Civilian Victimization and the "Identification Problem" in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey

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Abstract: During the 1990s, thousands of Kurdish villages in Eastern Turkey were forcibly evacuated, resulting in the displacement of more than one million people. This paper examines why some villages survived while the population of others was forcibly moved. The broader question the Kurdish case raises is why particular groups of civilians become more vulnerable to coercion and violence in the course of armed conflict and how such vulnerability is shaped by the extent and quality of 'knowledge' or 'information' states possess about population groups, particularly populations deemed dangerous to the regime. I argue that state practices to categorize the identity and loyalty of population groups are integral to the dynamics of violence. *State practices* of collecting information on the allegiances of a population, such as taking a census or employing informants- often introduce systematic biases into the information being gathered both during the process of its collection and in the process of its interpretation. Such practices also affect conflict processes themselves, by generating opposition to the state's information collecting practices, encouraging strategic behavior to manipulate the information being collected, and politicizing identities. I focus on aggregation technologies such as the census and screening of election outcomes; and informal interventions in daily life, such as the use of informants and "collaborators" embedded in the community to examine the ways in which projects of collecting information shape the kind of information that is available and the conflict itself, and introduce arbitrariness into decisions about who to target in the course of conflict. Drawing on displacement and election data as well as interviews with displaced persons and militia members, the article contributes to debates on civilian victimization in ethnonational conflict

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I Introduction

During the 1990s, around 3,400 Kurdish villages have been forcibly evacuated in Eastern Turkey, resulting in the displacement of about one million people.[1] This paper explores why some villages survived the civil war intact while others were forcibly evacuated by the state. The broader question I am interested in is the relationship between states' coercion of civilians and the extent of 'knowledge' or 'information' states possess about population groups, particularly populations deemed dangerous to the regime. How do state officials and military commanders decide who to go after during civil wars? How is 'knowledge' about the loyalty of civilian groups produced in the course of an ethnonational war? And how do civilians themselves shape the nature and availability of information about themselves and about other civilians?

Recent studies of irregular civil wars treat information as a central variable in their explanations of the extent and nature of civilian victimization during conflict. In guerilla warfare, insurgents avoid decisive battles with the government army and engage in "hit and run" tactics. Logistical support from the local population in the form of food, shelter, and intelligence thus becomes key to the sustainability of guerilla warfare. The government does not possess precise information on the allegiances of the population, while such information is more readily accessible to the insurgent organization.[2] Under these conditions, two mechanisms make civilians vulnerable to government violence. The first is the government's inability to distinguish "innocent" civilians from those that support the guerillas, what Stathis Kalyvas calls the *identification problem*.[3] According to this mechanism, although governments would *prefer* to employ selective violence against active supporters of the guerillas, distinguishing

[1] According to official figures, the number of internally displaced individuals is around 370,000 (Parliamentary Inquiry Commission 1998: 12-13). Independent organizations place the estimate around one million people (see, for example, Internal Displacement Monitoring Center 2011, 71), while pro-Kurdish sources place the estimate around 2-4.5 million (Barut 2002, 8; Kurdish Human Rights Project 2006, 11).
[2] Fearon and Laitin 2003, 80; Kalyvas 2006; Valentino 2004, 81-82; Downes 2008, 158.
[3] Kalyvas 2006, 6, 89-91, 147, 183.

innocent civilians from active supporters is difficult in practice.[4] "Violence is indiscriminate," writes Kalyvas, "when selection criteria are rough."[5] Governments may, in such situations, target the wrong people on false suspicions or treat a civilian's *type* as a cue to their allegiances.[6]

A slightly different mechanism is suggested by Benjamin Valentino and Alexander Downes, who draw on Schelling's theory of deterrence to account for the frequent instance of mass-killing in guerilla warfare. In wars characterized by the identification problem, coercing the civilian population to end its support to the insurgents gains critical military importance.[7] Hence, governments target civilians –either killing them or removing them from the territory in which the insurgents are active– to deny their enemy access to the civilian population. The most frequent instances of mass killing in the twentieth-century have occurred in guerilla warfare, Benjamin Valentino argues, where military organizations have found it easier to target the civilian population than targeting the guerillas themselves.[8] Such tactics have reached levels of mass killing when the governments have adopted counterterror, scorched-earth tactics and resettlement policies.[9] A similar mechanism is suggested by Jason Lyall, who argues that states may initiate indiscriminate attacks against civilians because such attacks effectively deter insurgent violence. Although both mechanisms are implied by the government's information problem, in the first mechanism, civilian victimization follows an *attempt* to identify supporters of insurgents, while in the second mechanism, the government does not make an attempt to distinguish, but rather targets civilians collectively to deny guerillas the resources offered by civilians.

Kalyvas develops a model of selective and indiscriminate violence towards civilians based on the extent of control the government and rebel organizations exercise in a particular area and the availability of

[4] Fearon and Laitin 2003, 80; Valentino 2000, 48.
[5] Kalyvas 2006, 148.
[6] Steele 2009, 422.
[7] Azam and Hoeffler 2002; Kalyvas 2006, 147-150; Downes 2008, 30-1; Lyall 2009; Lyall and Wilson 2009, 75-77; Valentino 2004.
[8] Valentino 2004, 5.
[9] Valentino 2004, 200-205.

information on the allegiances of the civilian population. In this model, individuals are more likely to denounce other individuals to the government-- and the government is more likely to use *selective* violence against targeted civilians-- where individuals do not fear retaliation in the form of counter-denunciation.[10] This condition occurs only when the government holds dominant control and individuals can trust that the government will protect them from counter-denunciation. Selective violence, therefore, is more likely in government controlled areas. Where control reaches parity, Kalyvas expects no violence, since no individual has the incentive to denounce others. Where the government has weak control (and the rebels have dominant, but not hegemonic control), the government may engage in indiscriminate violence.[11] Thus, indiscriminate violence by government forces is more likely in insurgent-controlled areas, while indiscriminate violence by insurgent forces is more likely in government-controlled areas.[12] The model links the nature of violence (indiscriminate or selective) to the quality and extent of information the parties have on defectors, and the quality of the information to the level of control each party exercises in a particular geographic area. Like Kalyvas, Abbey Steele expects individual targeting by the government in areas where the government has control, but expects collective targeting (targeting based on a shared characteristic) during phases of contestation.[13]

Although the emerging literature provides important ways to think about civilian victimization, it leaves several questions unanswered. First, there is a tension within the literature on whether violence is planned and well-targeted or originates in an environment of disorder where the state fails to distinguish "friend" from "foe." For instance, can extrajudicial killings and disappearances be considered a result of the identification problem? That is, do extrajudicial executions occur because the

[10] Kalyvas 2006, 174
[11] Ibid, 204
[12] Kalyvas 2006, 203-204.
[13] Steele 2009, 422.

government cannot distinguish who its real enemies are or because it can? A related ambiguity concerns the idea of "selective violence." Short of genocide, every form of violence, even mass violence, is "selective" at some level. On the other hand, every act of violence that targets noncombatants is "indiscriminate" since it fails to distinguish combatants from noncombatants. Yet the literature fails to provide clear criteria for determining when violence against civilians is "indiscriminate" and when it is "selective."[14] Indeed, such criteria cannot be formulated without knowing both why the state targets civilians at all *and* the ways in which it categorizes the population. While political scientists have tried to address the first part of this question—the objectives of the state in initiating violence against defenseless populations—they have not critically analyzed the second part—how the state categorizes the population—and the ways the two components may be related.[15] Finally, the idea of information asymmetry assumes that information about already existing allegiances is distributed unevenly between insurgents and incumbents. But as Kalyvas notes, allegiances are often endogenous to conflict, and depend critically on the level of control exercised by the combatants: civilians are likely to support the group that exercises greater coercive control, regardless of their initial sympathies.[16] If allegiances are endogenous to conflict –and especially to territorial control- however, why do governments bother to collect it? *Indeed, allegiances may be endogenous not only to conflict, but also to "information."*

This paper attempts to unpack the relationship between the politics of knowledge and civilian victimization during the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. The extant literature is indeterminate with respect to

[14] Kalyvas and Kocher argue that "Violence is selective when targeting requires the determination of individual guilt; it is indiscriminate when targeting is based on guilt by association or collective guilt" (2007: 188). Most counterinsurgency wars arguably fail to meet this criterion, as the determination of individual guilt enables the state to use legal forms of coercion (e.g., arrest with terrorism charges), while much of the violence in counter-insurgency wars is directed against individuals who are presumed to be *associated* with the insurgents, but the state does not have individual-level information or evidence. Moreover, collective targeting itself can be *more* or *less* selective, depending on how wide a net is cast by the state.

