



Parahyangan Catholic University
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Department of International Relations

Accredited A

SK BAN-PT NO: 451/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/S/XI/2014

**From Conflict to Cooperation: The Normalization Process
of the Kurdish Issue in Turkey (2002-2013)**

Thesis

By

Ayu Nadia Putri

2014330145

Bandung

2018



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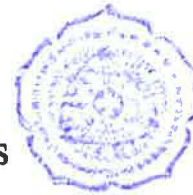
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2018

Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
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Hereby declare that this research is an original work and not a work that was ever proposed previously by others to obtain an academic degree. I make this statement with full responsibility and I am willing to accept the consequences in accordance with the rules in writing, if in the future it is known that this statement is proven false.

Bandung, December 4th, 2018,



Ayu Nadia Putri

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Abstract

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Title : From Conflict to Cooperation: The Normalization Process of the
Kurdish Issue in Turkey (2002-2013)

Since 1923, Turkish government has consistently addressed the Kurdish population using security-oriented approaches. Turkey's denial of the Kurdish identity has led the Kurdish population into a conflict against the Turkish government and military. Hence, the Kurdish issue was perceived as Turkey's major security problem. However, in 2002, the Turkish government started to address the Kurdish issue using means of cooperation and negotiation due to Turkey's accession to the European Union. Thus, Turkey began to enter the normalization process.

This shift will be analyzed using the theory of desecuritization, in which issue is moved off the 'security' framework and back into the sphere of 'normal' politics. Security is defined as the sovereign authority's ability to use emergency measures in dealing with threats. Meanwhile, normal politics mean that issue becomes a part of the public policy and is handled within the confines of the public sphere. The conditions of desecuritization include deconstruction-reconstruction of identities, passing of new legislation on sensitive issues and widening of actors.

This thesis argues that the Kurdish issue is desecuritized through three specific events enacted by the Turkish government: (1) Erdoğan's speech in 2005, in which a Turkish politician publicly acknowledged the existence of a Kurdish issue, (2) Kurdish Opening in 2009, where law reformations and a set of initiatives were established to reinstate Kurdish rights, (3) Oslo Process in 2012-2013, where open talks between the Turkish government and representative of the Kurds took place.

Key words: Kurds, AKP, Turkish government, Turkish policy, desecuritization, security

Abstrak

Nama : Ayu Nadia Putri

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Judul : Dari Konflik ke Kerjasama: Proses Normalisasi Isu Kurdi di Turki
(2002-2013)

Sejak 1923, pemerintah Turki menangani Kurdi di Turki menggunakan pendekatan berorientasi keamanan. Penolakan Turki atas identitas Kurdi telah mendorong penduduk Kurdi untuk memberontak terhadap pemerintah dan militer Turki. Oleh karena itu, masalah Kurdi dianggap sebagai masalah keamanan utama Turki. Namun, pada tahun 2002, pemerintah Turki mulai menangani masalah Kurdi menggunakan cara kerjasama dan negosiasi demi memenuhi persyaratan Turki untuk bergabung Uni Eropa. Dengan demikian, Turki mulai memasuki proses normalisasi dan akhirnya Kurdi di Turki mencapai perdamaian moderat pada tahun 2013.

Pergeseran ini akan dianalisis menggunakan teori desekuritisasi, di mana isu dipindahkan dari kerangka 'keamanan' dan kembali ke lingkup 'normal' politik. Keamanan di sini adalah kemampuan otoritas kedaulatan untuk menggunakan tindakan darurat dalam menangani ancaman. Sebaliknya, politik normal berarti masalah tersebut menjadi bagian dari kebijakan publik dan ditangani dalam batas-batas ruang publik. Kondisi desekuritisasi mencakup dekonstruksi-rekonstruksi identitas, membuat undang-undang baru mengenai isu-isu sensitif dan pelebaran aktor.

