 17-08-2015). In short, the research strategy in
this current study requires an in-depth analysis of a dynamic issue with clear multi-faceted dimensions and complex relationships. The selection of a research design in this context was therefore not only bound up with the research questions but also influenced by the nature of the research topic. These facts suggest that case study is the right strategy by which to examine one of the most complex contemporary issues in modern Turkey.

1.6.2. Data Collection
In qualitative research, data refers to the ‘words’ of research participants and does not necessarily denote ‘numbers’ as in quantitative research (Firmin, 2008: 190). Qualitative research is an empirical investigation of a social phenomenon and the data collection choices discern qualitative study from other types of social inquiry. Firmin (2008) stated that:

_Qualitative research examines evidence – sometimes visual and sometimes verbal – but the findings are not purely theoretical; they are grounded in empirical data. In short, it is the data collection process that separates qualitative research from speculative, philosophical, or archival research. There are many means that qualitative researchers use for collecting data_ (Firmin, 2008: 190).

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative inquiries are flexible and pragmatic when it comes to the techniques used to examine the research questions (Marshall, 2006: 524). Researchers therefore use a wide variety of instruments in their data collection processes. Among others, in a case study strategy, sources of data can be verbal statements made in interviews by participants. So a primary source of data in this current study was interviews with young people and key informants. A fieldwork-based data gathering process is advantageous for gaining a deep understanding of a process, which is rooted in the social interactions and relationships of a dynamic segment of society (in this case, conflict-affected youth) in Turkey’s southeast. Interview-based data were generated from the views of key informants active in conflict prevention and peacebuilding instruments for youth. Second, intensive desk-based research was carried out using documents of state, civil society, political parties, CSOs and research centre archives. One of the rewards of reviewing these secondary sources was being able to incorporate the literature regarding the structural exclusion aspect of the research. This objective was realised through a comparative analysis of the accessible sources. A
The first part of the data collection process involved a desk-based review of secondary sources in order to explore the structural determinants of young people’s participation in conflict. The overall objective was to examine the sources and dynamics of how young people are excluded by structures in society. A division between the established structures (the economy, education, and politics) and changing circumstances (internal and external migration) in order to think about the effects of conflict in the organisation of society by analysing structural causes categorically will be introduced in Chapter 4.

For the desk-based research, the primary sources of information were available in reports published by several institutions. In this study, the investigation of such reports was realised by using the database in Milli Kütüphane in Ankara, a national library, which is renowned for having the largest number of collections and research materials in Turkey and in the Turkish language. A review of news reports in Turkish newspapers and academic journals in terms of structural exclusion was also carried out with the aim of triangulating the robust descriptive information contained in these reports. This review of the major newspapers included mainstream news outlets such as Habertürk, Hürriyet, Milliyet and Sabah. Likewise, several low-circulation yet politically influential news sources (for example Cumhuriyet, Radikal and Yeni Şafak) were also included in the review of newspapers. This desk-based research was therefore an essential activity in order to address the first research question.

1.6.2.2. Interviews

In this study, a second method of data gathering was interviews with young people and key informants. The participants in these interviews were the staff at civil society organisations (CSOs), governmental officials, community leaders and other local peace-builders, and young people from different backgrounds. Interviews are one of the qualitative data gathering instruments used for revealing the perceptions, experiences and feelings of participants (Yin, 2003). Accordingly, interviews tend to be an appropriate method for carrying out empirical research in traditional societies where knowledge and testimonies are usually transmitted verbally. In addition, the illiteracy rates are the highest in
Turkey’s southeast, which required the researcher to rely on interviews as a method of data collection and an appropriate communication method with local people. Interviews were also valuable for adding a participatory perspective to the study as they allowed the researcher to observe different forms of non-verbal communication, such as body posture, gestures, and tone of voice, facial expressions and eye movements.

Based on the need to identify appropriate participants for this case study strategy, three target groups were selected before running interviews with young people. The target participant groups therefore included bipartisan, nationalist and Islamist segments of the society. Similarly, key informant interviews were selected to reveal the implementation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in Turkey’s southeast. In all, 46 interviews were held. Field notes and observations as part of the fieldwork were also an integral part of the data generation process. Several unrecorded conversations and interviews in informal settings were not included in the number of recorded interviews but they nevertheless enriched the quality of the data collection process.

A particular tone of language and approach was also an essential part of the data collection process during the interviews as some word selections or even abbreviations of words in speech had different meanings for the participants in the context of the Kurdish issue. These issues were therefore part of the researcher’s approach when conducting interviews with the research participants. The population in Turkey’s southeast is bilingual and people speak the Turkish language as native speakers with only a slight obvious accent or none at all. As the researcher is a native speaker of Turkish, no issues emerged with regard to the language barrier between the researcher and the participants. The political sensitivity of the issue, however, caused the cancellation of some of the interviews, and on other occasions the agreement to be interviewed was conditional on not using a recorder. In some interviews, the participants requested that the recorder be turned off while they commented on a specific aspect of the Kurdish issue. The interview questions were devised before the fieldwork and the interviews were designed in a semi-structured format. This meant that new questions and unanticipated issues arose during the interviews, which also informed the direction of the conversations with other interviewees and follow-up questions.
1.6.3. Entering the Field and its Organisation

The fieldwork in this study took place in two phases. The first round of the fieldwork was in November-December 2013 and the second phase was in June-July 2014. As discussed in section 1.4, the review of documents helped to answer the first research question about the structural exclusion of youth in society: ‘How have structural factors contributed to the engagement of Kurdish youth in violence in Turkey’s southeast since the mid-1980s?’ The fieldwork stage was, however, designed to gather empirical data regarding the second and third research questions. Accordingly, the first phase of the fieldwork constituted interviews with young people in order to develop an understanding of ‘why does Kurdish youth continue to participate in political violence when a peace process (2009-2015) is under way in Turkey?’ In the first two months of his visit to Turkey’s southeast, the researcher conducted interviews with young people. In general, the role of youth in the transitional periods is considered to be a critical issue since young people have the potential to either spoil or support the peace processes (see McEvoy-Levy, 2007). As political initiatives to end the Kurdish issue were still an option, the role of young people in this process was critical. So data were gathered to distinguish the perceptions of the conflict and recent political initiatives held by conflict-affected young people. The findings helped to answer the second research question. In this first phase of the fieldwork, the aim was to understand the relational and personal contexts in terms of the Kurdish issue. One of the features of the data collection phase was therefore to recognise differences in the conflict experiences of young people.

In the second part of the fieldwork, the objective was to investigate the conflict prevention and peacebuilding opportunities for young people in order to respond to the third research question: ‘How does participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions in Turkey’s southeast alter young people’s involvement in violence?’ This second phase was designed to enable an understanding of what kind of instruments are in place to enable peacebuilding roles and to prevent involvement in violence in society. As the subject of youth involvement in violence is prioritised in the state discourse more than in civil initiatives, the aim was to investigate programmes implemented by governmental agencies in Turkey’s southeast. Several interviews were therefore conducted with key informants in relevant institutions/organisations.

The second phase of the fieldwork was expected to enable an understanding of the current policies
and prospects regarding conflict-related challenges and opportunities in the southeast. A review of documents pertinent to the structural exclusion of youth and the first phase of the fieldwork regarding personal experiences of conflict was the point of departure for data gathering during the second phase. The extent of conflict sensitivity in violence-prevention instruments to address the structural and proximate causes of involvement in violence was examined in this phase. In this part of the fieldwork, therefore, the focus was on programmes related to conflict-affected youth. In short, it was a research activity to investigate the challenges and opportunities of current youth work, and the potential applicability and compatibility of conflict-transformation goals in this regard – the conflict-sensitivity aspect of current instruments – was the objective of the second phase of the fieldwork.

1.6.3.1. Site Selection

In the selection of research locations, the appropriateness of the social, economic, ethnic and religious foundations and composition of the society in Turkey's southeast was taken into consideration. In order to reflect the representation of as many segments of the society as possible, Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa were selected as the most suitable places to fit the research purposes of the study.

Diyarbakır was one of the most appropriate research sites in terms of the researcher's interest in investigating the Kurdish issue, particularly in terms of the availability of key informants. It is also a place where many distinctive segments of the Kurdish population in Turkey's southeast are represented. Diyarbakır is a cultural centre; it is the biggest metropolitan city in this region and the inhabitants of Diyarbakır have felt the repercussions of the conflict environment for many decades; an emergency law rule was in place there from 1987 to 2002. The city also suffered from internal migration during the 1990s. The city is also the informal capital of the region as the government has proxy establishments in this city to coordinate activities in all other urban and rural centres from Diyarbakır. So in order to conduct interviews with key informants from state agencies, visiting Diyarbakır was a necessity for this research study. Due to its cultural diversity, many non-governmental organisations also operate from Diyarbakır as their regional base. Finally, the city is also an important centre for nationalist and Islamist activities. This is evident in the frequency of political demonstrations and large-scale gatherings in the city.
Likewise, Şanlıurfa is also an important research site and a proxy for rural Kurdish society. Şanlıurfa is the informal capital of the prevailing social organisation of the Kurdish society. This is apparent in the composition of the city. Tribes are a significant component of social and political life in the city in contrast to their declining importance in other parts of Turkey's southeast. The ethnic composition of the city is also different from Diyarbakir’s. In contrast to Diyarbakir where the Kurds are a majority, the Arab presence in Şanlıurfa is significant. The political atmosphere likewise is different. Whilst Diyarbakir has been a centre for nationalist political leanings, Şanlıurfa is a symbol of division in the political landscape because of its cultural characteristics. The status of tribal structures in social and political life can be seen as a decisive factor for this division. Gaining the political support of tribe leaders by offering them positions in office has often been a concern for political parties. A tribe leader’s preference often rallies the entire tribe to the same political cause. This is not just limited to Şanlıurfa, but representatives of Islamists have also always been a major political force in the south-east, despite the rise of ethnic nationalism. The traditional features of the city’s inhabitants are noticeable even by simple observation, such as dress and music preferences. In fact, this shows the rural/urban division in the entire southeast. In the fieldwork, for instance, it was almost impossible to see someone wearing dress associated with rural areas in Diyarbakir, but it was equally difficult to avoid doing so in Şanlıurfa after just a short walk in the city centre. The city is also known for its religious composition as part of the prevailing traditional structure in society. Many inhabitants of Şanlıurfa, for instance, are named İbrahim (a Turkish version of Abraham) as the city was once home to the Prophet Abraham, a representative of monotheism.

1.6.3.2. Sampling

Sampling as a process determines the sources of data in a research project. This process involves (1) "defining the full set of possible data sources – (population)“, and (2) "selecting an accurate sample of data sources from that population" (Morgan, 2008: 798). Researchers can draw a sample from the population by probability sampling and non-probability sampling (ibid: 797). Probability sampling is often preferred – it is also called ‘random’ or ‘representative’ – in procedures for the statistical generalizability of results to the population in quantitative studies (Rudestam, 2007: 106). In qualitative research, researchers use non-probability or purposive sampling to capture the full array of perspectives and sources of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 40). Non-probability sampling is significantly rele-
vant and an appropriate strategy when subjects are unrecognisable, and are also identified as “hidden populations” (Morgan, 2008: 99).

In conflict and post-conflict societies, the selection criteria for research participants should be contingent on the knowledge and experiences of the participants. Some relevant participants may not be reached or may not be available due to their involvement in illegal actions. The exclusion of these persons is an obstacle to an effective data-gathering processes. As the primary goal of this study is to examine non-combatant (civilian) youth functioning in society, these limitations were not a disadvantage in this fieldwork. For the identification of participants to be interviewed in order to examine conflict-prevention programmes, the selection criteria were based on the person’s expertise in the relevant area.

Youth organisations, NGOs with youth-oriented programmes, youth councils within local municipalities, and government departments and agencies with a specific interest in peacebuilding and youth issues were the targets for the data gathering process. Academics and journalists who had published academic pieces in relation to the Kurdish issue and youth-related issues were identified as important primary targets for interview. Drawing on a report presented to the Turkish government by a committee of intellectuals as part of the peace process (the *Akıl İnsanlar Heyeti Güneydoğu Raporu*, published in June 2013), the following criteria were adopted for selecting research participants:

- **Conflict-affected young people,**
- **Youth wings of political parties,**
- **Civil society organisations (CSOs),**
- **Community and opinion leaders,**
- **Youth organisations; and**
- **University and academics.**

A variety of sampling procedures are used in conducting research in conflict and post-conflict settings. The theoretical sampling strategy is one of the most appropriate approaches in this regard. The sample for a research project is chosen from eligible data sources for their relevance to the “research question, analytical framework, and explanation developed in the research” (Schwandt, 1997: 232). This approach requires “sensitivity for differences and similarities among a variety of
classes or samples of data”, thus leading to an in-depth analysis of the research question (van den Hoonaard, 2008: 874). In this sampling approach, Charmaz (1990) noted that researchers benefit from this method particularly when there are categories of concepts established at the onset of the data collection, and then start to develop new ideas as the researcher moves to the next stage. These new concepts then either negate or validate the initial set of concepts, and thus help to develop the theory.

The theoretical sampling strategy informs a purposive sample selection and requires a snowball procedure. In the snowball method, after each interview, the researcher asks the subject for new names to interview as the next step in the data collection. According to Charmaz (1990), the initial sample in this approach is relatively random regarding its relevance to the research subject. Nevertheless, researchers seek for a strategy for selecting participants who have an experiential connection to the topic as much as possible.

Access to key persons was one of the initial challenges throughout the fieldwork in Turkey. I used some preliminary gatekeepers to access different segments of the society. For instance, human rights NGOs in the region facilitated some of the interviews in both Diyarbakir and Şanlıurfa. Also, youth associations arranged initial interviews with Islamist young people. Since the issue is highly politicised, I considered using gatekeepers with political leanings similar to the cluster of people whom I wished to interview in order to overcome challenges in accessing data freely and without biases against the researcher. The snowball method was therefore able to be used to good effect. Initial gatekeepers were persons in these NGOs or youth associations. The research participants were then drawn from a population, which had experienced the conflict in Turkey's southeast or had an expertise in the area of this research project. Accordingly, the population for the sampling strategy was mostly comprised of young people. Also, some of the interviews were conducted with key experts in the fields of youth contact and conflict prevention, and these were not necessarily young persons.

In addition to sampling strategies, researchers frequently use a flexible research design in qualitative research, which necessitates “an iterative, cyclical approach to sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation” (Marshall 1996: 523). This type of research strategy in qualitative studies entails
an iterative sampling method in which the size of the sample relies on the objectives of the research project and participants’ relevance to the research questions (Morgan, 2008: 797-798; Marshall, 1996: 523). Sample size therefore varies based on the complexity of the research project, as

Qualitative research emphasizes inductive theory building, subjective understanding, and detailed, holistic data, and these goals are often best met through intense investigations of small, systematically selected samples (Morgan, 2008: 797).

In this context, the number of interviews in this study was 46 individual interviews. Interviews were conducted in the Turkish language. I spent enough time to get acquainted with each participant in order to enable a regular conversation and set the terms for a sufficient interaction to learn about his/her experiences regarding the implications of the conflict in Turkey. By doing this, the rationale for achieving an in-depth analysis of personal experiences with conflict was accomplished.

As part of a case study strategy in qualitative research, one question, which must be asked, however, is "why will knowledge of a single or a limited number of cases be useful to people who operate in other, potentially different situations?" (Donmoyer, 2008: 372). Qualitative researchers have often been criticised by the proponents of quantitative research because they employ a non-random sampling method and thus rely on a small-sized sample. This is why, for positivists, the key problem in a research study is the lack of statistical generalizability in qualitative research. Generalizability refers to extending the results of a research project from a sample to the broader population. Nevertheless, quantitative researchers overlook the necessity of small sample sizes to identify an "in-depth and highly contextualised understanding of specific phenomena" (Morgan, 2008: 798), which is very unlikely to be achieved through quantitative research, specifically by applying statistical generalisations to the data and using probability sampling.

Donmoyer (1990) suggested "... that reading qualitative accounts of radically different cases could produce an enriched cognitive schema and that this schema would allow for a kind of intellectual generalisation even when settings are radically different" (175-200). Before proceeding to examine other aspects of the methodology, it is necessary to note the way and the timing of data collection. In theory, the researcher is involved in a continuous process of data gathering and analysis. This procedure lies at the centre of the theory and researchers are assumed to collect data until the
theory emerges as a result of comparisons of indicators. This approach therefore leads to theoretical saturation as a method and a criterion for sampling and data collection for qualitative research (Morgan, 2008).

Saturation is the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges on the newly constructed theory. A researcher therefore regards this as the point at which no more data need to be collected. When the method appears to be robust, with no gaps or unexplained phenomena, saturation has been achieved and the resulting theory is more easily constructed. If the researcher does not attain data saturation, any resulting theory may be unbalanced, incomplete and inherently untrustworthy. As a result, the data collection process is considered to be complete only when saturation has been achieved (Saumure & Given, 2008).

1.6.4. Data Analysis

After the data collection process had been completed in four months of fieldwork in Turkey’s south-east, the interviews were transcribed as the first step of the data analysis. The tape-recorded data from the 46 interviews were transcribed into the written format. The data was in the Turkish language so I transcribed the interviews myself and translated relevant sections of the interviews to be used in the thesis as direct quotations. This stage was followed by a process of organising the gathered data according to emerging themes for more advanced data analysis (see Yin, 2003). After producing a written version of the interviews, the next step involved the identification of patterns to generate inferences from the raw empirical data.

In the context of data categorisation, coding emerging themes in each interview is a technique used to carefully examine the available information. Coding refers to the categories and relationships in the approach to the raw data. Identifying codes and classifying them within a conceptual framework informs the theory and is the basis of this approach. To this end, researchers often begin with an open coding, which means the analysis of the data word-by-word in an effort to generate codes for advanced analysis. The researcher then reduces the initial number of codes by axial coding, aggregating the codes into core codes. Finally, by using selective coding, a focal code emerges as a result of the iterative coding and data collection process. Once the focal code has been identified, other codes have to be interlinked in terms of their relationships to the core code. Table 1.1 shows an
example of this coding technique:

Some materials have been removed due to 3rd party copyright. The unabridged version can be viewed in Lancaster Library - Coventry University.

As part of the organisation of the data, the major themes in the interviews with young people were in line with the categorisation of the target audiences at the beginning of the field-work. In other words, the reactions and expressions of youth clusters differed according to their political inclinations, nationalist or religious and so on. The following issues emerged after the analysis of the interviews: anti-peace-process sentiments; anti-JDP political stances; Islamic brotherhood as a solution to the problem; frustration with political developments; describing the ‘other’ negatively; cultural practices; and violence instigation. Similarly, the interviews with the key experts led to the following themes: the importance of education and employment; recreational activities as a tool for empowerment; divisions in society; the culture of violence; the ideological preferences of youth; and the inaccessibility of institutions for politicised youth.

At the end of coding the emerging themes documented from the transcribed interviews, core codes of the empirical data appeared for discussion in each data analysis chapter to follow. For instance, at the end of the coding process in terms of the data collected from young people, identity ‘salience’ and ‘transcendence’ in the sentiments of nationalist and Islamist youth respectively became two major themes to be considered in Chapter 5. Likewise, the coding process for secondary sources led to the organisation of Chapter 4. According to the coding process described in that chapter, the structural (educational and economic) exclusion of young people emerged as the leading theme in the reports along with the exclusion practices found in migrant locations.
The final step of the data analysis involved reflexive interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2007). Following the literal reading of the raw data, the interviews led to the emergence of relevant themes. This process was followed by reflexive interpretation of the data in accordance with the framework of analysis explained at the beginning of this research study. I adopted social constructivism as the leading frame for analysing the social reality. Social construction of the reality, by which I mean the implications of the Kurdish issue, defined the approach to analysing the raw data (see Chapter 2).

1.6.5. Ethics of Conducting the Research

The fieldwork in Turkey’s southeast started in the winter of 2013 after obtaining prior permission to conduct a research study involving human beings (see Annex 1). The safety of the researcher during the fieldwork was the leading concern at the onset of this study. Research sites were selected as locations (urban centres) with no major record of recent political unrest or terrorism risks. Those risks were only leading to a genuine safety problem in the mountainous parts or rural areas of Turkey’s southeast and were far away from the current project’s proposed field research sites. The positive political environment and non-violent period in 2013 reduced the safety risks. Even so, an exit strategy and arrangements were ready in case of an emergency situation. In addition, FCO advice was followed as a daily routine. There were adequate health facilities in the area providing health services and precautions against various types of disease and risk to health. As I am a citizen of Turkey and lived in the country for several years, I have an understanding of the security issues at stake. The following steps were taken to ensure personal safety:

- I limited my visits to Turkey’s southeast to a maximum of two-phases;
- I postponed visits in case of an event of any security concerns in Turkey;
- Meetings were held in the offices or branches of CSOs; and
- Accommodation was arranged in the guesthouses of local universities.

There were risks in regards to the interviews because the research subject concerned a politically sensitive issue. So I took into consideration any cautions from local guides about the standards of interaction with local people and the culture. Interviews were mainly held in the offices of local and international organisations. Gatekeepers in this context were the first point of reference.
Securing the anonymity of the research participants was an important aspect of the ethical considerations. When using the interview data within the text, I catalogued interviews in order to exhibit the location, year and type of interview. In abbreviations like ‘D13Y01’, ‘S14K02’, ‘D’ or ‘S’ stand for the first letters of locations (Diyarbakır or Şanlıurfa), and ‘Y’ or ‘K’ refer to the type of interviewees, respectively (Young people or Key experts). Likewise, the first set of numbers in ‘D13Y01’ and ‘S14K02’ show the last two digits of the interview year (2013 or 2014), and the second set of digits are the interview numbers assigned to each person.

As a result, no personal information was cited in the study and the identities of organisations were also disguised. By this technique, third parties could not be able to trace the interviewees back to the organisations, which they represented. Before each interview, the participant was asked to read the participant information sheet. Only when they had consented to the terms did I ask participants to sign a consent approval form and begin the interview. All participants were contacted by e-mail or telephone and agreement to participate was entirely voluntary. They fully understood that their participation was possible only after they had given their consent to participate and there was no pressure to convince them to participate. If participants for any reason asked for their comments not to be included in the research before the publication of the thesis, their requests were fulfilled and the relevant data were deleted immediately. Use of online interaction (such as e-mail and Skype) was restricted to the following conditions after the interviews: a) for a follow-up to clarify some points regarding the interview, and b) to contact some participants who were no longer in Turkey and were in places, which caused difficulties in reaching them personally (especially people working in conflict-affected areas). The university e-mail account was used for all such correspondence.

Data management is the process of ‘what and how to manage’ the data during the data fieldwork and data collection processes: “Data management is important because it ensures safekeeping or future proofing of data during the research process. Good data management reduces the risk of data loss, increases accuracy and verifiability, and reduces the loss of productivity if core staff members leave before the end of the project. It also offers greater potential for longer-term data preservation and increases the ability to reanalyse older data sets” (Corti, 2008: 193). To this end, data management involves: “(1) data storage, (2) format conversion, (3) backup copies, (4) authenticity and version control, and (5) control of access and security” (ibid: 194). The interviews in this research study
were therefore first recorded on a digital audio device. Then the information was transferred to a personal laptop upon the completion of the interview. After that, interviews were transcribed and stored together with the original audio files on the laptop using an optical storage medium, such as CD-r or DVD-R. Data were stored on a password-protected laptop, which was always kept in a locked room during the visits to Turkey. After return to the UK, the research data were removed from the laptop and transferred to an external data storage device and kept at all times in a locked drawer.

1.7. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters. This current Chapter 1 introduces the justification for analysing the research objective, provides general introductions to the Kurdish issue and the place of young people in this context, and identifies concepts relevant to comprehending the subsequent chapters. Chapter 1 also presents the study’s methodology, explaining the decision to utilise a case-study approach and a qualitative methodology. Several methodological choices and constraints are elaborated. Furthermore, the methodology section also describes the limitations of this study, the challenges experienced during the fieldwork in Turkey’s southeast, and the ethical issues, which were adopted.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on youth engagement in violence. It assesses the role and explanatory power of several theoretical explanations in order to explore the intersection between conflict and youth. Greed and grievance theories, psycho-social developmental approaches and blocked transition to adulthood are the major propositions, which are introduced in this chapter. This chapter also presents an overview of the discussions and concepts related to peace, peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Chapter 3 presents the historical context and evolution of the Kurdish issue. Fundamental issues regarding the composition and functioning of Kurdish society can be comprehended after reading this chapter. This chapter reviews the political efforts of the incumbent government after 2005, in particular upper-level conflict resolution initiatives. This chapter also presents the scope and extent of youth political activism in Turkey, in particular the role of Kurdish youth in the 1970s and the establishment of the PKK. Likewise, this chapter provides an overview of the role, which young people
have played in the instigation of violence during the recent peace process (2009-2015).

**Chapter 4** is the first data analysis chapter. It examines the role of socio-economic inequalities in society in the emergence of a conflict-prone youth cohort in the 2000s. This chapter proceeds with the analysis of the determinants, which leads to the development of the argument, which views youth tendencies to radicalisation to violence as part of structural exclusion and the lack of opportunities for young people after facing the negative implications of the Kurdish issue in Turkey’s south-east. A comparative analysis is made of information gathered from secondary sources, which often appears in academic works and in the reports of state agencies, political parties and civil society.

**Chapter 5** presents and incorporates the analysis of the fieldwork data regarding the conflict experiences of young people and interpretations of the peace process and the conflict between competing youth perspectives. The chapter discusses the variations in the conflict experiences of youth groups, the implications of the conflict and peace process on youth perceptions and relations in society. The data discussed in this chapter were generated during the field research in autumn 2013 and spring 2014 in the majority Kurdish-inhabited provinces of Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa.

**Chapter 6** provides reflections on how conflict transformation theory could help to understand the implications of conflict in the structures, relationships and perceptions of young people. Moreover, it includes recommendations for peace projects with regard to the design and implementation of youth peacebuilding interventions.

**Chapter 7** presents a model and guidelines on the basis of the relationship between conflict transformation theory and young people’s participation in peacebuilding. Lastly, the **Conclusion** chapter reviews the barriers to peacebuilding work in Turkey’s southeast, and consequently, provides a list of recommendations.
Young people's unique experiences of conflict (e.g., victims and/or agents for peace or violence) (see McEvoy-Levy, 2006), and the relevance of addressing youth-related issues in social change projects during, and in the aftermath, of armed conflict – often implemented by civil society, governmental bodies or international organisations (see Kemper, 2005) – contribute to thinking of youth in the particular ways in which they exist or appear as a manifestation of the implications of conflict and post-conflict situations. In identifying a number of discourses in the popular and academic forms, this chapter will consider specific aspects related to the emergence and construction of 'youth' as a concept. Also, it will reflect on the importance and changing aspects of youth roles in conflict-affected societies; thus, this chapter reviews the academic study of youth in armed conflict and peacebuilding. Therefore, this chapter explores three guiding questions. First, is there a common definition for the term 'youth' that is acknowledged within the associated literature? Second, what are the leading assumptions with regards to youth involvement in conflict? Third, how do scholars define peace, violence, conflict transformation, and indeed other relevant concepts, in the peace and conflict literature?

The first section explores the conceptual development of the term youth in historical approaches to related studies; its use in development psychology and youth sociology will be elaborated at a later stage. The second section will then discuss the use of the term and its conceptual underpinnings in the peace and conflict research. Following this, section three will examine young people's roles and functions in the generation and perpetuation of armed conflict. In post-conflict situations, a number of issues, dilemmas and questions related to youth arise from the uncertainties one commonly en-
counters with fragile war-to-peace transition regimes. For this reason, these issues will also be identified in the third section, articulating the implications of armed conflict for young people's normal functioning within society. The fourth section will provide further discussion about a number of foundational issues and definitions of important concepts, such as the meaning of peace, peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

2.1. The History and the Emergence of the Concept of Youth

Defining 'youth' is complicated – like many other theoretical concepts – and often leads to a contradictory debate due to obscure references as to the meaning of the term and to the differences in conceptualisations regarding the duration and character of youth groups both in different cultures and at various times in history. Incorporating a wide range of meanings, the dictionary definition of 'youth' has come to be used to refer to “the time of life when someone is young” or “the time when a young person has not yet become an adult” (Merriam-Webster’s, 2012). In many respects, the study of youth is in fact the study of intergenerational relationships, and any attempt to define 'youth' has often conceived it, to some extent, to be a temporary phase between 'childhood' and 'maturity'. The term 'youth', therefore, includes individuals who are adolescents or young adults between the two established ends of the childhood-adulthood spectrum. However, there is a sharp distinction and permeability amongst the concepts between these two ends, as defined by the characteristics of each term in use (e.g., child, adolescent, young adults). Newman (2004), for instance, defines 'child' as those young persons who have not reached puberty and 'adolescence', as a phase starting from the onset of puberty and continuing until physiological maturation. The use of 'youth' or 'young people', therefore, refers to an age category that comprises individuals who are neither children nor adults (ibid: 3). In contrast to biological categorisation, youth also refers to a social group, and its representation and social position are often discussed by sociologists. The development and construction of youth is both a cultural and a social process. Thus, like childhood, youth is a social phenomenon (see Qvortrup et al., 2004). Furthermore, from a historical perspective, pre-adult phases represent the difference, and divergence, between adult society and young persons over time and place as based on the socio-economic situation of the family, childrearing practices or governmental (legal) attitudes towards children (see Gittins, 2009).
As an issue of great complexity, it is, therefore, a prerequisite for researchers to clarify the particular form of procedure for approaching the term 'youth' at the onset of any given scientific enquiry into the subject. Over the last few decades, pre-adult phases have become a now-recognised area of study of a group that were previously overlooked or marginalised, but is now considered an important conceptual category and social position worthy of particular attention (Kehily, 2009). Approaches to the construction and the development of the concept of youth, to this end, spans the majority of conventional disciplines (e.g., history, development psychology, sociology). For this reason, it is equally important to distinguish the changing use of, and contributions to, the conceptual development of the term in various disciplines. However, important theoretical conceptions and methodological issues, such as the definition and length of youth, have frequently been contested and resisted by the various perspectives taken towards the study of youth. As a result, in this section, I will first outline the approaches that have contributed to the development of youth, and then close the section with a review of considerations regarding young people’s place and functions in the peace and conflict literature.

2.1.1. Historical Approaches to Pre-Adult Phases: Childrearing Practices and Modernisation

Today, youth is considered to be a separate conceptual category to study; however, the ambiguity in its meaning, changing social positions and functions of individuals has made it impossible to demarcate a clearly defined boundary between childhood and adult life. Historical research in this sense draws on the origin and development of concepts such as 'youth' and 'childhood' as an age group before the discovery of adolescence in the 1880s to the contemporary debates about the term, which informs us about the past and present trajectories of the pre-adult phases. In historical approaches to the study of youth, the initial emphasis is thus on how childhood and youth phases have been constructed by adults (in particular in attitudes towards working class children), and how this construction process has changed over time (the dynamics of progressive changes in childrearing practices and governmental attitudes to youth and childhood) so as to shape the characteristics of the pre-adult phases of life (see Ariès, 1962; De Mause, 1974). In other words, 'private dispositions toward the young' and 'proliferation of public institutions for managing child life' have become the two dominant themes in the study of pre-adult phases as this area has slowly gained acceptance in historical research (Bellingham, 1988: 347).
The purpose of the 'modernisation theorist' Philippe Ariès (1962), in *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, for instance, was to demonstrate and justify the difference between the modern day and past (until 1700s) 'representations' of pre-adult phases. The way children have been portrayed in artwork and linguistic material over the past 1,000 years have led Aries (1962) to the judgment that there are no sociologically separate stages in a person's life course as there is: "...[a]n ambiguity between childhood and adolescence on the one hand and the category known as youth on the other. People had no idea of what we call adolescence, and the idea was a long time in taking shape" (29). According to Ariès (1962), the process or period of changing from 'childhood' to 'adulthood' is considered in an entirely separate manner from biological maturation. Instead, the level of dependence to family-household more appropriately articulates such a transition from one stage of life to another. That is, “[t]he idea of childhood was bound up with the idea of dependence: the words 'sons/ varlets/ and 'boys' were also in the vocabulary of feudal subordination. One would leave childhood only by leaving the state of dependence, or at least the lower degrees of dependence" (Ariès, 1962: 26). Youth is, therefore, considered to be a 'modern' concept in the works of Ariès (1962), according to which young persons have long been depicted (or painted in medieval artwork) as 'little adults', at least until the 18th century, and thus “as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to adult society” (125).

Likewise, the Psychohistory school of thought in historical research took the premise that childrearing practices have become the underlying process for how the concept of child is constructed in society, while arguing that these practices also shape the rendering of pre-adult phases for different historical points and cultures. In this regard, 'psychohistorian' Lloyd De Mause (1974) in *The History of Childhood*, for instance, put forward the idea of the 'psychogenic theory of history' in which he drew attention to the shifting patterns in childrearing practices, and rising emotional needs between the parent and child over time. For De Mause's (1974) Freudian approach, the nature of the parent-child relationship has changed incrementally and in a linear manner, arguing “the further back in history one goes, the lower the level of childcare” (9). This premise is also at the centre of the cultural development cycle of a society that fuels 'historical change', as both childrearing practices and cultural change goes hand-in-hand (ibid). In such accounts, the boundary between childhood and adult life is defined by fundamental and progressive changes in parental sentiments for, and attitudes towards, children within the family. In other words, the nature of the relationship (emotional value)
between the parent and child has the ultimate impact on the development cycle of the family and the shaping of pre-adult phases in the psychohistory approach to the study of children and youth.

In contrast with the idea of progressive change in childrearing practices, Linda Pollock’s (1987) A Lasting Relationship, refutes the findings of modernist historians and the Psychohistory School by claiming that “parents have always valued their children: we should not seize too eagerly upon theories of fundamental change in parental attitudes over time” (12-13). By examining the Puritan family forms and parent-child relations, Pollock (1987) argues that basic features of human nature have, essentially, remained unchanged, and for this reason such modernist approaches to childrearing practices are misleading in terms of the belief that children were treated more ‘brutally’ by parents in the past. Similarly, Janet L. Nelson argues that: “He [Ariès] mistook the absence of handbooks on child-rearing for lack of concern with children, instead of looking in medical treatises for relevant material: focusing on artistic representations of children as miniature adults he ignored a mass of textual evidence” (82). Despite objections to the hypotheses of Ariès or De Mause, the historical approach, especially the premises of Centuries of Childhood, introduced pre-adult phases of life cycle as socially and historically constructed concepts, which have become a noteworthy contribution to the history of pre-adult phases, and that have also formed the basis for studying youth and childhood as independent conceptual categories and social positions (see Gittins, 1998).

2.1.2. Development Psychology and Non-Adults: Physical and Cognitive Development

Psychologists have made the 'psychological' and 'physical' development of the child the focus of attention in order to examine the 'nature' of life, which became the dominant approach in youth and childhood studies in the early 20th century (Woodhead, 2003). As part of human biological development, the period of 'adulthood' during the typical life cycle represents a 'natural' state that is reached after a long-transition from the pre-adult phases to maturity. As hypothesised in the late-19th century, Ernst Haeckel's 'biogenetic law' theory, for instance, argued that the development of anatomical or behavioural features of an individual from the earliest phase to maturity (ontogeny) is in fact the short and rapid repetition of an entire evolutionary process of a species (phylogeny) (see Archard, 1993: 32). Development psychologists, in this regard, perceive youth as a phase for rejuvenation, a process of gradual development as distinct from other living organisms and phases in the human life cycle (see Gittins, 1998). That is, human beings strive to achieve 'perfection' in the face of the distinct
difficulties of being in their youth. Adulthood within a person's life course, therefore, denotes an 'ideal form' and an 'end-state' of human development (ibid). As pre-adult phases are considered preparatory to becoming adult members of society, the medium of analysis in psychological research is thus the individual (e.g., children or young persons) (Kehily, 2004).

Life is categorised, therefore, according to physical and psychological development, which are based on age and acquisition of cognitive abilities, respectively. Accordingly, Swiss biologist Jean Piaget's (1926) 'stage theory of cognitive development' portrays the trajectory to adulthood as a process, and result, of biological maturation and environmental interactions. Piaget (1926), who has had an enormous effect on the understanding of the human life cycle in psychological research, proposed the following stages of cognitive development: 1) Sensorimotor stage (birth to age 2); 2) Pre-operational stage (from age 2 to 7); 3) Concrete operational stage (from age 7 to 11); 4) Formal operational stage (age 11 to adolescence and adulthood). This process is built upon what Piaget (1952) calls 'schema', which describe “[a] cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning”. As schemas are the building blocks of cognitive development, they resemble 'index cards' embedded in the brain to stimulate a person's behaviour (Wadsworth, 2004). Individuals adjust to the outside world by either using existing 'schema' (assimilation) to define an object or cope with a situation, or by changing existing 'schema' (accommodation) to deal with this new situation when they are unsuccessful in achieving a goal by assimilation (ibid). In other words, “for Piaget, intelligence was the product of a process of biological adaptation. The structure of intelligence at any age consisted of schemes or 'schemas' representing in knowledge the basis of a baby's response to, let us say, the movements of a mobile” (Bradley, 1989: 93).

In defining 'youth' as a phase within, and a part of, human biological development across the course of life, the term possesses distinctive age-group, yet unchanging, qualities, including cognitive and physical attributes, and behavioural patterns. To put it differently, pre-adult phases are defined as 'universal' concepts, without consideration of cultural, gender or class differences (see Gittins, 1998). Furthermore, Gittins (1998) points to this fact by arguing that, “theories of child development articulate ages and stages at which it is believed certain behaviours are appropriate/normal/necessary for psychological and physical well-being and maturation” (15). As a result of such consideration,
differences are only identified if a young person is situated away, or detached, from the normal patterns of personal development and is viewed as a “pathological/abnormal/deviant” human being (ibid: 15). The psychological approach to young people’s development in this sense is highly deterministic (Walkerdine, 2004). By criticising the primacy of this pre-determined developmental trajectory, Qvortrup (1994) likewise contends that psychologists define children as ‘human becomings’, not as human beings on such a path to adulthood. Therefore, it can be argued that psychological theories fail to provide an accurate or deeper understanding of non-adult stages of the life cycle as it offers only an insight into psychological factors but not culture or the interactions between the cultural, material and psychological realms (Gittins, 1998).

2.1.3. Youth Sociology: Age and Generational Relationships

As the boundaries and character of pre-adult phases are static - determined principally by biological and physiological determinants of an age group in psychological research - the emergence of the concept of youth changes with time, across cultures and social classes in the social construction and socio-cultural approaches to youth. Social construction of pre-adult phases has appeared as a conceptual category in the anthropological work of Opie and Opie (1969), who first acknowledged children as a separate category as entirely distinct from adult life and has come to be known with its own traditions and norms. Therefore, sociologists draw attention to, and view, youth as a 'social group' in contrast to its 'individualistic' representation in development psychology. Similarly, pre-adult phases of the life cycle are not universal concepts but a 'product of culture' that varies across time and place (see Kehily, 2009). Furthermore, in the context of socio-cultural approaches, one stream of research identifies 'age' as an important indicator of social boundaries and stratifications such as gender, social class and race (Passuth, 1987). In a same vein, Goodwin (1990) has found that age plays an important role, one that is as significant as the impact of other social markers, in children’s power relations within peer groups and in their interactions with each other.

However, sociologists such as Mayall (2000; 2002) and Qvortrup (2000) argue that 'generational relations' are more useful in explaining pre-adult phases in several ways. Adult hegemony on the construction of pre-adult stages of life cycle is a major issue as there is a discrepancy with regards to the role and power of adults and non-adults. That is, construction of pre-adult phases is a result of a multitude of actions or processes invented by adult society, such as the laws, books, activities or
spaces (such as school and clinics) (Maybin & Woodhead 2003). Therefore, the social position of young people prescribes a quasi-disadvantaged, yet vital, role for them in terms of social interactions (see Mayall, 2002). The interactions between adults and the young, in turn, set the particular ways in which an understanding of pre-adult phases occur in society and shape the fundamental characteristics of a whole cohort. Foner (1978), for instance, observes that “each cohort bears the stamp of the historical context through which it flows [so that] no two cohorts age in exactly the same way” (343).

Therefore, drawing attention to the importance of 'meaning', in contrast to biological notions about the term 'youth' is acknowledged as a distinct social category with shared needs and positions in society (Jones, 1998). American sociologist David Matza (1964), to this end, refers to the 'traditions of youth' in an attempt to explain 'deviant patterns' amongst youth in the 1950s-1960s that manifest in American society as “delinquency, radicalism, and Bohemianism” (102). Thus, as a 'social category', youth possess specific behavioural patterns, and displays different styles of reasoning and thinking patterns when compared to other phases of life (ibid). Therefore, a sense of 'fraternity' and shared interest amongst youth became the inevitable consequence for this group at different points in history (Gillis, 1974). As part of the emergence and historical development of youth as a concept, John R. Gillis (1974) in *Youth and History*, begins from the premise that the unique demographic (e.g., mortality and fertility rates) and economic conditions (e.g. industrialisation and urbanisation) represented 'historical' turning points that have had an impact on every social institution, including the family, and as a result on the parameters of each phase of the life cycle (ibid). This being the case, the pre-industrial society, for instance, made no specific references to the duration of youth and did not divide the life cycle into a number of categories by the standards of today's youth terminology due to a lack of distinction between adolescence and youth as many personal, social or economic tasks overlapped with the pre-adult phases (see ibid: 1-35). Having the qualities of a pre-industrial peasant economy, and traditional and communal forms of life in mind, the young spent most of their life outside the family – leaving home at a very early age (such as 7 or 8) to work and live as servants in different households or accepting apprenticeships at the age of 13 or 14 (ibid). In the manner exemplified in the system of ordering preindustrial society, to which people have mostly been assigned to social positions according to their inheritance and marital status, 'propertyless' and 'unmarried' youth had a lower social standing in terms of age relations in this period (ibid). Therefore,
as peasant households were able to maintain control of dependants through property ownership and inheritance instruments, young people appeared as a vital source of support to the family and provided cheap labour by working for different households. For this reason, the meaning attached to youth suggests a status of ‘dependence’ for young persons who could only form independent households after gaining the right, or the opportunity arose, to benefit from property ownership, and as a result of access to an inheritance after a lengthy process of succession.

With the decline of preindustrial socio-economic structures, old forms of relations and social boundaries changed or disappeared, which had an impact on the parameters of all phases of the life cycle with the socio-economic and demographic transformation of Europe into an industrialised and urbanised society in the late-18th and early-19th century (Gillis, 1974). In this era “modernization affected different groups in different ways, and in the period 1770-1870 the traditions of youth were redrawn along class lines, with the laboring classes developing their own distinctive youth culture organized around the urban neighborhood gang, and the upper and middle classes creating forms exclusively their own, including the modern student movement and bohemianism” (ibid: 37-38). Therefore, with the changes in the socio-economic landscape, youth benefited from the structural transformation of Europe in particular ways that allowed young people to begin to access the economy and to possess a more independent role in society, in contrast to the dependent status of the pre-industrial family households. Therefore, the social position of youth is perpetually re-interpreted with the changing structures of European society. The failed revolutions of 1848, in this sense, prepared the demise of student unrest and of the role of youth in working-class movements (ibid). Although traditions of radicalism and bohemianism continued to exist within socialist youth movements, a new group of people with common interests and similar social positions, as we now define as ‘adolescence’, became a prominent force, which was now nationalistic and socially conservative (ibid: 95). By the 1900s, the adolescent (14-18) phase of youth increasingly lost access to economy and society with increasing parental and institutional control over this phase of the life cycle (ibid). In turn, the role of the youth cohort was substantially different than that of previous generations, such that “this was reflected in the public image of the young, changing from Delacroix’s rebels on the barricades, youth at war with society, to the late-nineteenth-century recruiting posters, glorifying youth at war for their society” (ibid: 98).
In accordance with the construction of pre-adult phases by adults and in relation to the socio-economic situations of the family, Diana Gittins (1998), in *Child in Question*, argues that the social position of children was reinvented in the UK following the developments of the late-19th century onwards. The emergence and rise to prominence of the ‘middle class’ family forms and the character of this sector in this regard have had certain consequences for the representation of the young in society, which has gradually differentiated adults and young people (ibid). Although the value of affectional bonds between parents and children cannot be understated, in earlier centuries, as discussed earlier, children became emotional contributors to the family (and economically worthless) in contrast to the substantial reliance on the economic value of children in peasant or proto-industrial (cottage) households (see Gittins, 1998; Zelizer, 1985). As discussed in Viviana Zelizer’s (1985) *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, a study pursued in the United States, and in consideration of Western forms of family and childhood, this adjustment in terms of the representation of children within the family, which started with the changing importance of children among middle-class members of society, became the norm for all other children, regardless of class or gender. Accordingly, this change in image extended to increasing duties and ownership of children by the state and the passage of laws to protect them through education and restrictions on child labour (Kehily, 2004). Gillis points to the fact that: “for the first time, there were organizations devoted entirely to adolescence, the two best-known, the English Scouts and the German Wandervogel, founded in the first decade of the new century. Prisons and courts especially for juveniles, special employment services and welfare agencies, all were part of society's recognition of the unique status of those who were no longer children and, yet, not fully adult” (Gillis, 1974: 133). The emergence of young people's role as a regenerative force in socio-political change appeared in the 1950s-1960s as they started to claim rights that are now fully prescribed to adult society following the rise of youth-led movements and political activism. The presence of a youth 'sub-group' and 'culture' in modern society, however, provoked a number of often contradictory reactions over time and place with regards to the variation in representations of youth. There is still a degree of conflict between young people's portrayal as the ‘future of a nation’ on the one hand, and the ‘dangers’ posed by youth groups to the normal functioning of society on the other. How youth is constructed by different discourses in the context of contemporary challenges, and especially with regards to their positions and roles in conflict and post-conflict situations, will be discussed in the following sections.
2.2. The Definition and Construction of Youth in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations

From the early representation of children in the artwork, and relatively dependent status of youth in pre-industrial society, to young people's access to economy and society with industrialisation, and to the student movements of the late-1960s, the term 'youth' does not have the same meaning, nor does it possess the same position in society today as it did at different points in history. The meaning and roles attributed to youth in a way appropriate to specific circumstances change across cultures and can be associated with the interaction of a number of socio-economic factors. To this end, the presence of youth as a segment of the population in conflict and post-conflict situations introduces an already existing, but only recently seen, category. Furthermore, the position of youth in conflict-affected societies complicates the definition of the term by increasing its complexity, and brings issues and dilemmas related to young people as a fact of the ramifications of armed conflict to the attention of relevant local, national and international peacebuilding actors. In this regard, two approaches dominate the agendas of policymakers and academic researchers in their efforts to define the term. The first approach is mostly concerned with the 'protection' of young people, and uses the definition of the term as a statistical artefact. This approach is a part of an idea that culminated over time with the international and national policy instruments that aim to preserve young cohorts by legislating, initially, against the harms and other potential or unidentified consequences of armed conflict. On the other hand, the second approach presents a narrative of young people as persons who are capable of receiving and interpreting the context and implications of armed conflict, and who can become either perpetrators of violence or peacemakers. In this second approach, youth is often deemed as a socially constructed concept in contrast to the age-based categorisation of the term used by the first approach.

