

State-Building and Borderlands: Informal Control of the Turkish State on an Everyday Level

Introduction

On 27 December 2011, 34 Kurdish smugglers/villagers were killed in a Turkish airstrike while crossing the Kurdish-populated Turkish–Iraqi borderlands. This incident, known as the Roboski (Uludere in Turkish) event, was one of the most critical moments in the relationship between the Turkish state and the Kurdish guerrilla movement (known as the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*---Kurdish, Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK hereafter). The Turkish army had bombed the village of Roboski based on intelligence provided by Turkish spy drones and, according to the army prosecutor’s later report, “members of the Turkish Armed Forces acted per the decisions adopted by the Council of Ministers and the law” (Arsu, 2011). The Roboski incident occurred in the middle of the reform process, also known as Turkey’s Kurdish Opening, which included a set of state concessions toward Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights, launched in 2009. While the Turkish state had been doing reforms, the bombing of Roboski, Kurdish borderlands, was an example of state control and violence vis-à-vis people and territories, which contradicted the efforts made up until that point, as well as the stated strategy of reforms. This paradox relates to a prominent question: How does the Turkish state (re)shape people’s everyday lives in Turkey’s Kurdish borderlands? Why is Turkey still relatively stable despite of its 40 years old protracted conflict with the Kurdish insurgency? Here is why: informal control in everyday life enables the state to manipulate people’s hearts and minds by prolonged uncertainty and unpredictability as

well as arbitrary use of power so as to suppress dissidence and extend the state authority over people and territory.

The main pillar of my theoretical framework is informal control, an analytical category that is driven by extensive interview data showing the individuals' everyday experiences and narratives of state control in challenging conditions of contested borderlands. I describe informal control as the state's use of hard-to-catch mechanisms, such as unwritten rules, and informal practices that are based on the networks between politicians, security forces and business elites, so as to perpetuate uncertainty, manipulation, arbitrariness (contingency) and fear to extend state authority over certain people and territory (land and property). Through the analytical canon on the state's use of informal control along Turkey's Kurdish borderlands, my theoretical framework engages with the scholars of state-making, such as Migdal (2001; 2004; 2009), Beban (2021) and Helmke and Levitsky (2004), who have shown the role of unwritten rules, and informal (state) practices in shaping political preferences, in state-building, regime stability or political change across a wide range of cases.

Drawing on interview data with villagers, activists, journalists, and lawyers, collected in 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork from 2013 to 2014, when the peace process was still in place, this article argues that Turkish authorities use informal mechanisms to maintain the control of Kurds in borderlands as the state continues to perceive Kurds as a threat to its territorial integrity. The interview data shows how influential the informal control, using arbitrary power, changing expectations and measures, as well as manipulating emotions, escalates insecurity and makes it easier to enforce formal state control. Informal control is thus a source of the state's (re)making in Kurdish borderlands.

My theoretical approach explores everyday practices of state-making at the Kurdish borderlands, which adopts a borderland lens that reveals the complex interactions between multiple actors, including local populations, armed groups as well as state officials, based on firsthand observations (Idler, 2019; Brenner 2019). I develop a micro-study (bottom-up) theory of control which addresses informality as a strategy to extend state authority by creating uncertainty, fear and insecurity as people's lived experiences. As such, my analysis shifts the focus of study from the state center to the margins which illustrates that borderlands are the sites of multiple sovereignties (Scott, 2009) and that the inhabitants of borderland areas are likely to identify themselves in different, more or less complex ways with each other, and have recognizably different national or political identities than the majority inhabitants of the political community.

The main contribution of this study is to display the lived experiences of control mechanisms; to show the conditions under which informal strategies of state-making come to exist and to reveal the merits of pursuing a micro-study of state's ethnic control in Turkey, specifically the territorial imperatives of control. By showing relatively subtle modes of state control and adopting a new framework to the case of Kurds and Kurdish borderlands in Turkey, I extend analyses of state-making, state-society relations, political violence, as well as conflict and peace studies that comprise a growing literature on territorial imperatives of state's ethnic control (McGarry and O'Leary 1992; Pettai and Hallik 2003; Yiftachel 2006), especially in borders and borderlands (Newman 1989; Reeves 2014; Brenner 2019). I also contribute to analyses of the role of informal institutions and practices in state-making in divided nations, in general (Helmke and Levitsky 2004; Utas 2012; Cox 2015) and in Turkey, in particular.

In the following part, I will explain why borderlands are politically salient after I introduce the research site. The next part lays out the methods used for data collection and analysis while the

third part offers the theoretical contribution/framework of this study. I then present the analysis of empirical findings and analyze interview data. In the final part, I summarize the key points for discussion, reiterate the contribution of this study in Kurdish borderlands and show avenues for further research.

Why and How Kurdish Borderlands Matter?

Spanning roughly 518,000 square kilometres (200,000 square miles), much of the Kurdish-populated region perches on the Zagros mountain range that stretches from Turkey, through Iraq, all the way to Iran. While animal husbandry and small-scale farming are the region's leading economic activities, cross-border smuggling—routinely in petroleum products—constitutes a significant, albeit inestimable component of it¹. What makes smuggling possible is precisely what makes this story of sub-national unrest and centralised statecraft so compelling for academics, and so vexing for Turkey's dominant state authorities.

Under Ottoman rule, these lands were divided into semi-autonomous entities called 'emirates' where members served in the central army and paid taxes in return for a significant degree of local autonomy, which they used to challenge state authority. In turn, the Ottoman Empire penetrated the borderlands both directly and indirectly; co-opting emirates and tribes for indirect control, and building new institutions vested with extensive power to police its eastern lands, such as the gendarmerie, for direct (re)making of these distant provinces². Since the Ottoman era, the process of building state effectiveness has gone hand-in-hand with territorialisation of the state-space³, which turned unsettled and ambivalent zones of state frontiers into settled borderlands, demarcating the territorial limits of state sovereignty.

The demography in contested borderlands were more diverse in the past: there were Jews, Armenians and Assyrians living in these borderlands. The number of Jews, for example, was approximately 2000 in Van-Urmia area before WWI⁴ and the Armenian population was above 130.000 in Van⁵. The population of Assyrians was around 4000 in Van before deportations while the number was much higher in Hakkari—around 100.000⁶. The numbers of Christians and Jews dropped significantly due to the growing hatred towards non-Muslims across time.

Today, the same area, which spans from the north of Van to the south of Hakkari is inhabited overwhelmingly by politically active and mobilised Kurds,⁷ meaning these are areas where Kurds are both territorially concentrated and highly engaged. As such, any territorial state policies implemented in these contested borderlands also regulate Kurds' access to and benefit from these territories—as well as its resources. Additionally, these areas represent a testing ground for the degree of the permeability of state authority, as well as for the extent of control over people, land and property (territory) through the allocation of resources and other means, in a country where there is a dominant state centre and a subordinate minority nation.