Tesis ini berpendapat bahwa masalah Kurdi di desekuritisasi melalui tiga peristiwa yang diberlakukan oleh pemerintah Turki: (1) pidato Erdogan pada tahun 2005, di mana seorang politisi Turki secara terbuka mengakui keberadaan isu Kurdi, (2) Pembukaan Kurdi tahun 2009, di mana reformasi hukum dan serangkaian inisiatif diberlakukan untuk mengembalikan hak-hak Kurdi, (3) Proses Oslo di 2012-2013, di mana pembicaraan terbuka antara pemerintah Turki dan perwakilan Kurdi berlangsung.

Kata Kunci: Kurdi, AKP, pemerintah Turki, kebijakan Turki, desekuritisasi, keamanan

Preface

Finally, this thesis entitled *From Conflict to Cooperation: The Normalization Process of the Kurdish Issue in Turkey (2002-2013)* has been completed. This thesis includes what you might expect from the title, it is about the process of normalization of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, which is one of the most disastrous ethnic conflict in the world. The author's initial interest on the issue is originated from several documentaries of the YPG fighters, consisting mostly of Kurdish women. From that point, the author did an in-depth research on the Kurds and came across the Kurdish Question, which was considered a "plague" to the Turkish ideology since the country's establishment. Although an undergraduate student wrote this thesis, the author poured her heart and desire regarding the topic into this paper.

This thesis had probably taken more time in my life than it is necessary and I could not be more grateful that it is now completed. Finishing this research was very challenging, considering that the issue had existed since almost a century ago and a lot of reading was required to acquaint the author with the issue itself. However, due to the interesting nature of the conflict, it became easier for the author to write about it. Hopefully, this research can contribute as a credible reference to those who are interested to study about the Kurdish issue in Turkey even though the author acknowledges that this piece is still far from perfect. Therefore, the author accepts all kinds of constructive criticisms and suggestions not just for the betterment of this piece of work, but for the author's self-evaluation as well.

Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to express my highest gratitude upon the Almighty God—for only Him who has always listened to all of my prayers, and He who has always been there through my ups and downs in life. He is the one that give me this life and this capability, with his permission I complete this phase of my life, with his permission I stepped into a new lif and with his permission I will carry on the future of my shoulder. I am constantly in awe of His presence in my life. Without Him, I wouldn't be able to complete this thesis on time. Only He has made all of this possible.

Next, I would like to highly appreciate and give thanks to my family. I would like to thank both my parents, Yudie Pirngadi and Julettiana, for all of love and never-ending support. Thank you for always believing in me and for all the things I do. Without their endless prayers and blessings, the author would not be able to finish this thesis on time. Their support has meant so much to me and without them, I would not be who I am now.

Not to forget, I would like to give a shoutout to my special partner, Shahan Aziz, who has been by my side to support me throughout the process of creating this thesis. His love and support has been my sole source of motivation to do better at every aspect of my life. I would like to thank him for the help I've received in the process of finishing this piece of work—thank you for pushing me on the days I thought I would never get this research done on time. This particular individual has

showed me the true meaning of hardwork and dedication, and without him, I would never be the person I am right now.

To all of my close friends, Anastazia Adeela, Ayesha Soeharto, Marlyn Oktavia, Agatha Lydia, Fella Opheliani, Fikri Adith, Sabina Kellie and Julia Burns who has stood by my side and witnessed my journey in UNPAR, I thank you. I am so grateful to have all these amazing friends who support me on anything I do. Without the amazing nights and conversations that we've had, I would never be able to reach this point of my life.

Also, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Mas Adrianus Harsawaskita, who has provided me with the patience and guidance I need to complete this thesis. I finally did it! After a year of meeting him back and forth, I managed to complete this thesis. I know I was kind of slow at the beginning, but thanks to your elaborative discussion, I finally caught up during times I was behind. I hope you find this thesis as well as you expected it to be!

