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PKK is a popular name for the Kurdish Workers' Party. PKK stands for *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* in Kurdish. KADEK, Kongra-Gel, and KGK are some of the names the PKK is also known by. Founded in the 1974, PKK is a militant organization whose main goal was the creation of an independent, socialist Kurdish state in Kurdistan, an area that encompasses parts of southern Turkey, northeastern Syria, northern Iraq and northwestern part of Iran. Kurdish nationalism and Marxist-Leninism were some of the ideologies that informed PKK during its inception (McDowall 2005).

Today, PKK's initial claim for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan has shifted to that of the recognition of the political and cultural rights for the ethnic Kurdish population in Turkey only. In pushing for its demands the PKK uses violent actions like bombings, assassinations, chemical attacks, kidnappings, extortions and more. Their modus operandi certainly has them at loggerheads not only with the Turkish authorities but also part of the international community. The United States, NATO and the European Union all list the PKK as a terrorist organization (United States Department of State, 2002). The Turkish government calls it an ethnic secessionist group that uses terrorism and acts of force against both the military and civilian targets in pursuit of its political aims. The PKK attracts its biggest following from the Kurdish population in Turkey, and some degree of support in other areas of the Kurdistan.

To be in a better position to achieve the objective of this paper a closer look, first at the history of the PKK is imperative.

In 1974 a small band of radicals, all members of Revolutionary Youth or Dev-Genc in Ankara, decided to form the PKK as a Kurdish left wing organization under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan. Dev-Genc was the product of a radical Turkish left that attracted membership from the disenfranchised members of the Turkish society.

It must be understood during the 1950s and the 60s there was a rapid industrial growth in Turkey. This industrialization was also many factory workers' strikes. The strikers were always met with brutal force by the police. This situation provided a healthy breeding ground for movements and organizations espousing socialist ideals. Most of these organizations were crushed by the security. Dev-Genc arose from a split that followed a rebellion against the leadership of the newly formed Workers' Party (TIP).

While still a political student at the Ankara University, Ocalan joined the underground movements that were trying to overthrow Turkey's parliamentary system government. It was in these movements that he honed his leadership abilities and established a social network that would prove very useful.

His supporters were known as APOCUS and together with other 15 members including his later to be wife, Kesire Yildirim, Cemil Bayik, Baki Karer, Kemal Pir, Mehmet Seygat, ku: Mehmet Karasungur among others, Ocalan established the core of the organization. There were ten other members going by the name "Ankara Democratic Association of Higher Education" or AYOD. There are only a few living members left this original group. Not all

the original surviving members are still followers of the cause because, it's argued, internal differences that may have split up the party (Pike, 2004).

The organization was based in Ankara but Ocalan decided that it was better to shift the base of operations to the southeastern part of Turkey because he figured out the tribal system in existence there would provide the perfect conditions for the development of the organization. Ocalan knew that in the south east there were tribes that had less than perfect existence with the government in Ankara and he saw this as a really window of opportunity that will assist him secure a strong base for his organization. However in 1977, Turkish intelligence was able to unearth the activities and from then on it meant that they had to operate more carefully.

Another significant occurrence in 1977 was the murder of Haki Karer, a Turk confidante of Ocalan by a rival Kurdish group when he was out trying to recruit new members on the 18th day of May. After Haki's death the party adopted more secretive, strict and violent measures. It was about time the struggle was deepened and strengthened. The allegation that Haki Karer was killed by rival rebels was however put to question later when Baki Karer, the brother to Haki Karir and co-founder of PKK claimed that he was killed after a disagreement he had with Ocalan.

On October 27, 1978, in the village of Fis in the district of Lice north of Divarkabir, APOCUS was renamed Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, and stated its fresh ideology in a proclamation.

Titled the ' Proclamation of Independence of PKK' the document stated that their primary concern was to start a communist revolution in Turkey, a proletarian revolution informed by Marxism with the main aim of replacing capitalism with communism. No secessionist claims were made in the document.

Between 1978 and 1980 the PKK started an urban war attacking groups they saw as ' fascists.' Most of the violence was directed at people they perceived as collaborators of the state and the Kurdish that been coexisting peacefully with the government. PKK's first well pronounced act was the planned assassination of Mehmet Celal Bucak, a high ranking member of the Conservative Party. Although they were not successful it was a bold announcement showing that the PKK meant business, propaganda-of-the-deed. They also started fighting the landlords in Hilvan and Siverek as way of making a name for themselves.