Turkey's Kurdish borderlands were under a State of Emergency rule (OHAL) from 1984 to 2002. The State of Emergency rule refers to the extralegal reality that enabled the Turkish state to rule outside of formal institutions and policies. Governorate of the State of Emergency Region (Olganustu Bolge Valiligi in Turkish) was formed in 1987 and this rule was possible through extralegal practices and judicial impunity in the region provided by Decrees Having the Force of Law (Kanun Hükmünde Kararname or KHK in Turkish)⁸. The rule comprised ten provinces, including the sites of my research, where police and gendarmerie forces were bestowed with extensive authority.⁹ These people, police forces, gendarmerie and governors, have been the highest authority representing the state. In remote and mountainous areas, state presence was

expected to be higher than usual due to the high risk of insurgency, yet these were also the in-between zones where state authority was confronted the most by insurgents¹⁰.

Counter-insurgency policies against the PKK also gave power to certain state officials, including the official special unit forces as well as the State of Emergency Governor. But counter-insurgency policies have also included unofficial informal practices, such as the use of paramilitaries, some of whom were ex-guerrillas who were either caught or surrounded to the Turkish security forces¹¹. For example, the Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization (or JITEM), which was unofficially founded in the 1980s, was the unofficial intelligence agency of the Turkish Gendarmerie which became an active part of Turkey's counterinsurgency agenda against the PKK but also in extrajudicial killings of Kurdish lawyers, intellectuals and politicians, especially in the 1990s¹².

Political Ethnography and Participant Observations in a Conflict Zone

My research is based on political ethnography. Ethnography is used both as a ground-level method, which enables an immersion¹³ into one's place of research, and a research approach on the part of the researcher—namely, attention to people's perceptions and the meanings they attach to their social and political reality¹⁴. The ethnographic method enables political scientists to expand the objects of inquiry and shift the unit of analysis from macro variables to micro processes¹⁵, while also grasping nuanced understandings of patterns and variations along certain parameters from the perspectives of local actors across regions. Despite this, and the popularity of ethnography in sociology and anthropology, political scientists have only recently started to integrate the method into the study of local politics to investigate its implications in diverse contexts but, luckily, the literature is growing fast¹⁶.

During the 2013-2014 ceasefire between the Turkish state and the guerrilla movement, PKK, I conducted 115 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Kurdish villagers, lawyers, NGO workers, activists, politicians, and journalists, in the border cities of Van, Hakkari and surrounding towns and remote villages adjacent to the Turkish-Iranian and Turkish-Iraqi borderlands. Because I was interested in the experiences of people who had lived through the most violent years between the Turkish state and the PKK during the 1990s, I mostly interviewed men and women over the age of 40. The first part of the interview questions focused on people's memories about the past and how they remembered "the 1990s", shorthand for how people talk about the period when the conflict reached a peak. The second part of the interviews was mostly about the loss of property, compensation, militarization and control of various aspects of everyday life. Doing a fieldwork in the conflict zone, as someone who comes from the same subordinated ethnic background with the participants, and sometimes, feeling like going back home was challenging enough but also had its own benefits, especially in gaining people's trust and accessing to various set of groups¹⁷.

The selection of the research sites had methodological and practical factors. Firstly, the sites included a dense, ethnically homogeneous Kurdish population, with a high participation rate in the regional guerrilla movement led by the PKK: every household in each of the sites had at least one family member who joined the guerrilla movement. I was looking for a large share of households who have lost family members. In such sites, the destruction of villages and loss of private property is also common. Secondly, in the sites chosen, there was a strong state presence and powerful military installations, of particular note is that the ratio of both is disproportionately high compared to the number of Kurds. Given these two special characteristics of the region, the research sites enabled me to specifically explore the local challenges in people's narratives and

lived experiences of ongoing contestation over demography and administration in the Kurdish borderlands.

A non-randomly selected, representative sample was used in this study. During the fieldwork, I chose the initial group of participants based on acquaintances. I had several entry points into the community in all cities. There were people who I could communicate through existing contacts in each group of participants, such as villagers, lawyers, politicians, journalists, NGO workers, and I reached out to subsequent groups of people through the snowball sampling technique. Since “an understanding of who wields power and the local dynamics of conflict is an essential starting point for informed decisions”¹⁸, I was constantly taking notes in the first couple of weeks. I visited the party offices, introduced my work, got affiliated with the Lawyers’ Associations, and got in touch with journalists and NGOs advocating for human rights and women’s rights. After the initial set of interviews, I sought to identify interviewees to expand my data set, making sure to diversify the demographic composition of my research sample.

Theoretical Foundations: Uncertainty, Arbitrariness and Unpredictability

Given that divided nations are more likely to civil wars, why Turkey has been relatively stable despite of its protracted conflict? Informal control is the answer. The Oxford Learners’ Dictionary defines informality as a style that does not follow strict rules. In line with this definition, informal control is a way of governance that heavily relies on the production of uncertainty by state officials, security forces and business elites to maintain and sustain power through manipulation, fear, persuasion and contingent/arbitrary decisions/directives.

The informal state controls physical activities, such as farming, travelling, ownership entitlement, and interacting with other people, but it goes beyond that, into the emotional world people inhabit by infiltrating people’s minds and hearts. This informal control plays out through

uncertainty that rapidly changes everyday dynamics, makes life unpredictable and renders people agitated. That informal control should not be interpreted as evidence of state weakness and in fact can be a major source of its strength. This source of power is not peculiar to the Turkish state as several countries in the developing world, such as China¹⁹; Pakistan²⁰ or Latin America, including the patterns of Mexican state formation²¹, Brazil and Argentina²², illustrate some examples where state power is executed beyond the bounds of formal legal world.

In unpacking people's lived experiences of state-making in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands, my theoretical framework brings Migdal's distinction between image and practice of the state in conversation with Beban's emphasis on uncertainty as a source of state-making. By addressing the processes of state-making that draw on illicit mechanisms and informal networks, both scholars underline that certain states may use informality as a source of authority especially in dealing with 'dangerous populations', (Kemp 2004), such as territorialized ethnic groups or national minorities. This point is especially important to identify and explain how uncertainty, fear and arbitrary decisions by state officials serve to the interests of stakeholders. This process can be temporal, meaning that it may change from one period to another and be specific to certain groups.

In the case of Turkey, state's image contradicts with its multiple practices. Control regimes, such as Israel and Turkey (Peleg and Waxman 2007), may look democratic in image, but the practices of these states tell a divergent story than being a coherent entity (Migdal 2001; 2004; 2009). This gap is important for two reasons in this article: first, the contradictions between the image and reality of the state gives Turkish state a hybrid form²³ where certain democratic principles coexist with control mechanisms, which transcend the legal domain of policymaking. Second, understanding the state as a dynamic field of power enables us to see the clashes and compromises between different power holders, such as between local military and central or

national policymakers. I do not focus on the institutional level of state-making here, i.e. how the state is (re)made from within the state, but I am interested in people's lived experiences of state-making at the local level and what this really tells us about the macro narratives of conflict and peace studies that privilege state policies.