2.2.1. Defining Youth in International and National Frameworks

As discussed in the previous sections, delimiting the boundaries of youth is highly contextual and consequently a problematic process, regardless of the characteristics commonly ascribed to the 'youth' phase of the life cycle. To cope with this difficulty, there is a tendency to describe youth as an 'age group', which is often the case in the accounts of governmental bodies and international organisations. For instance, youth is defined in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (1995) proceedings and in the UN World Youth Report (2003) as persons between the ages of 15 and 24:
- “The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States” (Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981)

- “The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States” (Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly, A/40/256, 1985)

- “In 1995, the world youth population defined by the United Nations as the age cohort 15-24 – is estimated to be 1.03 billion, or % 18 of the total world population” (General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/50/81, 1995)

Despite the fact that it is not intended to become a 'legally binding' definition for the organisation and for other UN agencies, the UN provides a working categorical definition by using examples that refer to youth as being a 'fixed' age group. Although defining youth as being between the age of 15-24 serves as a limiting condition in terms of the way in which youth is perceived, and prevents the display of complex aspects and rites of passage from childhood to adulthood, it is useful for the statistical evidence and for generalisations that are obtained by inference from specific cases across youth groups. Thus, the 15-24 ages bracket, for instance, allows policymakers to produce comparative data amongst different youth groups in different countries. In addition to statistical purposes as a rationale for the use of an age-group definition, the preamble to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) describes young people as a vulnerable category and the reason for legal norms and a relevant definition in this manner is that “…the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguard and care, including appropriate legal protection”.

Even so, there is still no consensus within international organisations and agencies regarding the upper and lower age limits of the group. With regards to these differences, some organisations and agencies have come to recognize young persons under the age of 18 as being children. Youth, for instance, starts at the age of 18 in the CRC. Similarly, the first regional legal proceedings on children's rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) defines children as being persons under the age of 18. UN Habitat in Agenda 21, however, defines youth as those persons between the ages of 15 to 32. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) definition draws attention to the differences between the various pre-adult phases; that is,
UNICEF adopts the following categorisation in a variety of documents: adolescence (10-19); young people (10-24); youth (15-24).

On the other hand, the definitions of youth in national legal and policy frameworks vary across different countries. A report to the Council of Europe, for instance, categorises countries with similar attitudes regarding the age definition of youth into six groups:

- 14/15/16 and 29/30 years — predominant European model (Andorra, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Moldova, Germany, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey, Croatia, Montenegro, Czech Republic and Spain);
- 13/15/16 and 24/25 years — shortened youth age model (Ireland, Latvia, Macedonia, Switzerland and Sweden);
- 12/13 and 30 years — start earlier and end later youth age model (United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway and Portugal);
- 12/14/15/16 and 32/35 years — prolonged youth age model (Greece, Cyprus, Romania, San Marino and Ukraine);
- 3/6/7 and 25/26/30 years — youth age model also comprising childhood age (France, Estonia and Iceland); and
- 0 and 25/29/30 years — children and youth merging model (Austria, Belgium, Liechtenstein, Slovak Republic, Finland and the Netherlands) (Perovic, 2016).

Apart from the relevance of specific contextual factors (cultural or historical or socio-economic situations) to the definition of youth age in different countries, the definition is also dependent on the type of government “federal, provincial or local” and policies “employment, education, housing, social care, well-being, etc.”, or purpose “statistics, national or European programme support” (Perovic, 2016: 3-4). The age group definition of youth is used for practical purposes in most national and policy-level contexts in such a way as to evaluate and estimate youth-related issues and determine the vulnerabilities of the group that is widely used for the purpose of having a right to government programmes – namely, benefits and support provided to a particular segment of the population (see Council of Europe, 2008). To this end, the 'predominant European model' for instance, complies with EU policies such as “EU Youth Strategy – Investing and Empowering 2010-2018, Erasmus + and Youth in Action Programmes, Eurostat reports and Eurobarometer surveys” that consider youth as a phase
between the completion of secondary school and maturity (Perovic, 2016: 4). 'The shortened youth age model', on the other hand, more or less replicates the UN definition and prioritises an expedited process of transition to adulthood, and further regards employment as an important rite of passage to adult life (ibid). In contrast to these two models, however, the 'start earlier and end later youth age model' represents the lack of a consistent youth policy in certain European countries in which national or local governments deal with children, adolescents or young adults via the same instruments used for all non-adult groups (ibid). The 'prolonged youth age model', which defines the upper age limit of youth as late as 32/35, originates from the idea of a late transition to adulthood, which is especially prevalent in the Mediterranean countries (i.e., late marriages) (ibid). As will be discussed in the following sections, young people’s assumption of adult roles and responsibilities are effectively blocked in circumstances that can solely arise as cultural phenomena, as in the case of Mediterranean countries, or emerge as a consequence of context-specific questions, as appear in many developing and conflict-affected countries (see Hilker & Fraser, 2009). Lastly, the 'youth age model comprising also childhood age' and 'children and youth merging model' implies no clear distinction between the pre-adult phases of the life cycle, while the latter only declares an upper age limit for youth as relevant to national policies (Perovic, 2016).

Should countries follow a well prescribed and common youth age definition? The evidence in these models shows that although the lower limit of youth is considered to start at very similar ages in many countries, there is diversity regarding the upper-age limit which depends on the specific cultural norms and customs of the society in question. More importantly, this variation is a result of changing traditions (including contemporary trends and features such as individualism and consumerism) at the supranational/global level. Therefore, in addition to the limited utility of age or categorical definition of youth, an age-based definition suggests a weak link between the current 'state' of young people in certain circumstances, especially in fragile and conflict-affected societies, and the broad and 'fixed-age' definition of the concept of 'youth'.

2.2.2. Youth as a Socially Constructed Concept

The term 'youth' is often defined as a historically and socially constructed concept within the academic study on youth, which was discussed to in the context of its historical background in the first section. According to De Waal (2002), “[youth] is a Western concept and a political construct” which
is also “a problematic, intermediary and ambivalent category, chiefly defined by what it is not: youth are not dependent children, nor are they independent, socially responsible adults”. In this context, Bayart (1993) argues that African communities only introduced an age-based categorisation of the life cycle after colonialism and missionary education. Before colonialism, adulthood was used to refer to a quasi-social class composed mainly of wealthy men and a few women (ibid). Although youth as a conceptual category is a Western concept and a political construct; what is meant by youth and the implied or explicit significance of the term varies across cultures. This is why the categorical use of the term ‘youth’ as a transitional concept between the two established categories of the childhood-adulthood spectrum had also received criticism in the peace and conflict research (Wyn & White, 1997). With regards to the biological maturation aspect of the term, the definition of youth is conditional on contextual factors (ibid). Therefore, scholars in the peace and conflict research field have frequently attempted to use different age limits, if necessary, when referring to youth as the unit of analysis. A young person who is 15 or 16, for instance, can be defined as an adolescent, especially when such a definition is used to refer to child soldiers; however, the upper age limit of youth changes with time and place (McEvoy-Levy, 2006). For instance, the use of this sort of age-range in academic studies of youth varies from twelve to the mid-twenties in a variety of specific socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, in some cultures youth at a certain age are considered to be adolescents, while in others the upper age limit may be the mid-thirties and even forties, in particular in African countries (ibid).

To summarise, it can be argued that the youth phase of life cycle does not conform to a standard but rather refers to a highly fragmented transition process to adult life. As such, the definition of youth denotes a “transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood rather than as a rigid construct based on age” (Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 9). Additionally, youth is not considered as a homogenous concept, meaning it changes according to “gender, class, disability, ethnicity, education and provenance” (ibid: 9). It is also equally crucial to operationalize youth by taking into consideration the ‘agency’ aspect. Instead of providing age limits for youth and considering it to be a ‘preparatory stage’ to adult life, empowering youth is a significant aspect of normal youth functioning in society. In doing so, the "social, political, economic and military agency of youth" can be examined within a broader analytical framework (McEvoy-Levy, 2006: 49). By operationalizing a careful definition of the term, then, the purpose is to meet the needs and requirements of a research study. A strictly defined and
an age-range bound definition of youth can impair the goals of a particular research effort, and therefore a working definition of youth can only be obtained without impairing, and in accordance with, the researcher’s methodological choices and the scope of the research. These selections, of course, are a function of the various considerations of the socio-cultural context in question and are often a justification for the specific conditions and characteristics of the research subject.

2.3. Youth in Conflict

From ancient civilizations to the contemporary world, young people have existed as an object and, on occasion, the principal subject of the violence instigated between nations as conscripts of national armies; in intra-state conflicts as revolutionaries or militias, often motivated by a political cause or as members of criminal gangs; and, more recently, in transnational violent activities as members of extremist or terrorist groups. Young people’s participation (or non-participation) in armed conflict is connected to a multitude of factors and conditions, and denotes a highly contextual process (see Del Felice & L. Solheim, 2011). The academic study on armed conflict identifies a number of factors that can result in the escalation and sustainability of armed conflicts. Scholars emphasize the fact that armed conflict originates in the ‘motivations’ of combatants, armed groups or external actors engaged in fighting, and the ‘feasibility’ of rebellion with regards to the outbreak and sustainability of conflict (see Collier & Hoeffler, 2007; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Therefore, young people’s participation in violence can be understood in the context of a motivation versus opportunity divide; as such, the literature on development psychology and sociology elaborates on the role of developmental (i.e., social, psychological etc.) factors that might affect young people’s participation (or non-participation) in violence. Lastly, it can be argued that the route to participation in violence is a consequence of the structural exclusion of, and lack of opportunities for, young people whose transition to adulthood is blocked or prolonged by the interplay of the factors and conditions explained in the preceding theories (see Hilker & Fraser, 2009). The last section examines proximate factors for youth participation in violence.

2.3.1. Grievance and Youth Participation in Violence

In grievance theory, scholars hold the view that discontent with existing structures of society can mobilise members of a particular social or ethnic minority group against an established government
or ruler. Therefore, a person's propensity to violence is connected to politicisation and activation of discontent (Gurr, 1970) when they face structural inequality and injustice, particularly in conflict-prone or -affected societies. This is why the primary emphasis on the 'motivation' factor in collective action is centred upon a number of widely shared 'grievances' of a minority group in comparison to the privileges and rights associated with the majority. Therefore, the failure to redress such grievances can lead to participation in collective action, which often emerges as a result of relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970), horizontal inequalities (Stewart, 2008), ethnic insecurity (Posen 1993; Walter & Snyder, 1999), and structural discrimination or exclusion (Brown, 1996).

In this respect, mobilisation to violence is primarily about social class, and the resulting conflict of interests between social groups (e.g., centre/periphery). This inevitably violent conflict occurs between urban workers and the ruling class in capitalist society due to the exploitation of the proletariat by the capital, as widely discussed in Marxist discourse. In agrarian revolutions, however, peasants or the poorest class and their landlords come into conflict, often because of the landlords' unwillingness to accept the demands of peasants, as a result of which dissatisfied groups of people resist authority or control (Paige, 1975). In South America, for instance, members of the agricultural class who are deprived of subsistence were forced to rebel against the government as a result of the implications of the capitalism of emerging nations (Scott, 1976). Therefore, it is argued that the 'relative' position of a group in society is the principal reason for participation in violence, as was first hypothesised by James Davies (1962) in his article, Toward a Theory of Revolution, after analysing the experiences of Egypt, Russia and the United States.

Ted R. Gurr (1970) expanded the scope of this argument by presenting a more general framework and a theory of relative deprivation. According to Gurr (1970), as discussed in his seminal piece, Why Men Rebel?, relative deprivation requires a gap between a person's expectations and their capabilities. In Gurr's words, a "perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities" drive people into collective action (37). In reference to 'relative deprivation' as the principal factor for a person joining a rebellion, Gurr (1978) argues that “men are quick to aspire beyond their social means and quick to anger when those means prove inadequate, but slow to accept their limitations" (58). In the context of this discrepancy, it can be argued that a psychological source of motivation for
participation in collective action emerges, and consequently the intensity and persistence of grievances increases the magnitude of the associated aggression (ibid). Relative deprivation occurs in the following ways:

- **Decremental deprivation** – expectations are constant/capabilities fall (i.e., immigrants take over jobs)
- **Aspirational deprivation** – rising expectations/capabilities are constant (i.e., expectation of a better life)
- **Progressive deprivation** – rising expectations/capabilities fall (i.e., modernisation, economic or political depression) (ibid: 27-53)

Apart from the conflict of interests between social classes, grievances motivated by ethnic or cultural differences are a further reason for individuals to join armed groups. Byman (2002) defines an ethnic group as “a group of people bound together by a belief of common kinship and group distinctiveness, often reinforced by religion, language, and history” (5). According to primordial theorists of ethnic conflict, categorisation is one of the most important characteristics of human beings. That is, group members distinguish the in-group positively and the out-group negatively (Axelrod & Hammond, 2003). Therefore, identity (ethnicity) salience precipitates ethnic conflict between such competing groups. This is why primordial approach is often utilised by social psychologists (see for instance, Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 2008; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006) and is composed of micro-focused theories (such as contact theory) and have individual’s behaviour and attitudes at its core (see Landis & Albert, 2012) (see also Section 2.3.3). In contrast, instrumental theorists argue that the underlying cause of ethnic conflict is usually something else, such as competition for resources or weak states (see Caselli & Coleman, 2010; Jesse & Williams, 2011); however, later on, this conflict takes on an ethnic aspect because of the interaction of other factors at different stages of the conflict becoming a rationalisation for ethnic mobilisation (Landis & Albert, 2012). Therefore, the instrumental approach focusses on broad social or national trends and changes in society as the predictor of ethnic conflict, which are often considered macro-theories and usually purported by economists, political scientists and sociologists (ibid). Research by Boucher, Landis and Clark (1987) to analyse 12 intra-national ethnic conflicts (Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Basque, Puerto Rico, Native American, Philippines, New Zealand, and Hawaii) found the following themes useful as predictors for the eruption of ethnic conflict:
As part of the discussion on the relationship between macro-changes in society and ethnic conflict, for some, mobilisation to violence is a result of an ongoing reciprocal action or the influence of modernisation, and cultural and ethnic differences (Horowitz, 1985). That is, in the process of modernisation, adaptation to modern needs and habits acts as a catalyst to the upward mobility of a social group, which may lead to subjugation of other social groups due to the upwardly mobile group's access to the state power and repression. This results in identity salience (ethnic-nationalism) and politicisation of identity (such as national aspirations and secessionism) among members of the repressed group, which can prepare the ground for mobilisation to rebellion (see ibid). Therefore, nationalism occurs a result of, and in opposition to, state suppression of cultural manifestations of a minority group in society (ibid). Other scholars similarly view the exclusion of ethnic groups during the formation of modern nation states as a potential cause of participation in violence (Cederman, Wimmer & Min 2010; Wimmer 2013). In addition to these hypotheses, Zarkovic (1993) points to the economic benefits of independence. Drawing on the ideas of scholars such as Michel Foucault and Andre Gunder Frank, Hechter (1975) brings up the role of “internal colonialism” as a product of international powers and domestic economic policies in the emergence of nationalism. Furthermore, in Gurr’s (1993) research, using the Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset, grievances over political rights, mobilisation to achieve political rights and the scope of state power were found to be the predictors of rebellion among ethnopolitical groups. Gurr (2000) in Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century emphasizes four principal reasons for ethnic mobilisation and incentives for collective action. As collective action is associated with a group’s capacity and domestic opportunities available for mobilisation, the nature of ethnic mobilisation is dependent upon the regime type (democratic or authoritarian), the state’s ability to control the action (strong or weak), policy tradi-
tions of political elites (accommodation or repression) and components of ethnic identity (class, ethnicity or religion) (Gurr, 2000).

In the model of rebellion posited by Gurr and Moore (1997), who defined ethnopolitical groups as a category “...that define themselves by reference to some combination of common decent, shared historical experiences, and valued cultural traits who make claims on behalf of their collective interests against either a state or other groups” (Gurr & Moore, 1997: 1081), rebellion occurs as a result of the following casual factors and relationships: (1) grievances lead to mobilisation; (2) mobilisation leads to rebellion; (3) rebellion leads to repression; and (4) repression leads to mobilisation (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. The Gurr – Moore (1997) Model of Rebellion

Therefore, deprivation and resource mobilisation are the two principal factors that lead to rebellion. In particular, Gurr and Moore's (1997) model defines rebellion as a “concerted campaign of violent action used by organizations claiming to represent an ethnic group to make claims against the state” and is predicted by mobilisation and international rebellion; mobilisation refers to the “capacity of an organization that represents an ethnic group to get its members to support collective action”, and is predicted by group coherence and grievances; further, grievances are defined as “widely shared dissatisfaction among group members about their cultural, political, and/or economic standing vis-a-vis dominant groups”, which are predicted by demographic distress and past repression; and, finally, repression is defined as an “action that states take to enforce claims against an ethnic group” (1081).
As part of the grievance-based factors, Frances Stewart (2008) likewise argues that 'horizontal inequalities' can increase the likelihood of conflict between culturally defined groups. In Stewart’s (2008) study, the different dimensions of horizontal inequalities are classified as:

- **Cultural** – lack of recognition of group's cultural practices, e.g., dress, language, etc.
- **Economic** – employment opportunities and income; ownership of assets, e.g., financial, human and social capital, land, and livestock;
- **Political** – participation in the army, bureaucracy, cabinet, local government, and parliament;
- **Social** – access to social services, e.g., education, health, housing, sanitation, and water; human outcome indicators, e.g., educational achievements, health level (ibid: 13)

Grievance-based sub-factors in young people's decisions to participate in violence are an important aspect of the relationship between young people and conflict as they often see violence as a way to change the existing structures in society. In contrast to the youth bulge-based premises of Kaplan (1994) and other scholars, who often blame the deterioration in social fabric on regions or countries such as West Africa (such as scarcity, crime, overpopulation and disease) as the major sources of conflict escalation, Paul Richards (1996), in *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth, and Resources in Sierra Leone* argued that the rebellion in Sierra Leone was a result of state decay (alienation from political decision-making and corruption) and patrimonialism in rural areas that resulted in young people joining the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in the 1980 rebellion. Therefore, the persistence of inequality in Sierra Leone was the result of deep-rooted concerns in addition to the clearly visible deformation in social structures as the major causes for the escalation in violence. As Richards (1996) observes, the source of conflict was “a patrimonial state running out of resources (especially resources to support education), the emergence of rural slums in diamond districts, and the agrarian failures of an urban- (and mining) biased development policy” (52).

In a same vein, Stewart *et al.* (2008) argued that conflict is most likely when political inequality exists in tandem with socio-economic inequalities. Based on a number of case studies in West Africa, Southeast Asia and South America, they concluded that if a group is subjected to socio-economic inequality and the leadership of the group is politically excluded, then the likelihood of conflict increases. Nevertheless, the existence of such inequalities does not always establish the necessary conditions for conflict, as in the case of Bolivia, or may not be an identity-based conflict, as in Guatemala (Stewart
et al. 2008). These findings are reinforced by others, such as Østby's (2008) comparative study of 36 countries (1986-2004) which found that regional inequality and political exclusion (in particular minority groups) are potential reasons for conflict.

2.3.2. Greed- or Opportunity-Based Factors in Youth Violence

A second stream of research emphasises the feasibility of rebellion and the availability of opportunities for rebels as the principal cause of conflict. Therefore, the potential for personal financial benefit that might arise from participation in violence and reduced costs of fighting are considered parts of the basic tenets of the 'greed' hypothesis (Collier, 2007; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). In contrast to the centrality of common interest in grievance-based collective action, proponents of greed-based sub-factors examine individual motivations with regards to participation in conflict. According to Mancur Olson (1965), for instance, the rationality of self-interest-motivated individuals suggests 'free-riding' as a viable option, in lieu of participation in conflict and associated costs, to take advantage of public goods in the aftermath of conflict that will be provided without discrimination against any member of the affected society. Therefore, instead of the reliance on group interest as a starting point for collective action, the decision to participate in conflict is affected by, and due primarily, to a person's cognition and the resulting decision to rationalise the recruitment process.

In the context of individual incentives, Paul R. Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2000), who prepared the *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* report for the World Bank, found, after analysing worldwide armed conflict episodes between 1960 and 1999, that the onset of civil war is closely correlated with economic factors. For Collier and Hoeffler (2000), individuals fight for material benefits rather than grievances. In the presence of a substantial source of financial gain, rebels conceive fighting as a feasible option to either join or to continue their participation in armed groups against a government or ruler (Collier, 2007; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). At the personal decision-making level, joining an armed group can represent a route to personal enrichment, and can be seen as a profit-making activity. When it comes to youth with relatively little or no educational background, and who live in economically deprived neighbourhoods, the loss of potential gain from other alternatives when fighting is chosen may be quite low. According to the 'opportunity' or 'greed' theory, this situation increases the likelihood of participation in violence. According to Urdal (2007), for instance, potential recruits usually consider the pros and cons of participation, and often prefer participation if the gain is higher and
the cost is lower than non-participation, and thus opt for participation rather than seeking sources of income elsewhere. In addition to material opportunities, non-material incentives such as 'physical and psychological protection' and 'status' obtained when young people become members of armed groups can be regarded as a greed-based sub-factor and a 'push' factor (Hilker & Fraser, 2009; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008).

For the feasibility side of the 'greed' hypothesis, conflict is likely to occur where the terrain is impenetrable, a mountainous region, and represents a place of security for rebels to hide from a wide variety of armed raids (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Collier, 2007; Collier et al., 2008). Also, rebellion becomes feasible if a government lacks, or is weak, in terms of external security commitments (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Collier, 2007). Likewise, in places where the youth represent a relatively large proportion of the total population, the costs to rebels forming armed groups reduces, and the feasibility of rebellion increases due to an abundant supply of manpower (Collier, 2000). As such, access to natural resources constitutes an important aspect of the feasibility part of the argument, as rebels often seek financial support in order to maintain violent activities (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Collier, 2007). The rebellions in Sierra Leone and Angola, for instance, are financed by diamonds. Therefore, conflict appears more frequently in naturally resource-rich countries with relatively young populations. The political economy of natural resources (Le Billon, 2004) and their ownership (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002) can also generate inter-group competition. An abundance of commodities such as diamonds, oil or timber can trigger inter-ethnic competition for these natural resources. This is why Lujala et al. (2005), for instance, observe that such conflicts are as geographically selective as they are concentrated in natural resource-abundant areas of conflict-affected countries. As a result, extraction of natural resources and other financial revenues, such as taxation of locals and drug trafficking as profit-making activities, can enhance the sustainability of a rebellion and the survival of the associated armed groups (Sanin, 2004).

2.3.3. Psychosocial Approaches in Violence Participation

Apart from the motivation versus opportunity divide, young people's participation in violence can be the consequence of a number of psychosocial factors. From a primordial theorist's perspective, at the individual (micro) level, negative attitudes toward a group (prejudice) can precipitate conflict; however, it is important to examine the conditions under which such prejudice appears to be a factor
in participation in violence and how prejudice can be reduced (Landis & Albert, 2012). For instance, Allport (1954) argued that:

Prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal-status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom, or local atmosphere), and provided it is of the sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups (281).

Therefore, the main premise of ‘contact hypothesis’ is the reduction of prejudice in order to promote positive intergroup relations through interactions and encounters between the members of different social groups. For instance, one of the earlier studies of Star, Williams and Stoufer (1949) showed evidence of a decrease in the prejudice between African-Americans and Caucasians who worked together in the army. Allport (1954), in Nature of Prejudice, identifies the following conditions for the best, or at least most favourable, intergroup contact and prejudice reduction:

- Equal status contact in the situation
- Common goals
- Intergroup cooperation in achieving common goals
- Support of authority and cultural or societal norms for positive intergroup contact
- Friendship potential – intimate not superficial contact

Likewise, Pettigrew (1998) suggested the ways in which optimal intergroup contact can exist via the following sequence: “decategorization: seeing similarity with the “other” – seeing the “other” as an individual and interaction as an interpersonal, not intergroup, event; second, salient categorization: other’s group made salient so the “other” is seen as representative of their group in some essential way; and third, re-categorization into a larger category such as “working class” or “human race” that is inclusive (“we world”) of all interactants” (cited in Salzman, 2012: 38-39).

Therefore, contact theory argues that healing starts with contact between conflicting groups. The positive results of optimal intergroup contact depend on the progress in enhancing common feelings
and the existence of an understanding between people (such as sympathy and empathy). Such encounters, however, can produce anxiety, which might impede further contact; therefore, decreasing anxiety before the process can also help improve the conditions in achieving those of optimal contact (Landis, Brislin & Hulgus, 1985). According to Pettigrew (2008), (low or high) anxiety is a predictable consequence of this sort of encounter between the members of two competing groups that might lead to an increase or decrease in prejudice. A tendency toward reduced prejudice is evidenced by Pettigrew & Tropp (2006), who found that only 5% of intergroup contact gives rise to an increase in prejudice in an analysis of more than 700 samples from various parts of the world. However, researchers such as Brewer and Campbell (1976) argue that contact alone may not reduce conflict and, on the contrary, can in fact precipitate violence. Therefore, Amir (1969), for instance, put forward the idea that contact is more likely to reduce conflict if it is between equals. Likewise, Sherif et al. (1961) argued that not just contact, but working towards a common goal can further heighten positive intergroup relations.

Apart from the intergroup contact hypothesis, and the attention given to individuals within this theory; some macro-theories, which are primordial in essence, focus on group effects. In this stream of research (such as Social Identity Theory – SIT; Social Categorisation Theory – SCT), the fundamental premise of these macro-theories have their basis in an in-group/out-group distinction. Therefore, social categorisation occupies a central position in understanding the nature of intergroup relations (Riek et al., 2008). In SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), identity is determined by an individual’s group membership. That said, proponents of SIT argue that identity salience via group membership is an essential indicator of intergroup relations (ibid), and which is more prominent with in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (see Gaertner & Insko, 2000). Threats to identity, when based on ethnicity, lead to ethnocentrism, or the evaluating of others according to the standards of one's own group characteristics (see Landis & Albert, 2012; Kinvall 2004). According to SCT, on the other hand, individuals divide human and social life into categories in which the differences within the group are minimised and those with the out-group are emphasised (ibid). The result is reduced permeability between such groups, which consequently affects the emotional condition and cognition of group members; by contrast, it is assumed that increasing the permeability of group boundaries results in reduced prejudice and conflict (ibid). In other words, the aim is development of empathy between groups (see Allport, 1958). Therefore, different approaches and theories are a modern interpretation
of Allport’s hypothesis (Landis & Albert, 2012); such theories can be listed as:

- Cross-cutting Approach (Brewer, 1996);
- Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000);
- Stephan’s and Pedersen’s use of empathy (Pedersen & Pope, 2010; Stephan & Finlay, 1999);
- Culture Sensitizer (Albert, 1983; Cushner & Landis, 1996; Landis, Day, McGrew, Thomas & Miller, 1976; Triandis, Brislin & Hui, 1988);
- Seeds of Peace approach (Worchel, 2004);
- Trust-building approach (Kelman, 2005)

Scholars of developmental psychology showed that the sense of belonging to a group and identity formation as a fundamental human need starts in early childhood (Yee & Brown, 1992); this is why identity is at the centre of human development. In Erikson’s (1968) words, “in the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity” (130). From a psychological standpoint, youth, as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, can also be seen as one of the most important stages of human development. In this stage of life, awareness of belonging to an identity group and meaning-making are parts of the human development process in the face of a number of external challenges and pressures (ibid). This is why exploring young people’s mind-sets – especially in conflict and post-conflict situations – is significant to the extent and substance of youth functioning, which made is possible by elaboration on these meaning-making processes (Denov, 2010; Rudd & Evans, 1998).

A variety of motivations and beliefs exist in the establishment of group thinking, which produces a state of mind that constructs participation in collective action as a meaningful activity (Klandermans, 1997). This state of mind is typically cultivated by collective memory, and often stands at the centre of meaning-making processes and identity formation (see Ashmore et al., 2004). Thus, the ‘agency’ of an individual holds its value through partaking in action (Eyber & Ager, 2004). Meaning-making processes, as Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue, are often related to the identity salience that is closely associated with the nature of intergroup relations and interactions. Likewise, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) point to meaning-making processes as a determinant in out-group perceptions. For Reicher and Hopkins (2001), several narratives can exist in the composition of a collective memory. In conflict and post-conflict situations, the narratives of past conflict are a key factor for in-group identification,
and consequently intergroup relations are affected by experiences of conflict, which, in many particular ways, have a substantial impact on peacebuilding. The nature and emphasis of narratives, for instance, has been found to be likely to instigate conflict or to promote conciliation in different conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2000; Cairns & Roe, 2003). Hammack (2010), for instance, found intergroup contact and conflict narratives between Israeli and Palestinian youths as having the very opposite of the desired effect.

Participating in collective action, young people are usually attempting to represent the group with which they are identified through participation in peaceful or violent action (Wright & Tropp, 2002). As part of group identification, collective action can encompass opposition to established structures and actors (i.e., elites, various type of authority) and the problems they come to symbolise (Tarrow, 2011: 4). These justifications for collective action form part of the corpus of in-group solidarity, which can also inflict social sanctions on youth to force their participation in conflict (see Mamdani, 2001; Sanin, 2004). Strong communities, with the help of social sanctions, enable groups to monitor individual behaviour and succeed in dealing with the free-rider problem as they induce cooperation (participation in collective action) (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008). Strong communities in this context are the groups defined by “[i] a membership with shared values and beliefs; (ii) relations between members which are direct and many-sided and; (iii) practices within the community of generalized reciprocity” (Taylor, 1988; cited in ibid). Therefore, social networks and collective identity in strong communities are decisive factors in collective action. Mobilisation can be a function of such strong horizontal social networks, as indicated in Barrington Moore's (1966) Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship, with reference to peasant communities. Finally, James Scott (1976) pointed to a similar issue, that of cohesive villages and communal traditions, which played a major role in the South American revolutions.

As a final issue, it is important to note the role of social mobilisation on the basis of the resources gained by a group throughout its emergence and development (Deutsch, 1954). Distinct group characteristics play a major role in mobilisation as psychological pull factors. The development of historical collective memory from a psychological perspective, ‘chosen trauma’ is another example of the way to build narratives that refer to the specific (often harmful) events in a group's history (such as a genocide and rebellion) that are in use in group mobilisation (Volkan, 1993: 103).
2.3.4. The 'Blocked Transition' to Adulthood Perspective

A number of social factors in a person's life course, especially during the long passage from early childhood to adulthood, have the capacity to influence behavioural patterns of young people. The transition to adulthood concept has its relevance in both traditional and modern societies. Drawing on ritual transition theory, A. Van Gennep (1960) suggests that rites of passage to adulthood point to, and are a symbol, of both biological and social changes in the course of a person's life. Likewise, rites of passage involve the following line of changes:

- Separation of the individual from the order or previous social conditions;
- A marginal or transitional phase, which is highly sacred;
- A final stage, which incorporates the individual into the new social order or status (Jary & Jary, 2000: 523)

Based on the premise that youth is a socially and historically constructed concept, rites of passage, and consequently, the means of transition to adulthood, changes across cultures. However, it can be argued that each cultural context offers a specific ritual for this transition process. An anthropological study by Schlegel and Herbert (1991) in pre-industrial communities, which was conducted amongst the peoples and tribes of Africa, Asia, North and South America, for instance, found that the transition to adulthood indicates a systematic and symbolic rite of passage through which an individual gains a 'new' social position. In West Africa, secret societies play a major role in young people's transition to adulthood (Ellis, 1999). An example from Sierra Leone, for instance, involves young girls' induction into a secret society and female genital mutilation as a transition ritual to adulthood (and eligibility for marriage) (World Youth Report, 2005). Likewise, young boys inherit, marry or participate in tribal matters in Xhosa, South Africa, after a long transition to manhood, where circumcision represents one of the most crucial symbols of this process (Mandela, 1994; cited in WYR, 2003). In non-traditional societies, rituals, as part of a tradition, are different and symbolic in nature, such as the right to vote or being eligible for a driving licence (UNDP, 2005). In addition to variations in rites of passage to adulthood in many parts of the world, these processes are not clearly defined in complex societies (WYR, 2003). The age group boundaries of youth are often blurred. Although individuals are legally entitled to the rights and responsibilities of adults in most countries, when they are
married, 12- or 13-year-old girls are considered adults, and who often refrain from youthful or adolescent practices and assume the majority of adult responsibilities (UNDP, 2005). Equally, age group boundaries are less distinct in contemporary Western culture, which is “believed to be related to the homogenizing – but simultaneously individualizing – effects of universal education and popular-culture consumerism” (WYR, 2003: 5). More importantly, the rituals are now less important and significant as “[a]n individual’s status and position do not change with the partial rituals of the consumer culture in a way that classical ritual theory would define as signalling a clear transition” (ibid: 5).

The transition to adulthood in contemporary and complex societies, therefore, can be seen as a process “from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to independence, and from being recipients of society’s services to becoming contributors to national economic, political, and cultural life” (see UNDP Jordan Human Development Report, 2000). In the same manner, Richard Curtain (2004) argues that this transition corresponds to a young person’s capacity to contribute to the family economy. As such, youth is a period in which an individual follows a structured transition to adulthood by negotiating “a complex interplay of personal, institutional and macroeconomic changes” (WYR, 2003: 6). These factors, which prevent the normal functioning of an individual in society, are considered to be serious impediments to human development and to the process of transition to adulthood (Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 18). This fact is acknowledged as a global concern, that of a ‘youth crisis’ in the majority of developing countries (UNDP, 2006). As one of the crucial explanations for youth involvement in violence, the ‘blocked transition’ to adulthood can, in certain ways, incorporate the premises of the preceding theories and view the lengthy transition to adulthood as a problematic process that can lead to the frustration and disillusionment of youth and, in some instances, turns young people towards participation in violence (Hilker & Fraser, 2009). Although there are some contextual differences, major obstacles to achieving the goal of a successful transition to adulthood follow certain clear patterns (see Curtain, 2001; Barker & Ricardo 2005; Hilker & Fraser, 2009). According to Curtain (2001), such a process involves the following changes in a person’s life:

- Leaving the parental home and setting up new living arrangements
- Finishing full-time education
- Forming close stable personal relationships, often resulting in marriage and children
- Settling into a more or less stable source of livelihood (Curtain, 2001; cited in Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 18)
In short, young people's failure to satisfy or meet socially expected adult roles impede or extend a youth's transition to adulthood. This fact affects young men more often than women as social roles such as employment, marriage or property ownership are traditionally associated with men. When young men are not able to fulfil such male roles, the strength and aggressiveness of masculinity can become a source of violence (see Barker, 2005; UNDP, 2006). The relationship between youth and violence in the manner a 'blocked transition to adulthood' perspective explicates is substantiated through reports and academic research on youth in many parts of the world, for example the Middle East (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008), Rwanda (Sommers, 2012), South America (Dowdney, 2005), Sub-Saharan Africa (Barker & Ricardo, 2005) and West Africa (Richards, 1996);

2.3.5. Youth Mobilisation by Proximate Factors and Recruitment into Armed Conflict

As explained in the previous sections, a number of perspectives are present in the academic research on youth and conflict. However, determinants of youth engagement in violence are often related to one another, and in certain circumstances overlap. Therefore, reasons for youth participation in violence can be motivated by a number of individual (proximate) level factors (see Hilker & Fraser, 2009; Özerdem & Podder, 2015). In Hilker & Fraser’s (2009) study, individual (proximate) factors of youth violence can be listed as follows:

- Recruitment, coercion and indoctrination;
- Identity politics and ideology;
- Leadership and organisational dynamics;
- Trigger events

Participation in violence can be a consequence of certain forced measures, including physical abduction, processes of indoctrination and socialisation into violence (Hilker & Fraser, 2009). Forced methods in the recruitment of militants is frequently employed as a tactic by armed groups (Arjona & Kalyvas, 2006). Armed groups often use methods such as coercive strategies, abduction and retention to keep young people within their organisational structures. Forced methods are strategies in the recruitment of young people that are generally seen in instances of low manpower, or because of an inability to recruit to, or reluctance of potential recruits to join, armed groups (Gates, 2011: 36-37). Likewise, socialisation into violence within armed groups leads to a ‘group feeling’ (Benard et
al., 2005), which is considered as one of the proximate factors for youth participation in violence. Socialisation in violence draws young people into violent groups at an early age, where they can quickly become accustomed to violence (Barker & Ricardo 2005; Hilker & Fraser 2009). Similarly, indoctrination is frequently used by armed groups as a method to engage potential recruits in violence. As Peters et al. (2003) argue, young people who want to join armed groups tend to feel like adults and free human beings. Therefore, the process of indoctrination can be an ‘adolescence’ experience for non-adults, as recruiters often treat young persons in just this manner. This is why indoctrination can be an influential approach in terms of affecting the perceptions of young people, who as a fact of their youth are usually open to new ideas and political dispositions. With indoctrination, armed groups can impose a set of values on potential recruits, in a way providing a medium of exploration and interpretation of their near surroundings and socio-political environment. Therefore, young people are usually ready to ignore established structures, and can be relatively easily motivated to change these structures by violent means.

However, volunteerism is also a means by which to acquire new members (Brett & Specht 2004; Denov 2011; Utas, 2005). In this stream of research, young people's ‘agency’ to decide whether to participate in conflict is at the core of the argument. The age-related capacities of very young individuals to be able to decide rationally to participate in conflict, however, may not be an indicator of a genuine decision-making process (Wessels, 2002). Apart from the forced or voluntary participation divide, it is also equally significant to note different phases of recruitment and mobilisation (Özerdem & Podder, 2015: 15-16). In order to distinguish these two terms, the former involves a structured enlistment process organised in such a manner as to coerce or induce new members. Potential militants are approached via trusted networks, and exposed to an assessment of commitment before being enlisted, forced or offered material/non-material benefits to participate in fighting (ibid: 15). Mobilisation, though, can be both at the individual and group levels; involvement in violence is triggered by socio-economic deprivation, often emerging in the form of violent dissent, protest and revolution (Özerdem & Podder, 2015: 16; Gurr, 1970).

Ideology is an effective instrument of mobilisation, and is often used as a core explanatory framework by which to incite collective action (DFID 2008; Hilker & Fraser, 2009). As such, young people
make sense of conflict via perceived beliefs about fighting as influenced by certain ideological explanations. This process can provide an ideational substance for individuals to participate in conflict and becomes a legitimising factor for participation. Therefore, leaders of armed groups often use "religious, ethnic or class-based distinctions" to draw young people into conflict (ibid). As Stewart (2008) argues, these distinctions can "provide useful explanatory frameworks for grievances and dominant discourses of mobilisation, particularly when inequality and discrimination are institutionalised on religious or ethnic lines" (SFTF, 2000; cited in Hilker & Fraser 2009: 31). Ideological pretexts legitimising violence result in dilemma, however, as some armed groups seek potential recruits from both well-educated and poorly educated segments of society (Weinstein, 2007). In this sense, ideology often provides a powerful discourse for educated cohorts (Hilker & Fraser, 2009). In any case, ideology and identity politics provide armed groups with a particularly generous fertile ground in which they can sow grievances of young people and grow violence from such seed.

Apart from these major factors, the "role of charismatic leaders and elites who often manipulate young people's grievances", as well as “trigger events” such as “elections, political events, abuses by security forces, sudden economic crisis, policy changes and personal loss and trauma” are also considered as proximate/contextual factors in the peace and conflict research (Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 32).

2.4. Youth in Peacebuilding

Although the availability of academic research into youth and peacebuilding is relatively limited (see Del Felice & Wisler, 2007), the body of facts and information that is available suggests that young people can play important roles in peace processes and in the aftermath of armed conflict (see McEvoy-Levy, 2001; 2006). To this end, in the immediate post-conflict period, young people's role in the generation and perpetuation of violence, especially during and after the peace processes, is crucial, and indeed is sometimes the defining factor in the survival and maintenance of peace (see McEvoy-Levy, 2001; 2006). Young people's integration into society and rehabilitation in such contexts is an important task for any peacebuilding strategy. As discussed in the Introduction chapter, however, youth roles in post-conflict situations can vary from the negative to positive ends of the youth functioning spectrum, from involvement in political and anti-social violence, to participation
in various types of peacebuilding efforts. In consideration of the important roles that youth can play in peacebuilding, the following sections will introduce the significance of concepts such as peace, peacebuilding and conflict transformation with reference to youth as an important segment of a population and as a potentially vital actor during peacebuilding.

2.4.1. What Is Peace?

Peace is considered a morally good and desirable virtue of humankind. “Peace at any price” said Alphonse Marie Louis de Lamartine (1790-1869), a French poet and statesman, in *Meditations Poétiques*, a feeling shared by many people, namely that peace is a better option than war at any perceived cost. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) in *Letters to Atticus*, similarly stated that “I prefer the most unjust peace to justest war that was ever waged”, and Martin Luther (1483-1546) praised the concept by stating “peace is more important than all justice” (for other inspiring quotes see Rummel, 1981). Despite numerous expressions of approval or admiration of peace over millennia, the intricate multiplicity of the meanings of peace over time and place have led to extended debate on what peace actually means. Peace is a key concept in social sciences; by definition, it can be seen as an ‘intangible’ term, and “like ‘happiness’, ‘harmony’, ‘love’, ‘justice’ and ‘freedom’, we often recognize it by its absence” (Barash & Webel, 2002; Webel, 2007). The dictionary meaning of peace in Merriam-Webster’s (2012) is defined as:

- A state of tranquillity or quiet: such as (a) freedom from civil disturbance; (b) a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom
- Freedom from disquieting or oppressive thought or emotions
- Harmony in personal relations
- A state or period of mutual concord between governments; (b) a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity

Moreover, according to Johan Galtung (1969; 1976), the Norwegian peace research pioneer, peace can be defined both negatively and positively. ‘Negative’ peace, refers to a situation characterised only by the absence of (direct) violence. Merriam-Webster's definition of peace as “freedom from civil disturbance” and “a state or period of mutual concord between governments” in this sense denotes an end to violent hostilities within a society or between nations. Galtung's definition of 'positive' peace, however, suggests that the inception or establishment of a state of peace depends not
only on the 'absence of violence' (e.g. negative peace), but also the elimination of other (indirect) forms of (e.g., structural and cultural) violence. As exemplified in the Merriam-Webster’s definition of peace, 'positive' peace has a multitude of dimensions. That is, 'positive' peace denotes peace via social justice, and is defined as “a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom”, while the personal dimension of 'positive' peace requires a person’s ‘inner peace’, “freedom from disquieting or oppressive thought or emotions”. In addition to inner peace, positive peace has a relational aspect, which is defined by Merriam-Webster’s as “harmony in personal relations” (for a further discussion of the multiplicity of meanings of peace, see Webel, 2007: 6-7).

Historical considerations of peace lead us to the essence (ontology) of the concept (ibid). In this regard, “perhaps peace is both an historical ideal and a term whose meaning is in flux” (ibid: 7). The Pax Romana, for instance, was an era of imperial hegemony in which the absence of violence was the normative basis for social order, enforced through Roman military might from the centre to the periphery of the Roman Empire (Galtung, 1981). Similarly, peace denotes the absence of violence in the Hobbesian philosophy as peace emerged from, and was surrounded by, unending wars, while social order (internal peace) is assured by the Leviathan (see Lemetti, 2012). Therefore, without the role of war or violence, peace had only just begun to appear as an aspiration (positive peace) in Immanuel Kant’s idea of ‘eternal peace’ and was central to the premises of other Enlightenment thinkers. In the same vein, Michael Howard in The Invention of Peace (2000), stated that:

*The peace invented by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, an international order in which war plays no part, had been a common enough aspiration for visionaries throughout history, but it has been regarded by political leaders as a practicable or indeed desirable goal only during the past two hundred years.* (2).

In Toward Perpetual Peace (1795), Kant’s theoretical philosophy, the conceptual structure of positive peace, rests on the existence of an absolute moral law. Kant argues that, with a critique of reason, all philosophical controversies can be resolved and, consequently, reason moves from a state of nature to a state of peace (see Holzhey & Mudroch, 2005). Furthermore, Kant’s discussion of peace, apart from political instruments to maintain order, was aimed at a “federative union of free countries” and “a republican constitution within each of the countries” as preconditions to perpetual peace (ibid: 204).
In spite of reflections on positive peace from the Enlightenment era onwards, peace is often defined negatively. The meaning of the term in the UN system (after 1946), for instance, had the objective to prevent wars among nations as a fundamental principle for international order after witnessing the painful ravages of the two world wars. The UNSC, to this end, is obliged to determine threats to, and breaches of, the peace, and acts of aggression (see Articles 24 and 29 of the UN Charter). The Cold War (1946-1989), likewise, was perceived as a 'long peace' in the post-WWII era (Gaddis, 1997). The central mechanism of peace during the Cold War was based on nuclear deterrence and the principle of mutually assured destruction, a doctrine of national security and mass destruction of two or more sides in the instance of a nuclear war, has become the formula for international order and a sanction by which to enforce normative behaviour towards global peace and security for many decades (ibid). After the end of the Cold War, the idea of positive peace gained momentum with the conception of, and the need for, a 'new world order' (i.e., the promotion of democracy and a free market economy), following President George Bush's speech in the wake of the Gulf War in 1991, was now a substitute for the conflict between the two major powers (see Rasmussen, 2001). There was widespread interest and support for an overarching peace theory in conjunction with systemic changes in global politics in subsequent years. President Bill Clinton, for instance, made use of the 'democratic peace theory' as a solution to emerging threats to global peace and security in his State of the Union speech in 1994 (Clinton, 1994). A UN Report written by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace (1992), likewise, aimed to promote a culture of peace in the world. Lastly, the 'war on terror' and US intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, enunciated by George W. Bush in the aftermath of the 11th September 2001 attacks in New York and Washington D.C., was justified in terms of their threat to peace and freedom, while offering 'liberty' as a force and remedy for change in the wider context of global politics (see Appiah, 2004).

Peace derives its meaning within a theory or framework (Rummel, 1981). The considerations of peace in Western philosophical thought and in the political realm vacillated between positive and negative interpretations of peace. From the Western perspective, peace has thus been a product of the interplay between the realist (Hobbesian) and idealist (Kantian) worldviews. As one school of thought (i.e., the proponents of perpetual peace such as Dante Alighieri, Erasmus, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant) held the premise that positive peace is the ultimate end, and the
hope for an 'idealist' international order lasted until realpolitik outweighed moral or ideological considerations in global politics. A litmus test for the long search for positive peace was the failure of the League of Nations, which was founded on the 'idealism' of US President Woodrow Wilson who played a leading role in the peace negotiations after WWI and the formation of the League system. The eruption of the Second World War, and the period immediately subsequent, was dominated by various degrees of political realism, namely the oldest approach to global politics. Therefore, since the international conference after WWII, which was held in Yalta in 1945, the concept of negative peace as the ultimate solution to the recurrence of a major war has prevailed for decades.

The need for positive peace was only remembered in the West in the era of US hegemony after the 'new' global turn was established in the Paris Conference in 1990, and which resulted in the end of the Cold War (1949-1989) and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (see Rasmussen, 2001). Instead of a competitive global system and a negative peace situation reinforced by power politics, the military and ideological supremacy of the US in the post-Cold War era prescribed the idea of 'democracy as peace' as the leading paradigm of, and a viable solution to, interstate wars (i.e., democratic peace theory, see Doyle, 1983) and, subsequently, in the context of intra-state conflicts as they started to appear frequently as one of the consequences and aftershocks of superpower rivalry. The precondition for a peaceful global order and society in which different cultural groups can interact is thus achieved through the promotion of liberal democracy, which is considered equivalent to freedom and prosperity. This has led to the emergence of an overarching doctrine of building liberal democratic institutions and a free-market economy. However, it is still a lively debate as to whether liberal peace and related post-conflict activities (often supported and financed by the global north) can achieve peace with justice and non-violence in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (see for instance, Mac Ginty, 2011; Paris 1997; 2010; Richmond, 2009; 2011).

