In/visible Colonization: On infrastructure, surveillance and destruction in northern Kurdistan

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To "the land that has a soul..."

Atakan Mahir

To Kurdish mothers and their children,
for Taybet Inan and for Agit Ipek.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Abstract /Zusammenfassung/ Kurtasî

This dissertation concerns Turkish colonial techniques of governmentality in and over northern Kurdistan. Under the banner of state security, Kurdish areas in the country have been subjected to extended emergency rule for decades. Drawing on practices such as the construction of hydroelectric dams (HPP), systematic state sponsored wildfires and the building of high security military checkpoints *(Kalekol)*, I show how the specific examples of coloniality in northern Kurdistan harness in intricate ways institutional racism, population control and ecological destruction. Therefore, this study mainly focuses on the spatial colonization process of Kurdish geography.

Diese Dissertation befasst sich mit den türkischen Kolonialtechniken der Gouvernementalität in und über Nordkurdistan. Unter dem Deckmantel der Staatssicherheit sind die kurdischen Gebiete des Landes seit Jahrzehnten einer ausgeweiteten Notstandsregelung ausgesetzt. Anhand von Praktiken wie dem Bau von Wasserkraftwerken (HPP), systematischen und staatlich geförderten Waldbränden und dem Bau von militärischen Hochsicherheitshauptquartieren/Kontrollpunkten (*Kalekol*) zeige ich auf, wie spezifischen Beispiele der Kolonialität in Nordkurdistan auf komplexe Weise institutionellen Rassismus, Bevölkerungskontrolle und ökologische Zerstörung miteinander verbinden. Daher konzentriert sich diese Studie hauptsächlich auf den räumlichen Kolonisierungsprozess in der kurdischen Geografie.

Ev tez li ser teknîka desthilatdariya dewleta Tirk a kolonyalîst li Bakurê Kurdistanê ye. Herêmên kurdî yên li welêt bi dehsalan di bin ala ewlekariya dewletê de rastî rewşa awarte ya demdirêj tên. Li ser pêkanînên wekî çêkirina bendavên hîdroelektrîkê (HES), şewatên daristana yên sîstematîk ên bi piştgiriya dewletê û avakirina baregehên leşkerî /nûqteyên kontrolê yên bi ewlekariya bilind (*Kalekol*), ez nîşan didim ku mînaka taybet a kolonyalîzmê li Bakurê Kurdistanê çawa nijadperestiya sazûmanî, kontrolkirina nifûsê û wêrankirina ekolojîk bi awayên tevlihev bi kar tîne. Ji ber vê yekê, ev lêkolîn bi giranî li ser pêvajoya kolonîzekirina mekan a li erdnîgariya Kurd disekine.

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1. Introduction

The Kurdish issue has been at the centre of Turkey's social and political history for almost a century. This study questions the reasons for the emergence of the Kurdish issue and tries to reconstruct a reading of this comprehensive and multi-dimensional issue by shedding light on the often-neglected aspects at play. Contrary to the point of view that considers the Kurdish issue as a "problem" or a "question", by way of reconstructing, I argue that if a problem or question is to be mentioned, it is rather a question or problem of Turkishness. Against this backdrop, this study advocates for a rethinking and reassessment of the Kurdish issue through the lenses of coloniality.

This project concerns Turkish colonial techniques of governmentality in and over northern Kurdistan. Under the banner of state security, Kurdish areas in the country have been subjected to an extended emergency rule for decades. Drawing on practices such as the construction of hydroelectric dams (HPP), systematic state sponsored wildfires and the building of high security military checkpoints *(Kalekol)*, I show how the specific example of coloniality in northern Kurdistan harness in intricate ways institutional racism, population control and ecological destruction. Therefore, this study mainly focuses on the spatial colonization process in the Kurdish geography.

Conceptually, I discuss whether the colonial rule in northern Kurdistan fits the prevalent and conventional frameworks on colonialism which are usually based on cases of settler colonialism and internal colonialism; likewise, my discussion inquiries into the ways in which this case contribute to and broaden our thinking about the very notion of colonialism. I argue that it is inadequate to conceptualize the colonial practices the Turkish state has been implementing in northern Kurdistan within the dominant frameworks of already existing colonialism theories and to set it within the different types of colonialism that have been described so far.

I have been using the concept of colonial governmentality for my purposes of understanding Turkish state practices in northern Kurdistan through infrastructural policies and projects. As a result of my discussion and the data I have obtained from the field, I recommend the concept of colonial governmentality to understand the state-society relations between the Turkish state and Kurdish society. I argue that this allows for a more flexible, complex, and heterogenous definition of colonialism as a type of governance rather than distinct classifications of

colonialism. My case of assessing the Turkish state's approach to the Kurds, shows how the term of colonial governmentality can account for intersecting types of colonial domination and settings of control, from settler, to internal, and even orientalist approach. Instead of introducing or developing a new category in my dissertation, for instance, using an ambitious concept like *infrastructural colonialism*, I suggest that the Kurdish case contributes to the literature on colonial governmentality by broadening its scope.

In most literature that deals with the Kurdish issue both the issues such as identity, racism, violence, biopolitics or necropolitics are not discussed directly in the context of colonial theories. Further, Kurdish issue has not sufficiently been examined through the themes of space and geography. In this context, the lack of such theoretical studies makes methodological observation and implementation difficult. Of course, this deficiency may also be caused by the political difficulties and obstacles faced by researchers while focusing on field and archive research.

The colonial desire and practice of the Turkish state is not a historical narrative that happened in the past. The reflection of the colonial governmentality of the Turkish state on the everyday life of Kurdish society in various forms and its shaping effect from the functioning of institutions to the performance of subjects, from the ways of thinking and feeling of subjects to the forms of everyday resistance still continues today. In this respect, one of the impulses that prompted me to write this thesis is the effort to make the struggles of Kurds and the forms of everyday resistance visible in the decolonial literature. I aim to challenge the invisibility of violence imposed on Kurds and Kurdistan that permeates the dominant discourses both in de- and postcolonial literature and public opinion. This thesis is an intervention that regards the acts of violence such as punishment, prison, exile, torture, death or environmental destruction committed against Kurds and Kurdistan as a result of Turkishness as a colonial category.

At the time this thesis was written, it is more clearly visible that the state continues its institutional racism with all its power apparatus and power mechanisms. Bülent Küçük conveys the institutional racism, which is one of the most basic sources used for the survival of the Turkish colonial governmentality, as follows;

> Institutional racism in Turkey (…) works through the desire to see the Kurds – in the words of Mesut Yegen – as the future potential Turks and to culturally destroy the other. This institutional ideology speaks by emphasizing the lack of the other, its cultural and economic backwardness, and assumes itself to be more civilized and modern than the other; It encourages Kurds to look like itself.

It mobilizes resources to discipline; it says "come be like us", "love this homeland like us" (2013).

It is clear that, for the duration of the Republic's history, the state has administered the region differently than it has the western part of the country, using an exceptional, distinctive colonial law; it has violently oppressed not only those who revolted against this denial and state violence, but also the freedom movements that wanted to ultimately govern themselves; it has displaced a significant segment of the population using special forcible settlement laws; and it has destroyed them without any recourse to juridical procedures.

In this sense, in chapter two, I discuss the roots of Turkish state coloniality in a chronological framework with critical concepts such as nation-state building, nation formation, homogenization, mass violence and population politics in order to better understand how colonial rule emerged in northern Kurdistan. In this section, I will also try to bring about a brief summary of the long history of the Kurdish issue by criticizing the different forms of naming it in the state discourse. Finally, in this section, will be examine some political and academic references that consider the Kurdish issue as a colonial issue due to the colonial discourse and practices of the Turkish state.

In the third chapter, I address the Kurdish issue as an issue of being colonized. My approach differs from past debates on colonialism in Kurdish studies, as I discuss colonization in conjunction with the coloniality-decoloniality concepts of Anibal Quijano (2007) and Walter Mignolo (2009; 2011). I try to comprehend the colonial relationship between the state and society by borrowing the Foucauldian term of "governmentality" (2009) to describe the "political rationality of the colonial power" (D. Scott 1995) and its political sovereignty over the Kurds and the Kurdistan geography, as distinct from what has been so far conceptualized as internal colonialism. Finally, by way of discussing why the guerrilla warfare against colonial violence, which I argue is one of the most important tools of the colonial governmentality, should be read as an anti-colonial form of struggle. I address the non-violent forms of resistance that Kurdish subjects enact in their everyday lives and who describe their situation as "even worse than a colony".

In the fourth chapter, I discuss the geospatial policies applied in the state of emergency regime declared by the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan in the mid-80s. Attention will be given to concrete examples of how the "state of exception" (Schmitt 1986; Mbembe 2003; Agamben 2005) imposed on Kurds, who in fact have been governed by the state of emergency regime

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and have been regarded as colonized subjects since the proclamation of the republic, continued and was normalized in northern Kurdistan in the 1990s. In this chapter, a general evaluation will be made on the evacuated villages and settlements, the forced migration of the population, curfews, the village guard system and paramilitarism in northern Kurdistan in the 1990s, which have been dealt with in Kurdish studies exhaustively.

In the fifth chapter, which constitutes my fieldwork based on the interviews, I deal with the effects of hydroelectric power plants (HPPs), forest fires and high-security military posts (Kalekols) on the colonization process of Kurdish geography and their relationship with each other. I try to show that these infrastructural projects and military security policies are interconnected with racist discourse, practices of state violence, and control of the region and population.

Disclosing the indescribable: On Ethnography and Methodology

During the peace process between 2013-2015 and during the urban clashes between 2015-2016, I conducted preliminary interviews about my fieldwork in a region covering five Kurdish provinces. After, while I was continuing my unfinished fieldwork in Germany, where I came as an academic and political exile, through online interviews, I added another Kurdish city to these cities. These six cities are where the war was most intense and continuous since the war between the Turkish State and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan,* PKK) emerged in 1984. These cities are Mêrdîn (Mardin), Amed (Diyarbakır), Colemêrg (Hakkari), Şirnex (Şırnak) Dêrsim (Tunceli) and Çewlig (Bingöl) with their Kurdish and Turkish names, respectively.

Another feature of these cities is that they are cities with highly politicized and resistant, where the three different state policies (hydroelectric dams-HPPs, systematic state sponsored forest fires and building of high security military headquarters/checkpoints) are intensively applied. These state policies are also composing the main line of my thesis. Therefore, in my case study, I consider "the spatial and social margins that so often constitute the terrain of ethnographic fieldwork (…) as sites of disorder" (Das and Poole 2004b, 6) and "zones of insubordination" (Scott 2009, 127), where the state cannot strictly and efficiently execute its own ruling and power.

This thesis is also an indicator of how critical studies produced in an environment like Turkey, where both physical and academic oppressive structures are intense, are exposed to political

and criminal threats. Conducting critical studies criticizing the political power and the state by going beyond the limits of methodological nationalism, especially Kurdish studies, in countries where academic freedom and freedom of expression are relatively high, shows that the impact of the "colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo 2011) on alternative/critical knowledge production is still strong in Turkey.

The state's domination, violence and marginalization towards Kurds and Kurdish geography, as Mari Toivanen and Bahar Baser states that "has not only taken physical and occupational forms" with these destructive policies, but it has also try to prevent a decolonial objection to colonial and "orientalizing discourses" (2019, xviii).

"Considering the highly political nature of the Kurdish issue, the politicization of research topics and goals" (Toivanen and Baser 2019, xix), and moreover, conducting fieldwork based on ethnographic observation on sensitive subjects in risky or dangerous geographies not only includes learning experiences but also causes to be criminalized and punished of the native researcher who adopts the critical ethnography approach.[1] By native researcher here, I mean researchers who have a common ethnic origin with the community they are researching, grow up in a common culture, and "have first-hand knowledge about the overall culture of the community" (Qamar 2020, 62).

The purpose of critical ethnography, according to Vera Eccarius-Kelly, "is to partake in anti-colonial thinking by rejecting notions of established scholarly neutrality and objectivity" (2019, 6). She states that critical ethnography "engages in a radical critique that rejects repressive structures and processes of subjugation" (Eccarius-Kelly 2019, 8). Here, critical ethnography is not just an observation made for a purpose despite all life threats, but also, as D. Soyini Madison puts it, "an ethical responsibility to address the processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain" (2005, 5).

Jim Thomas, who says that "social critique, by definition, is radical" and he remarks that the roots of critical thinking are based on "a long tradition of intellectual rebellion" (1993, 18). Surely, when such critical thinking is combined with a political sympathy for the population investigated, an ethnographic study based on participatory observation involves "potentially revolutionary praxis" (Shah 2017, 49). In this sense, the positionality of the researcher is

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[1] After the attempted military coup in 2016, I lost my job at the university because I signed a declaration (academics for peace) calling for an end to the ongoing war due to grave human rights violations and deaths in urban conflicts in Kurdish provinces. In addition, my ethnographic fieldwork in northern Kurdistan was evaluated as "terrorist organization activity and propaganda" in the judicial and administrative investigations opened against it. See, https://www.echrblog.com/2021/12/academic-freedom-in-turkey-before.html. (Accessed: 25.12.2021).

important. In a decolonial context, this thesis is written by someone who grew up in a society that was exposed to various colonial violence and injustice practices by Turkish coloniality.

Because of my positionality of being Kurd, who has been exposed to the same social and political context, the topics I research are issues that have a personal impact also on me since they are topics I care about or care for in political terms. Being an insider therefore does not mean representation, which has never been my aim, but in Roosbelinda Cárdenas words, being an insider or native is more a "labour of care" (2017, 73). In my ethnographic approach I did not aim to represent my interviewees or to speak on their behalf. It was vital for me to know the limits that come with my role as a researcher, to listen and to let those who have their own voice speak. Therefore, what is called 'data' is real and their lived experience. It is knowledge produced by witnessing, feeling and reacting together.

This study, which was initiated based on ethnographic participant observation in northern Kurdistan, continued based on online interviews from Berlin as of 2020, as stated above, due to the limits of academic freedom and the pressures on freedom of thought in Turkey. Especially with the pandemic, one of the most important issues I have encountered in online settings, which is our social reality, is building trust, which is also related to positionality. But, first of all, to say a few words about the profiles of the participants; I interviewed 40 male and female subjects from different age groups, class levels, education levels and different political views. I have had some contacts (gatekeeper) that facilitated me to find participants since I have been conducting research in these 6 cities for different years and travelling to these cities. I tried to conduct the interviews over the most reliable phone applications (Telegram, Signal and etc.) on the internet.

The majority of those interviewed are people who witnessed the war and were affected by it. The most distinctive feature of these people is who have been exposed to all the violence policies of the state, were imprisoned, or lost one or more of their family members in protest actions, unresolved political killings or enforced disappearances and fighting in the mountains.

While being an insider or native provides many conveniences in reaching the field and the participants, in some cases it is not enough just to be Kurdish or an insider/native. For example, gaining the trust of many participants did not happen only by sharing the same political view or ideology, but also the fact that I paid the price (losing job, being targeted and punished etc.) for addressing such sensitive and highly politicized topics was effective.

It should be noted that the issues which I research are difficult and sensitive to discuss in public. Many people living in the region and with whom I came into contact throughout my research were concerned about security reasons, distrust, state pressure or also in a state of fear. Some of them refused to be interviewed for these or many other reasons that are completely understandable. Today in northern Kurdistan two hegemonic powers are represented, on the one hand there is the Kurdish movement that organizes itself around the PKK ideology and on the other hand, the Turkish state is present with all its institutions. Marlene Schäfers emphasizes that;

> a friend-foe logic has come to pervade social interactions, which posits a neat dichotomous division in a conflict that, as any other, thrives on the existence of grey zones and ambiguities. It is a logic that seeks to shore up loyalties and asks for unquestioned allegiance, always ready to accuse of treason those who fail to bow to the demands of exclusive attachment (2019, 71).

Particularly after the 2015-2016 urban clashes, within the predominant state oppression and the regime of fear, in some interviews, while the participants did not want to be recorded while speaking on certain topics, some of the respondents preferred an indirect narration by applying self-censorship to themselves during the narration. Therefore, I asked all my participants if they wanted their names to be cited. Some of them gave their permission to use their real names and in the other cases I changed the names to secure the safety for my participants. One observation I made during the fieldwork was that even if all my participants were not sharing the same political and ideological views, the reason for their feeling of fear and insecurity was that the omnipresent state may be listening to phone signals and/or through audio surveillance.

In the light of these observations of the fieldwork, I found that under these conditions of infrastructural politics and colonial domination, particularly under the state's perpetual 'state of exception', two different Kurdish subjectivities have emerged. Firstly, Kurdish subjects that the state tries to forcefully incorporate into "bare life" yet who exhibit visible and invisible forms of everyday resistance. Secondly, Kurdish subjects, where "bare life" is voluntarily produced, either because they belong to the advantaged class close to the political power or who have internalised the state's power and consent with being dominated. This group was not represented much in my thesis due to limitations of fieldwork access.

Beyond the field access after coming to Germany, another reason why my participants were mainly from the first group, those that exhibit everyday resistance, was due to my positionality and the assumptions I carried when entering the field, finding participants and so on. Being a

native researcher, beyond its epistemic advantages, also comes with limitations. Only after conducting several interviews, I understood that the second subjectivity, those that self-discipline and voluntarily consent with being dominated, was also central to subject formations under the given despotic and infrastructural power. The limitations that come with my own positionality got exposed through the engagement with the field and showed me that a second fieldwork would be necessary to complement my research outcomes. Being aware of this limitation, and with the aim to obtain a broader picture on the emerging subjectivities, and to enrich my thesis, I attempted to conduct some targeted interviews with exiled Turkish police officers and soldiers living in Germany.

I tried to reach out the members of the security forces who fled to Germany after the coup d'état in 2016 when the AKP government began to persecute Gülen movement members, to understand how the colonial governmentality in northern Kurdistan was perceived by actors of the state. However, many former soldiers and police officers, whom I tried to reach through social media, even though they did not accept interviews due to security reasons, they expressed their regrets for being a part of all violent state policies and that they assumed them as a state duty. These comments were made in their personal confessions to me. Only one of them was willing to speak to me yet without voice recording, for which reason I took notes during our interview and afterwards in form of a memory log (Gedächtnisprotokoll).

Veli (pseudonym), who served as the commander of the military post in different cities of Kurdistan for fourteen years spread between 1991 and 2010, stated that they fought in Kurdistan with the idea of battling a terrorist organization, however, eventually they ended up persecuting and violently oppressing civilians a lot. Although he acknowledged the violence and crimes committed by the state forces of which he was part of, he expressed his loyalty to the state by saying that these acts of violence were not representative of the state, or in his literal words, "this is not what the state was actually like, they (government) used us". When he compared the period, he was in service with the authoritarian regime after 2015, he stated that "the current periods were worse and will get worse".

While this encounter informed me about the perspective of state actors, significant for my ethnographic research were the accounts of the people who live in the geography I am studying and who are exposed to the power dynamics in the region. What are their experiences, their feelings, and thoughts? Therefore, with this research I try also to do an anthropology of

emotions from the perspective of the one who is intimidated, threatened, oppressed, and most importantly, who sees themselves as colonized.

The narratives of the participants revealed a general and collective narrative about Kurdishness and their ties with the geography of Kurdistan. This collective narrative is about how the geography of Kurdistan is colonized and destroyed day by day through different infrastructural projects. In this sense, as Veena Das and Deborah Poole stated that; "in mapping the effects and presence of the 'state' in local life, anthropologists often look for signs of administrative and hierarchical rationalities that provide seemingly regular links with the political and regulatory apparatus of a central bureaucratic state" (2004b, 5).

Due to the ongoing conflict in northern Kurdistan and the non-resolved questions about self-determination, human rights and ecological destruction, the emerging body of literature on the Kurds and Kurdistan maintains its political and crucial presence. With this study I do not only document the brutality of the state's ongoing war through the stories and testimonies of Kurds, but I also aim to show various fragments of fear, humiliation, experienced necropolitics and violence that affect the local people in the region. "After all, sovereign power exercised by the state is not only about territories; it is also about bodies" (Das and Poole 2004b, 10).

The state as an entity has always remained in the minds and emotions of the Kurds as an object of fear and a subject that committed acts of humiliation, assimilation, arrest, torture, killing, massacre, and other forms of violence. What strike me most was that all stories were both full of fear of dishonouring and humiliation and at the same time, infused with the hope of getting rid of the indescribable and undefined "even worse than a colony" situation. What I understand from the narratives of interviewees, the Turkish state goes beyond the known colonial practices of how the Kurd *should live* and focuses on how the Kurd *should die* by ways of necropolitical concepts where life is redesigned through death (see also; Bargu 2019).

The new necropolitical concept, in which the forms of killing are diversified and spread to the whole society, also indicates that multidimensional destruction is in use, using all the possibilities of institutionalized coloniality in addition to physical and psychological violence. The execution of this destruction now takes place not only through soldiers and police but also through all interconnected and jointly functioning bureaucratic institutions representing necropolitical power. Even today Kurds live with armed conflict, enforced disappearances and unresolved killings, dispossessions, threats, prisons, widespread forms of humiliation, and constant reminders about the fears experienced in the past, threatening with their repetition (see

also; Aras 2014; Biner 2020). People do not forget what happened to them. I tried to examine the colonial desires and practices of the Turkish state, which was shaped by the destruction of the body, space and even death in northern Kurdistan, through feelings and realities that my participants were struggling to find words and existing concepts for. However, without forgetting the words of Linda T. Smith;

> In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent. Taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively does not help people to improve their current conditions. It provides words, perhaps, an insight that explains certain experiences – but it does not prevent someone from dying (2012, 3).

The participants used the self-description of being "even worse than a colony" or "beyond the colony" to stress that even in colonies, in the classical sense, there is a legal order that limits violence to a certain degree. This type of comparison was often made by my participants to point at the non-existence of any legal framework that would limit the exercise of state violence, even if it was colonial. One explanation put forward by my participants was that the state approached northern Kurdistan by racial marginalization. My participants emphasized that the above-mentioned violent practices and legal rules in the period after 2015 cannot be seen even in colonies, and that the ways in which violence is exercised on Kurdish subjects and the Kurdistan geography is untypical and cannot be described with existing categories and grammar.

This state of being unable to describe includes the incurability of witnessing the death of a geography that has been turned into debris by the destructive interventions of the state towards the space and ecology in northern Kurdistan but also it includes a self-criticism about the inability to prevent this destruction. However, it should be noted that despite all the destructiveness of the colonial governmentality of the state and the ongoing war, looking at Kurdish social life, it is seen that Kurdish subjects have reconstructed Kurdishness. Here, Kurdishness defines the consciousness of a society that resists coloniality by claiming its identity and reproduces it in a decolonial context. In this sense, it can be said that this reconstruction constitutes the essence of the Kurdish political struggle, which constantly renews and develops itself.

Mapping

One of the symbols that Nobel Prize-winning writer Abdulrazak Gurnah (2002) used while describing the destruction caused by the colonizer in his novel *By the Sea* is maps. According to him, maps are one of the ways of understanding the world, which emerges as a manifestation of hierarchy, showing the zones to be plundered by the drawn borders (Gurnah 2002). Maps not only show a territory "to be plundered", they are also what make a territory seem like "something that could be possessed" (Gurnah 2002, 35). In this sense, they depict occupation and colonialism.

Since mapping was a crucial tool in embodying the "territorial desire of states on the earth's surface" (Neocleous 2003, 418), as stated by Bargués-Pedreny et.al "it was predominantly seen as merely an attribute of government power and control" (2018, 3). However, today, thanks to new technologies, mapping can be prepared according to target users and different purposes in order to illustrate reality, "on the basis of harmony and discord with the ideologies and policies" of the map creators (Collins-Kreiner et al. 2006, 405). In this sense, mapping is "an interpretative act" in which the map creator communicates they intentions and views (Pickles 1992 cited in Collins-Kreiner et al. 2006, 405).

Mapping via GIS (Geographical Information Systems) plays a key role, especially in cases of inability to access conflict areas and not being able to do fieldwork there. In order to confirm the accuracy of the interviewees' statements, I prepared maps showing the distribution of hydroelectric power plants, forest fires and military posts (Kalekols) in the region. I argue that even by looking at these maps without giving more details about the Kurdish issue, can be seen the intensity of infrastructural projects and military engagement of the Turkish state in Kurdish geography. These maps also show us the contemporary spatial practices of Turkish colonial governmentality in northern Kurdistan.

Hydroelectric Power Plants (HPPs)

The map that I am trying to show the distribution of HPPs in northern Kurdistan is based on the official statistics for 2018 annual report on the website of the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI). Especially, since the mid-2000s, the locations of 67 dams and water regulators, whose construction was completed and under construction, were pinned on Google Earth and formed by GIS. The distribution of these dams, which were built on large rivers in northern Kurdistan such as the Tigris river, the Euphrates river, the Munzur river, the Perisuyu

river, the Great Zap River and the Botan River -also as will be seen on the other two maps-shows the intensity of destructive interventions towards the space in cities where armed conflicts are partaken intensely.

Forest Fires

Access to areas affected by armed conflicts is often limited, posing obstacles for research into ecological destruction. For this reason, remote sensing using satellite imagery is one of the tools that is increasingly used to monitor how armed conflicts interact with the environment and space (Jongerden et.al 2007; Rustad et al. 2008; Baumann and Kuemmerle 2016).

Recently, advances in satellite technology have made it possible to monitor wildfire activity more accurately. Collecting data about a fire on land can be dangerous; however, satellites enable us to get this information from a safe distance. The use of satellites is an effective method in terms of time and cost, as it covers larger areas and has advantages such as collecting data on less accessible areas (Leblon et al., 2012).

Thanks to the chronological satellite timeline, retrospective wildfire investigation and detection are possible with remote sensing archived data, which provides an alternative method to fieldwork-oriented case studies. Through remote sensing data, one can see that there is a fire in a place and evaluate the severity of the fire and the extent of the damage it causes, based on the traces it leaves on the earth (San-Miguel-Ayanz et al. 2005). As Benjamin Strick puts it, "Blackening of the earth where any grass or shrub once stood, levelling of infrastructure exposing its foundations, clear white patches formed by beds of ash" (Strick 2018).

Unnaturally burned areas can be detected and analysed using free open source and remote sensing tools such as Google Earth and QGIS that do not require specific engineering knowledge and experience. In this way, it is possible to make a comparison and visual analysis of certain areas of interest have transformed over time by looking at satellite images taken in different time zones using the satellite timeline of Google Earth.

While determining some locations on Google Earth in the forest fires chapter and Kalekol chapter, I encountered visual obstacles. For example, when zooming in on areas close to sensitive conflict zones or military areas via satellite, the image becomes blurred with a grey or white layer. In addition, it is not always possible to reach the images of the past years by

limiting the timeline. However, there are other ways to confirm fire damage in satellite imagery, therefore, the data in this section is not limited to the source of Google Earth.

With the space technology developed since the 2000s, "active fire products" on earth can be detected with the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) within the scope of NASA's Earth Observation System (EOS) (Lasko 2021). These active fire products, which are included in the MODIS, Terra – the suite of terrestrial products group, "provide information about actively burning fires, including their location and timing, instantaneous radiative power, and smouldering ratio, presented at a selection of spatial and temporal scales" (Giglio et al. 2003, 273).

As mentioned above, the mapping algorithm for active fire types (Giglio et al. 2003) that requires technical knowledge and expertise is out of the scope of this study. However, thanks to these remote sensing tools and mapping methods, which are becoming increasingly popular in today's ethnographic research, open-source databases are available to assist researchers in confirming their hypotheses or presenting counter-hypotheses. In fact, the Sentinel Hub playground feature has several interesting processing options on satellite imagery. Its database being updated more frequently than satellite imagery from Google Earth, it is a great resource for anyone interested in the earth's naturally or artificially changing surface. Date ranges can be narrowed through Sentinel Hub, and some forest fires and the damages they cause can be seen clearly thanks to the changing graphical interfaces.[2]

The context under study also plays an important role in satellite imagery, as these overhead views will only give us about exactly where *HPPs* and *Kalekols* were built and the strategic location of this place. Or, as I will discuss in the forest fires section, it will be supportive enough to show that a forest area has been destroyed. As Lina Eklund (2019) said that "Studying and analysing satellite images can give us information about when, where and how much, but it doesn't tell us about who and why."

As in the case of forest fires, satellite images do not tell how or why forests are being destroyed. Therefore it is necessary to use other types of information such as reports from non-governmental organizations, human rights associations, local and social media reports or interviews with people who knows the area (Eklund 2019). However, using satellite imagery on a specific timeline is an important tool in ensuring the accuracy of these reports and the

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[2] See for more details: https://www.sentinel-hub.com/explore/sentinelplayground/ (Accessed: 04.04.2020).

narratives of participants. I have chosen the following method to verify that forest fires were started by Turkish armed forces, other than natural causes. First of all, I scanned the news about the location and time of the forest fires broke out in the cities I conducted my interviews. Then, I double-checked the forest fires recorded in these locations through the Global Forest Watch (GFW) and NASA's Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS), which captures fires and thermal anomalies.

As a final step, I used the colour infrared vegetation index on the Sentinel Hub Playground to highlight the burned vegetation in these locations. While the media reports and eyewitnesses confirm that most of these burned areas were caused by bombardments and the use of firearms by the Turkish armed forces, in some cases, some burned areas may have occurred for more than one reason. For example, every year in October, the peasants engaged in agriculture renew the soil for the new harvest by burning it. However, Kevin Tansey et al. (2004) states that this method has some disadvantages. For example, "detecting burned areas in cloudy regions, detecting burned areas smaller than the resolution of the sensing instrument (a significant problem in regions of tropical forest), and the false detection of burned areas caused by flooding or dark rocks" (Tansey et al. 2004, 19).

As a result, satellite imagery and remote sensing methods can provide evidence to strengthen the arguments of researchers when participatory observation-based ethnographic fieldwork is not possible. This evidence can also be helpful in corroborating claims in media reports or reports of human rights organizations.

Kalekols

Following the method used to produce the HPPs map, created with the help of GIS using Google Earth, a map was prepared for the Kalekols. The military maps and data available on the website of the Gendarmerie Commands of the Turkish Armed Forces were used in the creation of this map, which shows the density of the Kalekol numbers in the cities where the war was intense. But here it is necessary to mention a few difficulties in accessing data.

Firstly, the information/data on where the Kalekols are built is kept confidential and not shared with the public, as per the military security strategy. Our current information about on the Kalekols, their numbers, locations, and characteristics, were obtained mostly through the observations and narratives of human rights associations and the people living in the region. Another difficulty may lie in that the military security strategy disallows coordinate

information of the states' military bases from being imaged, potentially in agreement with Google Earth.

An indication to that effect is that while following up on information given by locals regarding the whereabouts of Kalekols, I tried to zoom-in on the location using Google Earth, the surface appeared blurry or faded. Such obstruction of data is common also around outposts situated in the border region, another militarily strategic position.

However, I was attentive to the diverse socio-political background of the participants, considering the risk that remote sensing data could be used as a sort of reverse 'ground truthing' to substantiate claims through top-down vision that emanate from situated interviews. As I have stated above, I reached the participants through the snowball method and key persons (gatekeeper). In addition to the children of village guards, there were also those who were distant from the Kurdish movement, or those who were not interested in the daily politics of the locality, but only reported their observations. Nevertheless, even if we accept the assumption of situated interviews, and even if we accept that the narratives reflect a particular perspective, I believe that the remote sensing method has the power of truth to verify or falsify these narratives.

To conclude the introduction, I would like to point out the importance of the mapping method for this research. Considering that I could not return to the field and create alternative maps myself through methods of 'ordinary mapping', mapping or remote sensing methods in fact helped me to continue my fieldwork from a distance. But beyond that, and I would like to emphasize, mapping as a method also discloses an alternative truth to what the state has been claiming as truth. Or in other words, it reveals an alternative truth that exposes what the states tries to hide.

As will be discussed in more detail in the related sections, for example, while it is forbidden and almost impossible to get close to the Kalekols to take a photo, creating maps through satellite images in fact shows exactly where the Kalekols are located, or confirmed that clear-cutting took place in forested areas around the Kalekols. Another example of how remote sensing programs help to disclose an alternative truth is related to the data in the forestry statistics of the state. I created maps on fires that occurred in northern Kurdistan through images. When comparing it to the official data, I saw how the fires were not reflected at all and in some rare case only related to the cause of – what they call – "terror".

Even if we look from the state's security perspective and assume that the fires were cause by "terror", it is interesting that this data I collected is not represented in the statistics. As a result, the triangulating of methods such as creating maps, using satellite images, and interviewing the local population helped me to unpack forest fires as part of infrastructural politics.

After establishing that the three infrastructural projects are interconnected, I observed that the Kalekols play a central role in the construction of the HPPs and deforestation activities and argue that the infrastructural projects, although sometimes framed under 'development policies', 'natural disasters' or 'consequences of the war on terror', all serve a military infrastructural interest.

2. The Turkish modernization and the basis of colonial rule in northern Kurdistan

In order to achieve a greater comprehension of how colonial governmentality or colonial rule emerged in Kurdistan, it is necessary to examine how nation-state construction takes place. In this chapter, I will look at the roots of Turkish state colonialism in a chronological framework with the critical concepts such as state formation, homogenization, mass violence, and population politics.

By the 19th century, separatist and nationalist movements were gaining strength in the lands dominated by the Ottoman Empire, who was in serious decline against the Western states and the borders of empires were shrinking day by day (Fortna 2008). While the 19th century was a period in which bureaucratic reforms for the formation of the modern state apparatus took place and the management styles of states changed, especially in the Western World, for the Ottoman Empire it was a period in which modernization and centralization reforms were implemented, which would lead to great transformations (Mitchell 2002; Kühn 2007; Hanioğlu 2008).

As the regions that had been under Ottoman rule since the 16th century gradually became autonomous in the early 19th century, the aim of the Ottoman Empire was to re-conquer these regions that had become de facto independent and to design a modern empire by making a series of reforms in these regions (Makdisi 2002; Kühn 2007; Deringil 2011). In this sense, as Ussama Makdisi (2002, 772) stated that, "Ottoman modernization, from which emerged a discourse of Ottoman Orientalism, was as much a project of power within the empire as it was an act of resistance to Western imperialism".

The reforms which were carried out around ethnic engineering and ethnic homogenization projects in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that included political practices such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, deportation, and exile, were not unique to the Ottoman Empire (Ü. Kurt and Çeğin 2015). In the same time period as the Ottoman Empire, the empires which included different ethno-religious communities such as Austria-Hungary and Tsarist Russia, who had fear of extinction and concern for survival, sought to resolve their own identity crises against rising nationalist movements by neutralizing other minority groups that they perceived as threats, which led to mass violence practices.[3] (Roshwald 2001; Reynolds 2011).

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[3] Roshwad Aviel (2001) explains the breaking processes of these three empires in the transition to the modern nation-state format as the reflexes of self-determination of other ethnic communities, which they are trying to involve around a supra-identity. In addition, Michael Reynolds (2011), who states that although the Ottoman and Russian empires followed different paths to prevent collapse, the reason for their collapse in the same period

Although it is debatable how much of these goals were achieved, the Ottoman empire "was engaged in a struggle for survival in a world where it no longer made the rules" (Deringil 2003, 311). Selim Deringil (2003) argues that the Ottoman Empire imitated the methods of the colonial powers in order to survive and applied these methods to its own periphery as much as possible. Using the concept of "borrowed colonialism" inspired by Dietrich Geyer's concept of "borrowed imperialism", Deringil states that the Ottoman elite who "conflated the ideas of modernity and colonialism, and applied the latter as a means of survival against an increasingly hostile world" (2003, 312).

The examples that Deringil examines are frontiers far from the centrally located regions such as, Libya, Hejaz, Yemen, where modern methods of power (such as discipline, management, control, assimilation, infrastructure, etc.) are tried. However, according to Deringil, one of the most distinctive features that distinguishes Ottoman-type colonialism from Western-type colonialism is the targeting of communities of the same religion (2003, 315). The reason why Deringil described Ottoman-type colonialism as "borrowed colonialism" was that one side of it was based on Turkish-Islamic laws such as traditional caliphate and sharia, and the other side consisted of centralizing reforms representing the enlightenment and positivist aspect of the 19th century (2003, 316).

Thomas Kühn (2007, 316) also emphasizes that Yemen was "reconquered" by the Ottoman Empire in the early 1870s. He states that the policy of "exclusionary inclusiveness" of Abdulhamit as "colonial Ottomanism", which reduced the Ottoman Arab population in distant provinces such as Yemen and Iraq to a "subordinate position within the Ottoman 'nation'" (Kühn 2007, 318). Mehmet Izzet, one of the translators of the sultan's palace in the Ottoman period, defines the colonial perceptivity of the Ottoman state as "The colonial government means that a civilized state occupies and develops places where a wild nomadic life is still going on and creates a market for its own goods" (Mehmet Izzet cited in C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 28).

Finally, before moving on to how the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish nation-state that was established after the disintegration of the empire, applied the similar colonial administration approach in Kurdistan, it would be appropriate to refer to the example of Egypt which Timothy

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cannot be explained only by the rise of nationalist movements, but also that nationalist movements occurring in border regions should be evaluated in the context of a global geopolitical conjuncture, considering that multinational states are in competition.

Mitchell analysed in order to understand the colonial political rationality of this period. While Mitchell examined the British colonialism that started in 1882, he mainly focused on how the Ottoman elite colonized Egypt with modern power techniques that "the formation of a new army, the introduction of organised schooling and the rebuilding of Egyptian villages and towns" (1991, 14) which they mostly learned from France and England.

Mitchell states that these colonial practices, which he looks at from the Foucauldian perspective of colonization, differ from known colonization practices in two senses. In the first sense; he remarks on the colonization of bodies and minds by "microphysical power" by reshaping space, rather than the conquest and exploitation of large tracts of land (1991, 34–95). In the second and more comprehensive sense; he points out how the political power, which aims to maintain its dominance continuously through the disciplinary mechanisms of colonial modernity, disciplines and controls an entire society and country (Mitchell 1991, 95–127). Thus, the civilizing of the Egyptians is achieved by creating an order in which individuals are "confined, isolated, combined together and kept under surveillance" through the disciplinary powers of power (Mitchell 1991, 176).

In the early 19th century, with the policies implemented by the Ottoman state to ensure long-term control in distant frontier regions (such as north-east African countries) within the framework of centralist reforms, is different from the content of reform and security policies that implemented in Kurdistan, which served as another border region against the Safavid empire in Iran, since the 16th century (Özok-Gündoğan 2014, 173). A detailed analysis of this differentiation, the dominance of the Ottoman state over Kurdistan, the historical background of the Ottoman-Kurdish relations and the factors that were effective in the political structure of Kurdistan at that time are beyond the scope of this thesis.[4] In other words, the revolts of the Kurdish emirates, which had a semi-autonomous status until the beginning of the 19th century, against the central authority, and the cause-effect relations in the transformation of the status of Kurdistan into colonial governmentality after these rebellions were suppressed is the subject of another study.

What I am trying to show here, albeit briefly, is that the colonial nature of the policies implemented by the Ottoman administration during the weakening process of the empire and

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[4] The following studies can be looked at how the Ottoman state made its relationship with the Kurds and its centralist role in Kurdistan effective through socio-political structures such as tribes and emirates, with different approaches; (Bruinessen 1992; Özoğlu 2004; Özok-Gündoğan 2014; Eppel 2016; Özcoşar and Vali 2017).

the attempts of modernization into a modern state, was meant to keep the ethnic communities in its periphery close to itself through legal, administrative and military reforms. Its colonial character stems from the colonial discourse used by the political and military elites of that period in the investigations they made in Kurdistan and in the reports they prepared.

Considering the colonialism discourse, the depiction of Kurdistan and the Kurds living there, and the policies towards their "civilisation", it is seen that there are striking similarities in the reports prepared both in the last periods of the Ottoman state and after the establishment of the Republic. This is most clearly seen in the "operational and mental continuity" of the "Dersim Mountain Reform" process, the foundation of which was laid in 1848 and ended in 1938 (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 13–14). In other words, in this report, which were prepared especially for the Kurds living in the Dersim region, during the Ottoman period, "the solution proposals based on medical analogies" such as "civilizing", "the elimination of savageness" and "the correction of beliefs" of settled and semi-nomadic tribes who defined as the rebellious and disobedient people it was extensively implemented by the political and military elites during the Republican period (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 13–14).

The reports of "Dersim Reform", which were accepted as one of the modern centralist reforms known as the *Tanzimat Reforms* and prepared with a colonial discourse, formed the basis of the government of other cities in Kurdistan, with a colonial mentality through *the General Inspectorates (Umumi Müfettislikler)* in the first thirty years of the Republican regime. These reports are very important in terms of understanding the colonial rationality in governing Kurdistan with a permanent state of emergency.

I will articulate a few of these very important reports, in which the colonialist desire and governmentality have not changed, even though the regime of the state has changed, as two separate periods, namely the Ottoman period and the Republican period. Firstly, the Ottoman period reports, which can be considered as the predecessors of the republican period reports, can be translated into English as a proposal or draft, are called *lahîya* in Arabic, and which is a method frequently used in Ottoman state practice that includes the political, economic, administrative and military problems seen within the borders of the empire and solutions for them (Kütükoglu 2003).

As it is understood from the reports, the Ottoman state turned to the region of Kurdistan known as Vilayat-ı Şarkiya (Eastern Provinces), especially Dersim, which rebelled against the central

government after the Tanzimat period[5] and the people who living in the region (settled and nomadic communities and tribes), "in order to get rid of their ignorance and rudeness and correct their superstitions" (Akpınar et al. 2010, 316), it has put into effect the social engineering that includes many militaries and administrative sanctions under the name of reform (Bulut 2009; Akyürekli 2011; C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013).

In the study, which is very valuable archive research and prepared by Cihangir Gündogdu and Vural Genc (2013, 21), the reports reflecting the views of the Ottoman ruling elites on Dersim between the years 1880-1913, military and civilian bureaucrats agree that "the way for the state to be permanent in the region should be followed by a more comprehensive and encompassing policy rather than military operations". It was clearly emphasized in the reports that "military operations alone would not yield results, and that cultural and religious assimilation policies that target the emotions and minds of the people were needed" (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 21). For this purpose, some kind of "population engineering methods were put into effect by constructing schools and mosques in the region, exiling powerful tribal leaders to other places, and changing the demographic structure with immigrant communities brought from outside" (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 21).

In many reports, the military and civilian officers sent to the region for a mission position themselves as delivering a kind of "civilization" to Dersim and its surrounding Kurdish settlements, while the people are described as "primitive and rebellious tribes" who are "unaware of the orders of religion and sharia" (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 38). Thus, the policy of forced resettlement is legitimized as bringing about "civilization". The most striking example of this colonial mentality is Mikdâd Midhat Bedirhan's report dated 17 February 1913. Mikdâd Midhat Bedirhan describes Dersim and its inhabitants as follows:

> The Alevi-Kurdish population of Dersim, estimated to be forty to fifty thousand and located in the middle of the Eastern Anatolian provinces, has not benefited from the social upbringing and has remained in brutality and ignorance, making their daily living by stealing, not being content with theft and plunder among themselves and other people nearby, they have been harassing and attacking the settlements, making the people there tired and forcing the government to punish them from time to time (Mikdâd Midhat Bedirhan cited C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 159).

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[5] The Tanzimat (literally reorganization) period, which covers the period from 1839 to 1876, marks the most intense phase of nineteenth-century Ottoman reformist activity. The inspiration of the reforms did not come from the sultans, but from the Europeanized Ottoman bureaucrats who analyzed the French and English colonial policies well at that time. See for more details; (Cleveland and Bunton 2016, 82; Provence 2017).

Another colonial discourse in Mikdad Midhad Bedirhan's report confirms Deringil's concept of "borrowed colonialism". In this report, in the colonial mentality of the Ottoman Empire, the people of Dersim are described as a "wild African society" and it is emphasized that the Sudanese practices of British colonialism should be taken as an example for the measures to be taken against the population in Dersim (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 161).

Makdisi (2002) mentions that each nation created its own Orient in a period dominated by the western-centred understanding of modernity, and that the Ottoman Empire could not be exempted from this. The Orient, which is in the mental background of the Ottoman ruling elite and, as will be seen later, the carrier elites of the Kemalist ideology of the Turkish Republic period, is a wide geography including primarily Dersim and other cities of Kurdistan.

The most important factor that enabled the transition from the Ottoman type colonization model to the Turkish type colonization model of republican period was undoubtedly the period when the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was dominant (1908-1918). In terms of the Unionist regime's fictionalizing the Kurds as a "social problem" (Dündar 2013, 27) and seeing the assimilation of the Kurds as a founding component of the policy of Turkification of Anatolia and Kurdistan geographies, and transferring this policy to the Turkish Republic period as a political legacy, it is important to mention here the characteristics of this period in general terms (Üngör 2011). It is of critical importance in terms of understanding the essence of colonialist desires and practices extending from the founding years of the Turkish Republic to the present day.

J.C. Scott, argues that "the pre-modern state was partially blind" to control the society, that the state had little knowledge of the location and identity of its subjects, that it lacked "a detailed map" of the lands and environments in which its subjects settled, and that for this reason "early modern European statecraft devoted to rationalizing and standardizing what was a social hieroglyph into a legible and administratively more convenient format" (1998, 2–3). The use of standardization and legibility tools such as population control and mapping, which Scott called "the massive, state-enforced social engineering" (Scott 1998, 89), can be seen in the ethnic engineering of the Committee of Union and Progress before the construction of the Turkish nation state.

In the work titled *The Code of Modern Turkey: The Ethnicity Engineering of the Committee of Union and Progress (1913-1918)* (*Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite*

Mühendisliği (1913-1918)), meticulously prepared by Fuat Dündar (2013), he mentioned that the policy of forced migration, deportation and resettlement for Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Kurds, Jews, Nestorians and Assyrians who lived under the Ottoman rule at that time, was actually a statistical and mathematical operation which aimed to Turkification of the Anatolia and Kurdish geography. In my opinion, the "ethnicity engineering" actions, in which nationalist policies were tested on maps, ethnography and topography between 1913-18, is an extremely important period in terms of pointing out where the origins of Turkish colonialism should be sought.

Dündar (2013, 432), who uses the concept of "ethnicity engineering" to emphasize that the Turkification policy is a mathematical operation, states that the Arabic equivalent of the word engineering means "mathematics", and one of the English meanings is "*engine* (war tool or war machine)". Dündar, preferred this conceptualization that because "the Unionist's viewed the civilian population as a war tool that sent them along with the army from one region to another", and stated that this "Turkification operation was carried out by the Unionists who have positivist idea, through statistical concerns and statistics" (2013, 432).

The assimilation policy and Turkification operation of the Unionists against the Kurds are planned and implemented on the basis of scientific racism by a group of Turkish sociologists, such as Ziya Gökalp, who played an important role in the construction of Turkish nationalism, especially after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. According to Dündar, Ziya Gökalp, who is known as the follower of Emile Durkheim and the founder of Turkish sociology, is the initiator of ethnographic studies of the Unionist Turkification policy (2013, 123). The positivist belief of the Unionists that "social problems can be solved with scientific methods" led to an increase in ethnography and sociology studies in this period (Hanioğlu 1995 cited in Dündar 2013, 121).

Ziya Gökalp, who conducted sociological research and wrote articles on the social texture of Kurdish identity and Kurdish tribes, he also referred to 'medical analogies' and defined "Kurdish tribes as a harmful disease, and because of the lack of appropriate treatment to eradicate this disease for good and in order not to endanger the integrity of the nation, he proposed the assimilation of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes into Turkish ethnic identity by sedentary life" (Dündar 2013, 403).

According to Gündogdu and Genç, the desire of the pre-republic Ottoman central "to establish a settled life based on obedience to the sultan in the centre and his local representatives" by using direct force and violence in some regions and persuasion in some regions followed a "flexible policy depending on the space and time" (2013, 18). With the new republican regime, the colonization of the Kurds will be carried out more systematically. Since the first years of the Republic, successive Kurdish revolts caused the Republican administrators to take radical measures regarding territorial integrity (Toprak 2012, 534) and were laid the foundations for the institutionalization of the Turkish-style colonization model, which denied the Kurds and aimed a long-term assimilation process.

When looking at the reports of the republican period, the civilization of Dersim and the transformation of its inhabitants into a subjugated community was inherited the republican regime of the new nation-state (Bayrak 1994; Bulut 2009; Akyürekli 2011; Sılan 2011). The newly established nation-state was not only limited to Dersim, but also used similar discourses and practices to suppress Kurdish revolts in other parts of Kurdistan. I think it is important to express a different perspective on the Kurdish rebellions mentioned here.

Historian Ahmet Kahraman, who studies the Kurdish revolts, emphasizes that "the necessity of a planned, programmed organization and organized action in order to talk about a real public revolt" and in accordance with this definition, he gives examples that took place in the republican period, the 1925 Sheikh Said Rebellion, the Ağrı Rebellion in 1930 and lastly, the revolt of the PKK movement, which took place in 1984 and turned into a long-drawn-out war (2003, 18). According to Kahraman, the uprisings, the numbers of which vary according to the official historical discourse, "are armed conflicts that occurred in order to survive in response to the *tedip* (to discipline and tame)- can be read as civilization- and *tenkil* (punishing, eliminating) operations that the Turkish state calls the 'extermination campaigns' to the Kurds" (2003, 19).

Though the contents of some examples of the republican period reports are also included in the next section, where a brief history of the Kurdish issue is described, the reports of the republican period can be summarized as reports are on the denial of Kurdish identity and the discourse and practice of transforming Kurdishness into Turkishness. Although Scott uses the concepts of "legibility and simplifications", which he describes as the instrumentalities of the "high modernist ideology", mostly to describe the ideals of the state to achieve bureaucratic homogeneity and uniformity (1998, 11–52), however, the modernist ideology of the new

nation-state, based on Turkish nationalism, first of all, wanted to implement social engineering by "the politics of incorporation by nation-destruction" (Bezwan 2021, 25) by removing the obstacles to creating a homogeneous nation. The Kurdish identity, which was in official sources until 1925 (Bozarslan 2003; Toprak 2012), was ignored as of 1926 within the scope of the measures taken after the 1925 Sheikh Said rebellion, and the Kurds were regarded as "Mountain Turks" or Turks (Bayrak 1994; Bulut 2009; Sılan 2011).

The end of the 1925s is also a period when the Eastern Reform Plan or The Report for Reform in the East (Şark Islahat Planı/Raporu) was prepared in 24 September 1925 (Bayrak 2009), in which the concrete foundations of the colonial governmentality were laid that continues even today in Kurdistan. Based on this plan, it is possible to summarize the highlights of the reports prepared by military and civilian bureaucrats in various periods and implemented through the General Inspectorates, which can be called the colonial governors;

1- The most important feature of the Settlement Law of 14 June 1934, which was enacted within the framework of the Eastern Reform Plan, is "the assimilation of the dominant Kurdish population in the eastern provinces to Turkishness" (Bayrak 1994, 263) and it is a law enacted "to evacuate some settlements, especially the Dersim province, to settle the Turks there, to seize the land free of charge in cases where it is not possible, and to Turkification the Kurds through missionary activities by sending officials who have the Turkishness ideal" (Bulut 2009, 242).

2- In a report prepared by Cemil Ubaydin, the Minister of Interior of the time, who was one of those who prepared the Eastern Reform Plan, he emphasized that "Kurdistan should be governed in a general governorate and colonial style" (Bayrak 1994, 583).

3- In the report that Ismet Inönü, who served as the prime minister of the newly established republican regime, was prepared on 21 August 1935 after his trip to Kurdistan in the 10th year of the Eastern Reform Plan, he emphasized that "the most important ideal of the republican regime was Turkishness" and in this sense, it is important that "the Kurdish provinces should convert to centres of Turkishness" and he pointed up that "the importance of general inspectors in places eager for Turkishness and should be made maximum effort to prevent

the spread of Kurdishness in these areas" (Öztürk 1992 cited in Bayrak 2004, 398–408).

The last stage of the civilizing mission of the republican regime was directed to Dersim, where the most reports have been prepared with colonialist discourse since the last periods of the Ottoman Empire (Akyürekli 2011; Sılan 2011). The resistance of the Alevi-Kurdish tribes against the Turkification project of the republic in Dersim was suppressed in a bloody way, as in the past Kurdish rebellions, with a comprehensive discipline and punishment operation (*tedip ve tenkil harekatı*) (1937-38) (Beşikçi 1992; Bruinessen 1994; Watts 2000; Kieser 2016).

Historian Zafer Toprak interprets this military operation, which ended in genocide, as a "'public order problem' rather than a colonial understanding" and also as "the results of an integration process aimed at eliminating banditry and putting end to the feudal-tribal system" (2012, 578). Moreover, Toprak states that with the newly established nation-state, "it is not possible for a colonial understanding to emerge in a country where capitalism has just sprouted, the homogenization policy is the destiny of nation-states and the 'race' problematic in the civilizing mission of the Republic towards the 'Eastern Problem' is inclusive, not exclusionary" (2012, 579).

