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## From Bullets to Ballots: Turkey and the PKK's Historic Turn Toward Peace

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### *Abstract*

*On July 9, 2025, imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan issued a historic call for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to lay down arms, dissolve its armed structures, and pursue peaceful political engagement. Two days later, around 30 PKK fighters participated in a symbolic disarmament ceremony in the Sulaymaniyah region of Iraqi Kurdistan, surrendering and burning their weapons. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan welcomed the move as a turning point toward a terrorism-free Turkey. This article examines the dynamics of this new peace initiative, highlighting how it differs from the failed 2013–2015 peace process. It explores the conditions for success or failure, and assesses the initiative's implications for domestic stability, regional security, and international peace. Employing a qualitative methodology, the article adopts a cautiously optimistic view regarding the prospects for a durable and transformative peace.*

**Keywords:** Turkey, PKK, Peace Process, Abdullah Öcalan, Erdoğan, Conflict Resolution.

### Introduction

During my tenure as Sudan's Foreign Minister (1998–2005), I visited Turkey twice, leading delegations of Arab foreign ministers. On both occasions, I met with Turkish President Süleyman Demirel (1993–2000).

The first visit aimed to mediate a water dispute between Iraq and Turkey. The second focused on de-escalating tensions between Syria and Turkey, which had arisen due to the presence of Kurdish opposition military leader Abdullah Öcalan in Damascus. That mediation effort led to Syria expelling Öcalan, first to Moscow, then to Athens, and finally to Nairobi, where he was captured. Since 1999, he has remained imprisoned on İmralı Island.

Since those events, I have closely followed the evolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Regardless of the nature of the ruling government, left or right, military or civilian, Turkey has consistently maintained a zero-tolerance policy toward any form of support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Since the 1930s, Kurds in Turkey have demanded cultural and political rights. With the establishment of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan in Lice, Turkey, these demands expanded to include autonomy or even independence (Barkey and Fuller 1998). On August 15, 1984, the PKK launched its first major attacks in Eruh and Şemdinli, marking the beginning of its armed insurgency against the Turkish state. In response, Turkey initiated extensive military campaigns, including repeated cross-border operations into northern Iraq targeting PKK bases throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Gunter 2013).

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In 1999, Öcalan, the PKK's founding leader, was captured in Nairobi and extradited to Turkey, where he has remained imprisoned on İmralı Island. Since the onset of the conflict in 1984, more than 40,000 people have died, and the insurgency has caused widespread destruction and strained Turkey's relations with neighboring countries. Numerous peace efforts have been attempted, but all failed, most notably the 2013–2015 peace process (Gunter 2013).

A new breakthrough emerged in 2025. On March 1, the PKK declared a ceasefire and initiated a fresh peace initiative. This was formalized at its 12th Congress on May 12, where the organization announced its plan to disarm and dissolve, framing it as a “total end to the armed struggle” (Washington Post 2025). On July 9, Öcalan released a rare video message urging PKK fighters to disarm and hand the process over to democratic legal mechanisms, supervised by a Turkish parliamentary commission (Associated Press 2025a).

This message was followed by a symbolic disarmament ceremony on July 11 in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, where 30 PKK fighters burned their weapons under the supervision of Turkish intelligence and Iraqi Kurdish officials. On July 12, President Erdoğan hailed the move as historic and announced the formation of a parliamentary committee to oversee the disarmament process (Associated Press 2025b).

This article seeks to analyze the objectives and significance of the 2025 peace initiative by examining historical documents, official statements, and recent actions taken by both the Turkish government and the PKK. It aims to address three key questions:

1. What are the main differences between the current peace initiative (2025) and the failed 2013–2015 process, and what makes this attempt potentially more promising?
2. What are the potential impacts of this peace process within Turkey, and on regional and international dynamics?
3. What risks or obstacles could derail the current peace initiative?

## **Literature Review**

**Differences from the 2013–2015 Process:** The 2025 Turkey-PKK peace initiative differs from the 2013–2015 process, which failed due to mistrust, negative foreign intervention, exclusionary practices, and regional instability (Savran, 2020; Ozkahraman, 2017). Öcalan's 2025 video message solidified the PKK's dedication to disarmament, in contrast to the factionalism that plagued the earlier effort (Associated Press, 2025a; Gunter, 2013).

The Sulaymaniyah ceremony, where 30 fighters surrendered weapons, signals verifiable progress, contrasting with the prior lack of milestones (Associated Press, 2025b; Andika & Hanura, 2023). Reduced Syrian tensions and Iraqi Kurdish cooperation create a stable context, unlike the 2013–2015 Syrian spillover (Özpek, 2018). **Institutional Dialogue and External Factors:** A parliamentary commission formalizes dialogue, fostering inclusivity (Autesserre, 2017). This hybrid model addresses external factors in state-centric approaches, providing insights for conflicts like Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) process (Arjona, 2016). However, dependence on Öcalan risks centralization, necessitating wider engagement (AlGhatrif et al., 2022).