2.4.2. Defining Peacebuilding and its Conceptual Underpinnings

Peacebuilding as a concept, despite several references to the term in early academic studies (e.g., Fisher, 1993; Galtung, 1976; Harbottle, 1980) gained prominence in the 1990s in the document, An Agenda for Peace (1992), prepared by the former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali at the request of the SC to reinforce the UN's commitment to peace through instruments such as preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking. Thereafter, the concept of peacebuilding became a crucial
subject in the peace and conflict research, and a central issue in policymaking circles. Originally, the concept was developed as 'post-conflict peacebuilding', and is defined in Paragraph 21 of the Agenda as: “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). In the context of UN's peace strategy, peacebuilding thus constitutes the last stage of conflict resolution following preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. The meaning of peacebuilding in this sense is interpreted rigidly. Peacebuilding is used as a concept to address the implications of war in the short-term. The Agenda, for instance, highlights a number of actions that can be implemented as measures to prevent the relapse into conflict and to facilitate sustainable peace in the aftermath of violence (intra-state) conflicts. Specifically, these actions are: “disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel”. The massive influx of refugees into Cambodia or the demobilisation of combatants in El Salvador are examples of the type of UN interventions used to deal with the immediate effects of war. Therefore, the purpose of peacebuilding is to begin to deal with the pressing security needs, emergency issues and reconstruction of infrastructure that has been damaged or destroyed in the aftermath of violent conflict. A rigid definition of peacebuilding is thus generally used to mean activities that are restricted in extent and scope, and which exist in a short period of time in post-conflict situations and include a small number of peacebuilding professionals.

However, a fundamental problem has still to be addressed. The ultimate objective in peacebuilding is to achieve 'sustainable peace'. The Agenda identifies peacebuilding as: “a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as economic transformation” (ibid). Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, known as the ‘Brahimi’ report after the commission chair Lakhdar Brahimi, reinforces the UN’s peacebuilding vision in the Agenda further by stating that: “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” (UN, 2000). That is, peace can be achieved when peacebuilders prepare the framework for a "stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes does not escalate into violence and war" (Haugerudbraaten, web). Therefore, the alternative is a broader meaning of the concept. Peacebuilding in this
sense denotes long-term processes and activities. According to John Paul Lederach (1997), for instance, peacebuilding “is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords”. Likewise, in Galtung’s (1976) words, peacebuilding is a long process of building self-supporting structures that “remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur” (298). Therefore, peacebuilding activities “should be built into the structure and be present there as a reservoir for the system itself to draw upon, just as a healthy body has the ability to generate its own antibodies and does not need ad hoc administration of medicine” (ibid). As implied by these definitions, peacebuilding may take place before, during or after conflict and at a multitude of stages in society. The nature of these activities, which, to some extent, depend on the stage the conflict is actually at, can be classified as process-oriented peacebuilding activities such as negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation, or otherwise as activities at the structural level, including institutionalisation and social processes. In the Agenda, for instance, the following activities have been categorised as being at the structural level: “monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Free democratic elections in Cambodia, and judicial and security sector reforms in El Salvador, are typical examples of these types of structural peacebuilding activities.

Although peacebuilding is a relatively ‘new’ area of inquiry within peace and conflict research, the literature on peacebuilding is extensive (Pugh, 2013). To differentiate strategies used in peacebuilding theory and practice since the 1990s, the ways of thinking about peacebuilding are another important aspect and form the basis of a debate that can be divided into two categories: problem-solving and critical paradigms (ibid). It is a fact that practitioners and policymakers regard the effectiveness of peacebuilding practice to be crucial and are consequently interested in the problem-solving approach; however, academics are more concerned with the effectiveness of the system itself, which often leads to a critique of the existing foundational paradigms of peacebuilding (ibid). Historically, one can trace the contours of established orthodoxy in peacebuilding within liberal thinking and its policy implications within post-Cold War global politics. As discussed, activities at the structural level often impose a liberal peacebuilding agenda on the activities of the UN or other leading
Despite the initial optimism that emerged during the 1990s, the international community struggles to manage the growing number of contemporary conflicts and violent situations (Ramsbotham et al., 2012). Therefore, caution is required in any attempt to define what peace actually stands for in its various contexts. A contemporary debate in this regard is the role and imposition of liberal thinking in peacebuilding theory and practice. Liberal peace is defined as “the dominant form of peacemaking and peacebuilding favoured by leading states, international organisations and international financial institutions” (Mac Ginty, 2010: 391). A foundational critique of peacebuilding in this sense argues that liberal peace imposes a 'flat-packed peace' in conflict-affected societies, which represents only the values, norms and interests of the global north (ibid: 392-395). As such, liberal peace invokes a political and economic liberalisation agenda for conflict-affected societies as part of an overarching solution to prevent any relapse into conflict (Paris, 2012). Specifically, liberal peace implies democratisation, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and neoliberal economic policies as preconditions for peace and development (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2009). In the context of liberal peace as an agenda for leading states, INGOs or international organisations’ levels peacebuilding involves efforts to rebuild state institutions and structures in the aftermath of conflict (Call & Wyeth, 2008). Thus, peacebuilding, in many respects, refers to statebuilding; indeed, institutionalisation often comes before liberalisation in many statebuilding efforts (Paris, 2004). For these reasons, peacebuilding actors emphasize ‘good governance’ (e.g., transparent administrative and financial practices) as a major pillar of the peacebuilding agenda (Mac Ginty, 2013). However, this agenda can be “inflexible and culturally inappropriate” in certain circumstances, which can also underestimate “the ability of local actors – national elites and communities – to slow, subvert, exploit and avoid international interventions” (ibid: 5-6).

To summarise, it can be argued that peacebuilding activities are often ineffective in generating durable peace and stability in post-conflict situations (see Barnett, 2006). Therefore, for all merits of establishing resilient institutions in post-conflict situations, conflict in many ways is about the human experience and social processes in which the key actors are ordinary people. This fact points to the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' divide in peacebuilding approaches. Lederach (1997), for instance, argues “the greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people...
and their culture” (94). Likewise, Rupesinghe (1995) and Fetherston (1998) reinforce this notion by stating that local actors are “the primary architects, owners and long-term stakeholders” of peace. In Mac Ginty’s (2013) words, “it is people who experience peace and conflict in their homes, workplaces, schools and everyday lives” (6). This is why it is crucial to pay appropriate attention to peace-building efforts at the micro-level, (i.e., bottom-up peacebuilding):

It is often individuals, families and communities who have to do the ‘heavy lifting’ of peacebuilding by learning to live with their neighbour from another religious group or learning to work alongside someone who shares very different political views...It often occurs at the micro-level of the village, street or neighbourhood. It rarely involves the symbolism of a peace treaty signing ceremony. Instead it is comprised of daily small steps: tolerating the co-worker from the other group, a judicious silence when a wrong word could start an argument, a shared economic endeavour (ibid: 6).

2.4.3. A Theory for Conflict Transformation

This section now turns to a further debate in the peace and conflict research: conflict resolution versus transformation. Originally, the latter term was conceived as a critique of conflict resolution, which is often criticised because of its implications in practice. Although it is a relatively new concept and still in the process of conceptual development, a progression from conflict resolution to transformation is clearly visible (Botes, 2003). However, this debate poses the crucial question “whether conflict transformation has truly brought new theoretical notions and application for practice to peace and conflicts studies, or whether it is in essence simply a reformulation of the term conflict resolution” (ibid: 1).

A first reference to transformation as a concept in peace and conflict research was in Burton’s (1990) work, in which he asserted “by the resolution of conflict, we mean the transformation of relationships in a particular case by the solution of the problems which led to the conflictual behavior in the first place” (2-3). Drawing on the works of Curle (1990), Kriesberg (1989) and Rupesinghe (1994), Lederach introduced a subtle investigation of the concept. At the beginning of his influential piece, The Little Book of Conflict Transformation, John Paul Lederach (2003) provides an account of his field experience in Central America as part of his quest for a new terminology to better articulate peacemaking endeavours. He surprisingly observes the hesitant and suspicious reactions of his Latin colleagues toward conflict resolution and management terminology; quick solutions to deep-rooted
conflicts were a major source of concern to them. Lederach (2003) frames these concerns as: “conflicts happen for a reason”; “is this resolution idea just another way to cover up the changes that are really needed?” Thus, Lederach (2003) suggests conflict transformation as a solution to similar concerns and a justification for constructive change in relations and communities which goes beyond a resolution to a specific problem.

According to Lederach (2003), conflict transformation can be defined through its key components. Therefore, it begins with the premise of “envision and respond”, which means “a positive orientation toward conflict” and “a willingness to engage in the conflict in an effort to produce constructive change or growth”. Second, conflict is an essential element of relationships, which involves the “ebb and flow” (calm-tension, predictable-unstable) of social conflict, and consequently change needs to be understood in terms of conflict recurrence at the level of immediate issues and the broader patterns of interaction. Third, social conflict as a “life giving opportunity” encourages the understanding human experience and relationships, and thus helps to understand both ourselves and others. In this sense, it is a ‘motor of change' that helps an individual or a community to establish social relations and structures that react quickly and positively to human needs. Fourth, constructive change derives its ‘energy' from the conflict itself, but moves the conflict from a destructive process to a “constructive change process”. Fifth, transformation has to deal with conflict by “reducing violence and increasing justice”. In this regard, violence can be reduced through addressing pressing issues of conflict and its fundamental patterns and causes. Likewise, increasing justice means people’s access to, and voice within, political decision-making processes. Sixth, constructive change requires capacity-building and social processes at the level of interpersonal, intergroup, and social-structural levels. This transformation process requires “direct interaction” (face-to-face) between peoples and groups, and (re)forming “social structures” (family, bureaucracy, or even global system). Finally, transformation prioritizes “human relationships” rather than an exclusive focus on the content and substance of the dispute. Although the conflicting issues over which people are prepared to fight are important, constructive change concentrates on the broader context, namely the web of relationships between peoples and groups. It is in this broader context that the conflict becomes “volatile or get[s] quickly resolved” (see Lederach, 2003)

In line with this perspective, conflict develops from, and produces change in, the personal, relational
and structural dimensions of the human experience; transformation aims for constructive change within these dimensions. Thus, for Lederach (2003), at first 'personal transformation' should aim to “minimize the effects of the conflict and maximize the potential for personal growth at physical, emotional and spiritual levels”. Following this, the objective in 'relational transformation' is to “minimize poorly functioning communication and maximize understanding”. Furthermore, the purpose of 'structural transformation' is to “understand and address root causes of violent conflict; promote non-violent mechanisms’ minimize violence; foster structures that meet basic human needs and maximize public participation”. Lastly, 'cultural transformation' aims to “identify and understand the cultural patterns that contribute to the violent expressions of conflict; identify cultural resources for constructively handling conflict”.

2.4.4. Youth and Peacebuilding

In conflict-affected societies in which relationships between different groups deteriorate and turn violent, young people can play a crucial role in peacebuilding when empowered by appropriate mechanisms and strategies that provide for their meaningful participation. Scholars, policymakers and practitioners agree on this distinct role that youth can play in peacebuilding efforts (Kemper, 2005; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Sommers, 2006). Therefore, peacebuilders should pay appropriate attention to the fact that social and cultural connectedness is restored between different competing groups and individuals, and political and economic infrastructures are restructured in such a way as to remove the underlying causes of the conflict and deal with the emergence of different forms of post-conflict violence. These are the vital, yet challenging and long-term, tasks of peacebuilding. More importantly, these initiatives should take into consideration the youth dimension. However, the role of youth in post-conflict situations is usually misconstrued, and indeed they are often regarded as the instigators of violence in the first place. Therefore, young people are viewed as 'spoilers' of peace processes. Nevertheless, the youth who become involved in political violence and criminal activities constitute only a small segment of the entire youth population, even in the most undesirable situations.

With this rationale in mind, conflict transformation refers to a long-term model of constructive change in relationships, interests and discourse between groups and individuals, and changes in the
conflict-prone foundations of society (Miall, 2011: 4). In long-term peacebuilding, the domestic resources of a country are crucial in transforming conflict, which is also connected to the role/status of different segments of a conflict-affected society (ibid). In other words, “conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting” (Lederach, 1995). This fact suggests a “transformative human construction and reconstruction of social organization and realities” (ibid: 17). Empowerment as a strategy is at the heart of conflict transformation (Schwerin, 1995: 6), which indicates a space for the proactive involvement of actors in any conflict transformation process (Lederach, 1995: 212).

Therefore, it seems urgent to pay reasonable attention to the role of youth in peacebuilding, as they constitute one of the most important and dynamic segments of any population. It is possible to move young people’s potential destructive energy towards more constructive purpose. Therefore, an assessment of structural determinants of involvement in violence, how these structures affect young people’s social positions and agency, the relationship and interaction between society/community and its youth, and personal development (e.g., identity, attitude and behavioural changes) of youth must be considered an integral part of any comprehensive peacebuilding strategy.

Implied in this discussion is the relationship between conflict transformation and youth, which leads to three assumptions. First, conflict transformation denotes a continuous process and a long-term platform for constructive change (Lederach, 2003). Moreover, transformation not only has the purpose of reducing the likelihood of relapse into conflict (negative peace), but also deals with the fundamental causes of conflict embedded in the existing structures of society (positive peace) (Lederach, 1998; McEvoy-Levy, 2001: 5). Because youth involvement in political, anti-social and criminal violence is one of the intractable questions of peacebuilding, it can be argued that there is a necessity to incorporate a youth dimension into any long-term strategy in order to impede relapse into conflict in post-conflict situations. Young people often become the instigators of “new forms of violence and re-cast ‘para-political’ violence in developing new myths and conflict narratives”, and “peace building work, boundary-crossing, and social networking” in post-conflict situations (McEvoy-Levy 2007: 2). From this perspective, it is imperative to problematise young people’s presence during the implementation of peace processes and in post-conflict situations.
Second, conflict transformation urges peacebuilders to pay attention to the restoration of healthy relations and the establishment of "new social relations, institutions, and visions" (Vayrynen, 1999: 151). What there is to transform, and the path of constructive change, is heavily disputed. For instance, Augsburger (1992) contends that any transformation should follow changes in attitudes and then in behaviour as a result of changes in the perceptions of different groups and individuals. Vayrynen and Lederach suggest a systematic classification of transformation that takes place in conflict-affected societies. For instance, Vayrynen (1991) suggests four categories of transformation:

- **Actor transformation** (internal changes of the conflict actors)
- **Issue transformation** (changes in the nature of the conflict)
- **Rule transformation** (changes in the relationships among conflict actors)
- **Structural transformation** (systemic or structural changes)

Similarly, Lederach (2000) notes that constructive change may occur at the:

- **Personal level** (changes in emotions and perceptions)
- **Relational level** (interactions and communication among conflict actors)
- **Structural level** (changes in social structures and decision-making mechanisms)
- **Cultural level** (changes in cultural norms with respect to conflict and peace)

Such categorisations are especially relevant when it comes to youth as they are “key connectors” in society: “they move between numerous different public and private spaces – such as homes, armed groups, peace organizations, the streets, schools, and refugee camps” (McEvoy, 2007: 4) Therefore, it is important to note the relevance of each aspect of conflict transformation with reference to the youth dimension.

In a same vein, the question of what to transform in conflict-affected societies leads us to a third assumption: how should the transformation occur? Lederach’s (1998) typology of actors at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels provides, at least to some extent, an answer to this question. Lederach’s categorisation unfolds into two separate, but also complementary ways. First, young people are usually considered to represent future leaders, community developers who often adapt to a
leadership role, especially within the attitudinal and behavioural change context, and this fact necessitates a close investigation at the micro-level. In the meantime, youth, and society/community and institution/structure relationships require detailed inquiries at the meso- and macro-levels, respectively. The factors that lead to youth participation in violence are complex and overlapped, so any associated analysis needs to combine the different elements within one approach. To this end, Lederach (1998: 5) suggests, at first, a bottom-up approach, in contrast to a top-down and externally driven one.

Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated on the academic study of youth in conflict and peacebuilding. The first part of the chapter defined youth from different perspectives. It articulated the relationship between youth and society, and how this evolved at different historical points. This part of the literature review relies heavily on considerations of the place and position of youth in the West. The experience and role of youth in this context is informative and useful, especially with regards to the depiction of youth in similar socio-economic situations and young people’s interactions within society in other parts of the world. Another important issue is the definition and rendering of youth in policymaking and academic research. An age-based definition is often used for statistical purposes within the frameworks of governmental bodies and international organisations. In academic research, however, youth is described as a socially constructed concept which prioritises the youth ‘agency’ instead of defining youth as a period of one’s life and restricting it to a specific age range. In peace and conflict research, this divide is especially meaningful as youth roles are varied in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Second, this chapter discussed the place of youth in conflict and peacebuilding. The theories of involvement in violence present an understanding of why youth participate in conflict. In general, ‘youth bulge’ theorists conceive youth as a demographic risk to peace and security. An approach based on ‘grievances’-related sub-factors provides an explanation for youth violence through concepts such as ‘relative deprivation’ and ‘inequality’ as the main sources of motivation for violence. ‘Greed’-based factors explain youth involvement in violence from an economic perspective. Young
people may decide to join violent groups when a person is rendered better off by participation, having evaluated its pros and cons (material or non-material incentives). Also, youth participation may refer to a social and psychological developmental process, affected primarily by the identity formation processes within a group. That is, young people interpret the external world and out-group relations from a perspective postulated by the group’s collective memory. Lastly, a holistic framework, the 'blocked transition to adulthood' as an explanation for young people's participation in conflict, was examined in the third section of this chapter.

Drawing on the particularities of youth conflict experiences, young people may play significant peacebuilding roles when meaningfully empowered. This concept has led to considerable debate in both peacebuilding theory and practice. Starting with the definition of peacebuilding, the main objective of this chapter was to introduce the concept of the interplay between problem-solving and the foundational critique offered to peacebuilding approaches. Peacebuilding as a field of study is initially comprised of post-conflict recovery and reconciliation goals, which are often dictated by leading actors in the international arena, and involve a top-down imposition of some peacebuilding agenda that is composed of a set of norms, values and interests, and which is often phrased as being a 'liberal peace'. This chapter, therefore, compared and contrasted the utility of liberal peace and its critique. A number of emancipatory, hybrid or local strategies appeared in the peace and conflict research as 'bottom-up' approaches to peacebuilding practice. This concept encompasses a broader definition of peacebuilding, which, to some extent, directs conflict transformation at different levels of society. Conflict transformation, to this end, offers an explanatory framework for peace projects concomitant to anticipated changes at the structural, relational and individual levels.

Overall, an important aspect of the vital roles played by young people during the peace processes and in post-conflict situations is, to some extent, connected with the theory-policy divide. Academic study of armed conflict informs peacebuilding practice, which is evident and exemplified in the US President Bill Clinton’s reference to 'Democratic Peace Theory' and in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s use of Paul Collier’s 'conflict-trap' concept in his UN Peacebuilding Commission’s inauguration speech (Caplan, 2017). For peace to persist, it is imperative to study war and peace together in order to understand the 'true' nature of peace (Caplan, 2017). The theory and practice of peacebuilding in this sense provides a number of tools by which one may manipulate the factors that are considered
to be fundamental causes of conflict.

With these facts in mind, subsequent chapters will draw on the considerations discussed here. An analysis of past and current political initiatives to end the Kurdish crisis in Turkey represents a particular means by which to understand how policymakers have conceived the current divide in peace-building paradigms over past decades.
III

THE KURDISH ISSUE AND YOUTH MOBILISATION IN TURKEY:
ACTORS, DYNAMICS AND ISSUES

The theme of this chapter is the emergence of the Kurdish issue from the end of an accord between Kurdish notables and the Ottomans in the late-19th century following the introduction of the Ottoman reforms and centralisation policy, and from rebellions between 1923 and 1938 that spanned almost the entire Early Republican Period, to the PKK-led violence since 1984 and recent political initiatives (2009-2015) to settle the Kurdish issue in the post-1999 period. Therefore, the objective in this chapter is to present the reader a detailed overview of the actors, dynamics and issues related to the emergence and evolution of the Kurdish issue. To this end, events are described in chronological sequence and divided into specific periods.

After an introductory review of the sources and nature of the Kurdish society in Turkey, this chapter will be presented in five distinct parts. I will first emphasise the significance of the Ottoman period, and the relative importance of external and internal factors that emerged concomitant with the decline of the Ottoman Empire, and affected the inception of Kurdish self-awareness from the 16th to the 20th centuries. In the second section, the discussion will turn to the role of insurgencies (1923-1938) in the early Republican period, with reference to the evolution of Kurdish nationalism and the emergence of insurgent groups as a national security issue. The third section will examine the role of the post-1961 constitution period in the formation of a secular/leftist Kurdish movement. The fourth section will focus on the socio-political implications of the 1980 military coup d’état, and the emergence of the PKK and the subsequent escalation of violence. The last section provides an overview of more recent political attempts to end the Kurdish issue.
3.1. Kurds in the Middle East

Kurds are one of the largest ethnic groups without a nation state, with the exception of the short-lived Mahabad Republic, which was founded in Iran in 1945 (McDonald, 1993). The majority of the Kurdish population is widely dispersed throughout Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey in the Middle East, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, and Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden in Europe. Kurds constitute approximately 70-80% of the population in the predominantly Kurdish-inhabited areas of Turkey’s southeast (Mutlu, 1996; BİLGESAM, 2012). Also, a sizeable Kurdish population lives in the big cities of western Turkey (such as Adana, Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir and Mersin). A true estimate of the Kurdish population in Turkey is not possible due to the absence of relevant information in the census data; the only exception to this is the 1965 census, according to which the Kurdish-speaking population in Turkey constituted 7% (2.2 million) of the total population (31.3 million). More recently, it was estimated that the Kurds represent 15.7% of Turkey’s total population (Ağırdır, 2008: 4).

Kurds are not a homogenous ethnic group and “the sources of these divisions are socio-historical, and they prevent the emergence of a full-fledged Kurdish identity” (Yavuz, 2001: 3). Linguistically, Turkey’s Kurds use the Kurmanji and Zaza dialects. Van Bruinessen points to linguistic differences and the role of language in shaping the Kurdish identity:

"Kurmanji and Zaza are both Iranian languages, grammatically quite different from Turkish, although their vocabularies contain many loan-words from Arabic and Turkish. Few, if any, Kurmanji speakers understand Zaza, but most Zaza speakers know at least some Kurmanji. Virtually all Zaza speakers consider themselves, and are considered by the Kurmanji speakers, as Kurds. They do however constitute a distinct subgroup (or rather some distinct sub-groups) that still tends to endogamy and differs from the Kurmanji speakers in several other cultural features (van Bruinessen, 2000)."

The Kurdish population in Turkey’s southeast is predominantly Muslim, who are the followers of Sunni and Alevi (a local branch of the Shi’a in Anatolia) sects. Sunni Muslims are divided into two groups according to mezhep (schools of religious jurisprudence) as Hanafi and Shafi’i, whilst Alevi Kurds represent approximately 10% of the Kurdish population (see Andrews, 1992). A small number of Kurds follow the Yezidi faith, a living variant of ancient Zoroastrianism. Regarding to the role of
religion in the construction of the Kurdish identity, van Bruinessen argues that:

Most Kurds, it is true, are Sunni Muslims following the Shafi’i mezhep. This neatly distinguishes them from the Shi’i Azeris and Persians as well as from the Hanefi Turkish and Arab Sunnis (and, of course, from their Christian neighbours) ... Many Alawis, however, speak Kurmanji or Zaza dialects and consider themselves as Kurds ... Many Shafi’i Kurds, in fact, refuse to consider the Alevi and Yezidis as Kurds (van Bruinessen, 2000).

Apart from the role of linguistic and religious fragmentation, feudal social structures (tribes and religious orders) are essential constituent elements of Kurdish socio-political life. Aşiret (tribe) denotes a form of social organisation on the basis of “fluid, mutable, territorially oriented and at least quasi-kinship groups” (Eller, 1999: 149). Belonging to an aşiret is a social marker in Turkey’s southeast, despite its decreasing prominence in the urban centres. Tribalism generates an unjust social stratification (caste), founded on oppressive and exploitative relations of production (Uluç, 2007). For instance, the head of the tribe or landlord (agha or ağ) seeks loyalty from, and inflicts a monopoly of power over, their subjects in exchange for the benefits of being a member of the tribe (ibid). Within the tribal social organisation, loyalty is the cement that keeps a tribe united (ibid). Furthermore, as van Bruinessen argues:

A person descending from a well-known Kurdish family or tribe is always considered a Kurd, whatever he claims himself to be. This criterion, however, does not define an ethnic boundary: many persons who consider themselves, and are generally considered, as Kurds do not belong to a tribe or great family (van Bruinessen, 2000).

Similarly, Nakşibendi (Nakshbandi) or Kadiri groups of tariqa or tariqat— which literally means 'path', and refers to religious orders of spiritual learning according to Sufism— are an important factor in the emergence of a specific type of social group and relations influenced by the teachings and orders of religious lords (sheikh or şeyh) (see van Bruinessen, 1992). The function of this type of relationship (loyalty) between traditional social structures and their members, as van Bruinessen (1992) notes, “[...] come more naturally to people than those towards wider and more abstract entities such as

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1 Sufism is an aspect of Islam based on a mystical system of beliefs and practices, which establishes a path (tariqa) to know God better.
nation or class and more easily fulfil the need to belong to an identifiable group” (317).

To summarise, first of all, over the years a specific social organisation developed among the Kurds that revolved around the growing prominence and authority of local Kurdish landlords (aghas) and religious leaders (sheikhs). The nature of the relationship between aghas, sheikhs and the states was a defining factor in the evolution of the Kurdish issue, not only in Turkey, but also in other neighbouring countries (e.g., Iraq, Iran and Syria). According to Martin van Bruinessen (1992), a prominent Dutch Kurdolog, in his seminal piece Agha, Shaikh and State, “primordial loyalties” are central to the construction and development of Kurdish society, which are influenced by external factors, and Kurdish nationalism developed in interaction with these primordial loyalties (11). In the sense that Hamza Alavi (1973) uses the term primordial loyalties, the term refers to sharing group characteristics that prevent group members from acting against the group’s interests, even when this contradicts certain objective interests. Therefore, van Bruinessen (1992) argues that tribes do not precede to state or they are not a stage in the evolution from Kurdish tribalism to Kurdish nationalism, but rather products of surrounding states of the Kurdish inhabited areas. This is why there had been specific Kurdish nationalisms depending on the distinctive characteristics of tribes or the places where Kurds lived as minorities (see Kasaba, 1980). This sort of social formation has led to considerable fragmentation in the wider Kurdish society and ultimately prevented unity; however, it also differentiated Kurds and heightened their ‘particularism’ from others (Yavuz, 2001: 3). Likewise, the role of traditional structures, especially the religious jargon used by sheiks in the rural areas of Turkey’s southeast, and in times of political mobilisation and crises, have had an undeniable effect on the development of Kurdish nationalist movements (see Olson, 1989). Despite its presence, the prominence of tribal social organisation weakened as a result of major changes in Turkey during the 1920s-1930s because of the Republican transformation of the state and society, and as a result of the modernisation and urbanisation of Turkey’s southeast from the 1960s-1970s onwards. However, divides such as Sunni/Alevi or Kurmandji/Zaza still persist, and have had important political implications in the evolution of Kurdish nationalism.

Second, the geography in which Kurds had lived for many centuries in the Middle East is an important factor in the construction and development of Kurdish nationalism. The topography of Kurdish-inhabited areas falls into two zones. The first is a highland from the Ağrı Mountains in eastern Turkey
to the Zagros Mountains in western Iran, which is surrounded by the second, a flat region in eastern Syria, northern Iraq and south-eastern Turkey. Historically, the Kurds were separated by the Ottoman-Safavid struggle, and Kurdish-inhabited areas were under Turkish or Persian dominion until the end of WWI. However, the post-WWI peace agreements divided the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire into three separate parts, and placed them in the newly independent Turkey, the British mandate in Iraq and the French mandate in Syria. The inaccessibility of the intervening topography affected the social formation and unity of Kurds. As the mountain range divided the Kurds into three separate blocs (Iran/Iraq-Syria/Turkey) in which Kurdish groups had to interact with the already-established Arab, Persian, and Turkish cultures, this in turn influenced the development of a fragmented Kurdish culture and society. Historically, the difficult topography of Kurdish-inhabited areas played a distinct role in the persistence of the traditional feudal system, the emergence of different dialects and cultures, and the separation of Kurds from other communities in each bloc; this resulted in reduced central government hegemony on the Kurdish periphery, and thus all of these factors, consequently, led to the emergence of sub-ethnic identities and competition between the associated tribal groups (Yavuz, 2001).

Lastly, Kurdish-inhabited areas have also been a front line for military and political rivalry since the time of the ancient civilisations. Many nations have made use of Kurdish-inhabited areas to build up armies for incursions and have used the local Kurd forces as means to infiltrate Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Kurdish territory had always been a contested area, variously claimed by powers from Asia, the Middle East and Europe. In the aftermath of WWI, Britain and, later on, the US, developed an interest in Kurdish territory in Iraq because of the major hydrocarbon reserves in Kirkuk and the surrounding areas. To live and exist as one of the ancient peoples of the Middle East, and often inspired by national aspirations, when confronted repression and subjugation, living in such a difficult setting often forced Kurds to form alliances, in particular with foreign powers that were aligned against the states they had lived in for many centuries (e.g., Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey) or against indigenous peoples (e.g., Assyrians and Armenians). In addition to military coalitions throughout the centuries with Mongols, Persians or Turks, as a consequence of geopolitical necessity and national aspirations, Kurds turned to forming an alliance with the US during the Iraqi invasions of 1991 and 2003, and in the war against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi’l-Iraq wa-sh-Sham) in Syria.
In short, Kurdish nationalism evolved in response to the changes in modernising surrounding states of the Kurdish-inhabited areas (Yavuz, 2001). Kurdish identity – and the emergence of modern Kurdish nationalism in the 20th century – has been constructed by “identity entrepreneurs” through stressing the differences between Kurds from the ‘other’ (Turks, Arabs or Iranians), and shaped by the then-prevalent political context at different historical points (ibid: 3). Therefore, in the following sections, I will first discuss how different actors have played a role in the construction of the Kurdish identity, and then how different political contexts have unfolded in such a way as to have influenced the development and politicisation of the Kurdish identity and consequently led to the emergence of modern Kurdish nationalism.

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3.2. Kurds in the Ottoman Period: Loyalty with Sporadic Rebellions from the 16th to 20th Centuries

The Kurdish issue during the late-19th and early 20th centuries first emerged as a result of the 'lost
autonomy’ of Kurdish notables, i.e., declining authority (e.g., direct rule from the centre) and interests (e.g., penetration of capitalist relations of production in lieu of feudalism) of religious and tribal leaders. From the 16th century until the decline of the Empire in the 19th century, Kurds maintained a constructive relationship on the basis of a pact with Sultan Selim I in 1514 (see McDowall, 1997). This pact facilitated Kurdish consolidation in Turkey’s southeast as a measure to protect the eastern gate of the Ottoman Empire against military incursions from Persia and the Middle East, and to suppress rebellions in the eastern parts of the Empire (McDowall, 1997). Therefore, Kurds participated in wars against Persia, Russia and the Armenian rebels (especially between 1894 and 1896 as parts of the Hamidiye Cavalry regiments founded by Abdülhamid II) (Olson, 1989). In short, organised as they were around great families and tribes, Kurds were allowed to protect an autonomous status on the periphery in exchange for loyalty to the Sultan (Ergil, 2000). In this regard, it can be argued that policies to engage Kurdish groups in Turkey's southeast have always been a significant issue. Therefore, the Turkish centre, at first glance, preferred a co-optation policy (not the breakdown) with the Kurds on the Empire’s eastern periphery during the Ottoman period, a situation that remained unchanged until the late-19th century (Cornell, 2001).

Amidst nationalist movements in the Balkans and following the Empire's decline, the understanding between the centre and Kurdish periphery that had prevailed since the 16th century deteriorated sharply with the onset of Istanbul’s controversial centralisation policies during the 19th century as part of the Tanzimat reforms and the policy of Ottomanism (see McDowall, 1997). Among many other reforms, the political initiatives of Mahmud II with regards to centralisation and westernisation of its administration, education system and military triggered the process of a decline in the authority and privileges granted to Kurdish notables on the periphery (Olson, 1989). During the 19th century, a prominent Kurdish figure Bedirhan, for instance, refused to join the armed forces in the Ottoman-Russian war of 1828-1829 (ibid). Discontent with the centralisation policy ultimately led to conflict decades after the centralisation policy, resulting in rebellions such as those by Bedirhan Pasha in 1847 and Sheikh Ubeydullah (Nehri) in 1880-1881 (ibid). Sheikh Ubeydullah, who was a landowner and the head of the Shemdinan family, demanded political autonomy from Persian and Ottoman rule (Özoğlu 2004). In spite of aspirations for independence in earlier rebellions, in Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State, Hakan Özoğlu (2004) argues that Kurdish nationalism appeared as a “full-blown political movement immediately after World War I (WWI) when the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist”
In this regard, Özoğlu (2004), for instance, opposes scholars such as Wadie Jwaideh who regarded Sheikh Ubeydullah’s uprising as a nationalist movement as he sought independence (see Olson, 2004). According to Özoğlu (2004), both the Bedirhan Pasha and Sheikh Ubeydullah rebellions were the results of tribal resistance and can be interpreted as part of a struggle for power due to attempts to centralise the Ottoman administrative system.

Apart from rebellions, Kurdish self-awareness appeared in the Ottoman period, first in the writings of Şeref Khan, a well-known emir of Bitlis, who wrote the history of the Kurds, and the Kurdish poet, Ahmed-i Khani, who criticised the loose cohesion and cooperation among the Kurds in his lyrics in the late-17th century (van Bruinessen, 2003). Furthermore, Özoğlu (2004) notes the important place territory took in shaping Kurdish nationalist thinking during the Ottoman period. For him, the Kurdish province, and the resulting autonomy established by Abdülmecid I’s imperial edict, for instance, was central to the emergence of a dialogical discourse between Kurdish nationalists and the central government (ibid). The evolution of this discourse led to the rise of nationalism among Kurds just after WWI as the Empire collapsed and its remaining territory was partitioned by various post-war peace agreements. Therefore, for Özoğlu (2004), Kurdish national aspirations emerged with the foundation of nationalist organisations such as the Society for Kurdish Elevation (SKE, Kürd Teali Cemiyeti) of 1918 in the aftermath of WWI (ibid). During the second constitutional era (1908-1920), SKE was the primary actor in the politicisation of Kurdish ethnic identity, consequently developing a Kurdish nationalist movement (Natali, 2005).

In short, first, the Kurdish issue in the Ottoman period and during the late-19th century uprisings revolved around tribal matters and the power struggle between great Kurdish families (see Özoğlu, 2004). As Kurdish tribal leaders of the time claimed that the central government was to blame, resentment about centralisation policies intensified with the decline of the Ottomans and rapidly worsened relations between local notables and the central government in Istanbul in the late-19th century. Kurds enjoyed and shared a privileged status with other nations as part of the dominant Muslim majority in the traditional Millet system, in which the principal form of Kurdish identity was on the

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2 Arabic word millet means a nation or community. However, in the vocabulary of the time, the term was used to imply religion and respective religious community. The Millet system in this regard refers to the administration of a number of religious communities within the Empire established by Mehmed II, who issued the ‘Galata Contract’ in 1453. Specifically, it refers to the three major groups, i.e., Muslims, Christians (Armenians and Greeks) and Jews. The system also denotes
basis of religious affiliation. Because the system allowed the protection of, and consequently strengthened, religious group identity regardless of ethnic or linguistic differences, it was clearly more than an administrative arrangement; rather, it was a bonding agent between different Muslim groups (such as Albanians, Arabs, Kurds and Turks). In the meantime, the social organisation in eastern Turkey maintained its existing state until the end of WWI despite centralisation efforts and in contrast to the penetration of capitalist relations of production in the Balkans, which in a way limited the emergence of a class with an interest in national unification and separation.

Second, as the fall of the Empire was on the horizon during the course, and in the immediate aftermath, of WWI, the Empire's relations with the Muslim majority was further jeopardised by means of the European influence on Muslim nations through the former’s political support of the latter’s national aspirations (e.g., Wilson’s Principles, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Treaty of Sèvres, Paris Conference) and by providing intelligence and military assistance to the tribal leaders and groups (especially the Russian support for Balkan nations and the British support for Arabs and Kurds) (see Olson, 1989; Özoğlu, 2004). Although this fact has its origins in the concessions given to the French (the protection of Catholics within the Empire) in the 16th and 17th century, European influence in the internal affairs of the Empire amplified during the 19th century. This political development was timed to coincide with the changing European (especially British) policy regarding the protection and unity of the Ottoman Empire. The Liberal Party in Britain campaigned against the Ottoman Empire in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, in particular after the Turkish government’s repression of the Bulgarian rebellion (see Armaoğlu, 1997).

Lastly, the harmony of the complex Ottoman system of governance rendered it highly sensitive to even slight changes in internal or external conditions. That is, any alteration in the system’s structure could potentially act as the trigger for substantial consequences. The localised change in the Balkans (i.e., nationalist movements) had significant effects elsewhere within the Empire. The Empire was likely to fall apart purely as a consequence of rising nationalist movements in the Balkans among Arabs, Albanians and Armenians. Therefore, Turkish nationalist intellectuals (in particular with the process through which each community is allowed to rule itself (through a head of each millet), and consequently a person is normally expected to abide by the community’s civil law. As a result of this practice, the Millet system offers a non-territorial autonomy to each nation or community, and in particular integrates non-Muslim communities within the multicultural socio-political system of the Empire (see Eryılmaz, 1992; İnalcık, 1973; Ortaylı, 1985.
help of the Turkish diaspora and Turkologs, such as İsmail Gaspıralı) sought alternative plans (Pan-Turkism). Thus, for some, the emergence of Kurdish nationalist organisations was the outcome of rising Turkish nationalism during the late Imperial (19th century) and the Early Republican years (1920-1930s) (Bozarslan, 2008).

3.3. Kurds in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic: Radicalisation and Nationalist Uprisings (1920s-1930s)

In the aftermath of WWI, the successful struggle for independence (1919-1922) revoked the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres, and consequently, laid the foundation of an assembly in Anatolia (23 April 1920) and proclamation of the Turkish Republic (29 October 1923) by a revolutionary group led by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). The group was comprised of former Ottoman army officers, intellectuals and state officials, who were educated or served as bureaucrats in the major western European cities, and consequently, influenced from the western European history (in particular, the legacy of the Enlightenment era and the French Revolution) (Ahmad, 2008). The Republic's aim in the 1920s and 1930s was to disintegrate the social organisation of Kurdish provinces in eastern Turkey as a serious impediment to the success of the Republican revolution. This is why the Kurdish issue in the Early Republican period relates to wider developments in the country as a whole because of local resistance to radical secularisation, national unification and the transformation of the state and society, which were contrary to the interests of local landlords and religious leaders. Later, the Republic denied the existence of Kurds, placing bans on any manifestation of the Kurdish identity and culture in the public sphere, especially after the Sheikh Said rebellion which became an important reason for Kurdish radicalisation (Yeğen, 1996). As a result of growing grievances in response to socio-political change, Turkey reached a crisis less than a year after its establishment. A series of Kurdish uprisings...

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3 The Treaty of Sèvres was signed on 10th August 1920 in the suburbs of Paris between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies, which restricted the armed forces and re-divided the Ottoman lands into occupation and political influence zones. Feelings of grief and the loss of confidence in the Istanbul government as the guardian of the nation and territorial integrity with the acceptance of the Treaty of Sèvres and the occupation of major cities, such as Istanbul and Izmir, by a group of Allied troops led to the emergence of an acting government and national assembly in Ankara and the start of the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922) (see Shaw & Shaw, 1977).

4 Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938) as a distinguished Ottoman army officer during the WWI was in charge of an army division in the Battle of Gallipoli against the Allies, and later on, became the leader of Turkish liberation movement and commander-in-chief during the War of Independence (1919-1922). He is the founding father and first president of the Republic of Turkey until his early death on 10 November 1938 at Dolmabahçe palace in Istanbul. Mustafa Kemal accepted the surname 'Atatürk' (father of the Turks) after the surname law passed by the Parliament in 1934.
between 1924 and 1938 (16 rebellions out of 18 rebellions nationwide) encompassed almost the entirety of the early Republican period (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997).

The most crucial implication of the dissolution of the Empire and of the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres for Kurds was their recognition and the promise of self-rule in Kurdish-inhabited areas of the Empire. In the short term, Kurdish support for the War of Independence from the end of WWI to the early Republican years, however, postponed Kurdish nationalist aspirations (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997). Amid fears of invasion by the Allies (and especially Armenian groups in east Turkey) and loss of material interests (such as property and possessions left from the Armenian population) encouraged Kurdish tribal leaders and groups to support the Turkish liberation war against a shared threat (see ibid). Furthermore, the government in Ankara used the religious factor against the Allies and İstanbul government by ordering fatwas (a ruling given by religious leaders) from pro-Ankara government religious leaders and declaring the war was to save the Sultanate and Caliphate. Both political moves motivated devout Kurds and Turks towards a war of liberation from foreign powers while other groups in Istanbul and Ankara were willing to accept English or American tutelage (such groups included the Association of the Friends of English in Turkey, Society for Islamic Progression, and the Society for Wilson Principles) (Özkaya et al., 2002). Likewise, special reference was made to the Islamic fraternity between Kurds and Turks during the preliminary meetings of the Lausanne Conference (Yavuz, 2001). As a result, the Treaty of Lausanne did not recognise Kurds as either a separate group or as a minority. On the contrary, some Kurdish groups (such as the Alevi Koçgiri tribe in Der-sim), influenced by the leaders of the SKE, revolted despite the War of Independence (see Romano, 2006). As such, Kurdish cultural committees and community leaders expressed national aspirations for a separate state at various international settings, in particular the Paris Peace Conference (Yavuz, 2001).

In the aftermath of the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, apart from many Kurdish rebellions, the Sheikh Said uprising has had the most significant socio-political impact on the development of Kurdish nationalism. The abolishment of the Caliphate on 3rd March 1924, which, for some, constituted the only remaining bonding concept to tie Turks and Kurds together, was the manifest cause of the Sheikh Said’s uprising (see Yavuz, 2001). Despite an apparent religious origin, the revolt in-
volved a nationalist aspect as it was also formed in opposition to the declining privileges of the Kurdish landlords in order to secure their interests through the maintenance of a feudal social organisation on the periphery (see Yavuz, 2001). Likewise, according to van Bruinessen (1992), a ban on the Kurdish language in the public sphere and on religious education, the exile of landlords and expropriation of their lands drove Kurds to the Sheikh Said uprising. The secessionist organisation, Azadi, which was behind the Sheikh Said uprising, was established by a religious and nationalist group seeking a separate state for Kurds (see Olson, 1989; van Bruinessen, 1992). Likewise, in The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion: 1889-1925, Robert Olson (1989; 2004) argues that Kurdish nationalism began in 1925 with the Sheikh Said uprising, which played a crucial role in the construction of the Kurdish ethnic identity and development of a nationalist movement. For Olson, “the fact that the rebellion had a religious character was the result of Azadi’s assessment of the strategy and tactics necessary for carrying out a successful revolution”. Furthermore, Olson (2004) argues that a dialectical process between a centralising state and Kurdish nationalism was the case when Sheikh Said revolted against the new government in Ankara, which remained a decisive factor in the following surge of rebellions.

A massive armed campaign by the TAF (Turkish Armed Forces, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri) in the Dersim uprising in 1938 ended the armed resistance and had a significant impact on Kurds, marking the beginning of an era of 'long silence' until the 1960s (see Bozarslan, 2008). In the aftermath of this era of insurgencies, the Democrat Party (DP, Demokrat Parti) government implemented an integrative policy of co-optation, reversing the policy of forced resettlement and allowing Kurds to return, and the onset of political pluralism led the DP to broaden its base in eastern Turkey by cooperating with religious and tribal groups and offering parliamentary seats to highly influential Kurds, such as

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5 The political system in Turkey experienced a series of fundamental changes in the Republican period. Despite early political attempts during the single-party era, such as Liberal Republican Party (LRP, Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası) in 1930 and National Development Party (NDP, Milli Kalkınma Partisi) in 1945; Turkey’s political landscape was transformed into a multi-party parliamentary system after Democrat Party (DP, Demokrat Parti) was established in 1946 and elected in 1950 (see Karpat, 1959). A breakaway group (Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuad Köprülü, Refik Koraltan), who demanded political liberalisation from the ruling RPP, constituted the nucleus of the DP (Ahmad, 2008). The economic development in the 1930s surfaced a new middle class of industrialists and businessmen accompanied by rural landowners, with common interests of hoping to remove governmental controls that limited the gains from their properties (Shaw & Shaw, 1977). In this regard, the DP had come to epitomise the interests of the bourgeoisie and local landowners on the periphery, and also the dissatisfied groups of people (with the prevailing social and political changes) as the power shift from RPP to DP brought the centre of political life from the cities to the provinces untouched by the Kemalist revolution (see Ahmad, 2008).
Abdülmelik Fırat, the grandson of Sheikh Said (ibid).

To summarise, first of all, the Kurdish issue in the early years of the Republic was one of the implications of a series of changes in socio-political structures arising from modernisation. In contrast to the heterogeneity of Imperial society and multiculturalism in the Ottoman period, Kurds started to resist the Republic's homogenisation policy. Therefore, the transformation of the state and society, and the resulting launch of a new, yet inflexible, Republican identity and definition of citizenship, led to the denial of Kurdish existence that was central to the inception of the Kurdish issue as nationalist groups and religious leaders began to politicise the prohibitions on the expression of Kurdish identity and to use its recognition as a political goal (Kurdism) (Yeğen, 1996). In this regard, a long-term outcome of the recognition of Kurds in the Treaty of Sèvres was not only to cause a number of Kurdish groups to support secession in the 1920s-1930s, but also to provide a platform for political manoeuvring and constitute a starting point for nationalist mobilisation during the entire Republican period. As a result, the policy of the denial of Kurdish identity and culture turned into an intricate socio-political conflict which was used by nationalist Kurdish groups (identity or conflict entrepreneurs) as a pretext to the strategic use of violence for Kurdish nationalist mobilisation (Yavuz 2001; Tezcür, 2015).

A second conclusion that can be drawn from the implications of the rebellions in the Early Republican period pertains to the rivalries between Kurdish groups themselves. Starting in the late-19th century, a major difference in views about autonomy or secession appeared between the Kurdish elites. After the foundation of the Society for Kurdish Elevation, for instance, the divergent views of the president of the society, Seyyid Abdülkadir, and other important figures to stay part of the Empire were evident, in opposition to nationalists who sought a separate state in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres (see Bozarslan, 2006). Therefore, Özoğlu (2004), for instance, distinguishes the political views of the Bedirhan and Cemilpaşazade families as secessionists – who supported an independent Kurdish state – from the Arvasi family and Said Nursi who are perceived as being supporters of autonomy within the Empire. Similar divides appeared in the Kurdish rebellions of the Early Republican period, in particular the rebellion perpetrated by Sheikh Said in 1925 (urban-rural disconnection and Sunni-Alevi rivalry) (Olson, 1989).
Third, the *Sheikh Said* case marked the beginning of an era of uprisings and a change in political dispositions of a number of unionist Kurds. The relations between Kurdish groups and the Republic worsened as the Islamic fraternity doctrine collapsed with the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924. Therefore, the post-Independence War conditions ended a long era of tacit co-operation between the central government and the Kurdish periphery; the abolishment of the Caliphate, to some extent, merged the interests of divided local groups in Kurdish society, i.e., previously unionist religious leaders and secessionist nationalists (see Bozarslan, 2006). This is why religious leaders (*sheiks*) led the uprisings with nationalists in the Early Republican period in contrast to the role of emirs in the rebellions during the Ottoman period.