Following Enrique Dussel and Anibal Qujano, Walter Mignolo, argues that modernity emerged with colonialism, not after colonialism. (Alcoff 2007, 83). In this sense, as Enrique Dussel has put forward, in the rationality of modernity, humanity needs to get rid of "cultural immaturity", and modernity as "a world-encompassing myth exploits and immolates men and women in the colonial world" (1995, 117).

When the contents of these reports mentioned in this and the next section are examined, two things are encountered in the policy of the republican regime towards the Kurds. Firstly, the modernist and colonialist discourse of the Turkish state is based on the idea that the geography of Kurdistan is not suitable for a human life and the Kurds who are living there have a dark and brutal way of existence that poses a danger to the process of creating a homogeneous Turkish nation. Secondly, the reports demonstrate a colonial mentality and approach towards the Kurds as despite the heterogeneity of beliefs and cultures in society, the spread of Kurdish consciousness among Kurds is meant to be prevented, the Kurdish language is tried to be destroyed over time, and most importantly, as Mesut Yegen stated in the introduction of book

on the Eastern Reform Plan, the aim is to "deprive Kurds of their capacity to become a national community" (Bayrak 2009, 11).

As understood from the first article of the Eastern Reform Plan, the understanding that the geography of Kurdistan and the Kurds should be governed by a permanent state of emergency based on military force is based on the conquest of space by the colonial Turkish modernity, which came to subjugate and kill. Considering that the reasons and nature of the rebellions were written in these reports in a way that is consistent with the colonial ideology, the vital discourse of the colonizer was to bring "civilization" to the colony. As Dussel points out, "while the conquest depicted itself as upholding the universal rights of modernity against barbarism, the indigenous peoples suffered the denial of their rights, civilization, culture, and gods" and after "Modernity elaborated a myth of its own goodness, rationalized its violence as civilizing, and finally declared itself innocent of the assassination of the Other" (1995, 50).

Another important feature of Turkish modernization, apart from its mission to "civilization" the Kurds, is its policy of Turkification, which is synthesized by its "essentialism" (Werbner 2015) and "pathological homogenisation" (Rae 2002) approaches and includes the forced assimilation of the Kurds. Pnina Werbner states that in history, "nationalist conflicts, racial murders, ethnic cleansing and even genocides follow on essentialist constructions of unitary, organic cultural collectivities" (2015, 229). Ralph Grillo remarks that theoretically, cultural diversity cannot be measured and homogenized, he emphasized that discussions of cultural essentialism usually arise in majority-minority population debates (2003, 165).

In the building phase of the nation-state in Turkey, cultural self-creation based on Turkishness took place by trying to eliminate other local peoples, who did not want to abandon their religious, ethnic and cultural identities, on the basis of forced assimilation (Üngör 2011). This assimilation occurred by the Kemalist regime, who founded the new nation-state, with a motivation that inherited the "pathological" mentality of "the Committee of Union and Progress, which preferred genocide as a 'rational choice'" in order to build a homogeneous Turkish nation-state and create a national identity (Rae 2002, 135). İsmail Beşikçi, argues that it is not generally seen that colonial states deny the mother tongue and culture in their colonies and try to assimilate them into their own colonial languages and cultures, however, he emphasizes, the basic dimension in Kurdish-Turkish relations is assimilation and intense state policies have been implemented to deny the Kurdish language, culture and assimilate the Kurds to Turkishness (2012, 105).

In order to achieve this, on the one hand the majority of the non-Muslim population (like Armenians, Assyrians and others) in the country, has exposed to genocide and deportation, on the other hand, the policy of assimilation and non-Turkish Muslim population was tried to unite under the roof of Turkishness.[6] Heather Rae states that in the process of state formation and collective identity creation, policies of homogenization based on ethnic violence, drawing "sharp boundaries between 'us' and 'them'" are central to an explanation that "recognizes the intersubjective nature of group identities" (Rae 2002, 39). Rae explains why it is important to draw sharp boundaries as follow;

> When the boundaries between insider and outsider are being marked out in ways that are consequential for political membership – and in the context of the modern state this has often meant who will survive and who will not – there is a crucial moral dimension to this process (2002, 39).

The new nation-state, which was built on the basis of nationalist and secularist ideologies, rejected the heterogeneous structure of the past as a whole and embarked on a unique identity-building process in an anthropological search for an origin (Houston 2009; Beşikçi 2013). This identity construction has created a social contract that is ethnically Turkish, religiously Sunni-Muslim and linguistically Turkish, which excludes, punishes, and even eliminates those who do not belong to it. Barış Ünlü (2018b), analyses this social contract as the Muslimism Contract (Müslümanlik Sözlesmesi) and the Turkishness Contract (Türklük Sözlesmesi).

Summarizing briefly, the Muslim contract as a social convention refers to the elimination of other non-Muslim ethnic and religious communities in various ways, through the common interests, feelings and will by the Muslim communities under the Ottoman rule, which forms the basis of the Turkishness contract as a political convention (Ünlü 2018b, 79–156). The Turkishness contract, on the other hand, refers to a comprehensive mechanism that "includes written but mostly unwritten documents between the state and society and within the society

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[6] Although it is not the subject of this research, to briefly summarize an important issue that cannot be covered with a footnote here; The Kurdish tribes, which were included in the Hamidiye Regiments formed during the reign of 2. Abdulhamid and were kept under control with certain privileges, took an active role in the Armenian Genocide. The extent and intensity of the Kurds' role in this genocide is a subject that is debated by historians even today. According to Bozarslan, In a territory where the Kurdish population is densely populated, especially the possibility of the establishment of an Armenian state after the Berlin Agreement of 1878 and the possibility of living under as a subject of a Christian nation, encouraged these Kurdish tribes to take part in a political formation where they could consolidate their domination. Continuing with Bozarslan, the desire of the (some) Kurdish tribes to live together with the Turks within the framework of an "Ottoman Convention idea" which based on a common religious reference caused them to become partners in this crime of genocide committed by the Turks (Bozarslan 2003). See also, (Yeğen 2011a; Hakan 2013; Aydınkaya 2015).

itself" (Ünlü 2018b, 14), which determines the actual practices of institutions, as well as individual and collective behaviours of society based on some fundamental agreements and rules on an ethno-religious (Turkishness and Muslimism) basis. According to Ünlü;

> Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his friends, who were Turkish nationalists but also advocated a radical westernization and secularism idea, abandoned the Islamic discourse in the Muslimism Contract and switched to the Turkishness Convention. This transition is not just a Turkism step, it is a secularism step that symbolizes the transition from a religious nation to a secular one (2018b, 163). However, this transition did not make Muslimism unimportant, on the contrary, Muslimism was the basis and indispensable criterion of Turkishness. In other words, to be a Turk, one had to be a Muslim (Ünlü 2018b, 167).

With reference to Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm in the context of nationalism theories, Ünlü, defined the Turkish nation "not as an ancient social reality, but as a political and emotional modern collective created by Turkish nationalism and the Turkish state" (2018b, 171). From this point of view, the Kurds, who were a loyal nation in the Ottoman period according to the Muslimism contract, had been seen as a community (internal enemy) that needed to be civilized and remained outside the borders of the Turkishness contract due to their ethno-linguistic and ethno-cultural differences, which Ünlü refers to as "a reward and punishment mechanism" (Ünlü 2018b, 176).

To conclude this section, it can be said that since the 1924 constitution and the 1925 Sheikh Said rebellion, hence since the Kurds became colonial subjects, the Turkishness contract has continued to exist and continues to renew itself. Simultaneously however, the Kurds and the Kurdistan geography have demonstrated a continues resistance against the colonial policies established around Turkishness. The following section will shed light on how Turkishness as a problem brought up the Kurdish issue and has shaped the historical course of the Kurdish issue until today, in order to understand the framework of modernization and colonialism in mutual duality. Even if the colonial discourse and practice or the form and method change according to the spirit of the time, it can be argued that the colonial desire of Turkishness and the anti-colonial struggle of Kurdishness remain unchanged constants.

2.1. Brief history of the Kurdish issue

In this section, I will try to sketch out the Kurdish issue by way of an introduction and a brief historical contextualization. In the words of Mesut Yeğen; "Turkey's Kurdish question is not simply a multidimensional, but a multi-layered social problem that has been subjected to the repression and veiling of history" (2003, 13). As will be seen in the following chapters, it would not be wrong to say that the emergence of the Kurdish issue as a "question or problem" should be sought in the results of the "modernization adventure in Turkey's social history for the last two centuries" (Yeğen 2003, 15).

It is precisely for this reason that this study attempts to reinterpret the handling of the Kurdish issue as a colonial issue in the social history of Turkey and does not aim to provide a comprehensive narrative that includes all dimensions of the "multi-layered and historical problem" of the Kurdish issue[7]. In the following chapters, I will discuss the denial, annihilation, and assimilation of the Kurdish people in Turkey and why the violence inflicted on Kurds in all its dimensions should be discussed in the context of colonialism theories.

In many studies on the Kurds, the Kurdish issue in Turkey is discussed under the titles of either "Kurdish Question" or "Kurdish Problem". Throughout this study, I will use the concept of Kurdish Issue. I want to begin my argument with an ontological and epistemological objection to the dominant terminology. From the mid-1920s to the end of the 1980s, the Turkish state denied the existence of the Kurds as an ethnic community within the borders of the Turkish republic. The Turkish state discourse ignored the ethno-political nature of the Kurdish issue by calling the Kurds wild, rebellious, traitors, problem or affliction (Yeğen 1996; 1999).

In other words, the Turkish state discourse addressed the Kurdish issue through another world of texts and representations and consequently presented a "practice of excluding Kurdish national identity" (Yeğen 1996, 217). As will be seen in the following sections, the Kurdish issue has been referred to as a "terrorism issue" since the beginning of the 1990s, and even until today as this dissertation is being written. In this sense, if a predicament in the sense of "problem" is to be mentioned here with regards to the Kurdish issue, it should be noted that

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[7] As a matter of fact, when we look at academic studies on northern Kurdistan, the Kurdish issue and the geography of Kurdistan are mentioned rarely directly in the context of colonialism and colonial theories. In the following sections, references will be made to the studies that look at Kurdistan from the past to the present from the perspective of colonialism.

racial othering (Fanon 2008) which denies the very existence of Kurds and tries to subdue them, should unequivocally be called a *Turkishness Problem*.

The debates about the ethnic origins of the Kurds, who are considered one of the largest ethnic communities without their own nation-state, Kurdish population rates around the world, their homeland, geographical location and geopolitical implications have been the subject of scientific research by many scholars (Izady 1992; Gunter 1997; McDowall 2004; O'Shea 2004).

The Kurds, who continued their existence together with other Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic communities under the rule of the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century, have been significantly studied by social scientists and anthropologists under the title "Kurdish Question" since the beginning of the 20th century with regards to their socio-political, economic-political and cultural history (Bruinessen 1992; Yeğen 1999; Bozarslan 2008; Gunes 2012; Yadirgi 2017; Bozarslan et.al 2021).

The historical emergence of the Kurdish issue is generally considered in the context of the transition from the multi-ethnic empire at the beginning of the 20th century to the creation of a homogeneous Turkish nation-state (Yeğen 1996; Bozarslan 2008; Yeğen 2009; Çelik 2012). After the First World War, the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which envisaged the sharing of the Ottoman lands between the alliance states and in which the Kurds were recognized as a separate ethnic group[8], was not implemented after the "War of Independence" under Mustafa Kemal. Later, with the Lausanne Treaty signed in July 1923[9], the Kurds were neither given territorial autonomy, nor were they recognized as a separate ethnicity or minority community (Lundgren 2007; Çelik 2012).

In another context, one of the reasons behind the emergence of the Kurdish issue or Turkishness problem, has been the so-called "Sevres syndrome" (Hale 2013, 225) that has been used to describe the fears and concerns, triggered by the Treaty of Sevres, over loss or division of the territorial area that remained in the hands of the Turkish state, hence within the realm of Turkishness. These concerns and fears stem from perceiving the existence of other ethnic

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[8] The Kurds' right to self-determination and the autonomy of Kurdistan were secured with the Treaty of Sèvres signed on 10 August 1920.

[9] It should be noted that the European colonialist states of the period, which ignored the Kurds' demands for regional autonomy, left the Kurds to the fate of the nation-statetization project of the newly established Turkish state (Turkification). This is one of the main reasons for the emergence of the Kurdish issue, which continues even today, and remains one of the biggest obstacles to its resolution.

communities as a threat to the Turkish nation-state, which was established with the Lausanne Treaty and shaped by chauvinist Turkish nationalism based on the idea of Anatolia as the "fatherland" of the Turkish nation (Rae 2002, 52).

Although trying to present a summary of the Kurdish issue, even with its main lines, carries the risk of missing or ignoring many important historical events, it is possible to summarize two features that have been determining the trajectory of the Kurdish issue in Hamit Bozarslan's words: "the state's denial of its existence; and the emergence of its radical challenge to the state" (2008, 333). The state's denial of a distinct Kurdish identity also impacted the boundaries of citizenship in Turkey. Kurds were only given full access to their citizenship rights once they denied their own identity and subdued themselves to the Turkification process[10]. According to Yegen, "as prospective-Turks, or potential members of the Turkish ethno-cultural community, Kurds have long been considered a part of the (national) political community, i.e. a part of Turkishness as defined by citizenship" (2009, 597).

The fact that Kurds are now seen as "prospective Turks" and the policy of Turkification, which inherits the late Ottoman colonial policies and includes the practices of denial and destruction of the Kurds' forced assimilation and existence, certainly has a legal basis. As Yeğen (2009) mentioned in his article, the new regime was declared with the 1924 constitution, which was reorganized by changing the founding constitution of 1921. This constitution of 1924 can be considered one of the most important steps in making the Kurds *colonized citizens* and it also constitutes the foundational pillars of Turkey's 1982 constitution, which was prepared after the military coup in 1980 and, despite some changes, continues to be valid until today.

The newly established nation-state also meant the introduction of a republican regime. The first duty of the parliament, which in fact was formed with a democratic organizational principle from the local to the center and is considered the founding assembly of 1920 that paved the way to the declaration of the new nation-state, was to prepare the founding constitution of the new state.

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[10] The policy of Turkification mainly targeted Kurds, but also other Muslim ethnic communities such as Laz, Circassians and Arabs. The reason why non-Muslim ethnic communities such as Armenians, Greeks and Jews are not directly affected by this policy is that the Lausanne agreement clearly protects the rights of these communities. However, the Turkification of non-Muslim minorities will take place by confiscating their economic power under the name of "Wealth Tax" (in Turkish: Varlik Vergisi). Some researchers call this an economic and cultural genocide (Çetinoğlu 2009). For detailed studies on Turkification policies towards non-Muslim minorities, see: (Guttstadt 2006; Aktar 2018; 2021).

The 1921 constitution is "the most democratic, perhaps the only democratic example of Ottoman-Turkish constitutionalism in terms of its preparation and acceptance" (Tanör 2016, 225).

The distinctive character of the 1921 constitution, which did not last very long, from other constitutions is important because it was based on pluralistic and democratic principles, where also other Muslim-majority ethnic communities other than Turks were seen as founding members, who have equal rights, and where full autonomy was provided to local governments (Özbudun 2008; Sevinç and Demirkent 2017). So much so that in the parliamentary minutes and in the speeches made by Mustafa Kemal, the founding leader of the new Turkish State, a kind of local autonomy was put forward to be granted to the Kurds, who were acknowledged by the 1921 constitution[11] as a distinct ethnic community with group rights, such as the right to govern themselves in their own lands (Yeğen 2009, 598).

Therefore, the acknowledgment of the Kurds as an ethnic community with rights to local autonomy as granted by the 1921 constitution disappeared with the 1924 constitution. Instead of an ethnically diverse founding of the Turkish state, the Kurds, like other non-Turkish ethnic communities, became Turkish or to be Turkified in the eyes of the newly founded state (Lundgren 2007; Yeğen 2009).

In other words, the year of 1924 marks the beginning of approaching Kurdish populations as Turkish, turning the Kurd into *a colonized citizen* both in terms of an official state discourse and on constitutional grounds. This led to systematic denial and rejection of anything that was considered within the realm of Kurdishness, which continues to impact political and social life in Turkey until today. Therefore, the persistence to consider the Kurd as part of Turkishness, or even of "Turkish race", creates a paradoxical situation where Kurds are considered Turkish citizens but at the same, different to other Turkish citizens, are subjected to colonial treatment. These practices towards the Kurds can be traced both in the open and secret reports kept in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, as well as in reports made during the republican period, which reflect on the colonialist desire and approach of the Turkish state.

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[11] For an article discussing the 1921 constitution and the position of the Kurds, see: Selami Bulut, "1921 Anayasası ve Kürtler", Demokratik Modernite, 15.01.2020 https://demokratikmodernite.org/1921-anayasasi-ve-kurtler/#_ftn42 (Accessed: 10.01.2021).

The 1925 and first comprehensive Kurdish rebellion in the republican period, known as the Sheikh Said revolt[12], must be considered as an important historical reference when looking at the state's configuration of its central organs based on institutionalized racism, which I argue marks the beginning of colonial governmentality in northern Kurdistan. The institutional accommodation not only informs the early republican period but also contemporary state practices in today's Kurdistan in particular and approaches to the Kurdish issue in general. Because, after the Kurdish revolt (Sheikh Said) in 1925, the Kurdistan of the early period has been under "the rule of an exceptional regime" organized along the "General Inspectorates", known as *Umumi Müfettişlikler* (Bozarslan 2015b, 299).

Approached as "backward" and a region "to be improve", the state of emergency in Kurdistan was tailored in a unique and permanent way, and, as I will discuss later in more detail, during the 1980s and until the beginning of the 2000s it took shape in form of so-called "Emergency Governorates", which again were a policy of the emergency regime implied in Kurdistan only. The "Emergency Governorates", which, I argue, constitute colonial governorships appointed by the central government in Ankara. This form of government that has its roots in the "General Inspectorates" of the early republican period (Koçak 2010), can be read as a legacy of the political and administrative colonial mentality and practices of the Ottoman state, which were carried into the Turkish republican period and can be framed in terms of "operational and mental continuity".

The colonial rationality and logic of an organized bureaucratic network extending from the Ottoman Empire to the republic, constantly busy with preparing reports on the Kurds is manifested in the General Inspectorates, which was created as an administrative mechanism between 1927-1952. The most important of these reports, which Mehmet Bayrak brought to light in his book Kurdology Documents (Kürdoloji Belgeleri), is the report of Avni Doğan, who worked as an inspector at the head of the 1st General Inspectorate and prepared the Kurdish Report, covering eight cities in Kurdistan between 1943-47. The report not only proposed a comprehensive assimilation program, but also assessed the assimilation policies proposed and implemented before its term (1994, 234).

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[12] In 1925, the Azadi movement, which was founded as a secret organization by a group of Kurdish former Ottoman officers, and its religious leader, Sheikh Said, rebelled against the state of the Turkish Republic. The rebellion, which lasted for three months, was bloodily suppressed, and Sheikh Said and his friends were executed in the Independence Courts. For a detailed reading of the rebellion, see: Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheik Said Rebellion*, University of Texas Press, (1991).

One of the most striking detail in those reports prepared by representatives of the central bureaucratic and military institutions of the state, such as the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi), Ministry of Internal Affairs (İçişleri Bakanlığı) and General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces (Genelkurmay Başkanlığı), is the report by the chair of the general assembly Abdulhalik Renda. Renda emphasizes in his report that unless measures are taken against the Kurds, who have a dense population in the east of the Euphrates, the lands in this region will be lost. In his view, "It is impossible for the two different nations to live together with equal power and authority on the same land, hence it is a necessity to increase the Turkish population and render Turkish power hegemonic" (Bayrak 1994, 255).

In the second report prepared by the Minister of Interior, Cemil Ubaydin, it was suggested that "immigrants should be settled in the *region* in order to increase the density of a Turkish population". The third report prepared by the General Staff includes a similar kind of demographic engineering proposal, where it is stated: "to create national unity requires making the Kurdish majority in the region a minority by resettling Turkish immigrants (in the region where Kurds live) and dispersing Kurdish inhabitants from the mountain villages to Turkish villages" (Bayrak 1994, 256–57).

According to Beşikçi, the settlement of the Muslim Turkish populations, who had to migrate from the Balkans to Turkey due to the population exchange in the beginning of the 20th century, was mainly done to gather Turks who had been living in a scattered and nomadic state for thousands of years and consequently to ensure that the Turkish culture became settled (1991).

The most common policy implemented to effectively assimilate the Kurds has been the forced resettlement of the Kurds. The demographic engineering that aimed at assimilation, hence the resettlement of Kurdish populations in Turkish majority region, has been subject to many academic studies (Beşikçi 1991; Çağaptay 2001; 2009; Dündar 2015), yet cannot be limited to the republican period. These practices, as shortly mentioned already, have their origins in the last episodes of the Ottoman period. They were enacted to break the resistance of semi-autonomous Kurdish tribes, hence, to suppress existing and prevent emerging uprisings in Kurdish majority regions, most strikingly in the Dersim governorate.

In her case study on the Dersim resistance (1937), Nicole Watts drew attention to the changing characteristics of the Kurdish revolts at the time, stressing that "Kurdish resistance" against the

Turkish state policies was not developing as a "long-term ethnic conflict" of two different ethnic groups, but should be seen "more as a series of confrontations" of many different Kurdish groups with the emerging Turkish nation-state (2000, 7).

The period between the beginning of the 1920s and the end of the 1930s was a period when Turkish nationalism, which was adopted as an "official and hegemonic ideology" (Bozarslan 2008, 338), implemented its colonial policy against the Kurds in the most intense and bloody way, and tried to thereby strengthen the state and the nation (McDowall 2004; Lundgren 2007).

With the Settlement Law of 1926, the forced deportation of Kurdish populations took place, yet the displacement of the Kurds was systematized with the same law enacted in 1934, aiming at changing the ethno-demographic structure in Kurdistan (Yeğen 2009). The Surname Law of 1934, which also falls into the same period, prohibited the use of Kurdish tribal names and surnames and replaced by a given Turkish name (Üngör 2011). This was followed by a systematic renaming of villages, which continued up until 1980s. Villages in regions known as Kurdistan, Armenia, Lazistan, hence where Kurdish, Armenian, Greek, Laz peoples and other ethnicities lived and referred to their thousands of villages in their native language, were renamed into Turkish (Öktem 2003; 2008; Nisanyan 2011).

After the "civil war-like" (Tunçay 2012, 134) period between 1924-1938, in which 17 Kurdish rebellions took place and Kurdish resistance was entrenching, the period until the 1960s has been called by Bozarslan "the period of silence" (2008, 343). The bloody suppression of Kurdish resistances, the execution or expatriate of its leaders and members, the negative effects of the Second World War, the unsuccessful rebellions and experiments in autonomy of the Kurdish nationalist movements in South Kurdistan in Iraq and East Kurdistan in Iran led to the overall weakening of the Kurdish resistance in Turkey (Bozarslan 2008).

In this period when the colonial policies were partially successful, the efforts to preserve the Kurdish language and culture carried out by the Kurdish intellectuals who were exiled from Turkey, the resurgence of the Kurdish national movement in Iraq and the transition from the Kemalist one-party regime to the multi-party political system in Turkey, slowly, influenced the the development of a Kurdish national consciousness and its politicization in the 1960s (Kurban 2020; Bozarslan et al. 2021).

Looking at the periodical course of the Kurdish issue in Turkey between 1960 and 1980 in general, it can be observed that many Kurdish organizations were influenced by the growing internationalist movement after the Second World War, and that many Kurdish organizations defended the Marxist-Leninist ideology's principle of "the right of nations to self-determination" and organized legal oppositional politics in the four different oppressive nation states of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey (Bozarslan 2008; Bozarslan et al. 2021). This period however was also marked by the Turkish nation-state's colonial power. Despite the emergence of anti-colonial rhetoric and theses, thousands of Kurdish activists were banned from doing politics after the 1971 military coup were tried in military courts and charged with long sentences in prison (Gunes 2012; Yadirgi 2017; Kurban 2020).

The developments during the1980s and their implications for the four decades that followed are central when assessing the history and present of the Kurdish issue. Despite short periods of ceasefires and political openings during peace process negotiations, the 1980s marked the beginning of a continuous war in northern Kurdistan and against Kurdish populations across Turkey. Not only was this period imprinted and governed by a military constitution after the 1980 coup, but also resulted in the systematic repression in the legal sphere of politics, banning of political parties and organizations seeking a solution to the Kurdish issue, exiling, or jailing of Kurdish politicians. As a reaction to this the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), officially founded as a national liberation movement by a group of university students in 1978, started its insurgency in 1984 and has since then been the most important actor of the Kurdish issue (Akkaya and Jongerden 2012; Jongerden and Akkaya 2015).

The Junta regime, which was established after the 1980 military coup to suppress the anarchy and violence in Turkey and the Kurdistan region, returned to the founding settings of the republic, but this time included Turkish leftist movements, and in Bozarslan's words, regarded "Kurdishness a pathology that needs to be treated with Turkishness" (2008, 350).

At a time when everything associated with Kurdishness was banned, when elected mayors were dismissed, hundreds of arrested members were tortured and murdered in prisons, intellectuals, lawyers and human rights activists disappeared, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and many party militants settled in Syria and Lebanon before the military coup, not only escaping the persecutions of the junta regime but also turning the PKK into a guerrilla movement (Bozarslan 2008; Gunes 2012; Jongerden and Akkaya 2012b).

Despite all the military and paramilitary, legal and political anti-insurgency policies of the Turkish state to suppress and eventually end the guerrilla war that has been going on since the beginning of the 1990s, contemporary Kurdish movement has survived as both a guerrilla and a political movement. But also, it has become a social movement that successfully mobilized a large part of the Kurdish population in Turkey, despite the biopolitical and necropolitical violence of the state, by increasing its social base day by day (Gunes 2012; O'Connor 2021; D. Aydin and Burç 2022). As Aydin and Burc state,

> Despite the significant military defeats in history and the continuing lack of a political status for Kurds and other minorities in the region, the PKK managed nonetheless to distinguish itself from other Kurdish rebellions in the past by framing defeats as a source of resilience. It managed to claim its place in the collective memory of the Kurds as a dynamic and ever-evolving movement that acts along the premise that no state violence or threat is invincible (2022, 7).

The Kurdish freedom movement, which is led by the PKK and which emerged as a political organization based on armed struggle, has evolved into a structure that organizes many movements in a political struggle for recognition and citizenship rights since the 1990s, including the women's movement, the labor movement, cultural and legal political movements (Jongerden, 2020, 208). However, the fact that the Kurdish issue is approached as a "terrorism problem" (Kirişci and Winrow 1997) by the Turkish state and those that join ranks around the "Turkishness Convention" has led to consecutive episodes of violence, silencing and oppression against Kurds articulating their demands for any kind of cultural, social, and political rights. One of the clearest examples of this is the forced closure and banning of seven Kurdish political parties by court decisions between 1990 and 2009 and the arrest and imprisonment of party members, as well as elected parliamentarians. Despite receiving the highest votes in northern Kurdistan, Kurdish politicians were not able to represent their re-established parties in the Turkish parliament due to the 10 percent threshold. Up until 2015 Kurdish politicians therefore either entered as independent candidates and formed a group once in parliament or ran on other party lists.

The last 20 years of the Kurdish issue in Turkey were imprinted by the Development and Justice Party (AKP), which came to power in 2002 as a party synthesizing neoliberalism, Turkish nationalism, and Islamic thought. The period can briefly be summarized as a time when the Kurdish issue in Turkey was approaching a solution for the first time. From having peace talks between the Turkish state represented by the AKP, Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK and

with Kurdish politicians as mediators, the Turkish state returned to *the colonial founding settings of the republic* abruptly, terminating the peace negotiations in 2015 and launching both a political and military war against Kurdish populations and their elected representatives.

On the one hand, the Kurdish freedom movement was undergoing a process of redesigning its political, military, and social organizations, a process that materialized in 2004 and was accelerated after PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was handed over to Turkey with the help of United Nations (UN) and The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states in 1999. On the other hand, the process of harmonization with the European Union (EU) under the AKP government led to some historical processes supported by reforms toward the democratic solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

The Kurdish freedom movement, which renewed itself by introducing the democratic confederalism paradigm in the early 2000s, according to Harun Ercan, has been following "violent and non-violent strategies" (2019, 114) according to the changing political conjuncture. Despite the fact that the Kurdish freedom movement inflicted great human losses an both its military (guerrilla) power and its social base during the armed conflict with the Turkish state between 2004 and 2013,

> "it successfully performed well-balanced violent and nonviolent tactics as well as concerted efforts between armed and political wings in order to remain organizationally resilient against state repression and channel public support toward mobilization for recognition, negotiation, and revolutionary transformation" (H. Ercan 2019, 123).

Between 2009 and 2015, three separate peace talks were held between the AKP government and the PKK, the longest of which took place between 2013 and 2015. A common feature of these three peace talks has been the state's primary goal to enforce the PKK's unilateral disarmament[13], yet in the fact of the PKK's increasingly strong mobilization the state ended the peace process and preferred a policy of annihilation towards the Kurds, which it called the "collapse plan".[14]

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[13] For detailed analysis of why these peace processes failed see also ; (Yeğen 2015; Rumelili and Çelik 2017; H. Ercan 2019).

[14] In the intelligence reports of the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces, this policy of annihilation is referred to as the "Collapse Plan" and is informed by the so-called Sri Lanka model, which was enacted to exterminate supporters and members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by military force. Similar military operations and plans have been carried out also against the FARC in Colombia. In the Turkish case, this plan was not only aiming at physically destroying PKK guerillas but also at killing, arresting, forced

With the termination of the peace talks, the war between the Turkish state and the PKK entered a new phase by moving the conflict into the centers of Kurdish cities and demolishing entire towns and neighborhoods. This period of war between 2015 and 2016 can be considered the most violent and brutal period of the 40-year conflict with hundreds of civilians, PKK guerillas, soldiers and police losing their lives and thousands of civilians forcefully displaced from their homes.[15]

After the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, the AKP government declared a state of emergency and carried out its own "civilian coup"[16] with statutory decrees that criminalized, intimidated, imprisoned with long sentences not only populations in Kurdistan but also oppositional individuals and groups across Turkey. This process was accompanied by a systematic crackdown on media, civil society organizations, NGOs and human rights associations and signaled the transition to an authoritarian regime.[17] The state, which suppressed Kurdish resistance by destroying entire cities and returning to the state's colonial foundational settings[18], lifted the immunity of 11 HDP (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi- The Peoples' Democratic Party) parliamentarians including co-chairs Selahattin Demirtas and

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displacements of thousands of civilian supporters, hence the destruction of the PKK's political and social base. Oktay Yildiz, "Cöktürme Plani", https://m.nerinaazad.cc/tr/columnists/oktay-yildiz/cokturme-plani?__cf_chl_tk=lopnjq8CMIGtHneyK2TJHCTrSe7FjAdevzz56gYlI3U-1639154764-0-gaNycGzNCaU. (Accessed: 10.09.2021). See also, Sri Lanka: State response to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam by Thomas A. Marks (2019).

[15] According to the data given by the International Crisis Group, between July 20, 2015 and July 19, 2016, "at least 307 civilians, 582 security force members, 653 PKK militants, 219 'youth of unknown affiliations'" lost their lives. 20 July 2016, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-s-pkk-conflict-death-toll. (Accessed: 10.09.2021). And in a more detailed report it is said that "in twenty-one months, at least 2,748 died, around 100,000 lost their homes, and up to 400,000 were temporarily displaced". May 2017, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/243-managing-turkeys-pkk-conflict-case-nusaybin. (Accessed: 10.09.2021).

[16] "The Two Faces of Political Islam" (Siyasal Islamin Iki Yüzü), 15.07.2019, https://taz.de/15-Temmuz-Askeri-ve-Sivil-Darbesi/!5612042/. (Accessed: 10.09.2021).

[17] The first one-month balance sheet of the state of emergency declared after the coup. "Balance Sheet of Violations of Rights Occurred during 15 July Coup Attempt and State of Emergency" Human Rights Association of Turkey, October 2016, https://ihd.org.tr/en/balance-sheet-of-violations-of-rights-occurred-during-15-july-coup-attempt-and-state-ofemergency/. (Accessed: 10.09.2021).

[18] Defined usually along the lines of ethnicist and nationalist signifiers of who belongs to the nation and who not, Rosa Burc has been using the term "factory settings of the republic" to describe the Turkish state's "one state, one flag, one nation, one language"-policy as foundational. She argues that re-narrating the nation as ethnically homogenous during the post-2015 period was an attempt of the Turkish state to "restore hegemony through the re-securitization of the Kurdish issue as a response to HDP's success as an anti-status quo and women's party". According to Burc, this not only demonstrated a re-emphasis of those foundational settings but also highlights how "the Turkish state has been built on 'one gender'" too (2019, 319).

Figen Yüksekdag, on charges of "making terrorist propaganda" or "membership in an armed terrorist organization" and sentencing them to lengthy imprisonment.[19]

The most important indicator of the transition to a colonial rule under the AKP government, in which the legislative, executive, and judicial powers are now concentrated in the authoritarian one-man regime bypassing the parliament, is the trustee appointment practice in Kurdish provinces. Hence, the arresting democratically elected mayors and seizing the municipalities by replacing the elected mayors with trustees from the center, in other words, *colonial governors*.[20]

The HDP has entered Turkish politics as a (pro-) Kurdish political party founded as a left alliance of different ethnic, religious, cultural, and gendered social communities who have been traditionally marginalized in Turkish politics and who mobilized to solve the Kurdish issue in Turkey by transforming the state democratically (Burç 2019; 2022). As Burc and Tokatli put forward, "the HDP project, is an attempt at challenging and transforming the core principles of the state and providing a new environment where citizenship rights apply to all individuals and not only those who are within the boundaries of *Turkishness*" (2020, 87).

For the Kurds political organization and articulation of demands continues to be under pressure up until today. At the time this thesis was written, the HDP, like its forerunner parties since the 1990s, is at risk of being shut down.[21] Against this backdrop of an overview of Turkey's Kurdish issue, it comes to the foreground that the repertoire of struggle and resistance of the

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[19] Human Rights Watch Report: "Turkey: Opposition Politicians Detained for Four Years" 19 November 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/19/turkey-opposition-politicians-detained-four-years. (Accessed: 10.9.2021). For a detailed analysis of the AKP government's practices in Erdogan's presidential system see also; Sinem Adar and Günter Seufert, "Turkey's Presidential System after Two and a Half Years: An Overview of Institutions and Politics", April 2021, https://www.swpberlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2021RP02_Turkey_Presidential_System.pdf. (Accessed: 10.09.2021).

[20] According to the report of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the first trustee appointments in September 2016 counted 94 appointed trustees to Kurdish municipalities and arrests and detainments of 93 co-mayors that were elected by the votes of the local population, of which 70 are still in prison. "Trustee practices as a means of extortion", https://hdp.org.tr/Images/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/DBP%20Kayyum%20Raporu.pdf. (Accessed: 10.09.2021). The second wave of trustee appointments followed the local elections in March 2019 with 45 of the 65 municipalities won by HDP were seized by trustees, 22 mayors and 11 city council members were arrested "HDP Headquarters Report: "The Trustee Regime in Turkey", 18 May 2020, https://hdpeurope.eu/2020/05/the-trustee-regime-in-turkey/. (Accessed: 10.09.2021).

[21] "Closure case: Court of Cassation sues the HDP again", Bianet, 08.06.2021, https://bianet.org/english/politics/245322-closure-case-court-of-cassation-sues-the-hdp-again. (Accessed: 10.09.2021).

Kurds against the Turkish state can be summarized along the three central themes of *survival, recognition, and autonomy*.

2.2. Colonialism references to northern Kurdistan from the past to the present

When the etymology of the word colonial or colony is examined in Turkey, it is often stated that it was first used in the Turkish dictionary prepared by the Turkish Language Association in 1945. However, it was previously used as the equivalent of the word *Müstemleke* (in English; Colony), which was derived from the Arabic word *istimlâk* (expropriation) in the Ottoman period and it meant possession of land by settling, colony.[22] As mentioned in the previous section that introduced the modernization process of the Turkish state, the colonial discourse about the Kurds first appeared in the "civilization" reports of the military and bureaucratic elites of the Ottoman state towards the end of the 19th century. This section will examine some political and academic references that deal with the Kurdish issue as a colonial issue due to the colonialist discourse and practices of the Turkish state.

From the past to the present, the handling of the Kurdish Issue and Kurdistan from the perspective of colonialism seems to centre around the discourses and theses of political parties and organizations under the influence of Kurdish nationalism, which arose in the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey with a few exceptions.

Apart from the theses of Hikmet Kıvılcımlı and the Turkish Communist Party, influenced by his views that Kurdistan was a colony in the 1930s, anti-colonial discourse and theses were absent during the period from the early 1930s to the mid-1960s, also called the "silence period", as mentioned in the previous section.

When looking at the political publications from 1965 and after, it becomes clear that a historical analysis of the Kurdish issue from an economic and political perspective is emphasized over the general question whether Kurdistan is a colony or not (Ercan 2012). The axis of these discussions is rather whether the understanding of the Turkish state's governmentality can be considered as a case of colonialism, with intensified violent practices such as denial, oppression, exploitation, and suppression of Kurds, and Turkey, a "non-imperialist country", as a colonizer (Ercan 2012, 152; Jongerden and Akkaya 2012).

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[22] See for the word of Müstemleke https://www.etimolojiturkce.com/kelime/müstemleke. (Accessed: 29.01.2019).

Harun Ercan (2012, 159), stated that "the basic framework of collective action (master frame)" of the revolutionary Kurdish organizations[23] that emerged in the 1970s was based on the colonialism thesis. He emphasizes, that these Kurdish organizations argue that "the Kurdish/Kurdistan issue is not just a 'national oppression problem', but also a 'colony problem'".

Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya (2013, 100) further stated that these Kurdish organizations are united around the thesis that 'Kurdistan is a colony', based on "the views of Lenin and Stalin on the 'national problem' and were inspired by the national liberation movements that existed in Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, Algeria and Palestine".

However, although there was a consensus among Kurdish organizations at that time that there was a need to oppose Turkish colonialism, Ercan (2012, 162) mentions two different views on the methods and practices that were applied regarding the strategies of struggle;

> First, those who accept armed struggle but base their primary actions on creating a wave of mass mobilization by using legal policy areas and then resorting to means of political violence. The second is those who state that achieving the targeted national liberation can only be possible within the framework of armed struggle, and that the way to mobilize the masses is through political violence.

It should be noted that Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, one of the leading ideologues of the Turkish Left movement and a member of the Communist Party of Turkey, adopted an attitude that was different from the general tendency of the leftist movements in Turkey regarding the Kurdish Issue. The 5th book of his series of 7 books examining the main problems of the Turkish Revolution and the Kurdish Issue, written while in prison in the early 1930s, is called *İhtiyat Kuvvet: Milliyet (Şark)* (Reserve Force: Nationhood (Orient). This book addresses the "Eastern Issue/Question" as a nationality issue. Kivilcimli states that the Eastern provinces are a separate market area for the Republican bourgeoisie and that the Turkish finance capital exploits Kurdistan in terms of "consumption of raw materials, production of raw materials and labour force", and for this reason, it is governed by colonial methods. (2010, 130).

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[23] Some of the revolutionary Kurdish organizations that emerged in the 1970s are; the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (TKSP), KAWA, Rizgari, Kurdistan National Liberationists (KUK) and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The Kemalist regime, that was established along the new nation-state and that legitimized the extermination and denial practices towards the Kurds through discourses of modernity or "civilisation" need to be considered along the failure of past Kurdish rebellions and resistances that did not demand self-determination. According to Ercan (2012, 159), the tendency of Kurdish organizations and parties to favour the colonialism thesis or discourse is "because they want to see the political regime which they live in not only as a national oppression, but also to morally condemn them and to destroy the legitimacy discourse of the Turkish-nation state within the codes of modernism".

In this context, the defence of Şakir Epözdemir, one of the founders of the Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (TKDP) in a court case known as *the Antalya Case* in 1969, can be counted as one of the first examples of anticolonial refutation. At that time, colonialism theses were being discussed within the Leftist movements in Turkey. The defence made by Epözdemir can be considered as a uprising or counter-judging speech, disclosing the denial and assimilationist policies of the Turkish nation-state towards the Kurdish people in Turkish courts.

In his defence, Epözdemir stated that the Kurds, who are one of the founding components of the Turkish Republic and have existed in these lands since the past, should have equal constitutional rights to the Turks, and that the policies of denial and assimilation should be abandoned. He exclaimed, that Kurdistan was a colony of Turkey and that various inhumane methods that were not applied even in the colonies were applied in Kurdistan at that time. Kurdistan was governed by colonial policies in terms of the forced farming of the lands of the peasants under the auspices of the state, and the importation of resources such as oil from Kurdistan to other regions as raw materials. (2005, 13–68).

Undoubtedly, one of the most important events in the history of the Kurds towards the recognition of Kurdish identity was the mass arrests and trials in Kurdistan in 1971. In these trials, also known as the 1971 Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (Devrimci Dogu Kültür Ocaklari-DDKO) trial, military prosecutors denied the existence of Kurds and Kurdish language in their indictments, emphasizing that the Kurds were originally Turkish, and that Kurdish language was a primitive version of the Turkish language. In response to this, the detainees, who gave their defence collectively for the first time, made an anti-colonial defence in the light of objective and scientific data that the Kurdish people exist as a divergent ethnic community and that Kurdish is a separate language to Turkish (DDKO Dava Dosyasi (1975) cited in Doğanoğlu 2016, 955).

After the 1971 DDKO trials, which resulted in the detainees being sentenced to decades in prison, the theses expressed as "Kurdistan is a colony" and "Kurds are a colonized nation" began to be adopted by almost all Kurdish organizations and some leftist organizations in Turkey, initiating from 1974-75. One of those on trial in this DDKO case was İsmail Beşikçi, who evaluated the Kurdish Issue in the context of colonialism with the theses he defended in the mid-1970s. Apart from İsmail Beşikçi, there are almost no studies on this subject in the field of social sciences. Beşikçi approached the thesis that Kurdistan is a colony and that the Kurds are a colonial nation with a different argument.

In his work called *Inter-state Colony Kurdistan*, Beşikçi, who touched on the issue of the establishment of colonies in the 19th century, made a distinction between colony and semi-colony nations. He stated that Kurdistan was divided into four parts by the imperialist powers and their collaborator partners (Arabs, Turks and Persians) and also that Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria are invading states in Kurdistan. Beşikçi's thesis, that Kurdistan is a colony can be summarized in his own words as follows;

> Kurdistan is not even a colony, the Kurdish people could not even become a colony. The political status of Kurdistan and the Kurdish nation stands even far below the status of a colony… The aim is to completely destroy the Kurdish identity… Kurds are not considered Kurds anywhere. They are considered Turk in Turkey, Persian in Iran, and Arab in Iraq and Syria. Therefore, an intensive policy of Turkification, Persianization and Arabization is pursued. The Kurdish and Kurdistan personality is persistently denied. (1990, 9–25).

Kemal Burkay, who founded the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (TKSP) in 1975, put forward the thesis that Kurdistan is a colony in his four-part historical analysis titled "The shaping of the rest of Kurdistan and the National Movements in the 19th Century", under the pseudonym Celal Aladag, in the Journal of *Özgürlük Yolu*. Similar to Besikci's colonial thesis, Burkay also stated that by dividing Kurdistan among four nation-states, its natural resources are exploited by these states and that the Kurdish people are impoverished by turning Turkish Kurdistan *(North Kurdistan- italic is mine)* into a typical economic colony for the Turkish bourgeoisie. (Özgürlük Yolu (1977) 2014, 289).

In 1978, the founding leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan-PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, in his party manifesto titled *The Road to the Kurdistan Revolution*, summarizes the thesis that Kurdistan is a colony by stating that the newly established Republican regime is aware that it cannot develop colonialism in the political, cultural, and

economic fields without a strong military occupation of Kurdistan:

> Kurdistan is politically dominated by four colonialist states that are dependent on imperialism. Each state plays a leading role in the development of colonialism on the part it dominates, in line with the interests of international monopolies and its own economy. The history of Kurdistan from its division into four parts until today is nothing but the history of colonialism, which was carried out on each part by occupation, massacre and plunder. ((1978) 1993, 63–87).

Mehmet Bayrak, who provided an important academic resource for the studies in this field by examining the Ottoman and Republican period, reports that Kurdistan was viewed as a colony, in his work called "The Kurdish Question and Democratic Solution". He states, that the new Turkish state colonized the lands of Kurdistan after 1923 and that this colonization was carried out through the mission of "constant conquest" and "Turkification" of the Kurdish territory. (1999, 188–98).

In the last decade, there has been a surge in the number of academic studies dealing with Kurds and Kurdistan in the context of colonialism in the social sciences. Some of these studies with reference to Michael Hetcher's theory of internal colonialism, evaluated that Kurdish territory is an "internal colony" of Turkey (Entessar 2010, 7) or that the Turkish state's government in Kurdistan is an "undeclared internal colony" (Gunes and Zeydanlıoğlu 2014, 18) and another study, also in the context of internal colonialism, focuses on the strategies that the AKP followed in the 2000s to legitimate the colonial rule through "religious discourses and Islamist politics" in Kurdistan (M. Kurt 2019, 357). In this vein, the recent studies by Kurdish researchers on Kurds and Kurdistan in the context of colonialism and post-colonialism theories under the journal Kurd Research (Kürd Arastirmalari) can be considered as an effort to read and interpret the Kurdish issue from a decolonial perspective.[24]

Naif Bezwan focuses on the role of homogenization policies towards the Kurds and the practices of "state-organised mass violence" from a different perspective. These policies and practices, he argues, were the instrument of ethnic domination during the formation and growth of the nation-state. He states that these processes are containing an inherently "colonial character" (2021, 13). Bezwan proposes the concept of "integral colony" by defining the continuous repetition of colonial violence and the production of a mechanism that ensures

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[24] For the second issue of the Kurdish Research journal titled "Colonialism and Cultural Hegemony", which is published in English, Kurdish and Turkish, see. http://kurdarastirmalari.com/dosya-45. (Accessed: 10.09.2021).

impunity for its perpetrators, as "incorporation by nation-destruction" (2021, 13). He describes the concept of "integral colonization and colony" with the following words:

> A specific type of domination by which the territories and communities that have been subject to the incorporation into the dominant society are construed as integral to the state and thus indivisible from its territorial and national integrity, without being recognised as communities in their own right or accorded to any public status (Bezwan 2021, 19).

Zeynep Türkyılmaz discussed the colonialism issue with a different approach using the memoir "Mountain Flowers" by Sıdıka Avar, who called herself a Turkish missionary, playing an active role in the "civilization" project of "rebel" and "wild" girls from Dersim. This is another aspect of the genocidal policy carried out by the Turkish State as a result of military operations in Dersim (Tunceli) in 1937-38 (2016, 162).

Türkyilmaz is shedding light on the gendered dimensions of Turkish colonialism, in the example of the Dersim (Tunceli) case. She is using the concept of maternal colonialism that is used to describe the alternative spheres of domination installed by "white" women in settler colonies to claim "their own exclusive colonial space through mothering" (2016, 168). Türkyilmaz argues that the colonial engagement of women in this sense has been an attempt to defy women's invisibility in a rather masculinized sphere of colonial domination (2016). She describes how Turkish missionary Avar, "an archetype of many now-forgotten 'national heroines', co-opted the premeditated, genocidal, disciplinary education policies and single-handedly transformed them into an 'affectionately' carried out, gendered, and only 'symbolically' violent project of assimilation and maternal colonialism." (Turkyilmaz 2016, 169).

As a result, one of the reasons behind the Kurdish movements' consideration of the Kurds as colonized people and Kurdistan as a colony is that they were influenced by the national liberation movements demanding self-determination or independence, which arose under the influence of the Marxist-Leninist ideology in the world conjuncture of that period. In addition, although some researchers refer to the theory of "internal colonialism or internal colony" to explain the position of Kurds in Turkey, in the next section I will discuss why this theorization remains insufficient in explaining the coloniality of Kurds and Kurdistan today.

Today, considering the Kurds in Turkey and the territory of northern Kurdistan as a colony is not just a discourse or thesis, as it has similar characteristics as different colonial geographies in the world. At the same time, despite the changing political powers of the Turkish state for about a century, there is still a Kurdish social reality where people are aware of how the colonial mentality remains the same, but how colonial practices have been updated and evolved.

As the practices of colonial domination have changed over a century, the demands, resistance and organizational forms of the Kurds or Kurdish movements have also changed. Therefore, conceptualizing the Kurds and Kurdistan within the classic colonial literature may cause to miss and make invisible the diverse realities that are specific to Kurdistan. In this sense, in the following sections, besides discussing the position of Kurdistan through colonial and post-colonial approaches, I will also discuss with the help of narratives, how the Kurds themselves perceive colonialism on a societal and personal level based on their current situation.

3. A colonial geography: Northern Kurdistan

The Kurdish issue is important not only because Kurds have been exposed to the nation-state's absolute evil and brutal practices most intensely and for the longest time, but also because it shows the nature of modern state power in Turkey and the extremes it can reach. In this section, I will discuss why the Kurdish issue and Kurdistan should be considered as a colonial issue, within the framework of the concepts of coloniality and decoloniality.

Colonialism debates tend to emphasize common features of colonialism, regardless of where it usually takes place. This inclination focuses on generalizing the colonial discourse by looking at certain characteristics that are geographically and historically conditional. In other words, in reference to Robert J. Young's pertinent question, "the fact that modern colonialism was effected by European or European-derived powers means that the discourse of colonialism operated everywhere in a similar enough way for the theoretical paradigms of colonial-discourse analysis to work equally well for them all?" (2005, 156).

Since "colonial discourse analysis can therefore look at the wide variety of texts of colonialism as something more than mere documentation or 'evidence', and also emphasize the ways in which colonialism involved not just a military or economic activity, but permeated forms of knowledge" (R. Young 2005, 155), it should be evaluated that each colonial discourse has its own subjectivity even if the colonial discourses are similar.

In the previous section, I attempted to provide a brief historical description of when the policies and practices of colonial rule in northern Kurdistan began. As is well known, Turkey's Kurdish issue is rooted in the last period of the Ottoman Empire but it began to deepen during the formation of the Turkish nation-state in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, it is possible to claim that catastrophic conditions (ethnic discrimination, assimilation, forced displacement, executions, killing, massacre and etc.) towards Kurds were triggered by the foundation of the Turkish nation-state in 1923.

As Anibal Quijano pointed out, the formation of nation-states based on the Eurocentric perspective meant the "homogenization of the population in terms of common historic subjective experiences" (2000, 569). The construction of a nation-state was also settled on "the coloniality of power based on the imposition of the idea of race as an instrument of domination" (Quijano 2000, 569).

The project of a modern nation-state was undertaken by Turkish political and military establishment elites to create an imagined nation based on the Turkish ethnic identity, history, culture and language (Ahmad 1993; Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997; Yeğen 1999; Çağaptay 2001). The policies of assimilation and suppression of internal ethnic and religious dissent became therefore inevitable in building a homogenous, modern and secular Turkish community and obedient citizens (Rae 2002; Öktem 2003; Bozarslan 2008). This is the point where the nation-state project moved from various form of symbolic and psychological violence to physical violence, where it encountered the resistance of subordinated subjects and groups (Zeydanlıoğlu 2010; Aras 2014; Ü. Kurt and Çeğin 2015; Bargu 2019b; Bezwan 2021).

In the previous sections, I tried to show the reasons why the Kurds are seen as an obstacle to the progressive "performance" that Turkish modernity has displayed against Western modernity (Ahiska 2003, 367), and why the Kurds are referred to as a "problem" and "trouble-makers" in an orientalist discourse (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008, 171). I should state once again that this state discourse (also including orientalist discourse) in which the Kurds are called "question" or "problem" needs to be reversed or deconstructed. The denial and assimilation policies implemented by the Turkish state in fact can be considered colonial policies. Although the Turkish case shares strong similarities with some of the colonial policies implemented and still continuing in various part of the world, the diversity and the multiple dimensions of the Turkish state's policies applied to the Kurds and Kurdistan make it a distinctive and understudied expression of coloniality.

Nonetheless, usually the scholarly literature is applying a terminology that defines the problem as "Kurdish", most commonly referred as Kurdish issue or Kurdish question, and not a problem caused by the colonial practices of the nation-states. Eventually, this instigated significant blind spots in the scholarly literature concerning the Kurds and the dimensions of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. This approach, as put forward by Rosa Burc with a critique on methodological nationalism;

> has led to a situation where politics from below put forward by communities within the wider predominantly Kurdish geography have been vastly disregarded or marginalized when studying popular politics in the Middle East. Methodological nationalism, hence conceiving the nation-state as the sole unit of analysis, further has led to a situation where minority groups in the margins of the dominant nation, which enjoys cultural hegemony, were mostly seen as passive recipients or victims rather than active agents in reassembling political and societal constellations during and after conflict (2020, 321).