**Impacts of the Peace Process:** The peace initiative could significantly enhance Turkey's social cohesion, regional influence, and international standing, aligning with SDG 16 (United Nations, 2015). Within Turkey, it has the potential to reduce violence, decrease military expenditures,

and foster greater Kurdish inclusion, thereby strengthening integration into global trade networks (Ünal, 2016). However, nationalist backlash risks exacerbating polarization, necessitating inclusive dialogue to mitigate tensions (Toktamış, 2018). Regionally, cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) could promote trade and contribute to Iraq's stability, though tensions with the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria could reignite conflict (Associated Press, 2025b; Dağ, 2018). On a global scale, a successful peace process could bolster Turkey's relations with the EU and position it as a leader in peacebuilding (Gurses, 2020; Pergolizzi, 2013). The initiative's symbolic and institutional approach challenges realist paradigms, providing a replicable framework for resolving conflicts worldwide (Autesserre, 2017).

**Obstacles to the Peace Initiative:** The peace initiative faces significant risks from domestic polarization, PKK factionalism, regional instability, and limited international support (Stedman, 1997; AlGhatrif et al., 2022). Nationalist opposition and public distrust require transparent milestones, such as amnesty, to build confidence (Özpek, 2018; Ozkahraman, 2017). Resistance from PKK hardliners and Öcalan's imprisonment could hinder disarmament efforts (Associated Press, 2025a; Arjona, 2016). Regional challenges, including tensions with the YPG and objections from Iraq, may disrupt negotiations (Savran, 2020; Dağ, 2018). The PKK's terrorist designation limits UN and EU mediation, highlighting the need for neutral, transparent NGO involvement (Pergolizzi, 2013). To overcome these obstacles, Turkey must engage all stakeholders, establish clear timelines, strengthen KRG relations, and pursue UN mediation, drawing lessons from Colombia's peace process (Autesserre, 2017; Arjona, 2016).

**Öcalan's Leadership Directive and Sustainable Conflict Resolution:** Abdullah Öcalan's leadership has been a cornerstone in reshaping the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from a militant insurgency to a movement increasingly oriented toward political dialogue and democratic engagement. His directive on July 9, 2025, calling for the PKK to disarm and dissolve its armed structures, marks a pivotal moment in the Turkey-PKK conflict, with profound implications for sustainable conflict resolution. This analysis critically examines Öcalan's role, highlighting his ideological evolution, impact on peace processes, and the external factors posed by internal and external dynamics. Through a world-critical lens, it explores how his leadership addresses global paradigms of ethno-nationalist conflict resolution, prioritizing inclusivity, equity, and the ethical complexities of shifting from violence to political engagement (Gerber & Brincat, 2018; Akkaya, 2020).

Öcalan's ideological transformation has redefined the PKK's goals. He moved the group from Marxist-Leninist armed struggle to democratic confederalism, a model rooted in local autonomy, direct democracy, and gender equality (Türk, 2022; Leezenberg, 2016). This shift, inspired by thinkers like Murray Bookchin, reimagines self-governance as a path to peace, challenging traditional state-centric approaches to conflict resolution (Gerber & Brincat, 2018). Globally, this aligns with emerging models of decentralized governance in divided societies, such as Rojava's experiment in Syria, but raises questions about scalability and state acceptance (Leezenberg, 2016). Öcalan's vision offers a groundbreaking alternative to violent separatism, yet its reliance on his singular authority risks fragility if internal PKK unity falters (Akkaya, 2020).

His directives have historically driven peace initiatives. The 2009–2015 talks with Turkey, spurred by Öcalan's calls for negotiation, showed his ability to shift the PKK toward dialogue (Savran, 2020). The 2025 initiative, with its symbolic disarmament in Sulaymaniyah, builds on

this legacy, signaling a bold commitment to nonviolence (Saeed, 2018). However, past failures highlight vulnerabilities. The 2013–2015 process collapsed due to regional conflicts, like the Syrian war, and internal PKK divisions over Öcalan's strategy (Savran, 2020; Gunter, 2000). These disruptions underscore a global challenge, leadership-driven peace efforts often hinge on external stability and internal cohesion, which are hard to sustain in volatile regions (Mross et al., 2021).

Öcalan's near-sacralized status ensures strong compliance within the PKK, making his directives uniquely influential (Balancar, 2019). His imprisonment since 1999 paradoxically enhances his symbolic power, framing him as a martyr-like figure for Kurdish communities (Türk, 2021). Yet, this centrality poses risks. Internal factions, particularly hardline militants, may resist his shift to politics, as seen in earlier peace process setbacks (Akkaya, 2020). This dynamic reflects a broader tension in global conflict resolution, charismatic leadership can unify but also create dependency, limiting adaptability if trust in the leader wanes (Lederach, 1997).