Fourth, the rebellions led by Kurdish religious leaders in the 1920s-30s in Turkey’s southeast against the newly established government posed a serious threat to the founding official ideology and territorial integrity doctrine of the Republic. The legacy of the *Sheikh Said* case and other rebellions between 1924 and 1938 had led to a security discourse that problematized and redefined the relationship between the Kurds and the Republic as the latter began to perceive secessionist ethnic and politicised religious movements as the most important threat to national security (Yavuz, 2001). This fact led to the introduction of laws such as the Restoration of Order Law in 1926 and Independence Tribunals (components of practicing emergency law), and re-settlement laws, which grew into further grievances and became a reason for the eruption of more rebellions, for instance in Ağrı (1927-1930) and Dersim (1936-1938) after the imposition of these laws and the resulting implications for society (see Çelik, 2012, McDowall, 1997).

Fifth, successive Kurdish uprisings have kept the fear of partition alive, a phenomenon which is otherwise known as the Sèvres Syndrome (with reference to the European occupation of Turkey after WWI) and, consequently, precipitated a cycle of violence that persisted for more than a decade during the early years of the Republic and onwards (particularly after the late-1970s). In fact, this ultimately led to the emergence of a negative perception amongst both the public and politicians regarding the recognition of Kurds, and consequently became a barrier to the political resolution of the Kurdish issue (Çelik, 2012).
3.4. Kurds in the Early Multi-Party Period of Turkey: Nationalist Revival and Youth Radicalisation
(1960s-1970s)

After a long silent era since the powerful suppression of resistance in Dersim rebellion, the restructuring of society and politics in the post-1961 constitution period resulted in fundamental shifts in the configuration of social relations among Kurds and prompted the revival of Kurdish nationalism. Starting from the 1950s, the eastern parts of Turkey became economically integrated into the rest of the country. The outcome of this integration was an increase in mobilisation among Kurds that allowed many to migrate from rural areas to towns and cities, and Kurdish students to study in the major cities of western Turkey (Bozarslan, 2008). In the meantime, cultural activities in the period of silence (from the 1930s to the 1960s) and onwards, through publishing journals and memoirs, left an important legacy in terms of the development of Kurdish cultural nationalism (ibid). More importantly, the 1961 constitution, which was intended to secure basic civil liberties in Turkey and the resulting political environment was one of the main reasons behind the Kurdish nationalist revival (ibid). In contrast to the rebellions in the Ottoman and early Republican periods, the bearers of the Kurdish nationalist movement\(^6\); however, were not the religious or tribal leaders but a new group comprising intellectuals, students, the working class and peasantry.

Tribal and religious groups continued to hold political power and a support base in Turkey’s southeast in the 1960s and 1970s, and occupied positions in the right-wing political parties of the successor parties of the DP-led political faction such as the Süleyman Demirel’s Justice Party (JP, Adalet Partisi) and, later, the True Path Party (TPP, Doğru Yol Partisi). Likewise, Necmettin Erbakan’s NSP, and his successor parties – all of Erbakan’s parties were banned from politics by the constitutional court – found representation in the Kurdish-inhabited provinces. Therefore, Kurdish MPs had participated in politics since the first assembly in 1920, and the Kurds had been represented in the party politics

\(^{6}\) I prefer to use the term ‘pro-Kurdish’, 'Kurdish political representatives' or 'Kurdish nationalists' interchangeably throughout this thesis. By using either concept, the purpose is to refer to the ‘political wing’ within the Kurdish ethnic movement. In the meantime, it is convenient to use a blanket concept in order to refer to a number of pro-Kurdish political parties and group of political elites as they have often faced party closure since the 1990s. However, when necessary, I refer to the specific group or organisation in question.
since the introduction of the multi-party period in 1950. In this respect, it is argued that the Kurds in Turkey have been represented consistently and proportionately in comparison to the number of Kurds in the total population (Cornell, 2001). As an indicator of political representation, one might consider the presence of 84-85 Kurdish MPs (out of 450 seats) in parliament during the period between 1960 and 1980, the military coup d'état (BAÜSAM, 2009: 72-73).

However, the centre of political life, especially in urban areas, of Kurdish-inhabited provinces in Turkey's southeast, shifted to the Workers Party of Turkey (WPT, Türkiye İşçi Partisi). In the post-1961 period, Kurdish intellectuals interpreted Kurdish identity and defined the problems of Kurds in wider society in a new and different way. The whys and wherefores of intellectuals of the period came from inspiration as to a new way of thinking from Marxist theory. Kurdish nationalists in the 1960s and 1970s were gradually attracted to the political left (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997) because the left offered a platform for Kurds to challenge the Turkish state's discourse on the Kurdish issue, and offered a channel of advocacy for socio-economic development in marginalised Kurdish-inhabited areas (Bozarslan, 2008). As a result of the emerging relationship between Kurds and the left, Kurdish intellectuals in the late-1960s reinterpreted the Kurdish issue as a regional economic inequality problem (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997). Similarly, the left in the WPT's fourth congress recognised the existence of Kurds as a different ethnic group (ibid). Likewise, the left offered a new Marxist-Leninist perspective for Kurds (Bozarslan, 2008). This is why Kurdish nationalists excluded the religious rhetoric (such as the abolition of the Caliphate during the Sheikh Said rebellion), and began to use leftist concepts such as 'oppressed people', 'exploitation' or 'colonialism' to mobilise support for their movement. Therefore, in contrast to the dominance of traditionally influential groups, religious- and tribal leader-led rebellions up to the 1920s-1930s, Kurdish nationalism in the 1960s-1970s originated as an urban, secular and leftist movement (see Yavuz, 2001). According to Yavuz (2001), the WPT's interest in Kurdish or Alevi issues was essentially because the party wanted to expand its base in Turkey's eastern provinces. Noting the new secular character of the movement, Kurdish Alevis, who dominated the Turkish left in the 1970s, played a significant role in familiarising the leftists with the Kurdish issue (ibid). In part to due to the WPT's position and Kurdish groups' demands for self-determination caused a rivalry and a split between the Kurdish and Turkish leftists. Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1960s was characterised as an 'integrationist' force rather than a secessionist one,
and the Kurdish movement stressed the unequal socio-economic development of the Kurdish inhabited areas (see Bozarslan, 1992; 2008).

A number of meetings in Kurdish-majority urban centres, known as the Eastern meetings (Doğu mitingleri), and the establishment, then outlaw, of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearts (RECH, Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları) in 1969, drew attention to the inequality question, social justice, and Kurdish identity. Similar activities (such as union activism, literary works and other formal writing, demonstrations) were used for the purpose of mobilisation and politicisation of the Kurdish population, in which youth constituted the main organised body of the RECH. Towards the end of the 1960s, the Turkish left went underground and began to use violence against the state security forces. Therefore, the Kurdish radicalisation took place in the 1970s was partly on the grounds of an external dynamic as Kurds followed the path of the Turkish left. Internal dynamics, such as the Barzani rebellion in Iraq and used as a reference point for Turkey’s Kurdish movement and the arrest of Kurdish intellectuals, radicalised the Kurdish youth during the late-1960s and 1970s (Bozarslan, 2008). Despite the authority of older generations, especially in the 1960s, the youth emerged as the leading force in the 1970s within the Kurdish movement. The sociological basis of violence in the 1970s lies in the reality of a radicalised youth cohort, who rapidly became the “agents of a generational fissure” as they started to criticise the feudal structures, including the Barzani family and older generations of intellectuals in Turkey, who were often suspicious of violent modes of action, for the catastrophe in Iraq (the decline and suppression of the Barzani rebellion by the Ba'ath regime as a result of Soviet support and the withdrawal of US military and logistical backing) (Bozarslan, 2008: 348). Therefore, young Kurdish cohorts played a significant role in political violence as one of the sub-groups within the Turkish far left groups from the very beginning of the student movements of the late-1960s, and then separated to initiate an armed struggle for Kurds alone. As a result, it is important to note that this youth cohort was at the centre of the process during the emergence of the PKK (1978-1983), most of the initial cadres of which – including the founder of the organisation, Abdullah Öcalan – participated in the outlawed RECH and were imprisoned due to illegal activities following the 1970 memorandum (Yavuz, 2001).

In short, first of all, it can be argued that the collapse of non-capitalist relations of production in Turkey’s southeast in the 1970s fundamentally shaped the evolution of Kurdish nationalism. The
transformation of Kurdish society resulted in shifts in the configuration of social relations and has led to the emergence of a secular political elite in contrast to the previous dominance of religious and traditional structures that has lasted for many centuries. Therefore, as some argue, the Kurdish issue entered into a stage of secularisation through socialism (Yavuz, 2001). More importantly, the PKK started to use violence strategically in order to mobilise working class and landless peasants, who had long been repressed and exploited by the traditional feudal system in rural areas, in contrast to the urban-led Kurdish movement in the 1970s (see Tezcür, 2015). This is why the PKK’s initial targets were not the state security forces but local tribal groups (such as the Bucak family in Siverek, Şanlıurfa), people who had ties with centrist political parties such as the Demirel’s JP, and competing Kurdish organisations with the PKK such as Kawa and Rızgari during the period of the PKK’s emergence (1978-1983) (see Tezcür, 2015).

Second, periods of major political upheaval caused by left-right rivalry and political instability in the 1960s and 1970s not only provoked military interventions, but also resulted in the initiation of emergency law and military rule, and arrests and further bans on the expression of Kurdish identity and culture. At its peak, the existence of Kurds was denied to the extent that they were considered “mountain Turks” (see Fırat, 1961). The propensity towards violence and radicalisation amongst the youth within the Kurdish movement in the 1960s-1970s, on the other hand, raised security questions and rapidly securitised the Kurdish issue, which resulted in a security-oriented approach, rather than democratisation, to deal with the Kurdish issue, which would subsequently dominate state policy during the 1980s-1990s period.

Lastly, it is crucial to single out the growing role of youth in Turkey's socio-political life. Young people were an important actor and bears of Republican revolution during the early Republican period (1923-1950). Despite the significance of the second-generation youth (1950-1980), however, their role in society, because of their participation in political violence, was problematic. The link between youth and violence is a phenomenon of the 1960s-1970s and originates in the political struggles of the left-right rivalry that occurred predominantly among university students (see Kabacalı, 2007; Mardin, 1978). With regards to the relationship between youth and political violence, academic researchers tend to focus on the role of youth as the primary actor and an 'object' of social transformation projects in socio-political life, as exemplified in the political crises of the 1960s and 1970s.
(see Neyzi, 2001). This is why the position of youth changed from idealised ‘subjects’ of Republican revolution and agents of constructive relations and roles in society to demonised ‘objects’ of a violent ideological rivalry in the 1960s-1970s. Consequently, youth were portrayed as rebels and associated with destructive roles in society.


The evolution of the Kurdish issue in the aftermath of the 1980-coup d’état was affected by the PKK-led violence and the Turkish state’s response to increased levels of violence in the 1990s and their securitisation of the problem. The 1980 coup d’état not only eliminated youth-led violence from the streets, but also the activities of Kurdish youth in Turkey’s southeast. Öcalan and his close cadres had already escaped to Syrian-occupied Bek'a Valley in Lebanon before the coup; however, the PKK’s hegemony developed as the organisation rid itself of major rival groups in Turkey (Cornell, 2001). Therefore, the PKK launched its first armed assault in Eruh in the summer of 1984 against the security forces. The level and intensity of violence escalated in the 1990s. Violence spread to the main cities in western Turkey in the form of terrorism, in particular suicide bombings in public spaces. PKK-led violence in the post-1984 period claimed more than 40,000 lives and inflicted irreparable costs on the social and economic fabric of society. Significant amounts of economic resources were diverted towards direct military expenditure. The Turkish state pursued a policy, on the basis of security-oriented options, to halt the growing terrorism problem and to promote socio-economic development of the Kurdish-inhabited areas in order to end the Kurdish issue. Leaving the political attempts of Turgut Özal to one side, which aimed to improve the worsening situation in Turkey’s southeast by increasing the powers of local administrations and calling for a general amnesty, most of the former administrations in Ankara implemented a strict interpretation of security measures, and anticipated economic development as the only available policy option until the 2000s.

The escalation of violence forced the Turkish state to place Turkey’s southeast under curfews, to empty villages and hamlets, and to move local people out of military zone in order to prevent the

7 Turgut Özal was the founder of the Motherland Party (MP, Anavatan Partisi). He was the Prime Minister (1983-1989) and 8th President (1989-1993) of the Republic of Turkey
PKK's use of the area to stage armed attacks and run its logistics. A state of emergency regime (Olağanüstü Hal, OHAL) was established in 1987 and lasted until 2002. In the emergency regime, local governors, as the representatives of the central government, had the right to enact regulations-effective-as-laws, including the right to limit civil liberties. During the 1990s, paramilitary groups were involved in unresolved killings. As a result of the escalation of violence and growing social tensions, Kurdish society was heavily traumatised. Therefore, the violent environment, and the subsequent emergency regime, expedited the PKK's local resource mobilisation in Turkey's southeast. In spite of the prominent role of an educated generation during the period of the PKK's emergence, a new generation of teenagers became the human resources, or sympathisers, of the PKK in the 1990s (Bozarslan, 2008). Population displacement and migration from rural to urban areas were the two major reasons for a generation to emerge with inadequate education and low prospects for economic opportunities in the suburbs of major cities, not only in western Turkey, but also in the southeastern provinces. Furthermore, the youth were socialised in violence due to the violent environment and through the experiences and memoirs of an earlier generation in the 1980s-1990s. Therefore, the PKK offered an identity (Kurdish nationalism) and commitment to social justice (socialism) for a 'displaced' or 'semi-intellectual' youth (Yavuz, 2001: 11-12).

The PKK's use of violence against rival armed groups or social forces that were against the PKK organisation further increased the level of violence in Turkey's southeast. Two camps dominated the opposition to the PKK. First, the village guards were composed of local Kurdish armed villagers, paid for and used by the central government against the PKK. The PKK involved in mass killings of village guards and civilians in pro-state villages. The village guards/PKK rivalry has become a cause of fragmentation and involved tensions in Kurdish society. Besides their role in fighting against the PKK, village guards were involved in privatised violence and posed a serious threat to civilians, such as in the abduction of women (see Kurban et al., 2006). Village guards can be seen as another consequence of the Turkish co-optation policy to rule the periphery in rural areas of the country as a tradition that has continued since the Ottoman Empire. A similar example was the Hamidiye Cavaliers in the 19th century (Winrow, 1997), as established against the Russian invasion of eastern Anatolia. Similarly, village guards were organised as a militia to curb the PKK activities and to challenge its hegemony in the region. A second armed opposition group was the Kurdish Hizbullah. Hizbullah's use of extreme violence against the PKK worsened an already volatile situation. Hizbullah's goal was
to put an end to the secular system in Turkey and challenge the PKK (Yavuz, 2001). Hizbullah executed many PKK sympathisers in daylight during the 1990s (ibid). Apart from the PKK, Hizbullah-led violence deepened the fragmentation in society and intensified the violence-prone situation.

In addition to the PKK, a political wing appeared within the Kurdish movement in the 1990s. Despite the representation of religious and tribal social forces within the right-wing political parties since the 1950s, Kurdish nationalists emerged as a sub-group in the leftist Social Democrat People’s Party (SPP, Sosyal Demokrat Halk Partisi) of Erdal İnönü in 1991 elections (Barkey, 1998). Between the 1990s and the present, many Kurdish MPs have lost seats in parliament following the closure of pro-Kurdish parties because of their links with the PKK. A regional threshold system in the post-1980s era (1983, 1987, 1991 elections); and 10 % limit nationally since the 1995 elections has allowed only major parties to access to parliament, which restricted a genuine representation of various political tendencies in the south-eastern provinces (BAÜSAM, 2009: 73). Hence, pro-Kurdish parties, which often received around 5-6 % of the total votes in the 1990s, failed to attain representation in parliament. Religious and tribal social forces of Kurdish society, however, were represented in the rightist political parties. In particular, Erbakan’s NSP, and later on WP, became a rising political force, and competed heavily with Kurdish nationalists.

Besides the role of internal factors and domestic political developments, Syrian and other external support for Kurdish nationalists, in particular the PKK, is an important element in the PKK’s mobilisation of Kurds and feasibility for their participation in political violence. The political support from Kurds in exile in Europe (mostly in Germany) was through organising political support campaigns and public marches (van Bruinessen, 1992; Cornell, 2001). The PKK’s imposition of a so-called compulsory tax on worker’s income and business profits, and indeed the narcotics trade in Europe, constituted the financial resources received from the Kurds in diaspora in regular and increasing amounts over time (Kurubaş, 2009). Militarily, after Öcalan’s escape, Syria provided a sanctuary for the PKK for nearly twenty years and offered the organisation military bases in Bekaa Valley in Lebanon (Özcan, 1999). Similarly, the PKK used the power vacuum in northern Iraq to settle in the Qandil Mountains on the Iran-Iraq border as a result of the post-Cold War political developments (the Gulf War in 1991 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003) and to start to use mountainous area on the Turkey-Iraq border for armed assaults (Özcan, 1999). The crisis in 1998 with Syria, and Turkey’s military build-up in Hatay
and military expedition on the Syrian border, brought the country to the brink of war as a result of Syrian support for the PKK, which come to an end and Öcalan was extradited when Turkey and Syria signed the Adana Memorandum on 20th October 1998.

In the aftermath of the 1984 Eruh attack, the PKK rapidly increased its power and hegemony through mobilisation of, in particular, young peasants in Kurdish provinces. It is a fact that the Republican revolution failed to transform non-capitalist relations of production in Turkey's southeast, as a result of which deep socio-economic inequalities in Kurdish-inhabited areas persisted until as late as the 1970s-1980s. Therefore, the PKK-led violence became a credible force in opposition to local landlords (Tezcür, 2015). Likewise, the culture in Turkey's southeast provided a human resource for the PKK, as it used the competition between families, in particular blood feuds, to recruit young people to inflict harm and retribution (revenge) on opposing families (mostly ruling families) (Imset, 1992; Tezcür, 2015).

The arrest of Öcalan shattered the image of the PKK, and its call for widespread violence in response to Öcalan's incarceration failed to produce any notable consequences. Therefore, upon the request of the imprisoned Öcalan, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire and began instead to internationalise the Kurdish issue. In February 2000, the PKK gave up its armed struggle and opted for a democratic and political solution to the problem. This, and several other ceasefires and attempts since then, occupied the political agenda in Turkey. Moreover, pro-Kurdish political parties emerged as important actors after Turkey's compliance with EU-induced reforms.

3.6. Kurds in the 2000s: Prospects for a Resolution with Sporadic Violence

The emergence and growth of an antithetical discourse (e.g., recognition of cultural diversity) to the founding parameters of the Republic (e.g., homogenising population) can be seen as an inescapable consequence of Turkey's 30-year-long quest for admission to the EU. Therefore, along with democratisation policy aimed to reinforce Turkey's admission to the EU, the associated wave of reforms

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8 The Turkish government applied for full membership to the European Community (EC) on 14 April 1987. However, Turkey's relations with the EC date back to the Association Agreement in 1963. In the meantime, Turkey has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1949, and joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1975.
have led to renewed interest in resolving the Kurdish issue. The leader of MP and vice PM Mesut Yılmaz stated “the road to the EU passes through Diyarbakır” (Turkish Daily News, 17-12-1999). To meet the Copenhagen political criteria, Verheugen’s report (Accession Partnership Document) in July 2000 involved education rights of Kurds and broadcasting in Kurdish, freedom of speech, military interference in politics (a reform in NSC) and abolition of the death penalty. Therefore, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA, Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi) passed a series of laws regarding the adaptation of Turkish law to EU Common Law, abolition of the death penalty, broadcasting in languages other than Turkish, and signed international treaties that protect cultural, economic, political and social rights (Çelik, 2005). However, the secular and military establishment’s opposition to change was a deep-rooted concern, for which the resolution to such chronic issues was posited on a false premise regarding the nature of Turkey’s social forces as threats to the founding principles of the state. The National Security Council (NSC, Milli Güvenlik Kurulu), for instance, opposed the EU reforms, stating that it would “tear apart the mosaic of Turkish society” (Financial Times, 17-02-2000). Similarly, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of Nationalist Action Party (NAP, Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi), argued “it is impossible for Turkey to look favourably upon cultural and ethnic rights which will only serve to fan the flames of ethnic conflict and discrimination” (Turkish Daily News, 15-11-2000). Although the EU-induced reforms fell far short of ending the Kurdish issue, they did pave the way for a more positive political environment, which would be conducive to further steps to resolve the conflict.

The developments in the political realm, which has undergone a radical transformation since the elections in 2002, prepared the grounds for a new political structure and triggered conditions conducive to the implementation of a political initiative to end the Kurdish issue. A 'new' policy practice to deal with the Kurdish issue at its source was featured in the political programme of the JDP in the aftermath of its rise to power in the 2002 national elections. In contrast to the security-oriented handling and socio-economic explanations of the origins of the Kurdish issue, the JDP government adopted a holistic approach and held a genuine 'conflict resolution' perspective for its 'Kurdish policy' for the first time in the history of the conflict. The JDP’s 'new' policy position integrated long-neglected cultural and political aspects of the problem so as to lead to a reliable political initiative that

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9 Political criteria for accession to the EU, known also as the Copenhagen Criteria, urge the candidate country to maintain democratic institutions and the rule of law, respect for human rights and protection of minorities.
could offer a realistic resolution to a century-old issue.

A permanent solution to the fundamental problems arising from the challenges of religious and ethnic groups had its limits, and until recently the disputes between the state and these groups could only be resolved by recourse to security measures. Therefore, the JDP’s consolidation of its position in the political realm since 2002, motivated by a desire to find a political solution to formerly insoluble dilemmas, stipulated the conditions required to implement a peace process. These conditions presented the dilemma as to how the ‘secular’ and ‘unitary’ characteristics of the establishment in the capital could be reconciled with the demands and challenges of peripheral religious and ethnic groups in Turkey. To this end, changing circumstances not only affected the course of events but also their interpretations. Therefore, shortly after the climate of ‘change’ in the political realm, a revisionist understanding of Kurdish policy appeared as a constituent element of the ruling party’s political strategy.

The issue of a ‘revisionist’ attitude is considered as a complete break with past state policy against the Kurds. This change in policy was clearly seen in political statements regarding the [political] motives of the government, which first became apparent within the public speeches and media interviews of the time. By their phrasing, these statements introduced a sense of ‘goodwill’ at first, and then the ‘determination’ of the government along with the implementation of some general political reforms. Erdoğan’s speech in the southeastern city of Diyarbakır, for instance, not only heralded the ‘new’ era but also demonstrated the ‘way’ by which to resolve the Kurdish issue. Noting the ‘maladies’ of state policy against the Kurds in the past, the Diyarbakır speech allowed Erdoğan to pronounce the ‘necessity’ to end the conflict by enhancing democratic rights and freedoms (The Economist, 18-08-2005).

However, there has been a strong argument, and indeed resistance, against the Kurdish initiatives of the JDP government. In essence, rumblings of discontent were based on an error in judgement regarding the problem. That is, the Kurdish issue had long been considered to be exclusively a security threat, and the new government’s position was at variance with those previously or officially held. The previous perception of the Kurdish issue to this end gradually reduced the socio-political significance of the problem to one of dealing merely with its increasing aspect of terrorism, which has
prevailed within Ankara’s civil and military bureaucracy since the late-1980s. In sum, democratisation (i.e., enhancing Kurdish cultural and political rights) emerged as the first pillar of the peace process, and as part of the ‘revisionist’ outlook in the face of considerable support for the singular use of security measures.

There have been a few precedents for the type of present-day political initiatives in the political history of Turkey (e.g., from the 1920s to the present). An early example was the modest statements made by PM Süleyman Demirel while the armed hostility between the state security forces and the PKK was about to enter into a particularly tense and violent period in the 1990s. Despite the fact that Demirel’s emphasis carried less weight at that time, his recognition of the ‘Kurdish reality’ in 1991 had been one of the indicators of the ‘reformist wing’ within the state establishment, who preferred a political solution to an absolute reliance on military operations or socio-economic development projects to resolve the Kurdish issue. Rather than signalling the importance of the Kurdish issue at a high level, a different understanding of the conflict, in the form of policy change, dates from the emergence of the political ‘will’ to resolve the dispute when Turgut Özal was in office as both prime minister and president, without which one cannot discover the founding pillars of the Erdoğan's Kurdish policy (Karaveli, 2010).

In contrast to the prevalence of security-oriented measures and economic development as a strategy to deal with the terrorism issue that had been prevalent since the late-1970s, the JDP government’s political initiatives constituted one of the most genuine attempts to resolve the Kurdish issue in the political history of the Turkish state, since its foundation in 1923. In comparison to past Kurdish policies, the JDP prioritised legitimate cultural and language demands of Kurds and sought a political solution to the Kurdish issue. To this end, the first political process was the ‘Democratic’ or ‘Kurdish' Initiative (Demokratik Açılım) (2009-2011). The JDP government declared that the initiative was intended to amplify Turkey’s commitment to enhance democratic standards, and improve freedoms and respect for human rights. “We are working to establish a democratic atmosphere where everyone can freely express himself/herself”, said Erdoğan in a live address to the nation (Anadolu Agency, 27-08-2009). Similarly, Beşir Atalay, then Interior Affairs Minister and the coordinator of political initiatives, explained the two goals of the process as: (1) Introducing a more democratic system on the one hand; and (2) reducing security threats on the other.
Initiating a political process as a 'new' path toward settlement, the government’s primary objective was to introduce 'democratisation', in a way, to satisfy the Kurdish demands for 'group rights'. This was the 'first pillar' of the process. In the sense of enhancing democratic rights, Beşir Atalay declared that they were seeking to conduct the process on a platform of reasserting 'equal citizenship' in which Kurds would feel themselves to be equally entitled citizens of Turkey, an element that had been missing from their lives for too long (see Sevimay, 2009 for a discussion of the early attempts in the peace process). The second pillar of the process was to reduce the security threat, for which the government anticipated establishing a channel of dialogue in order to 'disintegrate' the PKK. In the context of these developments (e.g., democratisation and dialogue), the process offered a 'paradigmatic' change in framing the decades-long conflict that shifted the 'official stance' and state policy from a 'security-based' militaristic position, to a 'conflict resolution-oriented' one with regards to the resolution of the Kurdish issue.

Intended to resolve the Kurdish issue, the government’s initial aim was to issue circulars at the first stage and then pass laws in the short and medium term. In the longer term, these efforts would intensify the need to finalise the Kurdish initiative in terms of any further and required steps, and indeed constitutional amendments. Later, upon the PM’s words and the call for the inclusion of different segments of society in the peace process, a wide range of activities became part of the proceedings. For instance, Erdoğan convened a group of artists and celebrities to draw attention to the peace process. The government’s 'new' Kurdish policy, therefore, started with efforts that can be portrayed as confidence-building measures, which at the beginning fell somewhat short of realising some of the key attributes of a peace process. Similar to Erdoğan’s meetings with artists and celebrities, the second initiative also involved a public relations campaign. In order to maintain a favourable image in the public eye, notable persons observed public perceptions and reactions to the peace process by establishing a structure called the 'Wise People Committee' (Akil İnsanlar Heyeti). Members of these groups visited cities, towns and villages in the seven geographical regions of Turkey.

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10 A bona fide peace process involves, but is not limited to, “negotiations conducted in good faith; inclusion of the main combatants; a willingness to address the key points of dispute, the disavowal of force; and prolonged commitment” (see Darby & MacGinty, 2003).
After comprehensive fieldwork, private consultations and public meetings in these places, the committees reported their findings to the Turkish government.

The government-sponsored initiatives in fact received widespread public support (Seta, 2009). Being on the ground for the government, the Erdoğan's leadership was perhaps the most important factor helping the government to gain public confidence. Very soon, awareness of the peace process increased up to 81.3%; when the public were polled about these governmental initiatives they in fact started to believe that what the government was doing was vital to the betterment of society (see public opinion poll results conducted by KONDA for the government in Bostan, 2013). Moreover, the declining tendency for political tension between the state and pro-Kurdish political representatives, and the continually decreasing rate of violent occurrences, also contributed to the increasing approval rates for the peace process. For instance, Leyla Zana, a Kurdish politician who was banned from practicing politics in the 1990s, came up with an odd way of thinking in pro-Kurdish circles when she stated that the only way to resolve the Kurdish problem lay in the Erdoğan’s leadership and initiative in their consideration of the past trajectories of the conflict.

Despite growing pressures from opposition forces (Celep, 2010; 2014), following Beşir Atalay's official speech delivered on July 29, 2009, the government passed a series of political reform packages in the TGNA and began two consecutive political initiatives to end the Kurdish issue. What was more significant than the government's determination to end the conflict in this regard were the electoral victories of the JDP that gradually helped to consolidate its political power and that also weakened the judicial and militaristic hegemony over democratic politics (see Cizre, 2008). These victories bolstered the government's confidence as the JDP gained increasing support from the public as the peace process was unfolding. At the same time, the PKK declared 'unilateral' ceasefires on the eve of each political initiative, which had already become a cyclic pattern of the conflict in the previous decade (2002-2005, 2009-2011, 2013-2015) (Todorova, 2015).

Despite unrelenting political effort over the 2009-2011 period, the prospects for peace ebbed away after the relapse into conflict in the summer of 2011. The July 2011 and September 2012 period, to this end, was more violent than any other period in decades (International Crisis Group, 2012). However, the JDP government retained the poise of re-introducing its political agenda with regards to
the resolution of the Kurdish issue. In addition to 'goodwill' statements and early political attempts, there were also signs of a 'perplexing' stage within the solution framework of the second political initiatives (2013-2015), considering the violent past trajectories of the conflict (e.g., regular use of terrorism versus counter-terrorism policies). As a result, the JDP government initiated the 'Solution Process' (Çözüm Süreci), in 2013. The rapprochement between the government and Kurdish political representatives in this second initiative and during subsequent proceedings of the process implied a 'new' method, a more transparent implementation of the peace process in contrast to secret meetings as a conduit for progression as part of the first political process. On 28th February 2015, top-level political deliberations between the government and Kurdish political representatives culminated with a declaration of consensus in the aftermath of a meeting at the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul. A statement on the basis of a 10-point consensus, a political agenda regarding the peace process being in progress, was announced to the public. In the aftermath of the Dolmabahçe meeting, however, the peace process was extremely politicised and turned into a tool of party propaganda in the subsequent national election of June 2015. More importantly, difficulties and a disagreement between political representatives of the Kurdish ethnic movement and its armed wing regarding the peace process and demobilisation of militants arose after the latter's rejection of politicians' authority over the armed wing (Daily Sabah, 10-08-2015). The peace process collapsed in the summer of 2015, after an urban riot was declared in Kurdish-inhabited cities and towns.

Political initiatives to end the conflict from 2009 to 2015 were identified with different titles such as the 'Democratic or Kurdish Opening', (Demokratik Açılım) or the 'Solution Process' (Çözüm Süreci) in the mainstream media and academic pieces. Despite different entitlements during particular time periods, however, these initiatives were part of a 'single' policy framework implemented by the government to effect a permanent resolution to the Kurdish issue. The most visible difference between these processes was that the former initiative (2009-2012) was conducted 'secretly' and a roadmap for the resolution of the conflict appeared when it was publicised, whereas the latter initiative (2013-2015) involved a 'transparent' management of the peace process.11

In theory, the government's Kurdish policy focused on the configuration of a 'pragmatic' and 'non-

11 The latter term is often used to refer to the 'whole' process, unless specific reference to the first initiative was necessary. As such, I will follow this strategy in order to evaluate the peace process in this research study.
militaristic' approach to the resolution of the conflict in contrast to the predominant security-ori-
ented policies (repression of rebellions) and out-dated explanations of the Kurdish issue (denial of
Kurdish existence) by its predecessors. To this end, the JDP government took major political steps at
considerable political risk to its place in the political power hierarchy. Despite its critics, which had
been purported on the basis of Islamist background of its leaders, the JDP's position was at the centre
of the right-left political spectrum. Bearing this in mind, the JDP was comprised of a 'broad coalition'
of members from different and sometimes competing segments of society (see Hale & Özbudun,
2010). For this reason, the JDP's initial role in politics rested on its capability to provide a platform
for dissenting views and to give voice to the marginalised periphery, particularly the Kurds and pious
Muslims.

As often appeared in the nationalist rhetoric, the opposition parties accused the government of 'treas-
on' and 'weakness' (see Celep, 2010; 2014). Apart from the observed general conviction as to the
enhanced value of settling the Kurdish issue that arose from the improvements to the peace process,
coming to terms with the Kurdish movement and the pace of rapid changes in the political realm did
not seem to satisfy the interests of far-right political groups. In particular, the government's initia-
tives brought certain negative implications to the surface, such as the expressed reflections of Turk-
ish nationalists on the inclusion of various vital and non-negotiable topics (e.g., Kurdish language in
education, constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity, regional autonomy) to the peace process
(see Kuzu, 2016; the poll results in KONDA, 2011 and Seta, 2009, for a complete representation of
the differences in public opinion regarding the items discussed as part of the peace process). During
the implementation of the peace process, the JDP therefore relied heavily on a coalition with the
pro-Kurdish political party representatives. Later, the political pragmatism and the existence of an
alternating electoral base also became another challenge to the political hegemony of the JDP in
Kurdish majority areas, which impeded the settlement of the Kurdish conflict by igniting competition
for Kurdish votes between the JDP and pro-Kurdish political parties (see Tezcür, 2010). A more spec-
tacular instance was Erdoğan's disownment the consensus reached at Dolmabağçe between the JDP
and Kurdish political representatives. This event marked the beginning of a transition from utilising
a form of rhetoric during the peace process to another form in the post-peace process period. The
failure of the process has also been attributed to the government's reluctance (and unwillingness)
to grant further cultural and language rights, and the regional dynamics in Syria that triggered and
renewed Kurdish aspirations for secession in the midst of an on-going peace process. Furthermore, differences in views regarding a solution to the problem, and power struggles among the ruling cadre of the PKK, pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (PDP, Halkların Demokrasi Partisi) and Öcalan confused the public and discouraged pro-peace politicians.

Lastly, political deliberations had been amicable, and there were grounds for optimism even in February 2015, yet the subsequent developments had cast an air of deep pessimism over the future of the peace process by the end of the year (see Bayramoğlu, 2015). For this reason, the increasing hostilities exerted considerable pressure on the implementation of the process. Not all instances fall neatly into one category, however, and the series of violent events which started with the Kobane protests in October 2014 resulted in policy failure on the government side. At the outset of the peace process in July 2009, the government's initial policy objective was to end up with a 'compromise' peace between the state and the legitimate demands of Kurdish nationalists. The increasing number of violent occurrences and political convulsions of the period, however, ultimately led to an 'alteration' in the positions of conflicting actors from moderate views to hard-line stances. These changes in position precipitated a return to long-held 'maximalist' discourses that had long been purported to be a part of the past political lexicon, frequently utilised not only by former governments (e.g., eradicating the threat of terrorism or killing the last terrorist) but also hawkish Kurdish nationalists (e.g., secessionist aspirations and use of violence).


Young Kurds have played a role in the instigation of violence during the second phase of the peace process, in particular the violent Kobane protests (6-8 October 2014) and the urban riot declared in the summer months of 2015. To start with, a widespread wave of violent protests in Kurdish-inhabited cities and towns triggered the end of any top-level political dialogue in the autumn of 2014. Led by young people under the influence of certain Kurdish politicians, in particular after pro-Kurdish party co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş’s call following his return from the US, young people came together in the streets in solidarity with Kurds and as a reaction against the armed campaign by ISIL to occupy Ayn al-Arab, or better known as Kobane in Kurdish, a Kurdish-inhabited town on Syria’s northern border, with Turkey. Although Demirtaş argued that his intention was to rally the youth purely
for the purpose of peaceful protest, at the end of the day events got out of control. The government’s initial indifference to ISIL’s armed raids and its siege of Kobane mobilised Kurdish nationalists towards these protests (The Guardian, 19-10-2014). However, in the course of these protests, the escalation of tensions turned events into a violent confrontation between the police and the Islamist Kurds, which fell within the government’s immediate remit to impose curfews in six cities. Protesters were mostly young people, and in the course of events they were involved in murders, and the destruction of commercial, private and public property across 35 cities. The solidarity with Kobane demonstrations, a spill-over effect of the Syrian civil war in Turkey, claimed more than 50 lives.

As all eyes were on the peace process, the political situation was more strained in the aftermath of a suicide bombing on July 20, 2015, prepared by a 20-year-old Kurdish member of the ISIL-affiliated Dokumacilar group, most of whose members are registered in Kurdish-inhabited Adıyaman province (Hürriyet Daily News, 22-07-2015). The bombing was perpetrated against leftist political activists gathered for the reconstruction of Kobane after the city’s liberation in Suruç, a town only 10 kilometres from Kobane on Turkey’s southern border with Syria (Milliyet, 20-07-2015). Very soon, sympathisers of the PKK killed two police officers in retaliation for ISIL’s suicide bombing in Suruç. The escalation of tensions provoked outrage on the government side and ignited a new phase of conflict. After a few days, the TAF began air- and land-based military operations against various ISIL and PKK targets situated in Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Later, the conflict, after two-year-long political deliberations over the peace process, escalated into urban riot which erupted in Kurdish-inhabited cities and towns and was again mostly led by younger [civilian] people. The riot marked the start of a short-lived ‘urban warfare’ era that occurred for the first time in the history of the Kurdish issue. However, the ‘new’ strategy lacked popular support as the inhabitants resented the damage inflicted by the PKK organisation, viewed it as being contrary to the interests of local people (Daily Sabah, 13-09-2015; 07-08-2015). Turning “urban areas into battlefields by digging ditches and erecting barriers”, this strategy was revised by the PKK as high-profile figures in the organisation witnessed its failure to achieve military ends and the goal of replacing state authority by mobilising the youth wing, the PRY-M, in this urban warfare (Daily Sabah, 31-05-2016; 19-09-2015).
In this chapter, Kurds were described as a heterogeneous ethnic group that is estimated to comprise 15% of the total population of Turkey. Fragmentation is a defining character of Kurdish society, which appears as a result of religious, sectarian, linguistic and tribal variations and is often shaped by the prevailing context at different historical points. For this reason, the issue of “who is a ‘real’ Kurd?” is a topic of considerable interest, and indeed confusion. However, Kurds are differentiated from various ethnic and cultural groups (i.e., Arabs, Persians or Turks) by these characteristics. This is why various identity or conflict actors (entrepreneurs), legal or illegal, helped to mobilise the Kurds via these unique resources and sought to change existing structures, often through use of violence, in the name of social equality and recognition. In other words, a Kurdish opposition to Turkish modernisation emerged subsequent to the late Ottoman Empire period (late 19th century). In the Ottoman period, religious and tribal leaders led the rebellions against the ‘centre’ to the ends of pure power struggle and to effect the resurgence of declining Kurdish authority on the ‘periphery’ in opposition to Ottoman reformers and the centralisation policies. Kurdish intelligentsia and nationalist organisations gave the Kurdish issue an ethnic character in the aftermath of WWI on the basis of the recognition of Kurdish self-rule in the Treaty of Sèvres.

In the aftermath of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and the resulting violent Kurdish opposition by Sheikh Said in 1925, Kurds sought recognition as a young Republic pursuing nationalism, homogenisation and resettlement policies as part of Turkish modernisation. The Kurdish response in the Early Republican period came in the form of a number of uprisings in the 1920s-30s. After a long period of silence, an emerging urban Kurdish intelligentsia used a socialist rhetoric to pave the way for a nationalist revival in the 1970s. However, this nationalist revival was problematic as it turned violent, a violence which intensified between 1984 and 1999 with the foundation of the PKK in 1978, who mobilised young peasants and the working class. The arrest of Öcalan not only changed the PKK’s objectives but also led to the democratisation of Turkey following the Helsinki Summit in 1999 in which Turkey was declared a candidate state. The possibility of a political settlement to the Kurdish issue only became a realistic proposition after the JDP’s rise to power, along with subsequent changes to the Kurdish policy and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's assertive leadership to end the Kurdish issue, from 2005 onwards. However, the political initiatives of the JDP government
fell short of a comprehensive resolution after a relapse into conflict in 2015.

With regards to the youth aspect of the Kurdish issue, it should be noted that from the early instances of political activism among young army officers, bureaucrats, intellectuals, and students within the Young Turks movement since the Tanzimat era, to the right-left political contention as a chief trigger of deadly street clashes between the two groups of university students prior to the 1980 military coup, young people have played an undeniably important role at various historical points. Similarly, the Kurdish youth played a major role in the 1960s-1970s within leftist organisations and in the PKK-led violence since 1984. Finally, young Kurds are considered to be a major factor in the instigation of violence as part of the dynamics that caused the failure of the peace process (2009-2015). So far, three spontaneous and intertwined trajectories are clear in the history of youth roles in society and instances of youth-instigated violence as part of the Kurdish issue:

- 'Ideological precursors' of organisational structure and political violence in the 1960s-1970s;
- 'Human resources' in the irregular warfare within the ranks of outlawed groups and networks since the late-1970s;
- 'Protesters' or 'troublemakers' in urban centres since the early 2000s.

An assessment of horizontal inequalities, exclusion, and the resulting frustrations, that sometimes cause youth to become involved in conflict and an analysis of lived experiences of conflict during the recent peace process (2009-2015) is a topic for further discussion about why youth continue to participate in violence when a peace process is underway, and which will be presented over the following two chapters.
This chapter presents the structural pre-determinants of a growing social concern, specifically, mobilisation of youth in the 2000s. In the context of unending violent occurrences, instigated primarily by politically opposing young generations, produced a vast amount of research regarding youth roles in society throughout the Republican period (Keleş & Ünsal, 1982; Lüküsli, 2008, 2014; Mardin, 1978; Neyzi, 2001). Apart from mobilisation of mostly educated urban youth in the 1960s-1970s and relatively uneducated peasant youth in the 1980s-1990s; Chapter 4 concentrates on the issues and dilemmas of a marginalised youth cohort in the 2000s, who have been affected by the conflict in Turkey's southeast since early childhood. The structural exclusion of Kurdish youth in the 2000s is acknowledged as a priori function of lack of socio-economic, political and educational opportunities for conflict-affected youth in society. Accumulated grievances related to the existing structures in society, particularly since the mid-1980s, due to the ramifications of widespread violent occurrences that started to emerge in the 1990s and consequences of the conflict (such as IDPs in big cities, economic competition, terrorism, prejudices) are some of the main departure points for the current analysis regarding the issues and dilemmas of conflict-affected youth.

Therefore, the first section provides the way youth is defined in Turkey's southeast and then the analysis is on the basis of the role of internal forced migration and out-migration, on youth exclusion. In the, third, fourth and fifth sections I will examine the role of educational, economic, and political structures on youth exclusion.
This section is comprised of the answers that conveyed how those interviewed view the limits of the period of youth and the transition process from youth to adulthood from their personal experiences. Drawing on responses to the question of how a young person reaches adulthood, or when elders begin to listen to the voices of young people (in Turkey's southeast), there were no significant differences between different youth categories. The responses revealed a strong relationship between the definition of youth and a contextual interpretation of the phenomenon:

_In fact, this has something to do with a person's maturity. It is not very relevant whether one goes to high school or to college. People mature through experiences, which increase in number with age. Moreover, with this [maturing], one's household will begin to slowly start to 'pass the word to you', so that you can freely speak your thoughts_ (Interview, S13Y07).

_Social factors, life; they are important. The behaviours of an individual are also important. There are some people that live a fast life. They see all kinds of things. They mature at an earlier age. Others may have been brought up with family pressure; reach the age of 30, but still cannot be as mature as another person at 20 years old_ (Interview, S13Y05).

Among others, one individual stated that the obligation of military service was one of the ways to finalise the transition to adulthood (Interview, S13Y04). This response, however, must be interpreted with caution as the conscription age differs depending on one’s level of education. For instance, the conscription age is 18 for high school graduates or those with a lower educational attainment. The enlistment process for university graduates, however, can be extended up to the mid-30s as a result of graduate education or the search for employment. An example of such an interviewee response can be found in the following excerpt:

_Our families usually do not listen to our words. Even if our views are correct at 17 or 18, our words are not heeded. "You do not know anything, you are a mere boy". For example, when you try to marry someone, it is often not welcomed and instead, families impose their selections. I should mention a view of my father here. He says, "Now this man has done military service, he has grown to face what he does_ (Interview, D13Y09).
Some participants expressed the role of education and employment factors in the transition to adulthood:

> Currently, I still feel young. I do not feel like an adult. Because, I am still a student. I get money from my parents. I do not own a business. Once I start to work, they will begin to listen to our words. Currently, they do not listen. It was different before university. After finishing it will be different. They listen to our words more after each level (Interview, S13Y24).

> Here [the Turkey’s southeast] age is a better criterion. They have the perception that every thought of the elders is true. If you achieve education and occupation at a particular point, they start to listen to your thoughts (Interview, S13Y08).

> It is shaped by the family’s expectations. If you know the expectations of the family – for example, if it is money – then you become an individual after you find a job (Interview, S13Y031).

Overall, responses to the first question (e.g., the transition from youth to adulthood) produced results that supported the findings in the literature in identifying issues as a source of youth exclusion that validate the role of the ‘blocked transition to adulthood’ debate (Barker & Ricardo 2005; Curtain, 2001; Hilker & Fraser, 2009). With regards to the outcomes of the Kurdish issue, certain impediments (such as lack of educational and economic opportunities) to the transition to adulthood process appear as major factors for young people’s exclusion. Likewise, research findings in this study suggest conclusions similar to the comparative study conducted by Salehi-Isfahani and Dhillon (2008), in which they explored young people’s methods of transition in Middle Eastern countries. In a transition process, issues like education, employment or marriage are often interlinked subjects. That is, young people’s voices are listened to, to an extent, subject to the accomplishment of one of these factors. However, in order to achieve the status of an adult in society, education, military service, employment and marriage are considered necessary prerequisites that a young person must achieve, and often in that sequence.

The excerpt below acknowledges Salehi-Isfahani and Dhillon’s (2008) findings that were found prev-
alent in traditional societies. Indeed, the quote below suggests the validity of the argument by comparing perceptions of youth-hood in traditional southeastern society with western Turkey:

*Usually, it varies from city to city in Turkey. For example, in Istanbul or Ankara, your words are valued whenever you finish high school. In places like Urfa education is not a priority anyway. Middle school, high school- they are not important, not even if university is reached. So the average age here is 20-21 when they start to listen to you, which is when after a person is done with military service. As if holding a gun makes a person mature and qualify as an adult.*

4.2. The Kurdish Issue and Youth in Turkey’s Southeast

The conflict inflicted serious costs on the socio-economic fabric of society, which in turn substantially affected young people's successful transition to adulthood in Turkey’s southeast. The discontents and anxieties of the Kurds arose from the prolongation of the armed conflict and the resulting emergency rule from the 1990s to 2002, raised concerns about the good/bad governance issue. As such, social interactions involved tensions between the Turkish and Kurdish population within a conflict-weary society. Migrant/local fault lines emerged as a result of forced/voluntary migration flux of the Kurdish rural population into urban centres in search of jobs and security. Likewise, the PKK-led violence – including the instances of self-immolation actions in big cities – became a source of antagonism, which have had a negative effect on inter-communal relations (see KONDA, 2011). Furthermore, the basic physical and organisational structures and facilities needed for the functioning of society damaged and social services interrupted due to instances of armed conflict in Turkey’s southeast. As a result of such factors, young people's marginalisation has become a 'norm', especially in the aftermath of violence intensification period (in the 1990s) in towns and cities as they face the ramifications of the prolonged conflict in daily lives, including social interactions and in-family relations.