For this reason, while Kurdistan has been widely addressed by various literatures and from the angle of multiple issues, so far it has not been systematically/scholarly assessed as a colony in the world of texts and representations. The absence of Kurdistan in the colonial discourse as generalized and categorized above, is apparent in both academic studies in Turkey and in the approach of left and liberal movements. However, in this study, I try to show and interpret that Turkish coloniality in the material and applied reality of everyday life is a distinct practice of colonial rule, besides having some similar features when looking at other people and/or geographies that have experienced and/or are experiencing colonial practice.

Another tendency noticed in the colonialism literature is that while focusing on the processes and practices of domination and the practices of the colonial power that are understood and represented, little attention has been paid to conflict, negotiation and resistance processes from the perspective of the colonized. In this sense, based on how a person who thinks, feels and experiences about the functioning of coloniality which "is already a decolonial concept" as Walter Mignolo stated, see or defines themself, I follow the approach that suggests "decolonial thinking and doing" as a critical objection to the colonial practices and legacy of "modern European ideals projected to and enacted in, the non-European world" (2011, 2–3).

Mignolo states that Quijano proposed the concept of coloniality to unravel the logic behind all western modern/colonial imperialisms, described as the history of the modern/colonial expansion of the West, from Spain to England and the US (2011; 2017). According to Quijano, "coloniality, is still the most general form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed" (2007, 170).

In the broad definition of Nelson Maldonado-Torres, coloniality refers to "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (2007, 243).

A radical initiative that stands out in Quijano's coloniality proposal (2000; 2007) is that, contrary to the approaches that deal with modernity and colonialism separately, "coloniality is a necessary component of modernity" and the two cannot be considered separately from each other, therefore, "coloniality cannot be ended if global imperial designs in the name of modernity continue" (Mignolo 2017, 2). In this sense, Mignolo defines coloniality as "the darker side of western modernity" (2011).

As said by Quijano, "coloniality of power is based upon 'racial' social classification of the world population under Eurocentered world power" (2007, 171). According to him, the civilizational rhetoric underlying the establishment of Western civilization accepts "inequalities existing in hierarchical sense" with other cultural differences outside of Europe or the West as "natural", completely ignoring the "Other" or seeing it as an "objectivized" entity (Quijano 2007, 173). According to such a perception, only European culture contains rational "subjects", while the rest "only can be 'objects' of knowledge and/or practices of domination" (Quijano 2007, 174). Such civilizational rhetoric sees the West as "savior" and those outside the West "in need of salvation" (Mignolo 2017, 2). Mignolo reconstructs this rhetoric as "the rhetoric of modernity" and remarks that "the logic of coloniality is presented positively with concept of salvation, progress, development, modernization and democracy" (2011, 14). As Mignolo stated in an interview with him;

> the rhetoric of modernity is the constant updating of the rhetoric of salvation hiding the logic of coloniality – war, destruction, racism, sexism, inequalities, injustice, etc. All the "bad" things people notice today in the world cannot be changed to improve while modernity/coloniality remain in place (2017, 2).

What Mignolo refers to as a "aberration" which "the pretense that Europe has achieved the perfect and happy stage of humanity and everybody else has to bend to it" (2017, 3), it is similar that seen in the Turkish nation-state creating its own Orient and modernity by internalising the colonial modernity rhetoric of Europe. Meltem Ahiska argues this internalization is not as a "copy" of Western modernity, but rather as implicit modelling of it (2003, 362). By addressing the distinctness of the Turkish modernity with the concept of "Occidentalism", she emphasizes that the national discourse of Turkish nationalists is structured within an "Occidentalist fantasy" (Ahiska 2003, 365). According to Ahiska;

> Occidentalism refers to a field of social imagination through which those in power consume and reproduce the projection of "the West" to negotiate and consolidate their hegemony in line with their pragmatic interests. The hegemony operates by employing the mechanisms of projection that support the fantasy of "the West" (2003, 366).

The Kemalist regime imagined its own Orient or its "East", the Islamic, traditional and heterogeneous social structure inherited from the Ottoman Empire, as a "backward" people, and within this backwardness, it was not "developed both economically and socially, resisted

change, and therefore it has created an ideal Other who was out of history and couldn't be a subject". (Ates 2007, 11; see also; Ahiska 2003; Zeydanlıoğlu 2008). Sabri Ates examined the civilization mission of the establishment elites of the nation-state or the working style of "Occidentialist fantasy" in more detail under the heading of "Turkish type orientalism or strategic orientalism" (2007, 14), and Welat Zeydanlıoğlu under the heading of "The White Turkish Man's Burden" (2008, 159). The common conclusion that can be drawn from both analyses is that while Turks or Turkishness being as a saviour that bringing the civilization, which historically re-creates itself as progressive, civilized and western, all "rural Others" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008, 160), especially Kurds, who were outside the Turkish understanding of modernity, has seen as a need to be rescued and civilized.

The Turkish orientalist discourse has been influential in the production of theories such as the Turkish History Thesis (Türk Tarih Tezi) and the Sun-Language Theory (Güneş Dil Teorisi), which include racist guidelines based on positivism (Beşikçi 2013). These theories tried to put forward a new Turkish-centred world history narrative and to prove that the source of the languages of the past civilizations was Turkish (Ates 2007; Zeydanlıoğlu 2008). Naturally, the Kurds, as a separate ethnic community, were denied their existence, language and geography, and they were referred to as backward, primitive and uncivilized "Mountain Turks", referring to the characteristics of the geography they lived in (Sagnic 2010).

It is possible to say that the Turkish orientalist discourse, which is one of the main tools of Turkish coloniality and which I consider as "aberration" by borrowing from Mignolo, is maintained and effective in different ways even today (Bayır 2013b; G. Gündoğdu 2017). However, it can be said that with the implicit or indirect "recognition" of the Kurdish identity since the mid-1990s (Yeğen 2009; Saraçoğlu 2009; Bayır 2013b), the coloniality of power after the 2000s reproduced this "aberration" in other ways, which not with the known methods and discourses of the past. For this, it can be explanatory to refer to Mignolo's concept of "the colonial matrix of power" (2009; 2011).

Mignolo describes the colonial matrix of power as "a complex conceptual structure that guided actions in the domain of economy (exploitation of labour and appropriation of land/natural resources), authority (government, military forces), gender/sexuality and knowledge/subjectivity" (2009, 178). Although how this matrix works in Turkish coloniality requires a comprehensive study on its own, the topics covered in the fourth and fifth chapters

present a portrayal of how the "interconnected heterogenous historical-structural nodes" (Mignolo 2011, 16) that built the colonial matrix works at the local scale.

It should be noted that when referring to this concept, I do not consider it independent of the framework that Mignolo has discussed extensively, namely, the knowledge of Western civilization or Western modernity becoming "a commodity of exportation for the modernization of the non-Western world" (2011, 13). However, there are many "colonial wounds inflicted by experiences connected to the West" in non-Western regions (Mignolo 2011, 330). The colonial wound says Mignolo, is "the fact that regions and people around the world have been classified as underdeveloped economically and mentally" (2009, 161). Kurdistan is only one of them.

While Mignolo's proposed concept sets help to understand the "epistemic delinking" (2007) behind decolonial practices in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, it provides also a conceptual ground for expressing what kind of colonial domination the Kurds with a long decolonial history were exposed to and how they exhibited decolonial practices within the rapidly changing dynamics of the "Middle East".

No doubt, this allows me to locate myself in decolonial thinking that analysis "the formation, transformation and management of the colonial matrix of power" (2017, 3) and eventually requires epistemic delinking, as Mignolo mentioned (2007; 2011). According to Mignolo, "the analytic of coloniality (decolonial thinking) consists in the relentless work of unveiling how the matrix works" (2011, 17). While Mignolo, quoting from Linda T. Smith ([1999] 2012), defines decoloniality as " 'long term processes involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological divesting of colonial power' " (2011, 52), he explained that what he meant with decoloniality as follow;

> Toward the end of the Cold War, de-colonization mutated into decoloniality (without, of course, losing its historical meaning), to highlight "decolonization of knowledge" and to cast Eurocentrism as an epistemic rather than a geographical issue… The focus became the decolonization of knowledge rather than of expelling the colonizer from the territory, and delinking from the colonial matrix of power (once again, Quijano's "extrication"; delinking in my vocabulary). At this point decoloniality became synonymous with being epistemically disobedient (Mignolo 2011, 53–54).

Being Kurdish or Kurdishness, which is still today perceived as a threat to Turkishness and the Turkish nation-state, is defined as the "Other" within the colonial matrix of power, and the production of knowledge on the Kurdish issue from the perspective of the nation-state paradigm is mostly handled under the categories of "separatist terror" and "ethnic nationalism" (Lyon and Uçarer 2001; Rodoplu et al. 2003; Derin-Güre 2011). Many daily practices and fundamental rights regarding Kurdishness, such as the Kurds, who are a stateless nation, expressing their geography as Kurdistan[25], speaking their mother tongue (Kurdish) (Zeydanlıoğlu 2012; Derince 2013; Elci 2020)[26] and singing in their mother tongue[27], have faced physical and legal pressure from the Turkish state. They have been subjected to racist acts, which include physical violence, not only by the state, but also by the nationalist majority, which adopts the state's ideology and is rigged with Turkishness codes[28].

Therefore, to refer to the eastern and south-eastern regions of Turkey as northern Kurdistan in this thesis is neither a fictitious idea nor a political propaganda. On the contrary, it is trying to make visible how the Kurds living in that region see their geography and how they call it, by protecting their historical and cultural heritage. To be expressed by the conceptualizations of Gilles Delueze and Felix Guattari (1987), it is an attempt by the Kurds to "reterritorialization" the space they live in, as opposed to the "deterritorialization" of Kurdish

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[25] One of the most recent examples of Kurdish phobia is the reactions to the use of the word of Kurdistan. As the word of Kurdistan, which is used by government representatives according to the political conjuncture and political interests, has been used by a Kurdish man, an investigation has been opened against him with a request for his arrest. See; 1- 31.10.2021 https://medyanews.net/kurdistan-defence-from-the-shopkeeper-who-was-detained-i-was-speaking-the-truth/. (Accessed: 01.03.2022). 2- 29.10.2021 https://m.bianet.org/english/print/252577-police-detain-citizen-who-told-iyi-party-chair-aksener-kurdistan-is-denied. (Accessed: 01.03.2022). See also; "Who Can and Cannot Say 'Kurdistan' in Turkey: A Guide", 16.07.2019, https://bianet.org/english/freedom-of-expression/210526-who-can-and-cannot-say-kurdistan-in-turkey-a-guide. (Accessed: 01.03.2022).

[26] On the denial of Kurdish and other languages, which is mentioned as an "unknown language" in the parliamentary minutes see; 22.02.2019, https://m.bianet.org/english/diger/205751-words-in-mother-tongues-recorded-as-x-in-parliament-minutes. (Accessed: 01.03.2022). Another example concerns the banning of Kurdish theatre play. 14.10.2020, https://m.bianet.org/english/freedom-of-expression/232667-sub-governor-s-office-bans-kurdish-theater-play-to-be-hosted-by-istanbul-city-theaters. (Accessed: 01.03.2022).

[27] "Police prevent İstanbul street performers from singing in Kurdish", 31.01.2022, https://stockholmcf.org/police-prevent-istanbul-street-performers-from-singing-in-kurdish/. (Accessed: 01.03.2022). "Turkey: Prison sentence for using the term 'Kurdistan' in a song", 12.11.2021, https://medyanews.net/turkey-prison-sentence-for-using-the-term-kurdistan-in-a-song/. (Accessed: 01.03.2022).

[28] "Kurds in Turkey increasingly subject to violent hate crimes", 22.10.2019, https://www.dw.com/en/kurds-in-turkey-increasingly-subject-to-violent-hate-crimes/a-50940046. (Accessed: 01.03.2022). Also, for the racist attacks faced by tourists who came from the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government which Turkey recognizes, during their visit to the northern and southern regions of Turkey, see; 19.07.2019, https://m.bianet.org/english/human-rights/210647-kurdish-tourists-assaulted-in-trabzon-to-be-deported-from-turkey. "Kurdish tourist family target of fascist attack in southern Turkey", 14.05.2021, https://www.duvarenglish.com/kurdish-tourist-family-target-of-fascist-attack-in-southern-turkey-video-57489. (Accessed: 01.03.2022).

geography by Turkish coloniality. In this sense, the experiences of defining, naming and rejecting the discourse and policies of the state and the state-supported "forms of epistemological dominance" (Bhambra 2014, 120) enable the epistemic restructuring, re-emergence and re-existence of Kurdishness. Therefore, to refer to the east of Turkey as northern Kurdistan, to try to show how this geography was colonized under the Turkish coloniality, can be read as epistemic disobedience in the decolonial context.

"Epistemological decolonization, as decoloniality" (Quijano 2007, 177) or "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo 2009) is increasingly manifested in disciplinary fields of study focusing on the Kurdish issue. (Gambetti 2010; Yarkin 2017; M. Kurt 2019; D. Aydin 2019; Salih 2021; Bezwan 2021). However, this epistemic disobedience is denied by being delegitimized and marginalized within the framework of methodological nationalism, which is one of the tools of the colonial matrix of power in Turkey. For example, Güllistan Yarkin completed her PhD thesis with the title of "The Making of National-Racial Formation and Coloniality in Turkey: Turkish-Kurdish Relations in a Working-Class District of Zeytinburnu in Istanbul, 1950-2017" at the State University of New York at Binghamton in 2017. Due to the use of concepts such as "Kurdistan", "colony", "guerrilla warfare", and "Armenian Genocide" in her thesis, the equivalence request of her doctorate diploma was rejected by the Council of Higher Education (in Turkish: Yüksek Ögretim Kurumu-YÖK) in Turkey, and it was stated that the content of the thesis could be considered a crime according to the Turkish penal law and anti-terrorism law (Yarkin 2022).

Surely, the reason why the processes of epistemic decolonization in Kurdish studies opposing the "forms of epistemological dominance" are denied and invisible is because, as Gurminder K. Bhambra emphasizes that these "intellectual resistance (…) offer more than simple opposition" (2014, 120). Bhambra, with reference to María Lugones (2010), states that what is offered is "the possibility of a new geopolitics of knowledge" (2014, 120).

Decolonial thinking and doing also means making visible decolonial epistemic and political projects that are not visible in decolonial studies due to the colonial differences when analysing political developments. For example, the Kurds are mostly unseen even from decolonial perspectives, as usually, decolonial academia continues to take the unit of the nation-state for granted. Hence, decolonization remains to be limited to the deconstruction of the imperial and colonial logic and Eurocentrism and consequently blindsides the coloniality of the sovereign nation-states such as Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey.

In a world where such complex and rapid global political changes have taken place in recent years, the Kurds, whose popularity has increased with the guerrilla war against Islamic State (IS) in Rojava (north-eastern Syria), their waged decolonial struggles are not only within their nation-states but also in their diasporas are discussed under different titles of transnational and interdisciplinary studies in social sciences (Baser 2013; Alinia et al. 2014; Demir 2017; Schøtt 2021).

Considering the reality of how enriched, differentiated, and dynamic the Kurdish society has become at the current stage, and the fact that it has created a serious accumulation in both political and cultural fields, this study should also be read as an intervention and objection to making the mobilization of the Kurds visible in the scope of decolonial studies (in the context of both political and epistemological decolonisation).

In the next chapters, I will try to analyze state violence and current institutional-everyday racist practices against the Kurds with the colonial desire of geopolitical imagine of official state policies on Kurdish geography in a framework that transcends the rigid boundaries of classical colonial theories. Based on the Foucauldian perspective, this framework focuses on the colonial impact of the concept of "governmentality" (Foucault 2009), which includes the practices of the modern state to expand its influence and create its own ideal citizen.

3.1. Colonial Governmentality of the Turkish state

I use the concept of colonial governmentality (Bhabha 1994 (2004), Scott 1995) to explain what kind of colonial practices implementing in northern Kurdistan, which I cannot include in the colonial classification (like settle colonialism, internal colonialism and etc.) in the current literature. Here, I will try to analyse the biopolitics and necropolitics of the Turkish state. Before examining the distinctive characteristics of colonial governmentality of the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan, I will discuss the extent to which in the current political conjuncture the Kurdish case should be handled with a different approach from the internal colonialism theory.

Norma Beatriz Chaloult and Yves Chaloult (1979), who in their analysis on the scope and limitations of the theory of internal colonialism, state that the theory of internal colonialism does not have a systematic definition. They argue that the common denominator of different scholars who use this theorization is that the concept of internal colonialism refers to social relations based on domination and subordination (Chaloult and Chaloult 1979, 86).

According to Robert Blauner's theorization, which stems from analysing urban uprisings of Black people in the USA, external (referring to settlement colonialism) and internal colonialism processes share common features. In his 1969 article "Internal colonialism and ghetto revolt" he submits that these features culminate in what he calls the "colonization complex". He defines the "colonization complex" with the four main elements:

1. How the racial group enters into the dominant society (whether colonial power or not). Colonization begins with a forced involuntary entry.
2. An impact on the culture and social organization of the colonized people which is more than just a result of such 'natural' processes as contact and acculturation. The colonizing power carries out a policy which constrains, transforms, or destroys indigenous values, orientations, and ways of life.
3. Colonization involves a relationship by which members of the colonized group tend to be administered by representatives of the dominant power. There is an experience of being managed and manipulated by outsiders in terms of ethnic status.
4. Racism: a principle of social domination by which a group seen as inferior or different in terms of alleged biological characteristics is exploited, controlled, and oppressed socially and physically by a superordinate group (1969, 396).

Emphasizing that the theories of internal colonialism are derived from analogies and that this is based on the colonizer and colonized parts of the society living in the same country, Robert J. Hind continues as follows;

> This approach usually excludes that feature of traditional views of colonization which assumes geographical separation, and also that feature which rests upon the premise that an entire population has imposed its authority upon an extraterritorial society or group of communities. The theories normally include such characteristics of conventional colonialism as political subjection, economic exploitation, cultural domination, and racial conflict (1984, 552).

Kurdish scholar Ismet Sheriff Vanly defines internal colonialism that emerged with racist discourses and practices as a characteristic feature of state formations as follows;

> Within the artificial frontiers inherited from imperialism, many Third World states practise a 'poor people's colonialism'. It is directed against often sizeable minorities and is both more ferocious and more harmful than the classical type. The effects of economic exploitation are aggravated by an almost total absence of local development and by a level of national oppression fuelled by chauvinism and unrestrained by the democratic traditions which in the past usually limited the more extreme forms of injustice under the old colonialism (1993, 204–5).

Finally, Charles Pinderhughes, who defined internal colonialism "as a geographically-based pattern of subordination of a differentiated population, located within the dominant power or country" argues that this subordination "has the outcome of systematic group inequality expressed in the policies and practices of a variety of societal institutions, including systems of education, public safety (police, courts and prisons), health, employment, cultural production, and finance" (2011, 236).

Based on these definitions, internal colonial practices in some countries (South Africa, USA, Ireland, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Baltic states, Canada and etc.) shed light on the Turkey-Kurdistan experience. Considering the colonial policies of Turkish modernization mentioned in the second part and the reasons for the emergence of the Kurdish issue, the domination of the Turkish state over the Kurdish geography and forcing Kurdish subjects to be subordinated to the Turkish identity can be considered as an example of internal colonialism.

But I bring the analysis a little further here, preferring to use the concept of "colonial governmentality" (D. Scott 1995; Bhabha 2004) instead of the concept of internal colonialism. By colonial governmentality, I mean a practice of governing and controlling, which has emerged as a result of the uncompleted or unaccomplished of the nation-state project that includes a dialectic of both accepting and denial (I mean *colonized citizenship*) and trying to erase the ethno-cultural differences of the Kurds with the mission of turning them into colonized subjects in a long-term process. Accepting in terms of providing a legal (Turkish) citizenship to Kurds but at the same time denying their identity as Kurds and fundamental rights such as exercise of Kurdish language.

Michel Foucault, in his work, *Security, Territory and Population*, which consists of 13 different lectures, he means with the concept of *governmentality*:

> The ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument (2009, 108).

Stephen Legg states that the lectures in which Foucault deals with the concept of governmentality "through the practical measures that emerged in response to a changing political, demographic and geographical reality, not through the mentalities or abstract rationalities of government" (2007, 10). With reference to the Foucauldian formulation, which

David Scott focuses on the active role of the institutional mechanisms of colonial domination as a way to move beyond the critique of colonial discourse and introduced the "colonial governmentality" approach (1995, 192).

He called "political rationalities of colonial power" refers to "historically constituted complexes of knowledge/power that give shape to colonial projects of political sovereignty" (1995, 193). Remarking that the political rationality of modern power has two distinctive features, Scott points out that, the first of these features is related to the point of application of modern power and the second is related to the field of its operation (1995, 198). According to Scott;

> The point is that in order to understand the project of colonial power at any historical moment, it is necessary to understand the character of the political rationality that constitutes it. And what is very important for such an understanding is not what the colonial's position on colonization is, nor does it exclude or include the indigenous people. On the contrary, it is important to try to distinguish the point of application, the aim of the colonial power, and the discursive and indisputable areas it tries to cover (1995, 204).

Homi K. Bhabha, referring to a form of governmentality that enables the recognition and rejection of "racial/cultural/historical differences", interprets "the colonized as a population of degenerated types on the basis of racial origin", and "that in marking out a 'subject nation', appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity" (2004, 100–101).

Starting from the above definition of the colonial situation and colonial governmentality, I aim to re-introduce an analysis of coloniality that considers the current conditions of the colonized as the beginning point for the analysis. Because, when looking at northern Kurdistan, although one can speak of a colonizer-colonized relationship in line with the above definitions, it has never been considered a colony in an official or legal framework. However, in my interviews I encountered a common narrative among my Kurdish respondents, where they conceived themselves as a subject *beyond the colony*, meaning to be in an even worse situation. I observed that despite being able to interpret all the processes of subjection and coloniality, they struggled to find adequate ways to describe it with existing terms.

While Georges Balandier describes the "colonial situation as the domination imposed by a racially and culturally different conquering community on inferior ethnic community in the name of dogmatically asserted racial, ethnic or cultural superiority" (1963 cited in Hechter 1999, 30), Bozarslan states that colonialism does not only mean the long-term occupation of a

region by foreign powers, but is synonymous with the formation of a human type who has been colonized, alienated to themself, and internalized the linguistic, cultural and epistemological violence of the colonizer (2014, 25).

For instance, Agit, a topographical engineer and environmental activist, stated that the domination and subjugation they experienced cannot be explained with classical colonial concepts and the state of being a colony is not only limited within the territory of Kurdistan. He stresses that this feeling of being colonized continues with the Kurds being detached from their own territory and being forced to migrate to the cities in the west of Turkey, where they are exploited as a labour force and are exposed to the daily practices of racism[29] *(Interview, Mardin, 20.05.2020).*

Birhat, who is a member of a collective that tries to create an alternative agricultural model that is self-sufficient without needing the state in northern Kurdistan, explains how struggling for freedom while not even feeling free in the most basic aspects of life creates a great contradiction for the individual. He elaborates on the inability to describe this situation as follows;

> You cannot have an identity in the face of a nation-state, which cannot even tolerate your existence. With the devastating effect of capitalism, the people of this geography have seen things that are difficult to describe. There is no emotion that we have not seen and experienced, everything has become ordinary. We have become a sick society… situations that humans usually should be struggling to handle have become ordinary. *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 06.07.2020).*

Another environmental activist, Vahap, tries to explain the situation of being a different colony with the concepts of reaction and internalization;

> Beyond the assimilation of Kurdish identity, the self-governing will of the society over its own territory is being eliminated with economy and energy policies. The most obvious example is the destruction of ecology in Kurdistan. But what I noticed and what is surprising is that there is a state of consent, the internalization of the psychology of being a colony, which accepts the situation of oppression. This was especially the case after the city wars. The most obvious example of this was the unexpectedly low degree of reaction to the forced dismissal of elected Kurdish mayors and the appointment of trustees bypassing elections. There are many reasons why this is so and they should be discussed, but I think, the biggest factor is the creation of a regime of fear *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 05.05. 2020).*

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[29] Güllistan Yarkin describes how the fact that the Kurdish working class became homeowners can be considered an anti-racist practice against housing discrimination, which is the clearest form of everyday racism in Turkey's metropolitan cities. For an extensive ethnographic study for the Istanbul case, which has a large Kurdish population, see (Yarkin 2020).

Looking at Blauner's concept of "colonization complex", where he combines different types of colonial rule, the case of northern Kurdistan demonstrates a similar situation. It can be argued that one type of colonial rule is not enough to account for the different regimes of domination and subjection on Kurdish territory, people, and culture that occurred in different time periods. Trying to apply only one of the existing concepts on the situation in northern Kurdistan risks to limit an understanding on the multiple types of colonial approaches by the same state. In this regard, as Peter Pels argues that "governmentality should be understood as a power dispersed through the social body. It cannot be regarded as a singular colonial strategy" (1997, 176).

As will be seen in different parts of this thesis, colonial governmentality in Kurdistan is more closely related to the violence of the sovereign power (Schmitt 1986; Foucault 2003; Mbembe 2003) Sovereign power, in Foucault's words, "the sovereign has a right of life and death means that he can, basically, either have people put to death or let them live… Sovereign power's effect on life is exercised only when the sovereign can kill" (2003, 240). In his article titled Necropolitics, which he deals with in a striking way, Achille Mbembe analyses what Foucault calls biopower, that is, "domain of life over which power has taken control" (2003, 12) and he states that "the sovereign right to kill is not subject to any rule in the colonies. In the colonies, the sovereign might kill at any time or in any manner. Colonial warfare is not subject to legal and institutional rules" (Mbembe 2003, 25).

Some examples of the conscious policies of the necropower that work together with the state's biopower are instances where the Turkish state exercised a right of disposition over wounded and dead bodies of Kurdish subjects, who were subjected to extreme violence or who rebelled against it, or, cases when the state exhibited systematic "dehumanization" practices over the dead bodies, rendering the relatives of the dead in a constant state of mourning by leaving the dead without graves (Özsoy 2010, 59; Aydın 2017). Rûbar says that in the process of the urban clashes between 2015 and 2016, the state's brutal intervention on dead bodies and funeral ceremonies resembles regions under colonial occupation;

> The fact that you don't even have a mourning process makes you feel like a foreigner here. The destruction of a space that belongs to you, the destruction of things that belong to you, makes you constantly feel that you are not safe here. In a place where hospitals and schools have been turned into police stations, even graveyards are near to the police station. So even the place where you are buried cannot be your home. Even there they have sovereignty and control *(Interview, Hakkari, 13.01.2021).*

Rûbar's account demonstrates how the state of being a colonial subject does not necessarily end with death, and, in Mbembe words, how space becomes "the raw material of sovereignty and the violence it carried with it. Sovereignty meant occupation, and occupation meant relegating the colonized into a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood" (Mbembe 2003, 26).

The reason why I called the Kurds *colonized citizen(ship)* is undoubtedly the existence of a permanent "state of exception" in the Kurdish geography, where there is a constant threat of punishment and death, which is not seen in other parts of Turkey (Bargu 2019b; Kurban 2020; M. Kurt 2021). The identity building of the Turkish state's colonial governmentality denies the self-identification of the Kurds and humiliates and discredits rather than officially recognizing them as a colony. Because, by colonial logic, recognizing Kurdish ethno-identity and their language, culture and equal citizenship could seriously endanger the status-quo of the Turkish state (see also; Beşikçi 1990; 2012). The state of being a colonized citizenship under a permanent state of exception, in another way, Jongerden and Akkaya, referring to Eyal Weizman's concept of "weak citizenship" zones (2007, 7) and they argued that "the allegiance bond of the Kurds has always been weak" because the Kurdish geography has been governed under martial law and state of emergency rule since 1927 (2012a, 99).

The forms of colonial governmentality that the Turkish state has implemented in northern Kurdistan throughout the history of the Republic have been constantly and simultaneously in the intersecting relationship between each other rather than the periodic transformation of the "law-discipline-security" triangle (Foucault 2009). Following the Kurdish revolt in February 1925, the execution of Kurds opposing the Kemalist regime through the "Independence Tribunals", which were created with "The Law on the Maintenance of Order" (Takrir-i Sükün Kanunu) in March 1925 and equipped with special powers (Ahmad 1993), gave signs about how northern Kurdistan would be governed.

The Eastern Reform Plan (Şark Islahat Planı) which came into effect on September 8, 1925 (Bayrak 2009) and is the essential guide of the Turkish colonial governmentality even today, provided the establishment of the General Inspectorates (Umumi Müfettişlikler), a form of government resembling colonial governorships, within the martial law and state of emergency rule in Kurdistan in 1927 (Bayrak 1994; Koçak 2010; Bayır 2013a). Finally, when considering The Settlement Law of 1934 (Iskan Kanunu), which allowed non-Turkish communities (especially the Kurds) to be assimilated into Turkishness by forced them to settle in areas where

Turks live densely (Beşikçi 1991), and also the Tunceli Law of 1935, which covers Tunceli and other Kurdish provinces around it's that is governed by a "military hierarchy" and brings a special judicial system specific to this region only (Beşikçi 1992; Bayır 2013a, 139), it is seen that there is a period in which the aforementioned triangle operates simultaneously and intersecting.

Colonial governmentality also allows for a more flexible, complex and heterogenous definition of colonialism as a type of governance. Assessing the Turkish state's approach to the Kurds through this term accounts for intersecting types of colonial domination and settings, from settler, to internal, and even orientalist approaches. Especially, the practices of the AKP regime of the past 20 years however shows that the colonial domination is not limited to its nation-state borders but is also exercised by the state outside its borders.

Some have called this transregional desire of becoming a hegemonic actor a neo-Ottoman foreign policy (Yavuz 2020; Çağaptay 2021), however for my research it is interesting to see that practices of internal colonialism within the territory, evolve into settler or occupation type of colonial domination outside Turkish territory. For instance three cities in northern Syria (West Kurdistan) have been occupied by the Turkish state, or you see increasing Turkish military posts in northern Iraq (South Kurdistan), airstrikes and drone attacks in border regions between West and South Kurdistan, or examples of water policies that deprive the Kurdish populated regions outside Turkish borders from water (Jongerden 2010; Jongerden et al. 2021).

Thus, colonial governmentality can account for both territorial and de-territorialized or extra-territorial practices of colonial domination. Instead of introducing or developing a new category in my dissertation, for instance, *infrastructural colonialism*, I suggest that the Kurdish case contributes to the literature on colonial governmentality by broadening its scope. This is also an important indicator in achieving the geopolitical goals inherent in the long-term policy necessity within the geopolitical colonial vision that steers the Turkish nation-state.

Considering the recent and distant past of the Kurdish issue, I argue that the colonial political rationality of the Turkish nation-state has never changed, although the political powers with different ideologies have changed periodically throughout the history of the republic. In order to understand this, I will try to explain how the AKP government negotiated the Kurdish issue in the 2000s, without going beyond the scope of this section and thesis, by giving an example here. It can also help to understand how was flexible and heterogeneous the colonial

governmentality of the Turkish state. Similarly, as can be seen in the 5th section of this thesis, it is mentioned how the AKP handled the Kurdish issue after the 2000s with infrastructural policies in order to consolidate the position of its political power, to ensure its continuity and to survive.

It would not be wrong to say that the Kurds, who are a heterogeneous society due to their both territorial and political, cultural and religious/denominational differences, which were governed by colonial law and military security paradigms dominated by the nationalist-secular Kemalist ideology until the 2000s. By the coming to power of the AKP (2002), which comes from an Islamic tradition that the secular bureaucratic and military elite sees as a threat, one of the most important strategies of its, to negotiate the Kurdish issue differently from the previous regimes, as Mehmet Kurt (2019; 2021) argues that, on the one hand, while continues to consolidate Turkish society without abandoning the nationalist discourse, on the other hand, it tries to subdue the conservative masses among the Kurds, who defend the Islamic ideology, by using the "religious discourse of unity and brotherhood" (2019, 356).

Kurt, interprets the AKP's Islamist policy not as a divergence from the state's past colonial practices, but as new strategies aimed at legitimizing and consolidating the existing colonial rule as follows;

> The Islamic discourse also provides an opportunity for local actors who are willing to benefit from state-originated wealth and political recognition. As well as repressing political opponents, the state offers an alternative pattern of adhesion to the Kurdish citizens, characterized by the rejection of Kurdishness as an exclusive form of political and social belonging (2019, 357).

These strategies showing that how the AKP, through its own Islamist ideology, tries to absorb the ethnopolitical essence of Kurdishness, or how it tries to form a new human type that has been colonized and alienated, as well as it is also helpful to see how it tries to suppress and marginalize the ideologically dissident Kurdish subjects with different coercive apparatus of the state when it cannot transform them. The AKP's failure to come to power alone in the 2015 elections, and its approach to the Kurdish issue and the Kurdish political movement since then, returned to *the colonial founding settings of the republic* (see also Burc as mentioned "factory settings of republic" (2019, 331), it shows that the "operational and mental continuity" concept that I mentioned in the second part maintains its currentness in certain periods.

To reiterate, "operational and mental continuity" that refers to colonial practices of the late Ottoman period that have been adopted by the Turkish nation-state as a governing principle.

To say that this concept has maintained its currentness in certain periods, is not to assume that there was a monolithic colonial governmentality in the history of the century-old republic. On the contrary, I argue that it expresses how the AKP government or Erdogan regime resorts to the colonial practices of the past periods as an instrument when it needed popular support. At the same time, it has moved beyond these practices by putting forward new colonial practices, which exhibit a governmentality that contains heterogeneous and complex power dynamics and resources.

The 5th chapter of this thesis, which includes a field study based on ethnographic methodology and interviews, will make the above-mentioned topic more understandable, but in concluding this section, I would like to mention two examples that will support my argument above. The first is that Kurdish cities have been governed by a new colonial concept since 2016, in a colonial mentality similar to the general inspectorates in the 1930s and the martial law or state of emergency governorships in the 1990s. This new colonial government concept is the appointment of governors representing the central government as trustees without an election, which resulted in the unlawful dismissal of HDP mayors elected by the votes of the local people and they were sentenced to prison. (Whiting and Kaya 2021; Marschall and Unal 2021; Tutkal 2021).

In the report prepared by HDP, this colonial form of governance, which is called the "trustee regime" (HDP 2019, 4) because it has powers that go beyond the duties and limits of a normal municipality, can be considered as an attempt to usurp all the gains made by Kurdish municipalities, which are exhibit "alternative, Kurdified... a new governmentality and anti-systematic challenger" (Watts 2010, 143; Bayır 2021), in a decolonial epistemology that has been in the field of local governments, against various forms of Turkish colonial government since the late 1990s.

Secondly, the colonial governmentality of the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan can be observed in the spatial arrangements made by the trustee regime in many areas of everyday life. The relocation of armed conflicts to the cities as of 2015 caused the destruction of many civilian settlements and civilian deaths, and then these settlements have evolved into urban rent areas for state-supported capital groups under urban transformation with various lawful

regulations. (Arslan et al. 2016; Onat and Çubukçu 2019; Taş 2022). This process, which resulted in the destruction of the city centres, also resulted in the cities being placed under a military siege through the security policies of the state institutions, which perceive the city riots as a threat. (Graham 2011). For instance, while the military and police barracks built of dense concrete blocks, or the residences of the security forces and their families create the impression of well-protected security areas (see also; Bedirxan 2017), in the areas outside, hence civilian neighbourhoods, control points and other public buildings are decorated with giant Turkish flags, which gives the image of an occupied or conquered space both as a show of dominance and a manner of discipline.

While Mervan, who works as a lawyer in Hakkari, one of the provinces where the military siege was intense, said that the first action done after the appointment of trustees to Hakkari Municipality was to hang giant Turkish flags on the city hall *(Interview, 15.02.2020, Hakkari)*, Aycan Irmez, a former HDP Sirnak deputy, states that in the regions where the state could not maintain strong control in the past, it is now tried to give the impression of a "occupied region" to the society *(Interview, 18.03.2020, Sirnak)*. These colonial practices based on marginalization and exclusion are the result of state's geo-spatial policies aimed at "the systematic redefinition and transformation" (D. Scott 1995, 205) of the region in which Kurds live, who are under constant control and surveillance.

It can be said that the contemporary Turkish colonial governmentality, as a form of domination and administration that essentially contains institutional racism and violence, resorted to many authoritarian or despotic policies aimed at limiting its mobilization in the public sphere in provinces where the influence of the Kurdish political movement is ideologically and logistically strong and intense.

These policies have continued, especially in the post-2015 period, with the evolution of the Turkish state's geopolitical goals to increase its regional influence in the Kurdish regions outside its territorial borders, towards occupation and settler colonialism. As Mesut Yegen (2020) has argued, the inclusion of a geopolitical perspective in the ethnopolitical essence of the Kurdish issue in Turkey and how and in what form this geopolitical perspective can be sustained depend on the developments in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy. Depending on whether the current authoritarian presidential system in Turkey will change or not and while the ongoing economic crisis and the financing dimension of cross-border invasions continue to be important issues concerning domestic policies, the strategic foreign relations evolving with

allied states are indicative that the Kurdish issue can no longer be only considered as an internal colonial issue but rather an issue over which the Turkish state negotiate its position as a regional power.

Giving prison sentences to deputies elected from a legal political party (HDP), criminalizing thousands of members of this party and giving them to prison sentences and banning politics, appointing trustees to municipalities in Kurdish cities over usurping the will of the people, are just a few of these policies. Although these policies, caused the society to see itself as *beyond the colony*, as will be seen in the next section, it could not prevent the continuation of the social resistance in everyday life in different forms, apart from guerrilla warfare.

3.2. Colonial violence and anti-colonial struggle in northern Kurdistan

In this brief section, my aim is to try to show the historical and contextual conditions of this "regime of violence" (Çiçek 2015, 296) that has been practiced with different forms of violence in Kurdistan for nearly a century, without trying to analyse the phenomenon of violence. As explained in the previous section, I focus on why this "regime of violence", which is part of the homogenization/Turkification policies and colonial ethnic domination of the Turkish nation-state building based on the civilization, assimilation and denial of the Kurds, should be defined as colonial violence.

Finally, I ask, what kind of anti-colonial struggle was fought in Kurdistan against this colonial violence? What were the resistance practices of the colonized subjects and how did they struggle to seek justice in their everyday life against being physically occupied, oppressed, marginalized and economically exploited because of their ethnic identity, language, culture and beliefs? Therefore, in this section, an analysis based on recent history will be presented as to why the struggle for the existence/survival of the Kurds against the colonial practices of the Turkish state for a century should be considered as an anti-colonial struggle.

Numerous studies that examine state violence against Kurds in Turkey refer to the mass violence practices within the framework of the "Turkification" policy implemented by the Kemalist regime. The Kemalist regime can be described as the continuation of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) mentality, during the transition phase from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire to the nation-state formation. (Çeğin and Şirin 2014; Ü. Kurt and Çeğin 2015; Bezwan 2021). These mass violence practices aimed at suppressing the Kurdish revolts both show that it has the legitimacy to use violence by exhibiting a "suprasociale" (Bozarslan 2012,

87) practice during the re-establishment of the state, and also emerge as a "politics of incorporation by communal destruction executed through a combination of ethnocidal and genocidal violence" (Bezwan 2021, 14; Nagengast 1994).

Güney Cegin and Ümit Kurt, focusing on the founding role of violence and its perpetrators in the establishment of the state, in light of Christian Gerlach's analysis of "extremely violence societies" (2010) and Charles Tilly's concept of "state coercion" (1985), they draw attention to the "organic continuity" between the practices of mass violence in the Armenian genocide and the violence repertoire towards the Turkification of the Kurds. (2015, 102–34).

While Ugur Ümit Üngör and Ayhan Işık emphasize the importance of three approaches, namely "juxtaposition, diachrony, and transmission" in the research on mass violence, they state that the diachronic approach can be more explanatory in the case of Kurds (2021, 4). This approach is based on questions asked by researchers to understand why mass violence occurs repeatedly in a society and how past political and social dynamics affect next violence outbreaks. (Üngör and Işık 2021). According to Üngör and Isik;

> in at least three periods in the modern era (1880-1896, 1915-1938, and 1984-1997), northern Kurdistan became the scene of large-scale violence, inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic, and against the authorities. To what extent were the earlier phases influential on later phases? Should we imagine this as a genetic, direct influence, or a genealogical, imagined influence in which later generations harked back and utilised the past to mobilise for violence? Only a focused, diachronic study can offer explanations (2021, 4–5).

Cuma Cicek, who analyzes the establishment of violence as a regime in northern Kurdistan, states that violence is not only physical violence based on the physical destruction or harm of certain collective identities by the actors in power but also the violations of rights are to be considered as violence (2015, 304). Cicek states that the state is "built and operates on violations of rights in economic, social, cultural, political and military terms" and that it also creates itself on "ethnic, national, religious, economic and gender based destructions" (2015, 304).

Finally, in addition to the known forms of violence mentioned above, I argue that two other different forms of violence that exist in northern Kurdistan. One of them is infrastructural violence (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012; H. Baumann 2021; Enns and Sneyd 2021; Turner 2022) and the other is cartographic violence (Neocleous 2003). In short, infrastructural violence refers to the active or passive articulation of infrastructures to traditional forms of violence, structural

or otherwise (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012). According to Rodgers and O'Neil, infrastructure is "not only the material embodiment of violence" but also is "instrumental medium" that contribute to the consolidation of social order through "reoccurring forms of harm" (2012, 404).

Hanna Baumann (2021) discusses how settler colonialism in the Israeli-Palestinian example operates as a deeper and longer-term form of violence in the east of Jerusalem through infrastructural policies. Baumann's conceptualization of "infrastructural violence" explains how seemingly paradoxical strategies of "exclusion and incorporation" operate simultaneously and how they play a vital role in the expropriation and assimilation of Palestinians. (2021, 207–8).

Using the concept of "infrastructural abjection", she states that it is a practice of political exclusion to draw symbolic boundaries for Palestinians living in areas "considered abject and those residents considered external to the Israeli state—or in need of purification" through the sewage infrastructure of the Israeli security forces in eastern Jerusalem. (Baumann 2021, 212). Baumann, with the concept of "infrastructural incorporation", remarks that various urban planning projects of the Israeli state (such as road constructions, pavement arrangements and rail systems) are the infrastructure method of occupying and annexing the east of Jerusalem and these infrastructural projects, which are "difficult to reverse, also a powerful means of establishing a permanent hold on occupied spaces" (2021, 216).

Mark Neocleous's conceptualization of "cartographic violence" (2003) as an important contribution to the literature on state violence is also very useful in understanding the impact of state violence on space or territory and population in Kurdistan. According to Neocleous, who analyzed the founding relationship between territory and state power, states are sovereign not only because they have all power within their own borders but also because they control the borders of a particular region and "claim to represent the citizens" living within these borders by holding a monopoly of the legitimate exercise of power. (2003, 411). While Neocleous emphasizes that cartography is a means of describing the main features of the sovereign state, such as the territorial boundaries, as well as the asserting ownership, sovereignty and legitimacy (2003, 417), he states that the map plays a very important role in the construction of national identity by repositioning the heterogeneous social subjects in a unified political structure in order to make them legible (2003, 421).

When colonial violence is considered as a cogwheel, the above-mentioned forms of violence form the individual teeth of this wheel. Since "any definition of violence already assumes a partial standpoint sustained by violent relations" (Coronil and Skurski 2006, 9), throughout this thesis, as seen and will be seen in the following chapters, the Turkish state's political, cultural, economic, militarist/physical, cartographic and infrastructural forms of violence against Kurds, in general, are described. Therefore, in this section, the practices of violence based on "state-building nationalism" (Hechter 2000) will not be discussed in detail.

If a definition is made in order to understand the main motivation behind colonial violence and the ultimate goal that political rationality wants to achieve, as Abdelmajid Hannoum stated; "violence has one effect–destruction, including the destruction of lives, emotions, spaces, bodies, languages, practices, beliefs, thoughts, dreams and possibilities, both in the present and future" (2010, 224). In his legendary book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon, while analysing the direct relationship between colonialism and violence, defines violence as colonialism itself, not as an anomaly or emergency tool of French colonialism (2004; Ünlü 2018a).

Just as France occupied and held Algeria through bare violence, inspired by Hannoum, Turkish coloniality "did not only engage in violence; it was violence" (2010, 120). However, as seen in all colonial discourses, the use of violence for the expansion of modern power has always been a legitimate and justified phenomenon. "Colonialism did not think of itself as a violence but rather as a humanitarian enterprise that brought civilization and peace to others, even if the means to achieve this was war" (Hannoum 2010, 121). In his book *Critique of the Black Reason*, Achille Mbembe explains that rethinking Aimé Césaire's work on colonialism means "to continue to track in today's world, the signs that mark the return of colonialism, or its reproduction and repetition in contemporary practices-practices of war, forms of marginalization and stigmatization of difference" (2017, 159).

Citing references to how Fanon describes colonial violence as manifested by the daily racist practices and torture of resisters in Algeria by the French army, Mbembe describes this war as "a savage and nameless war that reproduced Nazi methods against a people denied the right to self-determination" (2017, 160).

> Fanon often said of the war in Algeria, the "most horrific" of wars, that it had taken on the "look of an authentic genocide" or else an "enterprise of extermination." As he wrote elsewhere, the war was "the most hallucinatory war that any people has ever waged to smash colonial aggression." In Algeria it created a "bloodthirsty and pitiless atmosphere" that led to the widespread "generalization of inhuman

practices." As a result, many among the colonized had the impression of being "caught up in a veritable Apocalypse." (Mbembe 2017, 160–61).

In a similar approach, the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan, who called on the state to restart peace dialogues in order to end the 40-year-old war between the Turkish state and the PKK, said "this war is a blind war, a war in which no one cannot defeat anyone"[30]. Despite differences in their histories, geographies, forms of government and citizenship status between the Algerian and Kurdish case, undoubtedly, it can be argued that the colonial violence, in all its distinctiveness from case to case, has created similar destructive results, just like in the cases of other colonized societies in the other parts of the world.

In his article, *France-Algeria and Turkey-Kurdistan: Colonial Methods, Violence and Intellectuals*, Ünlü who did a comparative analysis on the colonial practices and the resistance against it, emphasizes the similarity between the state-sponsored *harkis* which were to fight against to the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) and the village guards formed to fight against the PKK, as well as the similarity between the forced migration in Kurdistan in the 1990s and the forced migration of nearly 2.5 million people which to prevent the FLN's success in rural areas (Ünlü 2014, 422).

When the example of Ireland is included in this comparison – even though today Ireland and Algeria have achieved their independence and exist as separate states – although they have theoretically different colonial experiences, they share a commonality of being forced to be assimilated but were never entirely assimilated. Another common element is that these cases are all cases of colonized peoples who did not give up their resistance as subalterns, which were tried to be deprived of their lands and rights (Young 2016). Kurds, Irish and Algerians tried to carry out their own decolonization process by resorting to violence.

It can be said that Turkish coloniality with its intrinsically violent practices, was forced to change only if the Kurds responded with acts of violence, regardless of whether it was more or less violent. As Frantz Fanon states that, "decolonization is always a violent event" (2004, 1). To summarize Fanon's law of violence against the violence of the colonizer, based on daily experiences and the deadly relations between the colonizer and the colonized, in his own

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[30] Abdullah Öcalan, "This war is a blind war, we can go back to a solution" 12.09.2016, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/290114/ocalan-bu-savas-kor-bir-savas-cozume-geri-donebiliriz. (Accessed: 23.12.2021).

words; "colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking, a body endowed with reason. It is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence" (2004, 23).

In this sense, in the words of Hannoum, it "is not to write a history of 'rebellion' or 'insurgency'" against colonial violence, but to look at anti-colonial struggles enables us to understand, "why, how and under what conditions the population resorted to arms" (2010, 96), how their violent and non-violent actions were suppressed or how resistance is continued under the conditions of colonial violence.

Anti-colonial struggle in northern Kurdistan

How was the existence/survival struggle of the Kurds against the colonial practices of the Turkish state for a century? Why should the Kurds' attempt to eliminate the Turkish state's monopoly and legitimacy of violence by using violence be read as an anti-colonial struggle? Surely, trying to give a comprehensive answer to such questions necessitates a long narrative of Kurdish resistance history, but it would not be wrong to state that the Kurdish rebellions and resistances that emerged in the last periods of the Ottoman Empire and the first years of the republic period were based on different demands and motivations.[31]

According to Bozarslan, although some of the revolts initiated by the Kurdish sheikhs and aghas in Kurdistan in the last period of the Ottoman Empire were shaped around the demands for autonomy and independence, the Ottoman central administration, in general, conceived these revolts and resistances within a "tacit contract", which was seen "as a means of bargaining and negotiation by the subordinate peripheral groups for improving their status within the state" (2003, 186). While Bozaraslan emphasizes that the biggest factor in the formation of the social and political contract between the Kurds and the Ottoman state was the phenomenon of religion/Muslim brotherhood, he also says that the new republican regime's suppression of the 1925 Sheikh Said rebellion, as well as the rebellions and resistances that followed, are indicative of the Turkish state's aim to systematically persecute, marginalize and humiliate Kurdishness (2003, 187; see also, Soleimani 2021).

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[31] For a detailed reading on the power relations, negotiations and conflict processes of the Kurdish emirates, which had an autonomous status and certain privileges, with the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Dynasties in the period from the 16th century to the beginning of the 19th century in Kurdistan, see (Özoğlu 2004; Atmaca 2021; Ates 2021). In addition, for an analysis of the negotiation and rebellion processes of the Kurdish movements with different class statuses –"urban and professional elites and 'traditional' notable classes, the sheikhs and aghas"-, which can be considered as the continuation of the Kurdish emirates, during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, see; (Bajalan 2021, 132).

In regions where the struggle for "constitutional decolonization" was insufficient after the Second World War and the colonial powers tried to re-establish political control over the peoples who had developed forms of autonomy (especially in Vietnam, South Africa, Central and East African countries) armed liberation movements emerged (Young 2016, 162). Thomas et al., divides anti-colonial resistance movements that emerge in different forms into five groups as "resistance to conquest, rebellions against European rule, movements of religious revivalism, nationalist constitutional moves towards decolonization and nationalist liberation struggles" (2020, 44).

As stated before, the Kurdish movements in northern Kurdistan were also affected by the national liberation movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s around the world. One of these Kurdish movement organizations, the PKK, which was founded in 1978, preferred the anti-colonial guerrilla struggle against colonial state violence, particularly after non-violent strategies were previously suppressed and seemed to be insufficient and ineffective in the realization of the "constitutional decolonization" process, which demands recognition, representation and equal citizenship of the Kurds as a distinct ethnic community.[32]

Considering the fact that the armed resistance of the PKK, which is considered as the "last Kurdish revolt"[33] with reference to other Kurdish rebellions in history, has continued for almost 40 years since its start in 1984, it is seen that it has not only emerged a short-term reaction movement but also a phenomenon that determines time and space (Bozarslan 2015a). Today, the PKK, as a historical phenomenon that transcends its own temporality, is considered as a social movement that emerged against Turkish coloniality in a specific historical context and is knowledgeable of past historical experiences. (Jongerden and Akkaya 2015; O'Connor 2021; D. Aydin and Burç 2022).

For this reason, in order to define and better understand the resistance to coloniality in Kurdistan, it is necessary to look at what political violence of the PKK meant to the Kurds against the colonial violence of the state at the time the PKK emerged. First, it is the only organization capable of resisting state violence and having the power to use alternative violence, and secondly, it is seen as "the construction of a collective Kurdish identity on a new

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[32] Kurdish issue and the PKK's guerrilla warfare in Turkey are often compared to similar processes in countries such as Algeria, Ireland, Colombia, Sri Lanka, and the Basque Country, see; (Aktoprak 2011; Eccarius-Kelly 2012; Borsuk 2016; Sezgin 2019). Even if some of them are under the heading of "terrorism" (Ciftci 2013; Forest 2018).

[33] Mesut Yeğen states that the Kurdish social mobility and struggle for existence, which revived in Kurdistan since the 1960s after a 40-year period of silence, became permanent despite the 1980 military coup, and the PKK's armed rebellion in 1984 has turned into the "last Kurdish revolt", see; (2011b, 35).

ground" (Ergut 2014, 221). Triggering from the second definition, although it brings to mind the possibility that the PKK may have been influenced by the thoughts of Frantz Fanon, one of the main sources in the formation of post-colonial theory, interestingly, references to Fanon's writings are not encountered in the publications of the PKK's founding years. (Kaya 2020, 23).