The Turkish state's production of uncertainty is more tangible in Kurds' relationship to their territory, which is particularly land and property. As Alice Beban (2021) righteously demonstrated in her analysis of state-making through land reform in Cambodia, uncertainty is used in three broad senses: first is the creation of uncertainty by state officials' personalized/patrimonial networks to control people and resources. The other use of uncertainty and fear is in distributing benefits and burdens by the state. Here the state uses public resources to punish the dissidents while offering extra benefits/profits/gifts to those who support its activities²⁴. In exchange for loyalty, state creates new subjects who are economically dependent and politically subjugated. Uncertainty can also be unintentional. When certain state officials suffer from a lack of competence, which can frequently happen in patrimonial systems where people are recruited through personal relations, uncertainty becomes inevitable. In rapidly changing dynamics of borderlands, uncertainty can also be an effective tool to avoid immanent problems at the local level.

In some of these cases, informal practices and processes seem to be problem-solving whereas in come other cases, informal practices are seen as problem-creating.²⁵ The former was seen in the case of rural areas where state fails to provide public goods, thereby incentivizing people and non-state actors to fill power vacuum with informal institutions, such as informal courts. The latter is also not uncommon. When the state cannot solve conflicts by formal institutions but wants a fast solution, it resorts to certain policies that are not acceptable by the international audience, such as

extralegal executions by paramilitaries or police forces in the history of Brazil²⁶; disappearances of young university students in the 70s of Argentina²⁷ and Chile²⁸, as well as the ongoing physical disappearances of Uyghurs in China²⁹. The common denominator of these instances is that the state has got immunity for itself from being accountable for its illegal activities.

Emphasis on uncertainty, contingency and fear as lived experiences is useful as it covers subtle cases that go beyond physical violence through persuasion, manipulation and uncertainty so as to suppress people's political aspirations. Examining people's lived experiences of state-making is important because it also helps us to understand and explain everyday dynamics of ethnic conflict throughout the changing processes of war. Also, the study of informality as a source of state-making guides us on how to mitigate ethnic conflict by explaining why state policies matter for the formation of people's grievances, mobilization and agency.

Control in Turkey's Kurdish Borderlands: A Micro-Analysis (Bottom-up Theory)

Informal control is a bottom-up theory that is driven by the experiences of local people on the ground. This theory is grounded in the ethnographic study of state-making in the margins, mostly at Turkey's Kurdish borders and borderlands. Starting from the dynamic life of borderlands, my framework places people's narratives of control at the centre in order to explain the dynamics of the protracted conflict (Korf and Raeymakers, 2013). Adopting such a perspective opens the space to recognize the borderlands as a political space in itself beyond state-centric perspectives.

The bottom-up theory brings the local processes and lived experiences into focus. A borderland lens/view approaches the state center from the margins as opposed to a top-down scrutiny in which the researcher explains everyday life of borderlands from afar based on policy briefs and secondary literature. This kind of analysis is likely to render some mechanisms of

control, such as informal control, hitherto unnoticed in the literature as the conditions of war have restricted the access to empirical data for decades. Unpacking mechanisms of control using ethnographic sensibility (Simmons and Smith, 2016) in the borderlands, this framework adopts a micro-analysis of state-making and urges scholars to reconsider the theoretical and empirical grounds of control by linking macro indicators to people's local processes and experiences of control.

There are three premises of my framework. First, I shift the analysis from state policies and actors to multiple actors at the borderlands, such as villagers, village guards, paramilitaries, party members, and institutions. Rather than pursuing a dualistic understanding of state versus society, my theoretical framework has more in common with Migdal's state-in-society approach in which he implies an ethnographic study of the state and a balanced account of the relationship between state and society (Migdal 2001; 2004; Watts 2013). My approach expands on Migdal's state-in-society approach because it enables us to see the variation between the interests and preferences of different power holders, such as between local military and civilian agents and central or national policymakers. This point is important because the divergence and outright reversal of state policies in Kurdish-populated areas of Turkey, especially in borderlands, generated new practices and informal networks,³⁰ such as the creation of the village guard system which relies on the co-optation of certain Kurdish tribes by the state in its struggle against the PKK.³¹

This point leads me to the second premise: the location of conflict and war matters: whether the area being close to the border; being far away from the capital; whether the land is resource-rich; whether the region is strategically important (Fearon and Laitin, 1999; Collier and Hoeffler, 2001). Borders and borderlands intensify the effects of violence during the conflict (Korf and Raeymaekers, 2013; Idler, 2019) as states and armed groups usually clash and interact in remote

and mountainous borderlands. This also ties into the literature on mountainous terrains as conflict-inducing factors (Saleyhan 2006). Following this, the final premise is that the borderlands are the sites of multiple sovereignties (Scott, 2009) and that the inhabitants of the borderland areas identify themselves in different, more or less complex ways with each other, and have recognizably different national or political identities than the majority inhabitants of the political community.

Empirical Cases of Uncertainty and Contingency: People's Lived Experiences of State-Making in Borderlands

In this part, I identify and describe analytically the mechanisms and the lived experiences of state-making in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands. Specifically, I discuss how informal mechanisms – of making people insecure--, are ignored, but are vital, and intersect with formal mechanisms, to create control. By the examples of border-crossing, kinship networks and cadaster procedures, the interview data from the fieldwork show how the state extends its power over people and territory (land and property) through uncertainty, manipulation, contingency and fear.

Border-crossings; Kinship networks

Kasim and Refik:

Kasim was a middle-aged man who was originally from a village beside the zero line of the border, but he was forced to move to the city/district center because his village was destroyed after the army declared it a military zone in the early 1990s. Kasim was politically committed to the Kurdish movement since he was in high school in the late 1980s. And he was even imprisoned for a few years. His wife was also involved in party politics. Similar to many others from this border area, Kasim and his family had ~~also~~ relatives in Iraqi Kurdistan and they travelled to the other side often.

After the border agreement was signed between Turkey and Iraq in 1923 and 1926 (Lozan and Ankara Treaties), the official border line divided people from the same tribe (extended family). The resolution of the Mosul conflict with Britain in the aftermath of the Sheikh Said rebellion extra-securitized this border: creating this border itself had a lot to do with offsetting a Kurdish secessionist movement. The border was even cut through some villages and towns in the area and divided people from the same family. Kasim is from one of those zero-line border towns. Soon after the border was demarcated, Kasim and his family had to apply for a passport and get a visa to travel from one side to another. They had to wait until the passport was issued.

Like most of the people whom I interviewed, Kasim knew the area well. He grazed animals in highlands as a shepherd when he was younger. He could go to the other side of the border from the mountains. The elders in Kasim's family—his father and grandfather—were also travelling to Iraq for trade exchange. "In the past, Turkish soldiers were also sending our grandfathers to the other side to buy sugar and other basic stuff. This is our biggest advantage of living here in the conflict-ridden borderlands, adjacent to Iraq and Iran. For us, borders are sources of life. We travel to the Iraqi side to exchange our animals and products with food, sugar, commodities and electronics. Iraq has been our market since those early days when the country was under the British mandate," he said.