November 28, 1979 was the day the Turkish government first responded to the activities of the PKK although they still did not know that PKK had changed its name from Apocus to PKK. 243 PKK members were arrested in Hilvan and Silverek.

Mehemet Bucak's tribe became an avowed enemy of the PKK and since his attempted assassination the two have being locked in battle. Other groups that have fought against the PKK are Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Association, the Liberation of the People and National Liberation of Kurdistan. With all these groups going at PKK and the PKK hitting back the country was quickly turned into a battlefield. In fact 5, 000 were reported to have been

killed between 1978 and 1982 (Katzman 1998). It is estimated there were ten assassinations per day.

Throughout this time, Ocalan remained in control. He successfully avoided capture by fleeing Turkey in 1979. He moved to Beqaa valley, an ex-Syrian controlled Lebanon territory. Syria was PKK's biggest outside supporter until 1999 providing arms and safe grounds to the organization in Beqaa valley.

In 1980 a host of significant things occurred. Turkey's prime minister was assassinated and the parliament was unable to get together to select one, there was obviously a lack of governmental control creating leadership vacuum in the country. There was also the on-going Iran-Iraq war and to top it all there was a military coup in Turkey.

These events played to the advantage of PKK. First the inability of the parliament to select a president ensured that there was no governmental control for a while and in such conditions that dissident groups like PKK thrive on. It meant they had ample time to regroup and build up more support. The military takeover of the government was not anticipated but it looks to have served the PKK well. When the military set up trials to charge members of the militant groups that were wreaking havoc in the country, the PKK seized the opportunity that arose out of this unlikely of situations. They were able to smuggle guns and communication equipment into prison. The PKK basically turned the prison into a recruiting and training camp. The onset of Iraq-Iran war had the effect of ensuring that the Kurdistan parts of their countries were free from their control thus providing the PKK with a free reign that also helped them consolidate their operations.

On August 20 - 25, 1982, PKK held its second congress in Ain al-Hilweh region of Lebanon. The remaining members of PKK and Turkish left-wing guerrillas were in attendance. Ocalan used this opportunity to consolidate his resources and it was here that the PKK's second stage of trying to gain control of southeastern Turkey was re-established.

On the outskirts of the port Sidon in Lebanon, a place adjacent to the largest Palestinian refugee camp, PKK established links with paramilitary groups and other ethnic groups that held historic grievances against Turkey, for example, the ethnic Armenian ASALA (McDowall 2005). It also started drawing support from the Kurdish immigrants in Europe.

In 1983 with the Russian intervention, PKK swallowed up ASALA because as the KGB saw it they possessed the same ideologies, ASALA having formed an anti-Turkey agenda as early as 1927 (Katzman 1998). According to the assassinated former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko, KGB trained Ocalan.

The organization continued to seek and attract support of other leftist groups in Turkey. These included the Workers Party of Turkey, Communist Labor Party of Turkey, and the Communist Party of Turkey among others.

PKK launched paramilitary action by attacking government personnel working with the Southeastern Anatolia Project, infrastructure as well as civilians. In 1998 the organization completed agreements with other left wing militant groups that would see it share the technology and skills to strike in large cities. During the Gulf War there was a marked increase in the organization's activities because Iraq was too engaged to watch over the activities of the Kurds.

About this time the organization was also able to develop branches in other countries such as Cyprus, Syria, Greece, attracting transnational ethnic nationalism.

PKK continued to attack government and tourist targets but they stopped attacking the Kurds who they had labeled as government puppets. The Kurdish civil war in 1997 presented great humanitarian crises in the region (Brandon, 2007).

To say the least, the PKK has been a torn in the flesh of the Turkish government. Efforts to deal with the problem have not been made easy by the hostile relationships between many of the countries with territories in Kurdistan. A feasible solution is still but a distant mirage.

At the writing of this paper, the BBC reported that PKK had claimed responsibility for the bombing of a pipeline in Northern Iraq. Among the tactics PKK now employs is the use of female suicide of bombers. Overtime, PKK has also changed names and ideologies to keep up with the changing times. These changes have also been necessitated by the need to suck up to the new regimes that are offering to back it up. As such there has been a shift from Marxist-Leninist revolution after the collapse of USSR and communism to that of seeking cultural and political autonomy for the Kurds. Even Islam has come into interplay. The call for the secession of Kurdistan has also been stopped.

With the capture of their leader Abdullah Ocalan in Kenya in 1999, one would have thought that the activities of the members of the PKK would have

diminished. This is however not the case. PKK has continued to operate robustly.

