Olgunlaşma Teorisi Bağlamında PKK ile Barış Sürecinin (2013-2015) Başarısızlığının Analizi

An Analysis of the Failure of the Peace Process (2013-2015) with PKK through the Ripeness Theory

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Abstract

Turkey has experienced a protracted conflict with the PKK since 1984. Over the history of almost 30 years of the violent conflict, the first comprehensive and overt peace attempt was launched by Turkish government in 2013. It had lasted for two years with great optimism and high expectations on reaching a political settlement before it failed in July 2015. This article aims to explore the reasons of the failure of 2013-2015 negotiations and examines whether conditions were suitable for launching a 'peace process' in 2013 to resolve Turkey's conflict with the PKK. It draws on three main elements of Zartman's Ripeness theory: mutually hurting stalemate (MHS), a formula for a way out and valid spokespersons. It is argued in the article that the conflict in Turkey was not in fact ripe enough for negotiations which were initiated and conducted hastily without any formula for way out and with problematic spokespersons.

Key Words: Conflict resolution, PKK, Kurdish Question, Peace Process, Ripeness, Mutually Hurting Stalemate

Öz

Türkiye, 1984'ten beri terör örgütü PKK ile çatışmaktadır. Yaklaşık 30 yıllık şiddetli çatışma tarihi boyunca, ilk kapsamlı ve açık barış girişimi Türk hükümeti tarafından 2013'te başlatıldı. Bu süreç iki yıl boyunca büyük bir iyimserlik ve yüksek beklentilerle devam etti ancak Temmuz 2015'te son erdi. Bu makale, müzakerelerin başarısız olmasının nedenlerini araştırırken Türkiye'nin PKK ile çatışmasını sonlandırmak üzere 2013'te bir 'barış süreci' başlatmak için koşulların uygun olup olmadığını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makale Zartman'ın "Olgunluk Teorisi"nin üç ana unsuru üzerine kurulmuştur: karşılıklı zarar veren tıkanma, çatışmadan çıkış için yol ve sözü geçen müzakereciler. Makalede, Türkiye'deki çatışmanın aslında hiçbir çıkış yolu formüle edilmeden ve sorunlu sözcülerle alelacele başlatıldığı ve koşulların müzakereler için yeterince "olgunlaşmadığı" ileri sürülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çatışma Çözümü, PKK, Kürt Sorunu, Barış Süreci, Olgunlaşma, Karşılıklı Zarar Veren Tıkanma

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Introduction

Between 2013 and 2015, the Turkish government engaged in negotiations to resolve the country's Kurdish question and end the 30-years long violent conflict and terrorism with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This moment was the first in the history of the conflict which both sides searched for alternative options to the one-sided approaches. The process was genuinely supported by some regional actors such as the Kurdish administration in Iraq and the international community including the USA and EU. The optimism was great and the expectations were high about the outcome of the negotiations. However, it failed in the first half of 2015 and the President of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, declared on July 20 that the Peace Process was frozen and had been 'put in the refrigerator'. The breakdown has been followed by renewed deadly clashes in rural and urban areas both within and outside Turkey and lasted so far. Considering the current escalated level of the conflict after almost nearly two years of high expectations about a conflict settlement between 2013 and 2015, one may ask whether there was in fact a suitable moment in Turkey regarding the PKK conflict which might have allowed the parties to reach a negotiated settlement. In searching for an answer, this study applies Zartman's 'Ripeness Theory'.

Zartman introduced a theory that has been widely applied to conflict situations like that in Turkey. His theory has been found useful for explaining both successful and failed negotiations. According to the theory, the ripe moment for resolving intractable conflicts requires three critical elements: a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS), a formula for a way out and valid spokespersons.

I argue in this article that the conflict in Turkey was not in fact ripe enough for negotiations, although this was misperceived by the political elites so negotiations were initiated and conducted hastily without any formula for way out and with problematic spokespersons. After discussing the elements of Zartman's ripeness theory, the nature and characteristics of the context of the conflict after 2000s are examined as they are determinative on the success of a resolution initiative. In the final three parts, the elements of Zartman's theory -MHS, way out and valid spokesperson- are applied to the case in Turkey.

Theory of Ripeness

Although protracted and intractable conflicts appear unresolvable, Peter Wallensteen argues that "most actors in conflicts will find themselves in need of negotiations at one time or another."[1] As Hancock noted, "this

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[1]   Peter Wallensteen, *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System*, SAGE Publications, London 2002, p. 13.

notion has come to be called 'ripeness', much thought being given to ways to identify, defy and codify, and predict when it will occur in different conflict situations." [2]

Zartman's theory primarily focuses on the timing of conflict resolution attempts rather than on the content of proposals for a solution. According to the theory, the ripe moment only occurs when three elements exist: MHS, a formula for way out and a valid spokesperson.[3] "MHS is based on the notion that the parties will only seek an alternative policy or way out when they realize themselves locked in a conflict that they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them."[4]

Ripeness is, of course, mainly a subjective condition. However, objective elements contribute to emergence of such condition. Zartman points out that "the greater the objective evidence, the greater the subjective perception of a stalemate and its pain is likely to be."[5] According to Zartman, subjective elements include expressions of pain, impasse and inability to bear the cost of further escalation. There exist two different forms of intensity that make a conflict ripe for resolution, which are, in his words, the "plateaus" and "precipice."[6] "In the former, both parties realize that they have reached a costly deadlock in which neither can maintain a victory with their current available means, nor can they hold the stalemate at an acceptable cost."[7] In the latter, "parties already stuck in a costly deadlock, recognize an incoming 'catastrophe' that would not only cause a big loss but also dramatically shift their relative power positions." [8]

The Hurting Stalemate (HS)[9] can be perceived in different times by each of the conflicting parties and it is the prerequisite of resolution when it is simultaneously perceived by both sides' political and social entities. Therefore, the concept of MHS in terms of when parties actually reached and perceived the HU both, individually and bilaterally in the history of this conflict will be elaborated in the article.