4.2.1. Forced Migration and the IDPs

In the context of the Kurdish issue, Turkey's history of internal migration inflicted serious costs on the socioeconomic fabric of society, particularly regarding the transformation of social organisation in big cities. Following the outbreak of armed conflict and the displacement of Kurds from Turkey's southeast, the transformation of society extended to an unprecedented level. Before the 1980s and
1990s, migration waves in previous decades were voluntary in nature and stimulated predominantly by economic motives. Doğan (2002) states that migration trends in the 1950s and 1960s were mostly motivated by a widespread agricultural modernisation, commenced with DP governments. For him, migration was an outcome of increasing unemployment rates in rural areas, encouraging internal population movements to more job-abundant industrial locations in the western provinces. In contrast to the economic migration trends of the past, internal migration throughout the 1980s and 1990s; however, were mostly caused by conflict-induced motivations, which also involved an involuntary aspect (HÜNEE, 2006).

Notwithstanding the persistent violent climate as a major cause of internal migration from the conflict zones to other cities in southeastern or western parts of the country, a substantial amount of research investigates secondary motivations. For Acar and Urhal (2007: 368), for instance, migration waves from Turkey's southeast are an outcome of factors such as unemployment, terrorism, expectations for an improved lifestyle, educational opportunities and better health services, inadequate land distribution in rural parts due to rising population needs and blood-feuds. Likewise, another report claims that personal (34.7 %) and family (27.1 %) issues are the most significant factors, while economic (16.2 %) and security (9.4 %) concerns are secondary issues for the internal migration trends (BAÜSAM, 2009: 82-89). In contrast, a report by TESEV (2006) contends that security concerns and fear are the major drivers of internal migration in the 1990s and afterwards. Similarly, Saraçoğlu (2010), points out the insecurity level experienced by inhabitants in Turkey's southeast as a result of prolonged conflict environment, and economic distress, which occurred after the neoliberal transformation of the national economy. Lastly, extensive research on Kurdish migration to the western cities found that 47.2 % of its population migrated for security concerns (HÜNEE, 2006: 57).

In contrast to voluntary and economically motivated internal migration waves in the 1950s and 1960s; entangled with various aspects, yet, mainly stimulated by the conflict, internal (forced or voluntary) migration in succeeding decades instigated unfavourable outcomes. In regard to the consequences of internal migration waves, a report that has been presented to Turkey's Grand National Assembly (TGNA, TBMM in Turkish) indicates that the negative results triggered by internal migration caused the following social issues:
As indicated in the Commission report to the national assembly, the adverse consequences of internal migration appear mostly due to prevalent socio-economic circumstances and infrastructural issues in host places. Rapid urbanisation and insufficient public services are often the causes of the emerging needs of a growing population, which is worsened by migration inflows. Likewise, economic stagnation and unplanned industrialisation for decades are among the leading causes of growing unemployment and underemployment rates that increase the economic insecurities of migrant families. Moreover, rapid urbanisation and internal migration movements inflicted costs on the social fabric of society. Exclusionary behaviours in host societies appear to be a significant problem, especially in big cities that affect both local and migrant populations. Although the Kurdish issue has been known as a low-intensity conflict between the security forces and the PKK militants for decades, as Ağirdir (2008) notes, recent developments involve risks to turn the question into a conflict between communities after the latest migration waves.

4.2.2. Rise of Exclusionary Behaviours

An outcome of the prolonged conflict in Turkey's southeast has been the construction of a setting that forced the relocation of a vast number of Kurds from territorial ‘periphery’ to the ‘centre’. Territoriality, in this sense, implies a fragmentation between locals and outsiders (migrants or foreigners). Therefore, a dichotomy exists in social relations between in-and-out-groups that involve a categorisation of others and development of an identity-based fragmentation that leads to separations such as ‘us’ and ‘them’ in transformed circumstances (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As part of such differentiation, belonging to a group fosters some psychosocial markers and mechanisms. Concomitant to building a distinct social identity for in-group, for instance, a ‘comfort zone’ appears for the members, while strangers who have either resisted or failed to be part of an existing social organisation...
could be forced into an isolated status within a system.

The rise of exclusionary behaviours in society as a growing pattern of existing social relations, therefore, separates different segments of society from each other. One of the characteristics of social groups, in this sense, is out-group homogeneity. Members of a social group often consider in-group as an entity that is comprised of diverse characteristics, whereas they in turn conceive out-group members more or less similar to each other (Leyens et al., 1994). This leads to discrimination against out-group members, founded upon the perceptions of attributed negative characteristics that may appear after initial encounters or following a certain level of interaction. Within the Kurdish context, certain types of exclusionary behaviours seem to exist parallel to the increasing levels of PKK terrorism, especially after it spread to urban centres in western Turkey. Concomitant to this has been the increasing migration waves after emptying of villages in the southeastern provinces, causing conflicts between migrants and locals (Ağırdır, 2008). As Saraçoğlu (2010) argues, the exclusion of migrants is an outcome of the socioeconomic transformation of “the social structure and urban social life”. In this sense, it could be argued that local exclusionary attitudes are reactions against an out-group that began to share resources with locals in post-migration settings, and to an extent, disrupted or affected the existing social order in a local context.

Field research conducted by Saraçoğlu (2010) in İzmir, for instance, explains that respondents in this study often describe migrant Kurds as the “disrupters” of social order by tacit reference to an increase in criminal activities in the city. Similarly, the use of the Kurdish language in public spaces is usually identified in the mindsets of locals to imply “solidarity” among the Kurds, and also to refer to pro-PKK views and separatism (ibid: 131-162). Saraçoğlu’s research on the views and experiences of middle-class inhabitants, and confrontations with the incoming Kurdish migrants since the 1980s, in İzmir, is an example to observe some of the root causes of youth exclusion, and therefore to demonstrate the increasing propensity to violence. In this sense, pejoratives used by inhabitants in order to categorise Kurds such as “living by ill-gotten gains” (haksız kazançla geçinme), “ignorant and culture-less” (cahil ve kültürsüz) and “separatist” (bölücü) (ibid: 132), suggests the economic, educational and political extent of exclusion in society in a migrant-rich, yet culturally homogenous and elitist province situated in the western coasts of Turkey nestled in the Aegean Sea. Likewise, the stereo-
types used by the locals such as “invaders” (işgalci) and “disrupters of urban life” (kent hayatını mahvetme) (ibid: 132-133) appear as adjectives that denote the outcomes of Kurdish migration on perceived mentalities regarding the distortion of social life in the city after growing migrant presence, and integration failures following rapid urbanisation. A national survey that has been directed by SETA (2009) reinforces Saraçoğlu’s inferences, yet opposing results exist on the Kurdish side. Whereas 71 % of Turkish respondents pair Kurdish identity with secessionist aspirations, 59 % of Kurdish respondents disagree with this opinion (ibid: 109-111). Kaya (2009) conducted research in the city of Diyarbakir, a majority-Kurdish province in the Turkey's southeast, and found that Kurdish migration from rural to urban areas generates similarly prejudiced behaviours, such as the humiliation of rural migrants in the public sphere. Anti-migrant behaviours in such examples tend to be a social issue that is mostly based on changing social settings after migration, yet, not precisely as a result of ethnic tensions.

It can be argued that armed groups frequently exploit the consequences of such social issues, as discussed in various parts of this research, in order to bring in new recruits. The displacement of individuals not only yields physical dislocation from home, but also represents a unique state of being that denotes persons who are socially and culturally separated from existing socioeconomic settings. Leaving everything back in their birthplaces, rootlessness and the search for an identity is a major issue that migrant families face in order to survive in emerging challenges after their arrival to post-migration locations (HÜNEE, 2006). In the context of Kurdish experiences of migration, for instance, leaving properties in Turkey’s southeast without a likely return possibility shortly seems like one of the most complicated issues in the face of internal migration to provinces in western Turkey (Kurban et al., 2006). Separation from usual settings where men and women were engaged in economic production like agriculture and stockbreeding, members of migrant families often fail to participate in the workforce, which increases their economic insecurities (ibid: 13). Such conditions give rise to tendencies to resort to alternative and often illegal means in order to achieve a certain level of economic wellbeing and social status (TBMM, 1998). Outlawed groups and illegal networks such as gangs and the mafia, therefore, aim to satisfy such vulnerabilities of migrants in big cities, especially frustrated urban youth (ibid).
4.2.3. A Migrant Reaction: Compatriotism

In response to the emerging issues within a post-migration context such as exclusionary behaviours, territorial isolation, economic and social insecurities, uncertainties, and other discouraging factors often force migrants to search for alternative ways of forming new identity structures. Migrant communities, thus often channel their growing presence and dynamism into hemşeri (persons from the same part of the country) networks by assembling in associations that are particularly aimed at filling the gaps that emerge in the absence of means to address migrant social traumas. Within this context, Çelik (2002), argues that Kurds have found similar compatriotic hubs for social connectedness in the first place, and also to deal with the consequences of structural deficiencies in destinations upon arrival.

As a way to revitalise the ‘self’, identity bonds recur in such spaces; these networks, therefore, may manifest ignored identities and allow an individual to explicitly redefine him or herself in an altered way. Within the context of these activities, such hubs often intensify centre-periphery ruptures in host places, and may further isolation by producing migrant ghettos. Kaya’s (2009) study, for instance, shows that Kurds, who arrive in Istanbul because of security concerns, often choose a place to settle in where compatriots are already present (see Table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places</th>
<th>From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aksaray</td>
<td>Mardin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avciğer</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bağcılar</td>
<td>Batman and Bitlis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esenler</td>
<td>Diyarbakir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esenyurt</td>
<td>Van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatih</td>
<td>Bitlis, Tunceli, Muş, Mardin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gümüşhane</td>
<td>Batman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kâğıthane</td>
<td>Şırnak and Hakkari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kartal</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanarya</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuçükçekmece</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şirinevler</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarlabası</td>
<td>Mardin and Siirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendik</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kaya, 2009: 147-148

By constructing solidarity networks, hemşeri associations usually provide economic opportunities to newcomers by employing them in the workplaces of the first-comers, and such networks are composed of voting blocks, which influence local politics by changing voting behaviours (Tezcan, 2011).
Unlike the shared features of every hemşeri association, which consolidate everyday life functions for migrants from a province of different parts of the country, such hubs founded by Kurds have also been places for ethnic revitalization that is often facilitated by social activities (Çelik, 2002). A kind of interaction thus exists in, and around these networks. The reconstruction of ethnic ‘self’ in hemşeri networks invites politicisation of the members; this is a way in which pro-PKK tools, such as media outlets and pro-Kurdish party agents use and manipulate such individual socialisation processes (Kaya, 2009).

4.2.4. Surviving in a Gecekondu: Marginalised Youth

Young people are likely to migrate from rural areas to urban centres for a variety of motivating factors in most conflict settings (Cockburn, 1999). Categorically, conflict-induced causes, such as pursuing better educational opportunities and expecting more economic gains are the top migration motives. Therefore, individuals often view migration from rural areas to urban centres as an opportunity to improve existing life standards (Sommers, 2003; World Bank, 2008). Youth migration, however, is usually linked to adverse outcomes in host locations, such as a rise in political and anti-social violence rates. Socio-economic conditions in host locations, in this sense, can marginalise young people who were frustrated due to unattainable living standards in post-migration contexts in contrast to initial expectations. Marginalised youth in these new settings, therefore, were gradually converted into the targets of violent groups. In principle, however, migration is a useful strategy to avoid youth violence as long as it is voluntary in nature and fulfils expectations to an extent, particularly if the route of migration is from fragile to more stable locations (Hilker & Fraser, 2009). Migration to the peripheries of big cities in developing countries, likewise, is likely to produce similar outcomes because of existing socioeconomic inequalities (ibid: 34). Organised migration inflows, which are guided to relatively established locations, therefore, might provide some means of integrating youth into the society that could prevent youth involvement in violence and illegal activities.

Most of the structural deficiencies in migrant receiving conditions also trigger infrastructural problems in these circumstances and constrain newcomers into dwellings comparable to slums (gecekondu in Turkish). This has been a source of further isolation and frustration for migrant members of society. Apart from the psychosocial needs that appeared as a result of structural deficiencies, physical conditions in these neighbourhoods also raised serious concerns. In these slum-like
habitations, migrant families often reproduce an eco-system that merge pre-migration living forms and the new circumstances. Typical migrant profiles in this context appear in post-migration settings that involve persons with some education, either unemployed or underemployed and living in a large family. For instance, research directed by the Population Studies Institute at Hacettepe University stated that 78.2 % were composed of uneducated individuals, while 44.5 of them were found to be unemployed (HÜNEE, 2006: 41). This is a conclusion of deficiencies in socioeconomic conditions, and lack of educational opportunities as predominant features of Turkey's southeast that also deteriorates survival strategies in post-migration settings (İçduygu et al., 1999; Yükseker, 2006). The immediate nature of migration has been an additional factor of migrant vulnerability, leaving Kurds unprepared for rising post-migration challenges (HÜNEE, 2006).

Escaping from insecure environments in Turkey's southeast, most Kurdish migrants ended up living in gecekondu, facing comparably difficult conditions, yet in different circumstances. Physical conditions in migrant quarters have typically been composed of small and unsuitable dwellings for a decent living, which are situated in the margins of big cities (İçduygu et al., 1999). A family structure, in general, is composed of an average of four or more children and often includes other family members such as grandparents or close relatives. A study conducted by KONDA, for instance, reports that the average number of members in Kurdish-origin respondents of the study is 6.1; on the contrary, the average number is around 4.3 in Turkish-origin respondents. Proportions of 6-8 (35.8 %), and 9 and more (18.5 %) members in a family are significant indicators of family types (see Table 4.2). In another study the proportion of such types of families is even higher (34 % for both 6-8 and 9+ members) in rural parts of Turkey's southeast (Ağırdır, 2008: 6).

Lack of economic opportunities is similarly alarming from various aspects. Financial situations in migrant families depend on the incomes of parents and older siblings; yet, new circumstances in big

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2. Number of Household Members in Kurdish Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of household members</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 and more persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: KONDA, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cities, and sometimes due to extraordinary issues (such as due to ill-health or loss of parents), financial provisions rely on the income generation activities of under-age persons as primary breadwinners of a family (Yükseker, 2006). This is a rising concern in post-migration settings. Socio-economic conditions in gecekondus are worsened due to insufficient infrastructure and low-quality social services provided by local administrations in these neighbourhoods (İçduygu et al., 1999).

Overall, migrant neighbourhoods are gradually being considered as unsafe spaces in big cities as a result of exclusion from socioeconomic structures and are starting to be associated with high crime rates, and the propensity for illegal activities, especially among youth who grow up in impoverished circumstances. In such settings, excluded young people living in migrant quarters are often targeted by armed groups, exploiting existing socio-economic problems as a motivation for anti-social or political violence instigation.

In terms of personal post-migration experiences and vulnerabilities in the face of impoverished settings that motivate young people to participate in violence, youth involvement in violent political protests in big cities could be seen as an example to justify the marginalisation of youth and participation in violence relationship. As Table 4.3 illustrates, the number of young people in the hands of security forces convicted or arrested due to participation in violent events have risen exponentially in recent years. This has evidently been a strategy used to socialise and mobilise young people in violent protests; to recruit them as they are being convicted of crimes, thus forcing them to become militants in the aftermath.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>74.251</td>
<td>9.142</td>
<td>83.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>76.405</td>
<td>8.511</td>
<td>84.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>89.667</td>
<td>11.164</td>
<td>100.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>102.350</td>
<td>13.089</td>
<td>115.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>102.493</td>
<td>14.993</td>
<td>117.486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TÜİK, 2014

This is why, the PKK’s initial strategies in recruiting rural youth in Turkey’s southeast gradually involved potential members from urban centres after rapid migration to cities, and uneven urbanisa-
tion since the 1970s (Karadeniz & Usta, 2007). Migrant quarters in big cities, therefore, are a significant ‘fishing ground’ for the PKK organisation. Some recruits from migrant quarters in big cities exceed members from Turkey’s southeast as the top 3 cities in recruitment are Diyarbakır 17.6%; Istanbul 15.7%; Mardin 15.7% (Özcan & Gürkaynak, 2012: 21). One of the consequences of internal migration to western Turkey or big cities in Turkey’s southeast is, therefore, a setting for an armed group to exploit and manipulate the feelings of aggrieved migrants. Organising in urban centres, armed groups also reinforce logistical bases to execute violent activities, and also to develop spheres of influence within such communities through propaganda and protest meetings.

4.3. Lack of Educational Opportunities

In certain circumstances, and in conjunction with other-sub-factors, lack of educational opportunities can motivate young people’s mobilisation. Several studies acknowledge the relationship between low-education levels and the risk of conflict onset and escalation (Barakat & Urdal 2008; Collier 2006). Regarding the educational system of a country, the schooling rate is an indicator of the education and conflict liaison. This is why, lack of education is a function of individual vulnerability that increases the likelihood of participation in illegal activities and armed groups (Hilker, 2010). Therefore, a well-organised educational system can decrease youth participation in violence, and enable their successful integration into society.

Barakat and Urdal (2009) argue that low schooling rates in secondary education, combined with a presence of youth-bulge in society can potentially increase the possibility of conflict inception. The relationship between low schooling rates in secondary education and violence proclivity, in line with Barakat and Urdal’s research, can also be observed as part of the educational system in Turkey’s southeast. As seen in the table below, the net-schooling rates in secondary education in Kurdish-majority provinces is lower than in other locations (see Table 4.4). In particular, the schooling rates are even lower in provinces where violent occurrences are relatively higher (e.g., Ağrı, Bingöl, Bitlis, Hakkari Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, Van). Exceptions to the propensity to violence and schooling rate exist only in the Diyarbakır, Batman and Tunceli provinces.
A second educational exclusion indicator that will be included in this section is the duration of education. Research conducted by KONDA has found that the length of education for citizens of Kurdish origin was 5.6 years in 2006, and 6 years in 2010 (KONDA, 2011). For Turkish respondents, education years have been measured 1.9 and 2.1 years more than Kurdish counterparts. More noteworthy is the length of education for women and parents (Ağırdır, 2008: 6). For parents, average years in education is 3.2 for Kurdish fathers and 1.3 for mothers, which was 4.8 and 3.3 respectively for Turkish parents in 2006 and 2010, indicating variances at community-based analysis and between the generations (ibid: 5-6). Illiteracy rates are also a significant indicator to evaluate overall composition of educational attainment in the Turkey's southeast rightly. As Table 4.5 shows, the illiteracy rate of Kurds is higher in comparison to the average illiteracy rate of the total population. Educational attainment at other levels is also equally lower than the Turkey average.
Table 4.5. Education Level of Kurds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Kurdish population</th>
<th>Turkey average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literate (without a certificate)</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school and vocational high school</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Lower educational attainment is an essential element of mobilisation. In various conflict situations, uneducated youth cohorts often constitute the only and necessary manpower resource of armed groups, as exemplified in Niger Delta and Rwanda instances (Oyefusi, 2008; Mamdani, 2001). Armed groups, thus, attempt to convert uneducated young generations into militants who have mostly been marginalised in big cities or isolated in rural settings; as in the case of the PKK’s recruitment strategy since the mid-1980s (Atıcı & Gümüş, 2001). As presented in Table 4.6, in which the overall data has been collected from 6158 persons, 13% of members of the organisation have been noted as illiterate persons. 9% of members in this study have been documented as literate individuals, yet, without any formal educational record. A quarter of militants, therefore, have not been involved in any formal educational system before enrolment in the violent organisation. Likewise, a large number of the militants (38%) were primary school graduates at the pre-recruitment stage (Atıcı & Gümüş, 2001).

Table 4.6. Education Levels of the Members of the PKK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literate (without a certificate)</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>2304</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6158</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Çalışmaları, APK Daire Başkanlığı - reproduced from Atıcı & Gümüş, 2001: 83-90

As shown in Atıcı and Gümüş's (2001) study, and in line with mobilisation strategies in different contexts, uneducated youth tends to be more willing to join violent groups in Turkey’s southeast. The propagation of organisational ideology in public, and mobilising ‘frustrations’ and ‘grievances’ seems easier for uneducated youth cohorts. Education often provides a rational worldview in everyday life.
choices and paves the way for an understanding of peaceful coexistence, endowing individuals with an ability to negotiate differences without resorting to force (Thyne, 2006). This is why, the role of formal education in the socialisation of young people is a significant pedagogical factor in their personal development that can also be seen as a preventive factor for youth mobilisation. Otherwise, violent groups would be able to satisfy neglected educational needs by ideological indoctrination in place of the educational curricula that is deemed as a crucial part of an individual’s cognitive development (Atıcı & Gümüş, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.7. Obstacles to the Right of Education, Student marches, Boycotts and Trespassing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student marches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student boycotts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student trespassing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In contrast to the relationship between low-level of education and the inclination to participate in violence, it should also be acknowledged that educated youth cohorts are recruited to perform particular functions within violent groups. For instance, Hilker and Fraser (2009) argue that violent groups are often composed of a combination of a small, educated unit and large, uneducated youth clusters. Likewise, Weinstein (2007) argues that identity-based movements usually appeal to educated cohorts in contrast to rent-distributing groups who usually comprise of uneducated recruits. Whereas the former are often mobilised by ideological motives alone and are situated at the top of the hierarchy, the latter group are mostly mobilised by social motives and/or economic incentives (ibid: 23). In this sense, violent Kurdish groups have been comprised of an equivalent structural formation since the mid-1980s. An educated group of members constituted the ruling cadres within the PKK organisation, whereas militants have largely been recruited from uneducated youth groups in society. Likewise, educated members of the organisation have primarily been motivated by ideological juxtapositions in the first place, once they became acquainted with violence-prone leftist groups during university years. It should also be recalled from the previous chapter that the political activism of university students throughout the 1970s has been a crucial component of the radicalisation of Kurdish youth before the formation of the organisation in the late-1970s.
4.3.1. Impediments to Educational Rights

Addressing the loss of, and alienation from education during the conflict and throughout post-conflict situations is a significant aspect of policy programmes, which aim to lower youth exclusion dynamics in societies (McEvoy-Levy, 2007: 5). For McEvoy-Levy, this is an essential subject mainly for the IDPs and refugees. Factors that might exclude youth from educational structures such as segregation in schools, worsened teacher-student relationships, must therefore be addressed in post-conflict peacebuilding enterprises (ibid: 5). Governmental strategies to reduce the alienation of youth from education, policies to transform the educational system by changing the content of the school curricula and textbooks in the 2000s (UPOS, 2014: 110-113), along with the EU reforms, can be seen as democratisation of the education system, which can also be regarded as an effort to diminish youth exclusion from educational structures.

Education and training that are not adequately linked to employment opportunities, and the quality of education as a means of reducing negative behaviours and attitudes are similarly regarded as significant aspects of youth-oriented initiatives (Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 24). Regarding the achievement of necessary job qualifications and increasing the employability of young generations, quality of education is a necessity, and is also an effective means to prevent young people from joining violent and extremist groups (Türkdoğan, 1996). Empowering educational infrastructures in conflict societies can be seen as an essential component of a social change endeavour aimed at the transformation of individual's social relations and roles. In this sense, Thyne (2006) identifies the role of educational investments in shaping the perceptions of local people about governments as a significant step, only if the locals are satisfied with educational progress and development in their neighbourhoods. This seems a priority policy framework for the incumbent government in Turkey to provide support to educational programmes both to address infrastructural and instructive needs. For instance, projects like BELDES (funding programmes for municipalities) and SODES (social inclusion programmes with an educational dimension) mainly intend to eliminate social impediments, such as reducing unequal access to education that includes refurbishing and re-opening schools due to violence, introducing training courses for the most vulnerable segments of society such as youth and women (UPOS, 2014). Initiating educational openings, particularly for persons beyond the school age is also a crucial means of integrating these segments affected by the prolonged conflict in society.
To undermine such dynamism to recover adverse implications of a more than 30-years-old conflict by reaching a larger community, counter-manoeuvres such as destroying educational infrastructure (building and material), impeding the right to education, and more importantly, jeopardising the lives of educational personnel in conflict-affected areas have long been adopted as a strategy by the PKK. This appears as an approach, not only aimed to discontinue an individual's educational progression, but also as a tactic to disrupt their attachment to the state by constructive bonds such as education. In this sense, Table 4.4 points to this fact that the PKK often targets the educational system and its infrastructure in the region by executing different tactics (impeding education rights, marches, boycotts, trespassing). Likewise, according to Atıcı and Gümüş’s (2001) study, educational personnel in the region have frequently been targeted by the organisation, as 116 individuals have been killed out of 128-targeted educators, while 37 have been abducted between the years 1984 and 2000 (83-90).

4.4. Lack of Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods

Turkey's southeast has suffered from economic underdevelopment because of modernisation and changing economic relations in the past centuries, and the conflict environment since the late-1970s. In the context of economic relations with the outside world, for instance, Saraçoğlu (2010) argues that “economic peripheralisation” in Turkey's southeast, in fact, dates back to 17th-century economic reorientation and changing economic relations in the Anatolian heartland (97). In line with Saraçoğlu’s evaluation, the origins of economic disparity also emanated from fundamental changes in the reorientation of economy periods and, as an outcome of the negative consequences of changing economic tendencies on social relations. In this sense, an import substitution oriented economic development model, which was introduced in the 1930s as part of a statist economic programme of the Atatürk’s RPP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – Republican People’s Party) was replaced by an export-oriented neoliberal economy in the 1980s (Aydin, 2005). Economic liberalisation in the 1980s not only influenced the structure and mode of production in the economy but also escalated the disparities between different parts of the country, which also triggered social tensions as part of the changing dynamics in the social environment and relations and as a result of rapid urbanisation and migration movements (Buğra & Keyder, 2003).

Apart from structural economic changes, the ramifications of armed conflicts often inflict costs on
the economic fabric of affected societies, and social services also face severe consequences (Achio & Specht, 2003), which impede youth efforts to survive in a rather challenging conflict setting. One of the main drawbacks in Turkey's southeast, for instance, has been the worsening of economic circumstances as a result of a conflict that has endured for over thirty years. An armed confrontation in the region not only damaged the existing infrastructure, but also barred economic feasibility for potential ventures. Combined with negative outcomes such as the dislocation of local people—especially those living in the rural areas—deserting agricultural capacity, abandoning stockbreeding fields for security reasons, and other geographical limits hindered economic activities in the region.

4.4.1. Basic Economic Indicators and Regional Underdevelopment

By evaluating economic issues in Turkey's southeast as an outcome of neoliberal transition, changing the nature of economic relations and distressing normal functioning of it, unemployment rates can be seen as a primary indicator. Similarly, the distribution of employment sectors is also significant when it comes to understanding the trajectory of economic transformation in the region. In this sense, an illustration of unemployment and retirement sub-sectors in the total employment statistics is consequential. For instance, in Erdem's (2008) study, the unemployment rate for Kurds (17.2 5 %) is significant in that it surpasses the unemployment rate of the total population (9.8 %) by 7.4 %. Likewise, other indicators, such as the ratio of retired people among Kurds, are % 8 less than average, whereas in the agricultural sector it is 2.8 % more than the national level in Turkey (ibid: 59) (see Table 4.8). In line with these statistical figures, it is possible to determine that the presence of high unemployment rates and less proportion of people in the retirement age are a sign of regional economic backwardness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment sectors</th>
<th>Kurds</th>
<th>Turkey average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Erdem, 2008: 17
Real wages in different employment sectors can also be a sign of relative economic differences between the Kurds and rest of the country. A significant statistic is, for instance, the proportion of Kurds that receive less than 300 TRY in a month (31.9 %), which is quite less than the total average (16.3 %). Both figures reveal the extent of economic deprivation in Kurdish-majority areas, and also in Kurdish migrant quarters within big cities (BAÜSAM, 2009: 67) (see Table 4.9). As one of the results of neoliberal restructuring of the national economy, real wages in most sectors were also devaluated along with the profit maximisation strategies of ‘new’ capitalists occupying the industrial sector in the post-1980 period (Boratav, 2003). Therefore, economic deficiencies at the individual and structural levels gradually involved social tensions in society and increased the gap between the upper and lower social layers (Doğan, 2002). While the conditions of poorest segments grew even worse, ‘frustrations’ became a new normal in the emerging economic and social order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income (TRY)</th>
<th>Kurds</th>
<th>Turkey average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 300</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-700</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701-1200</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1201-3000</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 +</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Erdem, 2008: 18

Likewise, a negative implication of the introduction of the neoliberal economy has been the relationship between the Kurds and the informal sector. In contrast to the 1960s and 1970s, however, the job portfolio in this sector throughout the 1980s, involved unintended jobs in society (Ayata & Yükeker, 2007). This alienated IDPs who had migrated to the western cities of Turkey where young Kurds in particular have been excluded from social and economic life (ibid: 53-55). This has built Kurdish youth as a social segment vulnerable to illegal activities that included joining violent and extremist groups. Similarly, neoliberal economic policies imposed an alteration of the mode of production. Turkey’s new economic orientation transformed it from an agrarian society, a prevalent feature of the Ottoman Empire that has been inherited by the new Republic, into an export-oriented industrialising economy. Agrarian production, such as farming and stockbreeding, which have been the main sources of income in Turkey’s southeast for many decades, became an out-dated feature of society (Doğan, 2002). The negative outcomes of the conflict environment could be observed as a result of this emerging feature of the economy, as thousands of villages have been emptied of...
security reasons and inhabitants migrated to urban centres in southeastern and western Turkey. In this sense, IDPs constituted an alienated and excluded segment of city life, as the transition from an agrarian form of life to an urban one positioned them in the unemployed and/or unskilled labourers group (ibid).

Notwithstanding economic deprivation as the only determinative factor, it has often been a catalyst for several other factors, which depict the motivations for participation in violence. The level of unequal distribution of economic wealth of a nation can be a source of equally rising levels of violence in society (Türkdoğan, 1996). An analysis of the Gross National Product (GNP) per person as an indicator of regional differences, therefore, is a useful statistical figure to reveal the ‘relative deprivation’ of Kurdish-majority areas. In particular, Marmara, a region nestled in Turkey’s European edge, and comprised of territories circling the Sea of Marmara, for instance, is the industrial centre of the country, sustaining a GNP over 10,000 TRY per person. Income levels in Turkey’s southeast are, however, about 1,500 TRY per person (BAÜSAM, 2009: 68) (see Table 4.10). A comparably significant indicator has been the use of free social security services (yeşil kart – green card). It is a system that aims to cover the health insurance expenses of the deprived population who have a total income of less than 1/3 of the minimum wage (Arın, 2002). The proportion of green card holders is about 33.2 % of Kurdish respondents in a general survey conducted by Erdem, while it is 10.3 % in the overall population (Erdem, 2008: 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>GNP per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marmara</td>
<td>10.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aegean</td>
<td>3.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>2.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Anatolia</td>
<td>4.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Sea</td>
<td>3.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Anatolia</td>
<td>2.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Anatolia</td>
<td>1.437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regards to the youth dimension of regional economic indicators, unemployment rates for youth are even more significant. According to an ILO (2009) report, many states have become unable to provide adequate employment opportunities for growing youth populations in the last few decades. Similar to global youth employment trends, unemployment and underemployment amongst youth
are also at an alarming level in Turkey. Persistent economic crises, particularly in the 1990s, and occasional global economic recession cycles tend to influence national capacities to provide jobs for incoming young cohorts. More importantly, economic tendencies influence job search and livelihood opportunities of young generations more than other segments of society. In the face of a national economic catastrophe, which occurred in February 2001, for instance, youth has been the most affected segment of society (in particular the 20-24 age group) (DİE, 2001).

**4.4.2. Youth and Unequal Economic Opportunities**

Economic independence is an important aspect and a crucial rite of passage to adulthood. However, high rates of unemployment and diminishing economic prospects for the future are considered among the indicators of young people’s economic insecurity. An ILO estimate, for instance, states that: “Youth population grew by 10.5% over the last 10 years to more than 1 billion in 2003, youth employment grew by only 0.2% suggesting that the growth in the number of young people is rapidly outstripping the ability of economies to provide them with jobs.” (ILO, 2004; see also Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 22). Economic problems are likely to have consequences on normal functioning of youth in society. Hilker and Fraser (2009), for instance, notes that “without access to employment or livelihood opportunities, most young people cannot afford a house, cannot afford a dowry, and cannot marry and their transition to adulthood is effectively blocked” (22). Therefore, economic exclusion and insecurity, in terms of large unemployed cohorts and exclusion of young persons from or within economic life, constitutes a major motivation for involvement in violence. Therefore, transition to adulthood as it is highly related to a person’s employment status, property ownership and marriage, could lead to a complicated progression in traditional settings where rites of transition to adulthood are strictly observed, and such phases of the transition are interrelated to each other (Hilker & Fraser, 2009).

In these contexts, the pressing needs of economic survival and financial stability push young people towards illegal activities and violence. Unemployment and the lack of alternative income opportunities can prevent the transition to adulthood, and can inhibit the engagement in crucial social functions such as marriage and property ownership (Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 22). Many sub-topics at the individual level such as employment in unskilled jobs; non-transparent job recruitments; disparities
in attained education levels and accepted jobs, and job competitions are some factors that may postpone youth transition to adulthood (Sommers, 2007). In addition to several impediments for employment primarily contingent on the existing poor economic conditions in Turkey’s southeast, migration to mega-cities has been a source of economic pressure on unskilled youth. Kaya (2009: 159), for instance, states that young people who have migrated to mega cities for economic reasons have mostly been engaged in menial jobs such as street vendors or temporary construction workers, which caused youth frustration and thus motivated them to escape from the economic distress in the jobs they have been employed in. Therefore, perceived economic differentiations amongst regions and in isolated locations such as between inhabitants of shantytowns and residents in mega-cities could be seen as a factor, which deepened youth frustration. Facing such a situation, young people could identify with joining a violent or extremist group as a possible solution or escape from everyday life problems. In the context of the Kurdish issue, similar economic elements have been detected as motivating factors instigating youth violence (see Kaya, 2009).

Being employed may also be overestimated in traditional societies. The transition to adulthood usually refers to employment, property ownership and marriage, which could lead to a complicated progression in traditional settings where rites of transition to adulthood are strictly observed, and such phases of the transition are interrelated to each other (Hilker & Fraser, 2009). The pervasiveness of customary practices in Turkey’s southeast, in this sense, has been a major factor for youth mobilisation to violence, particularly regarding marriage practices and family issues. Transition processes could be relatively easier in rural areas in comparison to urban centres, as economic production means are often run by family businesses, and due to cheaper alternatives in property ownership than in urban centres. However, in places where customs and local power relations restrict accession to land or capital, this also could increase youth frustrations (McEvoy-Levy, 2007).

The presence of power distribution schemes in society and social relations as part of the feudal socioeconomic structures, likewise, has been a structural concern in soaring youth sentiments in the face of existing circumstances. Exploitative economic systems that have been founded upon unjust local governance and resource distribution arrangements can be seen as factors of structural economic exclusion in conflict and post-conflict settings (McEvoy-Levy, 2007: 3). These structural aspects occupied a central place in the mobilisation strategies of the PKK, often a rationalisation on
ideological grounds, and through explanations that link the sources of inherent and existing socioec-
oneconomic issues with the existence of feudal structures in society and centre-periphery economic re-
lations. In addition to an intense structural economic aspect in mobilisation dynamics, a strong causal
relationship exists at the individual level between the structural economic determinants and per-
sonal sentiments. Personal incentives linked to youth sentiments as part of economic insecurities are
going to be discussed in the next chapter.

Similarly, the PKK’s attacks aimed to demolish the construction sites of essential investments such as
dams and factories, which appear to have been carefully selected in order to maintain economic
malfuctioning despite the government and private sector’s will to invest in the region. Similarly,
coercing local retailers to thwart their own business (known as kepnek kapatma – lowering rolling
shutters) as part of the PKK-led protests in city centres hinders small businesses from operating in
the commercial field. Economic backwardness in Kurdish-majority areas, in this sense, has been an
underlying feature of Turkey’s southeast since the early Republican years that has been documented
in several state or civil society reports (Yayman, 2011). Economic underdevelopment is even more
ironic considering the wealth of natural resources in the region, oil fields in the northern Iraq, and
high-capacity watercourses. In contrast to the economic development trajectories that were imple-
mented in different parts of the country for decades, the persistence of a violent environment ap-
peared as a leading cause of regional economic backwardness in the region since the mid-1980s.

4.5. Lack of Political Participation Opportunities

Political settings that exclude young people from established structures in conflict and post-conflict
circumstances contribute to violence mobilisation. Global trends in regard to youth political partici-
pation have been found to be ineffective when it comes to finding a solution for young people’s
needs and challenges (UNDP, 2006). In conflict and post-conflict settings, youth participation in pol-
itics is often a complicated issue, as young people are usually identified as objects of political tactics
and it is the dynamism attributed to youth that is used to accomplish a political objective (McEvoy-
Levy, 2007). These perceptions ignore young people once a political mission is over (ibid)

In regards to the Kurdish issue, some crucial factors can be identified as the underlying causes of
youth alienation from politics, and explain the frequency of youth participation in violence. At the systemic level, political exclusion of Kurdish nationalists in Turkey’s southeast is at the core of the implications of the Kurdish issue. Voting in elections is an indicator of political participation by conventional means. Table 4.11 thus shows the ratio of youth votes within major political parties. As the figures in recent elections suggest, youth participation in politics is quite effective when it comes to shaping the political configuration of parliament. Table 4.11 can be viewed as an exploratory chart of young people’s voting behaviours in the recent elections. As Table 4.11 reveals, the proportion of youth votes constitutes 40 % of the overall votes of the Kurdish nationalists in the 2014 elections. In comparison, the ratio of youth in the total votes of other political parties, such as AKP and CHP are at the lowest levels, 21 and 24 % respectively, whereas Turkish nationalist MHP gathers a share of 33 % from its young constituents. As exhibited in Table 4.8, the proportion of youth for political representatives of Kurdish nationalists (BDP) is above the ratios for other political parties. Therefore, it can be argued that allowing Kurdish political representation is a positive factor in reducing the exclusion of youth and increasing political participation.

Moreover, unconventional political participation can also be perceived as one of the means to measure youth participation in the political arena. According to Erdoğan (2003), Kurdish youth tend to participate unconventionally in contrast to the preferences of other youth clusters. Unconventional means often include protests and rallies that involve a degree of violence. Erdoğan contends that this tendency is a sign of young people’s exclusion from the formal political system (ibid: 10). Furthermore, Erdoğan claims that the political exclusion of young people is particularly noteworthy in consideration of the bans inflicted on pro-Kurdish political parties as a result of the relations with the PKK and non-refutation of violence. Lifting the bans to operate on political parties in the course of the Solution Process tends to be an attempt to remove the impediments in front of youth input in the political arena (UPOS, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political parties</th>
<th>18-28</th>
<th>29-43</th>
<th>+44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JDP</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPP</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMP</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KONDA, 2011
However, as discussed earlier in Chapter 3, the presence of contentious politics and mobilisation to violence assisted by political elites often subjugates the relationship between politics and young people into ideological indoctrination, and thus, in one way or other, push youth into violence. The nature of relationships between political parties and young people constitutes a significant aspect of the youth political exclusion debate. Parallel to the weakening of the positions and statuses in post-conflict settings (McEvoy-Levy, 2007), youth are often mobilised during election periods but most of the time, are neglected in the aftermath of the elections (Abbink & Kessel, 2005). Youth participation in Turkey's political parties, more or less, serves similar objectives (SETA, 2013). In general, in the post-1980 era, youth has been isolated from politics due to the politicisation that occurred in the 1970s that prepared the conditions for the 1980 military coup d’état (Neyzi, 2001). In contrast to the post-1980 trends, political developments in relation to the Kurdish issue and a climate of violence in the 1990s politicised young generations in Turkey's southeast. What complicates the nature of the relationship between young people and Kurdish nationalists, however, is the justifications for the use of violence put forward by political elites. This condition is an impediment to young people’s participation in peacebuilding, as political elites often rally young people in order to use them as part of contentious politics, including violent protests.

One of the complicated issues in the relationship between political elites or elders and youth is the power relations in conflict and post-conflict settings (Abbink & Kessel, 2005; Oyewole, 2006). The loss of privileges throughout the peace talks or afterwards can change youth perceptions of peace which can possibly end on-going peace initiatives as a result of youth participation in violence (McEvoy-Levy, 2007). Individuals deeply influenced by the conflicts can also find politicians liable for the failure to provide a peaceful arrangement for the wider society that may cause youth alienation from political participation due to factors such as political apathy and brain drain (Cilliers, 2006) in addition to persistent issues of corruption, poor governance and legitimacy (Kepel, 2004; Richards, 2003); and therefore may instigate participation in violence.

The role of political elites in a political system that is shaped around the hegemony of elders and elites is therefore an indicator of youth exclusion. In particular, the political realm built upon “rigid
and conservative power structures and patronage networks”, can limit young people’s political participation trajectories (Hilker & Fraser, 2009: 25). A similar political configuration in Turkey’s southeast prevents young people from attaining positions in the political arena that primarily originated from the existing power relations in society. Power relations are a factor, which influence political party decision-making processes. The degree to which power relations play a role in shaping the political representation in Turkey’s southeast is clearly shown in the selection of MPs for a political party. The selection process is often a specific design to accommodate the interests of tribal leaders or elder interests and voting tendencies of traditional constituencies to vote as a bloc. These designs are strictly built upon the hierarchical order within a bloc. For instance, an electoral failure of a political party to gain the votes in an electoral district from Turkey's southeast is often an outcome of disregarding the traditional power configurations and lack of pre-election design.

Overall, political designs that only reflect elder or tribal leader interests disregard not only youth, but also all other sectors of society to have a voice to influence the substance and direction of political participation. The persistence of feudal structures in society thus often constitutes a barrier to activate the youth ‘agency’ in political participation. In Erdoğan’s (2004) study, this was exemplified in fewer prospects for a political career for Kurdish youth (ibid: 13). Lowering the age limit to get elected as an MP from 30 to 25 recently, and prospects to reduce the voting age from 18 to 16, can be regarded as part of recent positive advances to remove the barriers in front of youth political participation (UPOS, 2014).

As discussed in different contexts throughout this research, traditional structures (e.g., feudalism on the basis of religious or local leaders) in Turkey's southeast are a source of frustration, which motivated youth mobilisation and used as an ideological pretext. Political exclusion, in this sense, is a reflection of alienation from politics but also a result of resentment from traditional structures. Ironically, Kurdish nationalists, who have been motivated by a political stance against the presence of feudal structures in Turkey's southeast, pursued the support of local tribes and voting blocs in the recent elections (Hürriyet, 09-05-2015). The hope to increase voting reach clearly exhibits the weight of traditional structures in shaping the socio-political environment in Turkey's southeast.
Conclusion

This chapter examined the implications of the structural causes of youth exclusion in conflict-affected societies. Existing deficiencies in socioeconomic structures led to the alienation of large segments of society over the decades. Within the context of the Kurdish issue, young generations have found themselves experiencing the pressure of such deficiencies while suffering the consequences of a climate of violence. These conditions worsened frustrations, and thus, steered many individuals towards violence. Exclusion in this context involved alienation from education. Economic backwardness in Turkey’s southeastern provinces, as well as the economic marginalisation of youth in general, is major factors for youth participation in violence. Political exclusion, similarly, involved young people’s participation in unconventional political participation, which very often caused youth to get involved in illegal activities, such as violent protests.

In addition to these factors, one of the major negative outcomes of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey has been the internal forced migration. The frequency of forced migration throughout the 1990s uprooted many young people from the environment, which they had lived in for many years. New circumstances in migrant quarters affected young people’s life choices. Frustrations often motivated them to join violent groups. Youth participated in illegal economic activities, such as mafia and other criminal activities, which became a social concern in most of the big cities. Out-migration is also a crucial factor concomitant to internal migration, as many conflict-affected people sought asylum, especially in Western Europe. Experiences in these locations also influenced the youth in exile, as they suffered isolation in different cultures, participated in the illegal activities of the PKK, including drug trafficking, and joined the armed cadres of the organisation as well.

Structural factors are an essential part of the explanation for youth exclusion and participation in violence. As the discussion in this chapter indicated in section 4.3, the lack of education is one of the reasons behind young people’s participation in violence. However, it is important to note that educated cohorts participated in the formation of the PKK, and continued to join the organisation after its establishment. Despite the explanatory power of structural determinants, the role of ‘agency’ in youth participation in violence is equally important. In regards to the Kurdish conflict, identity formation processes and nationalist discourses play a significant role in shaping the agency of youth.
Therefore, the next chapter is going to elaborate on this aspect and complement the analysis of the relationship between youth and violence.
The role of youth groups partaking in conflict societies is a primary concern and a key entry point for peacebuilders when conflicts are terminated. As discussed in Chapter 2, young people often play a substantial role as agents of peace or of violence in the aftermath of peace accords. As such, the recent peace process that commenced in Turkey in 2009 provided a unique setting in which to analyse the role(s) of conflict-affected youth in society. In order to elaborate on conflict transformation objectives at the individual level, it is necessary to assess how the youth perceive and adapt following the cessation of violence, in the midst of a political settlement process. This chapter will analyse the degree to which young people identify themselves with different groups. In this chapter, therefore, I explore the contexts through which the Kurdish youth make sense of the conflict. Meaning-making processes are often categorised by social diversity indicators (ethnic nationalism, ideology, religious affiliation). This enquiry is reinforced by researching the perspectives formed by the experiences of conflict and youth functioning in the face of recent political initiatives (2009- present). As a result, I aim to examine the differences in youth conflict experiences and identity-development processes in agreement with the not rigidly interpreted categorisations discussed both here and in Chapter 3. The themes that appeared from the fieldwork on concepts such as peace and conflict, along with recent political developments, have helped to organise the findings in this chapter.

Therefore, the first section begins with presenting a review of group identification and youth relationship. Conclusions drawn from the fieldwork conducted are presented in the following sections, which have been reached by conducting interviews that gauged participants’ views, day-to-day functioning and meaning-making processes. To conclude, I examine the polarisation of identities during
the peace process period, along with its potential negative effects on peacebuilding efforts.

5.1. Describing the 'Other': Ideology, Group-identification and Youth

In order to identify conflict experiences, insight into young people’s mindsets is a necessity that is closely shaped by interactions with social and political actors in society. That is, conflict experiences are influenced by existing social characteristics of societies (i.e., social and economic settings, religion, culture, etc.) (Barber, 2009). In this context, ideology is an effective instrument of mobilisation and often used as a core explanatory framework for collective action (DFID, 2008; Hilker & Fraser, 2009). As such, young people make sense of conflict via beliefs influenced by ideological explanations. This process can provide the ideational substance of participation or non-participation in violence. Young people's participation in conflict, therefore, is the outcome of views regarding social inequality or prejudice against a person’s group (Klandermans, 1997). With regards to past mobilisation trajectories in Turkey, early Kurdish groups (violent/non-violent) in the 1960s-1970s, for instance, were influenced by leftist and revolutionary views (see Özcan, 1999). Regarding the relationship between ideology and collective action, the self-determination principle and colonisation discourse offered a framework for action as the leading factor in the Kurdish secessionist movement.