Öcalan's role critically addresses conventional peacebuilding paradigms. While Galtung's model focuses on resolving structural violence, Öcalan's emphasis on cultural and political transformation extends further, promoting systemic change through grassroots democracy (Galtung, 1996).

His approach critiques state-centric power structures, resonating with global movements for indigenous and minority rights (Autesserre, 2017). However, it faces resistance from states prioritizing security over equity, a tension evident in Turkey's nationalist backlash during past talks (Çandar, 2019). Ethically, Öcalan's leadership raises questions about balancing revolutionary ideals with pragmatic negotiations, especially in a context where Kurdish voices are often marginalized (Taş, 2016).

This review contributes fresh insights by framing Öcalan's leadership as both a driver and a potential bottleneck for peace. Unlike prior studies that focus on his ideological shift or historical role, it integrates his 2025 directive into a global discourse on transforming ethno-nationalist conflicts (Gerber & Brincat, 2018; Savran, 2020). It highlights the need for inclusive processes that reduce dependency on a single leader, addressing a gap in how leadership is theorized in peacebuilding. Future research should explore how grassroots Kurdish movements can sustain Öcalan's vision independently, drawing lessons from cases like Northern Ireland (Kadioğlu, 2018). Actionable recommendations include fostering dialogue platforms within the PKK to bridge factional divides and engaging international mediators to bolster Öcalan's directives with external legitimacy (Mross et al., 2021).

Amid rising nationalism and ethnic conflicts, Öcalan's leadership presents a visionary yet fragile pathway to peace. His approach urges Turkey and the global community to reframe conflict resolution as a process of equitable transformation, beyond mere disarmament. Sustainable peace requires aligning his vision with inclusive reforms and regional stability, ensuring the transition from violence to political engagement fosters a just and enduring future (Lederach, 1997; Taş, 2016).

The Turkish government's evolving approach to negotiations with Kurdish groups, particularly the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), plays a pivotal role in advancing a sustainable resolution to a long-standing conflict. Past efforts, including the 2013–2015 peace process, offered important groundwork but ultimately faced challenges related to political dynamics, security concerns, and shifting regional contexts (Savran 2020; Taş 2016). In recent years, particularly

in the context of the 2025 initiative, there are encouraging signs of renewed commitment to dialogue, as reflected in President Erdoğan's public support for the disarmament process and the establishment of a parliamentary commission to oversee its implementation (Associated Press 2025b; Erdoğan and Özpek 2022).

While previous reforms, such as expanding cultural rights during Turkey's EU accession period, were notable, current opportunities offer a chance to deepen those efforts through inclusive engagement and transparent mechanisms (Toktamış 2018; Çandar 2019). A forward-looking approach that emphasizes mutual trust, equity, and representation can reinforce the credibility and effectiveness of the peace process. Drawing from global experiences, such as Colombia's inclusive negotiation model, strengthening the participation of a broad spectrum of Kurdish voices and civil society actors may further enhance the process (Arjona 2016; Autesserre 2017).

Ethically, the pursuit of peace offers a platform to address long-standing grievances and ensure that all communities feel represented in national dialogue. Emphasizing inclusivity over exclusivity, and reconciliation over marginalization, will be key to ensuring the durability of this promising initiative (Galtung 1996; Lederach 1997). As Turkey takes significant steps toward peace, continued institutional commitment and open dialogue can lay the foundation for lasting stability, justice, and national cohesion (Mross, Fiedler, and Grävingsholt 2021).

Risks include domestic polarization, PKK factionalism, regional volatility, and limited international support (Stedman, 1997; AlGhatrif et al., 2022). Nationalist opposition and public skepticism necessitate transparent milestones, such as amnesty to build trust (Özpek, 2018; Ozkahraman, 2017). PKK hardliners may resist disarmament, and Öcalan's imprisonment limits enforcement (Associated Press, 2025a; Arjona, 2016). Regional tensions, including YPG-related issues and Iraq's objections, could disrupt talks (Savran, 2020; Dağ, 2018). Limited UN or EU mediation, due to the PKK's terrorist designation, highlights the need for NGO involvement (Pergolizzi, 2013). To address these risks, Turkey must engage all stakeholders, establish clear timelines, strengthen KRG ties, and seek UN mediation, drawing on Colombia's model (Autesserre, 2017; Arjona, 2016).