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2   Landon E. Hancock, "To Act or Wait: A Two-Stage View of Ripeness", *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol.2, No.2, 2001, p. 195.

3   I. William Zartman, "Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiations in Internal Conflict", *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars,* I. William Zartman (ed.), Washington DC: The Brooking Institutions, 1995, p. 8, 18, 22, 23.

4   I. William Zartman and Alvaro de Soto, *Timing Mediation Initiatives*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C., 2010, p.5.

5   I. William Zartman, "The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments", *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol.1, No.1, 2001, p. 9.

6   I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989.

7   Mustafa Coşar Ünal, "Is it ripe yet? Resolving Turkey's 30 years of conflict with the PKK", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 17, 2016, p. 94.

8   Ibid, p. 95.

9   Hurting stalemate (HS) is defined as a situation when parties to a conflict "perceive the status quo as unacceptable and perceive no alternate venues for achieving their objections other than negotiations

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Zartman's MHS concept has been enhanced by other studies focusing on how the parties define the concept. Haass's emphasis on internal process and intra-party perception is strengthened by Putnam's "two tables" model for analysing international agreements. The latter argues that the correlation between each party's perceptions of ripeness at the inter-party level must match the "win-sets" for ripeness at the intra-party level.[10] This means that "for ripeness to be genuinely perceived at the inter-party level, it would have to be perceived by enough elements at the intra-party level to successfully enter negotiations without the possibility that any sizable groups within each party would act as spoilers to derail the negotiations or subsequent peace agreements."[11]

Mitchell also has developed the concept of intra-party perception and suggested "a set of strategies for reducing intra-party disagreement about engaging in negotiations."[12] In addition, Stedman and Coleman underline the importance of inter party dynamics, the role of the military actors and leadership changes in the conflicts.[13] A new leader may act more courageously toward a protracted conflict as he/she may not feel responsible for the existing policy and its heavy cost, and if a settlement may serve his/her domestic political purposes.

The notion of willingness is another important factor determining the ripe moment. Haass, for example, describes four prerequisites of ripeness: a shared desire to come to an agreement, valid leadership, a suitable formula and a mutually accepted process.[14] Haass is supported by Deutsch and Coleman, who use the terms "readiness to negotiate"[15] and "motivation."[16]

The second element for a ripe moment is a way out. Zartman and De Soto assert that "without a sense of a way out, the push for resolution associated with an MHS leaves the parties with nowhere to go."[17] In fact, searching for a way out is a process that allows the parties to negotiate an end to the conflict while satisfying their respective needs and interests. Haass

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10 Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games", *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No.3, 1988.

11 Hancock, ibid, p. 197.

12 Christopher Mitchell, *Gestures of Conciliation: Factors Contributing to Successful Olive Branches*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2000.

13 Stephen J. Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe, 1974–1980*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1991, p.208; Coleman, ibid.

14 Richard N. Haass, "Ripeness and Settlement of International Disputes", *Survival*, Vol.30, No.3, 1988, p. 245-246.

15 Morton Deutsch, "On Negotiating the Non-Negotiable", *Leadership and Negotiation in the Middle East*, B. Kellerman and J.Z. Rubin (eds.), Praeger Publishers, New York: Praeger, 1988.

16 Peter T. Coleman, "Redefining Ripeness: A Social-Psychological Perspective", *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology,* Vol.3, No.2, 1997.

17 Zartman and De Soto, ibid.

argues that "there must be a formula that involves sufficient compromise on both sides so that leaders can make a case to their colleagues and/or publics that the national interest was protected."[18]

The third component of ripeness theory is valid spokespersons for conflicting/negotiating. They should act in place of all political/ military factions of their respective groups, and "must have the necessary authority to make their constituencies accept any negotiated outcome."[19] If these characteristics exist in spokespersons, they are likely to succeed in commencing negotiation and ending it satisfactorily.[20]

Way out and valid spokesperson are also related to the content and conduct of the negotiations which are important for the process to reach a successful peace accord.[21] In the subsequent parts of this article on way out and valid spokesperson, content and conduct will necessarily be discussed.

Context of Conflict

In the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, a number of Kurdish uprisings had taken place. After almost 40 years of the last uprising in 1930s, the PKK was founded as a political and an armed insurgent organization on 27 November 1978 with a long-term objective of establishing an "Independent Greater Kurdistan" in Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. The PKK embraced a three-stage Maoist strategy to wage a protracted war; strategic defence, balance and offense. It launched the first stage on 15 August 1984 through military attacks in the south-east region of Turkey. The Iran-Iraq War, the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent developments in Iraq created a power vacuum in the Northern Iraq, providing the PKK with the opportunity to establish sanctuary and increase its armed and political activities by seriously challenging the state authority in the south-east region of Turkey.[22] However, from 1993 onwards, Turkey carried out a determined counterinsurgency and counter terrorism campaign against the PKK. In a short time, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) "took the initiative of detecting PKK guerrillas and decapitated them through conducting large-scale military operation" and 11,000 PKK militants were incapacitated between 1991 and 1994 alone.[23] After incurring big loses, the PKK declared a ceasefire on

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18   Haass, ibid, p.246.
19   Zartman 2015, ibid, p. 22,23.
20   Zartman 2001, ibid, p. 11.
21   John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty, *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Peace Process-es and Post-war Reconstruction*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p. 2.
22   Özlem Kayhan Pusane, Pusane, "Turkey's Military Victory over the PKK and Its Failure to End the PKK Insurgency", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 51, No.5, 2015, p. 729.
23   Mustafa Coşar Ünal, "Strategist or Pragmatist: A Challenging Look at Öcalan's Retro-spective Classification and Definition of PKK's Strategic Periods Between 1973 and 2012", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.26, No.3, 2014, p. 428.