Despite the ideological proximity to the Leftist groups in the 1960s, the growing significance attached to identity politics separated Kurdish groups from Turkey’s Left and led to the adoption of an ethno-political stance. As discussed in Chapter 3, the definition of citizenship in the Republican period was not as inclusive of cultural diversity as notion of the ummah was during the Ottoman Empire; at least for Muslims living in Anatolia. This is because group identification in the context of Kurdish groups, along with the meaning-making processes within the group during the Republican period, developed into an essential element of collective action (Interview, S13K03). Particularly since the 1960s, Kurdish groups have maintained a political stance of an opposition movement, and have led a national awakening via first cultural activities, meetings and organisations that contradicts with the dominant (Republican) ideology (Interview, D13K02).

The history of intergroup relations, therefore, was constructed in a way to narrate an alternative collective memory. From a group psychology perspective, Volkan’s ‘chosen traumas’ concept is an
example of utilising instances and events of historical importance in support of collective action (1993: 103). The Sheikh Said or Dersim revolts, for instance, have become the ‘chosen traumas’ that occurred in the 1920s-1930s, (Özçelik, 2006), preparing the grounds for collective action and redefining intergroup relations from a group’s ideological position. One interviewee concisely stated the role of historical events in shaping current ideological positions:

*When it comes to the Kurdish issue, one does not need to base something on the last 40 years. We need to trace it back to Said, Seyit Rıza [i.e., Dersim rebellion] (Interview, S13Y014).*

Thus after establishing a refined narrative, Kurdish groups have been able to mobilise some segments of society into secessionist groups on the one hand, and divided Kurdish society between nationalist and Islamist groups, on the other. As such, the differences in interpreting group identification and past narratives of intergroup relations took ideological positions, which have continued to be at the heart of motivations for collective action. The functions of the ideological positions in collective action, known as ‘social dominance theory’, refer to the relative status of a group (i.e., low/high) in the social hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Kurdish nationalists’ accounts of relative statuses in society pointed to a discrepancy between the high status of Turks and the low status of the Kurdish community (Interview, S13K05). The ideological positioning of violent groups, therefore, usually accentuated the prevailing socioeconomic inequality between Turkey’s western and southeastern provinces.

The implications of collective action are keenly felt amongst young people, since the youth are often the most affected and resented group in comparison to other segments of society (see Chapter 4). Weinstein (2007) argues that identity-based movements usually appeal to educated cohorts in contrast to rent-distributing groups who usually comprise of uneducated recruits. Similarly, Kurdish violent groups initially recruited factions from sympathisers in major universities (Interview, S13K05). Examples of the cohorts of the 1949s or nationalist revivalists in the 1960s were educated young people participating in political action and movements (Interview, S13K05). According to Alkan (2007), educated youths exercise their intellectual capacity along with scientific reasoning to accept revolutionary ideas. Moreover, in contrast to other segments of society, the youth have more prepared to waive personal interests for the sake of the public good (social and political change) (ibid).
Therefore, differences in conflict experiences of young Kurds are a consequence of identification processes in building a collective memory, which is closely linked to the interactions with social and political actors in Turkey’s southeast. Drawing on the categories that Aydınlı and Özcan (2012) have identified, I utilised the following youth sub-groups in the data analysis phase not as mutually exclusive groups but as part of the emerging themes on the basis of answers to the questions in this research:

- Bi-partisan conflict-affected Kurdish youth
- Youth affiliated with Kurdish nationalists
- Youth affiliated with political Islam and/or other Islamic factions

With regards to Aydınlı and Özcan’s (2012) categorisation of ‘integrated Kurds’, I preferred to use ‘apolitical’ or ‘bi-partisan’ tags for conflict-affected youth that were not yet affiliated with a political faction. In fact, ‘Integrated Kurds’ can be viewed as a more inclusive term that comprises other sub-groups. For instance, political Islamists can also be considered within this sub-group, due to their socioeconomic and political integration within wider society. However, the difference between apolitical or Islamist youth groups manifests itself in group identification processes. The role of social and political actors and the youth spaces that are provided by these actors, thereby engaging young people with specific political/ideological thinking, is an example and marker of this divergence. Each of the Islamist youths interviewed for this research, for instance, stated that they regularly take part in the activities of Islamist youth associations and traditional religious societies.

For this thesis I interviewed members of all three youth groups. In analysing group identification and identity salience, however, Islamist and Kurdish nationalist storylines revealed the most significant themes, juxtaposing incompatible considerations of the conflict in relation to its origins, its progression and its solution. Similarly, the collective memory of both groups diverges in content and is best seen through the narrations of past group history and prospects for the future. These identifications have been a part of the ideological/political attitudes with which young people socialised with in the face of Kurdish conflict and its consequences.
5.2. Identity Salience in Kurdish Nationalists’ Accounts of Conflict

When describing the ‘other’, Kurdish nationalists’ responses have often involved a strong negative out-group evaluations (see Çelebi et al. 2016). For nationalists, ‘integrated Kurds’ have been composed of a segment of society interested only in economic wellbeing, often lacking an awareness of belonging to a different ethnic identity, namely Kurdishness (Interview, S13Y17). During the fieldwork in Diyarbakir and Şanlıurfa, a strong disapproval of Islamist groups was present amongst the Kurdish nationalists:

Some are interested in education; some go to the demonstrations, and some others go to the mountains. These are all a way of participating in struggle. A fourth one denies its race and [...] earns a living only (Interview, 13Y16).

On the one hand, nationalists severely criticised the past co-optation policies of Kurdish elites and the allegiance of Islamist groups to the ruling authority. With regards to constructing a collective memory for the Kurds, a nationalist version of past events constituted a significant part of the interviews. Unlike the Islamist discourses of ‘living together for centuries’ or ‘religious brotherhood’, and considering these as weak arguments, the origins of negative evaluations tend to be the outcome of identity salience, since Islamists typically promote a shared identity paradigm irrespective of ethnic differences in society.

With regards to religion, those who say that “I am a religious man, I love the religion”, are doing the dirtiest things. A child witnessing such things in a way learns a different way of understanding religion (Interview, S13Y14).

On the other hand, the nationalist youth often referred to the violent actions and killings executed by Kurdish Hizbullah, as part of building a collective memory based on fear and dislike:

The way they entered into our village in the 90s was through religion. They shouted ‘takbir’ and hit heads. My uncle was an imam [...] he said they came to the village the following way: A person was selling tapes of religious song arrived the first [...] (Interview, S13Y11).
A significant problem is the inseparability of identity politics from the Kurdish issue that is at the centre of debates in the political landscape (Interview, S13K05). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, inhabitants of Turkey’s southeast have witnessed the implications of the Kurdish conflict in certain aspects of their daily lives. The conflict required inhabitants to fight for their survival, and they lived this way on a day-to-day basis in the persistent climate of violence. Considering the implications of the Kurdish conflict, major socioeconomic challenges such as unemployment, low-quality health services and educational opportunities have become secondary issues in the face of identity issues (Interview, S13Y11). Therefore, the primacy of identity was noted in the research findings that exhibited the need for the recognition of the Kurdish identity, and overwhelmed other substantial issues that prevailed in society for decades. According to an interviewee, for instance:

*The most important problem [Kurds] have been facing for years is the conflict environment. For true peace the demands of the Kurdish people should be considered [...] for example, Kurdish identity should be recognised* (Interview, S13Y05).

A different interviewee maintained the same line of reasoning and pointed to the fact that identity recognition is not only linked to formal acknowledgement of the Kurdish identity but also encompasses an aspect at the community level. This aspect is a significant outcome that originates from the perceptions of the ‘other’ and intergroup relations. He stated that:

*Sir, it is not primarily a problem between Kurds and western people, namely the Turks Lazs or Circassians. Before everything, the people in Turkey - Turkish people – need to accept us. We are like a ‘finger and nail’ [integrated so closely]. We were like a finger and nail with the Turks. Therefore, before the political parties, the people of Turkey have to accept the others living in this region. Thus the first point to begin with is this* (Interview, D13Y20).

The reference to the inhabitants living in western Turkey as ‘people in the West’ is a crucial indicator for categorising ‘others’. It is observed in the opinions of those interviewed that the implications of the Kurdish issue are visible as a result of interactions with the majority – Turks – and is a sign of a cognitive process of categorisation (Interview, S13Y08).
There is also an inter-generational conflict between the adult and youth interpretations of the Kurdish conflict and identity issues. Adults usually emphasise the role of education, employment and expectations of the future for young people (Interview, D13K01). They believe that identity-based discussions and participation in collective action is a way to politicise the Kurdish youth, and, therefore, provide motivation for their participation in violence (Interview, S13K02). A young interviewee pointed to this generational conflict between adults and the youth as follows:

*When young people begin university, their families only ask of them to stay away from protests, etc. [...] they want that their sons should always be with them, not detained in prison. Moreover, so that his employment record does not get ruined. Should this happen it may transpire that the day after tomorrow he will not be able to earn money, to accept official posts, will not be assigned to state jobs.*

Nationalists that were interviewed regarding the primacy of identity in shaping opinions and affecting life choices shared more or less similar views. The recognition of identity is the most important concern for Kurdish inhabitants in Turkey’s southeast (Interview, D13Y23). Other substantial issues such as youth unemployment or access to better educational opportunities have been regarded as secondary problems in comparison to identity-related needs.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) have argued that the salience of identity within a group is closely associated with intergroup relations and interactions. The salience of Kurdish identity according to the findings of this fieldwork, showed the extent of identity salience, which is a consequence of relations with groups such as Islamists in southeastern provinces or people living in the western provinces of Turkey. Thus a process of categorisation of the ‘others’ became explicit from the interviews. In particular, relations with radical Islamists are an important part of collective memory building and identity formation. The matter of forced internal migration is also a substantial issue that comprises some of the content of collective memory (Interview, D13Y23). The Kurds in big cities in particular emphasise the role of interactions with the Turkish majority when discussing marginalisation trends (Yükseker, 2006). Likewise, the salience of identity comes from perceived threats to group survival (Kinnvall, 2004). Historical events such as rebellions in the early Republican period have shaped the collective memory among young Kurds (Interview, S13Y17) and are examples that Kurdish identity salience is emboldened after relating these events into youth narratives. In sum, the following sections shed
light on the role of ideology in Turkey's southeast and the relational aspect (with the Turkish majority) in the analysis of the relationship between identity and collective action.

5.3. Exploiting Youth in Rallying for Identity Politics

One of the major issues in conflict settings is the position of political elites in times of political change. Despite the arguments that associate conflict onset to state failure, political opportunities expand alongside democratisation efforts and often permit ethnic groups to pursue opposing agendas (Gurr, 2000). For instance, ethnic uprisings in Eastern Europe and Africa during the 1990s are examples of the relationship between democratisation and increasing ethnic upheavals (ibid).

Turkey's democratisation efforts after 2009 followed a similar route regarding the role of political elites when a political solution to the Kurdish issue became underway. An example of the role of political elites has been to rally Kurds with an agenda that prioritises Kurdish secessionism. An image of this political agenda was noticed in the interviews with young people. For instance, when interviewees were requested to describe expectations of the peace process, the responses often entailed a realisation of the political demands of political elites as part of the peace process (i.e., the status of the imprisoned Öcalan, a general amnesty for imprisoned members of the PKK, decentralisation). The primary significance that is attributed to the issues that are often included in ‘higher politics’ thus lead to ignorance of more acute problems of young people, such as accessing educational or economic opportunities.

These observations reveal that the agenda maintained by Kurdish political elites is, in fact, a principal motivating factor shaping the views and expectations of young people in society. As the political aspects of the Kurdish issue abandon young people’s needs and challenges on different platforms, this situation exacerbates the effects of the conflict environment on young people (Interview, D13K04). The youth are often alienated from education from very early ages and forced to work or join illegal activities (Interview, D13Y10). As one of the experts on youth work in Turkey’s southeast noted, young people even start to be mobilised in formal education establishments as a result of continuing identity formation processes in secondary or high schools, and thus eventually participate in violence (Interview, D13K04).
This chapter has stressed one of the necessities of a successful conflict intervention is meeting the basic identity needs of the Kurdish people. Equally important is, however, the politicisation and use of identity as a pretext for participation in violence. By introducing legal actions and changes in regulations, such as lifting sanctions on the use of the Kurdish language in public spheres and private schools, the peace process has satisfied the initial demands (recognition of the Kurdish identity to an extent) of the Kurdish nationalists. In the context of democratisation efforts, therefore, ethnic goals in political elites’ agendas escalate violence. As argued in earlier chapters, Kurdish political elites have encouraged the youth to participate in the protests against ISIL’s Kobane assaults that escalated violence due to pursuing ethnic goals. Selahattin Demirtaş, co-leader of the pro-Kurdish party, called for protests to support Kurds in Syria. These protests however became acts of vandalism and claimed lives that fuelled further conflict, thus interrupting the peace process.

5.4. Kurdish Nationalists and the Use of Violence

From the 1960s, a nationalist movement emerged and evolved into an influential social and political actor in Turkey’s southeast (Özcan, 1999; Taşpinar, 2005; Yavuz, 2001). The use of violence has become a way for political ends since the mid-1980s. A new upsurge of violent occurrences overlapped with political developments during the peace process (2009-2015). This situation raised concerns once again about the role of violence in the nationalist movement. Kurdish nationalists confronted the inevitability of inclusion into the peace process, and thus initiated a PR campaign prioritising a ‘non-violent’ method of pro-Kurdish contention. This initiative aimed to form a coalition to reach other Kurdish and non-Kurdish segments of society while supporting a general democratic reform agenda and focusing on Kurdish rights in particular (Interview, D13K03). The pro-Kurdish PDP, for instance, appealed to the Turkish left – after decades of divergence – in the recent presidential and general elections. Despite the efforts in conducting politics as usual, Kurdish political elites inconsistently tried to strengthen their power base in Turkey’s southeast by maintaining an agenda of accentuating identity politics after solidarity rallies with the Kurds in Syria. Following these political moves the engagement in violent demonstrations once again reinforced the agenda-setting power of armed factions over the Kurdish politicians.
Accusing Kurdish political actors for not rejecting the use of violence is a consistent claim in the political landscape aired by different political parties and groups. One of the interviewees pointed to the fact that this condition is because of the monopoly of the armed factions over power relations amongst Kurdish actors; which is, for instance, in contrast to the relationship between the IRA and Irish politicians (Interview, I13K06). In the latter instance, political entities have maintained supremacy over armed factions in the political landscape. However, this has clearly not been an accurate depiction of the relationship between armed factions and politicians in the Kurdish case. It has been evident that in several cases, armed actors have often inserted a monopoly of power, criticising openly and even correcting the remarks of Kurdish politicians, thus becoming able to dictate and modify the political agenda (Interview, I13K06). The outcomes of not rejecting the use of violence directly and the armed faction’s monopoly have strained the function of since the early 1990s. Many pro-Kurdish political parties, and Kurdish politicians, such as Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle and Sırrı Sakık were banned from active politics.

5.5. Disregarding Other Kurdish Political Actors

Kurdish nationalists have long been sceptical of deviant political groups and have therefore kept a distance from such groups since the 1960s. This is primarily due to ideological divergences and the political agenda that nationalists pursued to control the entire geographical space as an area of dominant influence. That said, other political actors have become adversaries in the competition for gaining allegiance in the debate over who will represent the Kurdish people. As one interviewee put it, this political distancing policy is principally founded upon some factual occurrences, especially with regards to the violent clashes between radical Islamist Kurdish Hizbullah and nationalists (Interview, S13K05). However, it is also evident that relations between nationalists and moderate Islamists and traditional elites, such as local chieftains, have not been constructive over the decades. Nationalists in this context have frequently been ignoring such political factions on ideological grounds, often accusing them of collaboration with state authorities.

Nationalists’ growing apathy towards other political actors is also noticeable in the views towards resolving the Kurdish issue. As previously discussed, moderate Islamists prioritise having a historic transnational identity by emphasising the significance of Islamic bonds between the Turkish and
Kurdish communities. This caused nationalists to accuse Islamists of subordination of the Kurdish ethnic identity (Interview, S13K03). Considering the significance of religion in the daily lives and social relations of the Kurdish polity, this fact constitutes an existential threat to the presence of nationalists in Turkey’s southeast (Interview, S13K03).

These differences had implications for the Kurdish youth; often extending to them the political rivalry that existed between politicians, with the latter attempting to recruit new members into the adversarial contentions. The implications of these rivalries were noticed in the interviews; nationalist youths did not hesitate to express hostile views towards Islamists and Islamic identity-based arguments. Nationalists who were still attached to Islamic values to some extent, however, criticised the role and utilisation of religion in reversing the efforts towards acquiring Kurdish political demands for cultural rights.

An example of the political apathy towards different political actors was observed in one of the recent civil initiatives. In contrast to the significance attached to the initiative named ‘Saturday Mothers’, which is a gathering in Istanbul organised by the mothers of victims of violence, nationalists showed limited attention to a campaign in Diyarbakır commenced by the mothers of children abducted by the PKK. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, comparable examples can be extended to other practices; contention politics in the context of disregarding different social and political actors have constrained the influence of Kurdish nationalists. Nationalists have seen the obvious implications of such a flawed approach in the low levels of political backing gained in the Kurdish-inhabited areas of Turkey (approximately 5-6 % in national elections). In reaction to this political dilemma, the recently founded pro-Kurdish HDP commenced a political strategy of congregating opposing political groups – such as Turkish socialists, traditional elites and religious groups – in Turkey’s southeast, in a broad political coalition, with the aim of incorporating dissenting voices as potential constituents. This political change appeared consequential for the Kurdish youth, and introduced spaces in improving young people’s political participation. However, youths have since been left in the hands of violent groups as the coalition disintegrated after the failure of the peace process.
5.6. Identity Transcendence in Islamists’ Conflict Narratives

At the other end of the spectrum, interviewees within Islamist groups developed different narratives of the ‘other’. In general, Islamists refer to apolitical segments of the society as being composed of people who are typically interested in worldly affairs. This perception towards the apolitical youth, however, was not as antagonistic as that of the nationalists. Islamists’ suggestions often encompassed evaluation of a social issue that requires individual change assisted by some religious dialogue and coaching (Interview, D13Y24).

The portrayal of nationalists in Islamists’ accounts, however, was substantially different from apolitical segments of society. Often Islamists defined Kurdish nationalism as a rupture in the proper functioning of society and regarded it as a symbol of breaking with the past after growing nationalist tendencies in Turkey’s southeast since the mid-1980s (Interview, D13Y27). Kurdish nationalism is thus recognised as a threat to existing relations and harmony in society and as being against the cultural legacy of Turkey's southeast (Interview, D13Y27). For Islamists, the political implications of the Kurdish secessionist movement are comparable to the outcomes of nationalist movements a century ago led by the Arab, Armenian and Turkish political elites in Anatolia, and that ultimately instigated the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (Interview, S13Y23). Thus a substantial theme that emerged from the Islamists' views was a particular ‘belonging’ narrative that contextualised acknowledgement of the ‘other as ‘neighbours’ or ‘brothers’, as part of the centuries-old legacy of multicultural life in Anatolia. The Kurdish nationalist movement is thus seen as a rupture to the proper functioning of the social order, with similar effects of the 19th and 20th century nationalisms. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the divorce of Middle Eastern Muslims from the Anatolian population in the aftermath of WWI are solid constituents of the Islamist collective memory.

Conversations with Islamists often raised historical events that referred to the origins of Islamic expansion in Turkey’s southeast. Historical events such as the Islamic conquest of Diyarbakir are still alive in their memories. For instance, Islamist groups celebrate the conquest of Diyarbakir every year (Interview, D13Y27). Şanlıurfa symbolises the epicentre of religions in the narrative of ancient history, and as the capital of the religious orders, occupies a significant place in Islamists’ collective memory (Interview, S13Y32). Despite the fact that early Islamic armies that arrived in the 7th and 8th
centuries were mainly composed of ethnic Arabs, the acceptance of such historical events as part of a collective memory indicates the transnational property of Islamic identity and the widespread recognition of it by the Kurds.

In the aftermath of WWI, ‘Islamic brotherhood’ grew to become a significant theme amongst the remaining Muslims in the Anatolian territories. As a constructive social bond, it created a transnational identity, a paradigm that unified the Kurds and Turks for centuries (Interview, D13Y22). For interviewees, the rise of Kurdish nationalism was recognised as a threat against this notion of living together, risking the possibility of causing further partitions in Turkey. Whilst exhibiting similar demands with regards to identity recognition of the Kurdish nationalists’ discourse, the ‘living together’ motto is a way to prevent the partition of Muslim communities living in Anatolia.

In addition to these idealistic notions, Islamists also assume nationalist thinking as an aspiration for a separate state, in contradiction with realpolitik considerations of the Kurdish issue (Interview, D13Y30). According to an interviewee, the two communities are united demographically and culturally. For him, it is the fact that more Kurds are living in the mega-cities in western Turkey than in Turkey’s southeast. Besides, over decades many mixed families have been formed (Interview, D13Y30). In the words of Islamists, the rise of Kurdish nationalism also involves a tension due to changes in personal attitudes and behaviours (such as religious thinking) and social erosion in the traditional, religious and social composition of Turkey’s southeast (Interview, D13Y28). Secular Kurdish nationalism maintained a new identity formation process since the mid-1980s that are against the cultural norms in Turkey’s southeast (Interview, D13Y28). Within the context of social change, moral and religious values in society, have, therefore, been consistently jeopardised by Kurdish nationalism.

According to Islamists, the rise of Kurdish nationalism equally plagues the functioning of Turkish society and has led to the rise of ultra-nationalist views as a result of the frequency of violent events instigated by the PKK (Interview, S13Y29). Recently, social media has begun to play a major role in determining Turkish public opinion. One of the interviewees pointed to the increase in biased and xenophobic comments in social media users’ accounts (Interview, S13Y31). The role of visual and print media in this context is a factor in negatively shaping Turkish public opinion. As an interviewee
mentioned, the mainstream media often fail to differentiate people who have been involved in violence and ordinary Kurdish citizens that cause the Turkish public to have a wrong and biased image of the Kurdish population (Interview, S13Y31).

In identifying religion as a transnational identity, the presence of Islam has become one of the building blocks for the concept of living together and peaceful coexistence over the centuries. Islamic identity in the form of another social construct occurred first in the multicultural Ottoman Empire era, providing an identification leitmotif for Muslims coming from diverse backgrounds. The narratives of Islamists in this research strengthened the perceived role of Islam as an acting higher identity, which remains a substantial part of the collective memory amongst Muslims left in Anatolia following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. As discussed, identity salience is an outcome of intergroup relations in the nationalists’ narratives. In the same vein, Islamists’ emphasis on notions such as living together or Islamic brotherhood come from intergroup interactions and builds upon shared memories.

5.7. Religious Actors and Youth Resilience to Violence

Religion is a leading identity marker in Turkey’s southeast (see van Bruinessen, 2000; McDowall, 1997). Due to the implications of religion on identity formation, religious societies and associations appear as prominent social and political actors in influencing young people’s ‘agency’ and social roles. Traditional religious societies are often working actors in both rural and urban areas, shaping young people’s worldviews, especially in the face of the conflict environment and its challenges. During the fieldwork in Turkey’s southeast, for instance, young people frequently stated the importance of the regulatory role of Mullahs and Sheikhs in social relations and interactions, and portrayed them as opinion leaders and influential figures in constructing perceptions. In the context of revealing the functions of faith leaders, they commented that the existence of religious societies and groups is one of the key factors in preventing youth participation in violence (Interview, S13K06).

As in previous chapters, Turkey’s southeast is one of the unique locations in Turkey to have feudal social characteristics in which faith leaders appear as distinguished figures (Bağlı, 2012). In rural areas, mullahs and sheikhs perform the functions of judges and mediators in local conflicts, relying on
established structures and often referring to customary and religious laws in the decision-making process (ibid). In local and socially secluded contexts, the communities often act as a whole, and perceptions and social roles are sanctioned through the resolutions of community leaders or a board of elders (ibid). Young people and segments of the community affected act according to the ‘motivation’ of these resolutions. Therefore, it can be argued that in closed society structures, local customs stimulate young people's worldviews, and this may contribute to youth resilience in the case when the community encourages non-participation (Interview, S13K03). The equivalent stimulating factors can be in contradiction with resilience to violence, as such proximity networks can also rationalise participation and motivate the youth to partake in violence. For instance, since many faith leaders (mullahs and sheikhs) have been the instigators of insurgencies during the early Republican era (the 1920s-1930s), Kurdish revolts in this period were an example of the role of socially sanctioned decisions in mobilisation for violence (Entessar, 1992; Yavuz, 2001). Indeed, the 1920s and 1930s marked the era in which religious actors played a major role in society (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1998).

The role of faith leaders declined with the introduction of secularism and the suppression of religious orders and seminaries (ibid); thus their impact areas have been limited to the local and rural contexts. From the 1990s onwards, however, the role of religion in society evolved. Religion has become politicised, and pro-religious parties (Erbakan's Millî Görüş – National view – parties; JDP) and affiliated associations have begun to replace traditional religious societies. The functions of faith actors in young people's daily life choices and in influencing the participation/non-participation trade-off in urban areas tend to be essentially different from the roles attributed to them in the rural areas of Turkey's southeast (Interview, S13K03). In the latter circumstance, youth resilience can be seen as ‘a state of being’ generated by guiding principles decreed by faith leaders, and in line with local customs. So, young people often emerge as an ‘object’ in this socialisation process, and youth worldviews are conditioned by a direct involvement of external social forces (tribe and/or faith leader). As observed in fieldwork, however, young people's relationships with religious, social and political actors follow a different socialisation process in the urban centres of Turkey's southeast. It is also noted that the practices of religious actors are frequently based on conversations, which indicates an iterative process of developing worldviews and skills, intending to transform the ‘agency’ of young people in society.
Activities implemented by religious associations, therefore, such as book discussion meetings, conversation groups, sports activities and cross-country excursions, fit into the objectives of typical peacebuilding work (Interview, D13K07). The activities of urban faith associations encourage young people into thinking without the social pressure of local customs or traditional faith societies and local leaders. It can therefore be argued that young people participate in these kinds of socialisation activities as ‘subjects’, who can either accept or reject the views that are available to them. Similar examples were maintained during fieldwork in Turkey’s southeast, where the majority (19 out of 32 interviewees) described themselves as religious in their personal lives. Nationalist youths criticised traditional religious structures and their stance on the Kurdish issue. On the other hand, most of the other religious interviewees from the Islamist camp retained a ‘third way’ of looking at the Kurdish issue. In sum, from the findings of the fieldwork in Turkey’s southeast, religiosity appeared as a strong resilient factor against youth participation in violence.

5.8. Views on the Resolution of the Kurdish Issue

As discussed in the previous chapters, religious actors in Turkey’s southeast are divided into moderate (including both traditional groups and political Islamists) and radical (Kurdish Hizbullah and Salafi groups) political circles in terms of understanding the role of religion in shaping the way of life according to specified sources and principles. One of the results of these splits is evident in the views regarding the causes and solution of the Kurdish issue. This division in views turned Islamic groups into ineffective actors despite the religious characteristics of society in Turkey’s southeast (Interview, D13K07). This condition also creates a dilemma for the Islamists due to the condition of staying outside of the developments regarding the Kurdish issue over the past decades, despite capacities to perform decisive roles in the resolution of the Kurdish conflict. The effect is isolation from the most important social and political issue of the region; thus Islamist groups abandon their position as actors in society to those that also instigate the use of religion by these actors to pursue their political objectives (Interview, D13K07).

Whilst the nationalists’ power base in the region has been consolidated in the 1990s, new social realities have begun to influence relations and interactions in society. Islamists often view the 1990s
and the following years as an era of social erosion in contradiction of the traditional structure of Turkey’s southeast. This issue appeared as one of the main concerns in the interviews. Further, it has been argued that the Kurdish youth have been affected the most in the face of the social and political transformation of society (Interview, S13K06). As discussed in the preceding chapters, the youth are often perceived as the most ‘willing’ segment to adapt, especially in conflict settings when additional factors such as grievances or identity play a role in youth mobilisation. In the context of the Kurdish issue, youth attachment to nationalist thinking is accompanied with changes in worldviews and lifestyles. At this juncture, Islamists have differed in explaining the role of nationalism in identity development. For either moderate or radical Islamists, nationalism is a source of fragmentation and is in contradiction with Islam’s concept of the **ummah** (see Ataman, 2003; Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1998). Nationalism as an ideology upsets the unity of the Islamic community; however, Islamic thinking (main sources of knowledge, such as the holy book of Islam, Quran) recognise the presence of sub-identities i.e. different nations and languages:

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other” (Quran, 49: 13).

Hence the main differences appear in interpreting the position of nations within the Islamic community. According to moderate Islamists, establishing a separate Kurdish nation-state as a solution to the Kurdish issue is a flawed way of approaching the question from an Islamic viewpoint (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1998). This view is often supported in the political Islamist circles, who have pursued a policy of a union of Muslim nations since the 1960s as an answer to a variety of social and political questions, and regard the disintegration of existing states as an obstacle for such aspiration (Duran, 1998). Some Islamist groups (Kurdish Hizbullah, Zehra group, etc.) assert the equivalent status of Kurdish identity to any other identity and highlight the use of the Kurdish language to reinforce Kurdish identity within Turkey as natural rights entitled by the Quran and in accordance with the Islamic perspective (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013).

The subordination of ethnic differences in order to emphasise a shared identity and fortify Islamic unity has been a leading factor among moderate Muslims in this research. However, religious Kurds in support of ethnic claims were also present within the nationalists. This situation might be the
consequence of inclusive policies of pro-Kurdish parties that aimed to gain allegiance of devout Kurds (Sarigil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). Moreover, the absence of an effective moderate Islamist political actor that supported Kurdish rights can be seen as a significant factor in young people’s inclination towards nationalists (Interview, S13K06). As discussed in this chapter, one of the outcomes of recent elections was the decline in Kurdish votes after the changing discourse of the JDP regarding the Kurdish issue. In this context, these divisions are a significant factor for Islamists’ lessened role in society and concerning remoteness to the Kurdish issue, which is a dilemma for the youth who seek a non-violent alternative space.

5.9. The Legacy of the Prolonged Conflict Environment on Socialisation in Violence

In societies where individuals have persistently been exposed to the implications of a conflict, violence becomes a part of day-to-day life. Socialisation in violence in conflict settings motivates participation in conflict as young people begin to experience the implications of it from very early ages (UN, 2006). Thus young people adopt the use of violence as a ‘learned behaviour’ when confronting the challenges of conflict and personal problems in life after experiencing it as a method when solving issues on different platforms (WHO, 2002).

The experience of a journalist interviewee in witnessing children’s attitudes to violence is significant, and contributes to the comprehension of the socialisation of violence at the very early stages of youth:

*We were travelling in the region and stopped the car just after seeing children nearby the main road on the way to X city. We had a very positive conversation. After saying goodbye, the driver turned the engine on and our car moved a few meters away [...] then they suddenly began to throw grits from nearby the road to the car without any particular reason at all.*

The socialisation in violence is a critical aspect of youth participation in conflict. In addition to suffering violent occurrences as part of the prevailing cultural norms that allow violence in certain aspects of social life and interactions, young people’s narratives exhibit the degree to which such encounters permeate their identity formation more dramatically. An interviewee, for instance, revealed the overall issue of the socialisation of violence as follows:
I can assure you that we see the gun before we even see a pen. We have friends who saw prison before school. We had a friend who saw the police before teachers. If you see guns and violence, what will you do in the future besides resorting to violence? You have inserted it into the psychology of a person. You cannot take it back (Interview, S13Y22).

A remarkable response to the socialisation of violence appeared when young people were asked about their opinions on the question of what exactly ‘peace’ means to them. In the midst of a politically positive environment when the decades-long conflict was about to be settled, young people's views concerning the basics of peacebuilding is significant to comprehend the youths' world of values:

Q: What does ‘peace’ mean to you?
A: It is the word they say; that the peace process is a good thing. However, we are against it.

Q: What does ‘peace’ mean to you?
A: We are used to warring so much that we do not know what we will do in peace

Q: What does ‘peace’ mean to you?
A: This peace will be a revolution in the form of a civil war [...] 

As discussed above, the development of an identity after growing up surrounded by a climate of violence is a product of the war-weary environment in Turkey's southeast.

The conflict settings often influence identity formation processes and growing exposure to violent occurrences usually provide a social and personal meaning to young people (McEvoy-Levy, 2007). New social roles and changing identities in these contexts are among the key entry points for youth engagement in post-conflict interventions (ibid). As discussed, an example of changing identities and new social roles is found in the motivations of the Kurdish youth’s participation in the YDG-H’s violent actions during the peace process.

As Gürcan noted, youth in Turkey’s southeastern towns were organised in the name of “protection
units’ to guard the Kurdish population (Gürcan, Al-Monitor, 17-08-2015). According to young people, this protection was a necessity, and the Kurdish youth filled a gap in society (ibid). This narrative coincides with the role that young people invent in post-violence periods, compared with other conflict settings after the conflict enters a settlement process. It thus stands that a crucial aspect of the transition from war to peace is in addressing young people's challenges as a source of major violence.

An equally critical factor in the rise of the socialisation of violence is the role of social networking and storytelling (McEvoy-Levy, 2007). In relation to the Kurdish conflict, a generation grew up surrounded by the implications of the violence, without actually directly experiencing the violent climate of the 1990s. Therefore, conflict narratives of former generations influence young people's understandings of the conflict. This is a critical aspect of the Kurdish conflict as past traumas have often been the main topic in daily conversations of young people (Gürcan, Al-Monitor, 17-08-2015). The role of ex-militants in narrative building and dissemination in post-conflict settings is a significant factor in influencing identity formation processes. As McEvoy-Levy (2007) argues "[…] they move between numerous different public and private spaces – such as homes, armed groups, peace organisations, the streets, schools, and refugee camps […]" (4).

Emulating ‘militarised identities’ as a role model for interactions with peers and surrounded by a culture of violence, the true implications of violence are that the youth do not actually experience them in any sense. This situation might be as a result of growing up with conflict narratives but without directly experiencing conflict. Thus meaning-making processes produced from conflict narratives are listened to with excitement (Gürcan, Al-Monitor, 17-08-2015). In fact, conflict experiences without facing direct violence are an ‘imagined’ replication of violence in the mindsets of a generation who utilise after school free time playing first-person shooter games in public internet cafes. This experience has been noted in the testimonies of convicts realising how participation in violence and the depiction of violent group functioning has been an illusionary fact, and against pre-enlistment expectations (ibid).

5.10. Cultural Practices and its Impacts on Socialisation in Violence

In addition to the adverse implications of political violence since the 1980s, violent occurrences in
different forms have become a serious social issue, coming from the supremacy of customs and traditional power relations over legal codes and establishments in the Turkey's southeast (Bağlı, 2012). Frequent examples of applying customary law and bypassing legal proceedings to reconcile personal, familial or social conflicts in the region are thus a major social force in socialising young people into violence.

Some examples of violence triggered by customary practices include violence within families, in the streets or at schools. Examples referring to the role of customs and traditions as a social problem were also among one of the crucial topics that emerged from the interviews conducted in Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa. Young people are often motivated by elders of big families to execute killings in blood feuds or similar hostilities (Interview, S13K05). In the passages below, interviewees commented on the level of violence instigated by blood feuds as a common practice to retaliate adversaries:

*It was a 12-year feud. They could be living in the same village but in fear. Everyone had a gun at his waist. At that time, one was forced to carry weapons, even though it was a criminal offence to carry weapons. Eventually, there was a common point for both sides* (Interview, S13Y22).

*So you may think that you have solved an issue with might. You could say that it is solved. Maybe you killed a family of 10 people, but you know that it is the case [...] that the feud always kills the males. We experienced it in our village. They started the feud. They killed one person. 6-7 other men left in the family. One man said ‘what could I do?’ Let me kill 6-7 of them from this family, and once I have killed all of them, I can also get rid of the violence altogether. The man killed seven people. Here, how do you survive without violence?* (Interview, D13Y23).

Similarly, land disputes are also a significant cause of frequent violence incidents. An interviewee’s comments exemplified how a land dispute in his family occurred and lasted for 30 years, which - in his judgement – could only be terminated by resorting to intimidation and violence:

*We have a 30-year-old land issue. We are from different families in the same village. At first, we tried to take care of it on our own. Then we tried to solve it with the help of aghas and elders in neighbouring villages, yet it did not work. This time, we went to the court. We went to the court at least ten times, but the land issue continued; we were unable to convince them. At that moment a might naturally*
person feel the need to use violence to solve the problem. We could use it but we do not want to. However, they did not leave any solution […] this time, what we do is to cling to our guns and we will try to push them way back (Interview, S13Y32).

One of the legacies of resorting to violence to resolve conflicts are the notion that different usages of violence can be a form self-defence. A striking example was the justification of direct violence in one of the personal narratives below:

Not only honour and religion are important factors of violence. A person would think like this. They came and killed my brother. He [the killer] claimed so-called self-defence. Moreover, they did not judge him. He stayed for a short period in prison, and this did not satisfy me. I had a moment of madness. A man who killed my brother was sentenced to 2 years and is now free. There is a thing called male pride, something clogged in the throat, and when it comes to that point is usually the moment one resorts to arms (Interview, S13Y25).

This young person’s account of crime and punishment shows the effects of customary law in shaping perceptions of when and in what circumstances violence can and should be used. These examples refer to the deficiencies in the legal system and its malpractice in Turkey’s southeast (Interview, D13Y22). It also reveals the functions of customary law in substituting the gap that occurs as a result of legal dereliction. As part of the reasoning in this passage, a person’s disappointment with the punishment of an offence is due to the perceived unfairness of the penalties imposed. This situation, in turn, is at the centre of determining arbitrary punishment that becomes mediated by customary law and in accordance with the victim’s ‘will’. Likewise, several instances suggest the failure of the legal system to establish justice:

Due to the lack of efficiency of the justice system, someone may come to the conclusion that the judge did not fully sanction the case, and so the person is often taken down directly when he is out or even killed while serving the sentence in prison (Interview, D13Y22).

These justifications for the use of violence as a customarily prescribed modus operandi to solve a wide variety of personal and social problems leads to personal judgments regarding where or why to resort to violence, which rationalises the use of customarily sanctioned violence:
Sir, violence does not solve anything. However, violence is sometimes necessary. We are forced to use it (Interview, D13Y22).

Violence is sometimes a defensive tool [...] (Interview, D13Y23).

You persecute a person to this day. You impose something. You are forcing something. Therefore, there is a build-up. The explosion of feelings happens in one day (Interview, D13Y32).

Anyone who uses a gun has not resorted to violence. In a way, you imposed it [...] (Interview, S13Y22).

In addition to the examples of violent occurrences that come about as part of traditional and social relations in Turkey’s southeast, the passage below reveals a different aspect of rationalising the use of violence. The interviewee in this example pointed to the corrective roles of direct violence used by a parent. A childhood attitude is fixed by the father’s use of direct violence against the interviewee and the use of violence thus bears an instructive purpose for them as adults:

I had had a fight with my cousin when we were very young. My father came and hit me. He said “my son, you both carry the same blood. How does a person fight his uncle’s son? If you had a fight with someone else, I would not hit you like this”. I did not fight anymore. After seeing the severity of the lesson taught by my father already that day, it prevented a further fight with each other (Interview, D13Y25).

Lastly, another interviewee stated that the role of the family played a strong role in identity formation processes. For this interviewee, symbols of violence such as rifles, in a house, or having violent parents as role models, were counted as examples of sources for their participation in violence:

It stems a little from the family too; for example, a gun hanging on the wall. In general, boys emulate fathers as a role model. When the father carries a gun, you carry it to later in life. If he smokes, then you smoke too. I think the social behaviour is important for violence (Interview, D13Y32).
5.11. Implications of Conflict Experiences on Youth Perceptions of the Peace Process

Young people and indeed younger generations hold widely divergent views, which implies an inter-generational discrepancy between youth and adult opinions. The differences in views exhibited a clear optimism in adults’ perceptions of the Solution Process in contrast to the discontent in young people’s views. For those who lived through frequent violent occurrences in the 1990s and experienced the implications of night curfews and emergency rule, they pointed to the improvements that came about after the inauguration of the Solution Process. For instance, according to a restaurant owner in Diyarbakır, the substantial infrastructural changes that were underway in their local surroundings had become a symbol of recovery from the conflict. A sales merchant supported similar opinions by pointing to the non-violent period as an era of true calmness that was indebted to non-violence, economic vitality and growing momentum in everyday life activities. In the sense adults and young people interpret the peace process, therefore, a substantial difference in views is apparent as the former group often prioritise the maintenance of non-violence situation and seemingly

As exposed in section regarding the effects of the conflict environment on identity formation processes, though opinions regarding the Solution Process in the post-violence era revealed anti-peace-settlement tendencies in the accounts of the majority of young people interviewed in this study. Despite promising developments in everyday lives of people in parallel to legal changes (as an indicator of acknowledging identity demands and paving the way for a solution to the Kurdish issue), negative attitudes of nationalist youths regarding the peace process was alarming. The criticisms of the peace process mostly involved trust issues (with the government), although the political proposals were initially introduced as confidence building measures. The attitude of the arguments varied from finding the process inadequate to respond to Kurdish demands, to the government’s unwillingness to solve the Kurdish issue.

According to an interviewee, the peace process was not a workable option, but one the nationalists forced upon the government:

*I wish we would have peace [...] you mention the peace process, but there is no such process. This process has been imposed. Only the direction of the war has changed.*
Similarly, another interviewee proposed a different rationale for the inauguration of the peace process:

*The only reason to make peace is that there are rich mineral resources and oil deposits in the East. Also, there is an effort to enter the EU. In order to enter, I think they want to make peace.*

The issue of trust is one of the major motifs in the nationalists’ narratives. The following excerpt offers a typical portrayal of the peace process in the eyes of the youth. According to whom, the political positions of the Kurds and youth interpretations of the peace process, in particular, have been influenced by the positions and statements of political elites:

*If we are currently speaking about the peace process and discussing it at the moment it is not really because we can trust the government [...] not just the government, we cannot trust any political party. If we speak about and trust this process, it is because of the people [nationalists] who started it. The initiators of this process have calculated all of the possibilities. They have calculated all of the rules of the game.*

For Islamists, the nature of conversations was distinctive with regards to confidence-building measures. Interviews offered a particular agenda to solve some of the problematic social issues in promoting the peace process. One of the interviewees advocated the renewal of a ‘social contract’ between communities as existed in the past. The content of this interview suggested a way to transform the violent conflict and build a peaceful future (Interview, S13K02). As Islamists’ opinions suggested, confidence-building measures might substantially change the course of the conflict when the sociocultural legacy is once again revitalised in wider society. This view denotes an Islamist approach to the current social problems.

Islamists’ opinions grasp the social and cultural contexts of Turkey's southeast. Religious elites in the region, for instance, have played major roles in settling social issues between individuals, families and tribes (Interview, S13K02). As such, conflict mediation examples implemented by religious leaders who reconcile social problems, are an inspiration for Islamists, and suggest mechanisms that could be used in the resolution of the Kurdish issue in a much broader context.
In contrast to the differences in opinion regarding the functioning of peace process, both groups share pessimism over the power politics and geopolitical location of Turkey, and Turkey's southeast in particular. Thinking of the Iraqi, Syrian, and Palestinian impasses, Middle Eastern conflicts are currently one of the most complex political crises around the world. As one of the interviewees said, “...let’s think of us as peoples who live here in peace and freely, respect the rights and dignity of each other, do you think that great powers will let this prevail?” (Interview, D13Y01). A different interviewee expressed similar views:

_The bloodshed in these lands has not ended since the creation of the earth [...] Everyone’s eyes are in the Middle East, namely in Mesopotamia above the Tigris-Euphrates. We are living in a country where all players have stakes in it including major powers in the world_ (Interview, D13Y24).

Therefore, the commencement of the peace process in Turkey initiated an ephemeral political situation for the Kurdish youth. While Kurdish political elites benefited from the increasingly freer political environment, the Kurdish youth faced a trade-off between ideological and social positions in the post-violence period (2009 onwards). Specifically, young people confronted two emerging dilemmas as an outcome of the prevailing political atmosphere. The first issue was the overall depiction of the peace process that can be defined as a state of being deluded by an ethnic goal (a separate state), and downgrading the value of political improvements. The second issue was a ‘cabal’ of urban youth (Y-DGH) who began to use the politician’s campaigns to sway the armed forces in the urban centres in the name of people's protection units. This second issue indicated a redefined social positioning developed the identity of protectors of the people in the face of recent political developments.

A JDP politician Kızılkaya in an interview with Ayşe Karabat (2014), for instance, argues that the ‘new’ political atmosphere after the democratisation efforts has instigated a revival of rebellious views amongst the Kurdish youth and in contrast to the peaceful resolve of some of the political elites, which reached a peak after the events in Kobane. In other words, Kurdish politicians have now less authority to control this generation of young people than in the past (ibid). For İstegün and Avcı (2012), the Kurdish youth have been venerated as a generation that has realised ethnic goals and is encouraged to be used as an instrument for the instigation of violence by Kurdish political elites. Likewise, Güçlü (2011) argues that:
Kurdish youth in the context of their problems and interests of the nation are an unorganised youth [...] Therefore, the youth are in a position to be a militant force blind to the question of violence-prone and anti-popular authoritarian leftist movements, and to violent religious organisations that are not related to major Islamic principles.

In the same vein, one of the interviewees stated that young people’s presence in political protests is often a counter-productive element, as they lack the will to express political views through peaceful means. Some are easily provoked to use violence by throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at security forces (Interview, I13K06). For a second interviewee, this tendency to use violence is partly owing to their uncontrolled “energy”, and in part due to their experiences of violence since early childhood (Interview, S13K05).

The field observations of discontent that emerged from amongst young interviewees in this research paralleled the PKK’s blame of democratisation efforts, which was in contrast to the optimism seen from surveys of the general population (see KONDA, 2011). This feature, in a way, coincided with the Kurdish armed factions’ extensive relationship with political violence, and their failure to adopt a more pragmatic and non-violent political posture. Likewise in the political landscape, Kurdish politicians often failed to produce alternative views or opposition to the armed factions’ power that contributed to the mobilisation of young people, or at least indicated the inability of politicians in preventing the radicalisation of Kurdish youth.

Güçlü (2011) states that it is not possible for anyone not to fear Apoist youth; the Kurdish polity in this context resembles a land littered with landmine. In a study in 2012, İstegün and Avcı likewise argued that the ‘youth to fear’ arguably compose 1% of the total population aged from 13-30. These youths view violence and terror as the only solution to political conflict. However, this study finds that the level of socialisation into violence might encompass a broader youth segment of Kurdish society. Kurdish youths’ vandalism was the first example that appeared in the Kobane demonstrations from 6-8 October 2014, and demonstrated the extent of the relationship between youth and violence. After the breakdown of the peace process, the extension of the conflict led only by urban non-combatant youths in Turkey’s southeast has been an example of how radicalisation amongst the Kurdish youth and participation in violence evolved to a different level in 2015.
5.12. From ‘Storm Youth’ To an Uncontrolled Generation

The level of political violence in Turkey has increased since the late-1970s at an exponential rate and the Kurdish youth grew into a major human resource for armed and extremist groups. To encapsulate the role of youth in the context of a transition to peace period, then it is significant to explore three periods that have primarily defined categorical youth positions within the Kurdish communities. First, the cohort who initiated the PKK, and armed struggle against the state by launching violent attacks as a principal approach, involved an educated generation in the main universities. This cohort can be considered as the first inner circle of the organisation. The violent events since then have predominantly been implemented by this generation. In the meantime, this cohort became narrative-builders in society. Their roles in the making of militarised identities in Turkey’s southeast have been a significant element in youth participation in violence.