The PKK has multiple heads in many European countries. It has tentacles in the form of fronts. Abdullah Öcalan (1984-1999) was unchallenged leader of the organization. After the capture of Öcalan, authorities induced him to publicly plead for a ceasefire and for his own life at the court, which diminished his stature and credibility. Though serving life imprisonment, Öcalan is still considered the honorary leader and figure-head of the organization. He directs the PKK from his prison, with the aid of his lawyer (Katzman, p. 34,).

How this organization founded by radical students has managed metamorphose over time and grow such deep roots is now a question political scientists must attempt to answer.

Our task will be to study the evolution of PKK and its practices in relation to theories of civil war that have been put forward by some political scientists.

In a paper titled “ Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War” appearing in the *American Political Science Review* Vol. 97, No. 1 of February 2003 , James D. Fearon and his counterpart David D. Laitin, have put forward some ideas on the causes of the civil war. A closer look at the paper reveals that it can play a useful role in our attempts to explain the PKK and its activities in Turkey.

Fearon and Laitin, both Political Science Professors at the Stanford University, in writing their paper carried out extensive research and their findings helped them a develop a theory of their own relating to civil wars.

Having looked at the brief history of PKK it is now time to see it through the eyes of these two scholars.

Fearon and Laitin work is supported by a large body of literature and as we study its relation to the PKK we shall also put forth these sources. First, Fearon and Laitin quash the conventional wisdom that has been place for awhile now that holds that most of the civil wars increased after the end of the cold war and that the root cause of many of wars were ethnic and religious antagonisms (Fearon and Laitin 2003). They say that the current civil wars are a result of accumulation of protracted conflicts in the post-World War II era. They also posit that it is not true what people say about a country with great degree of religious and ethnic diversity being prone civil war. Lastly they dispute the commonly held notion that an outbreak of civil war can be predicted in an area where ethnic or other broad political grievances are strongest.

We will see how this is true with PKK. First, it is true that PKK is a not a by product of the end of the cold war and the eventual collapse of communism. PKK's formation was influenced by the Marxist-Lenin ideology and the need to form a socialist state; this was done way back in 1974 before the end of cold war. It is also true that PKK was started as a part of a reaction against the oppressive working conditions by the workers in Turkey.

It is also evident that though there were grievances not only in Ankara but in the southeastern part of Turkey where PKK later moved their operations, the need to pick up arms and start a rebellion was not foremost in the minds of many people in these regions. The Kurdish may be a minority there but they

had not felt the need to mobilize and fight against the government in spite of a myriad of grievances that they had.

How then did the Kurds become embroiled in one of the world's most famous civil wars? This can be explained in terms of "opportunity" (Eisinger 1973 and Tilly 1978) and the opportunity to seize the conditions that favor insurgency and exploit them to the fullest. These opportunities are things like rough land terrain, poverty, political instability and large populations. Per Capita income hugely influences the development of civil war because it determines how the state will react to any form of rebel mobilization. It will also determine the how many rebels are willing to enlist to fight in the civil war with the hope of gaining economically.

In the case where there is a weak government in place, fears and opportunities will drive the rise of would-be rulers to provide a form of justice both local and rough in order that they may enrich themselves or provide for the cause.

Ocalan must have spotted the availability of all these favorable factors in the southeastern part of Turkey and that is why he relocated the operations of PKK there. Of course the matter of per capita income also comes into play effectively here:

Turkey's southeastern region, due to a variety of geographic and historical factors, is far less developed than the western part of the country. The southeast is very mountainous and arid with hot and cold temperature extremes. Much of the region's economy is based on animal husbandry and

its distance from the main population centers in the west, has made it relatively less attractive for industrial development (MFA 2008).

The poor rural population was easy target for recruitment by the PKK because they had all along been disenfranchised by the government and development was hard to come by in their area (Tahiri, 2007). There were grievances on the ground in the southeastern Turkey but this was only transformed to action once the PKK came into the picture and played on the issues relating to per capita income, which was obviously low because the country was underdeveloped and unreachable. Grievance alone is a bad indicator for the likelihood of civil war occurrence (Collier 1999 and Hoeffler 2001).

In their paper, Fearon and Laitin, put forward various hypotheses some of which we shall try to view them in the light of the PKK problem. One of them states that: the presence of (a) rough terrain, poorly served by roads, at a distance from the centers of state of power, should favor insurgency and civil war. So should the availability of (b) foreign, cross-border sanctuaries and (c) a local population that can be induced not denounce the insurgents to government agents (Fearon and Laitin 2003).