[15] But see Steele 2011.

[16] Kalyvas 1999.

why particular groups of citizens are more vulnerable to state violence. That question, in turn, cannot be answered without knowing who the state deems as "supporters" of the insurgent group. Hence, I argue, state projects to map, categorize, and render a population legible are central to patterns of violence during civil war. Moreover, state practices to collect information are themselves often violent and productive of allegiances, and as such, resisted by the local population.

The question of how states attempt to identify the loyalties of population groups is particularly puzzling in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey for three reasons. First, justifications for the state's counterinsurgency campaign have relied extensively on the distinction between "the local population," often constructed as helpless victims of PKK violence and "terrorists." It is therefore important to understand whether and how, in its actual deployment of violence, the state distinguished between these two categories. Second, non-distinction between Kurds and Turks has been a core and constitutive element of Turkey's ethnic policy until recently.[17] Tracing how the Turkish government kept track of a category that it claimed did not exist thus provides insight into how ethnic policies are constrained by the very technologies of control that governments devise to manage ethnic populations and the arbitrary power that is generated by the mismatch between the instruments of control and the wider discourse on identities. Finally, Turkey's Kurdish regions have historically been those least legible to the state. Examining the history of the region's becoming more legible to the state thus allows an appreciation of the different pathways through which state violence and population knowledge are linked. The Kurdish conflict, therefore, provides a compelling case study of the relationship between control, knowledge, and violence.

In order to develop my argument on how state practices to make the Kurdish population legible affected who ultimately was targeted for coercion and violence, I focus on the processes by which the Turkish

[17] With the rise of Muslim parties that challenged Turkey's Kemalist legacy, Turkey's assimilationist policy shifted towards a multiculturalist policy during the 2000s (Aktürk 2012, 163-194).

state, which until 1991 denied the existence of a Kurdish population in Turkey, has tried to render Kurdish society legible.[18] First, I examine how the population census has created the category "Kurd." As numerous scholars have argued, the census is not simply a technical procedure for recording the traits of a population, but a central practice for defining and institutionalizing identity.[19] The official denial of Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey aggravated the "identification problem," only partially overcome through the proxies used in the census. Second, I examine elections, which, some scholars have argued, can play a role similar to that of the census.[20] By signaling the political preferences of a population, elections can provide aggregate information about a population, which can then be put to use for various political ends.[21] Kurdish political parties' tortuous experience in the Turkish political system during the 1990s provides an interesting test of whether elections were used to code the allegiances of the population. Beyond aggregate forms of information such as censuses and election outcomes, I examine the ways the state has tried to map the civilian population through a network of informants. Specifically, I examine the "village guard system" initiated by the government in 1985 to recruit a local pro-government militia that would aid the security forces in the war with the PKK. This kind of "human intelligence," collected from individuals embedded in the community, constituted a more fine-tuned attempt at deciphering the allegiances of civilians, but it also brought new problems of reliability and a new layer of arbitrariness to civilian victimization.

I argue that the legibility of Kurds was achieved through these three layers that ultimately proved to be crucial for the distribution of violence. Each of these instruments of legibility—the census, election outcomes, and informants—brought different elements of arbitrariness to who became coded as a PKK supporter and vulnerable to coercion and violence. At each level, the categorization relied on arbitrary

[18] In April 1991, the law prohibiting publishing in Kurdish was lifted. This law had effectively enabled the state to criminalize the expression of Kurdish identity.
[19] For recent research into the question of identity and census, see Bowker and Star (1999) Nobles (2000); Torpey (2000); Kertzer and Arel (2002); Posner (2003).
[20] Horowitz 1985, 326.
[21] Blaydes 2010; Steele 2011

criteria that, in many instances, could not credibly be linked to support for the Kurdish insurgency. But in creating categories of people, such techniques authorized various levels of collective punishment, ultimately doing much to generate "PKK supporters" from within an impoverished society that previously had very little contact with the central government.

The article is based on original research including a dataset on internal displacement compiled by the author based on government and activist sources, interviews with displaced persons in Istanbul and Diyarbakır, and interviews with village guards in two districts of Diyarbakir. In the rest of the paper, I first provide a brief background of the conflict and patterns of civilian victimization. Next, I examine the census, elections, and the use of village guards as practices to collect information on the allegiances of the population, and I discuss the ways these practices shaped the nature and location of civilian displacement. A conclusion follows.

II Violence and Civilian Victimization in the Kurdish Conflict

The PKK emerged as a small organization in 1978 under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan with the goal of "liberating" Kurdistan from Turkish colonialism. It concentrated its initial attacks on other left-wing Kurdish organizations until it became the predominant Kurdish armed organization operating in the region.[22] Between the PKK bombings of two gendarmerie stations in 1984, which mark the beginning of the insurgency, and the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya in 1999, the conflict has cost approximately 35,000 lives in battle deaths (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005).[23] More than 80 percent of the violence took place between 1992 and 1998.

[22] See Tezcur, forthcoming.

[23] Comparable figures from similar conflicts that pit the armed organization of an ethnic group against a state include roughly 76,000 in Sri Lanka (1984-2008), 92,000 in Chechnya (1994-2007), 42,000 in Kashmir (1989-2008) and 18,000 in Israel-Palestine (1949-2008). These figures are drawn from "best estimates" of Battle Deaths Dataset version 3.0 (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005).

The number of civilian deaths at the hands of government forces or the PKK was substantially lower than battle deaths—perhaps about 5,000-- suggesting that civilians were not targeted indiscriminately but rather through a process of selection. In the case of the PKK, independent sources count 1,205 civilian deaths from 1989 until 1999.[24] Much of this violence targeted individuals who had joined the pro-government militia force (so-called Village Guards) and their families. For instance, in February 1987, PKK militants attacked the homes of village guards in Taşdelen village in Hakkari and killed fourteen villagers.[25] In June 1987, thirty villagers were killed in Pınarcık village near Mardin for enlisting in the pro-government militia. PKK fighters also hanged village guards on trees and stuffed their mouths with money to deter other villagers from joining the militia force.[26] According to government figures, between 1987 and 1999, the PKK killed 975 village guards (Özdağ 2010). Although this violence was selective in targeting individuals associated with the government militia, it was also indiscriminate in including the family members of village guards and their children.

These PKK attacks against village guards and their families aimed to deter the civilian population from cooperating with the government by inflicting severe and visible punishment on those that joined the ranks of the village guards. Such violence seems to have had a certain level of success. As Serxwebun, the PKK's official journal, reported, 600 village guards left their posts by surrendering to the PKK, returning their weapons to the state, or leaving the region between 1984 and 1988.[27] Already in 1987, however, the PKK also showed signs of concern about alienating the local population through such

[24] This is according to the Best Estimates in Uppsala One-Sided Violence Dataset v1.4 2012 (Eck and Hultman 2007). Government sources attribute 4,356 civilian deaths to the PKK (Özdağ 2010). However, the government figures are not reliable and may include deaths resulting from the government-controlled militia Hizbullah. Comparable figures for one-sided violence by rebel organizations in other countries include 501 deaths by Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Israel-Palestine (2001-2004), 2,252 deaths by Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, 2,297 deaths by Kashmir insurgent groups in India (1990-2009), and 1,197 deaths by FARC/ELN in Colombia (1994-2001)(Eck and Hultman 2007).
[25] *Milliyet* 1987a.
[26] *Serxwebun* 1986, 3.
[27] *Serxwebun* 1988, 20.

operations and reached a resolution that it would henceforth target only the leaders and organizers of the militia, not all of its members, thus moving to a more *selective* use of violence.

Civilian deaths perpetrated by the government were more extensive and took the form of extrajudicial executions, unidentified murders, and disappearances.[28] Turkish human rights organizations hold the government responsible for at least 3,438 civilian deaths (Balta Paker 2010). An independent human rights organization specializing in transitional justice and disappearances reports 1,316 disappearances between 1980 and 1999 based on various sources (Göral, Işık, and Kaya 2013, 22). Nicole Watts documents 112 party administrators and activists killed in extrajudicial killings between 1990 and 2007 (Watts 2010, 100). Short of death, scores of activists and their family members have been detained, beaten, and tortured for reasons such as participating in mass demonstrations or their activities in human rights organizations, pro-Kurdish political parties, and newspapers.