As Fanon points out, "violence is not an end in itself, but a necessary means and an inevitable stage for an oppressed people to rise up, become unity, and thus gain personality" (Ünlü 2018a, 55–56). Thus, people become the subject that produces self-respect to themselves against the perspective of the colonizer, begin to feel that they determine their self-determination (Ünlü 2018a, 54) and play a leading role in the formation of a new identity (Fanon 2004). Therefore, the PKK sees violence not only as the liberation of Kurdistan, but also as the condition for the creation of a new Kurdish identity, a new Kurdishness (Fırat 1992).

In his work titled *Luxury and Violence, Domination and Resistance in Ibn Khaldun (Lüks ve Şiddet, İbn Haldun'da Tahakküm ve Direniş),* Hamit Bozarslan (2016) interprets the dialectic of domination and resistance through the concepts of power and civilization by comparing it with European thinkers such as Machiavelli, Pareto and Toynbee. According to Bozarslan, from the perspective of the oppressed nation, he explains the use of violence by an ethnic community against state that violence not only as a struggle for survival, but also as a reality of social movement in which it "creates its own power-making process by changing the power relations with a dynamic that comes from the suburbs of history" (Bozarslan 2021).

Remarking that the political violence of the PKK is a model that fits the rationality of resorting to violence in Ibn Khaldun's political philosophy, Bozarslan continued that "the PKK, not only because it resorted to violence, but also as a group which came from the suburbs of history that emerges as a phenomenon of empowerment that can produce its own resources, that means, both sources of violence and non-violence, starting over from the scratch, without having the facilities of the current state" (Bozarslan 2021).

> Those who resort to violence as a collective actor, emerge as actors who can no longer be dominated, who have a reading or interpretating of a past, present and can imageability of future, and defend another legitimacy (Bozarslan 2015a).

A guerrilla warfare focusing on the institutional and military reality of colonial rule in rural areas of northern Kurdistan revitalised a counter-hegemonic activism and an anti-colonial consciousness that naturally existed at the societal base. The fact that the PKK reminded the Kurdish society of the reality that it was a colony enabled the formation of everyday active or

passive, violent or non-violent forms of resistance in cities, even if it could not be equated with guerrilla struggle.

When these everyday forms of resistance, which James C. Scott conceptualize as "infrapolitics" (1990) are analysed through Kurdish society, from the violent acts of revolt that took place in the Newroz celebrations in the city centres with the effect of the intense war period in the 1990s, to the party demonstrations exceeding tens of thousands during the election periods, from the mass participation in the guerrilla funerals to the civil disobedience actions such as civil Friday prayers, from the opening of Kurdish language and culture centres to the occupation actions defending ecology and space and etc. It can be said that there is a wide resistance repertoire that can be increased as many examples.

However, my interest here is how and in which way the Kurdish social movement is still able to maintain "the resilience and endurance" (Üstündağ 2019, 107) of its historical resistance that spanned a long time, especially in the post-2015 period. In other words, I am discussing that as Scott noted in *Domination and Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, the "infrapolitics, is the silent partner of loud form of public resistance", or another words "hidden forms of resistance" (1990, 199) in which forms emerged in northern Kurdistan.

In this sense, I consider the reactions, reflexes and emotions of society as a practice of resistance whom sees themselves as *even worse than a colony* in daily life, against the colonial oppression regime that emerged after the end of the conflict process when resulted in the destruction of urban areas between 2015 and 2016. The narratives of participants can be read as the manifestation of the feelings created on the subjects by the biopolitical and necropolitical violence that the Turkish state uses in everyday life, in addition to the destruction caused by the despotic and infrastructural violence tools. This manifestation also reveals an *unwritten resistance.*

Even in the most unbearable situations, while the Kurdish political prisoners' the hunger strikes and the death fasts, even at the cost of losing their lives, put people in a position to cross the limits of their own will, it instils the political consciousness of "where there is power, there is resistance…" (Foucault 1978, 95), with its most bare form, to the people who resisting outside. The resistance at issue here, includes actions against colonial oppression and domination brought about by "institutional constraints on self-development and self-determination" (I. M. Young 2010, 31).

According to the subject who has such a political consciousness, the act of survival itself emerges as a form of resistance against colonial domination, which is "socially institutionalised as marginalisation and exclusion" and operates "as disrespect and misrecognition" (Stewart 2001, 58).

One of the prominent common forms of resistance in the statements of the interviewees is that they use Kurdish as a practice of resistance and solidarity, besides showing that they exist as a separate ethnic community by speaking their mother tongue everywhere. Nesrin Ucarlar, in her article named "Kurdish resistance and the return of the politic", examines how Kurdish is used by people and institutions who make politics on behalf of the Kurdish society "to criticize and transform the politics under the influence of the nation-state and to revive their own politics" (2012, 252). Ucarlar, with reference to Chantal Mouffe's work *The return of the political* ([1993] 2020) states that "the desire for the ignored and villainized Kurdish language" to be visible in the public arena by pushing the boundaries of the "national" is "not only a struggle for cultural and political existence but also it is an attempt to revive the Kurdish political sphere, which is constantly imprisoned" (2012, 292).

> The language issue is very important. Speaking Kurdish especially... We have been denied for years by reason of language and we continue to be denied. I think this is the most direct, easy and logical way to prevent this denial. To speak your mother tongue... Especially to speak more attentively in an environment with the colonialists *(Interview, Mervan, Hakkari, 15.02.2020).*

As mentioned above, another form of everyday resistance evident in northern Kurdistan fits within the theoretical framework that Scott defines as a symbolic challenge to the domination, in other words, "hidden forms of ideological disobedience" which he called "infrapolitics of the powerless" (1990, 183–201). The psychological and emotional reactions (i.e not laughing, sulking, not speaking unless it is necessary) of even ordinary citizens who are politically and ideologically conscious but not organized, against the soldiers and policemen who represented the despotic power of the colonizer when they encountered in public spaces, especially the checkpoints, can be interpreted "direct resistance by disguised resisters" (Scott 1990, 198).

> After the identity checks at the checkpoints, as soon as the door of service car is turned off, it is a common attitude here that everyone inside the car says bad words (slang) about the soldiers and police. While stones were thrown at the police in the past, now people feel the anger of not being able to do this anymore and are left with just swearing. Likewise, people who sometimes get on the same service car and are understood to be military-police wives and children from the west of Turkey with proper Turkish accents are also reminded that they are colonialists in

this geography by showing reactive gestures and facial expressions. *(Interview, Rûbar, Hakkari, 13.01.2021).*

Saying that the state of instant anger at the Turkish flags and Erdogan's posters hanging everywhere on the streets of Diyarbakir is clearly evident from the attitudes of the people, Mîzgin who is a university student continues her words;

> A few years after the traumatic process of 2015-2016, the state of silence has passed and people from all walks of life react loudly, sometimes directly or indirectly (for example, this can be seen even in street interviews). This is a state of resistance. On the other hand, despite all the fear and suppression, the high participation rate of society in mass demonstrations and festivals such as November 25, March 8 and Newroz, and the increasing number of women and youth organizing within the HDP, is the physical state of resistance and a challenge. *(Interview, Mizgin, Diyarbakir, 11.01.2021).*

In today's political atmosphere, where openly organizing under the HDP roof is easily exposed to the label of "terrorism", even the objections expressed only in street interviews and the attitude of claiming their political identities is a practice of resistance. This practice of resistance has provided another kind of publicity in the way Kurdish subjects, who have no other alternative and suffer from the same problem, directly convey their criticisms of the current political order. The speeches given here are not the immediate reaction of ordinary people who think politically, the fact that they reveal the reactivity of their subalternities, in which they have lived for a long time, without the need for any political organization or by raising their voices directly when there is no such organization.

Another individual reaction to resist those who humiliate their dignity and deny their identity and language is not to be in the same place as those who are seen as colonizer and to exclude them. For example, Rûbar, who prefers not to go to the cafés where the police go frequently, states that if the police come to another café where she spends her social time, she also leaves there *(Interview, Rûbar, Hakkari, 13.01.2021).* Another example is from Hakkari, which is one of the cities where the Kurdish freedom movement is strongest and which is tried to indicate the image of a city surrounded or conquered by the state, with the increasing population of police and soldiers. Stating that there is a problem of finding housing in the city in the face of the increasing population with the immigration of refugees and civil servants from outside the city, Biseng stated that her father showed his reaction in this way by not renting the empty flat to the police and soldiers who were looking for a flat. *(Interview, Biseng, Hakkari, 25.01.2021).*

In an interview, Scott (2010) states that non-state spaces are social inventions and should not be understood only as a geographical phenomenon, but also that people affected by the state are people who somehow manage to distance themselves from the state. Vahap, an environmental activist, talked about that the Kurds who lived under colonial pressure, fought for national liberation and tried to solve all their problems within themselves as a community excluded by the state, have an unofficial de facto structure.

As an example, he gives the villagers, who experience disagreements and even violent conflicts in the parcelling of their lands, for problem solving to seek peaceful solutions by applying to the wise people or the tribal elders who are called the notables of the society instead of applying to the state courts. Vahap states that keeping customs and traditions alive even in city centres is a form of resistance against cultural colonialism. He continues by giving other examples as follows;

> For example, in Kurdistan, where economic conditions have always been bad, families can get their children married by making a debt contract through the gold, without resorting to the debiting system that the state giving credits. As activists, we provide our own security by rejecting the police who come to ensure our safety in the environmental panels we make. We are trying to create a self-sufficient agriculture model based on using local seeds without using hybrid seeds, without using the agricultural pesticide sold by the state. In fact, there are many daily resistance practices that can increase the number of these and similar ones. *(Interview, Vahap, Diyarbakir, 05.05.2020).*

While concluding this section with reference to Scott's words, the number of examples of different local manifestations of infrapolitics in northern Kurdistan, which constitutes "the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused" (1990, 184) can be increased.

In this sense, the insistence of HDP and its predecessors to pursue politics and seek rights on a democratic basis, despite the long-enduring war, stems from the hopes and demands of the Kurdish society for an equitable life and an honourable peace. Therefore, infrapolitics for the Kurds is, "to be sure, real politics (…) Resistant subcultures of dignity and vengeful dreams are created and nurtured. Counterhegemonic discourse is elaborated. Thus infrapolitics is, as emphasized earlier, always pressing, testing, probing the boundaries of the permissible" (Scott 1990, 200).

4. Geospatial policies of the Turkish state in the 1990s

In this chapter, I discuss the geospatial policies applied in the State of Emergency regime declared by the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan in the mid-80s. Attention will be given to concrete examples of how the "state of exception" (Schmitt 1986; Mbembe 2003; Agamben 2005) imposed on Kurds, who in fact have been governed by the state of emergency regime and have been regarded as colonized subjects since the proclamation of the republic, continued and was normalized in northern Kurdistan in the 1990s. I will examine the methods with which the legal norms of the "exception" were applied to the Kurds during the 1990s and 2000s and how these methods go beyond the state's own laws, which are based on an internalized "civilization mission" rooted in the republic regime of the 1920s.

In this chapter, a general evaluation will be made on the evacuated villages and settlements, the forced migration of the population, curfews, the village guard system and paramilitarism in northern Kurdistan in the 1990s, which have been dealt with in Kurdish studies exhaustively.

It is possible to talk about two important developments in the course of the Kurdish Issue in the early 1990s. The first is that the PKK, which fought the Turkish state with a few hundred militants in the 80s, turned into a military force of thousands of militants in the 1990s (Gunes and Zeydanlıoğlu 2014). Secondly, the Kurdish people, affected and sympathized by the PKK, began to express their demands in mass and determined demonstrations, often confronting the state's security forces and resulting in deaths and injuries (Gunes 2012; Jongerden and Akkaya 2012). This period is called the period of uprising or urban uprisings (in Kurdish; *Serhildans*) by the Kurdish Freedom Movement (Westrheim 2014; O'Connor 2021; D. Aydin and Burç 2022).

In response to these developments, which threatened military and political authority, the Turkish State resorted to comprehensive intimidation policies against the Kurdish people and the PKK in the 1990s to maintain the current status quo (Gunes and Zeydanlıoğlu 2014; Jongerden and Hamdi Akkaya 2015). Starting from the first year in 1990s until to the year of 1999, which date of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan was brought to Turkey, it is possible to collect under three headings these policies. The first is a low-intensity conflict[34] against the

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[34] In order to avoid conceptual confusion, one detail should be mentioned here. The National Security Council (in Turkish, Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK), which saw the guerrilla war launched by the PKK in 1984 as a major ethnic internal threat and did not consider it as a total war in the first years, later they prepared the Turkish Armed Forces for a new war concept due to its insufficient capacity to fight small-scale guerrilla movements (Balta Paker

PKK guerrillas in rural areas (Jongerden 2007; Karayılan 2012). The second is the bloody suppression of mass demonstrations against Kurdish people by the state and the enforced disappearance of Kurdish activists, politicians and ordinary citizens by the extrajudicial execution. Finally, I will mention in this section the geospatial policies (Jongerden 2007), which include the evacuation of villages, the burning of forest and pasture areas, the forced displacement of civilian citizens and village guard system.

Unlike the Kurdish rebellions and resistances that took place on a more local scale in 1925 Sheikh Said, 1926 Ağrı and 1938 Dersim, the unstoppable and growing mobilization of the PKK, which fought against the state in a larger geographical area in the 1990s, caused the Turkish state to make changes in its Kurdish policy. This change, which Veli Yadirgi calls "politics of recognition", is the state's recognition of the existence of Kurds, but reconceptualizing the Kurdish issue as a "separatist terror" problem (2017, 223). Although the Kurdish Freedom Movement's[35] political, civil and guerrilla struggle in the 1990s led to the abandonment of the state discourse that the Kurdish issue was based on economic development, demands for ethnic recognition of the Kurds were met with "unprecedented" state violence in northern Kurdistan (Kurban 2020, 134).

In the 1990s, state violence against journalists, politicians, activists and civilians within the framework of a certain plan in northern Kurdistan has been the subject of many academic research studies such as unresolved political killings or enforced disappearances, impunity, forced evacuation of settlements, curfews and the village guard system (Jongerden et al. 2007; Göral et al. 2013; Isik 2020; Kurban 2020). It is important to emphasize an important point here that all these geospatial policies of the state, including violent practices based on denial and destruction, took place during the state of emergency rule (OHAL), which was declared in 1987 and included the extraordinary management of thirteen Kurdish cities. In this period when the geography of northern Kurdistan became an "open prison" (Aras 2014; 93), thousands of civilian citizens were forcibly disappeared by the "extrajudicial executions" just because of their ethnic identity and political views (Kurban 2020, 150).

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and Akca 2013). This restructuring process, which lasted until 1993, updated the Turkish army, which was equipped and organized for a conventional war, according to "low-intensity warfare" or guerrilla warfare (Jongerden 2007; Işık 2020). In this respect, in this study, although I use the concept of armed conflicts from time to time, I prefer the concept of "war" with reference to guerrilla warfare.

[35] The contemporary Kurdish movement that follows the ideas of Abdullah Öcalan and is usually simply referred to as "the PKK", describes itself as Tevgera Azadiya Kurd (in Kurdish) or Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi (in Turkish), which translates into "Kurdish freedom movement". Also, the translation "Kurdish liberation movement" is used sometimes in English language literature.

As Bezwan states, emergency regimes emerged as an ordinary situation in Kurdistan throughout the history of the Turkish republic, in which the state of emergency (OHAL) was systematically and periodically put into practice with a "geo-ethnic understanding and purpose" and based on "negation, assimilation and elimination methods" (2015, 48). These methods were most violently enacted during the 1990s. Bahar Şahin Firat, who, like Bezwan, by refering to the famous definition of "sovereign is he who decides on the exception" in the introductory sentence of Carl Schmitt's book *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (1986, 5), submits that the emergency regime, which is a "state of exception" established through the suspension of the existing constitution and laws in northern Kurdistan, is an attempt at integrating it into the law (2014, 377).

The colonial violence that is part of the state of emergency, which has become the norm in northern Kurdistan, can be read through the framework of Agamben's "zone of anomie" (2005, 36). While this violence was experienced by and impacted those who were subjected to it in a very particular way during the 1990s (Sahin Firat 2014), these governing techniques in northern Kurdistan, or in Das and Poole's words "the state's margins" (2004a), cannot be considered "exceptional and temporal" (Bezwan 2015, 43), but rather as continuous and permanent.

In the darkness of the state of emergency of the 1990s, a state of emergency law was enacted which called the Anti-Terror Law no. 3713 of 1991, in line with the discourse of "separatist terror" against the Kurds, whose existence could not be denied openly. While this law is not only an instrument of the low-intensity war against the PKK, which is referred to as the "War on Terrorism" in state discourse, the broad definition and ambiguity of the law also considers all Kurdish activities that can be evaluated in the context of their human rights struggles as terror crimes and causes the imprisonment many selected of politicians, activists and thinkers (Muller 1996; Zeydanlıoğlu 2012; Hürman 2020).

Here, the main motivation of the state is to try to eliminate the influence of the population in the rural area, which supports the guerrilla movement, in a way that it will never exist again. One of the most comprehensive spatial policies implemented to eliminate this social support was to force the people of the region to migrate by cutting their relationship they have established with the geography (Jongerden 2007). As a matter of fact, according to Günes and Zeydanlioğlu the forced evacuation of villages led to the weakening of the PKK's military power in the mid-90s and later (2014).

It is not only aimed to eradicate all the conditions that make rural life possible in northern Kurdistan, but also to prevent the transfer of the collective and individual experiences of the common past of the local people to the future by destroying it. The relationship established by a somebody who was born, grew up and lives in a geography resistant to the state, with the space where they lives, is not only an economic, but also an emotional and ideological belonging relationship formed by cultural and social memory. Therefore, when considering the ethno-political identity, historical resistance and spatial disobedience belonging to such a geography, interventions to destroy this relationship are an expression of colonial desire.

4.1. Evacuated settlements /displacement

The 1990s was a period when the war between the Turkish state and the PKK was very intense. As a devastating reality and a natural consequence of the war, the people living in northern Kurdistan and the Kurdistan geography were greatly affected by this war. What has the state done to prevent the social and logistical support of the local people to the PKK in this war, which it sees as the "War on Terrorism"? In this part, I will discuss the question of what the state has done in the name of "counter terrorism" such as; the burning of settlements and the forced migration of the people of the region in order to suppress the rebellion in the region.

The evacuation of villages and hamlets concentrated in the 1990s and the forced displacement of "citizens" is not the first experience of the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan. According to Soner Cagaptay, while many ethnic communities were displaced in the 1920s, according to the Settlement Law of 1926, for the Kurds this period did not become a common policy but "colonization of the East and resettlement of the Kurds" was postponed to the 1930s as a future target (2001, 10). According to Van Bruinessen (2000; 79 cited in Jongerden 2001, 81), "the first deportations were simply reprisals against rebellious tribes. In later years, deportations became part of the concerted effort to assimilate the Kurds". As already illustrated in the second part of this thesis, according to the official documents prepared in the 1930s and the Settlement Law of 1934, it was considered a necessity to settle the populations in the *eastern provinces* or nomadic communities that neither speak Turkish nor have Turkish culture in regions where Turkish culture was dominant. This assimilation policy also included that Kurdish settlements were declared as prohibited areas, with the aim of preventing resettlement (Beşikçi 1991; Bayrak 1994; Bulut 2009).

Jongerden (2007), considers the practices of forced displacement in the 1990s from the perspective of nationalization of space, along with other resettlement practices throughout the history of the republic. According to him, the Settlement Law of 1934, which is one of the basic laws of the republic and which divides the population into Turkish and non-Turkish people, aims to "creating a general framework for national settlement in Turkey" by rearranging the same space on the basis of the reproduction and sovereignty of Turkishness (Jongerden 2007, 174). Contrary to Ismail Beşikçi, who has put forward fundamental studies of the Kurdish issue and the colonial status of Kurdistan, Jongerden (2007, 174) argues that the Law of Settlement should not be understood only as a tool to suppress Kurdish uprisings, but also as part of a larger goal of "creating a homeland of the Turks".

Robert Koehl has evaluated the primary logic of resettlement as "the attempt to dominate a politically doubtful region by filling it with a controllable population and removing from it all those who are believed to be uncontrollable on national, political or class grounds" (1953, 232). He assessed resettlement "as a means of cleansing and exchanging populations and related these resettlement practices to the process of transformation by which empires became nation-states and the consequent concern of these states with the characteristics of their subjects" (Koehl 1953, 231 in cited Jongerden 2007, 1).

Jongerden also said that "both settlement and resettlement involve the planned, selective and controlled transfer of population from one region to another and a (re)constitution of social life" but this was not done for the Kurds who were forced to evacuate their villages and migrate to the cities in the 1990s (2007, 4). Many of the villages and hamlets in the rural areas, where the clashes continued during the 1990s and where the PKK was active, were evacuated and their inhabitants were forcibly displaced. Dilek Kurban (2020, 156) states that, unlike the Settlement Law of 1934, these forced evictions were carried out the "outside the realm of law" by military forces without a place to be resettled and that no humanitarian aid was provided to the displaced Kurds and were not given to them the rights to return to their villages.

Although the migration caused by the security forces, evacuating the villages is referred to as "forced migration" or "internal displacement" in the literature (Ayata and Yükseker 2005; Çelik 2005; Stefanovic et al., 2015), which the fact that the geospatial policies of the Turkish state are realized in colonial desires and practices. It will not be wrong to say that the practices that cause this forced migration were due to political reasons and that what was happened is "forcible" migration or "forced Kurdish migration". An important point to be made here is that

I argue that Kurds who were exposed to forced migration should be considered as "not the object of passive victimization, but as the subject of active political resistance" as Murat Güney puts it (2009, 79).

Undoubtedly, the main reason for the forced Kurdish migration that led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people is the armed conflict prevailing in the region and the militarist perspective and practices that reduce the Kurdish issue to a security issue. According to Yadirgi, forced evacuations "formed part of the Turkish state's enduring desire to break up the Kurdish communities" in Kurdish provinces and "to consolidate control in Kurdish heartlands" (2017, 225). Yadirgi (2017) has also stated that the forced evacuation of villages does not only include the fight against the PKK, but aims to nullify the Kurds' demands for autonomy. This policy can also be interpreted as an attempt to continue an incomplete process of assimilation (Turkification).

According to a research report published in 2006 by Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (HÜNEE), more than 1 million people were forcibly displaced at that time.[36] The research commission report prepared by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) in 1998 claimed that more than 3,000 villages and hamlets were evacuated at that time.[37] But throughout 90s in northern Kurdistan experienced so many serious human rights violations, the forced migration policies in Turkey, media, politics, virtually ignored by universities and the general Turkey public.[38]

According to some researchers, this approach is also seen as the new colonialism techniques and neo-liberal policies reorganizing the cultural and social sphere and deepening its sovereignty (Dinc and Ay 2009). These studies, which never discussing or superficially to explain the reasons for the migration, and mostly refer to the official state discourse, to focus

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[36] Migration and Displaced Population Research in Turkey (in Turkish, Türkiye'de Göç ve Yerinden Olmuş Nüfus Araştırması), Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (HÜNEE), Ankara, 2006, https://fs.hacettepe.edu.tr/hips/dosyalar/yayinlar/2006_TGYONA-AnaRapor.pdf. (Accessed: 20.03.2019).

[37] This was the report of the Parliamentary Investigation Committee set up in 1997 for finding solutions to the problems of citizens who migrated because of village evacuations. See: "Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Boşaltılan Yerleşim Birimleri Nedeniyle Göç Eden Yurttaşlarımızın Sorunlarının Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Tedbirlerin Tespit Edilmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu," *T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi* 53 (Dönem 20), June 2, 1998, http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem20/yil2/bas/b108m.htm. (Accessed: 20.03.2019).

[38] Forced displacement or forced migration in the 1990s was often ignored at the time, except for a few human rights organizations, but in the 2000s, with the influence of the EU harmonization process and the democratization process, few scientists and researchers studied this issue.

more on the consequences of migration and move more on the "problematic" situations of the migrant population in cities.[39]

According to Namik Dinc and Welat Ay (2009), one of the important points of this perspective is to consider the Kurds through the discourse of underdevelopment from a colonial perspective and to regard the state as the main subject of problem solving within the framework of social security policies. In another study, Bilgin Ayata and Deniz Yükseker (2005, 6) stated that the phenomenon of forced migration, which they conceptualized as "internal displacement", was reduced to a "technical" development issue by separating from the Kurdish issue, which is a political issue within the framework of the Turkish state relations with the EU and the UN. An important outcome of the study, which emphasizes that this phenomenon has been depoliticized, is that unless there is a political approach towards the solution of the Kurdish issue, the "return, resettlement and rehabilitation" phases will remain difficult targets to realize (Ayata and Yükseker 2005, 38).

Similarly, Nazan Üstündağ (2004) describes the ignoring of the main issue that caused forced migration through Kurdish subjects who had to migrate to the periphery of Turkish metropolises and faced a series of social and political problems caused by rapid urbanization as follow;

> Forcibly displaced Kurdish people, what is most hurtful to them, as many of them express it, is the fact that they are considered by authorities, NGO's and academicians alike as composing the third wave of migration in Turkey, and are distinguished from former migrants only in terms of their higher levels of poverty and "ignorance" of urban ways. Once they enter the urban realm, they become part of a larger narrative of development and world capitalism where the specific violations they endured and the main problems that caused their "migration" become hidden and go unregistered. When displaced populations are studied, it is usually their conditions, problems and the ways in which their immediate survival

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[39] To give an example of some of these studies on the criminalization of those who are forced to migrate and which are mostly prepared under the influence of state discourse. For example, this study handled the Kurdish issue as a "terrorism problem" and said that forced migration caused an increase in crime rates in cities and created an atmosphere of insecurity. See: Yilmaz Ceylan, "Relation of Forced Migration and Crime (The Example of Mus Province)", in Turkish: Zorunlu Göc ve Suc Iliskisi (Mus Ili Ornegi) https://www.acarindex.com/dosyalar/makale/acarindex-1423867942.pdf. (Accessed: 21.03.2019). This master's study, which was prepared from a more liberal perspective, internal migration was handled as a case study in Diyarbakir and it was a study that focused on the results of the urbanization, poverty, unemployment and criminal crime rates created by the migration from the village to the city, without regarding on the factors causing forced migration. Yilmaz Can, "Migration and the City: The urban adaptation of the people who migrated from 1989 to the present: The case of Diyarbakır." (In Turkish: "Göc ve Kent: 1989'dan günümüze göç eden insanların kent adaptasyonu: Diyarbakır örneği), MA Thesis, 2011. http://acikerisimarsiv.selcuk.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/1742/294488.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. (Accessed: 21.03.2019).

is secured what gains most attention. Usually, the terminology within which they are discussed makes use of marginality and exclusion.

Another criticism of the this literature is that, when looking at the studied of a number of liberal NGOs, academics and publishing circles in the 2000s about the forced displacement in Kurdistan in the 90s, these studies are the discourses of liberal project origin and these discourses are behind the Kurdish issue, which that it is inadequate, shy and denied to see and show the underlying structural political and social reasons (Güney 2009). Such liberal-origin studies, as Jongerden (2012a) points out that focusing on the transformation of cities and the integration problems of the forcibly displaced in new urban environments makes the struggle of people who are separated from the rural space less visible. According to him, the evacuation of villages by burning is not a random reaction and "derivative damage" of the war, on the contrary, is a "part of the anti-insurgency strategy of to their advantage" the military forces to transform the rural areas, which are the battlegrounds (2012a, 87).

Thus, defining a certain ethnic identity as defective with the discourse of underdevelopment and subordinating the development discourse to the state power with certain forms of integration policies are attempts to show the legitimacy and acceptability of the severe human rights violations committed by the state as the perpetrator and the forced migration it causes within the borders of state sovereignty. In this context, when the phenomenon of migration is the subject of discussion, it is seen that classification and describing the areas of sovereignty also reconstructs the whole mobility and living space of a population subject to a new governmentality (Dinc and Ay 2009). An example of this situation is the employment of the immigrant population settled in the perimeter districts (neighbourhoods) of Turkey's metropolises as cheap labour force and the political coding of these districts (neighbourhoods) as marginal regions by the state (Çelik 2005; Saraçoğlu 2009; 2010).

I have tried to summarize above why the state carried out the burning of villages, forests, agricultural and pasture lands as a counter-guerrilla strategy. Another important point to be emphasized here is that thousands of hectares of agricultural land in the region were left uncultivated and unclaimed due to the intense war in the 1990s and forced migration, which led to a significant decline in agricultural economic activities.

Mehmet Gürses's fieldwork with rural communities in Kurdistan meticulously and his analysis of the direct impact of the war on the environmental destruction is an extremely important

study in terms of identifying the state's countermeasures or security measures as the main variable behind the environmental destruction during the war. This study is interesting in that it shows, for example, the correlation of the environmental consequences of the intense war in the 1990s with the extent and degree of support given to the rebellion in the region. According to the study, it is seen that Kurdish settlements (Tunceli-Bingöl), which openly or covertly support the PKK, have been hit harder than the Kurdish settlements (Adıyaman-Malatya) where support is low (2012).

According to Gürses, although the reason why the grain production in the settlements where the war was intense could not be determined exactly depends on certain variables[40], it has determined that the decrease in the number of animals and deforestation rates was higher than in other settlements. The main reason for the decline of animal husbandry is the migration of the rural population and the fact that the immigrants do not return to their villages even after the conflicts are over, which shows that forced evictions have permanent effects on the socio-economic structure of the region (2012, 267).

It should be noted that the foremost motivation behind all these displacement policies in Kurdistan from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the 1990s is the nationalization of space and the nationalization of the population. In other words, trying to carry out an incomplete assimilation process (Turkification) through the transformation of the space or the colonization of the space. Although the geospatial practices of the state in the 1990s indirectly contributed to the Turkification of the Kurds by forcing them to migrate to the big cities, it would be more accurate to say that the ultimate aim of the practices of this period was to transform "a geography intrinsically resistant to state control (nonstate space)" (Scott 2009, 48).

Another basic motivation, again with reference to Scott, with the PKK guerrillas who continue to exist in the mountainous areas of the countryside, which are "historically been an area of refuge from state power" and "zones of insubordination" (2009, 127–32) or as Aysegül Aydin

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[40] According to Gürses, while one of the reasons why the effect of the war on grain production could not be determined is in the absence of data for some provinces in the region, the other one is the different levels of livestock farming even in the provinces where the war was intense, and the unequal results due to the fact that the conflicts are not at the same level everywhere (2012, 261). Another important finding of Gürses in his fieldwork is; the reason why the grain production is not affected by the forced evictions is that the agricultural lands in the villages that were forcibly evacuated are processed by those who accept the village guard duty in the neighbouring villages. While some villagers are not allowed to cultivate agricultural land for 6 years, the granting of such a privilege to the village guards is defined by Gürses as the state rewarding and encouraging those who accept the guard service (2012, 262).

and Cem Emrence called "zones of rebellion" (2015, 52) and providing moral and logistical support to them, is to break the bond between the rural population, which has an ideology that repels the assimilation policies of the state.

The wave of forced migration after the destruction of the city centres as a result of the intense armed conflicts in northern Kurdistan between August 2015 and May 2016 shows that the state violence in the 1990s and its spatial colonization process were not an exception and moreover it shows that the similar processes were repeated in the history of the republic.

4.2. Curfews

Throughout the war that has been going on from the 1990s to the present, occasionally very long curfews have been imposed in northern Kurdistan as a practice of surveillance and control of the population. In the cities where these curfews were imposed, Turkish military forces cut the connection of the settlements with the outside world, committed "unresolved political killings" (TBMM, 1995 cited in Kurban 2020, 137) or the "actor unknown murders"[41] and imposed food embargo and various collective punishments. In this part, the curfews that were intensely re-enforced after the city war that started in the summer of 2015 will be discussed.

The re-implementation of curfews as a phenomenon of violence in the Kurdish geography of the 1990s as a collective punishment method during the city conflicts in August 2015 deserves to be evaluated under a separate chapter, albeit briefly. Because the belief that the human rights violations perpetrated by the security forces will go unpunished under the legal protection of the state (it is referred to as *impunity* in the juristically literature) constitutes an important issue in terms of showing that the state has crossed the borders of biopolitics and necropolitical as in the known sense.

Because the curfews announced for certain periods in the 1990s, according to the report of the Turkish Human Rights Foundation, were applied 381 times in 11 different cities between 16 August 2015 and 1 January 2020, "sine die (leaving the end of the date open) and/or throughout the day (it is foreseen to take 24 hours)" was announced in this way for the first time in the

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[41] See the 1999 Human Rights Watch report on politically motivated killings resulting from the state's war against the Kurdish populations. https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/turkey/turkey993-05.htm. (Accessed: 10.01.2020).

history of Turkey.[42]

While curfews in the 1990s were perceived as an unusual practice applied only during the census days in western Turkey[43], it is an ordinary and normalized collective punishment method that practiced with hundreds of checkpoints exist and those living there are subject to a military permit regime in Kurdistan, where the state of emergency regime was in effect at the same time. Rearrangement of public spaces by delimitation and in the context of human rights violations the curfews are not only a part of the colonization of the space, but also an attempt to "the colonization of minds" (Jamoul 2004, 581 cited in Zureik 2016, 126).

In the interviews conducted within the scope of this dissertation, the interviewees, who made evaluations under the traumatic and psychological effects of the destruction caused by the war process, which started again in the summer of 2015, in both rural and urban spaces in Kurdistan, often refer to the spatial violence practices of the state in the 1990s. The definition of state violence that occurred in the minds of the interviewees who experienced the conflict environment of the 1990s when they were young or as children is "*When we ask what could be worse, it is always being worse*".

> Such long curfews maybe have been seen as rare even in war zones between states. These interdictions take place in rural areas in a way that includes more than one village. An unprecedented form of war has been waged since 2015. The state has done what it wanted to do since 1924 in these last 3-4 years. It has reverted to a policy of total annihilation *(Interview, Felat, Diyarbakir, 09/02/2020)*.

> Compared to the 1990s, they still have the power to do whatever they want. Their awareness of how to intervene in this geography has never changed, it is still the same. Declaring special security zones and curfews remind of those times. But the psychological impact of this period (meaning after 2015) is more than the 1990s. While people were kidnapped and killed by torture at that time, now there are more open and systematic killing practices. They have no boundaries *(Interview, Mazlum, Diyarbakir, 28/10/2020)*.

> In the 1990s, our village was not among the villages that were burned because it was close to the city centre of Lice (Diyarbakir). Since I was a child then, what I learned from the narratives and later oral history studies was this; State violence at that time was more bare violence, that is, it was a period of the "actor unknown murders" that no one knew about and directly burning people's homes. In recent

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[42] Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (Türkiye Insan Haklari Vakfi), *Curfews in Turkey between 16.08.2015-01.01.2020*, https://tihv.org.tr/16-agustos-2015-1-ocak-2020-tarihleri-arasinda-ilan-edilen-sokaga-cikma-yasaklari/. (Accessed: 10.01.2020).

[43] The last curfew was implemented in 2000 in Turkey due to the General Population Census. For the relevant regulation, see:
https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/File/GeneratePdf?mevzuatNo=4082&mevzuatTur=KurumVeKurulusYonetmeligi&mevzuatTertip=5. (Accessed: 10.01.2020).

years, this bared violence has been attempted with the horrifying methods of more strategic war. *(Interview, Seyma, Diyarbakir, 28/10/2020).*

The reason for the traumatic flashback narratives of the interviewees after the city conflicts[44] between 2015 and 2016 is due to the "more spectacular and morbid form of violence" as stated by Banu Bargu in her work called "Another Necropolitics" (2019a, 212). Bargu, referring to Mbembe's "Necropolitic" and Agamben's "bare life" concepts, defines "necropolitical violence" as follows:

> At issue is not the reduction of the living to 'the status of *living dead*' (Mbembe, 2003) but something else altogether: *the dishonouring, disciplining and punishment of the living through the utilisation of the dead as postmortem objects and sites of violence* (Agamben, 1998). Necropolitical violence, then, refers to an entire ensemble of diverse practices that target the dead as a surrogate for, and means of, targeting the living (2019a, 213).

The period between 2015 and 2016 is full of examples of necropolitical violence for the Kurds that will never be erased from their memories. Cemile Cagirga, who was 10 years old after she was shot by snipers in front of her door in Sirnak-Cizre, was kept in the freezer for 3 days and the body was not allowed to be buried.[45] Haci Lokman Birlik, 24, who lost his life after being shot by security forces in Sirnak, was dragged for kilometers after being tied to the back of an armored military vehicle with a rope.[46] Lastly, 57-year-old Taybet Inan, who was shot by snipers on her way home from her neighbour in Sirnak-Silopi, died after being wounded for 20 hours at the place where she was shot, and her dead body remained on the street for 7 days.[47]

Countless examples of such "another necropolitics" violence show that people, who "systematically rendered vulnerable by the presence of surveillance and domination that penetrate all aspects of daily life" (Abujidi 2011, 327) are not only imprisoned at home during

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[44] According to the Turkish Human Rights Foundation Report, it is stated that 1 million 809 thousand people are deprived of their basic human rights.

[45] Asli Zengin, "Cemile Cagirga: A Girl is Freezing Under State Fire", 17.09.2015, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32470. (Accessed: 10.01.2020).

[46] "Young Kurd murdered, dragged on ground by Turkish forces", 05.10.2015, https://sendika.org/2015/10/young-kurd-murdered-dragged-on-ground-by-turkish-forces-297129/. (Accessed: 10.01.2020).

[47] "Turkish 'cleansing' operation rocks southeastern cities", (Reuters), 25.12.2015, http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/12/25/turkishcleansingoperationrockssoutheasterncities.html. (Accessed: 10.01.2020).

the curfews, but also in these exceptional areas, that "going out on the street when they are not allowed to do so results in death, or that there would be records of dead bodies lying on the street and that those records would be buried or erased" (Islekel 2019, 257).

In concluding this part, I dealt with in chapter 3 the discussion of why systematic state violence, where biopolitics and necropolitics are intertwined, should be treated as colonial violence. The regions where curfews are declared for the Kurds are "absolute lawlessness" where the "state of exception and the state of siege" are linked (Mbembe 2003, 16). These areas are where the "exercise of the right to kill" (Mbembe 2003, 31) is used unlimitedly and the "ambition to discipline and subdue the living" (Bargu 2019a, 222) through the dead takes place.

4.3. Village guard system

Although the state is not a monolithic and homogeneous actor in Kurdistan from the past to the present, an indication that its colonial political rationality regarding the Kurds has not changed is the constantly generated state of the emergency regime and the institutional and organizational implementation of state violence. One of the issues that need to be addressed together with the evacuation of settlements and the issue of forced migration is the Village Guard system, which an official paramilitary organization established by the Turkish state by arming civil citizens to ensure public security (Özar et al. 2013). It is important to try to summarize such a historical and important subject, which would be a doctoral dissertation in itself, by using the academic literature written so far, in order to understand what happened in Kurdistan in the 1990s.

Since 1985, the village guard system has been the main strategy of the Turkish state's war against the PKK in Kurdistan. The village guards system, which is mainly composed of Kurds, can be summarized as arming the local people against the PKK in order to justify the surveillance and security in rural areas where there is a conflict (Jongerden 2018; Işık 2020).

The Village Guard System or officially name, temporary and voluntary village guard, is defined as armed villagers established to protect local people from bandits and pillages according to the Village Law No. 442 issued in 1924.[48] Although it was emphasized that this system was unnecessary or ineffective until the 1980s, the village guard system was put into

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[48] Village Guard System, Village Law No. 442, http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.3.442.pdf. (Accessed: 03.09.2019).

operation again with the armed uprising of the PKK. In the early years of the fight against the PKK, guerrillas were identified by the state as a "bunch of marauders" but however, the PKK's receiving significant support by local people in the region due to the denial and suppression of the Kurdish identity of the Turkish State revived the Village Guard system with an additional clause in the Village Law (Essiz 2009).

It is necessary to point out two critical points regarding the village guards. First, the village guards were evaluated as a strategic and instrumental mechanism to assist military personnel in operations against the PKK (such as better recognition of the region from soldiers, speaking the same language as PKK guerrillas, etc.) (Balta Paker 2010). Secondly and most importantly, the majority of the village guards consisted of large feudal and pro-government Kurdish tribes (Işık 2021). The Turkish state wanted to eliminate or at least prevent the sympathy for the PKK in the region by employing these Kurdish families as village guards (Aytar 1992; Özar et al. 2013).

According to Osman Aytar, there are similarities between with these armed groups, known as the Hamidiye Regiments (*Hamidiye Alayları)* during the Ottoman Empire, mostly made up of Kurdish tribes and played a role in suppressing many rebellions in Kurdistan, especially the Armenian Genocide and the paramilitary structure which were formed during the republic period and consisted of Kurdish villagers against the PKK's uprising that under the name of the guard system.[49] Aytar, who called the establishing purpose of these paramilitary organizations as the policy of "use the Kurds against to Kurds", describes the similarity between the Hamidiye Regiments and the Village Guard system;

> After the brutal suppression of uprisings and rebellions, beginning in early 1800's, a perception of "lack of state power" emerged in the public in Kurdistan. It can be argued the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were used as a tool to reinstate the authority of state authority. In the same manner, the village guard system could also be interpreted as a tool to fill the "lack of state power" that would be caused by the guerrilla movement started by the PKK in 1984 (Özar et al. 2013, 33).

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[49] The Hamidiye regiments, whose official name is Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları, (Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments) were irregular militia forces formed from Kurdish tribes in the eastern and southeastern provinces (northern Kurdistan) of the Ottoman Empire. See for a detailed review: Janet Klein (2002), Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (2012).

According to Nesrin Ucarlar, the continuation of the 1980's village guard system not only suggests security solutions of the 1920s to today's conflict period but also shows that neither a political solution was sought for the Kurdish issue, nor an attempt for the economic and social development of Kurdistan. Ucarlar continues to say that;

> …It also means that the political parties in the parliament and the state were benefiting from the tribal system with a clientalist approach and were pursuing a deliberate policy of deepening the existing gaps within the Kurdish society by rendering these tribes an actor in the armed struggle as well…Furthermore, the only meaningful aspect of the village guard system from the point of the state is that instead of weakening the authority and duty of the state that owns the monopoly on violence, it confers a part of the society- specially the part sharing the common demographic and sociological grounds with the organization that it is fighting against- with this authority and duty. The fact that the state's technically more advanced military force and structure was insufficient against the organization's guerrilla tactics and regional domination paved the way for the implementation of the village guard system (Özar et al. 2013, 45).

While the remnants of the security structure of the 1980s continued even today, the Village Guard System was a question of loyalty to the state. Families who did not accept village guards were forcibly displaced and Village Guards also benefited from the culture of impunity, which legitimized military practices in the region by engaging in many illegal activities, such as confiscation of displaced villagers' homes, involvement in the "actor unknown murders", drug and gun smuggling.[50]

Volunteering of local tribes in the region for Village Guards was an appropriate tool for expanding and securing their influence in the region by receiving state support. It was also seen as a good source of income in an economically underdeveloped region. Between 1985 and 2009, 123,000 village guards served in 22 provinces. According to the data given by the Ministry of Interior in 2009, this number was 71 thousand, while the number of permanent village guards was 52.395 and the number of volunteer village guards was 19.912.[51]

The Village Guard system, which is the state's violence and threat apparatus, which was established for a temporary period and based on voluntary participation, became permanent in Kurdistan as a paramilitary structure during the ongoing war between the Turkish state and the

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[50] See for a detailed report of human rights violations by village guards between January 1990 and March 2009: https://www.ihd.org.tr/images/pdf/ocak_1990_mart_2009_koy_koruculari_ozel_raporu.pdf. (Accessed: 03.09.2019).

[51] SETA Report: Turkey's Security Landscape in 2019, https://setav.org/en/assets/uploads/2019/02/SETA-SECURITY-RADAR-2019.pdf. (Accessed: 03.09.2019).

PKK. As will be seen in the next section, the recruitment of village guards as "security guards" to protect the built security dams (HPPs) and their active participation in tree cutting demonstrates that their role as a state strategy to colonize the space is effective.

The main motivations of geospatial policies in the 1990s, which I have tried to present a general framework in this section, to detach all kinds of relations that people had with their own culture and language from the Kurdish geography, continue in the 2000s and are called the "depopulation project of the region" by the local population. In the last part, I will discuss how a despotic power, together with private capital groups, in today's Kurdistan, a colonization process based on destroying space or geography through infrastructure projects, takes place through HPP constructions, forest fires and *Kalekols*, in the light of ethnographic data.

5. Colonization of Kurdish geography in the 2000s

In order to understand the Turkish state's colonial practices in northern Kurdistan from the lens of Michael Mann's conceptualization of despotic and infrastructural power, in this section I will analyse the role of hydroelectric power plants (HPPs), wildfires/forest fires and high-security military checkpoints (*Kalekol*), as well their interaction. The latter in particular contributes a novel perspective to the literature and facilitates a new reading of colonialism. I aim to show how social and spatial engineering strategies, which aim to control space and population and even change the demographic structure in the region, are used as a central tool by looking at the infrastructural projects of the Turkish state.

In addition, I argue that the state can be interpreted with conceptual abstraction when looking at the large infrastructural projects, the ways they constitute a geopolitical mission and the kind of outcomes they have. I will examine the geospatial policies implemented in northern Kurdistan by the AKP government, which has held state power since 2002, with the concepts of despotic power and infrastructural power theorized by Michael Mann.

Finally, the relationship of colonial governmentality of Turkish state with these despotic and infrastructural power-based infrastructure projects and military security policies which aimed at consuming the resources of the Kurdish geography, destroying its ecology day by day and reducing the population of the region, is examined in the context of their historical, cultural and political environment.

While discussing the causes and consequences of the destructive and irreversible interventions and policies of the state towards the ecology and space of a particular territory, a comprehensive state analysis of what the state is will not be made here. Unlike the Weberian definition of ideal state as a central bureaucratic institution in which political relations spread from the centre to the periphery and has the legitimacy to use physical violence and "the monopoly of authoritative binding rule making" ([1984] Mann 2003, 53), Joel S. Migdal's definition seems more appropriate to today's conjuncture. As Migdal defined, the state "is a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory, and (2) the actual practices of the multiple parts" (2001, 15–16).

Wendy Brown's definition of state may be helpful to understand what Migdal meant by multiple parts:

> Despite the almost unavoidable tendency to speak of the state as an "it" the domain we call the state is not a thing, a system or subject, but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices, cohabiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with one another (1995, 174).

As Timothy Mitchell argues that "the phenomenon we name 'the State' arises from techniques that enable mundane material practices to take on the appearance of an abstract, non-material form" (2006, 170). These material practices include the construction of infrastructures in public and military forms (such as public buildings, roads, dams, military post, checkpoints etc.), control of space and population (Scott 1998; Niewöhner 2015), infrastructural violence (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012) and laws, treaties, and regulations (Meehan 2014). Based on these material practices, the state emerges as structuring within the political practice (Abrams 1988). According to Philip Abrams "the idea of state has considerable political reality (…) and it can be understood as the device in terms of which subjection is legitimated; and as an ideological thing it can actually be shown to work like that" (1988, 68).

Michael Mann calls the forms of power that make up the modern state power as the "IEMP model" and states that social power actually consists of four fundamental sources, "ideological power, economic power, military power and political power" (1993, 6–7). For Mann these four different sources of power "generate overlapping, intersecting networks of power relations with different sociospatial boundaries and dynamics; and their interrelations produce unanticipated, emergent consequences for power actors" (Mann 1993, 9–10).

Arguing that political power means state power, Mann points out that it consists of despotic power and infrastructural power in itself (1993, 9). According to Mann, despotic power refers to "the distributive power of state elites over civil society" and it derives from "the range of actions which the state elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups" (1993, 59; 2003, 54). Infrastructural power refers to "the institutional capacity of a central state, despotic or not, to penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm" (Mann 1993, 59; 2003, 54).

Mann, who schematizes these two independent dimensions of state power (despotic power and infrastructural power) in their relations to ideal state types such as feudal, imperial, bureaucratic and authoritarian with historical examples and notes that states in capitalist democracies are despotically weak but infrastructural strong ([1984] 2003, 55). However, Mann, who later reinterpreted the conceptualization of infrastructural power, said that infrastructural power is a two-way street, and that in today's modern states, in the context of political power relations, it is not only possible for the state to transform civil society through certain institutions, but at the same time, despite the autonomy of the state, it is possible to control and transform the state (2008, 356).

In this context, and given the change of modern states over time, Mann suggests a revision of his two-dimensional typology (1993), where authoritarian regimes were replaced by term "single party" (2008, 357). This revised classification was driven by the examples of the Soviet Union and the Chinese communist party. This conceptualization seems very appropriate in terms of understanding the regime the Turkish state has evolved to, as well as its despotic and infrastructural power.

Despotic Power	Infrastructural Power	
	Low	High
Low	Feudal	Democracy
High	Imperial	Single-party

Source: Mann, Michael. "Infrastructural Power Revisited", (2008).

As can be seen from the table, both despotic power and infrastructural power must be at a high level for the single-party government to maintain its existence in a stable way. A similar distinction to Mann's analysis of dual power is made by Merje Kuus and John Agnew, under the conceptualization of "sovereignty regimes" as "the relative strength of the central state authority (state despotic power) and its relative consolidation in state territoriality (state infrastructural power)" (2008, 103).

Kuus and Agnew (2008, 104) stated that in studies on political geography, it is necessary to ask questions about how state power is discursively and practically produced and how it is operationalized spatially, rather than the definition and scope of state sovereignty in general and universal terms. The authors, who call the sovereignty regime that combines these two distinctions as "classic", have mentioned that this type of regime is the one closest to the definitions of absolute state sovereignty, as follows;

> The sense is one of despotic and infrastructural power still largely deployed within a bounded state territory (even if increasingly dependent on foreign direct investment and overseas markets for its exports) and a high degree of effective central state political authority. (2008, 103).

How the Turkish nation-state has exercised or failed to exercise its despotic and infrastructural power in northern Kurdistan in certain periods from its establishment to the present requires comprehensive research on its own. A comprehensive comparative study of the single-party period in the founding years of the republic (1923-1945) or the Kemalist regime and the AKP government of the last 20 years (since 2002) will be an extremely important study, especially when taking into account the neutralization of the multi-party regime or the parliamentary democracy system and its transformation into an authoritarian or one-man regime since 2015. However here, a brief comparison can be made about how both single-party governments have used their despotic and infrastructural power in their approach towards the Kurds.

In his article on the nation-state formation process in Turkey between 1920 and 1960, Harun Ercan (2009) discusses forms resistance and social transformation in northern Kurdistan and describes how the Turkish state's potential for despotic power was always high during the single-party period when Kurdish upheavals were suppressed without the need for any consensus with the society in Kurdistan and the instruments of violence were monopolized within its borders. The infrastructural power however he states, remained rather weak in the process of integrating the Kurds into social life by means of Turkification. In this period, although the infrastructural power manifested itself through the construction of railways, the extraction of mines, the creation of an industrial infrastructure that will enable the processing of these mines, the partially and selectively constructed highways and the investments made in the agriculture-farming sector, Ercan well puts forward that these investments were "precisely selectively shaped on the axis of benefit for security and economic" (2009, 30).

It can be argued that since the mid-2000s together with the AKP government, by looking at the state's impact on the daily and social life in northern Kurdistan, the Turkish state upholds a dual power that is both high in despotic power and in the infrastructural power it needs for implementation. So much so that Adaman and Akbulut state that the AKP government has had an element of authoritarianism from the very beginning and its intensity continues to increase exponentially (2021, 282).

Tim Jacoby (2004), who extensively analyses Michael Mann's theorization of social power in the case of Turkey from a historical perspective, examines the "aggressive modernist nationalism" that settled in Turkey with three military coups between the 1960s and 1980s and the effects of military elites on civil politics. He states that the influence of military elites on civilian politics has emerged as a "bifurcated regime" that has led to remarkable differences between the south-eastern Anatolian region (Kurdish geography) and the rest of Turkey (Jacoby 2004, 3). While a "semi-authoritarian", "militarist/industrial complex" regime dominated the regions outside northern Kurdistan, a more "autocratic-militarist" regime governed by permanent state of emergency laws emerged in northern Kurdistan on the grounds that this region poses a threat to national security due to its resistant topography and unique political culture (Jacoby 2004, 179–80).

As summarized in chapter 4 of the thesis, the radical social engineering policies based on violence and forced migration that were implemented by the "autocratic-military" regime in the 1920s and 1930s, without any "institutional compromise" (Jacoby 2004, 148) with the Kurds, were redesigned during the 1990s as a matter of national security threatened by terrorism. The AKP, which came to power in 2002 and emerged from an (Islamic) front that the military tutelage perceived as a threat to the Kemalist state regime, ignored the ethno-political nature of the Kurdish issue to strengthen its own political position and maintain its power. The AKP negotiated the Kurdish issue with a reformist approach and within a controllable security paradigm.