People in this town were connected to Iraq via trade and kinship networks. The intensity of people's relationship and the frequency of their visits to the other side were inevitably contingent on state policies but even more so on the decisions and attitudes of the state's local representatives on the ground. If the person in charge was corrupt, he would let people go to the other side in exchange for his share from each villager crossing the border. However, the next appointed local commander could easily prohibit illicit border crossings. In my conversations with

the villagers, I concluded that border policies were temporary and contingent as it was dependent on the highest local authority in power.

When asked about his daily life in the borderlands, Refik, an old Kurdish villager from a border town, responded as follows: “In 2009, we planted our wheat in front of Turkish soldiers, they could see our land from the military base. We were just about to harvest the products when they put a ban on it. With this decision, our annual harvest was completely wasted. Soon after this decision, that lieutenant was relocated somewhere else and the new one was quite opposite of the previous one. There is no rule of law here” (Interview #19).

The arbitrary use of power by the soldiers created an atmosphere of ambiguity for the villagers. And the lived experiences of ambiguous control pushed people to adapt to two languages/transcripts (Scott 2009). As people were trapped by the authority of at least two sovereign states, this in-betweenness has also pushed people to live in a constant grey zone folded with formal and informal webs of relations with the actors who are in constant traffic along the borders and borderlands. These actors include smugglers from both Iranian and Turkish sides, PKK guerrillas, villagers and soldiers. In one of the conversations, the villager told me that the history of getting into contingent alliances goes back to the days of their grandfathers: “Our grandfathers told us that the commander in battalion was asking them to bring sugar and other products from the other side (Iraqi and Iranian) of the border. We have been travelling across the borders for decades, this is the biggest advantage of living in the borderlands. But since the state declared the emergency rule, or OHAL, in 1987, the border policies have changed in a negative way and they have imposed strict control along the borders. This has disadvantaged lives in the borderlands.”

Refik was highly conscious of the Turkish and Iranian political contexts. He also had relatives living on the Iranian side as his second wife was originally from Urmia, a Kurdish Iranian border town. Refik travelled a lot in the broader region, so he was also familiar with the political agenda of the Iranian and Iraqi parties. He explained: “To prevent illegal border crossings, infiltration of PKK guerrillas and any logistic support that would go to PKK, both Iran and Turkey have intentionally built these high-tech military bases along the border in the last five-six years. To my knowledge, Turkey also constructed underground shelters along the border.”

While travelling along the borders and borderlands in 2013 and 2014, I witnessed the lived experiences of borders by observing everyday interactions of the villagers. On a very humid day in the summer of 2013, I was sitting in a border zero-line village together with my hosts from the same village. A middle-aged Kurdish man, Botan, was telling me about his perception of borders when his brother interrupted his words, saying that they should leave immediately. Botan was tortured in the 90s for political reasons and he was experienced and well-equipped against rapidly changing dynamics of the borderlands. He run quickly into the house, grabbed his AK-47 rifle and joined a group of men who headed out. Soon after, they came back. Botan told me that their 300 sheep and goats were abducted by the Iranian border guards who crossed the border from Iran to the Turkish side. “This is the first time something like this is happening here since the 90s. We had risked everything. Iranian pasdaran---an unofficial name for the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps used by people--- know that these animals are our everything, our daily and annual bread,” he said. His father added, “they are plundering my property in between two states.”

The villagers describe their lives in the borderlands as both advantageous and disadvantageous. Avramos was over 70 years old when I met him in 2014. He could also give me the history of trade with Iraq and Iran. He said, “We were not even going to the district center.

Always went to Duhok, Mosul and Amediye. Iraq was under the British rule in those days. You could buy anything from the Iraqi bazaar. It was cheap. I was selling my animals there and buying sugar, dresses and clothes in return for animal products. We did not have any relation to the Turkish markets. Roads for our village was built in 1965 and relations began to develop since then.” Even if the demarcation line was placed in the 20s, many villagers confirmed that previous generations could easily trespass the borders during the 60s and 70s.

Garzan:

The villagers cross the border and go to the Iraqi or Iranian sides for the exchange of goods and visit their relatives as a cultural practice that they inherited from their grandfathers since the 1950s. Iranians and Iraqis have also visited the Turkish side for trade and family visits. Some people do these crossings as a paid job—also known as smugglers³² in the official discourse. Many have even died in those journeys as these travels are dangerous due to landmines and debris left on the ground.³³

Smugglers are also perceived as threats and shot by the border guards. 34 smugglers, for example, were killed in an airstrike in 2011.³⁴ Despite its risks, villagers still travel to Iraq and Iran to see their relatives. Garzan was a Kurdish man above 60 years old and similar to many others, he also moved to the vicinity of the village after his home town was evacuated in the 90s. He has had relatives in Iraq from both his fathers’ and mothers’ sides. When I asked about his experiences, Garzan told me about difficulties of legal border crossings through the border gate between Turkey and Iraq: “I have two uncles in Iraq. We have been going through the mountains up until the state opened the gate. After that, we began to use the official way, but it is too slow. When I went to the office to get a permit, they told me that they give service for only two days per week and I should revisit on Monday and Thursday.” Other villagers shared similar experiences with the legal border

crossing. The border has become tougher to cross than before, said the villagers from the borderlands. This shift toward a rigid border control was undertaken alongside with other control practices, such as the restrictions imposed on the use of and access to the land; construction of new checkpoints and dams; building new infrastructure, such as military roads and high-tech castle-like military bases known as kalekols; deploying more troops and police forces; recruiting new village guards and creating new paramilitary forces—several villagers reported during the interviews. Such changes, while seemingly banal and limited, are means of controlling not only the borderlands, but also the populations within them.

Move towards rigid border control has had profound impact on people's lives given that they are more dependent on cross-border trade for a living. As previously mentioned, people are also connected to the other side through kinship networks. Any restrictions applied on the movement of people and goods across borders have reshaped people's relationship with the state. When the villagers fail to cross the border legally due to rigid policies, they do it illegally—in their own ways-- as border crossing is seen as a matter of life or death.

Garzan had to cross the border frequently. One time, He tried to cross the border to visit his uncles but failed. Soon after, he had to cross the border again with his mother who is originally from Iraq. His relatives on his mother's side were still living in the Berwari region of Iraqi Kurdistan. In one of those days, Garzan's aunt got sick and her situation was critical, so he had to take his mother to the Iraqi side. His mother was too old. But Garzan could not get permission to cross the border within a limited period of time. His mother was in rush to see her sister before she passed away. So, Garzan had no choice but crossing the border through mountains. He was familiar with the area but could not tell the exact location of landmines, constantly moving under the

ground. The Turkish military was not the only one that planted landmines, but Iraqi government did the same. There were landmines left even from the Saddam era.

My mother is from Berwari in Iraq. We are their nieces. I had to bring my mother to the other side; my aunt was about to die. They did not let us cross the border. I had to bring my mother by a cart. Just think about it... Most of the roads we use are heavily mined with ordinances. We had to open new roads for ourselves. They open the Turkish-Syrian border in special days religious/official holidays-- why do not they do the same here between Turkey and Iraq? The government says that they open it, but they do not. How can we get any advantages of living beside the borders? This border has troubles for 20-25 years, the soldiers are authorized with the right to kill anyone who crosses the border. This border is rigid since the village guardship started in this area as a part of state's counterinsurgency policies (Interview #7).