By far the most extensive form of civilian victimization was the forced displacement of around a million citizens living in roughly 3,400 villages as a result of a new policy by the government forces. Most of the evacuations occurred between 1992 and 1994, at the height of the conflict, a period that also witnessed extensive human rights violations in urban areas (see Figure 1).[29] Various accounts of the conflict suggest that some time in the first half of the 1990s, the security forces adopted a new strategy of establishing control in a select number of villages and evacuating the remaining villages that were presumed to support the PKK.[30] The forced evacuations and burnings of villages occurred after the

[28] Extrajudicial executions are deaths at the hands of security officials without due process while unidentified murders (*faili meçhul*) refer to assassinations by unidentified individuals thought to be associated with secret services.
[29] Parliamentary Inquiry Commission 1997, 107; Barut 2002, 15. Geographers Yüceşahin and Özgür date the greatest number of village evacuations between 1994 and 1996 (2006).
[30] Üstel 2004; Balta Paker 2010; Özdağ 2010. The exact timing of this transition is not clear. Ümit Özdağ claims that the strategy was officially adopted in 1995, after it had already been in force since 1990 (2010: 130).

adoption of this strategy, although there have also been individuals who left their home "voluntarily" due to PKK intimidation.[31]

Most of the evacuations seem to have followed one of two patterns. In some cases, villagers were provided with the option of either joining the Village Guards or leaving their villages.[32] Those that didn't agree to join the pro-government militia were presumed to be PKK supporters and ordered to evacuate their homes. In this pattern, the reaction of a village to government threats resulted in the village being collectively labeled as pro-government or pro-PKK. Often, the evacuation of the village occurred simultaneously with other human rights abuses, such as torture, humiliation, and disappearances and the burning down of houses, crops and livestock. In the second pattern (or according to alternative accounts), security forces came to a village following a PKK attack in a nearby police station. Security forces typically attributed the actual burning of villages to the PKK, after the security forces had left. In both scenarios, the evacuations were indiscriminate at the individual level, but selective at the collective (village) level.

III Sources of State Knowledge and Layers of Legibility

In order to examine whether the government attempted to inflict collective punishment against Kurdish citizens or selective punishment against Kurdish individuals associated with the insurgency, one has two know whether and how the government knew who was Kurdish and what categories or proxies were used to proxy support for or participation in the insurgency. Moreover, one has to know from which set of provinces, districts, or villages such subsets were selected: all Kurdish people in Turkey, Kurds living in the Eastern and Southeastern regions, Kurds living in particular provinces.

[31] A government-affiliated report claims that 51.4 percent of Internally Displaced Persons left their places of origin due to state violence while 48.6 percent left due to PKK intimidation (Türkyılmaz et al. 1998, 72, 121). This may be quite unrealistic. Other sources indicate 83.7 percent who left due to state violence (Barut 2002: 34-35).
[32] Human Rights Watch 2002, 12.

Turkey is divided into seven regions and 81 provinces. Since the government has historically rejected the existence of a Kurdish population, the closest "estimation" of Kurdish identity has been affiliation with the Eastern and Southeastern Regions, which comprise 22 provinces. The Turkish public does not have an accurate sense of which of these provinces are majority-Kurdish provinces. For decades, newspapers covered problems in the Kurdish region as problems of "the East" stemming from lack of economic development and violent incidents as "banditry." In this section, I examine three practices through which Kurdish society became legible.

The Census

As James Scott has argued, an essential component of modern statecraft is the attempt to make a society legible, "to arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion."[33] Key among such projects of legibility is the population census, which enables the recording, counting, and monitoring of population groups. As recent studies of the population census have argued, the census is not simply a scientific procedure for recording what exists, but a central practice for defining and institutionalizing identity.[34] Categorization necessitates the identification of criteria (such as race, language or religion) that can divide the population into mutually exclusive groups and reifies those traits that differentiate categories. By centralizing the accumulated information in the hands of government officials, moreover, censuses enable differential treatment of the population groups they create.

Historically, the Kurdish regions of Turkey have been those least legible to the state. The Ottoman Empire had not been interested in the ethnic make up of its Muslim population until the coming to power of the Young Turk movement in 1908, which replaced the multi-ethnic ideology of the Ottoman

[33] Scott 1998, 2

[34] For recent research into the question of identity and census, see Bowker and Star (1999) Nobles (2000); Torpey (2000); Kertzer and Arel (2002); Posner (2003).

Empire with Turkish nationalism. The first Ottoman census of 1831, for instance, had classified the population as Muslim, non-Muslim, Jewish, fellaheen (agricultural laborer), and gypsy, and separately counted *yörüks* (Turkoman tribes) and tribes. It was only after the rise of an exclusive and ethnic form of Turkish nationalism in the wake of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) that the state became invested in sorting out the demography of the Muslim population. Twenty-two ethnolinguistic categories were identified in 1914 and Muslim ethnicities such as Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and Circassian were counted in the census for the first time. Until the rise of Turkish nationalism in the final decade of the Empire, then, "Kurdish" was not a category that the state kept numerical track of (Dündar 1999).

Taking a census in the Kurdish regions was also difficult due to the large tribal population in the region. For instance, one government report noted that tribes in Eastern regions were not counted in the 1906 census because "mountainous localities and tribes that continue a nomadic life style do not lend themselves to registration for the purposes of military conscription and taxation" and the government "does not wish to incite a riot."[35] Efforts were made to include the Eastern regions in 1916 and again in the first Republic-era census of 1927, but large areas in the Kurdish regions remained outside the purview of these two censuses.[36] In particular, the size of the nomadic population and the reluctance of Kurdish men to enlist in the Turkish army resulted in considerable anomalies. Fuat Dündar notes, for instance, one tribe that reported 120 women and 3 men. Kurdish tribes' historical distrust of the state to avoid taxation and military conscription, a distrust carried over to the modern era with the consolidation of secular Turkish nationalism as the glue of the new Republic, made it very difficult to build the infrastructures of state power in the Kurdish regions. In 1935, census officials went to areas

[35] Dündar 1999.
[36] Dündar estimates that about 400,000 people in the Kurdish provinces were not counted in 1927, when Turkey's total population was 13,6 million.

with nomadic populations in Eastern Turkey months in advance and marked the tents of the nomadic population to make sure they would be counted.[37]

The transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic in 1923 brought about a reformulation of national identity. The Republic was established in 1923 following a War of Independence with the native Christian population supported by European states. The new state granted citizenship to everyone residing within the borders of Turkey and defined as "Turk" anyone who belongs to Turkey by citizenship. This seemingly inclusive definition of Turkishness went hand in hand with a denial of the claim that there could be any non-Turkish nations or ethnicities in Turkey other than the Christian and Jewish minorities officially recognized by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. This ethnicization of religion, whereby Muslims came to be redefined as Turks, left Kurds in an awkward relationship to Turkishness. Although Kurds were included as members of the favored religion, they were implicitly excluded by the emergence of proficiency in Turkish as the new criterion of membership in the Turkish nation. As one scholar has argued, Kurds were to be "prospective Turks" who would become Turkish through assimilation.[38]

These ideological blinders of the new Republic contributed to the relative "illegibility" of the Kurdish population. Declaring everyone living within the boundaries of Turkey Turkish -while excluding non-Muslims from this definition through a variety of formal and informal practices- the republican regime adopted a heavy-handed assimilation policy towards Muslim minorities like the Kurds. Through schools, publications, and other venues, successive governments spread the official ideology that there were no nations or languages other than Turkish in Turkey. Based on this policy, the government left Kurds alone as long as they agreed to assimilate. However, it equated the expression of Kurdish identity with separatism and reacted with force against any expression of Kurdish cultural or political identity. The

[37] Ibid.
[38] Yeğen 2006. See Aktürk 2009 for the argument that Turkishness was defined implicitly on the basis of religion.

assimilationist policy became more forceful after the military *coup* of 1980. Immediately after the *coup*, when thousands of Kurdish activists were arrested, the Diyarbakır prison administration banned the speaking of Kurdish among inmates and subjected Kurdish speakers to systematic humiliation and ill-treatment. In 1983, the military government adopted a law that banned publications in Kurdish.[39] Speaking Kurdish therefore became increasingly associated with separatism and punishable by law. Ironically, however, these policies of assimilation and repression, built as they were on the axiom that everyone within the borders of Turkey is Turkish, also created difficulties for surveillance of the Kurdish population. How would the government know who belonged to this population that it deemed so dangerous, but that couldn't be called by its name?