The insurgency use local information to their advantage, at times threatening and causing unimaginable harm on their own people to secure their turf from the government (Kalyvas 1999; Kriger 1992). This phenomenon has been noted in southeastern Turkey, were the PKK attack the Kurds they perceive as government informants. By violence and intimidation, including the burning of schools and the execution of village

school teachers, the PKK has sought to deprive a generation of local school children of their right to basic education (MFA, 2008). This is just one way of showing how the rebels attempt to control the community knows no boundaries.

The other hypothesis advanced by Fearon and Laitin is that: Proxies for the relative weakness or strength the insurgents - their odds of being killed or captured for a given level of counterinsurgent effort by the government - should be associated with the likelihood that a country develops a civil war. In particular, a higher per capita income should be associated with a lower risk of civil war onset because: (a) it is a proxy for state overall financial, administrative, police, military capabilities, and (b) it will discipline terrain and roads in rural areas of developed countries (Fearon and Laitin 2003).

They argue that a lower per capita income favours insurgency's technology where

worse economic alternatives. The Kurdish people felt that their country was cut out from the rest of Turkey because of poor infrastructure so it was better to fight with the PKK in hope that things might take turn for the better.

Another very important observation made by the scholars in their theory is that the political and military technology of the insurgency will be favored if some foreign governments and diasporas are willing to supply to money and arms. With the PKK, Syria has been its biggest supporter in terms of providing safe havens, arms and training guerillas. The Iranian government has also lent them support.

What Fearon and Laitin are saying in short is that countries with a lower per capita income are prone to civil wars and such is the case with PKK in Turkey.

The conditions that favor insurgency - in particular, state weakness marked by poverty, a large population, and instability - are better predictors of which countries are at risk of civil war than are indicators of ethnic and religious diversity (Fearon and Laitin, 2003)

Moving on to another aspect of this paper we shall now discuss the issue of greed and grievance and how the two play a role in the development of civil wars. We will be guided by a paper called "Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization" written Patrick M. Reagan and Daniel Norton and published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49 No. 3 of June 2005.

Many arguments and evidence today point out that, civil wars come about due a combination of "greed and grievance" (Collier 2000). Grievance in the sense that a political deprivation is felt and greed in that the rebels may be acting out of self interest. Reagan and Norton argue that grievance is at the heart of the procedure that leads to the civil violence. Greed becomes pronounced when the rebel leaders need to motivate their soldiers. The rebel leaders fear that their soldiers may defect if their economic needs are not met and it is at this juncture that a militant leadership that was initially fighting for the collective good of the society may resort to selective deeds feeding on selfish habits of men. This is especially true when the rebels are in control of some of the extractable resources such as minerals, timber, drugs, etc. Where there are no exploitable resources the rebels may resort to

other forms of selfish interests like drug trafficking, extortion and kidnapping. The PKK has turned this into an art (Brandon, 2007).

Reagan and Norton point out that income and distributional issues, repressive policies of the state and access to exploitable resources are each associated with the onset of protest, rebellion, and civil war (Reagan and Norton 2005). Starting with grievance, they are able to note that grievances of individuals will usually manifest themselves collectively. They also show four important things about peasant/ non-elite fighters. The first is that peasants do not care about broad purposes, philosophical systems, political theories, etc. Secondly is that peasant grievances are specific and well defined, limited and local. Thirdly, peasant actions are designed to satisfy material self interest and lastly, peasants will participate in collective action when they stand to gain particularistic benefits (Lichbald 1994: 389).

The rebel elite are however willing to risk more and will always gain more if they are successful. Such is how greed comes into play in a civil war.

Grievances are not socially constructed by rebel leaders but lie at the core of the motivation to organize in response to maldistribution (Midlarsky 1998).

The non-elite will offer their support only if they are sure of the benefits, costs and possibility that their support for one group will be detected by another group (Mason 1996).

When grievances lead to opposition and mobilization against the state, the state will try to minimize it by coercion or concession. The more force they use the more they move to the possibility of civil war.

In concluding Reagan and Norton observe that repression is the predictor of rebellion and civil war. Repression, they note might decrease protest but increase rebellion and civil war. Civil war, they go on, is complex process that starts at lower levels of antistate activity which, if handled poorly, will spill out into a full blown war. A war is rooted in grievance and brought to alive by the state's response.

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