While this reformist approach manifested itself in the form of democratization steps that developed with the process of harmonization with the European Union and were mostly limited within the framework of cultural rights, and a peace processes that was initiated to end the war, two legal Kurdish political parties that were founded in response to the political demands of

the Kurds were closed in 2003 and 2009[52], its members banned from politics and imprisoned, indicative of the state's controlled security paradigm. Also, despite temporary ceasefires, the ongoing war with the PKK continued in this period. Further, infrastructural projects such as hydroelectric dam constructions, forest fires and Kalekol constructions, which I will cover in more detail in the following sections, and military security policies were most intensely implemented during the AKP period.

Without attempting a long historical analysis of how the AKP determined and impacted the legal frameworks and a national security understanding of Turkey's political system in line with its own political needs in the past 20 years (Özpek 2019, 44), the Kurdish issue was negotiated by the AKP as a survival manoeuvre, especially whenever its political power was weakened. In such cases the AKP government demonstrated a flexibility to implement policies of the past authoritarian regimes (Burç and Tokatlı 2020). It can be said that the government has returned to the state's founding settings with regards to the policies implemented towards the Kurds and with the transition to a "presidential system alla Turca" (Tokatli 2020), especially after the establishment of the ruling coalition with the ultra-right-wing and nationalist party (in Turkish; Milliyetci Hareket Partisi-MHP) in the aftermath of 2015.

Although Murat Somer states that the authoritarianism peculiar to the AKP period, which he calls the "new authoritarian regime", has more mass support, unlike previous authoritarian regimes, and paradoxically has the potential for both repression and democratization in the long run (2016, 483) the appointments of trustees to and the seizing of Kurdish municipalities in 2016 and 2019, the imprisonment of elected mayors and elected parliamentarians of the legal political party HDP, and finally, the discourses and practices of the Erdogan government to close and criminalize HDP, are some examples to show that the argument about democratization cannot be supported from the perspective of the Kurds.

In this section I focus on the unequal, multifaceted and multi-actor relationship of the Turkish state with the Kurdish geography and the Kurds, to show how, in the context of colonial governmentality, the 20-year-period of AKP rule is different from the geo-spatial policies of the 1990s given the increasing opportunities of infrastructural power. I emphasize that since the mid-2000s, the increasing technology based hydro and military infrastructural projects of

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[52] "History repeats itself: Turkey seeks closure of a pro-Kurdish party - yet again", 18.03.2021, https://www.institutkurde.org/info/history-repeats-itself-turkey-seeks-closure-of-a-pro-kurdish-party-yet-agai-1232552003. (Accessed: 15.10.2021).

neoliberal domestic and foreign private capital are indexed to the conflict in Kurdistan and put forward the colonial political rationality of the Turkish state as the main agent in plundering the ecology of Kurdistan.

Before examining the HPPs in northern Kurdistan, it would be appropriate to discuss that South-eastern Anatolian Project (SAP)[53], which was built as a huge infrastructural project that has been evaluated by many academics (Özok-Gündoğan 2005; Jongerden 2010; Bilgen 2018a; 2018b) as one of the main policies implemented by the Turkish State for the solution of the Kurdish issue.

5.1. South-Eastern Anatolian Project (SAP) and Kurdish issue

The South-eastern Anatolia Project (SAP) is one of the largest development projects in the world. With its 75,193 km² of surface area and 10.9 million people, the SAP region continues to constitute around 9.7 % of the total surface and population in Turkey and it is being populated mostly by the Kurds (GAP-BKI 2020, 9). The SAP project was initiated in the 1970s as a technical project for the construction of 22 (19 of which are completed as of today) dams and 19 HPPs of various sizes on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, primarily for power generation and irrigation of 1.8 million hectares of arid land and also the project, in order to plan and manage water resources in Turkey was carried out by the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works, which was established in 1954 (GAP-BKI 2020, 2–4).

In the state discourse, Northern Kurdistan (the eastern and south-eastern Anatolia regions of Turkey) is described as "backward" or "underdeveloped" (Özok-Gündoğan 2005, 95) in socio-economic terms and with "ignorance" (Akıncı et al. 2020) in socio-cultural terms, reducing the Kurdish issue to an issue of "under-development" (Harris 2008; Jongerden 2010; Bilgen 2018b). In this sense, the underlying logic of SAP, which has been going on for the last 40 years and has transformed from a "mainly infrastructural and economic development oriented project into a sustainable and human development-oriented project" (Bilgen 2018b, 151) is to solve the Kurdish issue and ethnic conflicts based on the idea of eliminating regional inequalities, "integrating the Kurds into Turkey's socio-economic fabric" (Warner 2008, 279) and developing energy, increasing agricultural yield and industry (Harris 2012; Akbulut et al. 2018).

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[53] Southeastern Anatolia Project (in Turkish, Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi-GAP) is a large-scale damming and water diversion project in the upper Tigris and Euphrates basin.
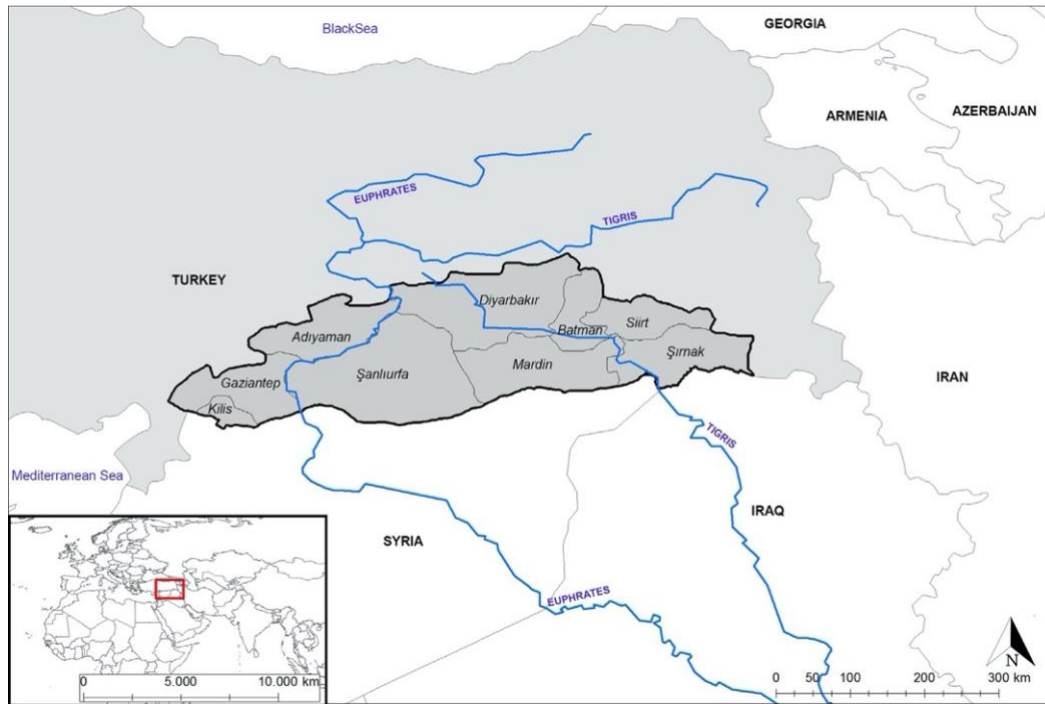
Map 1: Map of the SAP /GAP region[54]

In this context, I will briefly discuss the political mission of the SAP project in Kurdistan, where the state is the main actor in planning and financing, before moving on to the hydroelectric power plant (HPP) process, in which the right to use water is privatized for companies and the financing and responsibility of hydraulic infrastructure projects are transferred to private market actors.

The situation that led to Kurdistan remaining as an underdeveloped region is the insistence of the Turkish state to create a modern-unitary Turkishness space and are the reasons for the emergence of the Kurdish issue which is in a dialectical relationship with the Turkish state's colonial practices (Harris 2008). By ignoring the ethnopolitical essence of the Kurdish issue, addressing the issue as a problem of economic backwardness, like civilization discourse, in other words "by turning the focus from the ideological struggle to technocracy" (Vento 2017, 80) has led to spread a populist discourse (such as modernisation and development) that banned ideological discussion (Özok-Gündoğan 2005; Harris 2012).

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[54] Spread over nine provinces in the southeast of Turkey (Adıyaman, Batman, Diyarbakır, Antep, Kilis, Siirt, Urfa, Mardin, and Şırnak), it envisages the construction of 22 dams, 19 power plants and hundreds of kilometres of irrigation canals. Map Source: Joan-Cristian Padró Garcia from the Geography Department of the Autonomous University of Barcelona cited in (Akıncı et al. 2020).

The Kurdish identity, which was depicted as pre-modern, humiliated, excluded and denied, has fitted tremendously with the SAP's modernizing and civilizing mission as a regional development project (Harris 2008; Akıncı et al. 2020). In this respect, as Leila M. Harris (2008) emphasized that the SAP project represents an aggressive modernization vision placed in northern Kurdistan. Compared to the rest of the country, this region (South-eastern Anatolia region and indeed the Eastern Anatolia region too) is depicted as;

> undermines Turkish 'unity' (due to continuing separatist challenges from Kurdish factions) its 'modernity' (due to perceived excesses of Turkish state violence and repression, as well as economic disarticulation and associations with gender regressive practices) and 'Westernness' (as the poorest, most 'traditional', and among the most religious regions) (2008, 1707).

As Akıncı et al., stated that in the discursive analysis of official documents that they meticulously examined;

> GAP creates domination over the region through design as a particular form of power-knowledge. In the same way that Mbembe (2001) argues that Africa is presented in the Western imagination as an absent object, the power of the Turkish state in and/or over the region is constructed around the notion of "backwardness" or "under- development" (2020, 186).

By synthesizing the "power-knowledge" and the "sociology of absence" approaches in the official discourse analysis of the GAP region, the scholars identify "how the Turkish state's design of the region is constructed on exclusions, bans, denials, and rejections as well as it is based on knowledge and power" (Akıncı et al. 2020, 182).

In order to understand how the SAP project was designed "as a project region on the basis of erasure" (Akıncı et al. 2020, 187), it may be enough to give an example of Ilisu dam project, which was included in the scope of the SAP project in 1982 and started to be built in 1997. Environmental activist Agit Özdemir, expresses his observations that the Ilısu Dam, which was built on Hasankeyf[55], a historical, natural and archaeological site with a history of

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[55] According to the initiative to keep Hasankeyf alive, it is stated that the number of people who will be affected by the flooding of all or part of 199 settlements and who will be forced to migrate is 78 thousand. Considering that in addition to this number, three thousand nomadic (koçer) families will be adversely affected by the construction of this dam, it is estimated that the number will reach one hundred thousand. See more detail, Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive, 11 September 2017, Avaliable at: https://www.hasankeyfgirisimi.net/ilisu-projesi-nedir/ (Accessed: 23 Oktober 2020). Also, see the documentary made with the residents of several villages which submerged by the Ilısu Dam. News and Fiction by Metin Yoksu, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RtoyICykCU. 07.04.2021.

approximately 12 thousand years (Ahunbay and Balkiz 2009; Aykan 2018) that it does not leave a habitat for the future besides it caused the enormous ecological destruction in Kurdistan as follow;

> 314 square kilometres, 199 settlements – including Hasankeyf district, four towns, 95 villages – will be submerged. Among the places to be submerged are the villages that were forcibly evacuated in the 1990s. When a village that was burned down in the 1990s is now submerged, it will come to a point of complete no return. In fact, the people who have been displaced by oppression and forcibly are completely dispossessing their hopes of returning to their homeland (Özdemir 2020).

As Mitchell emphasized, dams were powerful and political tools not only for generating electricity and irrigating farmland but also for building nation-states (2002, 44). As with other large dam projects, the SAP focuses on nationalistic images of the state as "a rational centre of expertise and policy-making" (Mitchell 2002, 233) in terms of scale and engineering. The technocratic discourse of the Turkish state, which has colonial features, especially in the construction of large infrastructural projects, is based on the idea of progress and growth of the high modernist and nationalist ideology, which is generally associated with the materiality and splendour of physical structures that require great technology (Harris 2008; Moore 2013). As Bengi Akbulut points out that;

> The history of the republic is indeed marked with narratives that portray economic growth as the collective interest of the Turkish society, whose achievement is an arduous task that requires a unified nation and whose benefits are going to elevate all Turkish citizens (2019, 519).

Large-scale infrastructural projects also contribute to the formation of a strong colonial development expertise regime (Moore 2013), as the development approach of state is reduced to "a linear improvement that involves a process of evolution from lower stages of human conditions towards higher stages" (Leys 1996 cited in Akıncı et al. 2020, 182). Aaron Stephen Moore, in his study in which the Japanese imperial administration, which assumed the role of "modernizer of Asia", built the Sup'ung dam on the Yalu River during the China-Japan war, examines how the technocratic regime created by legitimizing the discourse of "scientific Japan" actually functions as "a despotic colonial power system" (2013, 116). In the case of Turkey, the GAP, which aims to develop the Kurdish geography, is evaluated in the context of "internal colonization" (Jongerden 2007; Warner 2008).

Map 2: Area affected by the Ilısu Dam Project (Source: Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive, 2017).

The state's goal of transforming the SAP region by integrating it into national and international markets gained momentum in the 1980s. Arda Bilgen, stated that the transfer of SAP from the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works to the State Planning Organization, which was established in 1960, provided the expansion and restructuring of the focus and scope of the project (2018a, 99). According to Bilgen, this change led to the expansion of the focus and scope of the SAP in the 1980s and its reformulation "as a multi-sectoral and integrated project" (2018a, 99; 2018b). From the second half of the 1980s, with the neoliberal transformation of the Turkish political economy, the reformulation of the SAP, opening the project to domestic and foreign investments, which has prepared a suitable ground for a neoliberal political mind that transforms every part of the region into a construction area and aims to build dams on all existing rivers (Adaman et al. 2017; Akbulut et al. 2018).

Akbulut et al. argued that although the planning, construction and operation of hydro-infrastructure projects went through various waves of liberalization that began in the early 1980s, it "remained a prominent practice under the orchestration and control of the state until the mid-2000s" (2018, 97). In addition to this argument, Adaman et.al elsewhere stated that the projects deepening gradually with the neoliberal/authoritarian policies together with the

AKP government as of the 2000s show a continuity in the transformation of Turkey's political economy and the state should not be perceived as a static entity (Adaman et al. 2016).

The politicization of dam construction and the use of water as a political threat in the inter-state conjuncture in the Middle East is well known due to the political crises in the past. When looking at the relationship between SAP and the Kurdish issue, the Turkish state signed agreements with the Iraqi State in 1984 and with the Syrian State in 1987 to ensure that 500 cubic meters of water flow per second (cubic meters) will be provided to these countries (M. Aydin and Ereker 2009). As a condition of the agreement, the Turkish state demanded that the activities of the PKK and other radical left organizations within the borders of the Syrian state be terminated. Ultimately, the use of water as a strategy to repress the Syrian state was successful and contributed to leave the country the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who has been working in Syria since 1979 (Jongerden 2010).

When the region covered by the SAP, which I have tried to summarize briefly, considered as "hydrosocial territories", as defined by Rutgerd Boelens et.al that are "socially, naturally and politically constituted spaces that are (re)created through the interactions amongst human practices, water flows, hydraulic technologies, biophysical elements, socio-economic structures and cultural-political institutions" (2016, 1). Large-scale dams and as will be seen in next chapter HPPs, built as concrete representations of the state's ideals of modernization, appear as "a singular process of creative destruction that changed 'natural' and urban landscapes irrevocably" (Kaika 2006, 277). In other words, SAP is designed to flood a "geography of production" (Akıncı et al. 2020, 187) which has spatial, political and socio-cultural dimensions that is desired to be destroyed in an irreversible way.

Different groups of people in hydro-social territories are affected differently "by the processes of inclusion and exclusion, development and marginalization" (Boelens et al. 2016, 2) and the daily production of the environment in which they live, although not always in the way they envisage, plan or desire. Therefore, "territory is not external to the society that formed it, but rather is its substance, it also embodies the contradictions, conflicts and struggles of that society" (Baletti 2012, 578). In this context, in the following sections, the effects of despotic and infrastructural power-based geo-spatial policies towards the colonization and depopulation of the Kurdistan geography will be analysed in the context of historical, cultural, and political environments in the view of ethnographic data.

5.2. HPPs (Hydroelectric Power Plants)

This section will discuss the relation between a political economy evaluation of the construction of hydroelectric power plants (HPPs) in Northern Kurdistan and colonial governmentality. Since the mid-2000s, with the AKP (Justice and Development Party) coming to power, the period in which the "state effect" (Mitchell 1991 cited in Harris 2012, 26) in dam constructions decreased relatively and state-sponsored private equity companies turned to energy investment areas, is called the neoliberal development period under the AKP rule (Aksu et al. 2016; Adaman et al. 2017). HPPs, the number of which exceeds thousands in Kurdistan and other regions of Turkey, come to the fore both with social struggles against dam constructions and with ecological damages caused by the interventions made to nature and space.

While these hydro power plants can be considered as a continuation of the SAP (Southeastern Anatolian Project in Turkish Güneydogu Anadolu Projesi-GAP) in Kurdistan, I argue that the purpose behind is geopolitically different from the HPPs built in other regions of Turkey. This hypothesis is supported by interviews conducted during my ethnographic field study.

As in the other two cases of my thesis, wildfires/forest fires and high security military checkpoints, the ethnographic study, which was desired to be carried out in cities where HPPs construction was intensive, could not be continued. This was the result of entrenchment of authoritarianism since 2015, which not only interrupted my on-site field work but also rendered ethnographic work on (re)securitized topics such as the Kurdish issue dangerous for both the researcher and his/her respondents (I discuss this in the methodology section of the thesis in more detail). Therefore, these interviews were conducted remotely. The central research aim behind the semi-structured interviews was an inquiry into the state-society relationship and how the local people in the region understand and experience the interventions in their everyday lives and space in Kurdistan.

With the beginning of the 20th century, the management of large-scale hydroelectric production and irrigation projects by undertaking the role of developing the water resources of the state's due to various national goals, emerged the "hydraulic bureaucracy"[56] (the General Directorate

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[56] Hans-Dieter Evers and Simon Benedikter, based on Karl Augustin Wittfogel's concept of "hydraulic society", argue that "in water-based societies and economies the necessity to regulate water through hydraulic management has created strong centralised hydraulic state bureaucracies, which hold considerable power over how to utilise nature as a means of production, namely water and land for agriculture" (2009, 419).

of State Hydraulic Works -DSI) in Turkey in 1953 as in many other countries (Molle et al. 2009). However, with the neoliberal transformation of the national energy sector and water management and technological innovations made "large-scale water resources development possible and desirable" (Molle et al. 2009, 333) and public and private capital investments on dams have emerged other water bureaucracies (in the case of Turkey, such as the Turkish Electricity Authority (TEK) in 1970 (Baskan 2011).

Considering the many legal regulations on hydro-energy in Turkey as of the beginning of the 2000s and the neoliberal restructuring of the energy markets, it can be said that the "state effect" has decreased relative to the fact that private capital has begun to enter energy investment areas such as HPPs and thermal power plants. (Eberliköse 2013; Adaman et al. 2016; Erensü 2016).

In the neoliberalization process, which can be defined as the minimization of the state's existence and the transfer of public resources to the private sector in many areas, the relative decrease of the "state effect" not considered as disappearance of the active role of the state against capital, rather deemed as the reorganization of the state through private capital on a national and local scale (Peck and Tickell 2002; Brenner 2004). In other words, the state does not weaken, on the contrary, it provides the state with different and new means of using power (Erensü 2016; 2017; Adaman et al. 2017a). In this sense, the dual power of the state, which Michael Mann describes as despotic and infrastructural power (2003; 2008), can also be read as the state-private capital partnership that is evident in the AKP period after the 2000s.

Erik Swyngedouw (2017, 260), who calls this network of relationships, in which economic and political interests are tightly intertwined, "Turkey-style neoliberalization" summarizes the political economy of Turkey, which has evolved into another form with the AKP, as follows;

> The state-orchestrated and state-led production of large-scale urban development projects have indeed been pivotal to fuel Turkey's growth while the economic-financial and political interests were tightly woven together in what cannot be termed other than a symbiotic state-capital oligarchy, leading to the accelerated making of a plutocratic kleptocracy basking in a crony network of extended family ties and nepotistic relations. Here again, the key and autocratic (if not authoritarian) role of the state in opening space, dispossession land and natures, imposing or changing land-use, etc… points at how the political terrain and its top-down imposition of market rule is absolutely vital for the 'free market' to operate (Swyngedouw 2017, 258–59).

Although the involvement of market actors in the use and management of water in Turkey was enabled by the Electricity Market Law of 2001, the transfer of the tenure rights of public natural resources to private companies through agreements between the state and the private sector faced legal obstacles on the grounds that it was against the public interest (Baskan 2011; Scheumann et al. 2011). However, the AKP government took a "revolutionary step in the hydroelectric sector" by enacting the Law No. 5346 on the Use of Renewable Energy Resources for the Purpose of Electric Power Generation, which came into force in May 2005, and through this law, put into effect the "purchase guarantee" principle that guarantees the purchase of a company's service by the state (Baskan 2011, 85). In addition to this feed-in tariff method, another method that facilitates the private sector in energy investments by the reorganization of the laws is the urgent expropriation procedure.

HPPs built in Turkey and northern Kurdistan are defined as "river type facilities" established to generate electrical energy.[57] HPPs are structures that create a water reservoir by damming in front of the stream and are different from large dams, with or without storage, in the way they are built.[58] Although large water infrastructures called in Turkish "Baraj" have purposes such as electricity generation, irrigation water for agricultural lands, drinking water supply and protection from floods, HPPs are built only for electricity generation (Erensü 2017; Mulvaney 2020).

According to the data published by the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (in Turkish Devlet Su İşleri Genel Müdürlügü-DSI) in December 2018; Turkey and Northern Kurdistan Hydroelectric Plant, built in general (HPPs) is the total number of 638. 67 of these were built by DSI between 1956-2017. Between 1924 and 2017, 571 HPPs were built by the Private Sector. Apart from these numbers, the number of dams built between the years 1936-2017 is 140. According to DSI, water structures having a height of 30 meters or more from the foundation are called dams. When we look at the number of HPPs built in the cities of northern Kurdistan (completed, in active), this number is 136. 113 of these were built by the Private Sector.[59]

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[57] https://cdniys.tarimorman.gov.tr/api/File/GetGaleriFile/425/DosyaGaleri/1010/172.pdf?layout=modal (Accessed: 21.07.2020).

[58] "Eastern Black Sea Region HPP Technical Trip Report" (in Turkish, Dogu Karadeniz Bölgesi HES Teknik Gezi Raporu), August 2011, https://www.emo.org.tr/ekler/45a43a1706a8faf_ek.pdf. (Accessed: 21.07.2020).

[59] These figures are taken from the 2018 annual reports of DSI. Available at: https://cdniys.tarimorman.gov.tr/api/File/GetFile/425/KonuIcerik/759/1107/DosyaGaleri/dsi-2018-faaliyet-raporu.pdf (Accessed on 15.03.2019).
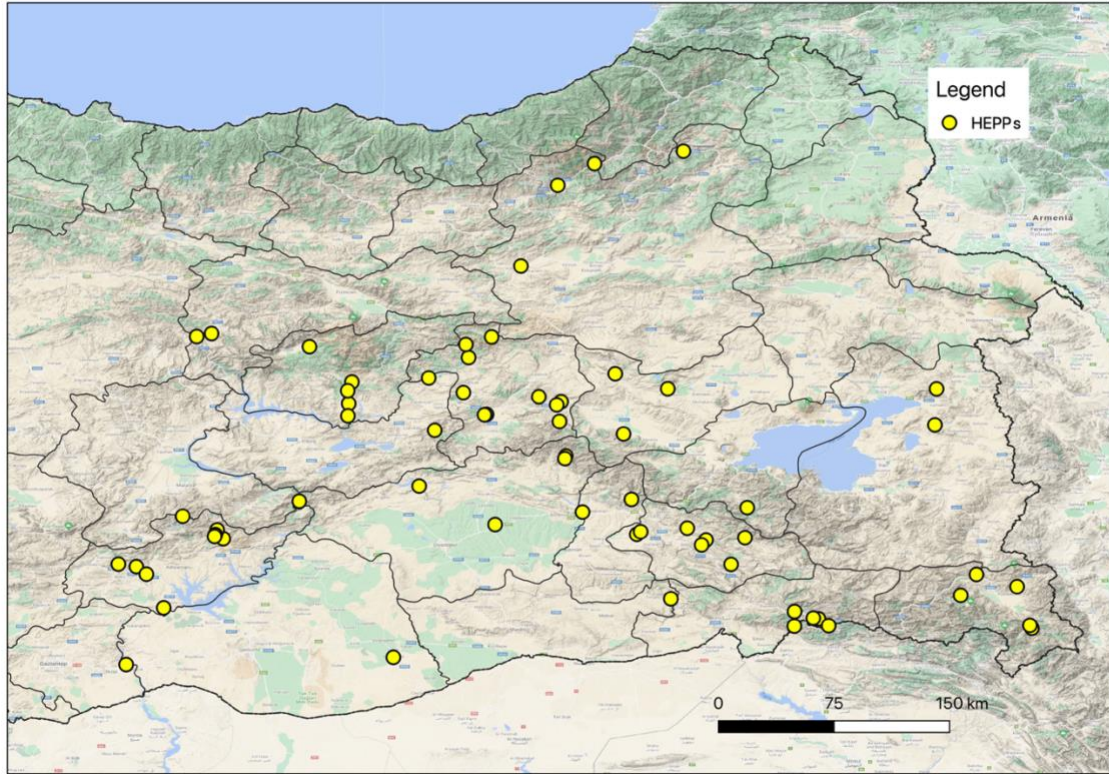
Map 3: Spanning area and density of HPPs in northern Kurdistan

Of course, it would be appropriate to look analytically at the possible consequences of the various processes and power effects involved in the formation of these hydro-infrastructural projects. Two key concepts are important in the process of HPP projects in Turkey and Kurdistan. The first is to transfer the right to use water and all the conditions for the creation of hydraulic infrastructure to free market actors, that is, the privatization of water by the state for companies with private capital. The second is the dispossession of the property or land in the hands of the local people by the state in line with the demand of these private companies,

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It should be noted that it is not always possible to reach realistic and up-to-date figures on HPPs built in Turkey and Kurdistan. One of the reasons for this is the frequent changes in detailed regulations regarding the licensing and construction processes of HPPs constructions, while another reason is the incomplete and complex data arising from the dispersed division of labour among the institutions. Large dams are not included in the figures I have given here, and are based on the annual reports published by the State Hydraulic Works (DSI) every year. When I looked at the web page of DSI in order to give the latest up-to-date data during the thesis writing process, it was observed that access to the website was sometimes not possible. The latest updated data accessed, according to the 2020 annual report of DSI, is as follows: The number of HPPs in operation is 714, the number of HPPs under construction is 37, and the number of HPPs that are at the project stage, which has not been started yet, is 493. Thus, the targeted number of active HPPs by 2023 is 1244. 1.132 of this total targeted number are projects that have been and will be carried out by the private sector. Available at: https://cdniys.tarimorman.gov.tr/api/File/GetFile/425/KonuIcerik/759/1107/DosyaGaleri/DS%C4%B0%202020 -yili-faaliyet-raporu.pdf (Accessed on: 12.05.2021).

that is, their expropriation by directly confiscating them (Swyngedouw 2005; 2006; Yılmaz 2009; Islar 2012; Kaya 2016).

Privatization as described by Erik Swyngedouw, "a process through which activities, resources, and the like, which had not been formally privately owned, managed or organized, are taken away from whoever or whatever owned them before and transferred to a new property configuration that is based on some form of "private" ownership or control" (2005, 82). The privatization of water, again by referring to Swyngedouw's definition;

> centrally the transfer of ownership of water, infrastructure, and the like from the public sector, from local ownership or control, from forms of collective or socialised ownership to often globally organised private water companies (2006, 46).

Electricity Market Law No. 4628 dated 2001 in Turkey gives private companies the right to lease the usage rights of streams for hydroelectric generation for 49 years.[60] According to Mine Islar (2016), the privatization process of hydroelectricity violates the right to water in three ways: Firstly, in terms of its impact on future generations, secondly, the deterioration of the natural environment by physically changing the river basin and deprivation of water of the local people who benefit from this environment, and third, the redefinition of laws and policies in order to overcome the obstacles that may arise in the process of privatized hydroelectricity and complete its development (2016, 139).

Although it is tried to create a perception with relatively positive aspects such as providing drinking water, generating electricity, and creating irrigation resources for agricultural lands in the places where dams and irrigation canals are built, local narratives say the opposite. Such large or small scale hydraulic-infrastructures, as Swyngedouw points out that "not only radically change earlier flows of water (and their uses) but also produces new uses, new structures of access, and new forms of water distribution" (2006, 12). According to Islar (2012), while the interventions made in natural rivers for irrigation or energy production are examples of "water grabbing" (Matthews 2012; Franco et al. 2013; Dell'Angelo et al. 2018) these interventions are also an "act of dispossession" that prevents local communities' right to access and use the rivers.

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[60] "Electricity Market Law" (in Turkish, Elektirik Piyasasi Kanunu), https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.4628.pdf (Accessed: 15.05.2020).

An important reality behind the act of dispossession carried out through hydro-infrastructural projects is the characteristics of the financial agreements in transforming the technical function of these projects into an economic one (Mbembe 2001). In other words, it is the role of transferring the income obtained by using public resources to "private hands" (Mbembe and Roitman 1995 cited in Larkin 2018, 176).

Another reality that is ignored during all the construction and operation phases of these projects is the rights of the local population and the damage to natural and wild habitats. For example, although the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process is "the only institutionalized instrument in Turkey that allows for direct participation of the public in dam decision-making" in the HPPs construction processes in Turkey and Kurdistan, as a mechanism that is mostly operated after the planning and construction of projects is completed, contrary to popular belief, it is a not powerful tool to protect the social environment and nature (Scheumann et al. 2011, 143).

Although a mechanism called public participation meeting is mentioned in the legislation for projects requiring EIA, it can be said that this does not work according to the principle of democratic participation in Turkey.[61] The general tendency towards these meetings in the EIA processes is that the local people do not attend the public participation meeting that should be held formally to show their opposition to the desired project. That is, they show their reaction by protesting the meeting.

One of the reasons why EIA meetings are protested is that they are perfunctory meetings where the views and complaints of the local people are not taken into account. Ahmet, who makes a living by beekeeping in Bingöl, evaluates the EIA meetings held for HPP and mineral exploration and extraction projects in the region where he lives, mostly as talks by private company employees to persuade the local people to the projects *(Interview, Bingöl, 12.03.2021)*. Remarking that the region they live in has a rich ecosystem that can have the status of a national park, İbrahim states that EIA decisions are political decisions whose bureaucratic processes have been completed for private companies as follow;

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[61] According to the EIA Regulation, EIA is required for HPPs with an installed capacity of 10 MWm and above. (Annex 1, article 15). For HPPs with an installed capacity of 1-10 MWm (Annex 2), the ministry examines the project introduction file and decides whether an EIA is required. If it decides "EIA is not required", no EIA is done. See, Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation, https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=20235&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip=5. (Accessed: 15.05.2020).

Although is known that the damage to the ecology and cultural heritage of the region, caused by the dynamite and chemicals used in the mining exploration projects, the number of which is increasing rapidly in our region, "EIA is not required" permissions are given to private companies by the ministries. The long duration of the lawsuits filed against these permissions or the conclusion of the lawsuits in favour of private companies shows that the law is instrumentalized in the plunder of nature here *(Interview, Bingöl, 10.03.2021).*

Şekercioglu et al., (2011) state that hydroelectric power plants and sequential irrigation channels, which were not made the environmental impact assessment and were built without being included in the technical approval process, cause additional environmental damage by causing habitat loss and pollution. Therefore, these projects, which create a new ecological environment by changing the river ecosystem in the regions where water is grasped or the flow direction is changed, directly affect the vegetation and precipitation regime, and cause irreversible physical changes in the natural and social environment.

HPPs have notable changed the geographical structure of the region and in my opinion, they are more dangerous than forest fires. The geography of Dersim is a mountainous and green place. After the HPPs, the climatology of the region started to change. We already suffer from global warming and climate change and now HPPs are built, the region becomes completely barren and inefficient. When the river water is caught, people's transportation routes are also effected consciously. In addition, there has been a terrible population of flies and insects lately. When you look at the city from above, a cloud of fog covering the city can be seen, which prevents snowfall in the city and causes the city to have a warm weather in winter. This harming many living things, especially endemic plants, animals lose their food and they have to change their regions. The natural order circulate of the region is getting worse *(Interview, Dersim, 15.12.2019, Deniz).*

In general, I don't think that the dams in Kurdistan were built with a demand to suffice the electricity needs. We are in an area that gets a lot of sunlight for hours on a daily basis, it could be also generate energy from here. Here, water is used as a trump card. Today, the water flowing from the rivers mixes with the sewage water and flows towards Rojava (North and Eastern Syria) as a polluted water. In fact, if they wanted to, they could clean this dirty water by purifying it and send clean water to the people of the region who are border neighbors, hereby, the local people there can also benefit from this clean water, but they do not doing that *(Interview, Mardin, 18.03.2020, Baran).*

In this sense, restricting the natural flow of rivers such as the Euphrates and Tigris, in the example of Turkey, by holding them, also usurps the right of access to clean water for the civilians living in Iraq and Syria, especially in neighboring border countries in where access to

water resources is low.[62] Blocking the natural flow or changing the direction of the water in the river basins not only causes the deterioration of the ecosystem, but also causes mass migration to the urban areas by rendering ineffective the sectors that sustain the rural economy such as agriculture and animal husbandry in the settlements where the rural population is concentrated (Jongerden 2010; Jongerden et al. 2021).

> When you look around Hasankeyf, about two hundred villages are under water. The habitat of a community engaged in animal husbandry and agriculture was destroyed. The habitats of wild horses were destroyed. Cemeteries have been moved, People's memories of the past have also been destroyed. *(Interview, Diyarbakir, Birhat, 06.07.2020).*

> HPPs and mineral exploration activities also cause a great nature massacre. It is obvious that it does a lot of damage to the people, and it is a policy that can result in the displacement of the people. How do we understand this? The region that receives the most precipitation (rains) in Turkey is the Black Sea (Karadeniz) region. However, when compared with that region, Şırnak was the province that received the most precipitation last year. Although the people resist migration, the changing seasonal conditions and precipitation regimes, and often forest fires reaching agricultural lands, negatively affect agriculture and animal husbandry here. Village and town populations are decreasing day by day. With these actions, there is evacuation and depopulation of the region. *(Interview, Sirnak, Aycan, 18.03.2020).*

Another important factor in the construction process of HPPs is the practice of dispossession, as mentioned above. David Harvey, in his article *The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession* (2004), re-discussed the concept of "the new imperialism" state that global capitalism tended towards "spatio-temporal fixes such as geographical expansion and spatial reorganization" in order to overcome global capitalism's "crises of overaccumulation" in the 1970s (2004, 63). Harvey, who states that global capitalism realizes the process of "accumulation by dispossession" by constructing a constant private property regime, continues as follows;

> The spatio-temporal 'fix', on the other hand, is a metaphor for solutions to capitalist crises through temporal deferment and geographical expansion. The production of space, the organization of wholly new territorial divisions of labour, the opening

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[62] According to local narratives and reports, it is stated that the reduction of water reserves and the transfer of polluted water to the regions on the other side of the border without treatment processes create large septic pits and are also used as a threat by states (such as Turkey and Iran) that grasping the water. "Water is under assault in Mesopotamia", 30.05.2019, https://www.hasankeyfgirisimi.net/final-declaration-of-mesopotamia-ecology-movement-water-is-under-assault-in-mesopotamia/. (Accessed: 20.05.2020).

up of new and cheaper resource complexes, of new dynamic spaces of capital accumulation, and the penetration of pre-existing social formations by capitalist social relations and institutional arrangements (such as rules of contract and private property arrangements) provide multiple ways to absorb existing capital and labour surpluses (2004, 65–66).

According to Swyngedouw, this "accumulation by dispossession" process which operates through seizures (grab), the light from the definition of privatization above as it is necessarily on a par with a privatization process and it is also "nothing else than a legally and institutionally condoned, if not encouraged, form of theft" (2005, 82). Such expropriations or privatizations will now be used to overcome crises of capital accumulation by opening up new areas for capital accumulation in competitive markets.

In Turkey and northern Kurdistan, dispossession through HPPs is carried out through the "urgent expropriation" method, which is known for its exceptional feature and is defined in Article 27 of the Expropriation Law no: 2942. The Urgent Expropriation method which except for the condition of public interest, is the forced purchase of private property by depositing the price determined by the court in a public bank on behalf of the property owners without informing the owners of private property or land in exceptional cases such as states of emergency and war periods which are decided to be hasty.[63]

An important point to be noted regarding the Urgent Expropriation decisions is that these decisions are taken in line with the demands of private companies in the energy and electricity market through private organizations affiliated with public institutions. Especially after 2008, the urgent expropriation decisions regarding HPP constructions are at the forefront of the decisions taken on behalf of the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works, Ministry of Finance and Energy Market Regulatory Authority.[64] In this context, the urgent expropriation decisions taken by the council of ministers, representing the government as the executive power[65], emerge as practices that draw attention to the urgency of capital accumulation in order

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[63] About on "Urgent expropriation" see Alp Tekin Ocak, March 2019, https://mekandaadalet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MELET-BUTUNLESIK-HAVZA-YIKIMI.pdf. (Accessed: 21.05.2020).

[64] Nese Leblebici, "Land Acquisition in Energy Projects: Expropriation, Usage Permit, Establishment of Easement Right, Leasing, Transfer, Allocation" (in Turkish: Enerji Projelerinde Arazi Temini: Kamulastirma, Kullanma Izni, Irtifak Hakki Tesisi, Kiralama, Devir, Tahsis), 2009, https://www.emo.org.tr/ekler/940cd47fa8b0bd6_ek.pdf?tipi=2&turu=X&sube=7. (Accessed: 21.05.2020).

[65] It should be noted that this method, which is envisaged to be applied in exceptional cases such as the state of emergency, is implemented despite the existing judicial decisions that it is not in accordance with the law is considered as a clear infringement of property rights. The fact that many urgent expropriation decisions,

to overcome the obstacles in front of capital accumulation (private property) after the 2001 economic crisis in Turkey (Kaya 2016, 85). In other words, as Swyngedouw stated;

> Without the various state levels paving the way and imposing conditions that guarantee privatization and then secure profitable operation afterwards, this accumulation by dispossession could not possibly take place, The state is, in other words, a central actor in establishing and maintaining "market principles." (2005, 89).

While the bureaucratic process and legal regulations for power plant projects in Turkey and northern Kurdistan legitimizing land appropriation under the name of 'public interest' and 'developmentalism', in other words, while the possession of public land is transferred to private companies, "as a legitimate law-making body, the state produces a hegemonic understanding of rights through legality" (Islar 2012, 388). This legal way, which was an exception before the 2000s, was implemented in the period of AKP including infrastructural energy projects, "water management, disaster preparedness, allocation of land for tourism investments" and especially after 2015 processes, has used "to suppress the Kurdish insurgency and redesigning Kurdish cities" in northern Kurdistan (Erensü 2017, 128).

Moore also points out that the colonial authorities used bureaucratic processes as a method of persuading local residents under the discourse of development and they also "invoked to law" as a way to "diffuse the resistance among residents" (2013, 127). Furthermore, he remarks that the "civil engineering expertise during the dam's construction also rested on multiple forms of colonial power -legal, police, administrative, economic, and ideological- in order to relocate the residents and mobilize workers to build the enormous structure" (Moore 2013, 127).

Although the liberalization of the energy market, urgent expropriations, the increase in energy investments such as HPPs, thermal/steam power plants and mineral exploration activities caused similar ecological destruction in Turkey and northern Kurdistan during the AKP period, the historical and political dynamics in northern Kurdistan make it necessary to handle these projects with a different approach. These hydro-infrastructural projects (and other energy and security policies) that cannot be dealt with independently of the historical course of the Kurdish issue are viewed by local residents as instruments of colonial biopolitics. As Brian Larkin

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especially the HPPs after 2016, were taken with the Presidential Decrees of the State of Emergency and that these decisions taken by the president are subject to a special trial procedure according to the Administrative Jurisdiction Procedures Law, and that some issues regarding the trial are missing in the law, the persons whose properties were confiscated causes long-term suffering (Öztürk 2019, 149).

points out to Foucault's conceptualization of governmentality, infrastructures emerge independently of their technical functions, and they also reveal certain political rationality that leads to the "apparatus of governmentality" (2013, 328). Larkin continues with reference to Collier's work focusing on the role of neoliberal economic theories imported into post-Soviet Russia in infrastructure projects as follows;

> Infrastructures, for Collier, are a mixture of political rationality, administrative techniques, and material systems, and his interest is not in infrastructure per se but in what it tells us about practices of government (Collier 2011 cited in 2013, 331).

In other words, the forced expropriation practices in Kurdistan are not only the despotically destruction of their subsistence economy or income sources, but also a part of the colonial violence and disidentification policies that Kurds are exposed to in their everyday lives.

> I think that the dams built in the valleys are projects to cut off the guerrilla's passageways. When we look at the example of Hasankeyf (*Ilisu dam project*), if it were considered as a tourism region, maybe they could earn much more than they would get from the dam, but why do they submerge such a historical space? The purpose of submerging many historical and cultural regions in Kurdistan is to make people forget the memory of their roots and to break the ties that people have established with the space. I do not think that the dams built here are intended for the interest of local people or to generate electricity. If there is a benefit to be mentioned here, it is that the rent obtained here, from the state officials who allow these dams to the private companies that build the dams, is shared among themselves, and there is an enrichment based on economic exploitation *(Interview Dersim, Kenan, 21.10.2020).*
>
> In the 1990s, people whose villages were burned and forced to migrate, but who still hope to return to their villages, are submerging the spaces that people want to return to today and those hopes are destroyed. People who are producers and are intertwined with nature are forced to migrate to cities and are squeezed between concrete blocks in the fast flowing life of cities. This is also to submerge the memories of their ancestors about the spaces where they lived in. Therefore, the children were born in this geography will not be able to speak their mother tongue with this migration -the acceleration of the assimilation process- which they speak more comfortably in their homeland. Therefore, it is necessary to consider dam constructions and the state's perception of security in a multidimensional way. There is also interference with minds and emotions. *(Interview, Mardin, Agit, 20.05.2020).*

When the various spatial interventions (such as forest fires and *Kalekols* constructions) made toward Kurdistan, especially during the AKP period, are taken into account, the intensity of the negative effects of these "hydrosocial territories" (Boelens et al. 2016) produced based on military force is naturally different. In other words, in the Kurdish geography, where controlled

colonial governmentality has been dominant for nearly a century, the interventions against nature and space contain many dynamics that cannot be only explained by the privatization of the energy market. Therefore, "the (re)creation of hydrosocial territories (and water) needs to be analyzed in the context of their historical, cultural and political settings" (Boelens et al. 2016, 4).

The essence of these dynamics is undoubtedly the historical position of the Kurdish issue and Kurdistan against the Turkish state. The Kurdish freedom movement has not only resisted with the guerrilla warfare against the AKP government's which under Erdogan's presidency that colonization of Kurdish geography through the "neoliberal modernization projects" but also "located its political and economic vision as an alternative" with the HDP past decade (Adaman et al. 2017b, 249). This, should be seen as a challenge to the spatial hegemony of Turkishness, which it constantly reproduces through infrastructural projects.

HDP, was established as a party project that wanted "transforming the state from outside by building a grassroots movement based on direct democratic structures locally" (Burç 2019, 9) with alternative management models such as radical democracy, communal economy and self-administration based on the democratic, ecological and gender libertarian society paradigm of the Kurdish freedom movement (Jongerden 2017; Öcalan 2020). This vision of HDP also creates a basis for struggle against the despotic and infrastructural power of AKP or the ecological destruction created by "post-truth authoritarian and nationalist neoliberalization" in Swyngedouw's words (2017, 261).

In this sense, the Turkish state as mentioned before has not only used water as a threat to life against the Kurdish autonomous territories in Rojava (North-Eastern Syria) -moreover, it occupied some of its regions-, which has implemented this paradigm, but also suppressed in a "brutalized" way (Bozarslan 2020, 33) all political and social actors of the Kurdish movement in Northern Kurdistan and Turkey (Adaman et al. 2017b). It is necessary to evaluate the colonization of the Kurdish geography through infrastructure projects within these dynamics.

Akbulut et al. (2018), who examined the Turkish state as a nation-state, how produced collective consent except of coercive through growth and developmentalism goals, by Gramsci's theory of hegemony, emphasized that the state was unsuccessful in providing this societal consent when it comes to HPPs according to large-scale dams. Akbulut et al. (2018, 111) have also noted that "the ability of the idea of development – one that is expressed in terms of a linear process of increased accumulation – to create consent remains largely

undiminished in much of Turkey (with the possible exception of certain segments of the Kurdish community)".

Bengi Akbulut, who states that it is inadequate to read the geography of Kurdistan with concepts such as developmentalism and growth through Gramsci's theory of hegemony and yet more the Kurdish society has a counter-hegemony to the state's hegemonic projects based on consent and coercion, continues as follows;

> The political consciousness, historical memory of resistance and the experience of political struggle in northern Kurdistan do not allow the hegemony of the state in other geographies to work in northern Kurdistan, hegemony does not work here, it cracks. *(Interview with Bengi Akbulut, 25.11.2020).*

In this sense, while the infrastructural power of the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan follows an inclusion strategy based on generating societal consent by penetrating the Kurdish society, its despotic power, functions as a coercive mechanism in situations where these consent production processes are not possible or without the need to produce consent. In other words, it is the ruling out of Kurdish subjects, who do not submit to this consent production process, by using violence. Although this dual coercion and consent form of power of the state sometimes works together to complement each other, colonial intervention usually manifests itself through despotic power tools.

It is necessary to open a separate parenthesis here for Dersim (Tunceli), which is built on the Munzur Valley and has an extraordinarily bio-diversity and a rich socio-ecological environment. Dersim is a city is assumed that to be a "social and cultural entity that has been ingrained in the memories with deep social destruction" (Aslan 2010, 9) and due to its linguistic, cultural, religious and social authenticity from the past to the present is depicted that as an existential opposition and resistance to the Turkish State and its official ideology, which has established its dominance in the region. (Çalışlar 2010; Tuna and Orhan 2013; Bilmez et al. 2015).

A nation-state that "tries to build its internal integrity through a system of values such as language, religion and race that will complete it in the sense of nation, namely Turkish, Muslim and Turkishness" (F. Ercan 2013, 34) has seen Dersim as a "practice/operation area" (Aslan 2010, 10) which to prove its sovereignty because of this opposition and resistance. During the establishing years of the republic, the Kemalist regime defined the existence of the state through the values highlighted above, and implemented the idea by intervening to the

geography that those who did not have these values should be "improved/rehabilated" (Bulut 2009; Aslan 2010; C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013). In this context, to the Kurdish geography, especially in Dersim, is interfered with another values, namely the identities, languages, believes social memories and emotions of the Kurds, through the values mentioned above, as in every period.

> In fact, intervening in geography is a policy aimed at separating geography from its identity, culture, belief and mother tongue. It is to force life away from its own essence and evolve into another life and identity. It is an effort to radically change it *(Interview, Dersim, 19.12.2020, Zerife).*

In the interviews, the first thing that was mentioned when expressing the opinion on the subject and which is very important in terms of emphasizing the historicity of the issue is the opinions that the desire to build HPPs or dams in Dersim actually dates back a century. The colonial infrastructural projects implemented for the transformation of the people of the region in by rehabilated which order to draw the region to one nation, one language and one religion line are first encountered in the reports prepared for Dersim at the end of the 19th century. In a report dated 1861, Erzurum Marshals Semih Pasha and İsmail Hakkı Pasha proposed that "block pools" to build in various parts of Dersim in order to "bring civilization" is one of the first examples (Bulut 2009, 257). Another aim of these pools is to prevent the solidarity of the people who rebelled in the region with each other and to prevent them from escaping at the time of intervention (Deniz 2016, 178). Although 6 dams and 8 HPP projects to be built on the Munzur River in Dersim were mainly decided in 1960 under the name of "Munzur Project", their construction started in the 2000s (Deniz 2016). As Hüseyin Zeytin emphasized that the reasons for the construction of these dams came to the fore as a project that "filling the valleys and in places which previously emptied by forced migration with water, and to cut off the city's connection with the surrounding districts and to prevent returns." (Zeytin 2003 cited in Deniz 2016, 178).

> The selected areas for HPPs are valleys. Controlling water resources, collecting water, closing transition areas. To bring about the death of water, making the water silent, it also removes all the life that water gives to its surroundings. They destroys the character of nature by making the water artificial. In the 1860s this was already planned during the Ottoman period. It is aimed to separate a region from another region by creating pools. They use water retention as a threat tool, not to generate electricity. Many villages had to be evacuated, people migrated. In Dersim, this seems to have been achieved to a large extent. The basic method is the depopulation of this area. It is to destroy life in rural areas, to gather people in town centers and

provincial centers, to ensure that they live here and to keep them under control. We are not only talking about the migration of people here, we are talking about the elimination of all relations established by people here. It is the day-to-day destruction of history, culture, nature and a belief that is sacred here. It is aimed to alienate human from theirself and transform them into another human being *(Interview, Dersim, 28.09.2020, Demhat).*

HPPs as Security Dams

In the 2000s, the Turkish State resorted to a comprehensive strategy change during the war with the PKK. One of them is the construction of 11 HPPs planned to be built in Şırnak and Hakkari provinces in order to provide "security" to the Iraqi border. The term of "security dam" used here is based on the following sentence in annual report of the State Hydraulic Works (DSI) in 2007.

In 2007, the project of the construction of 11 dams under the name of water inflating dams, which was included in the investment program due to border security due to the etude-project, was tendered.[66]

The purpose of the construction of these dams is to prevent the PKK guerrillas fighting against the Turkish State from crossing the border and limiting their areas of action and possibilities, according to reports in the Turkish[67] and Kurdish media[68]. Jongerden also stated that these power plants, which were designed as part of the strategy to stand up against the PKK in Kurdistan, were built only as a "water wall" to prevent the passage of PKK guerrillas, not for irrigation and electricity generation (2010, 142).

In 2012, WikiLeaks published the correspondence in the e-mails of Stratfor, which a Texas-based global intelligence company, under the title "The Global Intelligence Files". In summary, in these e-mails, these dams built on the border line were considered as a war strategy to flood the passage ways used by the PKK guerrillas, but in spite of the comments that this strategy

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[66] DSI 2007 Faaliyet Raporu, https://www.dsi.gov.tr/stratejik-planlama/faaliyet-raporlari (Accessed: 19.03.2019).

[67] "Two dams planned against the PKK on the border were completed" (Sinirda PKK'ya karsi planlanan iki baraj tamamlandi), Hürriyet, 26.10.2011, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/sinirda-pkkya-karsi-planlanan-2-baraj-tamamlandi-19088520. (Accessed: 18.07.2019). "The formula of '11 Dams' against PKK terrorism" (PKK terörüne karsi '11 baraj' formülü) Milliyet, 11.07.2009, https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/pkk-terorune-karsi-11-baraj-formulu-1116429. (Accessed: 18.07.2019).

[68] "Nature disappears as the border is surrounded by 'security dams'" (Sinir 'güvenlik barajlari' ile kusatilirken doga yok oluyor), Yeni Yasam, 26.06.2019, https://www.yeniyasamgazetesi.com/sinir-guvenlik-barajlari-ile-kusatilirken-doga-yok-oluyor/. (Accessed: 18.07.2019).

would still be ineffective, the watch officer named Michael Wilson responded as "when the geography provides a natural refugee for guerrillas, just change the geography".[69] Therefore, it is clear that, the desire to build these dams in a short time and the construction of many military posts to protect the dams, as it will be mentioned in the Kalekols section, indicates that there has been more extensive colonial desire on the Kurdish geography, which the dams have been turned into military combat vehicles, apart from irrigation and electricity generation purposes.

The construction of these dams, which were not built for irrigation nor hydroelectric power generation purposes, was also considered as a substitute for the construction of a 5 m high concrete wall along the boundary mentioned in the previous lines. However, years later, the Turkish state started to build a security wall (Aras 2020) along the border line, which it perceived as a threat to the Kurdish Freedom Movement's gains in Rojava (western Kurdistan or north-eastern Syria) and to prevent refugee crossings[70]. As stated in the previous lines, the perception of the enemy towards the autonomous administration of the Democratic Federation of north-eastern Syria, which has a multi-ethnic and democratic governance model led by the Kurds and which adopts the same political paradigm despite not having organic ties with the PKK, has caused been to implement policies that prevent water flow by the Turkish state.[71]

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[69] "Turkey to construct dams along Iraq border to flood PKK camps -daily", The Global Intelligence Files, realesed 27.05.2013, https://search.wikileaks.org/gifiles/emailid/1163104. (Accessed: 19.07.2019).