Until 1985, Turkish censuses included a question about mother tongue, although the answers to this question were not reported in government publications after 1965. The enactment of the 1983 law banning the promotion of mother tongues other than Turkish made it difficult to ask about mother tongue in the census. According to one news report, a number of officials from the State Statistics Institute were arrested for separatism in 1985 and the language question was dropped from the census beginning with the 1990 census.[40] Until 1985, then, the state had at its disposal household level information on Kurdish speakers even though publicly it was illegal to speak of Kurdish identity during this period and official ideology claimed that there was no such language as a Kurdish language.

Categorization based on Kurdish as mother tongue, however, constituted only a rough estimate of the Kurdish population. It missed Turkish-speaking Kurds who grew up in urban centers as well as Kurds who

[39] Technically, the law banned publication in languages other than "the first official language of countries recognized by the Turkish state." Kurdish had been recognized as an official language in Iraq, hence the qualifier "first" official language. In previous decades, Kurdish intellectuals and activists had been arrested and jailed for using the Kurdish language by means of other laws, but the 1983 law broadened the sweep of the ban and made it more systematic. This law remained in force until 1991, when it had to be repealed under a great deal of foreign and domestic pressure. Liberalization of the use of the Kurdish language proceeded only slowly, however, with many reversals, inconsistencies, and limitations.

[40] Dündar 1999, 65.

reported Turkish as their mother tongue simply to stay out of trouble. One Kurdish interviewee who grew up in an urban center noted, for instance, that he—like many others—grew up thinking he was Turkish, and that the peasants in the surrounding villages were Kurds.[41] Indeed, the percentages of people who reported Kurdish as their mother tongue, 8.6 percent in 1927, 6.6 percent in 1960, and 7.5 percent in 1965, are all well below the estimated Kurdish population of around 14 percent.[42] Large-scale migration from Eastern to Western provinces, moreover, suggests that the population count of 1965 was probably out of date by the 1990s. But inaccurate as they may have been, census figures appear to have served as the basis for a rough categorization of "Kurdish provinces" in the state's archive, a category never made public, but no less powerful for that. How else to explain the very different trajectories, during the 1990s, of provinces which had reported more than 50 percent Kurdish speakers in the 1965 census, and provinces that had reported less than 50 percent?

All sixty-seven provinces of Turkey came under martial law following the military *coup* of September 1980. Civilian rule returned in 1983 and martial law was gradually phased out of most non-Kurdish provinces from 1984 until 1986. In most provinces in Eastern and Southeastern Regions, however, martial law was replaced by emergency rule.[43] Giorgio Agamben describes the state of exception as a "no-man's land between public law and political fact," where the suspension of law "allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system."[44] Agamben thus links the state of exception to a shift from the selective punishment of political opponents to the collective punishment of "categories" of citizens.

[41] Interview with author, 19 August 2006.
[42] The most recent Turkish Demographic Health Survey, which was undertaken by the Population Studies Institute of Hacettepe University puts the number of Kurdish-speakers as 14 percent of the population.
[43] Martial law continued in fifty-four out of sixty-seven provinces in March 1984; it continued in twenty-three provinces in March 1985; and in five Kurdish provinces in March 1986.
[44] Agamben 2005, 1-2. Agamben suggests that categories of citizens that are defined as alien or other ("cannot be integrated") receive this treatment. The irony is that Kurds have been *forced* to integrate by giving up their Kurdish identity.

Emergency rule is directly related to the extensive civilian victimization in Turkey's Eastern and Southeastern provinces during the 1990s. In 1987, the government enacted an Emergency Decree (KHK 285) that authorized the Emergency Governor to "evacuate, change the locations of, or unify" villages and sub-villages (*mezra*) for security purposes. A 1990 Decree (KHK 430) further authorized the Emergency Governor to remove "persons or collectivities who engaged in harmful acts or disturbed public peace or *generated the impression that they might disturb public peace*" (italics mine) to locations outside the emergency zone. Individuals arrested on charges of crimes related to the declaration of emergency could be held in *incommunicado* detention for up to ten days before being presented to a judge. Homes could be searched without a court warrant. Public officials and security personnel could not be held accountable for acts they undertook in relation to their duties and no court proceedings could be initiated with such claims. The constitutionality of emergency rule decrees could not be challenged at the Constitutional Court. In this way, emergency rule laws and decrees constructed that "no-man's land" where "entire categories of citizens" could be subject to coercion and violence. This, in turn, generated very severe repression, including torture, extrajudicial killings, unidentified murders, disappearances, and village burnings and evacuations (See Figure 1).

Three types of emergency rule, with decreasing degrees of severity and constitutional oversight, can be identified in the Turkish legal system: martial law, state of emergency, and so-called "adjacent zones" (*mücavir alan*). Under martial law, security is administered by military commanders, while under a state of emergency, civilian authorities continue to be in charge of security, with considerably weakened protections for civilians.[45] A third, more loosely regulated category of emergency rule is that of "adjacent zone," a category not found in the Constitution, but created through a 1987 Decision of the

[45] For instance, long detention periods without access to a lawyer and trials in State Security Courts presided by military judges.

Council of Ministers, to temporarily authorize emergency rule powers in areas in proximity to the emergency zone.[46]

These degrees of emergency rule can be mapped onto three categories of provinces: those with more than 50 percent Kurdish population; those with *close to* 50 percent Kurdish population (between 40 percent to 49 percent), and the remaining provinces in the Eastern and Southeastern Regions with a Kurdish minority of less than 40 percent (see Table 1).

Table 1: Kurdish population as defined in the 1965 census and emergency rule

Province	% Kurdish Population		Martial Law	Emergency Rule	Adjacent Zone	Civilian Rule since	Literacy
	1950	**1965**					**1965**
Hakkari	91	86	1979-87	1987-2002	---	2002	17.6
Şırnak*	72	68	1979-87	1987-2002	---	2002	21.1
Siirt	72	68	1979-87	1987-1999	1999-2002	2002	21.1
Batman*	72	68	1979-87	1987-1997	1997-2002	2002	21.1
Mardin	66	67	1979-87	1987-1996	1996-2002	2002	20.1
Ağrı	69	63	1980-85	1985-1987	---	1987	25.9
Diyarbakır	71	62	1979-87	1987-2002	---	2002	25.8
Bitlis	66	61	1980-84	1984,1993-97	1997-2002	2002	23.8
Bingöl	76	58	1978-86	1986-1997	1997-2002	2002	26.0
Van	66	55	1980-87	1987-2000	2000-2002	2002	24.0
Adıyaman	Na	46	1979-85	1985-1986	1988-1995	1995	21.2
Şanlıurfa	46	43	1978-86	1986-1987	---	1987	21.5
Muş	61	42	1980-84	---	1988-2002	2002	24.0
Elazığ	44	24	1978-86	1986-1993	1993-1996	1996	37.9
Kars	23	22	1978-85	1985-1986	---	1986	37.6
Iğdır*	23	22	1978-85	1985-1986	---	1986	37.6
Tunceli	54	22	1979-86	1986-2002	---	2002	39.0
Malatya	35	17	1978-85	1985-1986	---	1986	39.8
Erzurum	15	11	1978-85	1985-1986	---	1986	37.5
Erzincan	14	6	1978-85	1985-1985	---	1985	45.4
Gaziantep	8	4	1978-85	1985-1986	---	1986	37.2
Kilis*	8	4	1978-85	1985-1986	---	1986	37.2

Source: Census data is from TUIK (1950 and 1965). Dates of Emergency Rule are compiled from the Turkish Grand National Assembly's (TGNA) website from Decisions on Martial Law and Emergency Rule (www.tbmm.gov.tr).

Note: Data on "Adjacent Zones" is based on Gemalmaz (2009), Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (1997), and a news report released by the pro-government Anadolu Ajansı news agency to several newspapers shortly before the end of Emergency Rule, which listed the provinces under the "adjacent zone" category with dates ("OHAL neydi?" *Cumhuriyet*, June 24, 2010; "Olağanüstü Hal 30 Kasım'da Bitiyor [sic]," *Yeni Şafak*, 28 November, 2002).

[46] Gemalmaz (2009)

Apart from this "leak," I could not locate a public announcement by the government of which provinces were "adjacent zones." Such decisions have not been published in the Official Gazette.