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude towards Beau Dunne, an intellectually gifted individual, who I used to have intelligent discussions with. This particular person was the one who introduced me to the Kurdish issue in Turkey and if it was not for him, I would not be able to come up with a topic for my thesis. Although arguing with you about these things and winning those arguments has never been my forté, I want you to know how much of these talks have changed me. Even if I'm never going to confide in you again, please know that without your presence back in 2017, I will never be as happy as I am today.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Prior to 2002, the Turkish government has constantly addressed the Kurdish issue using security-oriented methods. The Kurdish issue is a widely known general term referring to both the absence of a common homeland for the Kurdish people, and their struggle in achieving equal rights in countries in which they reside, often manifesting through denial of their ethnic identity.¹ Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, the Treaty of Sèvres was signed in 1920 to determine the partition of the Empire into different countries. However, the concept of an independent Kurdistan nation was ultimately rejected by other partition of the Ottoman countries, leaving the Kurds without a native land.

With an estimated population of over 25-35 million people around the world, the Kurdistan is frequently referred to as one of the world's biggest stateless nations.² The Kurds are dispersed throughout the Middle East, but concentrated among the regions of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. Due to their status as minorities, their identities in each of these respective countries have been denied. In each of these states, the Kurds encounter difficulties in achieving for equal rights and recognition

¹ Rabia Karakaya Polat, "The Kurdish Issue: Can the AK Party Escape Securitisation?," *Insight Turkey* 10, (2008): 75-86

² "Who are the Kurds?," *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440> (accessed September 12, 2018)

as an ethnic group, and nowhere have these problems presented themselves more prominently than in the Republic of Turkey.

When Turkey's founding father Kemal Atatürk adopted Kemalism—an ideology that prohibited the existence of another identities other than Turks—the Kurdish issue began to surface. The Kemalist viewpoint encouraged Atatürk to retain Turkey's homogeneity, which meant the country will only authorize the existence of one state, one nation, one language and one identity, which were soon reflected on the Turkish Constitution. Turkey's desire to achieve a collective identity led to significant political, societal and cultural changes for the country, and most importantly for the Kurdish population in Turkey. From that point onwards, Turkey profoundly denied the Kurdish minority and their identity.

The Turkish allowed the Kurds to reside in some areas within the Turkish border particularly in the southeastern region of Turkey, however in order for them to do so, the Kurds were required to enter the process of "Turkification," in which Turkish political elites aim to assimilate the Kurdish population into the reformed homogenous Turkish society.³ The process, also known as the "Kemalist therapy", included the ban of the word "Kurds", "Kurdish" and "Kurdistan", the elimination of the Kurdish language, deprivation of education for Kurdish youth, imprisonment of Kurdish politicians and journalists, changing of Kurdish names into Turkish, altering the names of Kurdish cities into Turkish, disbandment of Kurdish political parties,

³ Mesut Yeğen, "Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (2004): 51-66, doi: 10.1080/0026320042000282874.

and the list goes on. Although the Kurds constitutes twenty percent of Turkey's population, the display of force and violence by the Turkish government and its military counterpart toward the Kurds were highly common.⁴

Turkey's denial of the Kurdish identity has resulted in countless of Kurdish uprisings against the Turkish authorities; among those were Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925), Ararat Rebellion (1930) and Dersim Rebellion (1937-1938). Unfortunately, the Kurdish rebellions were successfully crushed each time by Turkish authorities. However, a powerful organization emerged in 1978 and was able to crush the Turkish authorities. This organization is the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK) or the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which was created by Abdullah Öcalan. The PKK began as a Marxist/Leninist organization seeking to create a unified and independent Kurdish state by means of armed struggle.⁵ As a result, the Turkish government justified even the most violent methods in confronting the Kurds. Their security-oriented approaches involved forced resettlement, burning down villages, massacres, death penalties and misuse of the Turkish Constitution in order to prosecute the Kurds.