[70] "The Wall on Syrian border to be completed by the end of year", Bianet, 16.06.2016, https://bianet.org/english/human-rights/175923-wall-on-syrian-border-to-be-completed-by-end-of-year. (Accessed: 20.07.2019).

[71] "The Euphrates: Turkey's tool of destabilisation of Rojava", https://internationalistcommune.com/the-euphrates-turkeys-tool-of-destabilisation-of-rojava/. "The Turkish state uses the water of Euphrates as a threat", April 2018, http://anfenglish.com/rojava/the-turkish-state-uses-the-water-of-euphrates-as-a-threat-26014.
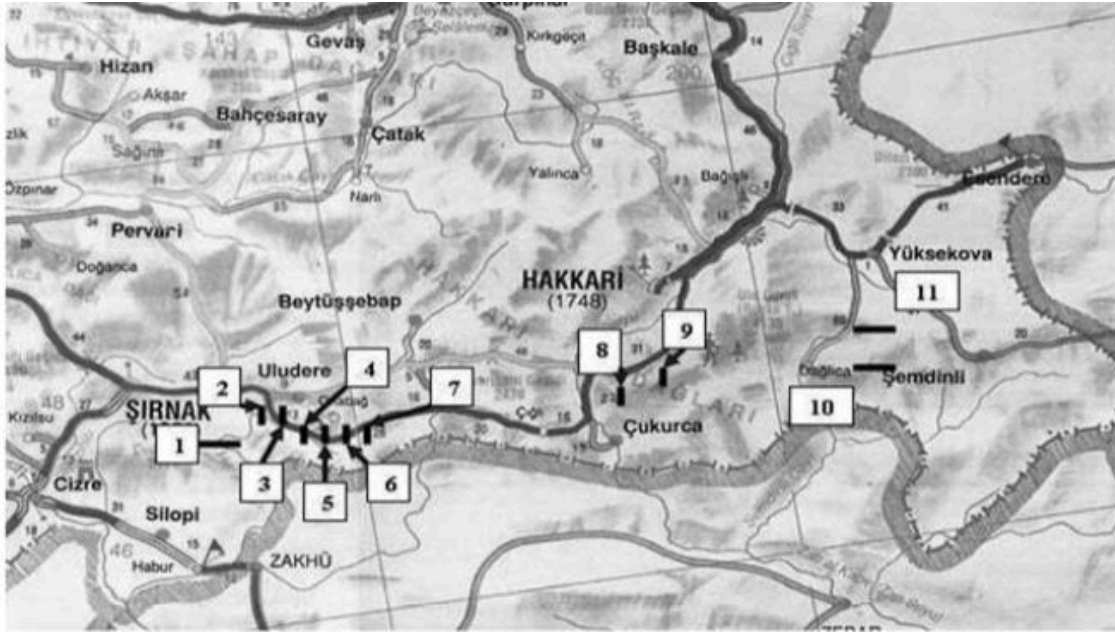
Map 4: Source: The Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects Office in Diyarbakır, Border/Security Dams Preliminary Report, 2009 (Turkish: Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği, TMMOB for short).

There are HPPs on the Uludere side, before the HPPs there were forest areas and the villagers' vineyards and gardens. They just built a wall and blocked the water and some farmland was submerged. So nothing about HPP. I think that there is a policy of neither electricity generation nor irrigation purposes, only closing the crossing roads and confiscating the water going to Rojava (*North and Eastern Syria*) and Bashur (*North Iraq*) *(Interview, Sirnak, 28.03.2020, Metin)*.

There are about 11 HPP constructions along the Şırnak-Hakkari border. The state already calls it a 'security dams'. Among them, there are some that are finished, there are some that are still in progress. There has big thermal power plant in Silopi was actually built as a continuation of these 11 HPPs. There are rumors that they (*state and private capital companies*) wants to merge it with the Hasankeyf project (Ilisu Dam project). Many residential areas, including villages, have been flooded by dam constructions and continue to be. These places, which are generally rugged, are also transition zones. A road can be built between the valleys, anyone can use those roads. But the state has flooded all areas that can be used as roads and continues to do so *(Interview, Sirnak, 20.02.2020, Rifat)*.

The hydro-energy policies of the state are implemented with the aim of building dams on almost all rivers in many regions where the rivers are fertile or well.[72] Although the geography of Kurdistan is an arid and less rainy region, it is a geography with the highest number of HPPs after the Black Sea region, which is located in the north of Turkey and receives the highest

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[72] In the strategic planning of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources for the year 2010, it is aimed to use the entire hydraulic potential of Turkey until 2023 which the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. http://www.sp.gov.tr/tr/stratejik-plan/s/269/Enerji+ve+Tabii+Kaynaklar+Bakanligi+2010-2014. (Accessed: 21.03.2021).

rainfall. An important distinction between the HPPs built in Kurdistan and the ones built in the Black Sea region is that the HPPs in the Black Sea region are formed by holding and transferring water through pipes, while the HPPs in Kurdistan are created by constructing large-scale dams on the rivers and blocking the flow of water.[73]

> The dam construction technique in western Turkey is different from the one in the Kurdish geography. In the dams in the west, the water is diked and stored there. The water, which is dammed in front of it, continues on its way even though its flow rate decreases. However, the most important feature of the dams built on the Euphrates and Tigris is the construction of a new dam right behind the embankment. Thus, an endless chain of dams is formed. When you set an embankment on the water, the flow continues where the dam ends. If you build a new dam at the end of the embankment, you will completely divide that region. The 11 security dams at the border are sequential like this. Like the dams on the Euphrates, the Ilisu dam is sequential. However, when we talk about security, we need to discuss not only the submerge of a geography or topography, but also the spatial, political, socio-cultural effects of being submerged (Özdemir 2020).

Another feature that separates the HPP projects in Kurdistan from the dam projects in other cities of Turkey is recruiting of the "temporary village guard" for the purpose of protecting the construction areas during the construction process of the dams here. In the previous sections, it was mentioned that the temporary village guard is an armed paramilitary structure of the state. Since village guards were not welcomed by the majority of the Kurdish population in the region, these guards were recruited with a different method under the name of "security guards".[74]

Considering the existing colonial inequalities in the region and the lack of power to protect the civilian population against the colonial despotic power's monopoly of violence[75], a perception

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[73] Haydar Cetinkaya. "Dam and HPP map of Anatolia", 30.03.2015, https://kuzeyormanlari.org/2015/03/30/anadolunun-il-il-baraj-ve-hes-soykirim-haritasi/. (Accessed: 21.03.2021).

[74] Concerning the recruitment of guards for Kiğı HPP in Bingöl and Pembelik HPP in Dersim-Elazığ where built on Perisuyu river, one of the most important rivers of the region and passing through the borders of three provinces such as Bingöl, Dersim and Elazığ. "Recruitment of village guards under the name of "security guard" in Diyarbakır", 09.04.2015, https://www.tigrishaber.com/diyarbakirda-guvenlikci-adi-altinda-korucu-alimi-16463h.htm. (Accessed: 21.03.2021).

[75] In fact, deterrent actions by guerrillas against the mineral exploration activities, cutting of trees, hunting of endangered animals and construction of HPPs and Kalekols in regions where PKK guerrillas were active until 2015. At the same time, the abduction of engineers and workers involved in the works in order to prevent the construction of HPP and Kalekol projects can be read as the defence of "a non-state space". Looking at the post-2015 period, the decrease in the PKK's guerrilla power in these regions or the intensification of the war outside the border and the withdrawal of its forces outside the border caused the state to complete these projects in a safer and faster manner. See some news in media agencies; "Attack on Kalekol Construction" in Turkish "Kalekol Insaatina Saldiri", Evrensel, 16.08.2015, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/258494/kalekol-insaatina-saldiri. (Accessed 15.05.2021). "PKK baraj santiyesine saldirdi: 3 yarali", Ihlas Haber Ajansi, 27.08.2015, https://www.iha.com.tr/haber-pkk-baraj-santiyesine-saldirdi-3-yarali-491244/. (Accessed: 15.05.2021). "Terör

of threat is created on the local residents through these paramilitary groups which in case the legal processes work against the state or there is a resistance against the dam projects. During the completion of the Sup'ung Dam on the Yalu River in Japan, Moore (2013) points out that the Japanese administration used counterinsurgency activities against local residents for mobilizing the villages, except of the bureaucratic process to justify land acquisition in some rural areas. Zeynep S. Akinci and Pelin Tan stated that the recruitment of village guards for the purpose of protecting dams can be used as a "surveillance tool that can function as a buffer" between the villages around the dams or the expropriated lands of the villages evacuated due to dam construction (2016, 147).

A visible feature of colonial governmentality in northern Kurdistan is the practice of governing the Kurdish geography, which is seen as a colony, in a different way than other metropolises. Except for the colonial practices of the centrally appointed trustee governors, which can be interpreted as the usurpation of the will of the people, it can be understood that Kurdistan is governed from a colonial gaze even when only looking at the interventions and obstructions the ecological struggles. Although it has been observed that the level of violence against the ecology struggles carried out in other regions of Turkey has increased in the last decade, it is at a level that cannot be compared to northern Kurdistan. Because the extent and scope of interventions in northern Kurdistan's geography and ecology are shaped by the state's military power and coercive apparatuses, which shows that it has similar characteristics to the government of the occupied territories. For example, the deterrent methods of the despotic power of the state, which operates in coordination with the state's infrastructural power during the construction phase of the projects, appear most clearly in the protests about the defense of the space.[76]

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bitince barajlar hizlandi", Yeni Safak, 02.07.2017, https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/teror-bitince-barajlar-hizlandi-2742263. (Accessed: 15.05.2021).

[76] One person had killed in June 2013, as a result of real bullets fired by the soldiers during the protest marches against the productions of Kalekol in the Lice district of Diyarbakir. https://m.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/165661-medeni-yildirim-iki-yil-once-olduruldu-dava-acilmadi. (Accessed: 15.05.2021).
In June 2014, 2 people lost their lives in the Kalekol protests, again in Lice (Diyarbakir), https://www.evrensel.net/haber/85919/licede-oldurulenlerin-cenazelerinde-ofke-seli. (Accessed: 15.05.2021). In another Kurdish city (Van), villagers protesting the opening of a marble quarry were intervened by soldiers and village guards with real bullets and villagers whose shelters were burned stated that they were forced to migrate. Bianet, 28.05.2021, https://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/244810-van-da-silah-zoruyla-dagitilan-koyluler-goce-zorlaniyoruz. (Accessed: 30.05.2021).

Thus, as will be seen in the next section on forest fires, which forest fires in northern Kurdistan are ignored both by the mainstream media and by the majority of Turkish society in other parts of Turkey. A similar situation exists in the anti-HPP protests in northern Kurdistan.

Another critical issue of this study, which deals with Kurdistan from the perspective of colonialism-colony, is that due to the theoretical approaches of 'Turkish' Marxist-left-socialist researchers working on hydroelectric power plants in Turkey, that their 'distance' attitude towards the geo-politic dynamics of hydroelectric power plants in northern Kurdistan. These researchers, whose studies mostly focus on HPPs in the Black Sea region, may have many reasons for not doing or cannot doing fieldworks on HPPs in northern Kurdistan.[77]

The war conditions in northern Kurdistan and the existence of vital and legal threats to conduct fieldwork there make this distant stance understandable. However, I argue that the main reason why many anti-neoliberal environmentalist movements and researchers, which are under the influence of traditional left politics in Turkey, do not adequately address the distinctive conditions of the infrastructural projects in northern Kurdistan, is that they still consider the ethno-geopolitical nature of the Kurdish and Kurdistan issue from the perspective of Turkishness.

Aykut Coban, who deals with environmental policies and ecology issues in Turkey from a Marxist-ecological perspective, summarizes the reasons why the above-mentioned researchers do not adequately address environmental rights violations such as hydroelectric power plants and forest fires in northern Kurdistan;

> In my opinion, this has several dimensions; The first is the differences in theoretical/political approaches. It may be due to the fact that the scientific and political approaches (class politics, capitalist state and corporation symbiosis, developmentalism etc.) used regarding the research object (e.g. HPPs) makes less visible or does not address the dynamics specific to the region (*such as the Kurdish issue, armed conflict and colonialism)* where HPPs are located. Secondly, in the face of the fact that even some words (such as Kurdish provinces, Kurdistan) used in academic studies on the Kurdish issue in Turkey are criminalized with oppression and imprisonment, it may be that researchers who cannot afford to "pay the penalty" self-censor themselves. Finally, the existence of war conditions in the region makes it difficult for researchers who are willing to "pay the penalty" to conduct field studies, and the limited access to alternative information/data in the presence of the insecurity of official data or the censorship of even this data flow

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[77] It should be noted that the number of researchers who deal with the infrastructural projects of "Turkey-style neoliberalization" (Swyngedouw, 2017) that cause ecological destruction in Kurdistan by incorporating the geopolitical dynamics of the Kurdish issue into the reproduction processes of capital itself is very few.

is an obstacle to conducting research on HPPs in the region *(Interview, 02.12.2021, Netherlands).*

Another dimension of the indifference or distant stance towards HPP projects in northern Kurdistan stems from the self-stated claim by of some of the local project-oriented anti-HPP movements that the ecology struggle is or should be "above politics" (Aksu 2016, 411; Coban 2018). This "above politics" tendency, which Coban (2018) describes as the "spontaneous ideology of the local" is the politics of isolating the ecological struggle from other ecological, labour, feminist, Kurdish movements and of confining it to a locally destructive industrial project and thereby to a local narrow-mindedness. In this sense, the activists I interviewed give the reasons why ecology movements organized around their own local environmental problems and do not sufficiently support to other ecology movements who they are focusing on the ecological consequences of war and security policies in Kurdistan are as follows;

> The ongoing war or conflict process and indeed the Kurdish issue and the geography of Kurdistan serve as a litmus paper for ecology movements. Forest fires and HPPs in these areas are handled with a "security" approach and viewed from this perspective. And the local environmental movements here are approached like "you are defending the organization" (he is meaning PKK). Although not speaking in terms of comparison, another phenomenon noticed in Kurdistan, for example, is that somewhere Kalekols and somewhere HPP constructions build on burned forest lands in the region, while in the West, especially in tourism cities, you can see that five-star hotels are built instead of burned forest lands. Therefore, when projects are opposed, you are either referred to as the defender of a political issue beyond a city-space defense, or you are put into a criminalization that often amounts to criminal sanctions (Such as being supporter and sympathizer, or doing propaganda of the organization). There is an effort by the state to terrorize the ecology movements here. In other words, embracing and carrying out the struggle for ecology in Kurdistan obliges the individual to undertake more difficult and complicated processes compared to other parts of the Turkey *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 05.05.2020, Vahap).*

> Since the projects on Hasankeyf and Munzur rivers were a little more popular or known, interest was high from environmental NGOs in the west of the country. But the ecological struggles in other parts of Kurdistan did not even attract anyone's attention. A distinction is made according to the subject and the space, we have seen this. For example, Hakkari and Şırnak were not in their area of interest. In my opinion, there are two reasons for this. First, the ideological reason, that is, the colonial mentality created by Turkish nationalism and even racism, has a point of view that belittles the environmental movements in Kurdistan. Second, apart from the Kurds, very few people mention the geostrategic or political significance of the dams or the ecological destruction there. Because it necessities courage. Those who criticize the state harshly on other issues remain silent against similar policies and practices in Kurdistan. Because the state is subject to oppression and penal

sanctions, so they do not want to take risks. *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 07.12.2020, Ercan).*

Therefore, ecology movements in northern Kurdistan naturally and rightfully emerge as a form of resistance that articulates other problems of this geography (war, death, ethnic discrimination and economic problems) according to the nature of the interventions against the Kurdish geography and Kurdish society. In a geography where civilian deaths are very easy and ordinary in addition to guerrilla deaths in the war that has been going on for nearly 40 years, for example, another environmental activist, the interviewer, expresses the inability to adequately explain the ecology issue to the local people due to the burning reality of the war in Kurdistan;

> Although it is a political society for an individual who sees the clear, physical state of death every day, the struggle for ecology is not fully settled yet. That is, it is not seen as a situation to be fought for. When it is mentioned that the natural environment is also being destroyed in such a conflict situation, it can show you the death of a relative. Naturally, the inability to overcome such a tragic situation prevents or is not enough to fully defend ecology *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 06.07.2020, Birhat).*

As a result, when looking at other parts of Turkey, the ignoring of spatial colonization in northern Kurdistan means that colonialism does not only apply the state's own policies as vertical practices from top to bottom in northern Kurdistan, but also shows that it shapes and organizes the society and mass movements living in other regions outside of northern Kurdistan through the codes of Turkishness or not being Kurdish. In other words, there has a colonization process in which the overwhelming majority of Turkish society actively participates or approves.

In addition to that the Turkish state promotes the use and management of water as a commodity for neoliberal capital through hydroelectric projects that it has planned and built over time, these projects are also perceived by local communities as an intervention in the political ecology of Kurdistan in a colonial context. With reference to Jamie Linton, water is now defined as an artificial environment, physically imprisoned, cut off from people and its natural environment, "as an objective, homogeneous, ahistorical entity" deprived of cultural, political and spiritual content (2010, 19).

Therefore, all these narratives of participants indicate that those colonial interventions are based on despotic power, beyond closing the space or control over the space, this despotic power is in a way to detach the relationship of the Kurdish people with the territory and space. The founding relationship of the Kurdish people with the land and nature through political, religious and cultural rituals, their desire to live on the land to which they belong, and their desire to reproduce socially are considered very important for the autonomy of the people. Since the Turkish state cannot drive out the people from the land, it tries to end this strong relationship by trying to destroy the land, ritual and generally political ecology of the people. This process, based on the destruction of space and ecology, continues over time. In other words, the geography of Kurdistan is annihilated spread over time.

5.3. Forest fires and deforestation

In the last 15 years in Kurdistan, in the rural areas of the cities where the war between the Turkish Armed Forces and the PKK is intense, forest fires have taken place every year, especially during the summer. I have inquired why and how these wildfires started, which allowed me to unfold not only the causes of unnatural, systematic and often deliberate forest fires caused by armed conflict alone but also the Turkish state's colonial gaze on Kurdistan.

The statistical data related to forest fires in Turkey is collected and shared with the public by the General Directorate of Forestry (GDF) (in Turkish, Orman Genel Müdürlügü/OGM), which is connected to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. When examined technically, there are methods of detection and classification of forest fires according to their causes. Even looking from a perspective that does not question the reliability and transparency of the data shared by the state, my first observation was as follows: When looking at forest fires across all the provinces in Turkey and the classification of the causes of their outbreak, it can be observed that data on forest fires in Kurdish cities, where armed conflict is intense, is either not provided or ignored.

I will discuss in the following section why such a deforestation practice that causes direct ecological damage in northern Kurdistan is ignored and why forest fires should be assessed together with hydro-infrastructural projects (HPPs) and *Kalekols*, which I identify as *military infrastructural projects*, and how they are interrelated. The purpose is to discuss to what extent

these three geo-spatial policies can be considered as the infrastructural reflection of the Turkish state's colonial practice in northern Kurdistan.

With the increasing interest of researchers in the relationship between natural resources and armed conflict since the end of the Cold War (Gleditsch 1998; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Humphreys 2005), there has been substantial literature in the last 20 years, particularly on how and to what extent forest resources play a role in armed conflict or war (Rustad et al. 2008; Machlis and Hanson 2008; M. Baumann and Kuemmerle 2016).

A research proposal, defined as "warfare ecology" by Gary E. Machlis and Thor Hanson (2008), which investigates the extent of the damage caused by war to ecology on the basis of empirical studies is an important source of inspiration for researchers who work in this field. They argue that a broader classification of war consists of "1-war preparations, 2-war (violent conflict) and 3-post-war activities" stages and each stage containing several key elements "military, infrastructure and governance" that affect both ecological problems and the outcome of the war (Machlis and Hanson 2008, 730). In the case of northern Kurdistan, I will discuss how these key elements Machlis and Hanson refer to include a military infrastructure and administration, in the section on *Kalekols* (high-security military checkpoints). In this section, I will discuss the relationship between these structures built-in conflict zones and forest fires.

Based on the theoretical framework of Siri Camilla A. Rustad et al. (2008), there are two arguments over the relationship between forest resources and conflict around the world. First, violent conflicts in forest resources, such as tropical forests, where wildlife populations are high, due to precious metals, to generate economic income (Hecht and Saatchi 2007; Beyers et al. 2011)). The second is violent conflicts over rugged terrain, where forest resources provide safe havens for insurgent groups or guerrilla movements (Rustad et al. 2008, 763). The case studies discussed here follow the second argument.

Matthias Bauman and Tobias Kuemmerle (2016) examine 38 case studies on the effect of armed conflicts on forest changes, and 16 of these case studies demonstrate which land systems are most affected by armed conflicts. Of these 16 studies, 12 show that deforestation in conflict zones is caused by bombing and the use of firearms or defoliants (M. Baumann and Kuemmerle 2016, 679).

Van Butsic et al. (2015) state that higher rates of deforestation occur during and following armed conflict and that de-conflict peacebuilding processes potentially create a recovery

situation for ecology and more protection for nature. Aiman Shahpurwala, in her case study examining the relationship between forest fires and armed conflict in Dersim, one of the cities I did fieldwork for this research study, states that "accounts of fires in these conflict zones and national level conflict dynamics are somehow related" (2019, 45). By the "national level conflict dynamics," it should be understood that reflection of the Kurdish issue or the question of Turkishness in the 40-year long war between the PKK and the Turkish State. The study is also important in that the conflict data of Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) for a certain time period reflects well "the fluctuations in political stability and conflict" in the ongoing war (Shahpurwala 2019, 40).

Of course, it is possible to obtain more detailed information about the content and dimensions of this relationship, thanks to an ethnographic study. Therefore, taking Shahpurwala's pertinent determination a little further, based on local narratives in cities where war is intense, it is fair to claim that forest fires and deforestation practices are not only limited to conflict situations and times but deforestation activities and forest fires are also carried out by the state even in times and places where there is no conflict.

Interviewees who witnessed forest fires usually talk about three types of fires. Some of these fires may be the fires caused by environmental factors due to extremely hot weather conditions in the summer months and an arid region with low precipitation, as well as man-made fires (Ganteaume et al. 2013). Man-made fires can be fires that are started to open agricultural areas but in a controlled manner (fires in October), or fires that are started by accident or by arson. Finally, there are fires started by the security forces of the state, which is the focus of this section of the study.

My interest here is how is deforestation practices of the colonial governmentality of the Turkish state as a control and depopulation practice in addition to the forest areas being used as a means of war in provinces where armed conflict is intense. Why are forest fires that are systematically started by the state's security forces on the grounds of "security" or caused by armed conflicts allowed to continue for days? Why and how were attempts by local people to extinguish forest fires prevented, as government agencies were either late or did not take any action to put out the fires? Finally, why do forest fires in Kurdistan not attract the attention of the Turkish public as much as forest fires in other regions of Turkey or are simply ignored?
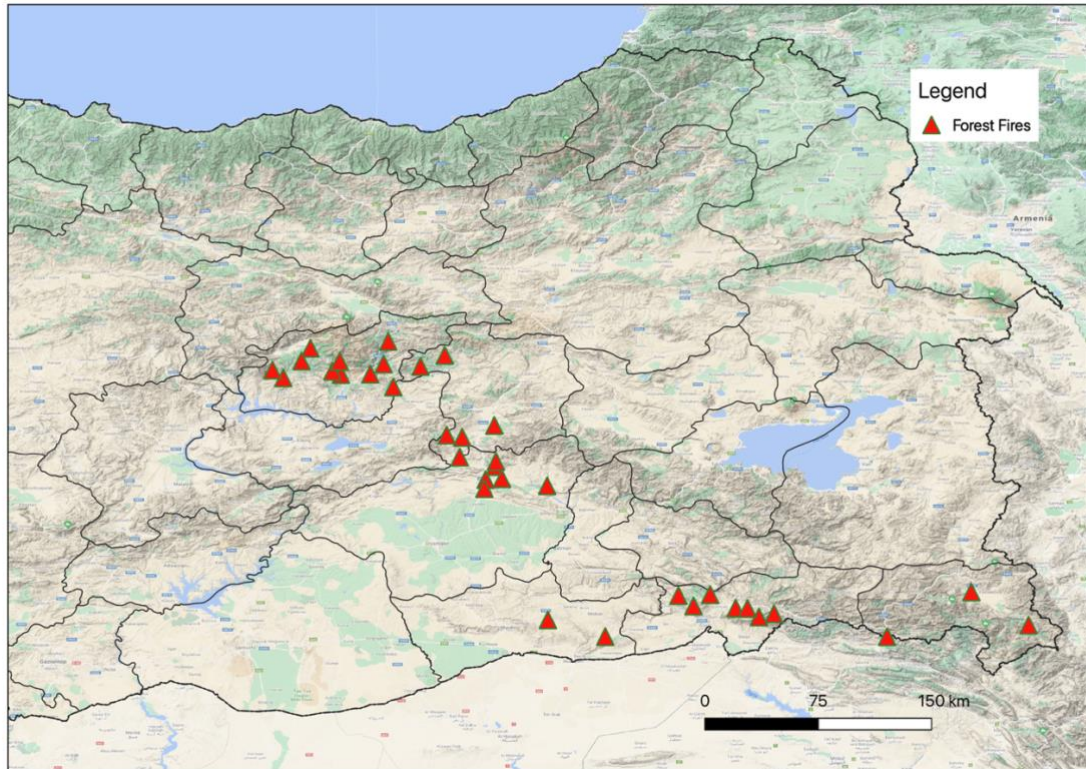
Map 5: Spanning area and density of Forest Fires[78]

It would not be wrong to define the statistical forest fire data shared by the General Directorate of Forestry in the annual reports as "state simplifications" which are part of the permanent "project of legibility" and has a "synoptic vision" with reference to Scott's words (J. C. Scott 1998, 79–80). Because that data, which is classified into categories according to the causes of fires as "standardized" and biased "utilitarian facts" are formed by "to varying degrees, riddled with inaccuracies, omissions, faulty aggregations, fraud, negligence, political distortion and so on" (J. C. Scott 1998, 80).

The reason why I can express this clearly is that data shared by the GDF on forest fires is not compatible with both the forest fire data recorded by environmental movements and data of the online platforms, such as Global Forest Watch (GFW), which monitors the change of forests and creates data sets with remote sensing tools on a global scale.[79]

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[78] Each red symbol does not represent a single fire in that area, but rather a larger terrain that includes multiple settlements or rural areas. They may seem few numbered because some dots overlap, but they are actually more numerous than they appear here.

[79] Due to drought and extreme hot weather, one of the devastating effects of the global climate crisis, forest fires that took place in touristic cities of Turkey in the summer of 2021 caused great ecological destruction. Another indication that state-sponsored fires in Kurdistan are not included in the statistics or are ignored is the fact that forest fires that occur in Kurdish provinces with the same period as the forest fires in these touristic cities are not

In order to explain this inconsistency with the data, I followed the following method: First of all, I examined the data of each city I conducted interviews in; then, I classified it according to years under the title of "Forestry Statistics" within the scope of the official statistics program of the GDF between 2015 and 2020.[80] The reason why I chose these years, in particular, is because it is visibly noticeable that the vast majority of forest fires, which are systematically committed by the state, are not included in this data set in the cities where the conflict process, which restarted in July 2015 and has been continuing intensely until today (2021). For each city I interviewed in excel files showing the "distribution of forest fires by provinces", I collected the number of forest fires between 2015 and 2020 with a simple mathematical calculation. I then compared the resulting numbers with all active fire warnings detected for each city through the GFW between 20.07.2015 and 28.09.2020.[81]

In the database of the GDF, the causes of fires are classified under the headings of negligence, intentional (terror, intension/arson, and other), accident, unknown, and natural causes. This classification has been made not based on cities, but by dividing into regions to cover more than one city. The cities that are covered in my fieldwork are gathered under two separate regions, and they are also the cities that are both in the OHAL (state of emergency) region and the scope of the South Anatolian Project (SAP). Bingöl, Dersim (Tunceli) and Hakkari are affiliated to the Elazig regional directorate of forestry[82], while Diyarbakir, Mardin and Sirnak are affiliated to the Sanliurfa regional directorate of forestry.[83] Fires caused by armed conflicts

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even also reported by some Turkish opponent news agencies. Although forest fires as a result of military operations in the summer of 2021 were tried to be made visible by the local people through social media but the interventions to extinguish the fires took place weeks later. https://medyascope.tv/2021/07/30/turkiyenin-orman-yanginlari-bilancosu-son-bes-yilda-16-binden-fazla-yangin-cikti-istanbulun-10da-biri-kadar-ormanlik-alan-yok-oldu/ (Accessed: 30.07.2021)

[80] These data, which are shared publicly on the web page, which is inaccessible from time to time, are available between 2007-2020 as of the updated last access date. This data set, which is shared in Turkish and English, can be accessed here: https://www.ogm.gov.tr/tr/e-kutuphane/resmi-istatistikler. (Accessed: 04.09.2021).

[81] The reason why I determined the date range between these dates is that the armed conflict process started again after 20.07.2015, as can be seen in the next section. See: https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkeys-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer. (Accessed: 30.07.2021). The September 2020 limitation is due to the fact that forestry statistics are given until 2020 and the number of fires caused by agricultural reasons is high in October. This is evident from the very high fire rates in the provinces of Mardin and Diyarbakir. Therefore, I have not included October 2020 and the following months in order to make the fires caused by conflicts more understandable and to make the comparative analysis more consistent. However, all months between these years are included. Nevertheless, it should be noted that by looking at the GFW data, it is difficult to clearly determine what kind of fires these fires are and occurring for what reason.

[82] The number of cities under the Elazig Regional Directorate of Forestry is 8, namely Bingöl, Dersim (Tunceli), Hakkari,   Bitlis,   Elazig,   Malatya,   Mus   and   Van. https://elazigobm.ogm.gov.tr/Sayfalar/OrmanIsletmeMudurlukleri.aspx. (Accessed: 04.09.2021).

[83] The number of cities under Sanliurfa Regional Directorate of Forestry is 7, namely Diyarbakir, Mardin, Sirnak, Sanliurfa,   Siirt,   Batman   and   Adiyaman. https://sanliurfaobm.ogm.gov.tr/Sayfalar/OrmanIsletmeMudurlukleri.aspx. (Accessed: 04.09.2021).

and military operations, or fires caused by *Kalekol*s are not classified, and it is unclear whether such fires are included in the above-mentioned categories.[84]

In this sense, this ambiguity supports the two specific meanings of the term "simplification" that Scott refers to. Firstly, the necessity of the state official preparing the forest fire statistics to give them a "synoptic view of the ensemble" in the context of the facts it needs and secondly that "the grouping of synoptic facts necessarily entails collapsing or ignoring distinctions that might otherwise be relevant" (Scott 1998, 81). What is necessary facticity for preparing statistics on forest fires in northern Kurdistan is the legitimacy of military operations for security reasons and thus that forest fires should be accepted as normal.

This reflects the "synoptic view" of the state. The "distinctions that might otherwise be relevant" is mean that these regions are historical, natural and cultural habitat for the people and all other living beings and a high level of support for the guerrilla; therefore, it is "a geography intrinsically resistant to state control (nonstate space)" (Scott 2009, 48). As a result, these fires are neglected and ignored as they are included and standardized in other types of fires (such as unknown) in the official statistics of the state as biased and "utilitarian facts of simplification" (Scott 1998, 80). This state of ignoring, again following Scott (1998), is not only a means of "legibility" of the Kurdish community and the geography of Kurdistan but also a means of acting on the ultimate desire of the colonial governmentality, which tries to establish a permanent dominance in this geography by putting ecological destruction at its centre.

Although the content of unknown perpetrator fires has not been defined and detailed information of fires originating from terror has not been given, the number of all fire types is revealed by adding these two fire types to other fire types. Looking at the statistics of the two separate regions below, it is possible to say that the big visible difference that emerges from the comparison of the data is due to a colonial gaze towards the Kurdish geography.

According to the data of the GDF, between the years 2015-2020, the total number of fires in the Elazig region, which covers 8 Kurdish cities, is 560. The total number of fires in the cities

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[84] This type of fire, which came to the fore under public pressure, is generally defined as "fires that occur for an undetermined reason" in press releases by the Governorships, which are seen as the representatives of the state in cities. For the governor's statement regarding the forest fires that broke out as a result of the military operation in Cudi Mountain in Sirnak in July 2015, see; http://www.sirnak.gov.tr/basin-duyurusu-18072015. (Accessed: 04.09.2021).

of Bingöl, Tunceli and Hakkari included in my fieldwork is 203. But looking at the Global Forest Watch data, between 2015 and 2020, the total number of fires in only these 3 cities is 963. When I made a similar mathematical calculation for the other 3 cities within the scope of my fieldwork, it was observed that there were again great differences between the data given. Namely; According to the data of the GDF, the number of all fires in the Sanliurfa region, which covers 7 Kurdish cities between 2015 and 2020, is 807. The total number of fires in the cities of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Sirnak included in my fieldwork is 446. However, looking at the Global Forest Watch data, between 2015 and 2020, the total number of fires in only these 3 cities is 4,744.[85]

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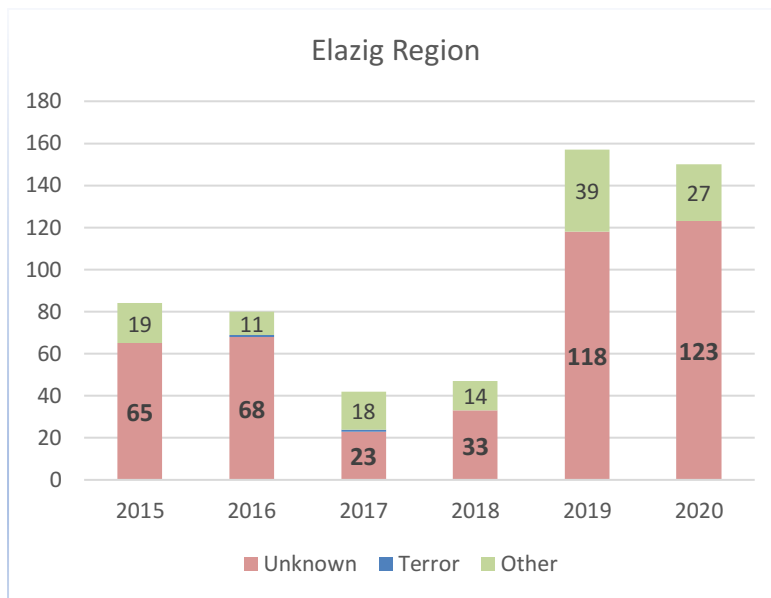
[85] The reason for the high number of fires here, as stated in the previous footnotes, is due to the controlled fires, especially in the provinces of Diyarbakir and Mardin, during the agricultural production periods to make the agricultural land suitable before the harvest.

Sanliurfa Region

Sirnak
2015-2020

HISTORICAL FIRE ALERTS IN SIRNAK, TURKEY

Between **20th of July 2015** and **28th of September 2020** Sirnak experienced a total of **778 VIIRS Alerts** fire alerts.

Fire alerts
Jun 06 2016   38 VIIRS alerts
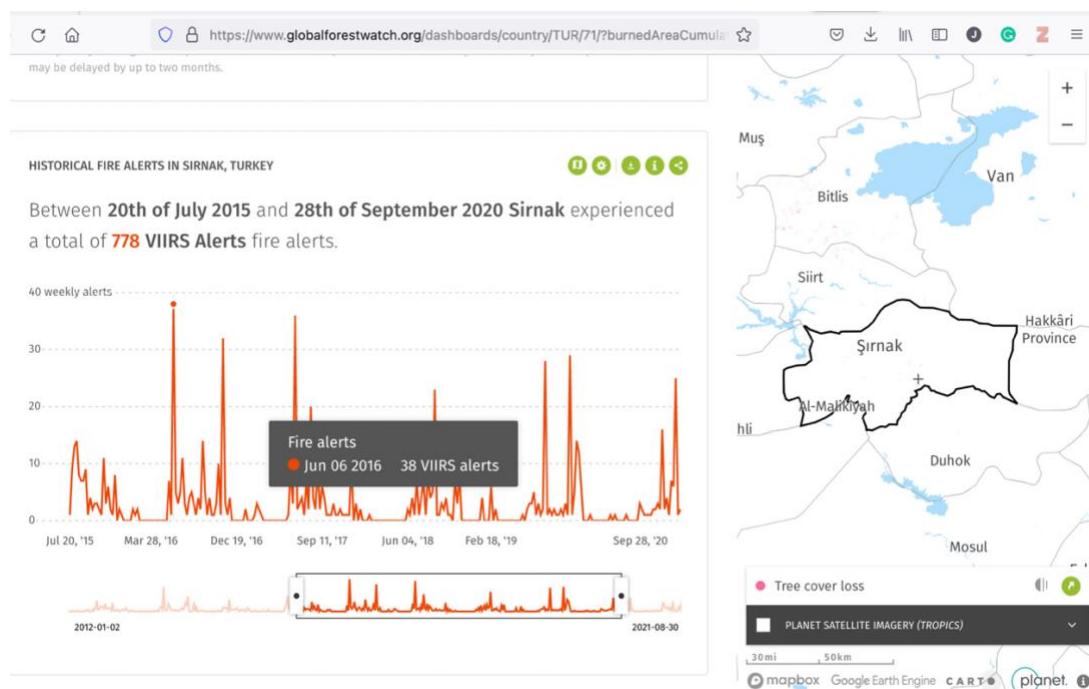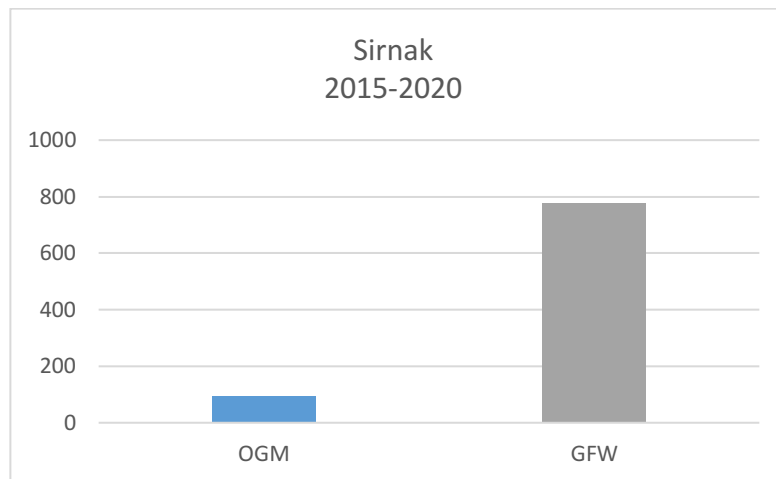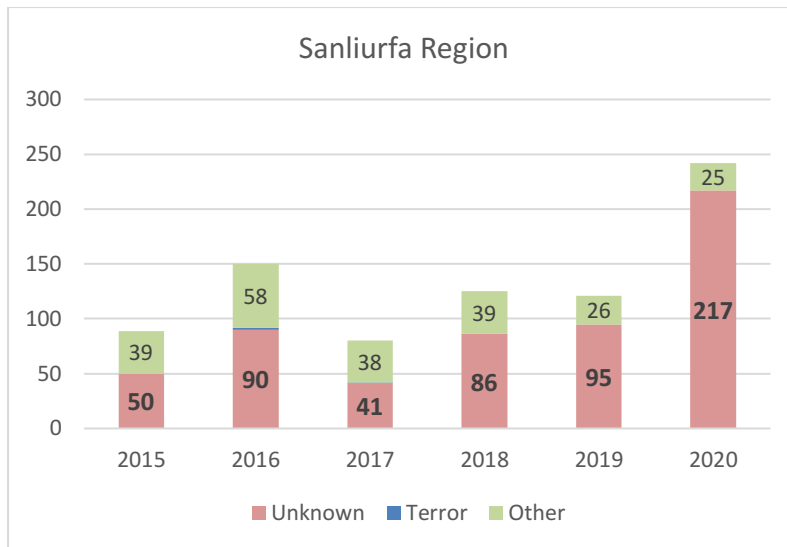
For example, the chart above shows the number of fires in Sirnak province between 2015-2020. Between these years, 93 fires were recorded according to the data of the General Directorate of Forestry (GDF), while 778 fires were recorded according to the data of the Global Forest Watch (GFW). It is possible to conclude from here that, even if forest fires as a result of military operations are not included, the General Directorate of Forestry either did not share many forest fire data caused by other reasons or did not give accurate figures.[86]

The statistics say that even if some details are ignored in order to minimize the visible big difference (for example, the fires in some provinces in October due to harvest production), still the figures are not very close to each other. This shows that the GDF, which is a state institution or apparatus, either does not give the real figures or that many forest fires in Kurdish provinces are ignored by not being recorded. As a result, I tried to show how the colonial governmentality in northern Kurdistan was reflected in the statistics through forest fires.

One of the observations made through the interviews about why and how forest fires broke out is that the majority of the interviewees said that the reason for these fires was that the forest areas were cleared with firearms by burning or cutting the trees close to the *Kalekol*s for security reasons.

> A policy that has been going on for years is that forest areas in rural areas that are within sight for security reasons at strategic locations for the state are routinely burned down every year. This is done with or without conflict. Although nature renews itself within a year, these areas are burned down again *(Interview,Diyarbakir, 06.07.2020, Birhat)*.

> The places where the fires broke out, the areas within the firing range of the mortar shells fired from the Kalekol's *(Interview, Hakkari,15.02.2020, Mervan)*.

> Compared to the 1990s, I can say that since then, only in the peace process for two years did we not witness systematic, state-sponsored forest fires. Apart from that, we always saw fires around Bagok and Omeryan (in Mardin) every year. These fires were also started to clear the surrounding area of the military station for visibility, and those fires were reaching the forests in the mountains. Sometimes, fires broke out because the soldiers bombarded the area with heavy weapons or helicopters, claiming that they were fired by the guerrilla *(Interview, Mardin, 18.03.2020, Baran)*.

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[86] Source: Global Forest Watch, Turkey, Sirnak, https://gfw.global/30xRul0. General Directorate of Forestry official statistics, https://www.ogm.gov.tr/tr/e-kutuphane/resmi-istatistikler.

The most common tree species in the forests of Kurdistan are Oak and Acorn trees. The re-growth of trees in the burned and bombed areas, their strong roots and long standing with their resistant structure, are identified with the centuries-long struggle for existence of the Kurds in daily narratives in the region.[87] As the interviewees and the local news confirm, when I was conducting my interviews, the oak trees in the region were cut down by the village guards with heavy machinery, in the absence of direct burning.[88] The interviewees in Sirnak and Dersim say that the trees around the Kalekols were cut down in order to ease the soldiers' vision and that these trees were sold to be used in different cities. The interesting thing here is that the Provincial Directorate of Forestry, which is the state institution responsible for the maintenance and protection of forests, accepts that these trees are cut down to open roads and areas suitable for the Kalekols.[89]

> It doesn't matter if it's near or far. Depends on the soldiers' vision zone. These men are trying to make visible what is invisible to them. In the last 20-30 years, these forested areas have been systematically and gradually destroyed. I think the re-appearance of trees in these areas is like a miracle. The roots of oak trees (*dara berû in Kurdish)* are very strong, no matter how hard they burn, they still grow. Moreover, they cut all the forested areas close to the Kalekols without even needing to burn them. Cudi Mountain has been shaved from one end to the other; the local people are offered money for tree cutting and because they do not accept it, most of the tree cutting is carried out by the village guards *(Interview, Şırnak, 20.02.2020, Rifat).*

> I am one of those who evacuated the village in Dersim in 1994 and settled in another village. The state sees forests as a threat to itself. In all villages, the state brought workers from Palu, Elazig to shave and cut the spaces that almost every family had designated as copse. They plundered the forest and took away the trees, not even giving them to the villagers living here. The regions where tree cutting is not possible are the spaces where it is bombed from the air and burned. Since it is already a restricted or forbidden area, no one can intervene. Complete shaving and cutting is done on the areas where the *Kalekols* are made. There is a practice of burning and destroying like enemy soil with a hostile approach *(Interview, Tunceli (Dersim), 21.10.2020, Kenan).*

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[87] "Oak Tree", 15.05.2018, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/352455/mese-agaci. (Accessed: 10.08.2021). "Branches of oak tree", 03.01.2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/mese-agacinin-dallari-972689/. (Accessed: 10.08.2021).

[88] "Cudi Dağı bölgesinde Kalekolların çevresinde ağaçlar kesiliyor." (Trees are cut down around the Kalekols in the Cudi Mountain region), 16.05.2020, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/404892/cudi-dagi-bolgesindeki-kalekollarin-etrafinda-agac-kiyimi-yapiliyor (Accessed: 20.09.2020).

[89] "Cudi daginda kalekollar için hergün ağaç kesiliyor" (Trees are cut down every day for Kalekols on Cudi Mountain), 19.05.2020, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/405131/cudi-daginda-kalekollar-icin-her-gun-agac-kesiliyor (Accessed: 20.09.2020).

Satellite image 1: Clearing the forested area around the Kalekol in Dersim by burning or clear-cutting.

The second observation is that it is perceived as a systematic and conscious state policy that forest fires coincide with the military operations that start in the spring every year and intensify in the summer and continue until September-October.

> I think that these fires were started systematically and deliberately due to security policies. These fires, which started at the end of May, increase in summer but continue until autumn. In this period when military operations are also intense, the high summer temperature and windy weather are also calculated to spread the fire *(Interview, 05.05.2020, Diyarbakir, Vedat)*.

> It is necessary to evaluate it over the war process. The use of firearms causes the forests to burn, whether it is intended or not, it is more likely that it was done deliberately *(Interview, 20.05.2020, Mardin, Egid)*.

> Every summer, forest areas are routinely burned under the name of "Fighting Against Terrorism" not only in Cudi Mountain but also in every mountain in Şırnak, such as Gabar, Besta Dereler and Herekol. Between 2006 and 2013 forests were also burned, but we could not make them visible. Its visibility after 2015 was partly due to the raised awareness of civil society. Since trustees were appointed to municipalities, local people were organizing themselves to put out the fire. There were times when I personally went and put a fire out. We go to put out fires every year, and it looks like we will go this year as well *(Interview, 20.02.2020, Sirnak, Rifat)*.

I think these fires were just started for political reasons. According to its own mentality, the state considers normal the burning of forested areas by bombing the spaces where they think the guerrillas are hiding in mountainous areas. However, people living in Kurdistan, especially in Dersim, in the thousand-year-old Turkish state tradition and the hundred-year-old Republic regime, have witnessed many times that the geography was counteracted. Therefore, it is necessary to see these forest fires not only against the guerrilla but also as part of a systematic destruction *(Interview, Erdal, Dersim, 20.12.2020).*

As a rough terrain form, forests hide guerrillas in conflict zones from aerial surveillance and exterminating devices, such as Armed Drones in Turkish SİHA and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems (*in Turkish IHA*)[90] provide camouflage to protect them from air attacks and a living space due to natural ecological diversity. In this regard, another indication that the intense fires in the cities in the conflict zone are caused by the state is that the figures given under the heading "Terror" as the cause of the fires in forestry statistics are both low.[91] Moreover, it is not reasonable and possible to assume that the guerrillas would destroy their own living spaces. In fact, on the one hand, the guerrillas have a lot of benefit from the forests in the war that has been going on for about 40 years; on the other hand, the network of relations and support established with the people of the region through ideological, logistics and blood ties is high. Therefore, this assumption is irrational and improbable or leads to the conclusion that it is even debatable.

Two studies based on remote sensing method and eye-witness reports on Dersim (Tunceli) (Jongerden et al. 2007; van Etten et al. 2008) which inspired this research study, demonstrate that deforestation practices due to village evacuations are the result of conscious government

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[90] It is possible to say that the war between the Turkish State and the PKK has evolved into a new technology-based phase with the more intense use of armed drones in the last 10 years. See: "Turkey-PKK 'drone wars' escalate", 18.09.2017, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2017/09/turkey-pkk-drone-conflict-escalates.html. (Accessed: 20.08.2021). This also caused the PKK to make tactical changes in technology-heavy warfare. See: "Drones: A new tactic in PKK's armed struggle against Turkey?", 14.06.2021, https://www.rudaw.net/english/analysis/12062021. (Accessed: 20.08.2021). Also, about the deaths of many civilians living in Kurdish settlements in northern Iraq, as part of the operations carried out against the PKK, by these armed drones, see: "Kurds in 'mountain prison' cower as Turkey fights PKK with drones in Iraq" 04.04.2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/04/iraq-turkey-pkk-drones-kurds-kurdistan. (Accessed: 20.08.2021).

[91] According to the statistics of the General Directorate of Forestry, between 2015 and 2020, the number of fires caused by "terrorism" actions in 15 cities within the scope of Elazig and Sanliurfa Regional Directorates of Forestry is 8 in total. No clear information has shared about when and where started the terror-related fires, which are in the category of 'intentional fires'.

policies aiming at controlling the rebellion, separating the guerrillas from their logistical support areas, and destroying their "natural resources" (van Etten et al. 2008, 1796).

> I think that forest fires in this geography were started within the scope of military operation rather than creating a basis for HEPP constructions and mineral exploration activities. I think that it was directly launched to destroy the living quarters and logistics areas of PKK guerrillas, especially the guerrillas who were trapped in certain areas during the operations (Interview, Hakkari, Mervan, 03.03.2020).

The destruction of large forest areas not only destroys an environment where guerrillas can hide, but also forces many people living in the targeted area to migrate. Therefore, it also manifests itself as a tool of both physical and psychological violence against the local population who indirectly or directly supports the guerrillas. In a study conducted by Joost Jongerden et al. (2007) using the remote sensing method, it was stated that the forest fires that broke out as a result of the bombardment of the Turkish Armed Forces in Dersim (Tunceli) in 1994 destroyed 26.6% of the forest area close to the villages. The study further stated:

> The more severe burning around destroyed and evacuated villages is important evidence for the intentionality behind the use of fire against civilian populations and underscores the claim of human rights abuse (Jongerden et al. 2007, 13).

The practice of forcing the local population to migrate, as an indicator of physical violence, occurs when forest fires in other forest areas, especially in rural settlements declared as "temporary military security zones", destroy agricultural lands that make the economy in rural areas possible.[92] As it can be understood from the local narratives, it should be noted that the policy of depopulation of the region, which was realized through the evacuation of villages in the 90s, restarted with varying degrees of destruction by 2005 with forest fires, HPP constructions and mineral exploration activities, and these practices continued in a systematic way since 2015.

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[92] Many interviewees state that the villagers whose land was burned due to the forest fires reaching their agricultural and pasture areas had to sell their animals due to the high cost of imported feed products, and agriculture and animal husbandry were being tried to be finished. See, HDP Report, "Forest Fires as an Extension of War Strategy: Observations and Technical Reviews on Forest Fires in Kurdistan in July-August 2015", 21.08.2015, p.38. https://yesilgazete.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Temmuz-%E2%80%93-A%C4%9Futos-2015%E2%80%99te-K%C3%BCrdistan%E2%80%99daki-Orman-Yang%C4%B1nlar%C4%B1na-%C4%B0li%C5%9Fkin-G%C3%B6zlemler-ve-Teknik-%C4%B0nceleme-Raporu-%E2%80%93-Sava%C5%9F-Stratejisi%E2%80%99nin-Bir-Uzant%C4%B1s%C4%B1-Olarak-Orman-Yang%C4%B1nlar%C4%B1.pdf.
"Systematic ecocide in Kurdistan – II", 08.07.2020, https://anfturkce.com/toplum-ekolojI/kuerdistan-da-sistematik-eko-kirim-ii-143201. (Accessed: 20.07.2021).

During the period I witnessed (in the summer of 2016), soldiers had come for a military operation. This fire occurred at the time of operation. The crops of the peasants were also burned. The grass they cut for the animals was also burned. The beehives of the villagers engaged in beekeeping were also burned (Interview, Hakkari, Mervan, 03.03.2020).

15 thousand acres of a village of 70 thousand acres is an agricultural land, and when you consider that this is the case in other villages, the whole geography has the potential to contribute to the people of the region in economic terms. However, they ripped holes everywhere, destroyed pasture areas to open coal mines, the number of those engaged in animal husbandry decreased, and this place turned into a commercial region won by private companies (Interview, Sirnak, 28.03.2020, Metin).

Considering all that has been done, it seems to me that the direction of leaving the people here economically needy seems more dominant. Unemployment is so high, villages are under siege and they are trying to be evacuated. Animal husbandry is coming to end. All interconnected policies, interventions that affect each other. People have stopped farming. The animals have been sold. Those who migrated to the cities either sold their lands or rented them with low rates. People were forced to do this because of economic obligations (Interview, Hakkari, 20.12.2020, Rubar).