*Figures for Şırnak, Batman, Iğdır, and Kilis are estimates, since these were not provinces at the time of the 1950 or 1965 census. Batman and Şırnak were districts of Siirt until 1990; Iğdır was a district of Kars until 1992; and Kilis was part of Gaziantep until 1995. Since data is not available below the province level for the 1965 census, I report the percentages for Siirt, Kars, and Gaziantep, from which the four provinces were carved. While exact figures are not available, it is known that Şırnak has a higher Kurdish population than Siirt, since the province center of Siirt has a large Arab population (14.5 % in 1965), which was left in Siirt after the creation of Şırnak.

Most provinces in the Eastern and Southeastern regions – with *any* Kurdish population- came under martial law in 1978 or 1979, *before* the rest of the country in 1980. After martial law was belatedly phased out in these provinces from 1985 on, with the exception of Ağrı, all provinces with more than 50 percent Kurdish population came under emergency rule. Provinces with less than 50 percent Kurdish population, on the other hand, either did not experience emergency rule or experienced a milder form of emergency rule, in the form of shorter duration or being declared an "adjacent zone."

The first key to whether a province would experience high levels of civilian victimization is whether it was under emergency rule during the period of "hot conflict" in the first half of the 1990s. Provinces that came under emergency rule witnessed about a quarter of their villages evacuated, while provinces that were not under emergency rule experienced very little to no displacement. The key to whether a province would experience emergency rule, in turn, depended on the size of its Kurdish-speaking population. Hakkari, Siirt (and Siirt's offshoots Şırnak and Batman), Van, Mardin, Diyarbakır, Bingöl and Bitlis, with their more than 50 percent Kurdish speaking populations, all came under emergency rule. Tunceli (Dersim) also belongs to this category, although the 1965 census reported 22 percent Kurdish speakers for Tunceli: Tunceli was a Kurdish-majority province (54 percent in 1950), which experienced severe repression after the Dersim uprising of 1937. The government's forced assimilation program focused particularly on literacy and proficiency in Turkish in the aftermath of the uprising, significantly bringing down the rate of Kurdish speakers, but the government continued to treat Tunceli as a site of

rebellion. Equally revealing is the trajectory of neighboring Urfa, Adıyaman, and Muş, which, with roughly 40 percent Kurdish speaking population, escaped the Emergency Rule, though Adıyaman and Muş became "adjacent zone"s. These provinces were influenced by the counterinsurgency campaign in many ways. For instance, some of the top leaders of the PKK came from these provinces (Öcalan himself is from Urfa, as is the PKK's current leader, Murat Karayılan). The PKK recruited members from these provinces and the government employed significant numbers of village guards. Overall, however, their experience of the conflict was significantly softer. Provinces with fewer than 40 percent Kurdish speaking populations, on the other hand, did not come under Emergency Rule after 1987 and experienced almost no displacement or other effects of the conflict, even though some of them consistently voted for the Kurdish nationalist party at fairly high rates.

While speaking-Kurdish may be an arbitrary or inaccurate proxy for supporters of Kurdish nationalism, what the census figures do seem to proxy fairly accurately is the level of literacy at the time. The provinces which reported more than 50 percent Kurdish speakers in 1965 are also the (only) provinces that reported less than 30 percent literacy. Average literacy in Turkey as a whole in 1965 was 48.7 percent. Literacy was lowest in the Southeastern, Eastern, and Black Sea regions. In the Black Sea Region, literacy ranged between 32.8 and 39.4 percent, but in no province other than those with more than 50 percent Kurdish speakers, was literacy below 30 percent in 1965.[47] A different way to read the history of the conflict, then, is to note the high level of correlation between illiteracy in the early Republic and vulnerability to violence during the 1990s.[48]

Elections

[47] Turkey had 67 provinces in 1965.

[48] By the 1990s, the average literacy level had reached 78 percent in the Emergency Zone. 61.5 percent of districts with literacy lingering below 70 percent in the Emergency Zone witnessed more than half of their villages evacuated.

Of 22 provinces in the "Eastern" and "Southeastern" Regions, 10 came under full-scale Emergency Rule. Of the 3,724 villages belonging to these ten provinces, 21.6 percent were evacuated. Although this is a very high rate, it also means that there was a mechanism of selection beyond Kurdish ethnicity as revealed by the census. Within these provinces, however, the government initially had very little guidance on which areas were more likely to support the guerillas. An important source of knowledge emerged from the 1990s on, when the Kurdish national movement began to organize its own political parties and participate in elections. Since numerous restrictions made the expression of Kurdish identity illegal, with a few exceptions, a viable political party with a Kurdish platform did not run in elections until 1991.[49] Kurdish nationalist activism through political parties started with the establishment of *Halkın Emek Partisi* (People's Labor Party- HEP). HEP entered the 1991 elections in an electoral alliance with the social democratic Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti (SHP), but was shortly closed down by the Constitutional Court. The party continued under different names and participated in elections as HADEP (1995, 1999), DEHAP (2002), and as independents affiliated with DTP in 2007 and with BDP in 2011.[50] Elections provided a more accurate and up to date estimate of supporters of Kurdish nationalism and their location than the census. Indeed, the aggregate information they provided about allegiances may be one of the reasons these parties were always allowed to participate in elections, even though they were subjected to severe repression during their campaign and always closed down after the elections.

In the 1991 elections, when a Kurdish ethnic party participated in elections for the first time, the votes in the Eastern and Southeastern regions were divided between four key parties: the SHP-HEP alliance, which brought together Turkey's social democrats with Kurdish nationalists; the center-right DYP, which

[49] The exception is the socialist *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (TİP), which participated in elections in 1965, 1969, and 1977. TİP was closed down and reopened to participate in the 1977 elections, when it received the Kurdish vote only in Diyarbakır and Dersim/Tunceli. TİP was not an exclusively Kurdish party, however. It was only in the 1990s that *ethnic parties* mobilizing primarily around ethnic grievances emerged.

[50] HEP was closed down in 1993. It was replaced by DEP, which was closed down in 1994 before participating in any general elections. HADEP was closed down in 2003. DEHAP dismissed itself in 2005 in response to the Chief Prosecutor's initiation of a case against the Party in 2003. DTP was closed down in 2009. See Watts 2010 for Kurdish ethnic parties in Turkish politics.

was most closely associated with the government's counter-insurgency campaign and militia networks, the ultra-religious RP, which received some of the Kurdish nationalist vote, and the center-right ANAP. HEP candidates were elected to the parliament in 1991 from Adıyaman, Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, and Van. In Hakkari, Bingöl, and Van, the SHP-HEP alliance was relatively weak, perhaps due to the greater role of tribal politics in these provinces. Instead, the center-right parties ANAP and DYP, and the religious RP were strong in these provinces. Overwhelmingly, it was pro-SHP villages that were evacuated: SHP emerged as the first party in 72.1 percent of the evacuated villages. While SHP received 20 percent of the national vote, and 25 percent of the vote in the Emergency Zone, its average vote share in the evacuated villages was 62 percent. Moreover, in a majority of the 334 evacuated villages in which SHP was the winning party, the party gained 80 percent or more of the votes in the village. In other words, pro-SHP villages that were evacuated tended to be monopolistically-controlled by SHP.

Despite pro-SHP areas' greater vulnerability to displacement, there were also important exceptions that often followed a regional pattern. While in Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Siirt, and Tunceli, it was mainly pro-SHP villages that were evacuated, in Bingöl, Bitlis, and Hakkari, displacement followed different patterns. In Bingöl, it was overwhelmingly pro-DYP villages in Kiğı that were evacuated. In Bitlis, roughly half of the evacuated villages were pro-ANAP, while the other half were pro-SHP from Tatvan. In Hakkari, villages of *all* political affiliations were evacuated.

At the district level (below the province level, above the village level), several patterns can be identified. Within the districts that experienced *zero* displacement within the emergency zone, SHP-voting districts were underrepresented and RP-voting districts were overrepresented (see Table 2). Within the districts that experienced some or extensive displacement, SHP was overrepresented (78 percent of SHP-voting districts were in this category).

Table 2: Distribution of displacement at the district level according to their support for political parties

Winning party	No displacement		Some or extensive displacement		Total
ANAP	3	33%	6	67%	9
SHP	12	22%	42	78%	54
DYP	6	50%	6	50%	12
RP	9	64%	5	36%	14
Total	30	34%	59	66%	89

Note. District-level displacement data is compiled from a list leaked by activists, since government sources do not provide disaggregated data. This list combines evacuated villages and sub-villages (*mezra*).