In addition to the violence, The Turkish government responded to PKK attacks by punishing the Kurds in general in many aspects of their civilization. The escalation of conflict between them led to further marginalization of the Kurdish

⁴ Murat Somer, "Resurgence and Remaking of Identity: Civil Beliefs, Domestic and External Dynamics and the Turkish Mainstream Discourse on Kurds," *Comparative Political Studies* 38, no. 6 (2005): 591-622

⁵ Eunyong Kim & Minwoo Yun, "What Works? Countermeasures to Terrorism: A Case Study of PKK," *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 32, no. 1 (2008): 65-88.

population in regards to political, socio-economical and cultural aspects of their livelihood. According to Hamit Bozarslan, between 1984-1999 alone he estimated that more than 37,000 people of both Kurds and Turks lost their lives due to the ‘civil’ war.⁶ Over 5,000 of the casualties were unarmed civilians and more than 2,000 of them, consisted of mainly scholars and academicians, were found murdered by mysterious personnels.⁷ In addition, 6,153 settlements and 1,779 villages were partially or completely obliterated.⁸ Lice, Sirnak, and Kulp, for instance, were among the towns that were destroyed as outcome of the war. Approximately tens of thousands of people was arrested consisting of mostly PKK insurgents and several Kurdish politicians, journalists, academicians and intellectuals. This tragic circumstance forced nearly three million of both Kurds and Turks to evacuate out of the country.⁹

The Turkish government and military authorities have always resorted to violence when it comes to the Kurdish issue. Answering radicalized Kurdish separatists by solely military means represented a huge part of the counterinsurgency doctrine exercised by the Turkish army since the country’s independence. This doctrine integrated elements of abuse and violence, as displayed in the military’s past training, which was a fundamental component of the country’s national security. Through its policy of repression, the Kurdish issue in Turkey has historically been

⁶ Hamit Bozarslan, “Human Rights and the Kurdish Issue in Turkey: 1984-1999,” *Human Rights Review* 3, no. 1 (2001): 45-53, doi:10.1007/s12142-001-1005-7.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

treated as a security problem. Furthermore, in attempt to completely destroy the Kurdish identity, the Turkish government did not just deny the presence of the Kurds in Turkey, but rejected the existence of a Kurdish issue altogether, making it one of the most devastating issues that ever occurred in the history of ethnic conflict.

1.2 Research Focus

1.2.1 Problem Identification

The turning point of the conflict is when the AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power in 2002. Created in 2001 by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the AKP began to assist the state government in easing tensions of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. This is because the AKP prioritised Turkey's candidacy to the European Union. However, European Union prolonged Turkey's membership application since the government experienced issues regarding human rights of its minority groups. Thus, in order to be fully recognized as a member, the European Union required Turkey to abide by the Copenhagen Criteria, which consisted of various law reforms on many aspects of Kurdish civilization. The AKP eventually influenced Turkey to gradually leave their methods of aggression behind and start adopting more civilized political approaches.

With Turkey's membership for the European Union on the line, the

Turkish government had to make societal, political and cultural changes within the country in favor of the Kurds. Despite PKK's resume of insurgency, the Turkish government was still determined to address the issue with a peaceful manner. Not only is the presence of the Kurds acknowledged, but the Turkish government also recognized their struggles and losses in achieving equal rights over the past years. Hence, after 2002, a series of speech, law reformation and open dialogue took place in Turkey as efforts to normalize the Kurdish issue. This normalization process of the Kurdish issue in Turkey is what the author aims to elaborate and examine.

The 30-year old conflict between Turkey and Kurds has finally come to an end as the Kurdish issue entered an era of peace in 2013 with the assistance of AKP and its leader Erdoğan. The Kurdish issue is now dealt in the realms of normal politics, as the Kurds are finally given their cultural and freedom rights, and addressed by means of negotiations and recognition. This occasion signifies the gradual change of “methods” used by the Turkish government, in which it was initially addressed military means, and eventually, through a complicated process, the Kurdish issue were finally able to be resolved peacefully.

1.2.2 Scope of the Research

This thesis will focus on Turkey as the main actor. The Turkish

government constitutes the Turkish political elites and Turkish military authorities. Other parties will only be discussed as long as it is relevant to the research. As for time span, the research will be limited in-between two specific occurrences, starting from 2002 to 2013. The turning point of the Kurdish issue occurred in 2002, as the AK Party won general elections and came to power. The year 2002 signifies the beginning of normalization process of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, as AKP needed to follow European Union's Copenhagen Criteria so that Turkey can become a full member of the union. Meanwhile, 2013 indicates the year of peace established between the Turkish government and the Kurdish population in Turkey. This occasion is marked with Öcalan's speech in Diyarbakir saying that the Kurdish issue can be resolved using means of cooperation.