Many "temporary military security zones", which were said to have been declared "temporarily" in rural settlements and were the practice of the state of emergency in the 90s, are permanently closed to the entrance of civilians indefinitely during the process.[93] Not only in Sirnak, but also in other cities, such as Dersim, the occurrence of many fires in the areas closed to civilians and the prevention of intervention in these fires "rule out" the possibility of fires caused by civilians such as negligence, intended (like arson) and agricultural causes (Dinc et al., 2021). From this point of view, as I will discuss in the next chapter, it is possible to claim that fires caused by negligence, such as picnics, shepherd fires, and stubble, are less likely to occur in these special security zones where the entrances and exits are under control and even where the food embargo is imposed. In other words, the narratives in the interviews, the testimonies in the news, and the reports of the ecology movements and political parties active in the region demonstrate that the majority of the fires were started by the military forces.[94]

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[93] This topic will be discussed in detail in the next (Kalekols) section.

[94] HDP Report, "Forest Fires as an Extension of War Strategy: Observations and Technical Reviews on Forest Fires in Kurdistan in July-August 2015", 21.08.2015, https://yesilgazete.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Temmuz-%E2%80%93-A%C4%9Futos-2015%E2%80%99te-K%C3%BCrdistan%E2%80%99daki-Orman-Yang%C4%B1nlar%C4%B1na-%C4%B0li%C5%9Fkin-G%C3%B6zlemler-ve-Teknik-%C4%B0nceleme-Raporu-%E2%80%93-Sava%C5%9F-Stratejisi%E2%80%99nin-Bir-Uzant%C4%B1s%C4%B1-Olarak-Orman-Yang%C4%B1nlar%C4%B1.pdf (Accessed: 20.05.2020). Mesopotamian Ecology Movement Report, "The Recent Forest Fires in North Kurdistan

The third important observation about why forest fires in Kurdistan should be handled from the perspective of coloniality is the prohibition of entry and exit to areas of fire for "security" reasons and the absence of any intervention by state institutions to extinguish these fires. Moreover, the fact that the local people, who wanted to extinguish the fires, were physically prevented by the security forces in the name of preventing the fires from spreading to a wider area and reaching agricultural lands; however, this is an indicator that the Turkish state looks at northern Kurdistan as a colonial geography. A current and striking example of this issue is that in March 2020, in Sirnak, 45 forest fires occurred between June and October in many regions that were inside the "temporary military security zone". The commander of the Gormec military post located on the slopes of Gabar Mountain, prevented the fire from being extinguished by saying to the villagers who wanted to put it out, "The fires will continue as long as the Gormec military post is here because there are artillery shots everywhere".[95]

Demhat summarizes how the state simply ignores the forest fires by referring to the denial or refute[96] of the fires that broke out as a result of the military operations in the forest area called Alibogazi in the Hozat district of Dersim (Tunceli) in August 2018; "The state never intervened in the fires, nor did it admit that there was a fire" *(Interview- 28.09.2020-Dersim).*

> The state, with all its institutions (*or apparatus*), prevents the civilian population and the municipality in places where there is a fire, and states that it will use physical force by the soldiers in case of opposition *(Interview, Mardin, 20.05.2020, Agit).*
>
> There has been no state intervention in the rural areas, but the state may allow the fire brigade to go into streets close to the city center. However, these interventions are also the result of voluntary work lasting for days and the initiatives of HDP deputies trying to raise public awareness. They never let the villagers put out the fire *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 20.10.2020, Mazlum).*

(South Eastern of Turkey)", 12.10.2015, https://www.hasankeyfgirisimi.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Forest-Fires-Report_2015-10.pdf (Accessed: 20.09.2020). CHP Report, "Temporary Military Security Zones Security Zones have been declared illegally, their duration is arbitrarily extended", 16.08.2015, https://t24.com.tr/haber/chp-tunceli-raporu-ozel-guvenlik-bolgeleri-yasaya-aykiri-sekilde-ilan-edildi-suresi-keyfi-olarak-uzatiliyor,306419 (Accessed: 20.09.2020).

[95] "As long as the Görmec Battalion is here, the fire will continue", 21.10.2020, https://yeniyasamgazetesi2.com/gormec-taburu-burada-oldugu-surece-yangin-devam-edecek/. (Accessed: 29.10.2020).

[96] Forest fires in the mentioned area became the agenda with thousands of people voicing their demands for emergency extinguishing under the hashtag "Dersim is Burning" via the social media platform Twitter. Thereupon, the Governorship of Dersim (Tunceli) made a statement on its official website that "the news titled 'Dersim is Burning' does not reflect the truth and the photographs used in the aforementioned news do not belong to our city". See; http://www.tunceli.gov.tr/basin-aciklamasi-1212. Ignoring the fires with this statement caused reactions. 16.08.2018, https://bianet.org/english/environment/200052-tunceli-governorship-says-no-fire-ferhat-tunc-shares-video (Accessed: 28.09.2020).

Aycan Irmez (36), who was elected as a deputy from Sirnak province between 2015-2019 and representing her city in the parliament, interprets as the colonizer's insulting to the colonized one that the parliamentary questions about forest fires in the region remain unanswered, and moreover, the state officials' doesn't recognition deputies even though they were elected with a large majority of votes.

> When I was a deputy, the other deputies of our party and I asked many questions to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, but they were not answered in any way. There was no interlocutor in front of us. While we were in the fire area, the provincial governor and district governor, who represented the state, were not answering our calls. While firefighting planes were immediately sent to the forest fires in the West, the response given to us by the low-ranking state officials was the result of our intense efforts; It was like "we don't have a plane". However, we knew that there were planes in Diyarbakir and Gaziantep, the closest metropolitan cities *(Interview, Sirnak, 18.03.2020).*

A comparative explanation of the state institutions' non-intervention in forest fires in northern Kurdistan is made through the emergency reaction of the same institutions to fires in western Turkey, especially in tourism cities.

> People are making great efforts to extinguish the fire. Here, even in cases where fire intervention is very rare after days, this intervention is done slowly. There is no emergency action as in forest fires in the Aegean Region or the Mediterranean. We witness many times that the state mobilizes all its institutions/possibilities to extinguish forest fires in the west of the country *(Interview, Mardin, Mehmet Ali- 20.05.2020).*

> As you know, as per my profession, I must say that we are witnessing the burning of mountainous forest areas along a line starting from Dersim to Bingöl, Diyarbakir, Şırnak and then to Southern Kurdistan. We can even include the forested areas within the borders of Southern Kurdistan (Kurdistan Region of Iraq/KR-I). Except for the indipendent or dissident media, especially the Kurdish media, it is seen that the forest fires in this region are never newsworthy and do not take place in the mainstream or Turkish media. However, in the live broadcasts of the mainstream television channels, we see how emergency interventions are made with aerial extinguishing vehicles even to small-scale forest fires in western Turkey *(Interview, Diyarbakir, Felat- 09.02.2020).*

> These fires, which are systematically started every summer, resemble the practice of the evacuation of the villages in Kurdistan in the 90s. It is slightly different from the causes of the fires in western Turkey. While in the West the burned lands are used for investment purposes, such as building a hotel, in Kurdistan they are used for depopulation *(Interview, Mardin, Duygu- 13.05.2020).*

A particular issue to be mentioned here is that the ecological destruction (burning of forests, the use of chemical weapons, etc.) that the Turkish military forces carried out as a military strategy in the war against the PKK is not only within its borders. Due to the fact that the majority of the PKK's military power is located in different mountainous and forest areas within the borders of Iraqi Kurdistan, some of the forest fires are sometimes located in northern Iraq (South Kurdistan) and eastern Kurdistan which is the western part of Iran which is adjacent to the borders of northern Kurdistan (Zwijnenburg 2018).

For example, in August 2018, when data on the relation between forest fires and military checkpoints/outpost were collected for this research study, according to social media reports and news, it was stated that there was a fire near the military outpost in Çukurca-Hakkari, which is within the scope of my field work and is on the Iraqi border of Turkey.[97]

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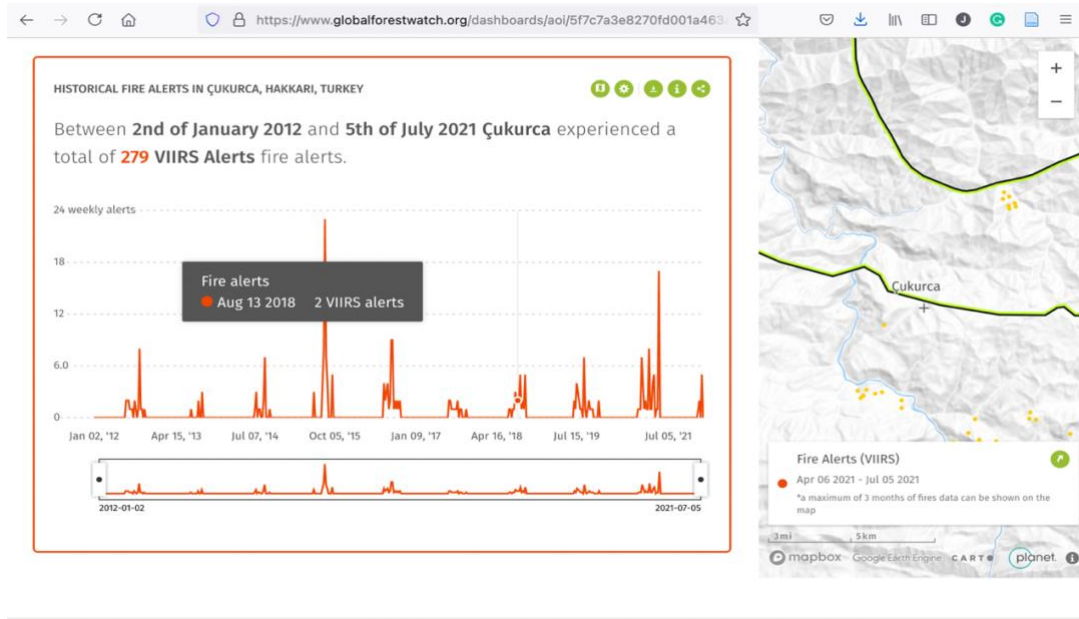
[97] "Çukurca'da askeri üs bölgesi orman yangını" (Forest fire in the military base area in Çukurca) 08.08.2018, https://www.dha.com.tr/yurt/cukurcada-askeri-us-bolge-yakininda-orman-yangini/haber-1593404 (Accessed: 15.08.2018).

Source: Twitter, Hashtag #Cukurca #Hakkari #Ormanyangini #2018

As said by eyewitnesses, no extinguishing operations were carried out in the forest fire that broke out near Karataş military post in Üzümlü village of Hakkari's Çukurca district.[98] According to the forest fire warnings of Global Forest Watch, 4 forest fires occurred in Çukurca between 6-13 August 2018.[99] Just when you search for the keywords Çukurca and forest fire on Twitter, you can come across the news of forest fires that took place in the same region every summer between 2012-2021. It is possible to apply this method in other cities where forest fires occur.

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[98] https://twitter.com/Gasteci_Eskin/status/1027271227717640197, 08.08.2018, (Accessed: 15.08.2018).

[99] In order to reach the data set of forest fires that took place in Çukurca, Hakkari and also in other parts of Kurdistan, a more detailed view can be found here. https://gfw.global/3jOAXk2 (Accessed: 15.08.2018).
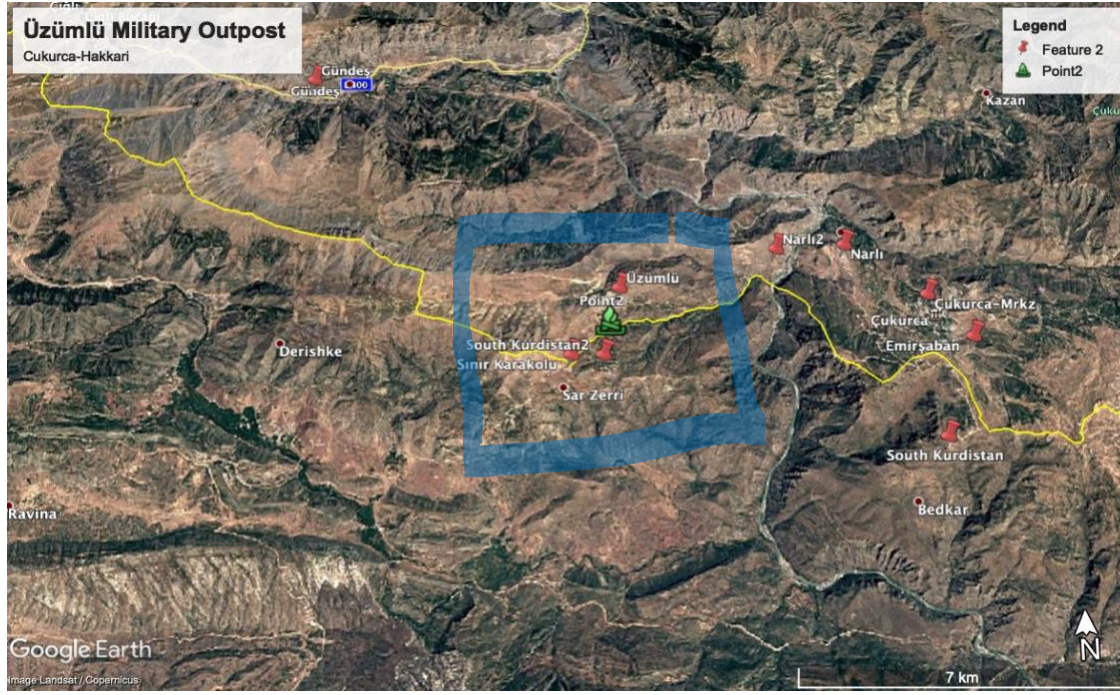
Satellite image 2: The location of the Üzümlü military border post.

The location of the Üzümlü military border post in Çukurca, which is mentioned in the narratives of eyewitnesses and in the news, is within the blue area on Google Earth. The map below (Map 6) is taken from the military map shown on the website of the Gendarmerie Commands. Üzümlü military post and other military areas are shown as red zones. Thanks to these military maps, a map showing the general distribution of *Kalekols* was created via GIS, as will be elaborated on in the next section.

Map 6: Military map of the Gendarmerie General Command.

Satellite Image 3

Using the Sentinel Hub Colour Infrared vegetation index (band 8.4.4) on August 08, 2018, it can be seen that the surface appearance of the forested areas burned at that date is darkened.

Satellite Image 4

The two satellite image above (*Image 3*) and below (*Image 4*) are the view of the area where the fire took place with two different indexes dated 13.08.2018. *The image 5* in below is a normal satellite view. The extent of the destruction caused by these fires, which broke out in places close to the Üzümlü military post and was brought under control after about a week, and the change in the burned areas can be understood by looking at two different dates.


Satellite Image 5

It is a well-known fact that Turkey has bombed forested and mountainous areas with cross-border military operations in the long-standing conflicts between Turkish army forces and the

PKK[100] in Kurdistan Region of Iraq which is located in northern Iraq, consisting of three governorates: Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. These cross-border military operations, which the Turkish state describes as "a synchronized war against terror" against PKK guerrillas, have caused the death of many civilians as well as the destruction of forested areas in the region.[101]

It is seen in the news of that period that forest fires caused by the "synchronous war" carried out by Turkey going beyond its borders continued simultaneously in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), or southern Kurdistan.[102] Satellite images taken in August and September 2018 from this region bordering Çukurca show that forest fires broke out because of aerial bombardment along a line from KR-I to the Kurdish regions in western Iran.
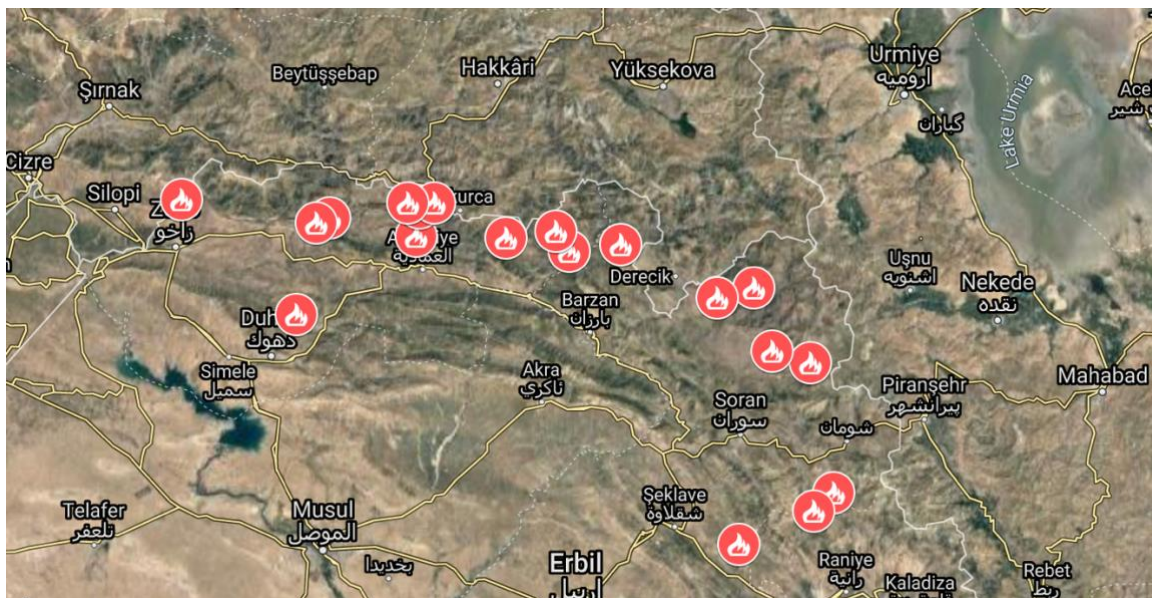
Map 7: "Burning Borderlands: Open-Source Monitoring of Conflict-Caused Wildfires in Iraq"
(Zwijnenburg 2018)

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[100] "Turkey bombs Kurdish rebels in North Iraq" (Reuters, 16.12.2007), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-iraq-strikes-idUSL1653612720071216 (Accessed: 20.09.2020). "Turkish warplanes bombed a Kurdish village in Silemani" (Rudaw, 27.11.2019), https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/271120193 (Accessed: 20.09.2020).

[101] "Kurdish civilians under fire as Turkey bombs PKK in Iraq" (Reuters, 20.08.2015), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-kurds-idUSKCN0QP1N320150820 (Accessed: 20.09.2020). "Turkey bombs Christian villages in Iraq's Kurdish region" (Jerusalem Post, 26.05.2021), https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/turkey-bombs-christian-villages-in-iraqs-kurdish-region-analysis-669214 (Accessed: 23.06.2021)

[102] "Sınır ötesi hava operasyonu: PKK kampları vuruldu" (Cross-border air operation: PKK camps hit) 13.08.2018, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/sinir-otesine-hava-harekati-40927555. (Accessed: 23.06.2021).

Below are satellite images dated 8 August 2018 and 7 September 2018. It shows the change of forest areas in mountainous regions in KR-I bordering Çukurca within one month. It has been observed that more forested areas were burned during this period. In fact, in the study of Rasul et al. (2021), which showed the general distribution of burnt areas across Iraq between 2001-2019 with the remote sensing method, it was found that the most burned areas are the forests and agricultural areas included in KR-I which located in the north and northern-east of the country. During the period covering the study, 2019 was when the burned areas increased about eight times compared to the annual average and the highest amount of burned area (16,180 km2).

Although Rasul et al. (2021) stated that as of 2014 most of the burned agricultural areas in the northern and north-western parts of Iraq were caused by the conflicts between the Iraqi government and ISIS, his comment is not sufficient to explain the reason why the majority of the fires took place between 2018-2019 in the KR-I. This gap is complemented by Eklund et al.'s (2021) case study on fires, conflict and soil geopolitics in KR-I. This study states that some of the fires were made to clear the land for agriculture or housing. In addition, it also points out that the fires in forested lands and areas with rough topography, which were coded as areas with other vegetation rather than sparse and agricultural lands, were caused by the conflicts between the Turkish state and the PKK.

In addition, the study shows that both the conflict data between 2015-2019 and the fire cases were parallel and the burnt areas in KR-I reached the highest levels in 2018 and 2019, with the increasing course of the war between the Turkish state and the PKK, which restarted in 2015 (Eklund et al. 2021, 11). Therefore, two conclusions can be drawn in the light of this data. First, the accuracy and reliability of the maps created by the remote sensing method are supported, and secondly, it is seen that the Turkish state not only started forest fires within its own borders (in northern Kurdistan) but also caused ecological destruction in KR-I (southern Kurdistan) by breaching the border.
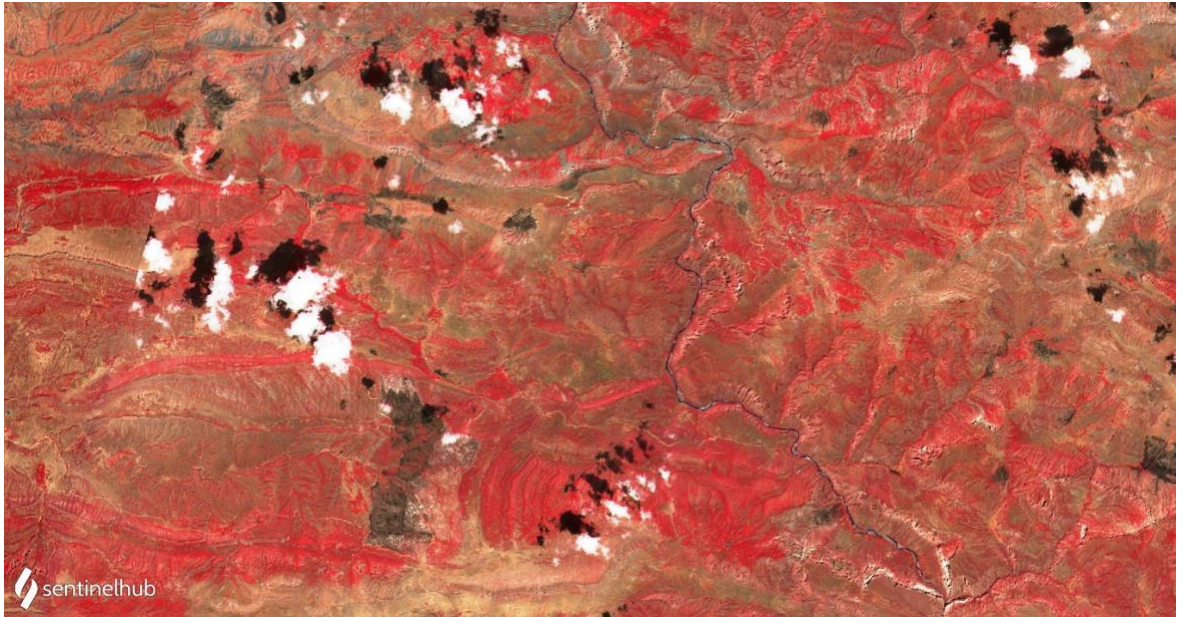
Satellite Image 6 : 08.08.2018

Satellite Image 7: 07.09.2018

Aside from the debate whether the conflicts between the PKK and the Turkish state are non-international armed conflicts, there are many arguments that the Turkish state violated international humanitarian law and the law of war, which is the component of international law that regulates the conditions for war *(jus ad bellum)* and the conduct of warring parties *(jus in bello)* (Ruys 2008; Yildiz and Breau 2010; Bagheri 2017). For example, Amnesty International defines the Turkish state's airstrikes against civilians in the Kurdish regions beyond its borders

with the claims of shooting PKK members in "terrorist camps" as "unlawful attack" or "unlawful killing"[103].

In addition, the bombing of mountainous and forested areas close to settlements inside and outside its borders during the warfare also means a violation of international conventions on the protection and preservation of the natural environment[104]. All these violations constitute an important aspect worth researching in depth. While the dimension of international law and its violations is not part of my research design, further research can surely benefit from taking it into account.

Eyewitnesses in the cities that I conducted interviews in say that the intervention in the forest is not only carried out using firearms but also other techniques for deforestation. The most common technique is the deliberate release of a large number of native and non-native herbivorous insects, reptiles, and pathogenic microorganism species, which are often referred to as "biological invasions" in African countries, into natural forests or areas where agroforestry is made in order to damage native and exotic trees (Graziosi et al. 2020).

Invasive plant pathogens and herbivorous arthropods also pose a devastating threat to the integrity of natural habitats, the productivity of agricultural crops, and the sustainability of rural economies, as are the damage done to villagers' farmland by fires because of military operations or deliberately by military forces (Fisher et al. 2012). Of course, how these species are seen in the rural areas of Kurdistan and how they have damaged the environment necessitate further empirical research, the interviewees claim that such destructive interventions for the deforestation of the region have brought the agriculture and animal husbandry activities to an end.

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[103] "Fresh evidence of casualties underscores need for impartial investigation into Turkish airstrikes in Kandil Mountains", Amnesty International, 11.08.2015, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/08/fresh-evidence-of-casualties-underscores-need-for-impartial-investigation-into-turkish-airstrikes-in-kandil-mountains/. (Accessed: 26.06.2021).

[104] To see more details: Article 44: Due Regard for the Natural Environment in Military Operations, the Rule of International Humanitarian Law and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule44. (Accessed: 26.06.2021). Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/guidelines-protection-natural-environment-armed-conflict-rules-and-recommendations-relating. (Accessed: 26.06.2021).

While forest fires were being carried out in different areas in 1993, after a while, the locust swarm, and the method of drying trees by releasing caterpillars were also tried, beyond burning. A large area was quickly dried in Ovacik-Dersim. The rooting method was also tried, there are many oak trees around, so they tried to uproot it, but it remained local *(Interview, Dersim (Tunceli), Demhat- 28.09.2020).*

The method of drying trees has been done in recent years as in the 1990s. Larvas (worms) are released into the forests, while all the forests were green in the summer, the image turned red more and more. They did it to make it difficult for the guerrilla to come, but the villagers living in the villages were adversely affected, the old people were seriously damaged, and the diseases increased. A red-colored, poisonous long and thick snake species that does not exist in this region began to be seen; it is said that the state brought and left them. Now the number of these snakes has decreased, they could not adapt much, but this method is tried from time to time *(Interview-Dersim, Firat, 23.12.2020).*

I do bio-farming in Dersim, according to the observations of the farmers, the yeast of these soils has deteriorated. We can see that these lands have undergone a very serious evolution in the last 40 years. The constructions of HPPs, the cyanide used in gold exploration disrupted the chemistry of the soil. We find it very difficult to reproduce the local seed; agricultural products do not grow as they did before, and they are rotten. I'm summarizing all this as the corpse doesn't rot away in the grave *(Interview, Dersim, Erdal- 20.12.2020).*

Using data through the accounts of citizens and local journalists, as well as open-source images provided by organizations like NASA, Google Earth, and Sentinel Hub, has helped illustrate the scale of forest fires in northern Kurdistan and its border regions. Although it is difficult to determine the cause of each fire, it is confirmed by both witness accounts and media reports that a significant portion of the fires detected were most likely caused by military action.

The narratives of participants in this chapter not only reveal the impact of armed conflicts on the environment and the extent of ecological destruction through the burning of forest lands, but also as other deforestation practices like the uprooting and sale of trees, the use of poisonous reptiles and caterpillars shows that the important role these practices played in colonial governmentality. HPP and Kalekol constructions, mineral exploration/prospecting activities and tree cutting, by which state-sponsored capital groups are among the important issues to be investigated.

The society in western Turkey does not react adequately to forest fires, remains silent and is considered 'normal' since these fires take place in a "terror area" which regularly erupts every summer in northern Kurdistan, it shows that there is a point of view that approves the colonial

political rationality of the state, which deals with deforestation activities from a security perspective, like HPPs.

5.4. High security military posts (*Kalekol*) and checkpoints

How and by which methods are surveillance practices and mechanisms intervening in nature and space as a colonial domination strategy? In this thesis, I consider hitherto unexamined aspects of the Turkish state's physical restriction of Kurds' freedom of movement, using myriad surveillance and control mechanisms such as roadblocks, military watchtowers, high security military and police checkpoints, headquarters, and a special set of military laws that support all other systems.

Before researching these structures, which I call *military infrastructural projects*, the existing data was in the scope of the reports published by human rights associations and the information made available by local media agencies. In this study, I conducted interviews to learn how direct is these structures' relationship with HPP projects and forest fires that occur systematically, as well as how these surveillance mechanisms keep the population under control, what the local people feel, what they experience in their everyday life practices and whether they exhibited resistance practices. My aim is to capture the characteristics of these surveillance practices in northern Kurdistan under the colonial rule of the Turkish state and to present their diversity as a contribution to the colonialism literature.

It has been observed that issues of information, power and control in the field of Middle East studies are being more rigorously discussed since the events of September 11, 2001 a period in which matters relating to the determination of northern countries' boundaries gained crucial importance (Dunn Cavelty and Balzacq 2017). For migrants and refugees from the Global South, globalized surveillance and racist mobility regimes are becoming increasingly prominent by way of increasing passport controls, visa limitations and airport security checks (Donnan and Wilson 2001; Andreas and Biersteker 2003).

Geospatial policies, surveillance practices and these impacts on population management and space control are important reference points in colonialism studies. It should be noted that although some commonalities between the functioning and practices of the colonial governmentality in Kurdistan and the Israeli-Palestinian example (Weizman 2007; Mansbach

2009; Rijke and Minca 2019) can be found and shall be referred to, both contexts carry distinct characteristics and differences in rationality that limit comparison. As stated in the related section of HPPs, it is not argued here that the colonial situation at the centre of this thesis is analogous to the Israel-Palestine setting, but rather that the Turkish state has adopted colonial techniques used by the Israeli state and applied them against the Kurdish population.

Those who visit northern Kurdistan can witness first-hand what is thoroughly known to the local population, namely how the Turkish state aims to control the population in the region through monitoring and surveillance. On the one hand, adding to "physical violence instruments" (Braverman 2011; Kössner 2015) such as roadblocks, manned checkpoints, high-security armoured military vehicles and heavy machine are computer databases, x-ray devices, cameras and radars for identity checks. Looking at these surveillance practices, the impacts of population control in northern Kurdistan, a region of conflict, are also examined.

Following the announcement that the PKK would withdraw its armed forces from the northern Kurdistan region on 8 May 2013, a ceasefire agreement between the Turkish state and the PKK was reached and peace negotiations (Gunter 2013) commenced.[105] However, during this period of ceasefire, the construction of more than a hundred heavily strengthened army stations — *Kalekols*[106] — was decided upon and building in northern Kurdistan, where conflicts had been intense, soon began. Most of these were done in Kurdish provinces along the border line. The construction of hundreds of heavily strengthened army stations (Kalekol) suggests that rather than engaging in a straightforward peace process, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) or

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[105] The Turkish government started a process called "Kurdish Opening" in July 2009 in order to end the conflicts. Accordingly, while the Kurdish Opening initially triggered concern and suspicion among Turkish opposition and social actors, most of the Kurdish public opinion supported this process. An opinion poll conducted by SETA (Pollmark) found that while 75.7% of Kurds supported the Kurdish opening, only 42.7% of Turks did. Available at: (http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20130109171358_turkiyenin-kurt-sorunu-algisi.pdf). (Accessed: 20.04.2021). As a matter of fact, this peace initiative was short-lived due to the election concerns of the AKP government, the exclusion of key actors that would play an important role in the peace process on the Kurdish side, and the continuation of armed conflicts. For a chronological analysis of this period, see: Gunter M (2012) "The closing of Turkey's Kurdish Opening", Peace in Kurdistan Campaign 25 July. Available at: https://www.peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/the-closing-of-turkeys-kurdish-opening/_#more-1665. (Accessed: 20.04.2021).

[106] The word of Kalekol derived from the word 'Karakol' = guard, known as "polis karakolu"= police station or "jandarma karakolu" = gendarmerie station, symbolizes the armament that has increased on the part of the Turkish security forces during the peace process. Kalekol is the name given to high-security military checkpoints that look like fortresses/castle built in cities, where the war between the TSK and the PKK is intense, high-dominant hills and in city centres.

Erdoğan's regime[107], views the process as opportunity for military build-up and war preparation in Kurdistan.

The June 2015 elections saw the Erdogan regime diminish in relative power, while the HDP (The Peoples' Democratic Party), which was largely composed of Kurds but supported by different segments of the society, successfully passed the 10% threshold and won 80 seats in parliament. As a reaction to the defeat in the June elections, Erdogan and the AKP regime took measures to suppress Kurdish votes such as the relocating of ballot boxes shortly prior to elections, upholding elections under military presence at voting stations in Kurdish towns.

This was accompanied by a nationalist discourse which not only fuelled into an atmosphere of anti-Kurdish sentiments but also aimed at gaining nationalist votes in the renewed elections. Following the suicide bombing in Suruç by ISIS on July 19, 2015, and the subsequent murder of two police officers in Ceylanpinar two days later, Erdogan and the AKP broke the peace process[108] and airstrikes on the PKK areas where outside of Turkey's borders led to the resumption of the war.

Heightened political violence and fearmongering against the Kurds were instrumental in the effort to secure the nationalist vote. Among the repressive courses of action by which the Turkish state targeted Kurdish citizens were the government's implantation of a long and continuous curfew in Kurdish cities and towns. During the curfew, citizens were deprived of their basic right to life. The curfew that was legitimized citing national security concerns and need for counter-terrorist precautions acted as the collective punishment of thousands of people in the region.[109]

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[107] This article, which analyzes the process leading to Erdoğan's authoritarianism, can be looked at. Türkyılmaz Yektan, Adar Sinem; "The Decline of Erdoğanist authoritarianism: a new chance for 'democratization' in Turkey", 16.08.2019, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/the-decline-of-erdo%C4%9Fanist-authoritarianism-a-new-chance-for-democratization-in-turkey/. (Accessed: 10.09.2019).

[108] While the Turkish government named the peace process the Resolution Process after January 2013, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan used the term Dialogue Process to emphasize that the PKK and the government are in dialogue, but not yet at the stage of the negotiations. Rumelili and Çelik's article analyzing on Turkey's Kurdish issue through ontological security theory provides a comprehensive overview of how the ontological asymmetry and ontological security concerns between the parties in ethnic conflicts affected the period they call the 2009-2015 peace process and why this peace process failed. See: (Rumelili and Çelik 2017).

[109] For another analysis of Erdoğan's authoritarian rule regarding the period between and after the two elections, see the following article. Tombus, Ertuğ, "The Tragedy of the 2015 Turkish Elections: Examining the AKP Victory", https://publicseminar.org/2015/11/the-tragedy-of-the-2015-turkish-elections/ (Accessed: 10.09.2019).

Turkey's new security strategy can be summarized as seeking to strengthen and expand the range of military checkpoints and police stations,[110] supporting the village guards and confiscating land for this new type of security facilities.[111] Aiming to blur the lines between civilian and military forces and to enhance its military presence in the region in the long term, the Turkish state seeks to penetrate urban and rural communities in northern Kurdistan, thereby instigating political collapse.

Indeed, the deterioration of the peace process in July 2015 and transition back to a condition of conflict marked the point of departure for a comprehensive political collapse plan -which I mentioned it in the Kurdish issue in the second part of thesis- on part of the Turkish state against the Kurds. This plan entailed, inter alia, the revitalization of the village guard system, the confiscation of land belonging to the public or municipalities through the trustee and the allocation to service of the security forces, the establishment of a complex system of checkpoints throughout the villages and highways, and finally increasing the number of private high-security checkpoints that were initiated during the peace process. According to Nino Kandelaki (2019), the checkpoints are "only one component of a larger counterterrorism strategy focused on rupturing PKK leadership structures, destroying strongholds, and demoralizing local populations".

Borrowing the words of Mary Louise Pratt (2008), checkpoints can be defined as "contact zones", the dialectical coexistence of colonizer and colonized people in a space. She describes as the "contact zone", "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (2008, 8)

Admittedly, the moments of encounter in this "contact zone", where road controls are carried out, as seen in colonial cities, emerge as a field of multiple conflicts and negotiations in Kurdistan: a space in which interdependent practices of resistance, discourses and domination practices interact in complex patterns. What does it mean for people who define themselves as colonized or even more than colonized and their encounters, within this "contact zone", with

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[110] For an analysis of Turkey's New Security Strategy, see; Murat Yeşiltaş, "Making Sense of Turkey's New Counter-Terrorism Strategy" https://thenewturkey.org/opinion/making-sense-of-turkeys-new-counter-terrorism-strategy (Accessed : 02.09.2019).

[111] https://www.yuksekovaguncel.org/yerel/navberojanda-her-yer-karakol-her-yer-kalekol-h67322.html (Accessed: 02.09.2019).

soldiers or police whom they defined as colonialist or invader in their everyday life? As someone who has experienced these moments of encounter many times in Kurdistan, I would argue that this history of *unwritten resistance,* created by eye contact, dialogues, and reciprocal feelings between the security forces and people who are seen as 'enemies', 'potential terrorists' as they are subjected to this colonial and racializing gaze, needs to be reconceptualized.

Referring to Eyal Weizman (2007), the Kurds are trying to maintain their daily lives under this colonial rule, not only as an object exposed to military power, but also as a be conscious of political subject. Inspired by Freud's famous sentence, "sometimes a pipe is just a pipe" saying Ariel Handel, "a checkpoints are not always a *check*-point" (2011, 259–60). It questions why the checkpoints Israel has implemented at hundreds of points in the West Bank are built, in what forms they are built and what they want to achieve.

Ariel Handel remarks that in Michel Foucault's works, especially Discipline and Punish ([1978] 1995) and The History of Sexuality ([1978] 1990), surveillance is often described as practices aimed at "appropriating" people and constructing "normal" citizens (2011, 259). Access to certain rights is granted on the basis of these "belonging documents", functioning as "inclusive surveillance", according to Handel's analysis; at the same time, he notes that, these monitoring practices can be viewed as geared towards excluding "unwanted populations", rather than simply "embracing" citizens, thus constituting an "exclusive surveillance" (2011, 259).

Similar to the ways in which the Israeli state makes use of exclusion to exercise control over the Palestinian population, the Turkish state deploys "exclusive surveillance" devices as a means to eliminate the rights, physical habitats and sometimes even lives of the Kurds living in the region. In this "contact zone" where the colonizer and the colonized meet, the most concrete manifestation of how "exclusive surveillance" is carried out with a hostile intent or perspective are checkpoints, where hundreds of flexible military roadblocks exist.

The checkpoints, which operate with "racialized distinctions and a constant anticipation of violence" (Streicher 2020, 37) constitute the essence of the surveillance array in its most obvious form. The lives of the local people, whose mobility is restricted by constant checking ID cards along the way, are penetrated with a sense of fear and uncertainty.

Photo 1: Armoured watching towers (Kulekol) built between Diyarbakır-Mardin highway for identity and vehicle control purposes. (Doğan News Agency (Turkish: Doğan Haber Ajansı-DHA), 2018).

Control mechanisms in northern Kurdistan are anchored in institutionalized racism, as part of a greater colonial desire. Implemented in the name of national security or the "fight against terrorism", the exact logic by which they operate remains obscure. In other words, surveillance is an inseparable part of the colonial domination of the Turkish state in conflict zones where population is ethnically diverse and demanding of national self-determination.

However, concrete blocks, heavy automatic weapons and armoured vehicles, which have increased in the last 10 years, are now also in cities. This is becoming routine. The war that started in July 2015 in northern Kurdistan and the peace process that followed represent an important transformation period because, after the urban clashes, an exacerbation of repressive practices and encounters could be witnessed at the checkpoints, when compared to the norm in the 1990s. The checkpoints that emerged as "a series of tactical necessities" of military officials in rural areas in the 1990s, over time "assumed an overall strategic layout, constituting a complete territorial system whose main aim is to dominate and manage" (Weizman 2007, 146) the lives of Kurds. In addition to these settled, fixed checkpoints, Kurds are now faced with an additional element of domination, whereby security forces can perform controls at any time and place (flexible military checkpoints).

In addition to my individual observations and experiences, I have examined the role and effects of reciprocal feelings behind the perception of citizens: whom civilians have seen as a threat to the sovereignty of the state or as separatist subjects over the security issue, as 'enemy' or, in popular words, 'potential terrorists' in the encounters at the checkpoints. The historical background of the marginalization of Kurds and other 'Othered' ethnic, religious and political communities, creating the perception of "enemy" towards them, lies in the colonial policies of the modern nation-state based on the practices of creating a homogeneous and one nation, such as "Turkification", as mentioned in the second part of this thesis.

In this sense, checkpoints act as spaces in which two different ethnic and political groups "becoming pitted against each other in fear and mutual hatred, constructing images of self and other" (Das 1998, 109) and the state apparatus "portrays oppositional entities as a fearsome, hateful and intolerable subjects, to create grounds for the consent to eliminate them" (Aras 2014, 27). Thus, state violence against Kurds—who are branded as "enemy" or "potential terrorist"—is deemed legitimate, crimes against civilians result in impunity, and a colonial control and surveillance system is created to reorganize society.

In "The checkpoint killings", Thomas Gregory (2019) focuses on the role of the affectivity behind the coalition soldiers' killing of civilians they perceived as dangerous, hostile and threatening at checkpoints in Iraq. Based on testimonies of soldiers who used "lethal force" at checkpoints in Iraq between 2006 and 2007, Gregory emphasizes the importance of the soldiers' emotions, moods and instincts in their decision to use lethal force.

> Soldiers describe, in vivid detail, how the sweltering midday heat could impede their reactions, while low levels of visibility might leave them feeling nervous, tetchy and a little anxious; they readily acknowledge that recent attacks on checkpoints in an area or the reputation of particular villages might cause them to adopt a hypervigilant stance; and there are signs that their overly aggressive posture may have caused them to misconstrue minor infractions as evidence of hostility (2019, 143).

In 2011, the Turkish military forces' bombing and killing of 34 civilians who were involved in border trade (smuggling) on the Turkey-Iraq border was defended by soldiers' stating "we supposed they were terrorists", with the trial resulting in impunity.[112] In the last 2 years (2019-2021), as I was conducting fieldwork in a city located on the Hakkari-Iraq border, multiple

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[112] The Roboski / Uludere massacre on 28 December 2011: The death of 34 Kurds, who made their economic livelihood through border trade (smuggling), as a result of the Turkish military air strike, based on the knowledge that PKK guerrillas crossed the border. Available at: https://bianet.org/english/human-rights/143200-timeline-what-happened-in-roboski (Accessed: 11.03.2021)

cases of soldiers using "lethal force" have been reported. Here again, civilians who make a living by smuggling are shot and killed by soldiers for being "terrorists" or "aiding a terrorist organization".[113]

My interest here is focused on the fact that through constant suspension of their time in the daily the hour-long identity controls, civilians are thrusted into a state of uncertainty at "the intersection of the legal and the political", a "no man's-land between public law and political fact" (Agamben 2005, 1). It is also my ambition to comprehend the affective state associated with those whose lives have been trivialized. Checkpoints as "contact zones" in northern Kurdistan are spaces where a subject clearly sees himself/herself as colonized vis-a-vis the security forces (military or police officer), representing the colonizer. In *the Colonial governmentality of the Turkish state* section of this thesis, I dealt with the question of why and how the people felt they were colonized.

> In short, I am stopped by soldiers in 6 places along a 200 km route (between Hakkari-Van provinces). The same operations are carried out at each control point. Our personal belongings are searched without permission as we are being humiliated. I ask myself, "How many crimes could I possibly commit along these 200 km?" *(Interview, Nergiz, Hakkari 17.02.2020).*

> Passing through the concrete blocks, you will see people on your right and left in armoured vehicles, masked, heavily armed with automatic weapons, and looking at you like the enemy. In these moments, which are routine for them but enormously terrifying for us, you wait for hours for these long car tailbacks to end. There is a policy of intimidation and control aimed at upsetting your psychology *(Interview, Mehmet Ali, Mardin 20.05.2020).*

> Apart from the concretely frightening effect of the control system -I mean armoured vehicles, masked automatic armed soldiers and police- I think everyone is aware that it creates a state of constant fear and uneasiness in our subconscious. For example, the Kurdish song playing in the shuttle vehicle is either turned off during the control or suddenly switched to a Turkish song *(Interview, Rubar, Hakkari, 13.01.2021).*

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[113] It should be noted that the cases given as examples here are related to the perception of Kurds as enemies or dangerous in border regions. Information on this subject is limited by the news reflected in the press, apart from the interviews in the fieldwork. "Soldiers Open fire on Villagers in Hakkari Near Border, 14-Year-Old Child Loses His Life" 02.08.2019. https://bianet.org/english/human-rights/211234-soldiers-open-fire-on-villagers-in-hakkari-near-border-14-year-old-child-loses-his-life# . (Accessed 14.06.2021). "2 people shot by soldiers on the Hakkari border were injured", 20.05.2021. https://dogruhaber.com.tr/haber/752883-hakkari-sinirinda-askerlerin-vurdugu-2-kisi-yaralandi/ (Accessed: 14.06.2021). Although not within the scope of this thesis, there have been serious human rights violations against refugees trying to reach Turkey by crossing the border from Iran, Iraq and Syria in the last 10 years. Only in 2015, 25 people lost their lives and 52 were injured while trying to cross from Syria to Turkey as a result of fire opened by security forces at border checkpoints. https://www.ihd.org.tr/2015-insan-haklari-ihlalleri-raporu/#_Toc443644803 (Accessed: 14.06.2021).

Such situations, where freedom of movement is suspended and uncertainty and unpredictability prevail, do more than inflict psychological violence. These "contact zones", as observed by Eva Kössner (Kössner 2015 blog post) in an ethnographic study on checkpoints in the West Bank, also "regulate the access to resources on the basis of ethnic discrimination and includes threats of physical violence. They allow violations of individual privacy and violently interfere in societal norms, especially when body searches are involved".

Another instrument of colonial surveillance and control in northern Kurdistan is the "food embargo" which state implemented in rural areas in the 1990s (Jongerden and Akkaya 2012a), has been a method used again, especially in 2015 and following years.[114] This practice, which the rural population interprets as a tool of psychological warfare tool or as special warfare practice, that villagers would take a list of food products they wished to buy to the District Gendarme Command and could procure those approved in controlled quantities, which were determined according to the size of the population.[115] As stated by Ruth Streicher, who remarked that checkpoints in southern Thailand indicated a "racialized problematic":

> Racialized distinctions often also play a direct role in policing practices at checkpoints, which are, according to the current US counterinsurgency manual, part of population and resources control measures undertaken to separate insurgents from the civilian population by controlling the circulation of people and goods (2020, 41).

Villagers living in rural areas, far from the urban centres, must venture to the city in order to receive their monthly staple products. Basic necessities, bought in bulk, are subject to controls, and villagers are vulnerable to occasional blocking and confiscation of their products at the checkpoints. In the interviews I held in Hakkari and Dersim, the villagers stated that this situation is common and has become humiliating and unbearable, given that soldiers were not satisfied with merely imposing a food embargo, but also applied restrictions on entering and exiting the village, limiting those to specific times of the day and keeping detailed records of people's movements.

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[114] The circular letter called "general instructions of food" by the Ministry of Interior which covers 32 provinces (Kurdish provinces) in the east and southeast of Turkey. 17.09.2018, https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/politika/2018/09/17/hdpden-soyluya-gida-ambargosu-mu-var-sorusu. (Accessed: 19.06.2021).

[115] The Human Rights Association has reported many food embargo cases in Kurdistan. For one of them, see: https://www.ihd.org.tr/san-haklaryetinin-beytbaptaki-ge-gambargosuna-i-arama-ve-celemesi/ (10.08.2001), (Accessed: 09.06.2021)

When entering our own village, a military officer from another city treats us as if he were the owner of this place. The fact that they control the inside of the house and the private area breaks our psychology. They control everything necessary for daily life such as fuel control, provisions control, fertilizer control, kitchen tube. They do so because they think that logistic support will be given to the guerrilla *(Interview, Dersim 23.12.2020-Fırat)*.

The 1-hour journey between Tunceli and Ovacık, which is 67 km, takes 4 hours when there are such controls. Vehicles are stopped at 6-7 points and soldiers take a harsh attitude against the people. There are detentions and obstacles to the transfer of goods, people are not able to bring materials such as batteries, medicine, sports shoes to their village. The same is true for alcohol and cigarettes *(Interview, Dersim, 28.09.2020-Demhat)*.

For example, citizens living in other parts of Turkey today can enter and leave their villages whenever they want. However, if you are in Hakkari, you are allowed to enter and leave your village at certain times *(Interview, Hakkari, 15.02.2020-Mervan)*.

Kalekol (High Security Military Post / Headquarter)

In the last two decades, in the regions where forest fires are intense, construction of military headquarters/checkpoints/posts or "*Kalekols*", as they are called both by locals and in official state discourse, has proliferated. Some Kalekols consist of older military guard posts, installed on the prevailing hills, having undergone demolition and redesign to render them more resistant to powerful firearms. These structures, which resemble the sheltered castles of the medieval age, can be described as high-security military checkpoints, rebuilt using modern architectural competences and technology.
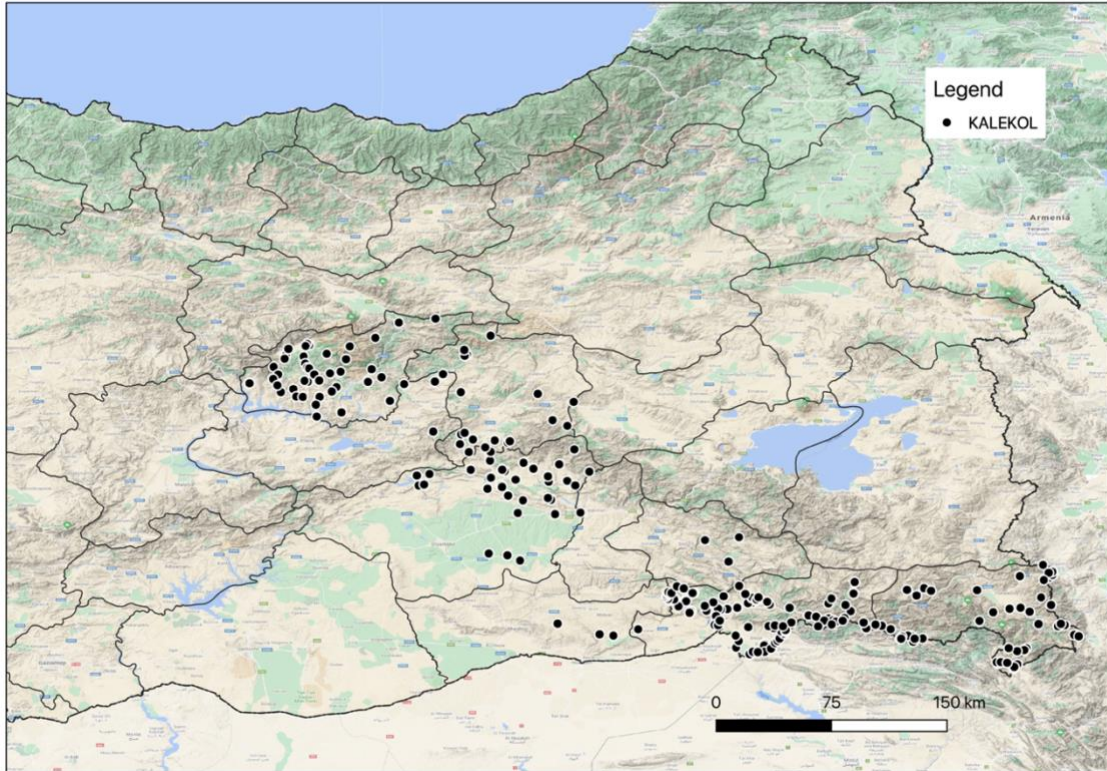
Map 8: Spanning area and density of Kalekols.

Photo 2: A distant view of the Kalekol built on a dominant hill. (Source: Anadolu Agency, in Turkish: Anadolu Ajansı), 2018.

Characteristic to the process of setting up the Kalekols in northern Kurdistan is the clearing of forest areas around the hills they were built on in order to ensure the soldiers' field of view is unobstructed, whether by burning, clear-cutting, or releasing harmful caterpillars that gnaw on trees and cause them to dry. In addition, in some areas where Kalekols building is planned, public lands —particularly agricultural and pasture lands—are appropriated using the "urgent expropriation" method, in which areas intended for construction are declared military security zones and closed to use of civilians.[116]

The noticeable increase in the construction of Kalekols in northern Kurdistan over the period of non-conflict (2013-2015) officially referred to as a "peace process" provoked anger among affected communities, bringing local people to protest and initiate mass actions. Although most Kalekols are newly built, a significant portion entails refurbished versions of the old outposts, which under the economic conditions surrounding their original construction in the 1990s were not considered paramount and were therefore hastily built on the roadside, leaving them vulnerable to guerrilla actions. After the year 2000, with the gradual development of technology and the huge budget allocated by the AKP government for the war economy (national security issue features heavily into the state discourse), old-style outposts were demolished and new types of military headquarters were built in places where area dominance of military forces was high and access by land is difficult.