Similarly, districts in which the SHP-HEP vote was low were less likely to experience large-scale displacement (see Table 3). Within the Emergence Rule Zone, 42.8 percent of the districts in which the SHP-HEP vote was below 50 percent experienced *zero* displacement. Conversely, of districts where more than 50 percent of the voters voted for the SHP, half experienced extensive displacement, another 32.3 percent experienced moderate displacement, and only 17.6 percent experienced no displacement. Stated differently, districts that voted substantially for SHP were less likely to experience no displacement.

Table 3 Distribution of displacement at the district level according to the level of support for SHP-HEP

Level of displacement	Districts with less than 50% SHP vote	%	Districts with 50% or more SHP vote	%
Extensive	14	26.9	17	45.9
Moderate	15	28.8	13	35
None	23	44	7	19
Total	52	100	37	100

Notes. Moderate displacement is defined here as districts that had 1 to 44 percent of their villages evacuated. Extensive displacement is defined as districts that had 45 to 100 percent of their villages evacuated.

Most of the evacuated villages had dominant or monopoly control by one party, where dominant control is defined as between 50 percent and 75 percent support for one party; and monopoly control is defined as 75 percent or more support for one party. Only 13 percent of the evacuated villages can be considered contested villages in which no single party gained 50 percent of the vote and the outcome of the election was uncertain. 89 percent of the evacuated SHP villages had dominant or monopoly control by the SHP. Similar rates (60-84 percent) obtain for pro-ANAP, pro-DYP and pro-RP villages. In sum, villages that were evacuated tended to be fairly homogenous in political identity.

To be sure, voting for SHP-HEP did not mean that individuals directly supported the PKK. Individuals may have voted for the SHP, which was associated with social democracy rather than for the HEP, which was associated with Kurdish nationalism. Moreover, HEP was a legal political party while the PKK was an illegal armed organization: support for HEP did not imply material support for PKK, even though HEP tried to formulate a vision that was largely in accord with the PKK. Finally, villages that voted strongly for SHP-HEP contained many individuals who had not voted for the party, but village evacuations often affected all residents of a village. As long as the village "generated the impression that they might disturb public peace," the Emergency Governor was authorized to evacuate everyone in the village. To the extent that strong support for SHP-HEP in 1991 coded a village as being pro-PKK, such categorization introduced another layer of arbitrariness, associating large numbers of citizens who desired a peaceful and democratic resolution of the Kurdish question, as outlined in SHP's program, with support for the PKK, and rendering them vulnerable to coercion and violence.

Village Guards

While the semi-legalization of Kurdish parties enabled the state to accumulate fairly accurate information on which villages were supportive of Kurdish nationalism, which were divided, and which were dominated by pro-government forces, this information was not fully available during the period in

which most of the evacuations occurred (1991-1993). The 1991 elections cast too wide a net because the HEP maintained a moderate discourse until the elections and participated in the elections under the SHP banner. Individuals technically voted for the SHP, which gained 20.8 percent of the national vote in 1991, well above the potential of a Kurdish nationalist party.[51] For instance, in Erzincan, where the Kurdish nationalist vote has rarely exceeded 2 percent, the alliance with SHP in 1991 yielded 33 percent (see Table 4 below). By 1995, when election results for HADEP could be considered a more accurate reflection of support for Kurdish nationalism, most of the village evacuations had already been completed.[52] Indeed, although villages and districts that voted for the SHP in 1991 were, on average, more likely to experience displacement than villages and districts that supported other parties, not *all* villages that supported the SHP were evacuated. For instance, all four districts of Hakkari, which distributed their support among ANAP, DYP, and to a lesser extent, SHP in the 1991 elections, experienced moderate or high levels of displacement. Many pro-SHP villages in pro-SHP districts and provinces, moreover, escaped displacement, suggesting that local factors that cannot be captured with election data must also have played an important role in how villages weathered the war years.

In this section, I examine the Village Guard System, which established a pro-government militia force composed of Kurdish strongmen and constituted one of the most ambitious projects to gather information about the allegiances of the population. The village guard system was initiated in 1985 by adding new provisions to the Village Law of 1924. The new law authorized centrally-appointed province governors to recruit "temporary" (paid) and "voluntary" (unpaid) village guards in provinces determined by the Council of Ministers.[53] Village guards were recruited locally from among the rural Kurdish

[51] Although the party has won considerable support in Kurdish regions, its national average has not exceeded 7 percent and was below 5 percent before the 2000s.
[52] Between the 1991 and 1995 general elections, there were local elections in 1994. The PKK boycotted the 1994 local elections and HEP, the legal Kurdish party of the time, did not participate in the local elections, especially with the looming decision of the Constitutional Court of Turkey to close the party. Most of the Kurdish vote went to the religious Refah Partisi (RP).
[53] Beşe 2006, 134-143; Balta 2004, 8-9.

population with an official mandate to "defend" their villages from the PKK and to "assist" security forces in their duties. The government would provide their salaries, weapons, clothing, and the compensation they would receive at the end of their service. According to statements made by interior ministers in response to parliamentary motions in 2003 and 2005, there were nearly 60,000 village guards on the government payroll, in addition to 25,000 voluntary village guards.[54] In 2005, the monthly salary of a temporary village guard was 390 New Turkish Liras, approximately U.S. $290, compared to a monthly GDP per capita in 2001 of less than $100 for most provinces in the Southeast region.[55] This large network of militias, dispersed throughout the region's rural areas, constituted one of the most important sources of the state's knowledge.

The village guard system appeared to resolve the information problem for the government for two reasons. For one, village guards would provide locally embedded information to military authorities on the allegiances of other villagers, enabling the state to "select" individual-level targets. Second, villages that refused to enlist in the government militia force could be deemed PKK supporters and those that enlisted in the militia could be deemed government supporters. Simply "inviting" a village to participate in the militia could thus become a reliable mechanism to divide the population into two mutually exhaustive categories, pro-government and pro-PKK, without the complicated delegation problems implied by authorizing local Kurdish strongmen to supply the government with information. For the PKK, which targeted a great deal of its violence during the early phases of the conflict against village guards, the village guards appear to have served a similar function, separating "collaborators" from "patriotic" Kurds.

How did the presence and distribution of village guards affect civilian victimization and displacement? Studies of irregular warfare suggest that where the state has more information on the allegiances of the

[54] The Village Guard system exists to this day.
[55] See Balta 2004, Beşe 2006, 136; Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, n.d..

local population, it has a better chance of exercising selective (discriminate) violence, by targeting individuals associated with the insurgency. Based on this assumption, central to nearly all theories of asymmetric war, one might hypothesize that where the government has a larger number of "eyes and ears" in the form of village guards, it should be better able to discriminate. But as with other instruments of information gathering, the employment of local informants embedded in the population introduced a number of dynamics that undermined the initial goal of separating "innocent civilians" from "rebel supporters." For instance, some village guards denounced their local rivals rather than individuals involved directly with the insurgency, to increase their local sphere of influence. Second, some villagers agreed to become village guards as a self-defense measure, without committing to the government's larger project of suppressing the insurgency and assimilating the Kurdish population. And some guards switched sides during the course of the conflict or collaborated with both sides. In this way, while village guards introduced another layer of arbitrariness to civilian victimization, they concealed as much information about true allegiances as they revealed.

In general, provinces with a greater concentration of village guards experienced more displacement and coercion against civilians. The four provinces with the highest concentration of village guards (Bitlis, Siirt, Hakkari, Şırnak) were also four of the top five displacement zones. Provinces that had fewer village guards per inhabitant (Diyarbakır, Bingöl, Batman) experienced some, but not extensive, displacement. And provinces that had a relatively large number of village guards, but that weren't under full-scale emergency rule did not experience substantial displacement (Elazığ, Iğdır, Muş).[56] Disaggregated data on village guards is unfortunately not available, but a screening of news reports suggests that the only three villages that survived displacement in Hakkari's Çukurca district -Taşbaşı, Çığlı, and Gündeş

[56] Two notable exceptions to the pattern of greater displacement in areas with higher concentration of village guards are Tunceli (Dersim) and Van. In Tunceli, which experienced extensive displacement despite a very small number of village guards, it is likely that the government was not able to find enough local volunteers to collaborate with the government and that the village guards from Elazığ–itself not under emergency rule- were used to control Tunceli. Van, on the other hand, was under full-scale emergency rule until 2002, had a large Kurdish-speaking population, and a high concentration of village guards.

villages- were village guard villages. In general, then, the presence of village guards increased the extent of civilian victimization.[57] Indeed, the Human Rights Association has documented 52 incidents of village burnings and evacuations, 294 armed attacks, 183 killings, and 562 instances of torture committed by village guards between 1992 and 2009.