1.2.3 Research Question

Based on the narrative provided above, the major question that this thesis expects to answer is as follows, "*How did the Turkish government normalize the Kurdish issue in Turkey? (2002-2013)*". The research question will be answered in the following Chapter 3.

1.3 Purposes of the Research

1.3.1 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to elaborate the normalization process of the Kurdish issue in Turkey that occurred between 2002 and 2013. This paper will reveal the gradual change of approach used by the Turkish government to handle the Kurdish issue in Turkey—from conflict to cooperation. It will discuss three specific events that occurred in 2002-2013, strengthening the author's argument that the Turkish government supported the process of normalization of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Finally, a conclusion and solution will be offered in the end. This research hopes to shed some light on the problematic Kurdish issue that had been poorly understood.

1.3.2 Practical Use of the Research

Since the Kurdish issue in Turkey have grown to be one of the most complex issues relating to security studies and ethnic conflict, a research to further study the relationship and background of involved parties is considered important. Bearing in mind that many readings related to this topic still remain bias, it is imperative that the author formulates the research using a neutral point of view. Hence, there will be two practical uses of the research. First, the purpose of this research is to develop the knowledge of the audience on their understanding regarding the Kurdish issue in Turkey from an unbiased point of view. Second, the research may also serve as an additional

reference for audience who are interested in doing an in-depth research on the Turkish past and present policies toward the Kurds in Turkey.

1.4 Literature Review

In order to understand further the normalization process of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, it is essential to discuss previous literatures pertaining to: (1) Turkey's domestic and foreign policy in order to describe Turkish-Kurdish relationship, and (2) desecuritization theory. There are four literatures in total that will be reviewed by the author below, two of which discusses Turkey's foreign policy impacted by the Kurdish issue, and the other two focusing on the desecuritization theory. The categorization is required to develop an elaborate understanding of the significant variables of this research.

One literature relating to Turkey's foreign policy that remains considerably noteworthy to the author is *Turkish Security Discourses and Policies: The Kurdish Question* created by Antonia Todorova. Here, Todorova argues that Turkey's military officials have shaped the country's policy based on the security discourses regarding the Kurdish issue. She refers to past regulations such as the establishment of 'state of emergency' in southeastern regions of Turkey and Anti-Terror Law as examples to strengthen her argument. Given that 'terror' is a broad concept, she believes that it created space for Turkish authorities to easily persecute not just Kurdish separatist groups, but Kurdish civilians as well.

Moreover, the author would like to review a literature entitled *The Impact of Kurdish Identity on Turkey's Foreign Policy from 1980s to 2008* assembled by Jülide Karakoç. Karakoç argues Kurdish issue has always been a major influence on Turkey's foreign policy. This literature examines Turkey's relationships with USA, Russia, European Union and Middle Eastern countries inhabited by Kurdish population. It is suggested that Turkey has a moderately peaceful affiliation with both USA and Russia, however, struggles to maintain good relationships with countries such as Syria and Iraq due to the presence of Kurdish groups that occupy the region.¹⁰ This means a country's stance on Kurdish issue determines their relationship with Turkey. Karakoç also added that speech acts created by military officials concerning the Kurdish issue are a major element in the composition of Turkey's foreign policy.