In response, people, especially in border zones, have also developed diverse strategies to cope with uncertainty and arbitrary use of power in the midst of violence and war: contingent alliances with conflicting actors. In one conversation, a villager confirmed what Kasim told me about border-crossings: "Our grandfathers told us that their battalion commanders would ask them to bring sugar and other products from the other side of the border. We have been travelling across the borders for decades; this is the biggest advantage of living in the borderlands. But since the state declared the emergency rule, or OHAL, in 1987, the border policies have changed in a negative way, and they have imposed strict control along the borders. This has disadvantaged lives in the borderlands." This shift toward a rigid border control was undertaken alongside other control practices, such as recruiting people as village guards, changing the topography of the region, and recrafting demographics^[9].

Cadastre Process

Hasan

Every year several people are being killed in Turkey, specifically in Kurdistan, due to local land disputes between families. For example, in 2020, land conflict led to the killing of five people in Urfa, a city in Turkey's Kurdish-majority south east. Following that brutal incident, some of the MPs from opposition parties, drawing attention to high number of death tolls caused by land disputes, suggested to have a special commission in the Parliament in order to resolve land disputes.³⁵

There is still no commission and land disputes continue to be a distressing issue. Why is this the case? The interview data tells that the root causes of land disputes in Turkey's Kurdistan are mostly related to the absence of cadaster or its improper applications. The abuse of the system by people, including officials, experts in committees, leads to property-related conflicts, causing several people to get killed and injured every year.

Besides, a high number of abandoned villages in the region has also created conditions that are conducive to land conflicts at the local level. The prolonged conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), spanning four decades, has resulted in thousands evacuated villages, and millions of displaced people. Some of these abandoned villages, which are scattered across the Kurdish-populated region of Turkey, are still vacant throughout the year. There are also some others where the owners only visit for the summer. These abandoned properties and lands, in certain cases, were appropriated by the village guards and paramilitaries working for the state³⁶. In some other occasions, the empty houses were turned into trenches by PKK guerrillas where they could also stay in the winter.

The issue of abandoned properties raises an important question: are the abandoned villages registered by the Turkey's General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre Office? If so, was

the process fair for the stakeholders? How many of those properties and lands, i.e. villages and houses, were not registered in 2013 and 2014, the time that I interviewed people on the ground?

From the legal perspective, the cadaster procedure can work to the benefit of villagers by reducing land disputes and property-related conflicts if state authorities could avoid the implementation problems³⁷. With cadaster, the state guarantees to protect land and divide it accordingly. Before cadaster, the relations of ownership were based on what is called the “zilyetlik kanunu.” Examining the registry of deed and cadastre procedure, conducted by cadastre and land register offices at the local level, illustrates well the lived experiences of formal but also informal control on the ground. The required data, such as property deeds, is collected by the regional governorate offices. These offices are mainly responsible for the registration of immovable property titles and provision of reliable records showing the boundaries, value and ownership of land parcels. Some of these records also included the location of the land registered.

To complete the registration, cadastre officers visit each neighborhood/district, and establish a committee to measure the parcels and complete the registration. Depending on the land needing to be registered, the cadastre committee consists of at least three (legal) experts and head in addition to the cadastre officers. The experts are selected by the village association (köy derneği) or city/town council. The scope of the powers of these committees are identified by Law No. 6083 and is attached to the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning. Previously, it was also under the office of Prime Minister.

The main task of the committee is to go to the field, register immovable properties and measure the land parcels as accurately as possible. In doing that, the committee determines the exact boundaries of the land, gives deeds to the owners, and adds each property and relevant land to its records. Through this activity, the state gets updated information regarding land registry, and

controls any change in these records. This in turn enables state officials to map out the topography of the area—making a cadastre map. In recent years, the government built the spatial information system and upgraded the model to keep online records of changes in land registers.

According to this law, land belongs to a person if they use it for twenty years. There is, however, an upper limit, so the person cannot claim all the land.³⁸ This law is also of limited use in case of conflict of interests. In ideal circumstances, it is harder to manipulate the measures calculated by the cadastre experts who are certified officials. Thus, most of the lawyers whom I spoke for this research support the cadastre procedure if it is implemented by law, meaning that if it does not involve bribery, arbitrary decisions, and abuse of power.

In principle, the cadastre committee is supposed to avoid incoherent, unfair and inconsistent decisions in terms of land size and its distribution/division. However, in reality, the process has been prone to implementation problems, leading to severe injustices. As previously noted, due to extensive village evacuations from early 90s onwards during the protracted conflict, the number of abandoned villages and unattended land increased tremendously in the Kurdish-majority region. Yet, the spatial distribution of those vacated places has been unknown for too long until early 2000s when the online system called TAKBIS was launched. Due to the lack of accurate spatial data, the land registry and cadastre procedure was either slow or prone to problems. With the installment of this online system, which was modeled as a three-stage project spanning between 2000 and 2010, the quality of service improved but problems are not wiped out.

In addition to the existing concerns, another problem was that the cadastre committee entered different areas in different years. This led to a lack of standardization throughout the process, thereby led to unjust outcomes. Also, it was easy for some people, who were in position of power, to take advantage of their privileges and manipulate the process given that there was no

proper enforcement mechanism monitoring the entire process especially prior to the start of the online data system.

Some people support this cadastre process and are eager for the committees to register their land to avoid potential land conflicts. Some of these people, whom I met during my fieldwork, were also members of these committees or they had close relatives, which gave them confidence in the power of the procedure. But those who did not have access to resources, including to experts in the committees, were more dubious about the activities and their decisions. These people mostly complained about the compliance of these committee members with those who were in position of power, such as commanders, landlords, village guards and so forth, as sharply epitomized by a middle-aged Kurdish activist from the Migrants Social Solidarity and Cultural Association, GOC-*DER* hereafter, “Village guards appropriated some of those villages in the area because the owners had to evacuate their properties due to ongoing war. These houses and lands will not return to the real owners if the cadastre committee completes registration now.” He added that the village guards from Van’s Catak have already registered one of the hamlets on their names in this way.

That deeds are official documents showing the characteristics of the relationship between the state and Kurds means they become tools of state control. On many occasions, people told me that their land and property was not registered until recently.³⁹ Hasan, for example, came to the city in the 90s after he was arrested and tortured by the Turkish army (gendarmerie) due to the alleged allegations for supporting terrorism. Back in those days, the paramilitaries made death-lists and executed some villagers. Hasan left his hometown as soon as he realized that his name was in the list. Many other people from their village did the same.

Hasan did not have any contact with his family for six years. Because he was trying to survive, and to protect people from any sort of state violence as a result of being connected to him,

he kept his whereabouts secret from everyone. Hasan was still engaged in politics when I met him in 2013. He was working for the pro-Kurdish HDP and he was an active member of the council of his neighbourhood. These councils were the executive bodies in the new model of governance known as ‘democratic autonomy’, the project that the Kurdish political movement advocated as a response to the arrest of Ocalan in 1999⁴⁰.