20 March 1993. Although this date is regarded by some scholars as a ripe moment and a missed opportunity for a negotiated settlement by the Turkish government [24], it is one of the strategic and pragmatic moves of the PKK when it faces the risk of total collapse. Even if this moment is regarded as a perception of HS, it is one sided. As pointed out earlier, it is the prerequisite of resolution when HS is simultaneously perceived by both sides' political and social entities. Thus, the acknowledgment of defeat by PKK in 1993 did not result in a process of negotiated settlement.

Öcalan, having been captured and jailed in 1999, assessed the defeat and new context in prison. Between 1999 and 2004, he was inspired from Murray Bookchin and his social ecology theory.[25] Many of the defining features of the political philosophy that Öcalan began to espouse in the 2000s are firmly rooted on Bookchin's idea of social ecology and its political practice: "libertarian municipalism" or "communalism."[26] Öcalan formulated his plan with 3D; Democratic Republic, Democratic Autonomy and Democratic Confederation. Based on his new vision, the PKK made adjustments and program changes in early 2000s to reach its objectives. In fact, Öcalan had directed the PKK to intensify pro-Kurdish political activities which gained momentum in the mid-1990s.

In parallel with the changes in Turkey, the PKK affiliated political parties were established in Iraq, Iran and Syria[27] in the early 2000s.[28] "From 2004 onwards, the PKK re-established itself along the directions given by Öcalan based on an extensive critique of classical liberation struggles, and of the idea of the nation-state."[29] As an important step of reconstruction, the PKK leadership established the Union of Kurdistan Societies (KCK) in 2005 which was designed as an umbrella organization aimed at bringing the Kurds of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq, and creating a "democratic confederation" comprised of autonomous Kurdish states. This model, in fact, was renaming of "Greater Kurdistan".

After the PKK established the KCK to achieve its political goal, the conflict dynamics have changed. As the new actors participated, the issues diversified and the space expanded, the conflict escalated with violent

24 Ünal 2016, ibid, p. 96.
25 Debbie Bookchin, "How My Father's Ideas Helped the Kurds Create a New Democracy", *NYR Daily*, 15.06.2018, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/06/15/how-my-fathers-ideas-helped-the-kurds-create-a-new-democracy/
26 Kamran Matin, "Democratic Confederalism and Societal Multiplicity: A Sympathetic Critique of Abdullah Öcalan's State Theory", *Geopolitics*, 15.11.2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2019.168878510.1, p.2.
27 In Syria, the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat-PYD in Kurdish) was established as a PKK affiliated political party in 2003. The People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel-YPG in Kurdish is the armed wing of PYD and formed in 2011.
28 Rana M. Khalaf, "Governing Rojava: Layers of Legitimacy in Syria", *Chatham House*, 8.12.2016, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2016/12/governing-rojava-layers-legitimacy-syria
29 Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, "The PKK's Ideological Odyssey", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 22, No.6, 2020, p. 731.

and non-violent actions. Regarding nonviolence trend, while almost 2500 nonviolent events were reported in 2007, the numbers increased to 3500 in 2008 and 5500 in 2009. Similarly, the trend of the violent events changed as yearly numbers increased to the level of 2500 in 2008 from the 500 events in the 2007.[30]

In 2008, Erdogan-led ruling Adalet Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) (Judicial and Development Party-JDP) government decided to end Turkey's decades-long policy of containment of the Kurds of Iraq and initiate formal contacts with the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq.[31] Turkish state officials also contacted the PKK to arrange a series of meetings in various places in Europe starting from September 2008. The most comprehensive of these were secret talks with the PKK in 2009, mediated by third parties, known as the "Oslo Process."[32] The Oslo meetings were the first known pre-negotiations in the history of the PKK conflict. In that case, a mutual perception of HS did not initiate the talks, "but rather both parties, particularly the Turkish Government, saw strategic (domestic and regional) economic and political advantages with engaging in talks and negotiating a ceasefire."[33]

The one outcome of the secret Oslo talks was the "Kurdish Opening" which became a significant turning point to resolve the Kurdish question through dialogue. In fact, "it constituted the Government's first official statement of intent for settling the conflict making it one of the most courageous and boldest effort."[34] In the context of the opening and as agreed at the talks, the PKK sent 34 militants and refugees from its camps in Northern Iraq to Turkey in November 2009 to show its willingness for the initiative. The group had been arrested at the Habur gate on the border between Turkey and Iraq. A judge released them pending trial, and Erdogan, then Turkish Prime Minister, described their return as a "very positive and pleasing development."[35] This event turned to a victorious demonstration of the PKK at Habur border gate on 19 October 2009 and provoked reactions from Turkish society.[36] Turkey's security situation had already been

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30   Ünal 2014, ibid, p. 437.

31   Mesut Yeğen, "The Kurdish Peace Process in Turkey: Genesis, Evolution Prospects", *Global Turkey in Europe*, Working Paper, 2015, https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/gte_wp_11.pdf, p. 6.

32   *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement,* No.129, International Crisis Group, 11.09.2012, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-pkk-and-kurdish-settlement

33   Arin Savran, "The Peace Process between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers Party 2009–2015", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 22, No.6, 2020, p. 782.