Both literatures, as discussed above, emphasize two different causes of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. While Todorova believes that Turkey's inaccurate perception of security were the direct cause of the Kurdish issue, Karakoç argues the root of the issue originated from the separate Kurdish identity itself. The cause of the Kurdish issue became a highly important discussion among academicians, as it shaped Turkey's foreign policy and Turkey's relations with other countries. Moreover, these literatures have slightly different opinion on the securitizing actors of the Kurdish issue. According to Todorova, the securitizing actors of the Kurdish issue aren't limited to the Turkish government and the Turkish army, but also the

¹⁰ Jülide Karakoç, "The Impact of the Kurdish Identity on Turkey's Foreign Policy from the 1980s to 2008," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 6 (2010): 919, doi: 10.1080/00263206.2010.5204231

civilian bureaucracy, political parties, certain civil society organisations and the mainstream media. However, Karakoç believes otherwise—the academician considers the Turkish government and military officials as the biggest securitizing actors of the issue.

Given the contrasting opinions from both pieces, the author deems that one journal seems more striking than the other. Although the author believes the two arguments from both academicians present a valid point, Karakoç's piece was better structured as it provides a more precise span of time of his analyses (1980s to 2008), in which Todorova's work was lacking. In addition, the author agrees with Karakoç's arguments, particularly regarding identity as the main determinant or variable of the issue. According to the author, the origin of the Kurdish issue comes from two conflicting identities of the Turks and Kurds, which escalated and developed into a severe conflict. With this in mind, the perception of 'what security is' of the Turkish state—inaccurate or not—becomes less relevant. Security here automatically is perceived as the opposing team, or the 'other' identity.

Now the author will discuss previous literatures in relation to desecuritization theory. Bourbeau, Philippe and Juha Vuori created an interesting piece in their book entitled *Critical Studies on Security*. On the chapter named *Security, Resilience, and Desecuritization: Multidirectional Moves and Dynamic*, the authors describe the importance of resilience in a desecuritization process, particularly on issues relating to ethnic differences. In this article, the goal of resilience is to maintain a desecuritized status quo. The article mentions several cases that would develop into a

civil war if it weren't for the use of resilience strategy. The strategy allows the issue to stay within the realm of normal politics and prevent it from further escalating.

Another substantial work regarding the concept of desecuritization is *Securitization and Desecuritization* by Ole Wæver. Wæver proposed two major strategies of desecuritization: (1) keeping issues below a certain level and prevent it from escalating so it doesn't trigger any securitizing movements, and (2) creating the speech act failure. These approaches were also similarly outlined in other Wæver's work entitled *Security, the Speech Act*. In addition, he believes that in order to initiate a desecuritization process, extraordinary measures taken by actors of power should be delegitimized first. After measures are successfully delegitimized, only then the issue can be moved into the realm of normal politics using diplomacy and other economic tools, where insecure actors can no longer search for potential threats that could possibly be securitized.

The author believes that these two academic journals complement each other. Wæver discussed about 'keeping issues below a certain level and prevent it from escalating' in order to achieve desecuritization, meanwhile, Bourbeau *et al*'s work is fixated on the ways and methods of maintaining problems below a particular threshold by formulating the resilience strategy. Instead of providing two contrasting arguments, both Bourbeau *et al* and Wæver points are similar and they complete each other. To strengthen the author's argument, the two literatures uses the same definition of security coined by Wæver, which is 'by uttering something as [security], state representatives are given the authority to use any means necessary to block it',

making both journals very effective as they used the same definition of security to analyze and translate their interpretation of desecuritization.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Security, Securitization and Desecuritization

As tensions of the Kurdish issue in Turkey have declined over the recent years, it is important to examine the decline using an appropriate concept. The theory that this research will use is desecuritization theory, coined by Ole Wæver. Desecuritization is generally defined as a process of taking a problem out of the framework of security and into the realm of cooperation and negotiation. Therefore, in order to grasp concept of desecuritization theory, one should be able to understand the definition of “security” beforehand. In *New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-first Century*, Barry Buzan explained “security” as follows:

“Security is taken to be about the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile. The bottom line of security is survival, but it also reasonably includes a substantial range of concerns about the conditions of existence. Quite where this range of concerns ceases to merit the urgency of the “security” label (which identifies threats as significant enough to warrant emergency action and exceptional measures including the use of force) and becomes part of everyday uncertainties of life is one of the difficulties of the concept.”¹¹

¹¹ Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-first Century,” *International Affairs* 67, no. 3 (1991): 431-451.