Table 5: Displacement and Concentration of Village Guards

Province	Displaced	Total Village Guards (Voluntary and Paid)	Village Guards per 1000 rural inhabitants
No Emergency Rule			
Gaziantep	0%	565	2.1
Kilis	0%	34	0.8
Malatya	0%	1392	4.2
ŞanlıUrfa	0%	966	2.1
Ağrı	1%	1181	4.2
Erzurum	1%	0	0.0
Erzincan	3%	0	0.0
Kars	3%	578	2.6
Iğdır	6%	374	4.3
"Adjacent Zone"s			
Elazığ	2%	2507	11.2
Adıyaman	3%	1510	5.2
Muş	4%	4293	15.7
Emergency Rule			
Van	3%	7554	20.2
Diyarbakır	12%	6415	12.8
Bingöl	13%	2602	16.0
Batman	13%	3962	26.5
Mardin	25%	4586	14.8
Bitlis	29%	6780	36.8
Siirt	31%	5140	38.8
Tunceli	45%	475	5.7
Şırnak	49%	9165	67.0
Hakkari	59%	7648	75.8

Notes: Data on village guards is drawn from Balta (2004).

[57] Another district-level finding comes from a village guard interviewed by the author, who stated that Silvan had 10 guard villages, Kulp about 20, and Sason about 50. This ranking overlaps with increasing levels of displacement in these three districts.

Village guards tended to be more abusive in their treatment of the local population in rebel-dominated areas than in government-controlled areas. A comparison between Silvan and Çermik, two districts of Diyarbakır with opposing political tendencies, supports this claim.

In the 1991 elections, 77 percent of Silvan's voters supported the SHP-HEP alliance, while in Çermik, the SHP-HEP vote was unusually low for Diyarbakır at 21 percent. Silvan is nearly twice as populous as Çermik, more urbanized, but less literate. The two districts had very different experiences of the conflict: 54 percent of Silvan's villages were evacuated, while only 4 percent of Çermik's … villages were evacuated. Moreover, Silvan experienced widespread abuse by village guards. For instance, the Human Rights Association recorded 16 instances between 1990-2009 in which Village Guards in the Silvan area were involved in human rights abuses, most of them by the guards of Sulubağ, Bayrambaşı, and Boyunlu. The abuses included forcing villagers out of their village and burning their houses, settling in the villages of those evicted, shooting villagers, and the suspicious suicide of the young wife of a village guard, suspected to be an honor killing. Two ECHR Decisions also involved Silvan guards (Matyar v. Turkey, 2002; Application no. 23423/94; Bilgin v. Turkey [not VG but burning]). In Çermik, in contrast, no human rights abuses related to village guards or forced displacement was reported. Nor were there any deaths on either side during the conflict.

Çermik's K. village had 52 guards, compared to Silvan's 120. Guards in both districts had previous local conflicts involving blood feud and land disputes that had resulted in multiple deaths. In Boyunlu, the guards mentioned a blood feud that ensued when the widow of one villager married another villager. The feud led to 18 deaths in the preceding decades. An ECHR decision also mentioned a land dispute with Ormandışı, one of the villages evacuated by Silvan guards. (one villager initiated a case at the ECHR claiming that the Village Guards had … but the ECHR conclude that the events could not be verified). In

Çermik, too, the village guards mentioned a blood feud in the village that had resulted in close to 20 deaths and some family members having to leave the village.

While the government may have approached both villages as potentially useful due to the existence of previous conflict, village guards in the two districts described different paths and motivations for becoming village guards. The Silvan guards framed their motivation for participating in the militia force in ideological terms, boasted of their patriotism and sacrifice for the Turkish state, and described the PKK insurgency as an Armenian-Syrian manipulation. Village Guards in Çermik, by contrast, expressed empathy for the plight of Kurds and described their decision to become a village guard as one made unwillingly under pressure to protect their villages. The interview was held in the district center and occasionally interrupted by a member of the Kurdish nationalist party (it did not seem to be a problem). In Çermik, the guards claimed that their village collectively decided that one person from each family in the village would participate in the VG force, after two other villages in the district became VG villages against their will. In Silvan, the father of one of the guards had been the head village guard and he had been killed during the conflict. The guards mentioned that they had acquired many enemies. Initially about 30 or 40 villages in Silvan had guards, but many subsequently left the militia force under PKK pressure.

Although the presence of village guards tended to result in increased coercion of civilians, it is far from clear whether village guards were pro-government in allegiance in any consistent sense and whether they applied scrupulous criteria in who they denounced as being linked with the PKK. In the case comparison above, the guards in pro-government (based on election data) Çermik were much more sympathetic to the cause of the Kurdish national movement than the guards in Silvan, who operated in a rebel dominated area. Hence, accepting to become village guards may well have been a decision to maximize security without necessarily implying an endorsement in allegiance. Second, it is far from

clear whether village guards denounced true PKK-sympathizers or pursued their local rivalries. These problems reached beyond Çermik and Silvan. In 1994, a parliamentary Inquiry Commission protested that the village guard system was out of control:

> Today, a large portion of arms and drug smuggling is still under the control of village guards. Influential persons in the region have used the village guard system as a basis for their dominion. Tribal leaders who are now village guard heads have become much more ruthless and lawless in their behavior, exerting pressure on people who don't support them. They have passed on false information on these individuals to security forces, claiming they are PKK supporters. Several village guards have killed villagers with whom they have blood feuds based on the pretext that the latter are PKK members, and pressured these villagers to desert their villages.[58]

An army general, stationed in Hakkari between 1993 and 1995 wrote in his memoirs, that "either because of fear or faith, some [village guards] were covertly supporting the PKK with their state-issued guns and salary. That was not enough; they were participating in the operations of the PKK against the state."[59] According to the Interior Minister, the posts of 992 village guards were terminated from 1985 until 1997 for aiding the PKK.[60] In 2011, village guards were found to be involved in an attack that killed eight soldiers and one village guard in the Çukurca district of Hakkari.[61]

Much remains unknown about the activities of the village guards during the 1990s. The findings here show that violence towards civilians increased in areas with greater village guard penetration. However, it is much less certain whether village guards "accurately" distinguished PKK-supporters from

[58] Parliamentary Inquiry Commission 1995, 102.
[59] Pamukoğlu 2003, cited in Balta 2004, 12-13.
[60] Milliyet 1997.
[61] Doğan 2011. Doğan reports that since 2007, relations between the PKK and village guards have thawed and that they are particularly close in Hakkari.

government supporters and whether the guards themselves were consistently pro-government. In other words, the interpretive grid through which a population is coded as loyal or disloyal, which is central to patterns of violence, can be incidental to actual allegiances.

IV. Conclusion

This paper has explored the relationship between population knowledge and state violence towards civilians by examining three ways in which the Turkish state collected information on its Kurdish population: the population census, elections, and the network of village guards. Each of these instruments of legibility brought different elements of arbitrariness to civilian victimization. For instance, provinces that had close to 50 percent Kurdish population, but remained below this line escaped emergency rule altogether, and experienced much less violence and displacement throughout the 1990s. But Kurdish as mother tongue was an arbitrary standard of support for Kurdish nationalism, demonstrating rural and education background more than support for Kurdish nationalism. Nonetheless, once an area came under emergency rule, civilians were more likely to experience violence and arbitrary power; and they were more likely to vote for pro-Kurdish parties. Similarly, voting for SHP-HEP in 1991 did not necessarily mean support for Kurdish nationalism and certainly not material support for the insurgents, but such villages were more likely to experience displacement, especially if they happened to be in an area where support for SHP-HEP was high and where these were penetrated by village-guard villages. The employment of village guards, intended in part to overcome the arbitrary power generated by the use of broad categories, brought in a different kind of arbitrary power. As key information gathering functions were delegated to local agents, these agents turned in their rivals or protected their families, presenting the government with their own map of "good Kurds" and "bad Kurds." The processes through which populations get "coded" may be central to civilian victimization

even when they are incidental to actual allegiances. It is thus crucial to understand the lenses through which the state "reads" a population.