34   Ibid, p. 782.

35   "Turkey releases PKK 'peace' group", *Aljazeera*, 20.10.2009, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/10/20/turkey-releases-pkk-peace-group

36   "Habur'dan Diyarbakır'a gövde gösterisi", *Milliyet*, 21.10.2009, https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/haburdan-diyarbakira-govde-gosterisi-1152997; "PKK'lılar Habur'da", *Sabah*, 19.10.2009, https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2009/10/19/dagdan_inis_gununde_kaza

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increasingly deteriorating after October 2009. After an exchange of harsh rhetoric and initial clashes, the PKK declared the end of ceasefire on 1 June 2010. From that date, clashes between PKK and security forces started and continued for almost two years. During these years, the PKK's self-declared ceasefires did not change feelings of general insecurity. The Oslo Process finally collapsed in summer 2011, shortly before the June 12 parliamentary elections. The fighting restarted and "lasted until the PKK's March 2013 unilateral ceasefire, killing at least 920 people, of whom 90 percent was militants, the majority from the PKK."[37]

After the Syria crisis was transformed into a civil war along sectarian and ethnic lines, Turkey has perceived PKK affiliated PYD (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat-Democratic Union Party in Syria) controlled- autonomous Kurdish region in Syria as an existential threat. Turkish government initiated a two-front campaign against PKK inside and outside Turkey, and against its affiliate PYD forces in Syria.[38]

Analysing MHS in Turkey with Regard to the PKK Conflict

Over the history of Kurdish issue and the PKK conflicts in Turkey, two turning points are identified above: the first is the military defeat of PKK in 1992-93 and   the second is when Öcalan was captured in 1999. Both events led the PKK to declare the unilateral ceasefires, and decide to withdraw its militants beyond Turkish borders without disarming them and dismembering the organization. These moments, in fact, are regarded as pragmatic tactical moves as the PKK had not renounced its main objective-Greater Independent Kurdistan, and never accepted the disarmament and dismemberment. Turkish State, on the other hand, was the "winning side" and remained committed to ending the question unilaterally.

It is safe to argue that the case of 2013-2015 was quite different than previous turning points since a negotiation process was overtly launched and conducted. In this part of the article, the processes before and during the negotiations are examined considering three components of Zartman's ripeness theory; MHS, Way out and Valid Spokesperson.

The first issue to examine is whether the Turkish state perceived that its conflict with the PKK had reached the HS. As Stedman claims, the military

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37   Taha Özhan, *Normalization Pains: Turkey from the Opening to Solution Process 2008-2013*, Özgür Yayınları, Ankara 2014; *Turkey and the PKK: Saving the Peace Process*, No.234, International Crisis Group, 6.11.2014, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-and-pkk-saving-peace-process, p. 3.

38   "Turkey hits PYD twice for crossing Euphrates: PM", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 27.10.2015, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-hits-pyd-twice-for-crossing-euphrates-pm-90385

component of each party in the conflict is the crucial element in perceiving the HS.[39] This was also unquestionably true in Turkey's case as the TAF had long been a main actor dealing with Turkey's 30-year PKK conflict.

The casualties are considered one of the objective elements determining the HS perceptions of both the military and political elites. The casualty rates in the previous high intensity level period before 2013 when the negotiations with the PKK started was overwhelmingly high. For example, while the total casualty rates for the years of 1991, 1992 and 1993 were around 500, 1600 and 2200 respectively [40], it was much lower in 2010-2013. According to confirmed casualty figures for the last four years (2008-2011) of the conflict, the PKK lost more than 1,000 militants while the security forces losses were one third of that number.[41]

Heavy loss from the inferior like the PKK in this study does not mean that mass human loss puts a heavy cost on the inferior so it would alter its behaviour as a rational actor. On the contrary, it exploits this as a source of recruitment. Therefore, the sole military approach and its concrete quantitative results on human loss is a dubious criterion to judge the HU. In a temporal approach, this even reflects difference in terms of its perception by the public. As Feaver and Gelpi spelled out, "The public is 'defeat phobic' not 'casualty phobic' under certain circumstances."[42] Therefore, the causality numbers do not correctly suggest the perception of HU by any side.

If an HS exists at all, it is largely in the political sphere that the most evidence can be found. There have been many factors contributing to AKP's perception of an HS. Stedman's argument that internal political conditions are helpful both for perceiving ripeness and turning that perception into initiating promising negotiations[43] clearly applies to Turkey's case. AKP came to power in 2002 after PKK's leader Öcalan had been captured and imprisoned and PKK militants had withdrawn from Turkey. Although AKP won elections in 2002 and 2007, it lacked full control over the state, in particular viewing the military as a rival to exclude from politics. Such threats to an incumbent leadership from domestic rivals - rather than threats from the enemy - are seen by new rulers as a source of impending catastrophe.[44] Accordingly, in Turkey after 2002, AKP realized that it had to solve the PKK conflict without increasing the military's role. Thus, "AKP viewed a solution of the Kurdish question by political means instead of military measures as an

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39   Stedman, ibid, p.241,242.
40   Ünal 2014, ibid, p.427.
41   Ibid, p.428.
42   Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelphi, *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2004, p. 145.
43   Stedman, ibid, p. 241.
44   Daniel Lieberfield, "Conflict Ripeness Revisited: South African and Israeli/Palestinian Cases", *Negotiation Journal*, Vol.15, No.1, 1999; Stedman, ibid.

opportunity to undermine the role of the military, which has used security problems to intervene in politics."[45] In other words, "AKP aimed to use the Kurdish question to eliminate the political competitors."[46] This is in line with Stedman's observations regarding leadership and ripeness: "a change in leadership can lead to a settlement if such a settlement is in the practical political interests of the new leader."[47]

The Middle East's changing dynamics also contributed to AKP leaders' perceptions that the best way to retain the region's existing borders is a peaceful settlement of PKK conflict. In Syria, "the withdrawal of Syrian government forces from five Kurdish-dominated towns along the Syrian-Turkish border in July 2012 created a political vacuum that the Democratic Union Party (PYD) — which has close ties to the PKK — rushed to fill."[48] For AKP's leaders, such a secessionist scenario was catastrophic. So they searched for a way out.