Buzan also added that the label of “security” is commonly shed in a negative light and has bad connotation to it, as he quoted:

“Basically, security should be seen as negative, as a failure to deal with issues as normal politics. Ideally, politics should be able to unfold according to routine procedures without this extraordinary elevation of specific ‘threats’ to a prepolitical immediacy.”¹²

If Buzan defines security as pursuit of freedom, Wæver believes that labeling an issue as security is a matter of choice—political choice. Wæver argues that the definition of security is ultimately constructed through the lens of actors of power, i.e. state government and military officials. He believes that an issue only becomes a security concern due to the subjective representations regarding what a security issue is made by actors who have influence over particular area or community. Wæver argues that whether or not something is labeled a security issue depends on the subjective understanding of ‘security’ of these influential actors and the context in which they decide to display an issue as such. In other words, security is understood as a socially constructed concept.

The subjectivity of “security” has allowed actors of power to take excessive measures to deal with threats in order to sustain or assert their power status over a certain region or community. This process is called securitization. Securitization’s main argument is that security is a form of *speech act*, meaning by labeling something as a security issue, it then becomes one. Wæver discusses speech act in the

¹² Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde, “Security: A New Framework for Analysis,” Boulder: Lynne Rienner, (1998): 29.

following manner,

“Security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act.....By uttering ‘security’, a state representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.”¹³

As an important concept of Copenhagen School, securitization works when an actor of power declares that a particular *referent object*, e.g. ideology, identity or sovereignty, may be existentially threatened, which gives *securitizing actors* an excuse to use *extraordinary measures* as a way to ensure the survival of the object. The issue then experiences a transition, where securitizing actors takes it out of the realm of normal politics and move it into the sphere of emergency politics.

Although both theories are mutually situated under Copenhagen School’s umbrella, desecuritization is a completely separate concept from securitization. According to Wæver, desecuritization is defined as the transfer of an issue from the realm of emergency politics and back to sphere of normal politics.¹⁴ This meant that the problem no longer has to be dealt using extraordinary measures and security-oriented methods, but preferably using cooperation and negotiation. It can also be defined as the broadening of boundaries of normal politics, meaning there is an expansion of space within the issue allowing other actors aside from actors of power such as the military or the government to interfere.¹⁵ It does not mean that the

¹³ Ole Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” in Ronny Lipschutz, e.d., *On Security*, New York: Columbia University Press, (1995): 46-86.

¹⁴ Paul Roe, “Securitization and Minority Rights: Conditions of Desecuritization,” *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 3 (2004): 279-294.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

element of 'security' no longer exists, but rather taken into the framework of regular politics, and only then the issue can be addressed properly.

Let us first clarify what kind of space desecuritization refers to. The definition of desecuritization as the 'shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the public sphere' suggests a move from the securitized to the politicized ('meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance'), rather than to the non-politicized ('meaning the state does not deal with it and it is not in any other way made an issue of public debate and decision').¹⁶ A move that takes us from securitization to politicization is different from one that takes us to non-politicisation, and given that the Copenhagen School defines desecuritization as the movement of issues 'into the ordinary public sphere', it might be best to delimit desecuritization to the former move.¹⁷

Desecuritization does not directly provide a solution to resolve the issue, however, it is more important for the problem to be framed and perceived in a political way and is not handled within the security framework. This means that the perception of 'threat' is removed from the issue. It is important to keep in mind that the 'perception' of the threat itself is more vital than the 'actual' threat. Some views also suggest that desecuritization is the undoing or unmaking of securitization. Opposed to this idea, Wæver argues that desecuritization cannot be interpreted as the

¹⁶ Buzan *et al.*, "Security", *Op. Cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 29.

conceptual twin of securitization. To him, one should not assume that the two concepts work in similar ways or in reverse. For instance, speech act is only effective when it comes to securitization. Speech act has little relevance to the concept of desecuritization. One cannot desecuritize through speech acts such as, ‘I hereby declare this issue to no longer be a threat’, as this would be invoking the language and logic of security.¹⁸ Desecuritization, therefore, happens as a result of speech acts, but there is no such thing as a desecurity speech act.¹⁹