In the second period, cohorts from the 1970s to 2000s have been motivated by various methods to join in the militant cadres of the organisation. The substantial effect of this generation was to spread the violent events. The population in Turkey’s southeast have gradually been socialised in violence by the bitter experiences of the conflict. As Yavuz stated, most of the youth participants in this period came from segments affected by the conflict and resultant exclusionary dynamics in society i.e. displacement, neoliberal policies, rapid urbanisation:

> As a result of a centralised education system, urbanisation, and population displacement, a new wave of Kurdish youth came to major cities to study or work. This became the movement of first generation Kurdish university students, who had doubts about finding jobs and encountered a new socio-economic life in the cities with very little means to benefit and join. The PKK targeted these ‘displaced’ and ‘semi-intellectual university students’ regarding offering identity (Kurdish nationalism) and commitment to justice (socialist economic order) (Yavuz, 2001: 11-12).

A third period has been marked by a generation growing up in the persistent conflict environment during the 1990s and 2000s as the frequency of violence reached a peak. This new cohort has often been called ‘storm youth’ by Kurdish politicians, composed of angry and frustrated youth groups.
This term was invented in the Kurdish body politic to mirror the legacy of conflict on the new generations. In this sense, Kurdish politicians like Şerafettin Elçi and Ahmet Türk, for instance, argued that the current generation may be the last generation to have a sort of dialogue with Turkish counterparts to discuss peace and a possible solution, contending that new generations have been socialised in violence, and deprived of manners of dialogue and a collective memory with Turkish counterparts in contrast to previous cohorts (Hürriyet, 01-02-2014).

In short, this research aims to address one of the consequences of the Kurdish issue on youth as it appeared to be an important factor for the failure of the peace process (2009-2015). The resolution of the Kurdish issue, however, was not an option when Şerafettin Elçi, a senior Kurdish politician in Turkey, argued that young Kurds growing up surrounded by a conflict are 'reluctant' to participate in any sort of dialogue with 'others'. Elçi's 'forecast' about the role of conflict-affected young generations in politics was in fact proposal for the resolution of the Kurdish issue to be reached before it is too late. Elçi's assumption was based on young people's 'reluctance' to negotiate due to accumulated frustrations and grievances over time. Therefore, in light of the political optimism evident in the government side that was also clearly seen in the implementation of the political initiatives, and in consideration of Elçi's crucial observations, young people's experiences and potential roles during the peace process and in the afterwards merit an academic appraisal of the subject. Youth can act as 'peacemakers' to conciliate parties to the conflict in a dispute or act as 'troublemakers' to escalate violence in conflict-affected societies and post-accord settings (see McEvoy-Levy, 2006). As such, the recent escalation of conflict as a result of PRY-M instigated instances of violence in Turkey's southeast can be seen as one of the manifestations of this 'negative' role in a time period that had come to epitomise the conceptions of 'peace process' and 'post-violence' or 'ceasefire' settings.

Although the importance of young people as human resources is still not disputed, the Kurdish movement has become overwhelmingly urban and politically active following the inception of political and legal reforms in conjunction with the inception of Turkey's admission to the EU in 1999 onwards. One of the consequences of an increasing broad base in society and changing political landscape in general has been the imposition of an 'alternative' role for youth to play in urban areas, which has been different than the role played by previous young cohorts in the 'rural warfare' since the late-1970s. Despite the regular flow of young persons into armed conflict, the dynamics of young people's
mobilisation into violence changed after the arrest of important figures of the PKK, including the founding head of the outlawed organisation, Abdullah Öcalan. The surge of youth-led violent protests emerged in the 2000s, particularly in response to trigger events associated with the Kurdish issue (e.g., Öcalan’s mental and physical conditions in prison). As a result, the role of young people in violence escalation, often called as ‘stone throwing children’, was a totally new situation and became a major social problem due to the involvement of a young – 1990s-2000s birth – cohort affected by the conflict. Therefore, youth involvement in violence appeared first in an organised public protest march in 2006 in Diyarbakır expressing an opposition to the TAF’s military operations in Muş. Young people played a major role in the violent attacks against public buildings, banks, political party offices and other workplaces. More importantly, use of youth and children as human shields and Molotov cocktails were a new and an emerging public safety issue (Hürriyet, 29-03-2006).

As such, the first function assumed by youth when the peace process is underway was through involvement in violent riots and mobilisation of young people as a ‘proxy’ armed unit for a localised ‘urban’ conflict. Although these instances of violence were organised by an outlawed youth group, YDG-H, engagement of local civilian youth in the instigation of violence was part of the PKK’s ‘changing’ strategy to fight in urban areas, in contrast inclination toward rural type of fighting characteristics. Despite the inauguration of JDP’s political initiatives to settle the Kurdish issue, started in 2009 and 2012, the major motivation for the changing strategy was the ‘spill over’ effects of the conflict in Syria, following the eruption of the crisis in 2011, which helped to set the stage for relapse into violence in Turkey’s southeast. In particular, the apparent opportunities for the PKK to realise its political aspiration of self-rule with its growing relative importance after fighting against ISIL as the most potent ground force and control over territories to the north of Syria. The sequence of developments arising from the Syrian conflict relates specifically to the ‘proximate’ factors of youth involvement in violence. On the one hand, the dynamics of involvement is about the ‘ideology’ of the PKK that prioritised its ‘maximalist’ demands of self-rule instead of a ‘compromise’ peace amid positive political initiatives and against a relevant atmosphere, and a reflection of its ‘organisational dynamics’ and ‘hawkish’ pro-conflict armed units, in contrast to ‘dovish’ political representatives. Equally important is the influence of ‘trigger events’ on youth involvement in violence such as the effects of ISIL attacks against the Kurds in northern Syria on young Kurds and on the decision to start a localised urban conflict.
The peace process itself was a rare moment of inspiration in contrast to the dull display of violence in the history of Kurdish conflict. However, there was little incentive for young people to play constructive roles in this stage, and their positions must not be seen in isolation from the developments in the political arena. That is, youth groups in Kurdish-inhabited southeastern provinces failed to remain detached from petty politics. Implied in the discussions, youth were in fact at the centre of violence instigation. According to an International Crisis Group (ICG) report, the death toll after the onset of violence, as a result of armed hostilities in cities and towns from July 2015 to July 2016, claimed the lives of at least 219 ‘youth of unknown affiliation’ apart from other causalities (ICG, 2016). Similarly, young people were on the front lines in the course of preparing violent Kobane protests. The lynching of a 16 years-old boy, Yasin Börü, and his friends, who distributed food packages to the poor on Muslim festival of sacrifice (Eid al-Adha), stirred public outrage and remembered as a symbol of brutality towards ‘other’ Kurds, committed by PKK-affiliated youth groups (Daily Sabah, 16-10-2014; 05-10-2015).

Exclusion of youth from the peace processes can yield adverse outcomes. McEvoy-Levy (2001), for instance, argues that alienation of youth from the peace process in South Africa produced negative outcomes as critical roles attached to young people in the fighting stage had been denied during and after the peace initiatives. These developments slowly forced South African youth into criminal activities (ibid). As the political climate in Turkey often fluctuate with the unexpected developments, the presence of a ‘discontent’ youth cohort amid an unstable period involves similar risks. Youth can spoil or support the implementation of pro-solution political actions as substantiated in countless post-conflict settings and peacebuilding practices. In the context of the Kurdish issue, however, young people's role as part of political developments has mostly been negative since 2009. Moreover, youth perceptions of peace process tended to be in conflict with pro-peace politicians’ views in the execution of the Solution Process. In such a complex political climate, young people have been converted into spoilers of the peace process in the final analysis, often depicted as an ‘uncontrolled generation’ (see Karabat, 2014).

Since mid-2000s, therefore, an unprecedented increase in the number and level of violent protests and riots is perpetrated predominantly by young Kurds. By starting a localised ‘war in trenches’ and
participating in violent riots, however, the reality compromised the hopes for young people's expected roles to participate in peacebuilding during a time period epitomised as an historic moment in the course of the resolution of the lengthy Kurdish issue. However, this is not an unexpected development or contrary to factual information in the peace and conflict research as many examples from conflict areas around the world exhibits contrary findings regarding youth roles and patterns of involvement in violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In addition to the fact that 'structural' determinants have been identified as a major element in explaining the youth and violent conflict relationship, the prominence of 'proximate' factors is also noted in this regard, to have a complete understanding of the roles ascribed to and functioning of youth in conflict-affected societies. At individual level, therefore, it is likely that young people are influenced or harmed by the changes in personal safety and well-being conditions that often impair normal youth functioning. As these 'new' conditions impose the ways in which one acts in response to a given circumstance, young people are one of the most easily influenced group who face the ramifications of violent conflict perpetuated by 'proximate' factors, such as ideological indoctrination, socialisation into violence, militarised identities or trigger events (see Hilker & Fraser, 2009).

In consideration of such proximate factors, this view is equally appropriate for the recent surge in youth involvement in violence in Turkey's southeast. Despite the fact that the JDP government's peace process transformed the political landscape to an extent, and also translated the weaknesses of the Kurdish issue for many decades into positives, such as the inception of legal amendments to remove the barriers that is preventing the use of Kurdish language and restraining representational politics, generation and perpetuation of violence, primarily by youth, and the resultant relapse into conflict is problematic. In contrast to the removal of hindrances to the expressions of identity, language, and political representational issues, proximate factors seemed to have a more impact on recent violence instigation in Turkey's southeast than the role of determinants in the past patterns of involvement, and contrary to the prominence of structural factors in this regard.
Conclusion

This chapter has explored the one of the aspects of potential answers to the research question in this research. Specifically, I argue that the role of ‘agency’ in youth engagement in conflict is a major indicator, particularly when identity is one of the leading causes of conflicts. This chapter thus looks at the role of ‘agency’ in youth experiences within the Kurdish conflict. However, youth experiences are distinct for each person. In line with identity development and meaning-making processes, the youth can experience conflict as victims, bystanders or active agents of peace or violence. In post-violence situations, youth roles can be decisive, and they can be spoilers of peace. Ideological positions often provide the basis for youth mobilisation.

In the context of the Kurdish issue, past experiences and the current trajectory of youth engagement in violence underlines the role of the identity development process in comprehending the relationship between youth and violence from the perspective provided by social identity theories. For the Kurdish conflict, this process is filtered by social and political actors’ involvement in youth circles. As the chapter elaborated on the development of a context specific identity formation route, nationalists and Islamists emerged as principal actors. Nationalist discourses often provide a framework for shaping young people’s social roles negatively. Therefore, nationalist actors such as pro-Kurdish parties, municipalities or affiliated CSOs are usually the original actors to engage young people in Turkey’s southeast. Moderate Islamist discourses, however, try to keep young people out of the conflict environment as active participants. Similarly, Islamists utilise different actors to engage young people with a particular way of thinking. The functions of the associations of Islamists are particularly significant. Islamist associations often engage young people from early childhood until the end of higher education. Despite the findings of Sarıgil and Karakoç (2016), who argue that Islamic brotherhood or Muslim unity is not a realistic strategy for the resolution of the Kurdish issue and curbing ethnic-nationalism in Turkey; in-depth interviews with young people who take part in the activities of religious groups revealed the fact that identity transcendence subjugates ethnic loyalties in their life narratives and conflict experiences.

The agency of youth is an underlying feature that shapes young people’s social roles in Turkey’s southeast, which is as a result of their experiences of conflict since early childhood. Past conflict
narratives and cultural roots of violence influence their upbringings and impact worldviews. In general, the youth can be viewed as a vulnerable segment of society exposed to implications of external influences more than any other segment, as youth ‘energy’ has always been an incentive for violent groups in conflict societies. In addition to the role of structural deficiencies discussed in the previous chapter, ‘agency’ plays a major role in socialisation into violence. The ‘agency’ factor in mobilisation is influenced by several proximate factors. This chapter reviewed such factors at the individual level. As the identity issue and ideological mobilisation is a key aspect of the Kurdish issue, a major duty of a peacebuilding lens in youth interventions at the individual level is addressing identity and ideology related conflict drivers on the personal development of young people. While an analysis of youth mobilisation factors at the structural level, combined with the reality of youth exclusion in society, both accommodate a crucial part of the root causes of the Kurdish issue, the absence of analysing political/ideological aspects make a true assessment premature.
OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS OF YOUTH INTERVENTIONS IN TURKEY’S SOUTHEAST

This chapter examines existing conflict prevention and peacebuilding instruments for young people in Turkey’s southeast. One of the central objectives of this chapter, therefore, is to explore existing peacebuilding work for youth, who have long been portrayed as a vulnerable sector of society. That said, Kurdish youth in Turkey have faced the implications of the conflict since early childhood. Struggling to survive amidst violent occurrences is a part of their daily routine as a result of structural deficiencies and proximate causes of involvement in violence (see Chapter 4). Youth are exposed to socialisation in violence and a change occurs in identity formation as discussed in Chapter 6. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to analyse existing youth initiatives for Kurdish youth in conflict-affected areas of the country in the first place. Similarly, it also aims to explore whether these initiatives respond to the factors discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Therefore, the first section explores the peacebuilding opportunities in Turkey’s southeast. The next sections analyse the dominant themes in the following order: vocational training opportunities, educational opportunities, empowerment by field visits, youth camps, sports, and festivals, and youth advisors in psychosocial programming, basic skills training.

6.1. State Ownership in Peacebuilding for Conflict-Affected Kurdish Youth

The research participants in this study argued that a fundamental responsibility in the socio-economic integration of youth in the conflict-affected areas of Turkey rests on the state institutions and governmental funding. The central authority, and state-led units and agencies in Ankara, and their
provincial administrative organisations, are often the major players in almost all youth-oriented interventions in southeastern provinces of Turkey. The major players in the field of youth-related issues reflecting the protectionist approach are the Directorate for Youth and Sports (GDYS), Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) and the Turkish National Agency for the Youth in Action Programme. Also, local governments (municipalities) and the Southeast Anatolia Project Regional Development Agency (GAP) take part in youth-related activities and projects (UNDP, 2008: 114), especially for the socio-economic consequences of the Kurdish issue. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Internal Affairs also have active youth dimensions within their institutional structures (Göksel, 2007: 21). State-led initiatives and funding schemes, such as the SODES (Social Support) programme, provide funding for youth-oriented projects. The recipients of such funds are from both governmental and non-governmental sectors: Governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations, or directly involved in youth activities.

In regards to the youth experiences of conflict, the literature emphasises particular conflict prevention and peacebuilding areas in the conflict and post-conflict settings. For instance, Sommers (2006), focuses on six relevant programme areas, such as vocational training, reproductive health programming, basic skills training, peace education, youth empowerment efforts and psycho-social programming (ibid: 13-23). According to Sommers, these specific areas listed might overlap since the components of such programmes are permeable in addressing the needs and challenges of youth (ibid: 13-14). In regards to Kurdish young people and the measures aimed at coping with the implications of the conflict, vocational training, educational programmes, psychological counselling youth empowerment efforts and social support programmes for basic skills training were observed as the most significant existing programmatic responses. State institutions and CSOs often implement these strategies throughout Turkey's southeast in order to prevent youth participation in violence. In the meantime, cross-community interactions in the form of youth empowerment efforts have emerged as additional programmatic responses, which aim to engage Kurdish young people and alleviate their social integration into society.

To these ends, one of the major undertakings taking place in the region is the SODES (Social Support) programme. Following the inception of PKK activities in Turkey's southeast, the SODES programme
commenced in 2008, with the aim of ensuring the social and economic integration of the most disad-
advantaged sectors of society, including youth, children and women (SODES, 2013). As a state-spon-
sored social support programme, SODES is primarily composed of a funding scheme for both public and civil society actors directed towards social inclusion initiatives, and targeting vulnerable sectors through interventions that are aimed at increasing the likelihood of employability, and integrating such vulnerable groups into society via capacity building activities. In this regard, central and local governmental units, such as governorships perform significant functions in implementing the projects under the SODES programme. One of the key experts at the Governorship’s Project Coordination Unit in the city of Diyarbakır, for instance, reviewed the scope and the extent of SODES sponsored projects and initiatives in their province as follows:

The Project Coordination Unit, in general, supports social projects. For example, SODES-funded projects consist mostly of the everyday work here, and EU projects as well. Besides, preparing projects for public institutions and civil society organisations is another element of our business in this province. We are referring them to the available resources; how to use and utilise the funds advertised by the national authorities. However, most of our daily schedule is, as I said, devoted to social inclusion projects under the SODES scheme, assisting projects for disadvantaged sectors of the society, especially youth and children, by providing educational opportunities, and engaging in sports activities, cultural events and excursions, employment and social inclusion activities for women (Interview, D14K08).

Despite the fact that the programme was initiated for beneficiaries such as public institutions and CSOs in the southeastern provinces, the extent and scope of the projects covered by the SODES programme incorporated other less-developed provinces of Turkey, including provinces in the eastern region of Turkey (the total number of provinces in the programme reached a total of 25 in in 2010) (SODES, 2013: 3). SODES funding schemes, in general, allocate the available resources to a variety of actors, such as public institutions and agencies, local authorities and CSOs. However, as shown in Table 6.1, government agencies and affiliated public bodies often utilise the SODES-initiated funds more than any other beneficiaries. Justifying the over-representation of state-affiliated agencies and institutions to receive SODES-funded projects, a standard view amongst youth workers in the public sphere was that youth activities should be implemented by state-led youth centres, as CSOs often lack the capacity to reach as much youth cohorts as the state does (Interview, D14K08).
Table 6.1. Number of SODES Projects Based on Type of Institution

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<tr>
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<td>778</td>
<td>1187</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>1619</td>
<td>5792</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SODES, 2013: 27

In fact, due to the perceived role of young people in conflict settings, the ‘youth problem’ seemed to attract the attention of state institutions. As a result, several youth centres are being established in the region. For instance, it is observed that governorships, the Youth and Sports Ministry and GAP administration are running youth centres. As another youth worker pointed out, recent governmental investments to expand the scope of youth work in the region encouraged the opening of new youth centres, particularly after the establishment of the Youth and Sports Ministry. For instance, the number of Ministry-led youth centres increased from 1 to 4 in the city of Diyarbakir throughout the last decade. This has also increased the number of beneficiaries and the type of activities in such facilities:

In Diyarbakir, we have four youth centres. One of them is here (near the city stadium). Others are in Ali Emri, Sur and Seyrantepe neighbourhoods. There are two more centres, which are now being constructed, one of them is in Bağlar, adjacent to İskan Evleri, and the other one is near the district garage in Yenişehir. However, we have four centres operating at the moment, with approximately 14,000 registered youth members. Of these youth, the age range is between 14 and 29. In these centres, for instance, university exam preparation courses attracted more than 4,000 students during the weekdays and weekends. In the meantime, we are offering handicraft classes, such as the hüsn-ü hat (Ottoman calligraphy), guitar, bağlama (a traditional musical instrument with three double strings) and wood painting, and vocational training courses (Interview, D14K11).

Talking about the youth activities, and with particular reference to the SODES initiatives, a broad range of interventions exist in the youth sector. These programmatic responses will be explored in the following sections.
6.2. Vocational Training Opportunities

The rise of unemployment rates, which devastated the economic infrastructures in Turkey’s southeast can be seen as the consequences of the 30-year armed struggle. Acknowledging the economic aspects of the Kurdish issue, therefore, numerous governments since the 1990s adopted comprehensive economic development programmes, mostly as part of the repeated GAP action plans that involve preventive measures (effective employability policies, vocational training courses, and employment coaching and re-designing vocational schools) in order to assist the economic development of the region. In this sense, it is observed that many actors such as the Ministry of Development, governorships, regional development agencies, GAP Administration, and İŞKUR (Labour Placement Office) assume key responsibilities when it comes to accomplishing declared broad development objectives. On the economic inclusion of Kurdish youth, for instance, SODES-funded projects appear as one of the most efficient youth initiatives. To exemplify the extent of the programme, under the employment action of the SODES funding scheme, 6792 participants have been assigned a job between the years 2008 and 2011 (excluding employment at public institutions) (SODES, 2013: 45). During the field research in Turkey, participants frequently referred to the role of SODES-funded programmes in the economic empowerment interventions. Therefore, several interviews with key experts in the head offices and training centres of state and CSOs have been conducted in order to shed light on the efficacy of their programmes. To demonstrate the role of several actors in economic empowerment activities, it is observed that CSOs frequently consulted with the İŞKUR and local employers at the design and implementation stages of the activities to meet the requirements and pressing needs of the local employers. There is also a division of responsibilities when it comes to engaging different categories of young people. Particularly, regarding the criminalised youth and children, state agencies for the youth services (SHÇEK), and Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü (Police Department) undertake fundamental responsibilities. In a project entitled ‘Umut Yıldızı’, for instance, the contribution of the police force in Diyarbakir to the employment of youngsters, who have been convicted of drug use, could be described as exemplifying the active participation of the Police Department in the social integration of young people in the region.

In such activities, the aim is often to train young people in activities to meet the local industry’s intermediary positions such as operating computer-based machines, and self-employment jobs such
as tailoring, sales assistantship, barbering, and computer programming. Certain matters of concern appeared that are often raised in the interviews with key staff regarding the activities provided for vocational training courses. For instance, it was observed that the employment success of participants after completing vocational training courses appeared to be linked to the type of activities provided and the proficiency levels of the host institutions, as well as the local employment needs and capacities. As one of the interviewees argued, it is very likely for a participant to find a job after graduation if they acquired the necessary skills required to satisfy the demands of the local industries. In the meantime, he states that job prospects are directly connected to the job supply and economic activities in the localities. This latter situation is particularly crucial for Turkey's southeast as the economic opportunities have traditionally been lower, and the economic and commercial activities further affected by violent clashes and sabotages since the inception of PKK activities in the region. Another interviewee alluded to this notion and argued that host institutions' relations with the local industry and their willingness and capacity to supervise participants' job search are also as important as the domestic economic conditions in specific locations. For instance, he mentioned that they not only try to predict the local industrial trends and needs before starting a vocational training course, but also directly get involved in the arrangements for a job interview and placement with potential employers.

A crucial aspect of current youth activities is that local police forces play positive roles when it comes to assisting the CSOs in selecting participants among marginalised and disadvantaged groups. This includes particularly young people who have been involved in violent and criminal activities and ex-PKK members who have benefited from the repentance law. According to the interviewees, CSOs frequently collaborate with police forces, both to involve particular types of participants, as well as to secure the spaces from various security breaches due to participant profiles. Such special arrangements are in place for a limited number of activities as most of the economic empowerment activities administered by public and civil society actors rely on open calls for admission processes, reaching all sectors of society.

The physical environment in the vocational training courses could also be perceived as a factor that contributes to the skills acquisition process positively or negatively. With that said, the places visited in this study demonstrated that some spaces were inadequate regarding the number and skills of
the staff, and the availability of material resources. There were also institutions equipped with high-quality machinery identical to the ones used in industrial facilities. Regarding the use of such spaces by the participants, however, one of the interviewees mentioned that they frequently face instances of misuse and pocketing the amenities in their centres. She argued that the instructional materials, especially drillers and supplies that could be used for an offence and drug abuse, have frequently been stolen when they commence the courses for the youth who have once been sentenced and released for certain crimes and anti-social violence. She further argued that a certain number of CSOs and public institutions, therefore, have intentionally been prevented from initiating activities for such youth groups.

Another issue that emerged during the interviews has been the disparity between the expectations of the participants after completing the training, and the appropriate skills that they have acquired throughout the courses. For instance, one interviewee mentioned that those who gain basic computer skills expect to find jobs as if they were computer engineers. This situation can clearly be seen as a critical dimension of youth frustrations whereby young people who have been alienated from education due to the existence of political conflicts and the violent environment, expect to find valued economic positions in society. Most of the participants also argue that intermediary jobs are often discriminated against by the general public, and the vocational courses that are usually aimed at training youth for such posts are undervalued, and sometimes could be counter-productive. It could also be argued that similar problems exist among the educated youth cohorts, particularly after graduation. As higher unemployment or under-employment is one of the most pressing issues of conflict and post-conflict situations, these aspects frequently become the lively topics of several peacebuilding interventions.

6.3. Educational Opportunities and Young People’s Social Integration

State institutions and several CSOs in Turkey, often try to enhance educational opportunities for youth by launching additional educational courses aimed at preparing them to excel within the school system. In this regard, such opportunities often target high school students, who are pursuing success in the nationwide university entrance exams in order to reserve a place in distinguished
higher educational institutions. Enhancing educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups, particularly for youngsters who have traditionally been the most vulnerable sectors of society, such educational courses contribute to the peace and reconciliation work in Turkey’s southeastern provinces. As one of the interviewees urged, involving young people in the educational system is often a major challenge in these neighbourhoods for a variety of reasons. According to him, most parents are not very interested in their children’s educational advancement, which is partly due to the financial problems, resulting in many deprived families being unable to afford educational expenditures. Considering the presence of big families in the region, which are roughly composed of 4-5 school-age children, their educational expenses put a fiscal burden on their already very limited budgets. On the other hand, financial circumstances frequently force some other parents to consider youth and children as part of a workforce required for the families to earn money and contribute to the aggregate household income. This latter situation is often the case in rural areas of the region, where children and youth participate in the family businesses such as farming and livestock production. In the urban centres, however, they frequently get involved in the informal economic structures and participate in illegal business activities.

Concerning Turkey’s southeast, it can be argued that recent educational investments, as part of the democratisation efforts in the predominantly Kurdish inhabited areas, are motivated by the rationale to expedite the possible social transformation in order to promote peace and reconciliation work in the region. There are certain structural issues that thwart the efforts made to generate the intended results. For instance, as one of the civil society leaders mentioned, the region has long been suffering from insufficient educational infrastructure regarding the shortage of qualified manpower and educational facilities. He argued that teachers and other staff, who are appointed by the central government and who are from the western regions of Turkey, frequently pursue the occasion to leave their posts in the southeastern provinces. This situation, unquestionably, hinders the continuity and quality required for success in the educational system, which increases the degree of frustrations among the inhabitants. It was also mentioned during the interviews that the language could also be a reason for the alienation of youth from educational settings. Since most of the students learn Turkish, as the main medium of instruction after their first enrolment in primary schools, their inclusion into the educational structures could pose a challenge, affecting their cognitive learning abilities, as well as
the teacher-student relationships. For instance, one of the interviewees mentioned that their inability to speak Turkish is often criticized by the teachers. One of the other structural problems in the educational settings is the prevalence of the use of violence in schools as a factor to influence youths' schooling rates and successes. Interestingly, another participant, working as a teacher in one of the schools in Diyarbakır, complained of the fact that teachers could also be exposed to violence coming from more mature students and their families.

6.4. Empowering Youth with Field Visits, Youth Camps, Sports, and Festivals

This area of youth engagement regarding youth conflict experiences can be described as the most widespread tool used by both public and civil society actors in peacebuilding interventions. To ensure young people's social inclusion in the society, the methods used in youth interventions should occasionally move beyond basic needs such as education or employment. That being said, such initiatives need to be comprised of elements that nourish the relational aspects of social interactions, generating a socially inclusive environment, in which individuals find the opportunities to build constructive relations with others. In this sense, addressing the issue of resentment and antipathy towards other members of the in-and-out-groups appears to be one of the building blocks of youth empowerment efforts. As Sommers (2006) argues, it could be difficult to categorize which activities are going to be included in such programmatic responses. He, for instance, classifies the interventions in this area aimed at 'energising and engaging youth through mainly sporadic, high-profile public activities (such as sports competitions, concerts, or conferences), or, alternatively, through the engagement of existing youth groups (20). In this regard, youth empowerment efforts in Turkey's southeast involve most of these objectives. In the meantime, based on field observations in the southeastern provinces, such activities could be described as the most widespread youth interventions when it comes to analysing the extent and scope of youth engagement. Youth empowerment efforts were also mentioned by most of the key experts as the chief mode of activities that exists in the region.

In this sense, engaging young people in recreational activities, such as inter-regional field visits, youth camps and festivals, youth actors appear to fulfil peacebuilding roles in order to help young people overcome the difficulties that arise as a result of instances of violence occurring in or near their
neighbourhoods, as it limits their social development and interactions in the larger society. For example, as one of the interviewees who works for a youth centre in Diyarbakır mentioned:

We have had a mobility project called ‘Ulu Çınarin İzinde (Tracking the Grand Plane Tree)’, in which 10,000 young individuals participated over 2 years. It consisted of roughly 100 visits in 100 buses from Diyarbakır to 9 other provinces. In addition our Ministry carried out nature and sea camps projects, in which more than 3,000 youth participated in 2 years (Interview, D14K14).

It has been observed that cross-community field visits function efficiently with regard to shaping young people’s perceptions of the ‘self’, and ‘others’ by visiting different parts of the country. It is expected to help reduce long established stereotypes and prejudices that can be observed in the narratives of violent groups. Participatory dialogue thus can be considered as a constructive approach in the activities of public and civil society actors, which often involve aims such as changing the perceptions of Kurdish youth by enabling them to visit other geographical regions of Turkey, as well as by helping them to form new relationships with their counterparts in the provinces they visited. These types of activities could generate negative results as well, since young people are more likely to compare the prosperity in other regions of the country with their own war-torn, lacking environments. The previous interviewee highlighted this fact and said that it could reserve the benefits expected from such activities if the aims are not well explained to the young people. He further suggested that the pre-visit informative training and practices could overcome the difficulties that might arise at the end of the youth interventions:

While our objective is fostering a sense of belonging among young people to the country, young people who visit the places like Antalya or İstanbul, and then return to their homes could ask: ‘why are they living in very pleasant cities, and we are living a life of misery?’ We should not let them say this. Then, it would not mean anything even if we wanted to do something good. It would turn into a pointless experience for both sides. This is why, we, first, prepare its background before initiating a project. We do not directly ask youngsters to come with us to the excursions, but we clarify them objectives in the courses in advance for about 7-8 months to prepare them for further similar interactions, like organising sports activities, arranging visits and picnics within the city boundaries (Interview, D14K14).

It is clear that building trust and eliminating prejudice among youth clusters in both the western and
southeastern provinces should be a vital component of existing and future peacebuilding activities in Turkey. Similar social impacts of youth projects can be observed in the experiences of Turkish young people who have been mobilised for face-to-face interactions with their counterparts in the southeastern provinces. For instance, one of the interviewees working as a project officer in a youth organisation in Istanbul referred to their youth project as a ‘Peace Bridge’, and commented on the experiences of Turkish young people in the region:

It is quite crucial to listen to people’s complaints in its local contexts. And it is not significant to do this in Istanbul but to achieve it in Hakkari. That’s a significant activity when young people arrive there and communicate with locals, and thus begin to break their prejudices. For instance, recently one of our volunteers told us that he had lots of prejudices when they went to the city of Van for a school renovation project. He further said, however, “once I had conversations with the people in Van, then I found the chance to realise the extent of shared values and the abundance of common things to talk about”. I think this is crucial because if there would be a transformation, and we enter into peace environment, these would happen once the people get to know about each other. It is not wise to do this based on information on the TVs. You should travel there and talk to the people. We also organise the same activities to the west (Turkey) (Interview, D14K10).

Young people’s participation in sporting activities occupies a significant part of youth centres’ activities in the Turkey’s southeast. The increasing interest in sports activities as a means of empowering young people appears to be one of the strongest measures when it comes to alleviating the social integration of youth in conflict and post-conflict situations. The importance that is given to the relationship between young people and sports can be traced back to the national youth policies in Turkey. As one of the interviewees argued, the state bureaucracy in Turkey has long been equating young people and sports in order to redirect youth’s vast energy into an active path, in a way to demonstrate a point of escape for young people who are affected the most by the implications of the violent environment. In fact, the national higher authority for youth affairs in Turkey’s capital is called the Youth and Sports Ministry, reflecting the significance of sports and its relationship with youth empowerment. In this sense, in most of the youth centres, sports trainers work alongside other instructors and youth workers to engage young people who are interested and have the capability to excel in one of the sports branches provided in the centres. Among others, martial arts,
boxing, and other individual sports activities are usually the most popular branches among the participants in youth centres. Regarding the relevance of sports activities, most of the interviewees in this study noted the effectiveness of such activities in preventing young people's participation in violence. That is, sports activities not only enable youth to gain self-confidence, but also, excellence in a sports activity leads to economic benefits, social status and prestige. One of the interviewees, for instance, mentioned that:

“Sports activities occupy a large segment of our operations. To give an example, recently, we learned that one of our participants entered the physical education department in Y province. If I may say so, these young people were amongst those who were throwing stones at the police forces, without a future or hope. After we started to work with them for 5-6 years, he became a national sportsman, and in the meantime, now started a job as a physical education teacher.” (Interview, D14K10)

Indeed, the success stories of certain youth from the southeastern provinces who have been competing in national sports events quickly capture the headlines in the national news, very similar to the example referred to in this above excerpt. As another interviewee argued, the sports initiatives are uniquely compatible with the existing socio-economic situation in the region, first, because of the widespread interest in sports activities as a means of providing economic incentives. Second, he stated that sports education in higher institutions requires a physical capability, in contrast to other educational branches, which attract more people from the region. Acknowledging the inadequate educational infrastructure, and conditions that prevent young people from attaining a better educational background, excellence in various branches of sports and its education, apparently, provides a crucial incentive for the youth in the southeastern provinces. In return, the likelihood of their involvement in violence is being reduced significantly.

6.5. The Role of Youth Advisors in Psychosocial Programming

One of the most pressing issues regarding youth experiences of political conflicts emerges in the areas of past and on-going traumas, which inhibits young people's active participation in society. It is observed that SHCEK is a competent actor, especially when it comes to addressing children and youngsters' social and psychological needs. Similarly, youth centres in the region function as hubs for young people, enabling them to overcome the implications of the conflict experiences. Indeed,
in recent years, violent incidents instigated by Kurdish youth, along with the on-going peace process in Turkey have heightened the need for the participation of young people with positive roles within society, more than any other period since the 1980s. However, Kurdish youth have frequently faced the implications of the surrounding fragile environment, in which several forms of violence have been nurtured by the cyclical armed clashes between the state and the PKK, and as a result of traditionally constructed structures. For instance, escaping from domestic violence or violence in the streets or schools, it was observed that youth centres often emerge as spaces, which shelter young people from the consequences of the surrounding fragile environment. As they experience problems with their parents and peers, such youth centres often provide the means to cater for their psychosocial needs. A youth worker in one of the centres, which is located in Diyarbakır's midtown area, stated that most of the centres in their city had become alternative spaces for them, as they have been isolated/escaped from violence-prone environments. He stated that young people have frequently been exposed to several forms of violence in their neighbourhoods, schools, and within families. He further said that in youth initiatives such as "...study halls, rehabilitation services, and spaces to engage youth via youth advisors", young people are joining "an entirely different atmosphere in which there is no alcohol, drugs or violence" (Interview, D14K09), which has been acknowledged as the dominant features of youth spaces in the city of Diyarbakır.

These views were echoed by another informant who was formerly a teacher in Diyarbakır before becoming a youth worker at one of the centres established by the Youth and Sports Ministry, which operates in a two-story building designated for youth services located near the Diyarbakır's football stadium. He highlighted the role of advisors and instructors in the centres, helping young people to cope with the dilemmas of their daily interactions. In this sense, young people's interactions with youth advisors appear as part of their regular everyday work. In this sense, young people's frustrated upbringings often surface when they are emotionally upset with their parents and siblings, or distressed because of being exposed to physical violence, which befit them to the youth services provided by Diyarbakır's youth centres. As one of the youth workers in one of the centres highlighted: "we are receiving letters from participants stating that, today, I was flattered by the instructor, and they never get angry with us". He further said, "it is often regarded as a naïve thing for ordinary people to encounter this (being flattered), but they are apparently deprived of such interactions in their near surroundings" (Interview, D14K09). The fact that they are deprived of such basic emotional
needs, and encountering the absence of constructive interactions with peers and parents, these centres provide the opportunities for youth to establish meaningful and lasting connections with participants in the centres and the youth advisors. Besides the emotional attachments between the youth and advisors, the latter’s social profiles frequently set a good example in the former’s life choices. For instance, another youth worker both the attachment and role-model functions of advisors, and said:

Teacher X has had a student here. His father passed away a year ago. He was not going home. He was spending more time with X than his family. Apparently, he had problems at home and found the compassion and natural affection here. Young people are joining in here, either for material gains or attach themselves with emotional ties, as in this one. Those who are linked to only material benefits often split away, and we cannot keep in touch with them further in future. However, once emotional attachments are established the communications usually continue afterwards (Interview, D14K09).

In addition to the key expert views presented, examples of similarly distorted patterns of interactions emerged in the dialogues with the Kurdish youth as well, especially in relation to their relationships with their parents and elders. They frequently mentioned the intergenerational problems, not just by referring to the typical parent-child issues as a factor to distancing themselves from their families, but mostly about the differentiation of the ‘self’ regarding the implications of the Kurdish issue. Based on the observations in this study, it can be argued that the former issues were frequently revealed in the interviews with apolitical youth cohorts, yet the latter often emerged as a preliminary matter in the interviews with young people who have acknowledged a political or ideological affiliation. Political views inform youth perceptions of the Kurdish problem, therefore, can be seen as one of the factors influencing parent-child relationships. For instance, most of the youth narratives in this study showed that parents or elders and youth perceptions of the political issues vary, concerning the youth positions in society, particularly their participation in politically motivated protests and events. It seems that youth centres, especially state-led-or-sponsored initiatives are playing limited roles in such tensions that involve political issues. However, for young people who experience the consequences of the violent environment in spite of everything, and who are not interested in the political aspects of the Kurdish issue, youth centres perform certain functions in young people’s social integration journeys.
6.6. Basic Skills Training

Basic skills training is another key component of programme responses to address youth in conflict and post-conflict settings. As aforementioned, the scope and extent of programme areas frequently overlap in the course of implementation, which can be seen in the core competencies training activities as well. Throughout this study, emphasis is mostly given to human rights awareness initiatives, as it is the most frequently observed item in the activities of civil society. A role could also be assigned to the EU-sponsored undertakings aimed at the dissemination of human rights values and education as part of the EU's Mediterranean partnership programmes. Since the most pressing issues of the 30-years of the conflict environment in the region, human rights activities feature as one of the most significant peacebuilding needs. In this regard, increasing young people's awareness of universal human rights values, building the necessary capacities to monitor human rights abuses and advocacy activities appear to occupy a major role in the civil society initiatives in Turkey's southeast. To this end, a social activist working in one of the most recognised human rights associations in Şanlıurfa commented that:

Our job as a civil society organisation is aimed at spreading the peace and prosperity ideals for young people through creating a youth consciousness by providing educational activities...This educational work is particularly on social issues; and experts, intellectuals, academicians, legal practitioners are usually invited to deliver seminars to contribute to the development of social consciousness in the society...We have a clear distance to triggering crime and violence, and supporting armed activities. Therefore, we are promoting democratic rights of all, and working towards an environment in which people freely exercise such rights. Our thinking, thus, by adhering to the ideals of human rights, aims at enhancing such practices to all segments of the society. This is, however, a difficult endeavour in this region, despite our efforts (Interview, D14K13).

As she explains, human rights awareness initiatives frequently dominate the activity agenda of most of civil society in the region, which was also discerned in the fieldwork visits to the other provinces in the area. In these campaigns and educational activities, young people are often 'objects' of the civil society human rights programmes. For instance, the role of youth in these activities is limited to showing up for press releases or demonstrations, and attending the public lectures of high profile individuals. Therefore, the perceived functions of civil society, in this sense, do not surpass the utility
of a human rights course offered in formal educational settings. In contrast, unconventional methods, such as initiatives involving various features of informal and peer education, and vesting in youth ‘agency’ in the first place by including them in the knowledge and experience give-and-take processes can be seen as one of the necessary means of observing the actual impact and expected personal changes in relation to youth perceptions of the ‘self’ and ‘others’. It is found that some civil society initiatives address these objectives. For instance, a foundation, which has been established as a network of youth volunteers, and headquartered in Istanbul, however, operating through sub-groups comprised of mostly university students and organised in almost all of the provinces of Turkey can be seen as one of the best practices in the field. To encourage young people to take part as a ‘subject’ in the awareness campaigns and activities of complicated human rights and social issues, a youth activist, for instance, describes young people’s participation as both participants and trainers in their operations:

*What we observe is that they acquire the basic human rights awareness and advocacy skills during 4 years of participation period (this refers to the university education time as most of the participants are initially college students) in the foundation’s activities. If they become trainers the impact increases exponentially, so the transformation of their agency. Accordingly, they have the opportunities to visit different locations and receive some skills from the ‘training of trainers’ activities. If they only participate in the organisational activities, they are still subject to a sort of personal transformation and acquire some skills in the face of mutual interactions. Our efforts to instil a "volunteer's consciousness" into youth could become a feasible objective as the participants are now able to internalise an approach to intellectually process the cohabitation of cultural differences at the end of the activities (Interview, D14K13).*

Similarly, he also pointed out the role of peer education as an effective mechanism for knowledge and experience exchange:

*Young people who participate in our activities frequently refer to the peer education as one of the best practices in our foundation's activity pool. In such activities young people find the opportunity to deliver the training to their counterparts. This training includes human rights education, social rights, and reproduction health. Therefore young people as mentors communicate their experiences with other youths... The significance of this type of activities highlights the fact that young people usually listen to their elders, yet the actual learning process occurs among them. It is, in fact, true that we often*
Informal education as a tool that is being used throughout the process of young people's acquisition of core competencies can also be observed in the EU programmes that are implemented in Turkey. The EU funds are mainly allocated under the Youth in Action (YiA) scheme, into youth organisations to disseminate the basic skills targeting young people in the European and Mediterranean regions. In light of the above considerations regarding the role of young people in youth projects, the YiA programme offers the opportunity for both professional organisations and informal youth groups to organise events that brings young people from different cultural backgrounds. This is particularly crucial for the latter group in the sense that it can instil entrepreneurship skills into youth to own the peacebuilding initiatives. Therefore the EU YiA programme allows them to access a broad range of funds to actualize their projects while internalising the social values and acquiring necessary skills.

The projects that are sponsored by the YiA programme are mostly in the areas of human rights consciousness, measures to cope with anti-discriminatory practices, and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups. In this sense, it has been observed that several informal youth groups are implementing projects in the southeastern provinces. To support their project management and implementation skills, the YiA programme is being administered by the National Agency (Ulusal Ajans) in Ankara. To this end, the National Agency implements several activities for the capacity building of youth organisations. Activities regarding the training of trainers allow young people to train other youth participants, therefore increasing the ownership of YiA programme objectives and the outreach of the activities throughout the region. In terms of the implications of the Kurdish issue and the presence of socially excluded youth groups, the YiA programme meets the peacebuilding objectives addressing both their ‘agency’ and reflecting on the social exclusion issues.

Conclusion

Socially integrated individuals participate as full members of society by gaining access to a comprehensive set of rights and opportunities as individual parts of a collective. In conflict societies, the integration of young people into society is recognised as one of the most essential components of war-to-peace transitions (Sommers, 2006). Indeed, occurrences of political and anti-social violence
often instigated by young people in post-conflict settings urges the need to address young people’s challenges in the well-functioning social systems (McEvoy-Levy, 2007). Indicators of exclusion (economic, educational or political), in this context, offer an explanatory framework. In conflict societies, exclusion differs significantly compared to normal societies, where other conflict drivers (ethnic, ideological or religious social markers) are often negligible factors. The process of peacebuilding in fragile contexts thus requires a wider perspective, taking into consideration the contextual conflict drivers and root causes in a specific conflict. It is particularly significant in complex conflict situations such as in Turkey’s southeast. The dynamics of exclusion, as an outcome of the conflict, is a relatively understudied area. However, as exclusion is also a phenomenon prevalent in normal societies, especially in migrant-abundant locations, it is often a convenient way of programming peacebuilding interventions and of detecting means of addressing such challenges. In these contexts, the fieldwork findings in this research demonstrate that the socioeconomic and a liberal peace perspective dominates the overall aim of present conflict prevention and peacebuilding work in Turkey. Therefore, there is a reliance on vocational training, educational support, and recreational activities and basic skills training activities as a means of preventing participation in violence.

However, separating some of the conflict dynamics from peacebuilding interventions may not yield the anticipated post-programme results. By explaining the challenges in the last chapter for barriers to peacebuilding, the results of the fieldwork exhibit that the divisions in Kurdish society, alternative means for youth socialisation in venues of other social and political actors often weaken the overall rationale of integrating youth into society and preventing participation in violence.

Conflict transformation in complex conflicts requires institutions, which are responsive to the challenges that young people face. It can be argued that following the developments, which occurred as a result of the peace process, structural violence is a priority for the incumbent government, which is evident in legal improvements (UPOS, 2013). Existing peacebuilding interventions addressing the structural issues could similarly serve as the basis of post-violence period interventions. In contrast to some of the findings in the peacebuilding interventions in different conflicts (see for example Mercy Corps, 2009), however, young people are often familiarised with pro-violence thinking during the higher education years. Therefore, the fieldwork findings discussed in Chapter 6 are key for the success of peacebuilding interventions in Turkey. In other words, the primary focus should be on the
role of the identity formation process, influenced by social and political actors at the personal level. The next two chapters provide an insight into and recommendations for such endeavours.
The central aim of this chapter is to present a dialogue between the ‘data’ (the findings of the field research and peacebuilding work in the conflict-affected areas of Turkey), and the ‘theory’ (the conflict transformation concepts). In this context, this chapter is primarily concerned with how young people’s exclusion and unique conflict experiences can be addressed in youth work, as a process to empower young people meaningful participation and to integrate conflict-affected youth into the social, political, and economic structures of society. Therefore, this chapter prepares the grounds for a number of ‘new’ questions. Is it necessary to introduce a peacebuilding lens to the attention of policymakers to solve the question of youth violence in Turkey and for sustainable peace? Is there any room for emancipation and bottom-up approaches in the current peacebuilding and conflict prevention landscape, which is designed in accordance with the principles of liberal peace, top-down approaches and a limited set of instruments to prevent youth violence in Turkey’s southeast?