Another significant factor shaping AKP's HS perception is the high 30-year economic cost of the conflict. Military conflict obviously reduces human and physical capital stock, increases uncertainty and military expenditure, shifting resources from productive sectors to the defence industry, and adversely affects specific sectors, such as airlines or tourism.[49] This is also true in Turkey. According to one government report, the direct overall cost of terror in Turkey is around 300 billion dollars while indirect costs have been estimated at around one trillion dollars.[50] Consequently, Turkey has had to set aside 15 billion US dollars annually over the past twenty years to fight the PKK. This financial burden has significantly damaged both the regional and national economy.[51] The negative effects on the conflict affected regions were more severe regarding decline in GDP, poor socio-economic development, high unemployment rate and poverty. The lack of public investments has been a major problem in the conflict region. "From 1990 to 2001, the Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia received on average TRY 3,000 million public investment per capita, while the remaining five regions of Turkey attained TRY 8,000 million public investment per capita."[52] In short, the overall costs

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45   Burak Bilgehan Özpek, "Paradigm Shift between Turkey and the Kurds: From 'Clash of the Titans' to 'Game of Thrones'", *Middle East Critique*, Vol.27, No.1, 2017, p. 48,49.
46   Ibıd, p. 53.
47   Hancock, ibid, p.198.
48   F. Stephen Larrabee, "Why Erdogan Wants Peace With the PKK: The End of An Insurgency." *Foreign Affairs*, 27.3.2013, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ articles/turkey/2013-03-27/why-erdogan-wants-peace-pkk
49   Alberto Abadie and Javier Gardeazabal, "The economic costs of conflict: A case study of the Basque Country", *American Economic Review*, Vol.93, No.1, 2003.
50   *Questions and Answers to Democratic Opening Process*, AKP Booklet, http://www.ak-parti.org.tr upload documents acilim220110.pdf.
51   Yılmaz Ensaroglu, "Turkey's Kurdish Question and the Peace Process", *Insight Turkey*, Vol.15, No.2, 2013, p.9.
52   Veli Yadırgı, "Turkey's Kurdish Question in the Era of Neoliberalism", *Journal of Balkan*

of the conflict to Turkish citizens both in the conflict area and the rest of Turkey have been so great that they have contributed to the Turkish political elites' perception of an HS.

In addition, "the broader Turkish public had come to recognize that trying to end the insurgency with force was a dead end and that the government would have to make a more determined effort to find a political solution to the Kurdish conflict."[53]

Changing domestic political dynamics in Turkey was an important factor for AKP leaders to search for a political settlement. Presidential elections would be planned in August 2014. Then Prime Minister and AKP leader Erdogan decided to run for president and amend the constitution. As one commentator observed; "AKP needed the support of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which had 33 seats in parliament and almost 10 percent Kurdish voters in upcoming election. A peace accord with the PKK would help Erdogan's government secure the BDP's allegiance and Kurdish electoral support."[54]

The PKK's perception of an HS may depend on different objective elements. First, it has been fighting more than 30 years, and suffered a military defeat in 1993-4 with the loss of many of its most highly-trained militants and fatigue in remaining PKK cadres.

PKK's perception and acknowledgment of military defeat came earlier in 1993-4 period. It was evident in Öcalan's press conference in 1993 in Northern Iraq with Jalal Talabani as well as his statement in the pro-PKK periodical called Serxwebun in April 1994.[55] This led the PKK's leader to acknowledge that total victory by defeating TAF is not possible. After Öcalan was captured and jailed in 1999, he made repeated calls for peace negotiations. Politically, recognizing the impossibility of achieving its aims by defeating the Turkish state militarily, the PKK changed its strategy. It now declared that its aim was no longer an independent Kurdish state but democratic autonomy within a democratic Turkish Republic.

The Arab Spring and Syria's crisis led the PKK to change it strategy in Turkey. The PYD's—PKK's Syrian branch—gaining quasi-state structure and de facto legitimacy in its fight against the ISIS made the PKK to have the chance and opportunity to internationalize the conflict. Such a development, actually, increased the concerns for the state for the HS and its associated

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and Near Eastern Studies, Vol.22, No.6, 2020, p. 802.

53   Larrabee, ibid.

54   Ibid.

55   Mustafa Coşar Ünal and Fatih M. Harmancı, "Turkey's Struggle with the Kurdish Question: Roots, Evolution and Changing National, Regional, International Contexts", *Eradicating Terrorism from the Middle East*, Alexander R. Dawoody (ed), Springer, Switzerland, 2016, p. 277.

cost both in human and material loss and risks, even if the state continues on the securitization effort. Yet, it should be noted that the PKK conveyed some of its command structure from Northern Iraq to PYD controlled territory in Northern Syria just because of this condition. So, this has not served PKK's perception of stalemate but the complete otherwise. It just gave more to the PKK's hand.

If we turn back 2011-2013 period, it is obvious that for Kurds in Syria, a historical opportunity might be about to emerge, allowing a Kurdish state to be established. However, the PKK's personnel and material weaknesses meant it could not sustain a two-front war. It therefore had to choose between two courses of action: fighting on two fronts, or saving its forces by agreeing to a negotiation process in Turkey while establishing its centre of gravity in Syria. The PKK chose the second option and redeployed a considerable number of militants from Turkey and Qandil to Syria . PYD leader, Salih Muslim, stated that negotiations in Turkey pave the way for the PYD in Syria.[56] This is in fact not the perception of HS in the theory, rather it is a strategic and pragmatic move.

Way Out

As far as the second element of Zartman's theory, "a formula for way out", is concerned, the nature and success of initiatives in this regard are quite complex.