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[116] For Kalekols, which will be built on an area of approximately 100 thousand decares in 7 different districts in Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin and Şırnak, the decision of the Council of Ministers has been taken for "urgent expropriation". "Urgent expropriation for Kalekol in seven counties", 11.04.2016, http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/14968/yedi-ilceye-kalekol-icin-acele-kamulastirma. (Accessed: 24.04.2021).

Photo 3-4: Images of two different Kalekol taken at different times. (Source: Twitter hashtag #Kalekol, 2018)

In the interviews I made on Dersim (Tunceli), there is also a historical reference to the Kalekols, just like the HPP constructions. While the interviewees were describing current geospatial policies of the state, they stated that these policies were planned and meant to be executed a century ago in Dersim (Tunceli), with narratives concerning them passed down from generation to generation. Indeed, as can be gleaned from the reports of the Ottoman and Republican periods mentioned in the previous sections in relation to the project of "civilizing" Kurds and Kurdistan, these narratives are not an "urban myth".

In June 1890, a report prepared by the Reform Committee (Heyet-i Islâhiye) was sent to Dersim by the central government on the topic of making the tribes and general population of Dersim more obedient and controllable for the state (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013). Foreseeing that methods of persuasion grounded in consent and tolerance will be insufficient, the report contains detailed ideas regarding the placement of as many military battalions as necessary in suitable places in Dersim, as well as "building towers and military outposts on dominant peaks, in areas where rebellions are intense and hard to contain" (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013, 67).

> A Kalekol was built on each mountain, and this construction, which disrupts human psychology, reminds the barracks/quarters culture of 1938 - *reference to the massacre that took between 1937-1938 place as a result of the military operation in Dersim* - against the people here, there is a threat to keep the Dersim of the 1938 era alive. In this sense, 1925 Sark Reform Plan (The Report for Reform in the East) and the 2014 Collapse Plan are similar *(Interview, Dersim, Firat, 23.12.2020).*

Emphasizing their historical dimension of the Kalekols, Agit (30), a survey engineer and environmental activist them as follows:

> We see that the Kalekols, as structures that take their mentality from the past but use contemporary technology, were established on the dominant hills overlooking the newly built dams in Dersim, for example. These Kalekols were built so that they can overlook each other, seeking to ensure the safety of the dams as well as their own. These are structures with underground systems that are prepared to endure a very strong and long-term siege, we can see that features of modern architecture and technology are applied. The state and military government unit know the topography very well, having aerial measurements taken and mapping the surface using aircrafts such as drones or Photogrammetry. A system in which the underground is also mapped and modelled with gravity measurements is now used. The concept of the Kalekol is also somewhat related to the topography *(Interview, Mardin- 20.05.2020).*

The strengthening of the old outposts and the construction of new ones during the two-year period of non-conflict are experienced by local people as insincerity on part of the Turkish state regarding its commitments to end the war and achieve peace with the PKK. As a matter of fact, the disappointment of the "Kurdish Opening" in 2009, the period just before the last peace process in 2013-2015 (Savran 2020), coupled with the insensitivity and unresponsiveness of the Turkish people—especially after the Roboski Massacre in December 2011—brought many Kurds to the point of "emotional break" vis-a-vis the Turkish people (Tastekin 2013).

According to Bahar Rumelili and Ayse Betül Çelik, the failed peace process—the first substantial step taken towards ending the war in nearly 40 years of conflict—along with the previously described construction of the new Kalekols and other such developments "were viewed as validating the assumptions present in Kurdish narratives that Turks and the Turkish state deny Kurds the equal status, dignity, and empathy they deserve" (2017, 11).

> If peace is aimed, the question of why Kalekols are built was always on our minds. It was then that we realized that the peace process would not achieve its goal. Strengthening the outposts and turning them into Kalekols gave me the impression that this war could become even more severe. I look at it as a matter of strengthening their position *(Interview, Diyarbakir, Seyma, 11.01.2021).*

> We can say that the first thing they started in the peace process was the Kalekols. The state used the peace process very well, perhaps the Kurdish Movement and the guerrillas lingered here, and this process was given an opportunity for the state to become more established. The thought that is aroused in me by the presence of so many Kalekols is that this issue will still take a long time and more people will die *(Interview, Dersim, 21.10.2020, Kenan).*

The activists who took part in the anti-Kalekol protests contend that Kalekol constructions are not geared solely towards meeting operational or security needs in the war against the PKK, but are in fact the first stages of a longer-term plan. The first stages of this long-term plan, according to my analysis, are to form the groundwork for the transition from controlled colonial governmentality to settled colonialism.

> Kalekol constructions are an indicator of the state's long-term, future-oriented plans. While this means that the war will be extended further; it also means taking the security issue to the next level. The state seeks to be more permanent and settle in Kurdistan. One of the strategies to bring this about is to have areas settled by military means, to declare its surroundings a military security zone by building the Kalekols and to evacuate civilian settlements with these methods at an increasing level *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 06.07.2020-Birhat).*

> Now there is a dimension that goes beyond the security issue: the accelerating militarization of cities, of which Kalekols are but one part. Today, there are mobile police stations on every street in city centres. Cities themselves became enclaved and securitized spaces *(Interview, Mardin, 20.05.2020-Agit).*

The interviewers use the analogy of "Open Prison" when describing the existence of many Kalekols and how their cities were surrounded by these military control mechanisms.

I think there are other reasons why there are so many Kalekols. In other words, it is not only against the guerrilla that these structures can be used; they can also help ensure the safety of mineral exploration activities, for example. In a city that has been turned into an open prison, I think there is a desire to ensure the safety of the population coming from outside- He means to the personnel and their families sent to public institutions, especially military and police officers- and to settle here and consume its resources *(Interview, Dersim 20.12.2020-Erdal).*

There are cameras and checkpoints everywhere. The state is conveying the message that it is following us through Kulekols and Kalekols, "we are watching you, we are controlling you, you cannot do anything without our knowledge", putting efforts into creating this perception *(Interview, Bingöl 19.12.2020-Zerife).*

You feel yourself in a completely open prison. If you want to take a walk in the mountains and forests, you are faced with the obstacles and threats of Kalekol or military security zones that are forbidden for civilians to enter. If you want to roam in your own city and neighbourhood, you are constantly harassed, being stopped by civilian or military armoured vehicles. As someone who has gone abroad before, I would like to give the following example: going abroad—in terms of time and transportation—can be easier and shorter than going from one city in Kurdistan to another *(Interview, Dersim, 05.12.2019-Deniz).*

Daniela Mansbach argues that, unlike Foucault's *Panopticon*—an architectural structure designed to exercise control over individuals through the use of surveillance rather than coercive violence—military checkpoints are "pre-panoptic structures, i.e., they rely on the use of violent physical force via weapons, barriers, and the confiscation of property to attain and maintain control" (2009, 260). In this sense, Kalekols, which are accepted as legitimate in their use of force against civilians, nature and spaces, justified within the scope of military operations in the "fight against terrorism" are military infrastructural projects as the spatialized dimension of the physical violence of the despotic power.

One of the reasons why the state prevents the attempts of the local people to extinguish forest fires is the "Temporary Security Zone or Military Security Zone" factor, which is encountered in the above narratives. These areas, which are formed by combining the points taken from around the Kalekol or other military institutions at a maximum distance of 400 meters, further reinforce the functioning of the "state of exception".[117]

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[117] The narrowing or expansion of these public lands according to the needs is also realized by the urgent expropriation decision. With the Statutory Decrees issued in 2018, these powers have been transferred to the President. "Closed Military Areas and Security Zones Law No:2565", https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=2565&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5. (Accessed: 21.03.2021).

The law does not contain any clearly defined parameters to regulate how security zones created as "temporary" in the context of counter-terrorism military operations become permanent in the process. Therefore, this gap in the legal literature means that the actual acts of "terror" and "potential civil disorder" defined as threats to the existence of the state in practice, are not limited in scope and duration, thereby granting the "state of exception" a potentially permanent status (Mansbach 2009, 259). Indeed, Turkish society and the Turkish state may continue to perceive and describe the war in northern Kurdistan as a "terrorist/terror" threat indefinitely. This perception rests on the construction of Kurds as permanent enemies, as emphasized in the previous lines.

Another reason why old-style outposts were strengthened and turned into Kalekol is related to HPP constructions, the number of which increased rapidly especially during the AKP rule. The task of the Gendarmerie Commands, which are administratively subordinate to the Ministry of Interior, is defined as the armed law enforcement forces that fulfil the duties assigned by the laws and presidential decrees.[118] As can be seen in the mapping on Google Earth, there are Kalekols in the immediate vicinity of the HPPs built.

Looking at the mission or terms of reference on the official web pages of the Provincial Gendarmerie Commands, the reasons for the construction of these Kalekols can be better understood. The statement made under the title of responsibility area on the official web pages of the Gendarmerie Commands, especially in the cities where the war is intense and where interviews were conducted, is as follows:

> The security of some critical public facilities that contribute significantly to the national economy or the war power of the state, which will have negative consequences in terms of national security, national economy or social life if they are partially or completely demolished, damaged or when their work is hindered, even temporarily, are permitted to take special protection measures by Gendarmerie units.[119]

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[118] For the mission of the Gendarmerie General Command, see: https://www.jandarma.gov.tr/hakkimizda (Accessed, 21.03.2021).
[119] Areas of Responsibility and Regions (Sorumluluk Alanları ve Bölgeler), https://diyarbakir.jandarma.gov.tr/sorumluluk-alan-ve-bolgelerimiz (Accessed, 21.03.2021).
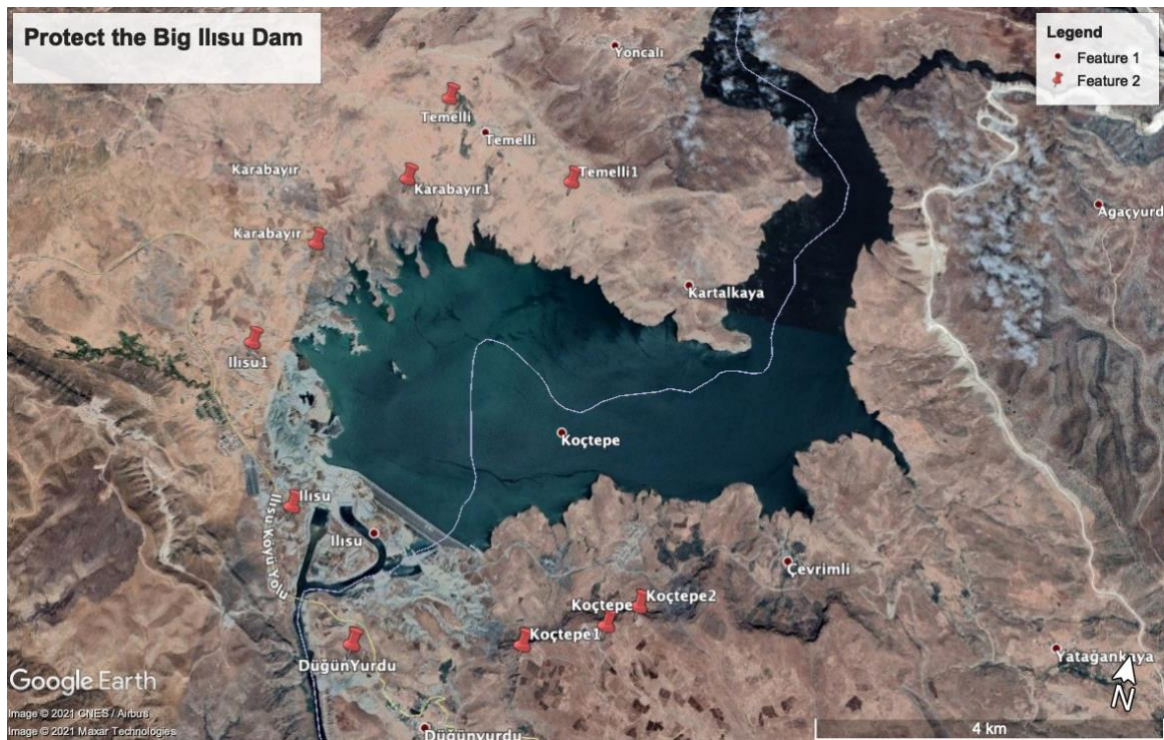
Satellite Image 8: Kalekols and checkpoints constructed to protect the Ilisu dam.

Satellite Image 9: The security roads built between the Kalekols are used only by the security forces.

Considering what these critical facilities are, which differ according to the provinces, it is seen in the statement made on the official website of the Gendarmerie Commands. These; Hydroelectric Power Plants and construction sites of private companies that build these power plants, mineral exploration and extraction enterprises belonging to private capital groups, oil exploration and production facilities belonging to private companies, electricity distribution enterprises belonging to private companies, natural gas pipeline facilities and distribution stations.[120]

A couple of additional points should be noted here: firstly, in some cities, the Forestry Operations Directorates (for example, in Dersim) allocate suitable forest areas for Kalekol constructions upon request of the Provincial Gendarmerie Commands;[121] secondly, all these Kalekol projects are executed by giving tenders to intermediary private companies under the leadership of the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKI)[122] which is affiliated with the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization.[123]

When examples are examined singularly in detail, these two situations show that both public institutions work in coordination with each other and the functionality of the state as an intermediary institution that paves the way for capital and regulates the flow of public resources to the private sector, just as in the construction of HPP projects. Another study that can be conducted in detail on the sharing of the "war rent"[124] under the name of "War on Terrorism" between the AKP government and the capital groups that have patronage relations[125] will be a study that will reveal very important results.

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[120] https://siirt.jandarma.gov.tr/sorumluluk-alanimiz (Accessed: 21.03.2021)

[121] For the commission report of the Human Rights Association against the constructions of Kalekol and Military Base Area see; 16.09.2013, https://www.ihd.org.tr/yeni-karakol-kalekol-ve-us-bolgeleri-yapimlarina-iliskin-ihd-komisyon-raporu/. (Accessed: 24.03.2021).

[122] "...it is also constructing different projects such as military facilities and Kalekol's" ("...askeri tesis ve kalekol gibi farklı projeler de inşa etmektedir"), TOKI, https://www.toki.gov.tr/kamuya-yonelik-uygulamalar. (Accessed: 24.03.2021). The English language web page does not contain the expression mentioned here. https://www.toki.gov.tr/en/background.html.

[123] There is a similar situation in Kalekol projects regarding the fact that data on forest fires in Kurdistan are not shared. Data on Kalekol projects are not shared on the websites of TOKI and the Ministry of National Defense. As it is understood from the protocol of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Commission, these Kalekol construction tenders are exempt from inspection and the companies that won the tenders are kept confidential. 05.12.2018, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/komisyon_tutanaklari.mv_goruntule?pTutanakId=25789. (Accessed: 24.03.2021).

[124] Zeynep Gambetti, "TOKİ's war rent" ("TOKİ'nin savaş rantı", Birgün Gazetesi, 12.01.2016, https://www.birgun.net/haber/toki-nin-savas-ranti-100230 (Accessed: 24.03.2021).

[125] Although there is not enough data due to the lack of sharing of information on which companies were awarded the Kalekol tenders, most of the interviewee state that these projects were awarded to capital groups close to AKP executives. The news in the press about this increases the accuracy of these claims. "Security Capitalism: Tenders of Kalekol subserved to Proponents", (Güvenlik Kapitalizmi: Kalekol Ihaleleri Yandaslara Yaradi), 11.06.2014,

Satellite Image 10: The security road built between two Kalekol in the mountainous region.

An important detail that should be mentioned about Kalekols is the "military security road" built to provide transportation between these buildings. The main characteristic of these "military safety roads", as can be seen from the satellite images, is that they are built independently of the existing transportation roads (village roads). Connecting Kalekols which are located within a short distance from each other, the roads facilitate passage over the mountains and hills and are open solely for soldiers.

> There is Kalekol every 20 km between Şırnak and Hakkari. It's the same subcontractor company that builds both these roads and the Kalekols. Concrete walls are built with these roads to prevent and control the passage of refugees and guerrillas from Iran and Iraq *(Interview, Hakkari, 25.03.2020-İsa).*

> These Kalekols were built in such a way that they could see each other. A concrete pile in the mountains. More than anything else, it's an ugly build. While some villages do not have access to a single road, special roads are being built to connect Kalekols. In the winter, for example, many village roads in Dersim are closed to transportation due to heavy snowfall. However, we see that while the roads leading

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http://www.baskahaber.org/2014/06/guvenlik-kapitalizmi-kalekol-ihaleleri.html. (Accessed:24.03.2021).
"Outpost and Kalekol's have been 'investment'" (Karakol ve Kalekollar "Yatirim" Oldu), 25.05.2017, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/321098/karakol-ve-kalekollar-da-yatirim-oldu. (Accessed: 24.03.2021).

to the Kalekol are cleaned with the bucket, this cleaning work is not carried out in order to reopen the village roads to transportation *(Interview, Dersim, 28.12.2020-Naze)*.

As stated earlier, within the scope of the fieldwork, these cities are not only sites where intense armed conflicts take place, but are also spaces in which political awareness and sympathy and support to the PKK are high. Therefore, the intervention of the state and its institutions in these cities takes different dimensions. Of course, the fact that density levels vary does not mean that similar colonial geospatial policies are not implemented in other Kurdish cities. The important factor under consideration here is the extent of the Kurdish Freedom Movement's ideological and logistical influence on the people in northern Kurdistan.

One of the interventions recounted in the narratives is that of Turkish nationalist security guards (military and police personal) who were assigned to Kurdish cities from different provinces of Turkey for the purpose of changing their demographic makeup, in correspondence with a detailed plan that included the arrival of their families later on. Garrisons, military and police lodgings established in city centres or Kalekols built in rural areas all betoken a process by which, on the one hand, as representative of the Turkish republic state, the army and the police personnel—who consider themselves racially superior (Turkishness)—have access to safe and sterilized living spaces for themselves and their family, while Kurds, who are construed by the ethno-nationalist discourse as racially distinct and "potentially dangerous" or "terror supporters", and who have been trying to be cut off from all the codes of belonging they have established with the geography they have lived in for many years.

> Dersim has never seen the assimilation policy of the trustee period's governor throughout its history. Assimilation at the highest level, colonization at the highest level, the conquering perspective and a very detailed change of the demographic structure… It's been hard for people to grasp this. On the one hand, there is the understanding of conquest by using violence with Kalekols, and on the other hand, there is a structure that transforms those who do not oppose the state by using the economy, by allowing them to use the opportunities of the state *(Interview, Demhat, 28.09.2020)*.
>
> A message is given to the public. In these cities, which they could not control in the past, especially after 2015, the message being communicated is "we are here now, we have conquered" *(Interview, Sirnak, Aycan,18.03.2020)*.

> Although the increase in the population of foreign civil servants (Turks) comes to the fore at election times, the state actually has plans for permanence. First, they want to settle as an armed force (military) in order to consolidate their security and establish a control management here for many years. They deny the historical past of this geography and say, "we have conquered this space now". In every city that comes under their domination, the message is clearly conveyed: "This is the homeland of the Turks" *(Interview, Diyarbakir, 28.10.2020-Mazlum).*

> Trustees were appointed to municipalities in Kurdistan, the first thing they did was to hang Turkish flags in almost all municipalities *(Interview, Hakkari, 15.12.2020-Mervan).*

The fact that the Turkish state tries to show its sovereignty and greatness through such physical and symbolic violence, deploying its devices of despotic power (such as Kalekols built on dominant hills or having many garrisons and checkpoints in city centres, hanging giant Turkish flags on all public buildings and squares), results in them being perceived as invaders in these lands to which they never belonged and did not used to live in. The fact that the cities in northern Kurdistan are viewed as conquered spaces is also an indication that the state indirectly regards northern Kurdistan as a territorial area that does not belong to the republic of Turkey. In this sense, northern Kurdistan appears as a geography where the Turkish state is constantly trying to show and prove its sovereignty in its colonial rationality.

> The state is a destructive image for me, why should it try to protect nature in Kurdistan? The state is doing everything to maintain its dominance. Kurdistan is a living geography that is under constant occupation. I don't think this is an occupation process that will end in the future, it seems as if there is a continuous process of occupation and recapture. That's why the Kurds have been in a colonial situation since 1923. Continuing the war in a geography that is constantly under occupation is in the interest of the state *(Interview, Diyarbakir,11.01.2021-Şeyma).*

> It seems their thoughts and desires are "these lands are not our lands and the more we can destroy, the better for us". I recognize this mentality of the state. Because the state knows that these lands are not their own, and they are destroying these lands with the thought that in the future these lands will be out of their hands *(Interview, Mardin,18.03.2020-Baran).*

It would be appropriate to touch on the Anti-Terror Law in a little more detail here, a law I briefly mentioned in the section analysing the forest fires that took place systematically in northern Kurdistan. Because, as many of the interviewees expressed, this law is considered as

a special penal code specific to northern Kurdistan. According to the anti-terror law, the definition of terrorism is as follows;

> Any criminal action conducted by one or more persons belonging to an organisation with the aim of changing the attributes of the Republic as specified in the Constitution, the political, legal, social, secular or economic system, damaging the indivisible unity of the state with its territory and nation, jeopardizing the existence of the Turkish state and the Republic, enfeebling, destroying or seizing the state authority, eliminating basic rights and freedoms, damaging the internal and external security of the state, the public order or general health, is defined as terrorism.[126]

Although the Anti-Terror Law is a penal code that is also in effect in other geographical regions of Turkey today[127], it is especially in relations to the Kurdish issue that many politicians, human rights defenders, journalists and even children have been tried within the scope of this law due to their non-violent ideas and thoughts that can be considered as freedom of expression (Hürman 2020; Kurban 2020)[128]. In a 2012 report of the United Nations Human Rights Committee on Turkey, some provisions in the definition of the law were found to be problematic and inconsistent with the Human Rights Convention[129].

As Dilek Kurban relates, this law, which is "disproportionately targeting the Kurds" and is "entrenched" (2020, 129), is best understood as the "state of exception" that has become the norm in Kurdistan. Because as Agamben said, "The state of exception is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept" (2005, 4). For example, even if local people did not

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[126] Anti-Terror Law No: 3713, in Turkish https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=3713&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5. See also in English, https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3727/file/Turkey_anti_terr_1991_am2010_en.pdf. (Accessed: 14.06.2021).

[127] Especially after the military coup attempt that took place in July 2016, many amendments made to the Anti-Terror Law with presidential decrees generally refer to "link or connections" with "terrorist organizations". According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, not disclosing "the nature of such links" and "giving large discretion of interpretation to the authorities responsible" for their implementation are considered human rights violations. OHRC 2017 Report, March 2018, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/2018-03-19_Second_OHCHR_Turkey_Report.pdf. (Accessed: 14.06.2021). See also the last reports of other human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/turkey# and https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/turkey/report-turkey/ (Accessed:14.06.2021).

[128] "Turkey: Terrorism laws used to jails the Kurdish Protesters", 01.11.2010, https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/11/01/turkey-terrorism-laws-used-jail-kurdish-protesters. (Accessed: 14.06.2021).

[129] "United Nations Human Rights Committee Criticizes Turkish Counterterrorism Law", 08.11.2012, https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2012-11-08/turkey-united-nations-criticism-of-anti-terrorism-laws/. (Accessed: 14.06.2021).

commit the crimes specified in the Turkish Penal Code and the Anti-Terror Law, taking action through this law or using this law as a threat to the civilians who intervene to put out forest fires helps spread the state of fear and uneasiness. Therefore, it would not be wrong to consider this law both as a war strategy in northern Kurdistan and as an anti-Kurdish law related to the legal order in "the zone of anomie" (Agamben 2005, 36) created by the suspension of life.

What I can say is not only true for the city and region I live in, but also for other cities in Kurdistan, even if the state of emergency was officially lifted, there was always a special state of emergency for the Kurds, and it still continues. In our village, the state of emergency is still in effect because entrances and exits to the village are prohibited for reasons such as the fact that our village is in a military security zone and is considered a conflict area, and our lives here are interfered with for certain periods, but continuously *(Interview, Mardin,18.03.2020-Baran).*

The region we live in is referred to as the "terror zone", and we are portrayed as a people who are victims of "terrorism". The police and the military get paid by the state for protecting us. We are the ones who had their villages burned, who were forced to migrate from their villages, who were not shown where to go and where to settle, just as they were forced to migrate. It is the officials of the state who get a salary here and buy luxury houses in the west of the country. In this case, I would like to ask, who do you think does not want "terrorism" to end? *(Interview, Dersim, 21.10.2020-Kenan).*

This is not any province or district of Turkey. This is Sirnak. As a lawyer, I must state that there is a separate legal system specific to this city and this region, or rather I should say that: The legal procedure applied in the west of Turkey is not applied here. The legal system does not work here *(Interview, Sirnak, 28.03.2020-Metin).*

This is Hakkari, "the most eastern point of Turkey". When a forest fire occurs or the construction of a HPP is planned in Izmir, the westernmost city, people react, and the legal system is activated. But there is no legal order that you can object to here. If there is a law, it's called the anti-terrorism law. In this legal order, with intending to kill a human is the same thing as having the right to destroy ecology. There is a rape system or law of rape here, in which all kinds of practices against Kurds are permissible *(Interview, Hakkari, 15.02.2020-Mervan).*

While the hydroelectric dam projects and forest fires might seem like issues non-related to the securitization and militarization of the region at first sight, this chapter has shown that they are directly related to the Kalekols. Hence, Kalekols emerge as a central element in the colonization of the Kurdish geography. Although the Turkish state calls the colonial practices deployed in Kurdistan against the Kurds a "strategy of fighting terrorism", including the construction of Kalekols, its operations against the PKK both inside and outside its borders are aimed at establishing long-term and persistent colonial rule in Kurdistan.

The colonial domination of the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan, which has been going on for many years, continues to increase especially after the end of the peace process with the PKK. The penetration of despotic and infrastructural power into all aspects of life, reflected in daily practices in Kurdistan, suggests that this colonial governmentality or colonial rule will continue in the coming years.

6. Conclusion

This study does not merely focus on the process that evolved from denial (there are no Kurds) to implicit acceptance (there are Kurds) and the direct colonial interventions against the body, identity, language and culture of the Kurdish subject in "a geography intrinsically resistant to the state control" (J. C. Scott 2009). It focuses on the processes of colonisation on space and nature through spatial arrangements such as hydro and military infrastructural projects and deforestation, and how these processes affect the people who are subjected to it.

In this thesis I have discussed the Kurdish issue from a geopolitical and geospatial perspective and have tried to explain the complex and intertwined colonial practices of the Turkish state in its constant negotiation of the Kurdish issue over the last two decades and its ways of being in relationship with Kurdish society through the concept of colonial governmentality. I have demonstrated the interconnection of infrastructure projects and military security policies with a racist discourse, state violence and colonial control of territory and population.

As Langdon Winner has emphasised that, "histories of architecture, city planning, and public works contain many examples of physical arrangements that contain explicit or implicit political purposes" (1980, 124). Therefore, by providing specific historical references on how the colonial policies of dispossession and displacement against the Kurds were implemented in the early years of the republic through military operations that resulted in massacres and subsequent legal regulations, this study argues that the practice of uprooting or detaching the Kurds from the territories where they lived, and they bonded is a continuity that has developed over the course of a century. In other words, as I argue, even if governments and political regimes change, what remains unchanged and dynamically evolving is the Turkish state's colonial desire and forms of domination over the Kurds.

Looking at history from the perspective of the colonized

Looking at the last two decades of the Kurdish issue, which has been the most important issue in Turkey since its establishment as a unitary nation-state, the fact that the political rationality of the state returns to the colonialist founding settings of the nation-state when its needed, has led me to resort to a brief historical narrative in this study. Because, if I define coloniality in simple terms as the continuation of colonialism in other forms and contents, looking at past history in order to understand and interpret contemporary state policies helps both to see the "operational and mental continuity" (C. Gündoğdu and Genç 2013) in the colonial policies of

the state and to see how resistance and decolonial practices from the point of view of the colonised can develop at a level that enables an "epistemic delinking" (Mignolo 2007).

It would not be wrong to say that the Turkish nation state, which emerged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, and which resorted to colonialist policies to prolong its life in the final stages of its collapse, was established through the physical destruction, assimilation and forced displacement of other ethnic communities from the lands to which they belonged. Especially in the period between 1908 and 1945, which Erik-Jan Zürcher calls the "Young Turk era" (1992, 240) the homogenisation and Turkification policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and the subsequent Kemalist regime in northern Kurdistan, which has been referred to as the 'eastern provinces', has been researched under the light of how it impacted heterogeneous populations in the region, mainly Armenians and Kurds, particularly looking at the histories of ethnic cleansing and genocide. (Rae 2002; Uğur Ümit Üngör 2011; Bezwan 2021).

One of the driving forces behind the contextualisation of this study within the context of coloniality is undoubtedly the colonial discourses and policies employed in the reports of the late Ottoman Empire and during the establishment years of the republican regime when Kurds were deemed to be made a legible and governable community. One of the common features of these reports, written by military and civilian bureaucrats in different periods, is that they depicted Kurds and other ethnic communities living in Kurdistan "as inherently treacherous and anti-Turkish" (Uğur Ümit Üngör 2011, 130) and a threat to the security of the state.

While the reports show that the desire to create a society that is loyal and obedient to the state is realized through military security policies, it has also been one of the main reference sources of the constantly security policy towards the Kurds. What has not been central to this dissertation but is worth noting is that these assignments of essentialist characteristics of "the Kurds" also drive from an orientalist approach the Turkish state has been mimicking when trying to establish itself as a Western power in the early years of the republic and the decades that followed.

Another important feature of the reports is the discourse of "civilisation against barbarism". As can be seen especially in the reports of the republican period, the population in the Kurdish provinces has been subjected to large-scale demographic interventions through extensive ethnographic research. As Ugur Ümit Üngör states, "The non- Turkish population of the

eastern provinces was looked down upon as primitive and inferior, fit for colonial rule by a Turkish master nation which operated in the name of progress and rationality" (2011, 184). In this sense, the preference of a "pathological" mentality that sees mass violence practices such as ethnic cleansing, genocide and deportation as a "rational choice" (Rae 2002, 135) in the name of creating a national, homogeneous and single identity, for colonialist policies against the Kurds should be read as a conscious choice against the backdrop of this thesis.

This study, which is situated in a decolonial perspective, critically approaches the state discourse that treats the Kurdish issue, which is Turkey's most pressing issue that continues up until today, as a "problem or question" and provides an alternative to the dominant approaches in academic studies that support this discourse. Moreover, by reconstructing the discourse, I argue that the centuries-old Kurdish issue must be addressed in the context of coloniality. In fact, if there is a "problem or question" to be mentioned, it is the desire to create a nation-state and a homogenous nation based on Turkishness. In other words, I argue that a racial othering and Turkish supremacist understanding of identity that puts Turkishness at the centre when dealing with the Kurdish issue is the main source of the problem.

The Kurds, which as I discussed was seen as an obstacle in the making of the new Turkish nation-state, were subjected to an unofficial colonial status. By unofficial I mean, even the lack of the recognition as a colony, as opposed to, for example, in the past, France officially recognizing Algerians as their colonized. This situation was accomplished by completely amending a constitution (Constitution of 1921), which saw the Kurds as a distinct ethnic nation and provided them the right to autonomy. The new republican regime, as a requirement of its civilization mission, defined the framework of colonized citizenship by accepting the Kurdish subject, who is seen as "savage" and "primitive", as Turkish through a new constitution (I refer to the 1924 Constitution).

Within this framework, the identity, culture, history, and language of the Kurds were denied, violently suppressed and moreover, the geography they lived in was also attempted to be Turkified. As Fanon states about colonialism, "with a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it" (2004, 149).

The success of many of the national liberation movements that emerged around the world and demanded self-determination or independence was influential in the fact that some of the

Kurds, whose rights were not recognised as a distinct ethnic community on the political and constitutional grounds, resorted to armed struggle based on an anti-colonial struggle. Indeed, the war between the Turkish state and the PKK since 1984 is at the very core of the issues outlined in this thesis, which is based on ethnographic observation and methodology.

One of the first periods that comes to mind when the Kurdish issue is mentioned in Turkey is the dark period of violence and deaths in the 1990s. I am referring to a period in which the "dialectic of denial and resistance" (Vali 1998, 82) that lasted for a long century evolved into other dimensions, a period that was not limited to the years in which it was lived, a period whose traumatic and yet transformative effects are felt, remembered and referred to even today. With projects such as the south-eastern Anatolia Project (SAP, in Turkish; GAP), it can be said that the state actors of the period, who stated that the Kurdish issue stemmed from economic reasons rather than its ethno-political nature, and who took a stance in favour of solving the "Eastern Question" through economic development, indirectly conceded the Kurdish reality, "even if it was considered conjunctural and insufficient" (Perouse 2009, 355).

It should be emphasised that reducing the Kurdish people's demand for self-government (the desire for autonomy) to an economic demand or, in other words, to the issue of underdevelopment through concepts such as progress and development through infrastructural projects is a colonial perspective. Also, as Özok-Gündogan (2005) points out, development policies in northern Kurdistan and the state's aim to recognise and control the Kurdish people through the SAP are closely linked to the ongoing war between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK.

This implicit recognition of the Kurdish reality has led to the Kurdish issue being seen as a "problem of terrorism" and therefore the inhabitants of the region being subjected to security policies that are intertwined with the colonial violence of the state. It should be briefly noted here that the "fight against terrorism" discourse and policy, which has been going on since the early 1990s, has been frequently expressed in recent years by R. Tayyip Erdogan, the president of the republic of Turkey, as "there is no Kurdish problem in Turkey, there is a terrorism problem"[130].

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[130] "There is no such thing as a Kurdish problem", 15.03.2015, https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/kurt-sorunu-diye-birsey-yok/2680849.html. (Accessed: 01.06.2022).

The state's approach to the Kurdish issue from the perspective of "terrorism" led it to implement administrative and spatial policies specific to the Kurdish geography in order to control the "last Kurdish revolt" (Yeğen 2011b) based on historical background. The establishment of the state of emergency rule as a state policy also had the historical consequence, as Aydin and Emrence emphasise that "it also created a de facto Kurdistan on the national map… and contributed to the rise of an ethnic consciousness within the Kurdish community by detaching the region from the rest of the country" (2015, 10–11).

In regions that are resistant or insubordinate to the state, where ethnic as well as ideological consciousness is high, the colonial intervention of the state has reached extremely high and brutal dimensions. The forced evacuation and burning of villages, unresolved political killings and enforced disappearances carried out by paramilitary structures, the forced internal and external migration of nearly three million people, the routinisation of curfews and the deaths of thousands of guerrillas and soldiers in armed clashes are historical cases that summarise the climate of severe violence in the 1990s.

Even the last 20 years of the Kurdish issue is in fact a brief summary of the long history of political struggle of the Kurds and Turkish coloniality towards them. This 20-year period is also the period of the AKP government under Erdogan's leadership, during which the Kurdish issue has been negotiated in different ways. In its first years in power, the AKP government, by constructing a political discourse based on the historical grievances of the Kurds, pursued a "policy of weak recognition" (Yeğen 2012) that would not repeat what previous political governments had done. In so much so that ceasefires, which were considered a taboo and led to a brief cessation of armed conflicts, were reached and the Turkish state officially had conducted peace processes with the PKK.

However, what Yeğen calls the "policy of weak recognition" did not allow even Kurdish demands for cultural rights to be recognised sufficiently. For example, the Kurds living in the metropolises of Turkey, especially in northern Kurdistan, have not had their demands for education in their mother tongue recognised, and Kurdish language education is only accepted as an elective course, but even today, due to the lack of adequate groundwork, physical obstacles are created in the way of Kurdish being chosen as an elective course.[131] While this is the case, Kurdish demands for political rights such as recognition as a nation, status and self-

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[131] "Elective course that is not allowed to be selected: Kurdish, 09.09.2019, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/386372/sectirilmeyen-secmeli-ders-kurtce (Accessed: 01.06.2022).

government are considered as "terrorist" crimes on the grounds that they threaten the existence and integrity of the state and are subject to severe criminal sanctions.

This thesis has dealt with the discourses on Kurdistan being a colony, which were dominant in the 1970s. Conducting my interviews I realised how those living in northern Kurdistan today express the same discourse of the 1970s again and reproduce it in different ways. Reflecting on the perceptions my participations shared with me during my fieldwork, I argue that coloniality continues in different ways and, most importantly, by constantly updating itself.

I define coloniality in its simplest sense as a consequence of colonialism that has been going on since the past and that in fact colonialism has never ended, but that it reproduces knowledge and power technologies in different ways and with different practices in the post-modern or global age. For example, it cannot be said that there is a colonization of Turkish subjects because Turkishness already has a colonial function as an identity with dominant and sovereign power structures, which objectifies or ignores the Other. The reason why I prefer the concept of coloniality is that the colonial policies against the Kurds have been constantly continuing, forcibly and violently imposed on the minds of the Kurds as if Turkishness is the best way to be human and modern.

This research has been carried out inductively. The field and how the field is shaped, as well as how my participants described their relation to the infrastructural manifestations, channelled me to a conceptual discussion on both coloniality and governmentality. While colonial rule could have been enough to describe the blatant authoritarianism and violent order, it was the research outcomes on the emerging subjectivities that pushed me to an engagement with the concept of governmentality. I have chosen the concept of governmentality because it shows the functioning and different subjectivisation processes in both Turkish and Kurdish society. I will briefly summarize why I chose to use colonial governmentality and not simply "colonial rule" to conceptualize the Turkish state's relation to the Kurdish issue.

I borrow the term governmentality from Foucault's analysis, which focuses on how new governmental understandings emerge. The key element here is that governmentality as an "art of government" (Foucault 1991, 87) refers not only to the procedural operation of sovereignty, but also to the transformation of the ways of thinking and perception. In this sense, governmentality is not essentially about being oppressive, but rather about the internally functioning mechanisms of self-discipline and control.

Therefore, I wanted to show the long-term processes of turning Kurds into colonized subjects. For example, I use the term *colonized citizenship* to show how colonial governmentality can account for the grey zone that exists in Turkey between being a colony and being a citizen. It contributes to an understanding of the different subjectivities that emerge, hence those that employ self- discipline and voluntarily accept, those that are silent (for instance, I show in last chapter of thesis how this is the case also for the Turkish parts of the society) and those that resist. The Turkish state's colonial governmentality promotes – in the words of one of my participants – "a state of consent that accepts the state of oppression, and the internalisation of the psychology of colonisation".

The general theme of Foucault's work is not power, but "subjects" (1982, 778). According to him, power works through subjects, especially through "subjectivity" (Foucault 1982, 782). Since the colonial nature and political rationality of the rule and law prevailing in northern Kurdistan regards the population and life there as the object of its political strategies (which is one of the definitions of governmentality), it targets the life of the population as well as the body of a single person. And it does so by directly intervening in everyday life through its security apparatuses.

Since the geospatial policies and infrastructural projects as discussed in chapter 4 and 5 are also part of the security apparatuses, the above-mentioned state of consent and its implications for the internalisation of coloniality takes place in everyday life in a straightforward and natural way. These infrastructural policies occur very intensively in places that are considered "terror zones" by the state, hence where there is intense resistance and high political ideological consciousness among the population. Therefore, state practices are carried out within the framework of "war against terrorism" and a social perception is created in this direction.

Considering that the realpolitik on the Kurdish issue in Turkey has been like this for many years and that methodological nationalism has been influential in all structures of the social arena has led not only to the criminalisation of Kurdish subjects living there, but also of the geography in which Kurds live. Within this context, forest fires and other deforestation practices, security dams, Kalekols that are encountered every 10 km, all the related control and surveillance practices that suspend daily life, the dismissal of the democratically elected mayors by the Kurdish community, the appointment of trustees to replace them, and many other colonial practices are being implemented under the concept of the "war against terrorism".

The fact that these colonial practices are ignored, or silently and voluntarily adopted by a large part of the Turkish society, and that these policies are considered necessary, acceptable, and legitimate by nationalist segments of Turkish society, is related to how colonial governmentality shapes the ways of thinking and perception of people, in both northern Kurdistan and Turkey. As a space where the "state of exception" has become the rule, the two different processes of subjectivisation created by colonial governmentality in northern Kurdistan can be summarised as follows;

First, it is the process of transforming the thinking and internalization processes of Kurdish subjects who, in a historical consciousness, try to keep the state "at an arm's length"(J. C. Scott 2009, X) and explicitly perform state-evading practices based on an understanding of self-determination, by force and violence. This group represents Kurdish subjects who are subjugated, who are defined as "terrorists", "internal enemies" and "bandit" by the death politics produced by the state, who feel themselves as *even worse than colony*" in spaces "where violence and punishment turn into a spectacle" (Tuncer Gürkas 2014, 229). The Kurdish subject here, as I mentioned before, represents the subject who resists all these processes of subjectivation through everyday practices.

Second, it defines Kurdish subjects who benefit from the privileges of Turkishness if they give up their own self, that is, their identity, and who exist in opposition to the Kurdish subject described in the first group. This group represents the Kurdish subject who, in a state of voluntary consent, without being subjected to the instruments of force and violence of the state, changes the ways of perception and thinking through mechanisms of self-discipline and control that operate internally, and who, like the nationalist section of Turkish society, is a shareholder and actor of the colonial policies implemented.

Depending on the development of the Kurdish freedom struggle and the Turkish state's room for manoeuvre in domestic and foreign policy, it can be said that the Turkish state has a complex, flexible and heterogeneous understanding or policy of governance, which oscillates between more traditional colonial violence and rule and colonial governmentality, and which, depending on the conjuncture of the period, sometimes gives place to the former, sometimes to the latter, or both.

Regardless of what the theory of considers as colonialism, the fact that Kurdish subjects under today's conditions see, feel, and believe that they are colonised, is worth emphasising and has been the point of departure for me in this thesis. The contribution of this research to the studies

that deal with the Kurds and Kurdistan from the perspective of coloniality is undoubtedly the experiences and narratives of the Kurdish subjects who sees themselves as "*even worse than the colony*".

The state's last resort: uprooting and detaching people from their lands

In this sense, the practices of colonizing a geography or territory are best observed, felt, and experienced by those who live there. Therefore, although this study seems to focus on the geospatial policies of the Turkish state towards the Kurdish geography, it also analyses the processes of conflict, resistance, and negotiation from the perspective of the colonised.

Hydro-infrastructural projects such as the construction of hydroelectric power plants (HPP) and military-infrastructural projects such as the construction of Kalekol, not only shaping people's relations with the space they live in and with each other in northern Kurdistan, but also "affecting where and how people and things move across time and space" (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012, 403). Therefore, as Jörg Niewöhner puts it, analysing these infrastructural projects "as part of an ecology of infrastructure thus offers a way for the social sciences to inquire into human interaction and social organization, a way that emphasizes the partial connections between structure and agency, and inquiries into the 'how' of connecting and its implications" (2015, 120).

For example, when it is questioned why dams are built on rivers that are not suitable for the construction of HPP or in deep valleys where there is very scarce water in the name of "border security", it will be seen how water policies are used as a security strategy and direct threat tool, and how water also emerges as a physical and social actor in political and conflict processes. On the other hand, the environmental destruction caused not only by "security dams" but also by large-scale dams, such as the Ilisu dam (Hasankeyf-Heskîf), also brings about a spatial transformation based on dispossession and forced displacement.

This spatial transformation not only confronts hundreds of thousands of people whose villages have been submerged with the difficulties and obstacles of building new settlements by displacing them to other places, but also pushes them into a control mechanism that can be more easily implied in fragmented small communities. For this reason, the founding and strong relationship of the Kurdish people with the land and nature through political, religious and cultural rituals is tried to be dissolved through the transformation of the space or by taking the people apart from the space in a process spanning time.

Another characteristic of Turkish colonial governmentality is that the Kurdish geography, which I argue is seen as a colony by the state, is governed differently from other regions. Correspondingly to what J.C. Scott describes as "the administrative ordering of nature and society" (1998, 4), the scale and scope of the intervention in the ecology and space of Kurdistan through military force and the apparatus of coercion demonstrates that the social engineering towards Kurdish population there is taking place in a manner not dissimilar to the governance of an occupied territory. One of the clearest indicators of this is the perspective and practices of the institutional apparatus of the state towards the systematic forest fires that take place every summer, especially in conflict zones that are resistant to the state.

The state's "synoptic vision" (J. C. Scott 1998) on forest fires in Kurdish cities reflects the fact that much of the fire data is not shared accurately, is incomplete or distorted, and is often even ignored. The main motivation behind such a colonialist perspective on forest fires, as evident from the interviews and institutional statements, is the legitimacy of military operations on security grounds ("war against terrorism"), and therefore the acceptance of forest fires as normal.

This study not only contributes to the broad scientific literature on the role of armed conflict in deforestation, but also sheds light on some of the mechanisms involved in deforestation activities carried out by military forces even in the absence of armed conflict. While understanding these mechanisms and analysing their interrelationships requires more in-depth empirical research, it is clear that there are powerful economic interests that benefit from the relationship between armed conflict and deforestation.[132]

These strong economic interests that sustain infrastructural power can be seen in the construction phases of HPP and Kalekol projects, as well as in spatial arrangements such as deforestation. Particularly in view of the rapid increase in the number of Kalekols in burnt or cleared forest areas and their role in deforestation, strong economic interests between state-affiliated institutions and a "symbiotic state-capital oligarchy" (Swyngedouw 2017, 258) that are not directly related to the state have a great impact on the emergence of spatial arrangements such as deforestation.

An important observation that can be added about the relationship between armed conflict and deforestation in northern Kurdistan is the role of paramilitary structures (village guards) in

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[132] For a comprehensive case study analysis of the environmental impact of armed conflict in Colombia and the role of paramilitaries in deforestation, see; (Fergusson et al., 2014).

deforestation. Particularly in provinces where military operations are intensive, such as Diyarbakır, Bingöl and Şırnak, local people report that logging /cutting trees is easier and more intensive, and that trees are sold cheaper to cities outside Kurdistan[133], which is in line with the characteristics that define settler colonialism. In this sense, one of the reasons for framing the theoretical framework of this study in terms of the concept of colonial governmentality is that the Turkish state has applied different practices of colonial domination, which are intersecting and co-operating in with similar methods in northern Kurdistan within the borders of its nation-state and in other autonomous Kurdish regions outside its borders.

Referring to Rodgers and O'Neil, Hanna Baumann (2021, 216) argues that infrastructure is the "instrumental medium" (2012, 404–5) of violence and that infrastructure not only reflects specific political decisions but also has the capacity to lead to violence beyond its intended scope. From this point of view, the Turkish state's construction of military infrastructures such as Kalekols in Kurdish regions inside and outside its borders as part of its "counter-terrorism strategy" is both expressed by the inhabitants of these regions as a practice of infrastructural violence based on continuous colonial surveillance and control, and also seen as strong indications of the Turkish state's intention to establish a permanent dominance in these regions as occupied areas.

Considering the central role of Kalekols in the construction of HPPs and forest fires, I argue that these military infrastructural projects are the mainstay of the Turkish state's spatial interventions to colonise Kurdish geography in a way that will cause massive irreversible ecological destruction. Seeking answers to questions about how the infrastructural projects implemented in Kurdistan are part of structural colonial violence, how they threaten the inhabitants, how they affect their daily lives and, most importantly, how they are colonising and transforming the space in which they live, not only contributes to the development of the notion of infrastructural violence, but is also important in order to see how infrastructural violence operates in other geographies, in a very different way, with different motivations and desires.

On the other hand, these infrastructural projects sometimes lead to the expropriation and submerging of living areas, forcing residents to migrate, and sometimes to the declaration of

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[133] In particular, in the report prepared by the Sirnak Bar Association to draw attention to the intensive logging/ cutting trees in the province of Sirnak in the last 3 years, which is within the scope of my fieldwork, it is stated that the percentage of forest has decreased from 44% to 36% within a period of 7 months. 12.10.2021, https://web2.ebaro.web.tr/uploads/73/%C3%87evre%20ve%20Kent%20Komisyonu%20Raporu%2012%20EK%C4%B0M%202021.pdf. (Accessed: 15.07.2022).

these living areas as special security zones, restricting the mobility of local residents in their daily lives, and also considering the role it plays in criminalising them under the name of "terrorism" and even dispossessing them, I have tried to highlight how and why a specific practice of infrastructural violence in the Kurdish geography deliberately perpetuates continuous "processes of marginalization, abjection and disconnection" (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012, 401).

This study is the result of a research based on ethnographic methodology and interviews and shows the state's colonial intervention in northern Kurdistan, especially through HPPs, systematic forest fires and the constructions of Kalekol, how it is directly colonising space and its impact on the inhabitants of the region. While carrying out this study, I came across a social reality in northern Kurdistan where practices of infrastructural violence are naturalised and internalised in everyday life but are also resisted. The social reality also depicted how spatial justice cannot be realised in colonies.

In many of the narratives, I also witnessed the despair that social justice cannot be achieved in the face of a colonial legal system that acts in collaboration with colonial despotic and infrastructural power mechanisms, and the need or expectation for a self-defence power to defend local people against the infrastructural violence that is the root cause of surveillance, exclusion and displacement. I have observed how the majority of the Turkish society, which approves of the colonial rationality of the Turkish state in the colonisation of the Kurdish geography, has left the Kurdish people alone in pursuit of their rights in defence of ecology and space.

Even just looking at the state's actions in the 1990s, for example the forced displacement of nearly 3 million people, the general apathy of Turkish society or the lack of reaction to what is happening says something about how Kurds are viewed within national community (see; Kurban et al. 2012). In this sense, I argue that this 'state of being left alone' contributes to the continuous reconstruction of the colonial system on the Kurds and that where social justice cannot be achieved, spatial justice cannot be achieved.

Because, as a colonial category, Turkishness is used in opposition to Kurdishness, and this point of view produces the code that the geography of Kurdistan and Kurdish bodies can be destroyed very easily in a surveillance and control system based on colonial governmentality. In this respect, while the form of the Turkish state's colonial intervention in space and the Kurdish subject is constantly changing, at the same time it transcends the boundaries of

biopolitics and necropolitics, showing both the Turkish subject and the Kurdish subject what it can constantly do in Kurdistan.

While the state in the eyes of the political and even the ordinary Kurd in northern Kurdistan, as the Kurdish poet and writer Selim Temo described it, is "a thing in official buildings surrounded by barriers, in armoured vehicles, in bullet-proof vests"[134], the dominant nationalism and conservatism within the majority of Turkish society perceives the state as an institutional structure that is the sole protector of national sovereignty and a requirement for the "fight against terrorism". This dominant perception considers it a direct and unconditional right, related to the right to sovereignty, to declare a part of the society, which it perceives as a threat to itself, as an enemy and to destroy their bodies and spaces of life.

While the majority of the Kurdish society demonstrates forms of anti-colonial struggle or other forms of resistance against this situation, for the majority of the Turkish society the state's intervention in Kurdish geography is considered acceptable and necessary, so that there is usually no widespread opposition.

The findings of this research also point at pressing questions on the prospects for peace in Kurdistan and Turkey. While conducting this study I witnessed that despite a century long Kurdish issue and the poignant reality and omnipresence of war, a large part of the Turkish society have internalised the state's dominant discourse where anything related to Kurdish identity or geography is seen as potentially a security threat and is handled under the parameters of a war against terrorism.

My study has shifted the focus from approaching the so-called Kurdish question as an issue of forced assimilation, denial of identity and deprivation of fundamental rights towards an understanding that these issues intersect with the ways the state intervenes into the Kurdish geography as a last or final resort to its colonial desire. Hence, making the space and nature of what the Kurdish people consider their homeland, *welat*, an unliveable place due to the lack of water, omnipresent military surveillance and drought caused by deforestation.

Beyond the physical consequences of the colonial practices through the intervention into space, the state also targets the imaginaries of return of those displaced and exiled communities, who – knowing what is happening – cannot imagine of a Kurdistan to return to anymore.

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[134] "It's not back to the 90s, it's back to the 30s", 30.12.2015, https://www.yuksekovahaber.com.tr/haber/selim-temo-90lara-degil-30lara-donuldu-172495.htm. (Accessed: 08.08.2022).

The fact that there is no significant oppositional stance in Turkish society against the infrastructural interventions and systematic deforestations, where, in a way, even trees and geographies are regarded as "terrorist", raises important questions on how conflict resolution can be successful, how reconciliation and peace building will be possible. Especially thinking of how the impact of those ecological destructions in Kurdistan cannot be limited to the Kurdistan geography but eventually is transcending nation-state borders, regions and above all, communities – especially in the era of global climate crisis.

7. References and Appendix

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