When I met Hasan, he was living with his family in a politically active neighborhood, located at the outskirts of the city center. The infrastructure was still poor, and the neighborhood was full of with many shanty houses. This district, which was also known for its political commitment to PKK and HDP, has also had a long history of giving refuge to urban guerrillas. These peripheral districts have also become a battleground between the police and activists over the course of years. The residents were usually internally displaced Kurds who were forcefully migrated to cities in the 90s. It is fair to say that the majority of these people, who were forcefully displaced from villages to cities and cannot return to their hometowns, are the owners of the abandoned houses although we should be aware that there is no accurate statistics on this issue.

When asked about the problems arising from the absence of state registration and land cadastre in their hometowns on the Turkish-Iraqi borders, Hasan addressed the problems that are likely to emerge if the cadastre committee maps the boundaries of properties, and registers land before ongoing local land disputes between families are resolved. “We had land disputes with the neighboring town twenty years ago...” The dispute became so serious that violence broke out, and some people died. ‘The neighbors who claim to own our land made a request for state registration without telling us and the cadastre committee registered the land in their names, even though the land belongs to our family.’ Hasan was not sure about the exact year when this incident happened. But the cadastre committee did not visit their hometown before 2010. Their town was in a

mintika/valley belonging to their tribe. And like many other places in the region, several families in the same tribe also shared a large piece of highland for animal grazing. Hasan's family launched a legal case against the cadastre procedure, but the court rejected their request. Hasan's family therefore requested an appeal. Because of all this, he was concerned about the future: "fifty people could die if these two families do not reconcile. This is what cadastre means for me," addressing uncertainties and risks that the formal process of cadastre leads to. As this example has shown, formal mechanisms and processes have cultivated a long-term sense of insecurity, loss and uncertainty on the part of people.

Avramos:

Avramos, who was a Kurdish man in his mid-seventies, was one of the experts in the cadastre committee. What is interesting about him was also the fact that he was one of the few people who went to the court to seek justice after the special police forces compelled him to sell one of his lands to build a new police station there. The legal process was still going on when I talked to Avramos back in 2013-14. Avramos gave me an historical account of the diverse ethnic and religious composition of the local population. Avramos was a wealthy man, and in the past had owned properties in the center, such as houses, stores, and parcels of land: "I had 2000 poplar, 700 apple trees. I was getting seven-eight truckloads of apples every year." Like many people from the area, he expressed good memories about his life before 1992, when the village center was razed in the middle of the night as a part of the state's counterinsurgency agenda. More than thirty cattle were killed, plants and trees were burned, all houses in the center were riddled with bullets: "My house was close to the border stone demarcating the Turkish-Iraqi borders. I counted nineteen mortars hitting the contours of my house, and twenty bullets inside the house."

Avramos was highly aware of the political context in which the Kurdish borders and borderlands became the epicenter of deadly clashes between the Turkish state and PKK. Violence escalated quickly. He left the village in the same year, 1992, moving to the city, where he stayed for seven years. Life was difficult for newcomers: “I did not have anything when I moved to the city. I was in need of even a small piece of trash (expression in Turkish),” meaning that he was extremely poor. He called attention to the precarity of many others at the time, who lived in tents for more than a year. These people were given construction materials by the office of governor but had to build their houses on their own.

One of Avramos’ large lands, which was high-priced because of its strategic location, was expropriated by a unit of the special forces of the Turkish police responsible for counterinsurgency. Avramos’ land was very fertile, and he planted rice there. He asked for compensation, but he was mistreated, and his demand was rejected. Special forces built a road on that land and the road was only used by police forces. But Avramos did not stop and he sued the police forces. He said that the same land has been vacant for a while and it is not used by anyone, including police forces and army.

When asked about the implementation of the cadastre procedure in his hometown, Avramos shared his contempt: “I was one of the experts in the cadastre committee. This area is very steep and mountainous. You register my share of land, but you register my two meters-long trees to the national treasury. But those trees are also my property. The district revenue officer says no, they cannot do that. They are scared of the state but not of its citizens. The governor also says that he will not let people steal state’s money as if the state owns those hectares of land. Our grievances would not last even if we speak for 10 months.”

Avramos' words tell us how the formal process has been interrupted by informal practices, which makes future unpredictable and gives message to people that unjust practices are embedded into legal decision-making. The examples—Hasan, Kasim, Garzan, Refik and Avramos--show that the lived experiences of state-making bring uncertainty, fear, insecurity and worrisome, triggering past grievances most of which are still uncompensated. By investing in this kind of mindset through informal practices of control, the state finds an opportunity to manipulate formal practices for its own benefits so that it can keep people under control for longer terms.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, I explored the mechanisms and lived experiences of informal control through cadastre process and border-crossings in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands. My fieldwork in war-torn borderlands of Turkey, Iraq and Iran has shown that the use of control in the hands of the state officials transcended formal practices, and included informal control, mainly occurring by manipulating people's emotions through prolonged uncertainty and arbitrariness.

As discussed earlier, McGarry argues that the dominant state-holding ethnicity is likely to engineer demography and administer the territory to its advantage⁴¹. These practices include changing administrative boundaries of targeted areas; introducing borders dissecting land and moving in immigrant groups while expelling the members of the subordinated ethnicity, so as to prevent the latter from engaging in collective political action against the state. This form of control is evident in the interview with Avramos, when he mentioned how improper use of the registry had caused ongoing conflict between two families, which had already taken lives, and was likely to take more. Emotions were at the core of this, showing the intricate way informal and formal mechanisms act together. Avramos' comments on the process of deeds and cadastre that his trees

were not registered without any legitimate reason while his lands exemplify how state authority is enforced through control but also ambivalence. Lack of standards in cadastre procedure enabled some groups to get more than what they deserved while deprived certain real owners of their entitlements.

Coerced relocation and land registration reforms are means of state control designed to force communities to have closer and more direct relationships with state power. As more people become dependent on state support, it is easier to maintain state control over people and territories. On certain occasions, state officials or village guards got directly involved in land and property confiscations, as shown by the words of a Kurdish activist from GOC-DER: “Village guards appropriated some of those villages in the area because the owners had to evacuate their properties due to ongoing war. These houses and lands will not return to the real owners if the cadastre committee completes registration now.” This anecdote also addresses the disjuncture between the idealized image of the state and its actual set of practices, referring to paradoxical statecraft activities that may be inclusive but also exclusive; formal but also informal⁴². These conflicting practices of state-making also challenge the idealized definition of the state as a territorially coherent entity.

The conditions of war and conflict shaped the mindset behind the state administration, paving the way for the use of formal and informal practices as a means to maintain and sustain control against the Kurdish population that has been territorially concentrated and politically mobilized. However, these policies and practices were still in place during the ceasefire period, 2013-2015, while I was travelling in the contested borderlands. The decision to keep them in place was informed by the state’s understanding of Kurds as a source of threat, requiring state control mechanisms to monitor people’s everyday lives.