The outcome of Oslo talks had never been publicized. Indeed, the government was so diffident that it never even admitted negotiating with PKK until the leaking of alleged recordings of meetings.[57]

As the Oslo talks continued, the two parties followed different approaches to the conflict. The government initiated a series of reform packets mainly focusing on cultural rights and democratization. On the other hand, Öcalan reportedly announced a road map, "Road map to peace" on 15 August 2009, although it was not made public. It was only after a year and a half, around the end of 2010, that PKK lawyers obtained a copy of the memorandum, which they forwarded to the European Court of Human Rights.[58] Öcalan described his road map as a "democratic solution plan" consisting of three phases. First, the PKK would declare a permanent no-action period, during which both parties would prepare the general public for a "solution process" while preventing provocations by keeping tighter control over their own forces. Then, the government would take several steps, such as establishing a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" composed of both

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56   "Salih Muslim: Türkiye'de PKK ile görüşmeler PYD'nin önünü açıyor", *BBC Turkish*, 7.5.2013, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/05/ 130506_salih_muslim

57   "Chronology of Oslo dialogues with PKK", Hürriyet Daily News, 28.09.2012.

58   Chris Kutschera, "The Secret Oslo Talks That Might Have Brought Peace to Turkey." *The Middle East Magazine,* 2012*,* https://www.chris-kutschera.com /A/Oslo.htm

parties, enacting a legal framework, developing an amnesty mechanism, forming a "Supervision Board" to be located in the conflict areas, consisting of authorities from the third parties and Turkey. If these steps were taken, the withdrawal of PKK militants outside Turkey and the release of those imprisoned for PKK activity would be jointly planned and simultaneously implemented. Öcalan made clear his uncompromising position on this phase by writing that "neither shall be implemented without the other."[59]

However, as the talks continued it become clear that the parties' end states were so different that it was quite difficult to find a common framework. In fact, the PKK's formal end state had already been formulated by Öcalan in 1999 and accepted by the PKK in 2007. This was to establish the KCK based on Öcalan's three interrelated concepts of a Democratic Republic, Democratic Autonomy and Democratic Confederalism.[60]

Although it is not known whether AKP's end formula existed, its approach was radically different from Öcalan's road map and end state. AKP neither envisaged nor discussed Öcalan's concepts, as was clear from the Kurdish Opening launched in 2009. AKP's Kurdish Opening, which was neither a detailed nor formal plan, was presented in an AKP manifesto (AKP Booklet) under three main headings: language, education and the media; criminal justice and the question of an amnesty; and political participation.

Meanwhile, "in May 2011 before June elections, Öcalan submitted three hand-written protocols to the government"[61] which were mainly in line with the 2009 Road Map, despite slight changes. However, "the government never responded to the protocols or submitted any proposals of its own"[62] while the fundamental differences between two sides' end states remained unchanged. The government's focus on the withdrawal and disarmament of PKK forces was dismissed by PKK cadres in Qandil on the basis that arms would only be abandoned after legal reforms were completed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and a peace agreement signed with guarantees of third parties.

To sum up, the radical differences between the parties' way outs are unquestionably clear. As one author argues, there seems to be a "paradigmatic difference" between the AKP and the PKK about the very terms of the resolution process.[63] The AKP "did not significantly change its approach to the Kurdish question in this period and more importantly failed to develop

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59   Ibid.
60   *Declaration on the Democratic Solution: Democratic Confederalism*, Mesopotamian Publishers, Koln, 2011.
61   Kutschera, ibid, p.31.
62   Jake Hess, "Turkey's PKK Talks." *Foreign Policy*, 2013, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/01/08/turkeys-pkk-talks/
63   Yeğen, ibid, p. 12.

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a policy framework capable of accommodating Kurdish rights in Turkey."[64] While the government did not introduce any plan for a negotiated settlement rather than giving certain rights, Öcalan declared a far-reaching road map for his 3D vision and eventually the Greater Kurdistan.

Valid Spokespersons

As far as the Turkish government is concerned, the valid spokesperson was former Prime Minister and now President Erdogan. It is very commonly accepted in Turkey that the peace process was one of Erdogan's personal aspirations. Given his pivotal role in AKP and Turkey's political system, the state's civilian and security institutions have acted in accordance with what he wanted. Although Erdogan was a genius supporter and founder of peace process, it is argued that he made pragmatic moves during the process and "aimed to use the Kurdish question and the peace process for its political ambitions."[65] In support of this argument, the changes in Erdogan's stance are noteworthy. In early 2015, Erdogan's aim was to gain 400 deputies in the 2015 June national elections to introduce the presidential system. He targeted Kurdish voters by linking the peace process to the presidential system and his presidency.[66]

Erdogan, having been alarmed about the risks of losing the majority in the parliament in June 2015 elections, made another pragmatic move and "objected to the memorandum of understanding, known as the Dolmabahçe Protocol, setting the conceptual and methodological framework of the peace process, concluded and declared by the AKP government and the pro-Kurdish HDP deputies on February 28, 2015."[67] This was end of the peace process.