To elaborate the theory of desecuritization further, it must be understood that the concept has several key requirements. These are the reconstruction/deconstruction of identities, passing of new legislation on sensitive issues and widening of actors involved in the issue. The reconstruction/deconstruction of identity means the re-defining of identities of the existential threat and/or the referent object. For example, the identity of the existential threat can be re-defined as less threatening. Next, passing of new legislation on sensitive issue is done as the countermeasure of hard and strict policies that was used to securitize an issue. Its execution is crucial as it hopes to reverse the effect of securitization. Last, widening of actors that are involved in the issue allow the cutting back of power possessed by sovereign authorities. The participation of civil society organizations, academicians, media, NGOs are vital in the desecuritization process—so that previous securitizing actors wield less power.

¹⁸ Ole Wæver, “The EU as a security actor,” *International relations theory and the politics of European integration: power, security, and community*, Routledge : London, (2000): 250-294.

¹⁹ Thierry Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (2005): 171-201.

After these requirements have been fulfilled, can the Kurdish issue enter the realm of ‘normal’ politics where it is successfully desecuritized.

However, it is also important to keep in mind that once an issue is desecuritized, there is always a possibility of re-securitization, meaning that the issue will be taken from the normal political sphere and moved back into the security framework. Here, resilience becomes an important element to maintain issues in the realm of normal politics.

1.6 Method and Material

1.6.1 Research Method

The method employed in this thesis is qualitative research. Qualitative research possess characteristics of being “descriptive,” meaning that the thesis will rely heavily on the author’s ability to interpret data examined through many different written resources and create an in-depth analysis out of the collected information. This allows the author to create a piece of work, which arguments are a result of the author’s understanding of the issue, combined with reliable references. The author will focus on collecting data from various researches, then describe and interpret the researches in order to be able to form a concrete analysis.

1.6.2 Data Collection Technique

The data provided in this research will be collected through books, electronic books, news articles, and academic journals. These sources will be used to examine the normalization process of the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

1.7 Research Structure

This research will be assembled in four major parts: introduction, background, analysis and conclusion. The structure of the thesis is formulated as follows:

On Chapter 1, introduction of the research is provided. Introduction consists of research background, problem identification, research question, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology used in the research and its structure. This section identifies the problem, scope, question, objectives as well as the purposes of the research. The theory used throughout the research, desecuritization, is also introduced in this chapter.

The title of Chapter 2 is named *Understanding the Development of Kurdish Issue in Turkey*. This chapter begins with an elaboration of the origins of the Kurdish people dating back to the Ottoman era and after the Empire collapsed. This chapter does not just discuss the historical background of the Kurds in Turkey, but also the political, socio-economical and cultural status of the Kurds after the population had been marginalized by the government. The second chapter aims to illustrate the Kurdish issue as a major security threat to Turkish Kemalist ideology and how the

issue itself became heavily securitized. Lastly, this chapter ends with an account of the peace situation between the Turks and Kurds that occurred in 2013.

Chapter 3 is entitled *The Normalization Process of the Kurdish Issue in Turkey*. This section answers the research question given in the first chapter. The author argues that the normalization process itself involves three attempts enacted by the Turkish government. First off, the author divides these aforementioned attempts into three main sub-chapters, in which the explanation of each of these events is provided respectively. In each of these sub-chapters, the author will also provide a comparative analysis of the past (prior to 2002) and present (2002-2013) in regards to each attempt. This will reveal the contrasting difference between securitization that occurred in the past and desecuritization that occurred in the recent years. Such comparison will help the audience to understand how the two concepts work differently.

Finally, on Chapter 4, the author incorporates the analysis and findings of this research into a form of conclusion. On the conclusion, the recommendations of how to sustain the peace between both Kurdish population and the Turkish government, so that in the future the Kurdish issue will never be re-securitized again.