Kurdish narratives and experiences of ethnic control and its varying formal and informal practices on demography and space imply that people must rely on the state in order to defend their title to land and to ensure access to a new apartment as they are forced from their original homes and towns. Alongside that (and the real focus of the lived experiences) is the role that uncertainty plays in forcing people to deal with the state. Unwritten rules that rely on loose networks shape people's everyday lives in the borderlands: people are forced to build personal relations with officials who are appointed for short periods of time and represent the highest state authority. The cadastre process is often ruled by arbitrary decisions made by these people. The exhaustion and exasperation caused by this, creates forms of dependence on the state and leads to frustration that may be just as real as those stemming from formal policies and procedures, as evidenced by Hasan's words: "Even fifty people can die if these two families (who have conflict of interests on the same land) do not come to terms. This is what cadastre means for me."⁴³

By challenging the dominance of state-centric views of control, this study opens up a number of new venues for further research, not only on control regimes and their impact on people's perceptions and everyday practices, but also in the broader scholarship of conflict and peace studies. The adoption of a micro-analysis has potential to overcome the shortcomings of macro approaches in conflict and peace studies that primarily focus on state policies and their formal applications.

Concurring with relevant scholarship that suggests my argument on the coexistence of formal and informal control in state's treatment of certain groups is generalisable to the cases similar to Turkey—where there is a mobilised borderland people—, my analysis suggests that the web of relations between territory, control and state power lie at the heart of how states control borders and borderlands. My argument has implications for similar cases, such as Basque people

in the Franco–Spanish borderlands, the Irish borderlands, the Green Line in Cyprus (i.e. buffer zone) and Israel–Palestine. Further afield, there is the case of borderland people and stateless rebels in the Southeast Asian borderlands⁴⁴. Country cases include Nepal⁴⁵, Sri Lanka (Araratnam, 1986), the Indian sub-continent⁴⁶ and Southern Thailand⁴⁷, because these, too, harbor minorities spanning across borders. This analysis is not only important in and of itself but also for policymakers, scholars and practitioners who are committed to (re)settling violent conflicts given that this triadic relationship has profound impacts over the long-term settlements of negotiated conflicts.

¹ Firat Bozcali, “Probabilistic Borderwork: Oil smuggling, nonillegality, and techno-legal politics in the Kurdish borderlands of Turkey,” *American Ethnologist* 47(1) (2020): 72-85; Adam Morse, Sanan Moradi, Delaram Pakru, Shehabad H. and Alexander Murphy, “Geographies of precarity and violence in the Kurdish kolberi underground economy,” *Political Geography* 95 (May 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102562>.

²Nadir Özbek, “Policing the countryside: Gendarmes of the late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire (1876–1908),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40(1) (2008): 47-67; Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Seda Altug, “Turkish-Syrian Border and Politics of Difference in Turkey and Syria (1921-1939)”. in *Syria: Borders, Boundaries, and the State*, eds by Matthiue Cimmino. London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020: 47-73.

³Sabri Ateş, *Ottoman-Iranian borderlands: Making a boundary, 1843–1914*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴Nesi Altaras, “Jews of Van-Urmia: Remembering Borderland Migrations (1914-1918),” *Jewish Social Studies* 27 (2022): forthcoming.

⁵Raymond Kevorkian and Paul Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens: dans l'Empire Ottoman: a la veille du genocide*. 1992.

⁶Joseph Yacoub, *Year of the Sword: The Assyrian Christian Genocide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016

⁷There are historical, political and psychological reasons that explain the high level of Kurdish political engagement in these borderlands. The raised consciousness of the borderland inhabitants resulted not only from remarkable historical events, such as the first ethno-religious rebellion called the Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri rebellion in 1880, but also from living on a battlefield. These borderlands continue to be the centre of deadly clashes to this day. For details see: Celil Celile, *1880 Seyh Ubeydullah Nehri: Kürt Ayaklanması*. Istanbul: Peri Yayinlari, 1998; Wadie Jwaideh, *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi: Kökenleri ve Gelisimi*, (Istanbul: İletisim Yayinlari, 2006); Djene Bajalan, Princes, Pashas and Patriots: The Kurdish Intelligentsia, the Ottoman Empire and the National Question (1908–1914). *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 43 (2016): 1-18; Kamal Soleimani, *Islam and competing nationalisms in the Middle East: 1876–1926*, (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁸Ozlem Has, “Necropolitics in OHAL: The State of Emergency Experience of Turkey,” Unpublished MA Thesis, Bogazici University (2017).

⁹Ozlem Kayhan-Pusane, “Turkey’s Military Victory over the PKK and its Failure to End the PKK Insurgency,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, 5 (2015): 727-741.

¹⁰Benedikt Korf and Timothy Raeymaekers, *Violence on the margins: States, conflict and borderlands*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Madeleine Reeves, *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Central Rural Asia*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); Annette Idler, *Borderland Battles: Violence, Crime and Governance at the Edges of Colombia’s War*. (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019); David Brenner, *Rebel Politics: A Political Sociology of Armed Struggle in Myanmar’s Borderlands*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

¹¹Ugur Üngör. *Paramilitarism: Mass Violence in the Shadow of the State*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2020)

¹²For more details about the involvement of JITEM personnel in brutal killings of Kurds, see: Yesim Y. Yildiz, “Confession as disavowal: JITEM officers confessing to atrocities against Kurds during the 1990s,” In: Adnan Çelik and Lucie Drechselová, eds. *Kurds in Turkey: Ethnographies of Heterogeneous Experiences*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2019).

¹³Limited or uneven immersion is an ethical strategy for researcher who conduct ethnographic research in high-risk conflict zones: Jana Krause, “The Ethics of Ethnographic Methods in Conflict Zones.” *Journal of Peace Research* 58, no. 3 (May 2021): 329–41.

¹⁴Edward Schatz, *Political Ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of power*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

¹⁵Diana Fu, and Erica Simmons, “Ethnographic Approaches to Contentious Politics: The What, How, and Why.” *Comparative Political Studies*. 54, 10 (2021):1695-1721.

¹⁶Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999); Lisa Wedeen, “Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 13 (2010): 255-272; Lisa Wedeen, *Authoritarian Apprehensions: Ideology, Judgment and Mourning in Syria* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019); Timothy Pachirat, *Every twelve seconds: Industrialized slaughter and the politics of sight*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); J. Auyero, J. *Poor people’s politics: Peronist survival networks and the legacy of Evita*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); G. Baiocchi, G., & T. Connor, The ethnos in the polis: Political ethnography as a mode of inquiry. *Sociology Compass*, 2 1, (2008): 139–155; Elizabeth Wood,

“Field research,” In C. Boix & S. Stokes (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007): 123-146.

¹⁷ If you are preparing for a fieldwork or interested in data collection and analyzing interview data in political science, see also: Peter Krause, and Ora Szekely. *Stories from the Field: A Guide to Navigating Fieldwork in Political Science*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); See also: Diana Kapiszewski and Lauren MacLean, *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Lee Ann Fujii, *Interviewing Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. (New York: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁸ Jonathan Goodhand, “Research in conflict zones: Ethics and Accountability,” *Forced Migration* 8 4 (2000): 12-15.