Therefore, the first section will review the various attempts and perspectives of the past governmental bodies with regards to the resolution of the Kurdish issue. The second section will highlight the need for conflict transformation concepts and a peacebuilding lens in youth interventions as a tool for addressing the youth dimension of the Kurdish issue as part of on-going or future peacebuilding initiatives. The purpose in the last section is to provide a starting point to help peacebuilders to think about the aspects of constructive change (e.g., perceptional, relational and structural) with reference to the conflict-affected youth in Turkey’s southeast by drawing attention to conflict transformation concepts in tandem with the findings of the current research.
7.1. Towards Resolution of the Kurdish Issue

Historically, the Kurdish issue has come to be known as an armed conflict between the state security forces and the PKK, a violent armed group and network operating in Turkey's southeast with political objectives of separating predominantly Kurdish-majority provinces from Turkey. Despite the PKK presence in the southeastern provinces as a non-state armed group for more than thirty years that has controlled the Kurdish political struggle along with the justifications for the use of violence, Kurdish body-politic have also produced political parties, and legal civil initiatives, preferring non-violent and political campaigns. The interrelationship between the PKK and Kurdish movement has always been blurred, and most of the other political competitors have been eliminated by the PKK since the 1970s. Referring to the incompatible political objectives of the Turkish state and the Kurdish nationalists, however, youth initiatives in both sides of the conflict have been closely linked with the respective understandings of the Kurdish issue, particularly concerning the root causes and the resolution of the conflict. Therefore, as was observed during the fieldwork, the state and the Kurdish political movement seems as two main competing actors in the area of youth activities. This fundamental political divide between the state and the Kurdish political movement, therefore, appears as one of the main fault lines, as both actors acknowledge the significance of the youth, being on their sides of the conflict in order to control political power and gain their allegiance. This has seemingly instigated a divide, in which both state and the Kurdish political movement tried to parcel the youth sector into small zones of political/ideological influence. To this end, and as discussed in the previous chapters, state institutions adopt ‘security-based’ and ‘economic development’ perspectives to possess young people in their own right. The Kurdish political movement’s approach is primarily motivated by identity politics and its relationship with the young people.

Within the context of such a pervasive and dynamic characteristics of the conflict historically, strategies to cope with its armed aspect and socioeconomic and political dimensions require an enquiry of turning points in the past decades both in terms of changes in its nature and also with respect to policies to prevent negative outcomes of the conflict (Beriker, 1997; Çelik & Blum, 2007). Such turning points could be recapitulated as:

- **Ups and downs in violent occurrences (the 1990s, 2004-2009, 2010-2012);**
Changing views and positions of actors (hawkish or dovish stances of the PKK’s ruling cadres, security-based or developmental government policies, democratisation and conflict resolution efforts);

External factors (post-Cold War dynamics, effects of globalisation, access to weaponry, shadow economies, Turkey’s EU accession bid, conflicts in the Middle East)

Such changes in the course of resolving the Kurdish issue altered positions and statuses of Kurdish youth mainly affecting the dynamics of and strategies for mobilisation. The growing need for militants in the violence escalation period, for instance, can be seen as an example of changing mobilisation strategies, and how its structural basis for justification for participation in conflict has been shaped in the past decades. For instance, the Kurdish nationalist discourse maintained ‘grievance’-oriented mobilisation by using frustrations as a result of past state policies and structural exclusion of Kurdish youth as an ideological apparatus especially in the 1990s. The ‘proximate’ factors as a frame for mobilisation for secession and ethnic nationalism appeared as a conflict driver in the recent (i.e., during the peace process – 2009-2015) violence instances. Mobilising youth via proximate factors has been an issue for the Kurdish nationalists in the calculation of political opportunities that might emerge in Turkey parallel to violent events, political turmoil and social upheaval instances in neighbouring states (e.g., Iraq and Syria). This view has fundamentally undermined the prospects for a potentially positive role for youth to act as ‘peacebuilders’ during a critical period in Turkey for the resolution of the prolonged Kurdish conflict (i.e., the political initiatives that commenced in 2009 by the JDP government). On the contrary, Kurdish youth became ‘spoilers’ of the peace process (2009-2015) as widely discussed before in previous chapters.

Based on these considerations, understanding the ways youth have been mobilised in Turkey require a closer investigation of changing features of the Kurdish issue. This ranges from different aspects and emerging sub-issues in the course of the developments since the mid-1980s. In this sense, some sub-topics and certain aspects of the Kurdish issue have often been neglected. Without such an inquiry and a comprehensive approach, measures to mitigate the implications of the Kurdish issue would be flawed. Arslan and Çapan (2013) to this end noted different aspects of the Kurdish issue as:

- The PKK problem;
- Basic rights and freedoms of Kurds;
In the following sections I will briefly discuss these three aspects of the Kurdish issue before providing an insight into the relationship between youth and conflict transformation concepts.

7.1.1. The PKK and the Militarisation of the Conflict

The military aspect of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey's southeast began with the eruption (late-1970s) and intensification (1980s-1990s) of the PKK-led violence. Since then, military measures have been taken to preserve national integrity of Turkey that gradually militarised the Kurdish issue and delayed its peaceful resolution. Therefore, a solution to the Kurdish issue involved only military measures and operations for several decades (Yavuz & Özcan, 2006). Today, while substantial variances in views remain over the policy issues, security aspect has become a primary feature of the Kurdish issue. On the public side, for instance, a recent survey has found secessionist goals, terrorism, and the PKK (13.2, 12, and 11.2 % respectively) as significant indicators of the cause and non-resolution of the prolonged conflict (KONDA, 2011).

Militarisation of the Kurdish issue refers to the realist discourse in international politics in order to explain the positions of political or military actors and analyse the root causes of armed conflicts. According to the realist model, resolving a conflict with ‘soft power’ - conflict resolution approaches – is often believed to be idealistic and ineffective (Ramsbotham et al., 2012). Realist conceptions such as deterrence, military coercion, and balance of power are the essential means in inter-state relations as described in the works of mainstream realist theorists like Kenneth Waltz (1959; 1979) and Hans J. Morgenthau (1946). This stream of theorists argue that coercion and military measures in defeating the rebels are the only available option, positing a ‘win-lose’ situation in armed conflicts. Military victories over non-state actors such as in the Tamil Tigers case in Sri Lanka are acclaimed in the realist camp as an exemplary of such notions (Ramsbotham et al., 2012). A more recent justification for the realist views questioned the relevance of conflict resolution efforts in wars caused by ‘greed’ instead of ‘grievance’ (Shearer, 1997); as conflict parties in the former are less likely to consent to a settlement that reduces the value of conflict resolution efforts. This fact also refers to Burton's (1990) distinction of needs vs. interests. That is, the former represents the importance of non-
negotiable items in conflict resolution processes while the latter is often considered a part of negotiable items usually fuelled by a ‘greed’ incentive.

Adopting such a perspective in resolving the Kurdish issue brings structural implications. First, military measures used as a result of realist stance prevailed from time to time in response to frequent violent occurrences over decades. Thus, the PKK problem either prevented or delayed the political solution efforts in addressing the structural root causes of the Kurdish conflict. Second, mainly due to the characteristics of asymmetric conflicts in the post-Cold-war era, which changed positions and objectives of ruling cadres in the PKK. These changes generated a ‘credible commitment’ problem at the actor level. The nationalists mobilised the masses using the ‘grievance’ factor (i.e., implications of modernisation and past policies) in the 1980s; and by means of exclusion of Kurds as a consequence of conflict environment in the 1990s after adverse outcomes of the conflict escalation period (e.g., forced resettlement, military operations and OHAL). The tendency in the 2000s, however, consisted of proximate factors. Changing motivations of the PKK is important at the actor level, as the positions of the outlawed organisation would remain a decisive factor for the resolution of the Kurdish issue. Similarly, such motivations for mobilisation influenced the methods of official response to the conflict.

Addressing structural issues in this context became a secondary issue in the course of past developments. Although the presence of violence is a clear threat to basic security needs of the general public, reducing the entire span of policies to only counter-terrorism measures is a deterministic policy framework, which has also been accredited by several governments at different times. So, one should not reduce the Kurdish issue into only PKK-led violence, as these are often considered as separate questions.

7.1.2. Socioeconomic Backwardness and the Kurdish Issue

A socio-economic approach motivated policymaking circles over decades to end the Kurdish issue. Many scholars acknowledged economic and social backwardness as a common feature of Turkey’s southeast since the early Republican years as a factor that increased the regional disparities between Kurdish-majority areas and the rest of the country (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997; İçduygu et al., 1999). According to a socio-economic approach mobilisation to violence originated from the outcomes of
regional differences that influenced the social and economic life of Kurds in Turkey’s southeast. In order to support such arguments, the general public, similarly, advocated development (socioeconomic aspects) and education (24.7%) as part of a solution to the Kurdish issue (KONDA, 2011).

Therefore, one should distinguish the socio-economic context in which Kurdish society has lived for many centuries and the particularities of such specific contexts in comparison to relatively developed regions of the country. These conditions, however, are not restricted only to Turkey’s southeast, but Kurdish inhabitants, who have been living in other parts of Turkey, similarly constitute the most deprived segments of society in their respective neighbourhoods. To this end, socio-economic issues tend to be one of the major drivers of the conflict in Turkey. In fact, socio-economic maladies as one of the features of the conflict-affected regions have long been an integral part of the state-led interventions in Kurdish-majority areas, steered by regional development plans in many governmental projects since the 1980s.

In contrast to the state initiatives in an effort to mitigate socio-economic difficulties, violent groups, however, have long been using regional socio-economic conditions to reinforce their positions in the eyes of the Kurdish public by relating existing social and economic structures as only triggers of backwardness in the region. This condition is often used as one of the ‘resentment’ factors in the mobilisation of young Kurdish cohorts into violence, particularly in the early stages of the conflict.

7.1.3. Kurdish Identity and Emerging Community Level Conflicts

Basic rights and freedoms of Kurds is a theme emphasised in the current research in examining the role of youth in the Kurdish issue (see Arslan & Çapan, 2013). In addition to other aspects, dynamics of the conflict in Turkey involved an ‘identity’ crisis. The identity needs of the Kurds have not only been a major concern for the resolution of the Kurdish issue at different times, but also a matter of socio-political tension since the early years of the Republic. Suppression of identity in society as part of denying ‘basic human needs’ is often suggested as a source of individual or group frustration (Burton, 1990). Therefore, identity-related issues are a motivation factor for resorting to violence at the individual or group levels. In regards to the Kurdish issue, subjects such as ‘freedoms’ and ‘rights’ as part of exercising a culture in the public sphere, such as bans on the use of language occupied the political agenda for conflict resolution efforts since the 2009 initiative. Similarly Sarıgil and Karakoç
(2016), found that secessionist feelings are partly affected by ideology, discrimination.

A survey conducted by KONDA (2011), measured the ‘cultural identity’ aspect of the Kurdish conflict by asking the respondents ‘whether they perceive any difficulties to live their identities in the wider society’. In response to this question, 3.2% of the Turks and 23.4% of the Kurds identified challenges at the structural level. Structural issues became an important part of the peace process. For instance, in a document published by the Undersecretariat of Public Order and Security (UPOS), The Silent Revolution: Turkey’s Democratic Change and Transformation Inventory, the peace process aimed at improving rights and freedoms in line with democratisation efforts (UPOS, 2014).

In addition to prioritising identity as one of the ‘basic human needs’ that needs to be a primary focus of a potential settlement to the Kurdish issue, Özçelik (2006) argues that ‘security’ needs of majority Turkish group should also be emphasised in the conflict resolution initiatives. This aspect denotes to the third dimension (e.g., persuading Turkish public opinion) in Arslan and Çapan’s (2013) study. As the armed conflict aspect of the Kurdish issue escalated over the years, the consequences of it not only increased the human cost but also shaped the perceptions of the wider society negatively. Therefore, persuading the Turkish majority in order to reconcile with Kurdish demands seems to be a major issue. KONDA’s (2011) survey, for instance, found that the Turkish majority considers ‘constitutional recognition’ of Kurdish identity as a flawed policy in order to end the Kurdish issue. Although being ‘Turkish’ in legal terms is widely accepted as a civic citizenship operationalized by Atatürk during the establishment of the Republic, its reference to an ethnic group is a contentious issue often opposed by Kurdish nationalists.

Another aspect of the problem is the nature and level of social relations between groups. The decades of contention and social tensions bequeathed to the public a founding ‘ethnocentrism’ that has appeared impossible to discard in the succeeding periods (Yavuz & Özcan, 2006). It may be said to polarise society and so often marred non-violent past bi-communal relations to survive in the present time. This situation mostly occurred at cultural fault lines in migrant-rich big cities in western Turkey, such as in Istanbul (Yükseker, 2006), Mersin (Kaygalak, 2001), and İzmir (Saraçoğlu, 2010).

The conflict in Turkey’s southeast was described as a dispute between the Turkish state and the
PKK since its inception instead of "two mobilised and competing communities" (Barkey & Fuller, 1998); growing antagonism between these conflict actors over the years has gradually distorted the course of relations between the Turks and Kurds (KONDA, 2011). Despite the presence of a non-violent past and growing mix of ethnic features into a ‘composite identity’ on both sides of the communities (Somer, 2004) the nature of relations have deteriorated as a consequence of the PKK’s secessionist agenda and frequent resort to the use of violence. Also, especially forced migration from the conflict zones to economically viable yet culturally homogenous spaces in western Turkey turned it into a social problem (Ensaroğlu & Kurban, 2011; Saraçoğlu, 2010). As Saraçoğlu argues, this has been an outcome of the socioeconomic transformation of "the social structure and urban social life" that accumulated exclusionary attitudes because of ethnic tensions.

In this regard, cultural fault lines between the communities have been built on reactionary behaviours, which typically escalated due to cyclical violence instances, and during times of violence escalation inter-group relations are affected negatively, particularly among the Turks against the Kurds (Celebi et al., 2014; Bagci et al., 2016). As Ensaroğlu and Kurban’s research (2011) argues, hesitations and reactions of the Turks regarding the Kurdish issue are often linked to violence and political issues concerning the PKK and Öcalan, while the majority are not necessarily against human rights of the Kurds or democratisation of the country in general. So, both groups tend to maintain a conflict-sensitive attitude that features a symbiotic relationship in everyday interactions free from the conclusions of prevailing contentious politics. That said, both groups continued regular social practices such as inter-ethnic marriages, being neighbours, and initiating joint business activities (KONDA, 2011). Turks, for instance, often interpreted the conflict by discriminating supporters of the organisation or pro-PKK political entities and other Kurds, which enabled peaceful coexistence amid periods of high frequencies of violence. Likewise, the Kurds living in western Turkey were integrated into the existing social structures.

Despite the three-decades-long dispute, the following legacy of cordial relations between these communities can be observed in high percentages of support to the continuation of conflict resolution initiatives (Radikal, 22-06-2010; Kaya et al., 2013). Approval of peace initiatives has been carried to public discourse with an intention to end the violent implications of the prolonged conflict. This has provided an incentive for the government to remain on track for the conflict resolution initiatives to
end the Kurdish issue by peaceful means (UKAM, 2013).

In light of considerations on the birth and development of the Kurdish issue so far, intervention areas and issues related to conflict-affected youth with special reference to the implications of the prolonged conflict environment in Turkey’s southeast are presented in Table 7.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Major Issues</th>
<th>Type of Change</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| State vs. Kurds in Turkey’s southeast | - The instruments and methods used in preventing young people’s participation in violence  
- Educational system, teachers and the curricula  
- Economic opportunities for youth  
- Rights and freedoms of Kurds | Institutional |
| Turkish vs. Kurdish; Nationalist Kurdish vs. Islamist Kurdish youth within politically opposed groups | - Interpretation of the conflicting issues (e.g., use of Kurdish language, decentralisation, PKK leadership, terrorism, etc.)  
- Perceptions of the ‘other.’  
- Identity politics and ideology | Relational and Individual |
| Temporary workers and IDPs vs. local people in certain urban centres | - Economic competition  
- Young people’s role in popular protests and trigger events  
- Inter-communal relations | Relational |

Source: Author

7.2. Youth and Conflict Transformation

Peacebuilders hope to promote the following four dimensions of change in society caused by social conflicts, which will shed light on the analysis of the findings in this research study:

- **Personal:** Conflict changes individuals personally, emotionally, spiritually
- **Structural:** Conflict impacts systems and structures - how relationships are organized, and who has access to power - from family and organizations to communities and whole societies
- **Relational:** Refers to people who have direct, face to face contact. When conflict escalates, communication patterns change, stereotypes are created, polarization increases, trust decreases
- **Cultural:** Violent conflict causes deep-seated cultural changes, for example, the norms that guide patterns of behavior between elders and youth, or women and men (Lederach, Neufeldt, Culbertson, 2007: 18)
7.2.1. Actor and Institutional Transformation: Youth and Structures

Peacebuilders in conflict-affected societies take into account structures of society in order to promote change by empowering young people to attain the necessary skills and therefore, develop strategies to cope with youth-related issues. Similarly, peacebuilders introduce appropriate mechanisms and venues for youth in order to promote young people’s participation in communal, local and national decision-making structures and consequently, hope that young people's voices are heard, and their needs and issues are addressed. Once young people find a venue for raising concerns about the conflicting issues that are often used as pretexts to justify participation in conflict, these can be negated and resorting to violence for the political objectives can be marginalised. Likewise, for the leadership in armed and extremist groups, the possibility of manipulating young people to engage in violence can become more difficult.

Shapiro (2006) suggested that "legislative, electoral and judicial reform, establishing new mediating mechanisms and forums within society" are the general features of responsive institutions in eradicating repercussions of armed conflict. Integrating youth-sensitive issues into such legal and political frameworks can help to meet the needs of young people and increase the institutional responsiveness to their challenges. Lastly, peacebuilding strategies should consider the nature of conflict-related security arrangements in accommodating the needs of young people who participate in the conflict. These procedures require responsible authorities in acknowledging militant profiles as ex-combatants, and in a way, provide a roadmap for the "transition to non-military roles". Likewise, security institutions in conflict societies should adopt a peace agenda in agreement with the post-conflict settings by avoiding the use of excessive force, repression, detention and profiling (McEvoy-Levy, 2007).

As discussed earlier, conflicts have the capacity to revive structural problems associated with established institutions of societies. Peacebuilding strategies should also take into account the need for responsive institutions in addressing vulnerable groups. Governmental bodies and civil society are either susceptible to the idea that young people can play a decisive role or not capable of providing the essential means to channel their energy into more constructive and peaceful domains. Thus one
of the main tasks of this research was to carefully scrutinise the institutional barriers to young people's participation in peacebuilding efforts and find the ways to reduce lack of educational, economic and political opportunities for youth.

7.2.2. Relational Transformation: Youth and Society

Conflicts are often a medium of change to restore broken relationships among antagonists in conflict-affected societies. Peacebuilding enterprises depend on the ability to remove the root causes of conflicts embedded in the structures. This feature is well described by Galtung (1990), as he stated that structural and direct violence is often legitimised by cultural perceptions of adversaries. Hence, such a process of restoring peaceful relations relies on the change/ transformation of social structures along the lines of cultural perceptions. The theoretical basis of this stream of objectives, therefore, partly draws on public attitudes theory in the social change literature, as misperceptions, prejudices and intolerances for the out-group (others) are found to instigate hatred and violence in society. Therefore, peacebuilding strategies should provide improved relationships between the antagonists, summarised as "learning about the "out-group", changing behaviours toward out-group members, developing cross-group friendships, reassessing the 'rightness' of one's group [...] establishing a new, common in-group identity to facilitate inter-group cooperation" (Shapiro, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998).

Among others, peacebuilding aspirations to eradicate the differences are impacted by ideological, religious and ethnic pretexts. Perhaps one of the demographic groups heavily targeted by these discourses is young people. For instance, during the Cold War era – due to ideological fragmentation in Turkey – young generations were at the centre of ideological rivalries. The process of ideological indoctrination was manipulated along the lines of communist/anti-communist partisanship during the 1960s and 70s that produced certain social and political tensions. Similarly, ethnic rivalry in the face of the Kurdish issue has been an ongoing clash of identities. Therefore peacebuilding strategies should address isolation, polarisation, and prejudices between antagonists (Church & Rogers, 2006; Shapiro, 2006). Thus the aim should be to reinforce constructive relationships between young people and the wider society and between youth to youth interactions. Returning to the question posited at the beginning of this section, it is possible to argue that one of the objectives of this research was to elaborate these differences and pave the way to alter common misperceptions, prejudices and
intolerant behaviours between different groups in Turkey.

The guiding cultural principles and contradictions as a result of the norms produced by societies influence negative/positive youth functioning. However, in conflict societies, researchers also need to consider the conflict experiences of young people. Notably, socialisation in violence, perceptions of social marginality, tensions within families, and extended adolescence and adult territoriality (McEvoy-Levy, 2007; 2013; Hilker & Fraiser, 2009) are some of the causes of low levels of participation in society and a major reason for inferior status of young people within their communities. In order to enable youths to this end, public perceptions about young people and their situation in such communities, specifically in patriarchal and traditional societies where different potential roles of youth are thwarted within these structures as they are occupied by adults, should constitute one of the most critical aspects of peacebuilding strategies. A causal explanation for participation in violence and young people’s role in peacebuilding initiatives, therefore, exists in the relationships and interactions between the society and young people.

7.2.3. Personal Transformation: Youth and Identity
Conflict transformation requires skills and abilities to deal with the consequences of armed conflicts and violence. Changing the nature of relationships between adversaries and promoting young people’s status in self-structure interactions prioritises the need to modify attitudes and behaviours. In addressing the primary objectives of this section, changing the adversarial images; communicating political aspirations; reducing mutual stereotypes; arriving at a deeper understanding of psychological conflict; reaching a mutual understanding of political ideas (Rouhana, 2000: 297) can be used for peacebuilding activities. Similarly, Shapiro (2006) has suggested three main dimensions of attitudinal and behavioural change: cognitive, affective and behavioural. According to Shapiro, cognitive changes refer to transforming hostile or prejudicial attitudes toward the other, which includes:

Fostering self-reflection and awareness, learning about the Other, critical analyses of social norms and messages related to the conflict or the Other, eliciting an “aha” experience of insight, introducing new information or analysis that is connected to existing knowledge structures, providing ‘safe environments’ and permission to experiment with new ways of thinking and reframing conflictual issues in integrative ways (Shapiro, 2006: 64).
Affective changes, on the other hand, are about emotions (e.g., fear, shame, grief, etc.), and peace-building strategies should aim at changing behaviours and attitudes by emotional control or release. Emotional control refers to the construction of mechanisms in discussing and solving the problems that are related to the conflicts between antagonists i.e. empathy. In contrast, the emotional release refers to unfreezing of emotions, as a method that facilitates such changes at the individual level (ibid: 64). Lastly, behavioural change aims at personal development and interpersonal skills of the individual to improve cooperation and communication among each other. These types of change include “establishing new rules and norms for interaction, modelling more constructive behaviours and providing opportunities for imitation and rehearsal of constructive behaviours” (ibid: 65). Young people usually involve in strong social networking roles within peer groups and societies. Youth often performs "narrative and myth builder", "social connector and ideological reproducer" roles in conflict-affected societies, in a way, instigating the reproduction of violence (McEvoy-Levy, 2007). Young people in conflict societies use violence as the only known method for them to solve inter (intra)-personal disputes. Developing skills and introducing tools for conflict resolution for the conflict-affected youth can help to change the mode of interaction in such situations. This individual change is also an essential component of peacebuilding strategies.

In most general terms, peacebuilding aims to stop violence and refers to a process in which the root causes of the conflict is addressed. Therefore, peacebuilding involves “transforming hostile and violent relationships into a peace system characterized by just and interdependent relationships” (Abiiew & Keating, 1999: 81–82). In this regard, it is important to recognise the following points as crucial guidelines in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 with regards to ending the violence cycle in Turkey's southeast:
Table 7.2: A Framework and Strategy for Change (From Structural to Personal and Relational)

**Overall Goal:** Achieve national youth policy change that promotes young people’s rights and access to decision-making

**How?** Increase advocacy and dialogue capacity between young people, community and local/national government

**Overview:**
1. Recent violent occurrences (e.g. the peace process 2009-2015) has been fuelled by Nationalist Kurdish political groups and party.
2. The Turkish government has been lacking a comprehensive peacebuilding and youth strategy

**Strategy for Change:**
1. Affecting political decision-making
2. Countering political manipulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Relational</th>
<th>Structural</th>
</tr>
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| **Focus** | 1. Enable peace constituencies’ commitment to peace  
2. Influence political leaders | 1. Increase the level of contact, exchange and respect between community and government  
2. Pursue policy change in youth-related legislation to promote young people’s rights and meaningful participation in peacebuilding |
| **Theories** | Increased understanding of youth needs and issues will lead to a better organised community for advocacy. These skills will increase dialogue, establish clear goals, policy change prospects and commitment to peace.  
Consensus building workshops, skills building, advocacy and coalition building contact will increase potential for constructive change and negotiation of terms and conditions. | Policy change requires putting pressure on political leaders at different levels; establishing peace zones/committees; increased capacity for peacebuilding, dialogue and advocacy. These efforts will lead to a youth strategy and a peace-building lens for change in youth-related legislation. |

Source: Author (adapted from Lederach, Neufeldt, Culbertson, 2007)
### Table 7.3. A Framework and Strategy for Change (From Personal to Cultural, Relational and Structural)

**Overall Goal:** Increase capacity to prevent violence between conflicting groups

**How?** Conduct workshops with a focus on relationship building, community development projects and mediation skills with young people from different backgrounds and groups

**Overview:**
1. Recent violent occurrences (e.g. the peace process 2009-2015) has happened between Islamist and Nationalist Kurdish groups.
2. Most young people in Turkey’s southeastern provinces has been connected/affiliated with different socio/political/religious actors. These actors can bring young people from different backgrounds together.
3. Prejudices against the ‘other’, conflict traumas; lack of conflict awareness, cooperation and mediation are some of the major issues.

**Strategy for Change:**
1. Breaking the cycle of violence
2. Breaking down hopelessness
3. Dealing with the lack of communication
4. Reducing dehumanisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Relational</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Skill building in conflict awareness and transformation, for young people 2. Capacity building in mediation and conflict awareness for peace constituencies</td>
<td>1. Build relationships and networking between young people at workshops 2. Establish mechanisms for extended and systematic communication</td>
<td>1. Build venues and systems of cooperation between young people within CSOs, schools, religious groups and other possible conflict resilient actors from different backgrounds and groups</td>
<td>1. Establishing more positive relationships 2. Changing attitudes and better understanding of differences 3. Spread of these changes in attitudes and behaviours 4. Emphasizing other identity characteristics and reducing avoidance of the ‘other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories</td>
<td>Increased awareness of peace and conflict will change attitudes and behaviours of young people from Turkish and Kurdish background, and Islamist and Nationalist youth groups. This effort will allow the capacity to respond to violence constructively.</td>
<td>Increased relationships between different groups of young people (e.g. Islamist and Nationalist Kurdish groups) will assist cooperation and networking. This cooperation will help to prevent violence. Peace actors through mediation skills and capacity will serve as early warning mechanisms to lower youth violence. Reconfiguring conflict-prone identity groups and emphasising cross-cutting identities will help reduce violence incidences.</td>
<td>Increased interactions between young people and potential peace actors in wider society will contribute to the spread constructive changes in attitudes and behaviours will provide a wider and sustained capacity for conflict response in the wider patterns of violence in the community</td>
<td>In the long-run, workshops, community development projects and activities will help breaking down isolation, polarization, and prejudice between different groups. Dialogue and cooperation will replace ethnocentrism, racism and revenge. Such activities will help trauma-healing and skills building.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Author (adapted from Lederach, Neufeldt, Culbertson, 2007)
Conclusion

Why does Kurdish youth participate in the most extreme forms of violence? As young people who grew up with the narratives of violence and war traumas in conflict-affected areas, although without directly experiencing past violence, youth participation in violence denotes to a complex social problem (see some of the newspaper articles in this period, such as Aydıntaşbaş, Milliyet, 29-05-2011; Belğe, Taraf, 29-05-2011). Often discussed in the peace and conflict literature, young people's positions during peace processes and in the aftermath necessitates a special attention, a cautious diagnosis of youth needs and challenges in conflict societies (see McEvoy-Levy, 2006; 2007). Recent violent occurrences to this end, in which young people occupied a central position, clearly showed the existence and negative implications of the conflict environment that shaped young people's perceptions, relations and attitudes as they were mobilised against the social order in Turkey's southeast.

The political initiatives of the incumbent government entitled the 'Democratic of Kurdish Opening' in 2009 and the 'Solution Process' in 2012, aimed to resolve an armed conflict that has lasted for more than thirty years, and attempts to reconcile the socio-political aspects of the Kurdish issue can be exemplified as confidence building measures. Regarding the final settlement of a conflict, such actions indicate the "reaching of an agreement between the parties to settle a political conflict, so forestalling or ending an armed conflict" (Ramsbotham et al., 2012: 31). Still, often fighting resumes in the wake of signing peace accords if the underlying causes of the conflict are not addressed, including existing structural contradictions (ibid: 31). Therefore, it can be argued that sustainable peace requires a lengthy and challenging process to enable relevant actors to collaborate at different levels to remove the underlying causes of the conflict. This can be accomplished through development of resilient institutions and social processes that produce healthy relationships between individuals and social (cultural) groups.
CONCLUSION

In this study, I examined the implications of the conflict on present and future youth roles in society in a period characterised as an era to end the prolonged armed conflict in Turkey’s southeast. In this regard, the thesis offered an analysis of youth conflict experiences by drawing attention to the existing scholarly literature of youth conflict and peacebuilding. Therefore, the current research analysed the role of structural factors in youth exclusion and mobilisation, and how these factors occurred in the contexts of the Kurdish issue and youth in Turkey’s conflict-affected areas. Similarly, I utilised ‘social identity theories’ in order to understand proximate factors in the identity and ideology and youth mobilisation relationships. Both analyses at the structural and individual levels helped to depict a general picture of youth in the face of prolonged Kurdish conflict and the recent peace process (2009-2015) in Turkey. A third significant aspect of this research study was devoted to the analysis of current conflict prevention and peacebuilding instruments designed to prevent young people’s participation in conflict in Turkey. Observing the pros and cons of present programmes for young people, I looked at how structural and proximate factors of youth participation in conflict were addressed in youth-centred initiatives.

The following sections in this sense explain how the data presented in this thesis addresses the research questions posited at the beginning of this current research. Having discussed how the research questions were constructed in Chapter 1, the following sections explores how several research objectives are necessary to explain the course of actions in addressing youth problems and issues in conflict and post-conflict situations. These objectives are divided into three groups, as much of the role of young people in conflict-affected societies have been associated with:

- Certain institutional and structural barriers.
- Interactions and relationships within the community and society
- Individual attitudes and behaviours

Therefore, the analysis in this research study evaluated the evidence for exclusive/inclusive nature and positive/negative influence of political and economic institutions concerning youth involvement in violence or potential constructive roles in peacebuilding initiatives in Turkey’s southeast. These objectives helped to determine the present situation of Kurdish youth in Turkey, and provided an assessment of the opportunities and constraints for them at an institutional level. Research objectives in the second stream is a result of the theoretical assumptions for structural and cultural determinants in explaining the relationship between community/society and young people and examined how these interactions affect youth roles in conflict-driven environments. In the third category, the analysis focused in particular on the experiences of the conflict and violence, cultural norms and perceptions of the ‘other’. Therefore findings in this thesis offer the following conclusions in relation to the implications of the Kurdish conflict on youth functioning.

8.1. Socio-political Barriers to Peacebuilding Work in Turkey’s southeast

There are a number of peacebuilding interventions examined in this research, which are successful in responding to the socio-economic root causes of the conflict in Turkey’s southeast. Social support projects under the SODES programme, for instance, can be seen as one of the most comprehensive funding initiatives in comparison to conflict situations elsewhere. Governmental partnership with the CSOs, in this sense, stimulates successful social integration outcomes. Similarly, regarding the position of women in the face of a culture of violence in the region, ČATOMs often benefit from the socio-economic expectations of vulnerable young female groups. Building the educational infrastructure of war-torn provinces of the Turkey’s southeast, for instance, during the last decade, particularly after the inauguration of democratisation efforts can be seen as practices, which address the educational aspects of the 30-years-long conflict that recent improvements in educational infrastructure, in fact, exceed the governmental and private investments in comparison to the entire Republican era since the 1920s.

In response to extensive investments in the region, one should question why the armed clashes and
violence events continue to occur, especially in the face of recent conflicts during the on-going peace process. Regarding the peacebuilding interventions, one of the potential explanations for the continuation of a conflict environment could be linked to the conflict transformation perspective, in which several aspects of peacebuilding initiatives are interrelated to both accommodate the peacebuilding needs and systematically decrease the probability of relapse into violence. It can be argued that peacebuilding, as a strategy to elucidate the root causes of prolonged conflicts requires peacebuilders not only to invest in reviving the socio-economic and cultural structures, or to respond to the conflict drivers effectively, but also to change the relationships, and transform the agency of conflict-affected individuals. Theoretically speaking, jobs for marginalised young cohorts, or participation in sports activities, or even completing a university degree may not be the solution for youth exclusion in society or non-involvement in violence.

8.1.1. Ideological Challenges in Peacebuilding Work

Despite the well-known economic and social problems associated with the armed conflict that has lasted for over thirty years and the evolution of the Kurdish issue, qualitative data obtained from fieldwork accumulated diverse views and conclusions regarding the role of such factors in young people's relationship with violence. On the one hand, some key experts, and most of the state officials have paid more attention to the facts as mentioned earlier, to the inadequate socio-economic inequalities as one of the indicators of youth involvement in political violence. They have also mentioned that such factors are efficient measures when it comes to integrating those conflict-affected populations into society if young people are empowered with better socio-economic opportunities. They reiterated the fact that socio-economic issues are known as the permanent features of the southeastern provinces that need to be addressed immediately as part of the on-going peace initiatives, and a permanent solution to the Kurdish issue. From their perspective, a causative link between such indicators and the Kurdish issue exists. Furthermore, academic literature on many conflict interventions elsewhere has seemingly coincided with the role of socio-economic inequalities on the conflict onset and escalation phases. Therefore, drawing attention to the consequential effects of socio-economic conditions on the inception and escalation of the armed struggle in Turkey's southeast seems a plausible way of dealing with today's youth needs and concerns. In some studies, this connection unfolds with particular reference to the general profile of the recruits of violent groups and networks, indicating that most of the youth are unemployed and uneducated at the onset of
their entry into violent organisations (Alkan, 2007). Therefore, providing socio-economic opportunities for them, the role of state institutions is expected to diminish the likelihood of youth involvement in violence by empowering them with necessary skills and tools to choose to be a valued member of society, and thus helping to break the vicious cycle of recruiting new members to violent organisations.

On the other hand, for others, and particularly for some young people who have been interviewed throughout this study, socio-economic conditions seem to indicate less significance compared to or without other factors. Particularly ethnic identity issues in relationship to acquire cultural rights, especially educational rights in the native language, appear as the most significant current issues. When the participants were asked about the role of education and economic well-being in the decision to participate in violence, the majority commented that these factors do not constitute any substance as they argue that many university graduates and economically stable persons are involved in such activities. In the meantime, they describe the socio-economic indicators as one of the consequences of existing traditional structures, embedded in the exploitative relationships between the tribal leaders (exploiters), and the common people (exploited). These descriptions on the role of socio-economic factors about the Kurdish issue, apparently, resembles the narratives aired by violent groups and networks that are frequently used to serve for politicisation, and mobilisation of masses for the pre-declared political causes. Therefore, the socio-economic integration of young people into the existing structures is deemed as a manipulative action, which contributes towards young people abandoning their ideological views and positions gradually. Hence, for them, socio-economic opportunities provided by the state institutions are being interpreted as part of the political agenda to eliminate the influence of such ideological pretexts. The state's socio-economic projections in these provinces are, then, being disputed as observed in the conversations with many of the participants. This could also be found in the actions that are aimed at interruptions or sabotages in the economic and educational activities, as a response to negative political developments, and due to trigger events. While young people are the most crucial actors in these types of protests, such activities also demonstrate the logical milieu to substantiate how socio-economic issues are being interpreted by armed groups.

Therefore, the categorical affinity between the views and deeds of young people, and the narratives
of armed groups highlights the role of ideological indoctrination and politicisation of youth grievances to shape the ‘agency’ and ‘positions’ of youth in the society, which frequently limits the efficacy of socio-economic integration interventions. In this sense, such interventions that prioritise the enhancement of socio-economic opportunities are observed as not treasured as to inhibit youth participation in political and anti-social violence. Disregarding social and ethnic identities, peacebuilding initiatives in the social and economic landscape, therefore, could be inefficient. Also, it has been observed that socio-economic activities are directed at the wrong audiences, targeting young people who are not ideologically inclined to political ideologies as purported by the violent organisations. Furthermore, it has also been observed that even when vulnerable youth clusters are engaged in such initiatives, they also frequently face ideological indoctrination at some point in their lives, especially throughout their higher education years. As long as the socio-economic initiatives are deprived of the policy support required to meet the costs and pressures of identity issues, socio-economic integration interventions seem to be bound to a limited efficacy regarding anticipated integration objectives.

8.1.2. Selectivity of Youth Practices and Impenetrable Youth Spaces
It can be argued that facing the presence of several youth categories; peacebuilders usually seek different socialisation mediums for each youth groups. In most of the cases observed throughout this study, and as the various aspects of such activities were discussed; available actors, spaces and perspectives associated with youth activities appeared highly selective concerning participant profiles and the scope and extent of activities provided for them. In other words, it seemed impossible, for instance, to start a vocational training course aiming to gather all of the youth clusters in one particular space, unless members of each sub-group are satisfied with the peacebuilding actors, spaces and perspectives. These assumptions have partly been derived from the field observations and informed by the interviews with key experts by analysing responses to issues seeking to describe beneficiaries from youth activities, and recruitment patterns into such programmes. For instance, in one of the interviews, it has been explicitly mentioned that certain categories of youth have been excluded from the activities, such as criminalised youth (Interview, D14K12). Moreover, some young people intentionally choose different activities due to personal preferences, such as ideology and religion. Therefore, it can be argued that young Kurdish people are fragmented regarding their characteristics, and thus, spaces they do attend regularly. Interviews with young people and the field
observations have also shown that youth categorisations are not mutually exclusive groups of young people since one individual can participate in more than one space, and/or switch into another category at a particular moment of their lives.

8.1.3. The Actor/Implementation Problem

In contrast to the conflict environments elsewhere, international programmes for young people are mostly superseded by national schemes in Turkey. A possible explanation for this might be that unlike many instances of conflicts elsewhere, the Kurdish issue has been a conflict that emerged between the state, and an outlawed organisation, which has used terrorism as the modus operandi to realise its political objectives. Therefore, the Kurdish issue has been viewed through a security lens, and countering violence has become the primary governmental objective, that constrained deliberations regarding the Kurdish issue into the national boundaries and thus have attracted mostly national intellectual and material resources. Another possible explanation for this is that in most of the conflict-affected environments, state power is often weakened by the repercussions of the conflicts; thus the available resources and the rationale for peacebuilding and reconstruction activities have already been absent. International funds, therefore, aim to revitalise these ‘failed states’, instead of allocating resources to relatively functioning states.

Moreover, it is apparent that most state-led youth initiatives are externally planned and rarely reflect local contexts and priorities. Personal biases are often on the grounds of family disapproval to participate in such activities. Colleta et al. (1998) highlights the role of the international community in peacebuilding enterprises; efforts to rebuild the damaged social fabric in conflict-affected societies often fail to address the complicated issues in such conflict environments. Notably, economic and political measures that are formed to assist post-conflict reconstruction strategies are typically confined to externally driven goals, such as promoting liberal economic systems, and developing more democratic societies. However, this approach consistently neglects local perspectives and overlooks inconceivable issues, such as culture and identity, inherent conflicting relationships and conflict traumas that are often considered as the root causes of conflict. Therefore, addressing sensitive issues for one of the most vulnerable segments of the conflict societies, youth policies and programmes should suggest solutions by reflecting on several dimensions of the conflicts, and produce multifaceted approaches in a way to think about young people’s needs and concerns. This includes
changes/transformations in established structures, antagonistic relationships and biased perceptions, which consistently reproduce conflict drivers. These approaches, in return, require an in-depth investigation of issues surrounding young people but most importantly, necessitate a familiarity with the local circumstances and indigenous methods for peacebuilding activities that are often embedded within the existing social structures and relationships.

8.1.4. Youth Profiles in Selected Peacebuilding Work

The peacebuilding initiatives partially address the needs and concerns of conflict-affected young Kurds and fail to reach most critical categories of Kurdish youth in Turkey's southeast. In contrast to the conflict experiences elsewhere, economic and educational opportunities may not provide the necessary mechanisms to socially integrate conflict-affected youth, although these factors, as evidenced in many other conflict settings, are also among the major issues of concern in Turkey's southeast. Therefore, a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy, entailing context-specific measures that recognise young Kurds' perspectives of the conflict, and similarly incorporating local concerns into existing youth activities, necessitates reflecting on peacebuilding initiatives in different conflict settings, and learning from the lessons drawn from youth initiatives elsewhere.

Certain drawbacks in youth initiatives often limit the capacity and impact of youth-oriented activities, despite good practices and success stories. State-led efforts were initially intended to engage several categories of young people in the operational precincts. As one of the youth workers put it, the ‘selection of participants are not on the grounds of political preferences’, and they accept ‘young people as long as the capacity of centres allows receiving further participants’ (Interview, D14K08). However, amongst the youth who participated in two different interviews conducted in the Şanlıurfa and Diyarbakır provinces, two divergent discourses emerged. Firstly, a considerable number of participants mentioned that family disapproval against these types of activities on the grounds of mixed gender activities and other religious factors inhibit their participation in such youth activities. Secondly, some participants were biased against state-led activities, due to their ideological/political backgrounds (Interview, D14K09). Together these observations provided insights into the personal and familial preferences of the local people regarding youth participation in particular types of activities, and gave hints about the sustainability of peacebuilding activities in Turkey's southeastern prov-
inces. Considering the predominant traditionalistic and religious features of locals, and discriminatory personal preferences, such evidence represents one of the crucial factors that need further consideration when designing and implementing peacebuilding activities for conflict-affected youth. Therefore, a considerable number of young people prefer to attend municipal youth-oriented activities, such as reading halls and municipal youth centres, and activities by religious associations.

While the peacebuilding interventions by several actors have targeted conflict-affected youth, because of their interest in the activities in line with proximate ideological/religious associations, they split youth into various ideological/religious groupings. In almost all of these groups, peers or mentors with a passive ideological/religious agenda that has been inflicted on youth, along with the youth-oriented activities often carry out the programmes. The diversity of actors and programmes could nourish peacebuilding efforts by adopting strategies addressing very specific youth needs and challenges, as long as they are in line with the peace process in Turkey. However, considering the sharp split in ideological/religious lines, the competitive edge for recruiting youth into the affiliated youth groups, and incompatible perceptions of each other inhibits the peacebuilding strategies towards building trust and reconciliation in the region, and in particular among conflict-affected sectors of the society. A plan to establish peace structures that lay a new framework for cross-group visits to alleviate collaboration, and to relieve the tensions among these groups are an effective means of overcoming the issues of multiple actors in peacebuilding activities.

8.2. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

One of the contributions of this research is the identification of peacebuilding intervention areas and key entry points in line with the conflict transformation theory discussed in the previous chapters. Therefore, three data analysis chapters in this research demonstrated the potential structural, relational and individual aspects of conflict transformation in the potential post-conflict period in Turkey with reference to young people’s involvement in conflict. In this regard, the peace process and post-conflict arrangements should bear in mind the role of institutional deficiencies in Turkey in addressing the concerns of young people in order to enable them to practise peacebuilding roles in society.
Similarly, the negative implications of the conflict have been extended to big cities after forced migration of the Kurds from the conflict zones to urban centres both in Turkey’s southeast and western Turkey. In this context cultural fault lines between Turkish and Kurdish populations and between the rural and urban populaces within the Kurdish society suffers the risks for youth participation in violence. With regards to the cultural fault-lines, the importance of diminishing economic opportunities in the neo-liberal economic age after the mid-1980s is significant.

The last feature of a conflict transformation framework in responding to the implications of the Kurdish conflict is about the identity issue. In this regard, the findings of the thesis reveal that there is a clear association between personal development in a conflict-affected society and participation in the conflict. This situation requires transformation at the individual level that involves change in attitudes and behaviours of young people. In particular, a significant role in this context rests on political elites since the ideological positions and ethnic goals in particular are the primary incentives for youth mobilisation that shapes the nature of personal development processes for youth in society.

In light of the conflict transformation framework and peacebuilding lens provided in the previous chapter, the following lessons can be drawn from the fieldwork in Turkey’s southeast:

- Existing youth programmes should employ a comprehensive assessment of the characteristics of youth population in the region. This evaluation must reflect the contextual factors, such as the religiosity and traditional features of the Kurdish society.
- Widespread regional (economic and social) development programmes often fail to respond to the personal aspects of youth participation in violence. This assessment usually prioritises providing educational and economic opportunities as a ubiquitous programmatic response for existing youth challenges in society. Such a structural approach ignores the role of ‘agency’ in young people’s decisions to participate in violence.
- Due to the dominance of a ‘structural’ attitude in addressing youth challenges in society, existing youth programmes often involve young people in peacebuilding to an extent and a level. In this regard, young people’s personal development processes particularly following the secondary or high school stages are usually left to the influences of ‘other’ social and political actors. This ‘gap’ leads to coaching young people starting from very early ages in line with the agendas of these political/social actors.
- Community level mechanisms in order to prevent youth participation in violence can be an efficient
tool based on the prevailing features of the Kurdish society. Due to negative reputation of social actors such as the traditional religious or tribal groups, particularly in the rural areas, these actors fail to act as suitable agents for youth engagement in peacebuilding. Also, the fundamental changes in Kurdish society (from rural/feudal/religious to urban/modern/secular and nationalist) following the effects of migration trends from rural to urban areas and expansive urbanisation, the role of these actors in society is in decline.

- There is an urgent need for ‘new’ youth engagement mechanisms especially in addressing the personal development of young people. These instruments; however, should incorporate the sensitivities of youth and cultural characteristics of Turkey’s southeast. These instruments should reduce the tensions between different youth clusters (in particular Islamists vs. Nationalists) in Turkey’s southeast. A major role, in this regard, rests on the political elites in absorbing a peacebuilding agenda.

Therefore, the following recommendations are made as a result of the assessment of youth issues and challenges in Turkey’s southeast:

- The existing security-based mechanisms should be transformed into peacebuilding instruments in light of the on-going peace process.
- A holistic attitude that is comprised of structural (economic and educational) and personal (identity) determinants must be a priority for peacebuilders.
- A contextual understanding of youth challenges and issues must be emphasised in youth interventions that specialise on different youth groups, such as rural, urban or migrant youth.
- The community-level actors should be taken into consideration by empowerment efforts at different levels, such as trainings for peacebuilding, institutionalisation and funding opportunities.
- A locally-owned peacebuilding strategy can engage young people to participate in activities, which would change the perceptions of youth as troublemakers.
**ANNEX I**

**REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT**

**ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM**
(Review feedback should be completed within 10 working days)

**Name of applicant:** Murad Duzcu
**Faculty/School/Department:** [Business, Environment and Society] BES International Studies and Social Sci
**Research project title:** Youth, identity and peacebuilding in Turkey

**Comments by the reviewer**

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<td>The project does carry some small risk which Murad has identified and indicated how it will be addressed in terms of the safety of the areas where the research is taking place. However, I need the Health and Safety form to be completed and uploaded before final ethical approval can be given.</td>
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<td>- I also need to see a copy of the semi-structured interview questions or topics - this also needs to be uploaded</td>
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<th>Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:</th>
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<tr>
<td>There are a couple of issues to be dealt with:</td>
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<td>- there needs to be explicit reference in the consent form that the participants agree to be audio taped [which I believe is taking place from what Murad has stated]</td>
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<tr>
<td>- there needs to be an explanation on the ethics form of how the data will be kept confidential e.g. saved on password protected files/encrypted data storage; hard copy kept in a locked cabinet.</td>
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**Recommendation:**
(Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).

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<th>X</th>
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**Name of reviewer:** Anonymous

**Date:** 11/07/2012

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