A second implication of the research presented here is that the rendering of a population legible is itself often a violent process and productive of allegiance. Perhaps the most direct and gruesome way in which knowledge and violence are linked in reverse causality is the use of torture to extract denunciations, a crime widely committed in the urban centers of Eastern Turkey during the 1990s. One can argue, then, that various forms of coercion, from torture to threat of displacement, increasingly forced the Kurdish population to take one of two dichotomous positions in the conflict, in this way helping *constitute* the categories of which the state was after. In other words, the militarization that Emergency Rule unleashed may have created many PKK sympathizers out of "moderate" Kurds. It is important to note, then, that the relationship between violence and knowledge is not one way: while information on allegiance (population statistics, intelligence) results in violence towards "undesired" groups (emergency rule, torture, displacement), it is also the case that coercion (emergency rule, threat of displacement, torture) generates unambiguous loyalties and the desired kind of knowledge (of supporters and enemies, of "pro-government" and "pro-PKK" villages).

Finally, every project of legibility generates resistance. Local efforts to avoid being coded in one way or other (i.e., as pro- or anti-government), or avoid being coded at all, are thus central to local histories of violence. Particularly worthy of further study are the efforts of individuals and communities, quotidian and organized, to avoid being miscoded or being coded at all.

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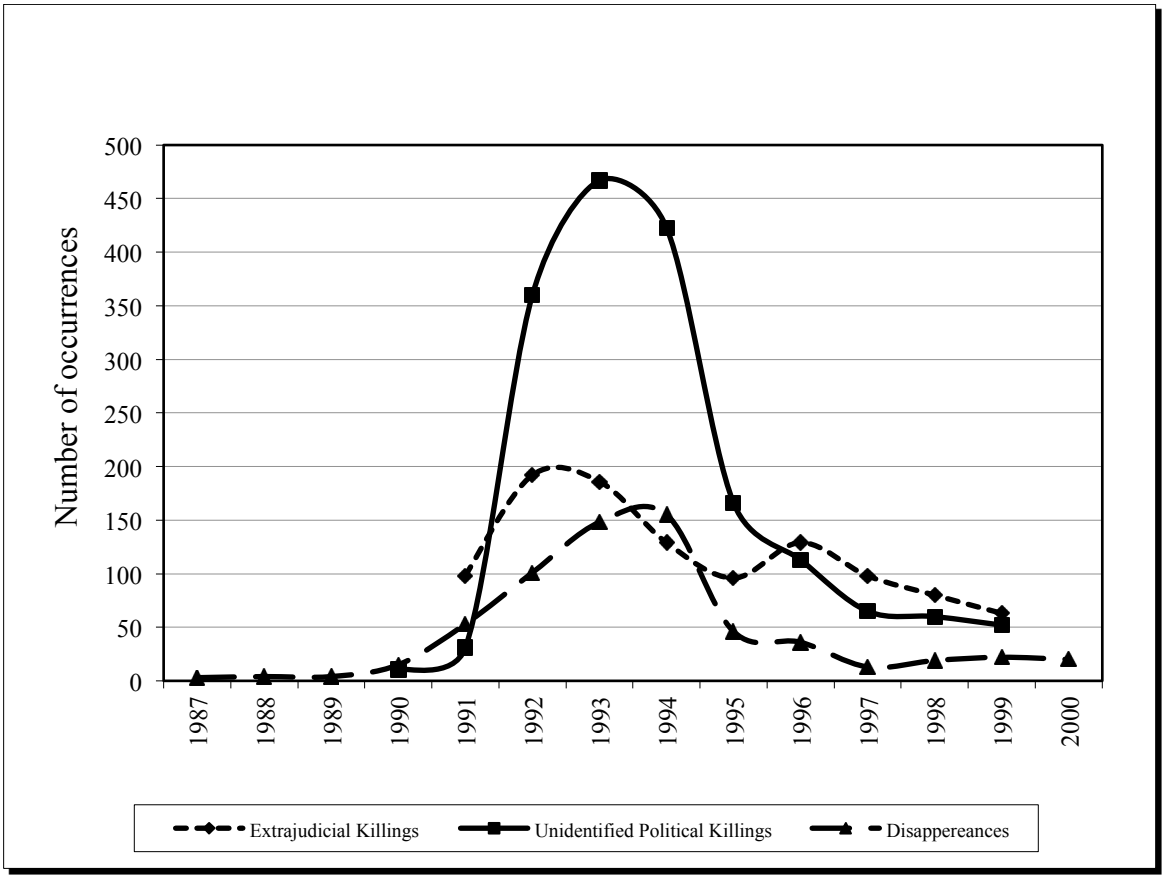

Figure 1: Human Rights Violations in Eastern Turkey, 1991-2000

Source: Evren Balta Paker (2010)

Note: The graph is compiled by Evren Balta Paker from the human rights reports of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. It shows deaths of civilians attributed to the state. The Human Rights Foundation distinguishes "extrajudicial killings," in which state security forces kill civilians without judicial process (for instance, during a protest or under custody) from so-called unidentified murders (*faili meçhul*), in which unidentified individuals thought to be connected to the secret service assassinate civilians.

Figure 2: Battle Deaths and PKK attacks against civilians, 1984-2008.

Source: Battle deaths are indicated in darker shade and PKK attacks against civilians are indicated in lighter shade. Battle deaths were extracted from the PRIO Battle Deaths Dataset, 1946-2008, Version 3.0 (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005), and show deaths of state security officials and PKK militants. PKK attacks against civilians are based on Özdağ (2009), who used the data of the Turkish Interior Ministry and the Turkish General Staff.

Note: From the PRIO dataset, "best estimates" are reported for every year except 1999, 2000, 2001, where best estimates were not available. For these years, the average of the low estimate and the high estimate is reported.

Table 4: Rural displacement and support for Kurdish nationalism

Province	Displacement	% Kurdish	1991 vote	1995 vote	1999 vote	2002 vote	2007 vote	2011 vote	AVG vote
Gaziantep	0%	4%	28.0	6.7	5.5	8.0	5.1	5.4	6.1
Kilis	0%	4%	NA	0.9	0.9	2.3	0.1	0.1	0.9
Malatya	0%	17%	26.2	2.9	2.3	4.2	1.8	1.3	2.5
ŞanlıUrfa	0%	43%	20.7	13.8	16.6	19.3	20.1	27	19.3
Ağrı	1%	63%	15.4	18.0	33.8	35.1	24.4	43.4	30.9
Erzurum	1%	11%	9.0	5.9	6.2	9.8	5.4	8.1	7.1
Elazığ	2%	24%	15.5	3.9	5.0	7.1	3.1	0	3.8
Adıyaman	3%	46%	27.2	9.5	7.5	12.0	8	6.6	8.7
Erzincan	3%	6%	33.4	1.2	1.1	1.6	4.5	0	1.7
Kars	3%	22%	31.2	6.8	17.5	18.8	15.6	19.2	15.6
Muş	4%	42%	41.9	16.8	31.9	38.1	45.8	44.3	35.4
Iğdır	6%	22%	NA	21.7	29.8	32.7	40.5	31.5	31.2
Van	3%	55%	22.3	28.1	35.8	40.9	32.6	49.5	37.4
Diyarbakır	12%	62%	50.0	46.5	46.0	56.1	47.0	61.7	51.4
Bingöl	13%	58%	17.9	7.1	12.9	22.1	14.3	23.9	16.1
Batman	13%	68%	52.8	37.4	43.5	47.1	39.4	51.5	43.8
Mardin	25%	67%	54.0	22.0	25.3	39.6	38.8	60.9	37.3
Bitlis	29%	61%	21.9	10.0	13.7	29.6	21.8	40.2	23.1
Siirt	31%	68%	39.7	26.7	22.2	0.0	39.5	42.5	26.2
Tunceli	45%	22%	58.0	17.0	13.4	32.6	60.0	22.2	29.0
Şırnak	49%	68%	61.3	26.0	24.1	45.9	51.8	72.3	44.0
Hakkari	59%	86%	19.1	54.4	46.1	45.1	56.2	79.8	56.3

Notes: "Displacement" refers to percentage of villages in a province that are evacuated, based on the official statement of the Emergency Zone Governorate (Parliamentary Inquiry Commission 1997, 12-13). "% Kurdish" refers to percent of province population who reported Kurdish as their mother tongue in the 1965 census, the last year for which this information is reported by the Turkish Statistics Institute (TUIK). The vote shares in the remaining columns indicate percent vote for pro-Kurdish parties, including the electoral coalition of SHP-HEP in 1991, HADEP in 1995 and 1999, DEHAP in 2002, and independents organized by the Kurdish party in 2007 and 2011. The average excludes the 1991 vote, in which the Kurdish party entered the race with the SHP.