¹⁹ Jiang Shanhe, Eric Lambert, Jin Wang. “Correlates of formal and informal social/crime control in China: An exploratory study,” *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Volume 35, Issue 3, (2007): 261-271.)

²⁰ Saif Rahman, and Zhao Shurong, “Governing through Informal Mechanisms: Military Control over State Institutions in Pakistan,” *Asian Survey* 61 6 (2021): 942–970.

²¹ Denyer Willis, “What Happens What Governments Negotiate with Criminals,” (Oct. 30, 2013), *Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars*.

²² Daniel Brinks, “Informal Institutions and the Rule of Law: The judicial response to state killings in Buenos Aires and São Paulo in the 1990s,” *Comparative Politics* 36, 1. (2003a): 1–19.

²³ This is different than the hybrid state (Jaffe 2013) in which multiple governmental actors—in this case, criminal organizations, politicians, police, and bureaucrats—are entangled in a relationship of collusion and divestment, sharing control over urban spaces and populations.

²⁴ Adam Auerbach, in his excellent work, *Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Good Provision in India’s Urban Slums*, shows how party members and local leaders get extra privileges by putting pressure on state institutions, leading to inequality in the distribution of public goods and services in India’s urban slums. See: Adam, Auerbach, 2019. *Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Good Provision in India’s Urban Slums*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁵ For a detailed description on the interactions between formal institutions and informal processes and rules, see: Helmke and Levitsky (2004).

²⁶ Denyer Willis, Graham. Mundane Disappearance: The Politics of Letting Disappear in Brazil. *Economy and Society*, 50, 2. (2021): 297-321

²⁷ Gabriela Aguila, “Dictatorship, Society and Genocide in Argentina: Repression in Roserio: 1976-1983,” *Journal of Genocide Studies* 8(2) (2006): 169-180.

²⁸ Heinz 1995; Cathy Schneider, *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet’s Chile*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press (1995).

²⁹ David Backman, “Making Xinjiang Safe for the Han? Contradictions and Ironies of Chinese Governance in China’s Northwest.” In Morris Rossabi, ed. *Governing China’s Multiethnic Frontiers*, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004).

³⁰ Ceren Belge’s (2009, pp. 1-40) research also points out the effects of clan authority over the relationship between the Turkish state and Kurds. In explaining the resilience of the informal authority of clans, Belge argues that “it is more about the relations at the local level than the national level.” She further notes that “the likelihood that the state officials, such as judges, prosecutors and police, will impose the jurisdiction of the state over minority communities that resist state authority depends [...] on how they view the boundaries of their own authority, and the extent to which state officials are able to penetrate the local community.”

³¹ Nicole Watts (2010, pp. 19–20) explains this situation as such: “local bureaucrats, judges, and police chiefs in the Kurdish-majority provinces of the east and southeast were often more concerned about governing without excessive disturbance than fulfilling the mandates coming from Ankara, and, in any case, usually lacked the resources to penetrate local society.”

³² They are called Kulbers/Kolbars—border carriers-- in Iran. For the details, see: Soleimani, K. and A. Mohammadpour, 2020. “The securitization of life: Eastern Kurdistan under the rule of a Perso-Shi’i State.” *Third World Quarterly* 41 (4): 663–682.

³³ See: Iranian forces attack gathering of kulbers in Kurdistan Region, killing several: <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/863175ad-d8ec-4dad-8f8c-b252016dc65e>

³⁴ 34 Kurdish smugglers/villagers died in a Turkish airstrike while crossing the Turkish–Iraqi border in December 2011. This incident, known as the Roboski event, was one of the turning points in the history of the peace talks. On 27 December 2011, the Turkish army bombed the village of Uludere/Roboski based on intelligence provided by Turkish spy drones and “members of the Turkish Armed Forces acted in accordance with the decisions adopted by the Council of Ministers and the law,” the army prosecutor's office reported (Arsu, 2011).

³⁵ See: <https://www.krttv.com.tr/gundem/arazi-kavgasi-katliama-donusmustu-devlet-zemin-hazirliyor-h58888.html>

³⁶ For comparative examples on abandoned properties, see also Andrea Peinhopf, “The Curse of Displacement: Local Narratives of Forced Expulsion and the Appropriation of Abandoned Property in Abkhazia.” *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 4 (2021): 710–27

³⁷ See Zerrin Ozlem Biner, *States of Dispossession: Violence and Precarious Coexistence in Southeast Turkey*, Philadelphia: UPENN Press, 2020.

³⁸ 40 parcels in wet soil and 60 parcels in dry soil.

³⁹ There were villages and towns where people could get their houses registered after 2010.

⁴⁰ Also See Joost Jongerden, and Hamdi Akkaya, “Democratic confederalism as a Kurdish spring: The PKK and the quest for radical democracy,” In M. M. Ahmed & M. M. Gunter (Eds.), *The Kurdish Spring: Geopolitical Changes and the Kurds* (pp. 163–185). Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2013; Dilan Okcuoglu, “The Kurdish Movement in Turkey: Understanding Everyday Perceptions and Experiences,” in *Oxford Handbook of Turkish Politics*, edited by Gunes Murat Tezcur. (2021) Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

⁴¹ John McGarry, “Demographic engineering’: The state-directed movement of ethnic groups as a technique of conflict regulation,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21(4) (1998): 614–638.

⁴² Joel Migdal, (Ed.). (2004). *Boundaries and belonging: States and societies in the struggle to shape identities and local practices*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press; Joel Migdal. “Researching the state.” In M. I. Lichbach & A. S. Zuckerman (Eds.), *Comparative politics: Rationality, culture, and structure* (2nd ed.) (2009: 162–192). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

⁴³ Hasan, summer 2014. I am not sharing the exact location to protect his real identity from any harm.

⁶⁶ David Gellner, *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia: Non-State Perspectives*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2013; Nicholas Farrelly, “Nodes of Control in a Southeast Asian Borderland,” in *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia: Non-State Perspectives*. (edited by) David N. Gellner. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2013.

⁶⁷ Jeevan Sharma, *Crossing the Border to India: Youth, Migration and Masculinities in Nepal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

⁶⁸Jeffrey Sluka, *Death Squad: Anthropology of State Terror*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020; Haley Duschinski, Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 82 (2009): 691-717; Bert Suykens, "State Making and the Suspension of Law in India's Northeast: The Place of Exception in the Assam-Nagaland Border Dispute." In *Violence on the Margins: States, Conflict, and Borderlands*, edited by Benedikt Korf and Timothy Raeymaekers, 167–89. New York, NY, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Scott Gates & Kaushik Roy. *Unconventional Warfare in South Asia: Shadow Warriors and Counterinsurgency*. London: Routledge, 2014.

⁶⁹Itty Abraham, and Sumie Nakaya, 2007. "Uncertainty, Knowledge and Violence in Southern Thailand." *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, 24 (2007): 2304-2309.