Regarding Turkish society's perceptions of the peace process, both political parties and Turkish society as a whole are split over whether to negotiate with terrorists or crush them. While AKP and pro-Kurdish parties have supported a negotiated settlement, opposition parties representing nearly 40 percent of Turkish voters have rejected this option from the outset. The main opposition party, the People's Republican Party (CHP), did not object to negotiations in principle but to the method used, especially clandestine talks with the PKK's jailed leader, Öcalan. Meanwhile, the Nationalist Movements Party (MHP) along with other nationalist parties has strongly rejected negotiations. A number of surveys show that this political division corresponds to that in society. In a survey commissioned

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64   Cengiz Güneş, "The Transformation of Turkey's Pro-Kurdish Democratic Movement", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol.22, No.6, 2020, p. 756.
65   Özpek, ibid, p. 55.
66   Max Hoffman, "The State of the Turkish-Kurdish Conflict", *Center for American Progress*, 12.08.2019, https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/08/12/473508/state-turkish-kurdish-conflict/; Özpek, ibid.
67   Özpek, ibid, p. 54.

by the ruling AKP on May 2013, "91 percent of respondents said everyone should take responsibility for a Kurdish settlement, while 81 percent said the process is for the happiness of all."[68] While support was as high as 80 percent in eastern Turkey, it was lower than 50 percent in western Turkey. More importantly, a majority (64 percent) of Turkish people did not support talks with Öcalan[69], meaning that Öcalan was not seen a valid spokesperson by Turkish society.

Erdogan, possibly being aware of relatively low level of public support, decided to establish a Wise People Commission (WPC), known in Turkish as the "Akil İnsanlar Heyeti" on April 3, 2013 which consisted of 63 members. The aim of founding this commission was to include the wider society in the process, but the commission itself was not inclusive, composed of mainly AKP supporters and excluding the main opposition parties' views even though it was first proposed by the main opposition party, CHP. Consequently, it further polarized the society rather than boosting public support. It was even described by the MHP leader Devlet Bahceli, as 'treason'.[70]

Negotiations with the PKK were not fully welcomed by some AKP supporters either. Especially, the "Gülen Movement", which was once the main domestic ally of AKP and later designated as a terrorist organization by the Turkish government. It has withdrawn its support to the government initiative after 2011 June elections. On February 2012, Turkish national intelligence (MIT) chief, Hakan Fidan, was called to testify in an investigation with the accusation of having contacts with PKK-linked Kurdish Communities Union, KCK. "Meanwhile supporters of Gülen's organization, nested within the state, were said to leak the audio recording of Fidan's talks in Oslo after taking the tapes from a spy linked with the French intelligence."[71]

A confusion was also observed in the base of the ruling party. "The ruling party had difficulty in explaining the importance of the process to its own base. The AKP's popular base has always approached the process sceptically. As a result, a solid social support that would balance the political fluctuations and flaws and contribute to peace was not achieved."[72] The confusion became evident when the Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç, who was one of four founders of AKP, once one of Erdogan's right hands, stated the government

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68   *Crying Wolf: Why Turkish Fears Need Not Block Kurdish Reform*, No.227, International Crisis Group, 7.10.2013, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/crying-wolf-why-turkish-fears-need-not-block-kurdish-reform

69   Ayla Albayrak, "Turkey's Kurdish Peace Process: Parsing the Polls." *The Wall Street Journal*,19.04.2013, https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-250B-86

70   "PM, CHP meet for Kurdish woe", *Hürriyet Daily News,* 6.6.2012, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/pm-chp-meet-for-kurdish-woe-22500

71   "Turkey's MIT crisis sets its sight on the silver screen", *Yeni Şafak*, 3.7.2014, https://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/turkeys-mit-crisis-sets-its-sight-on-the-silver-screen-2022310

72   Talha Köse, "Rise and Fall of the AK Party's Kurdish Peace Initiatives", *Insight Turkey*, Vol.19, No.2, 2017, p. 159.

would do what is required for Committee of Observation and Committee of Truth and Investigation proposed by Öcalan while Erdogan was opposing.[73]

The only significant opposition to a negotiation within the state's institutions might be anticipated to come from TAF. However, because of the judicial cases initiated against it and its declining political role, such opposition might not be deemed as significant as once it was. In fact, TAF did not agree on negotiations with the PKK and openly criticized the peace process until 2011. After 2011, however, TAF gradually stopped openly criticizing the negotiation effort, although this was not the product of being convinced that negotiation is the better way; rather it was the consequence of several judicial cases opened against both retired and active personnel since 2009. Since then, TAF has not openly stated its discontent with the peace process, although it has continued to publicize PKK activities and its own demands from administrative chiefs to authorize operations against the PKK. In 2014, for instance, "military officials applied to carry out 290 operations against the PKK in the south east, although in what the government says was an attempt to safeguard the process, only eight were approved."[74]

For the Kurdish side, the most prominent valid spokesperson is naturally thought to be Öcalan, and various circles have claimed him to be unquestionably the right man, albeit often exaggerating his position. One author stated that he is "seen as a 'demi-god' by all PKK cadres and many other Kurds"[75] while his brother argued that he is "the most important person in the party and irreplaceable."[76] From the PKK's supporters view, his role is indisputable. Moreover, AKP has also given him a special position in the negotiations, with one former AKP politician stating that Öcalan cannot be dismissed and prominent AKP members declaring that Öcalan is the most significant actor and valid spokesperson of the Kurds.[77] Indeed, it is interesting that a jailed leader on an isolated island with limited communication and interaction possibilities could be accepted as a main actor for Kurds and the PKK in negotiations.

Another important point which was ignored during the process was who has had full control of PKK. This was not easy as an analyst has pointed out: "It [PKK] has become a transnational movement with networks and operations across the region. Not all of them are under his control.

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73   Cengiz Çandar, "The Transformation of Öcalan", *Al Monitor*, 6.1.2013, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2013/01/turkey-kurds-pkk-peace.html

74   *A Sisyphean Task? Resuming Turkey-PKK Peace Talks*, No.77, International Crisis Group, 17.12.2015, https://www.crisisgroup.org/tr/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/sisyphean-task-resuming-turkey-pkk-peace-talks

75   Çandar, ibid.

76   "Osman Öcalan says Thanks to extremists, PKK has had two golden years", *EKurd Daily*, 8.5.2015, Available from https://ekurd.net/osman-ocalan-says-thanks-to-extremists-pkk-has-had-two-golden-years-2015-05-08

77   "Arınç'tan ezber bozan Öcalan açıklaması", *Milliyet*, 27.2.2013, https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/arinctan-ezber-bozan-ocalan-aciklamasi-1674301

Even if Ocalan can persuade large segments of the PKK to support a peace agreement, some hardcore nationalist groups might still be unwilling to lay down their arms.[78] As a matter of fact, there are different factions and power centres within PKK's rank and files. The PKK's top leaders in Qandil have not left important matters, such as disarmament and withdrawal, to Öcalan. They have acted as more than secondary actors, or generally spoilers, rejecting withdrawal and disarmament before the Turkish government takes the required legislative steps, preferably including constitutional changes, as Öcalan's brother's statement conforms: "not everything Öcalan says is implemented by the PKK immediately but ultimately the party abides by his decisions."[79]

On the other hand, by accepting Öcalan and the PKK as actors to involve in negotiations, AKP has further polarized the Turkish side and some Kurdish groups, such as village guards and their families, Kurds with Islamic tendencies and tribes historically resisting PKK's dominance in the region. Although the government assumed that negotiations with a jailed leader would be much easier, it actually has many disadvantages. First, it seems impossible to encourage the PKK to develop and transform itself into an entity that could be a part of a conflict resolution process. "The primary reason is that the group suffers from a generational problem. Namely, those who started PKK, with its particular strategies and ideas, still control the movement."[80] Secondly and more importantly, as long as the PKK retains its arms and militants, some elements in it have the ability to act as spoilers at some point.

The various pro-Kurdish political parties that have been opened and closed from 2009 to 2015 have only acted as couriers. Thus, a delegation from the parties, agreed by both the government and Öcalan, has shuttled between Imralı, the island where Öcalan is serving his life sentence, Ankara and Qandil, without playing any meaningful role in searching for a suitable peace formula. The PKK's tutelage over its subject parties has been so tight that they have never acted with freedom or self-confidence, which is seen as an obstacle to finding a valid and legitimate spokesperson for Kurdish society.

As Hofmann puts it: "The government therefore elevated Ocalan, despite the fact that the HDP was the only legal representative for the Kurds. The actual PKK military cadres, as well as the YDGH, were controlled by a separate decision-making structure in Kandil—one long isolated from Ocalan, if deferential to him."[81]

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78   Larrabee, ibid.
79   EKurd Daily 2015, ibid.
80   Ersel Aydınlı and Nihat Ali Özcan, "The Conflict Resolution and Counterterrorism Dilemma: Turkey Faces its Kurdish Question", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.23, No.3, 2011, p. 444.
81   Hoffman, ibid, p.7.

Turkish government, in fact, stayed in a dilemma because of domestic political considerations. While avoiding to be called as a government negotiating with PKK, it also aimed to bypass Kurdish political party, HDP. The result was that "This political reality led the government to negotiate primarily with Ocalan, who the state could control but who lacked operational command of the PKK military cadres."[82] Regarding wider Kurdish society, the NGOs, other political parties and "important leaders from different opinion groups and independent intellectuals in the region were not included in the process."[83]

The lack of clear leadership either institutionally or individually and inclusiveness mean mishandled negotiation which is related to the conduct of the negotiation. In a broader concept, the peace process of 2013-2015 could not shift from conflict management (unilateral) to conflict resolution (reciprocal). In fact the conflict resolution is a reciprocated process which Erdogan and AKP never accepted for not to grant any political legitimacy to the PKK and its political wing parties[84] as well as for their domestic political concerns in elections.

Conclusions

In Turkey's case of 2013-2015, it seems difficult to claim that an MHS was perceived by the conflict parties. Although the political elites of the ruling AKP appeared to be willing to negotiate, the TAF did not perceive an HS due to level of casualties, material and personnel strengths or PKK power. More importantly, a considerable part of Turkish society did not feel that the only option was negotiation with the PKK's leader.

The PKK's willingness to negotiate rather than its perception of an HS interacted with new developments and opportunities in the Middle East, particularly an emerging window of opportunity in northern Syria, where a Kurdish independent state, or at least an autonomous Kurdish political structure, has become highly possible since 2011. The PKK made its choice between the military front against the Turkish state and conditions in Syria by manipulating negotiations with Turkey in order to gain advantage. As a result, it moved thousands of militants to the Syria front, as discussed in the relevant section above.

An MHS is arguably the most critical part of a ripe moment since its absence may preclude successful negotiations, which was what exactly occurred in Turkey. Because of a weak MHS perception, it was more difficult to find a suitable way out of the conflict. In addition, the above-mentioned

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82   Ibid, p.7.
83   Köse, ibid, p. 146.
84   Savran, ibid.

end-states of the two parties were so irreconcilable that no concrete steps were possible. For example, the government's rejection of Öcalan's road map, including democratic autonomy, Truth and Reconciliation, and Supervisory committees shows how difficult it was to make political concessions.

The lack of valid spokesperson for the Kurdish side was very obvious. A critical flaw in the peace process's framework was accepting a jailed leader as the Kurdish spokesperson, who was not only hated by most Turkish people but also possibly not respected by a considerable number of Kurdish people and lacked full control of the PKK and other political forces in the Kurdish constituency, mainly due to his isolated position. The Turkish government seems to have finally realized this mistake as evidenced by President Erdogan's vow to never speak with the outlawed PKK or any party under its control again, while promising to liquidate it militarily.

In sum, it appears that the lack of widespread MHS perceptions, the lack of necessary formula for a way out and valid spokespersons are the main reasons behind the failed peace process. Thus, any suitable formula for a way out seems quite difficult to find now or later unless one of the parties radically changes its stance, which seems likely to happen only following total military defeat.

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