Öcalan's role critically challenges conventional peacebuilding paradigms. While Galtung's model emphasizes addressing structural violence, Öcalan's focus on cultural and political transformation through grassroots democracy pushes further, advocating systemic change (Galtung, 1996; Gerber & Brincat, 2018; Akkaya, 2020). His ideological evolution and influence on peace processes highlight the ethical complexities of transitioning from violence to politics, offering a visionary yet fragile path to peace (Taş, 2016). Amid rising global nationalism and ethnic conflicts, Öcalan's leadership urges Turkey and the international community to reframe conflict resolution as equitable transformation, not merely disarmament. Sustainable peace requires aligning his vision with inclusive reforms and regional stability to ensure a just and enduring future (Lederach, 1997; Taş, 2016).

Confirmation bias among negotiators and failure to learn from comparative peace processes hindered progress (Dilek, 2021). These issues reflect global trends where nationalist agendas and power consolidation obstruct conflict resolution, as seen in Sri Lanka and Myanmar (Mross et al., 2021). Despite promising developments, the 2025 Turkey–PKK peace initiative faces several challenges that require careful navigation. These include internal divisions within the PKK, regional geopolitical uncertainties, limited international coordination, and the need for stronger domestic consensus. Addressing these risks constructively will be essential to sustain momentum and deepen trust across all levels of engagement (Stedman 1997; AlGhatrif,

Alghatrif, and Ammouri 2022). Past experiences, such as the collapse of the 2013–2015 process, highlight the importance of sustained political will, inclusive dialogue, and public communication to maintain trust between negotiating parties (Özpek 2018; Ozkahraman 2017). Encouragingly, recent efforts, such as the establishment of a parliamentary commission, signal Turkey's willingness to institutionalize dialogue. However, concerns persist over whether reforms will be sufficiently broad to meet expectations across Kurdish communities and society at large (Arjona 2016; Associated Press 2025a). The role of diaspora communities and Track Two diplomacy also presents opportunities for engagement. These actors often foster dialogue and promote reconciliation, particularly in transnational spaces. Their impact, however, is significantly strengthened when their efforts align with official initiatives and enjoy broad governmental backing (Dilek 2021; Autesserre 2017). Greater recognition of diverse Kurdish voices, within legal, civic, and political boundaries, can contribute meaningfully to national unity and trust-building.

This analysis contributes to the scholarly debate by situating Turkey's peace efforts within a broader global discourse that seeks to balance state sovereignty with the inclusion of minority perspectives. Rather than focusing solely on past obstacles, it emphasizes the transformative potential of inclusive frameworks and mutual recognition in advancing sustainable peace (Çandar 2019; Toktamış 2018; Mross, Fiedler, and Grävingsholt 2021). Comparative lessons from Northern Ireland and Colombia show that grassroots and diaspora-led efforts can complement official negotiations when supported by state actors (Dilek 2021).

Ultimately, advancing inclusive, transparent, and nationally supported dialogue mechanisms can address root causes of tension while reinforcing Turkey's regional leadership and global standing. This approach aligns with broader international norms of peacebuilding and justice (Lederach 1997; Galtung 1996). By continuing to strengthen trust, promote equity, and empower diverse societal actors, the current initiative may serve not only as a model for internal reconciliation but as a global reference for resolving complex ethno-political conflicts.

**Regional Geopolitical Shifts and Sustainable Conflict Resolution:** Regional geopolitical shifts profoundly shape the prospects for sustainable conflict resolution, acting as both enablers and obstacles in volatile regions like the Middle East and South Caucasus. The 2025 Turkey-PKK peace initiative, spurred by Abdullah Öcalan's disarmament directive, unfolds against a backdrop of dynamic alliances, proxy conflicts, and economic rivalries. This review critically analyzes how these shifts influence peace processes, focusing on their impact on Turkey's conflict with the PKK. Through a world-critical lens, it analyzes the dynamics of power, stability, and external influence, providing new perspectives on global peacebuilding external factors while prioritizing equity, inclusivity, and ethical considerations (Minko, 2024; Farah, 2024).

Shifting alliances reshape conflict dynamics. In the Middle East, realignments among powers like Turkey, Iran, and Russia have altered the feasibility of peace, as seen in Syria and Yemen (Zaidi & Nirmal, 2022; Dahal, 2024). Turkey's growing influence in the South Caucasus, bolstered by its support for Azerbaijan in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, has shifted regional power balances, creating opportunities for mediation but also tensions with Iran over issues like the Zangezur corridor (Torosyan & Vardanyan, 2024). In the Turkey-PKK context, Iraqi Kurdistan's stability provides a neutral space for disarmament ceremonies, such as the one in Sulaymaniyah in 2025, yet external actors like Israel and the U.S. complicate negotiations through proxy support (Minko, 2024). Globally, this reflects how shifting alliances can open

windows for peace but also risk escalation when interests misalign (Ohanyan, 2020).

Regional stability is critical for peace processes. Stable areas, like Iraqi Kurdistan, facilitate dialogue, while instability, such as in Syria, derails efforts by fueling proxy conflicts (Farah, 2024; Munir, 2023). The fall of Syria's Assad regime in 2024, driven by weakened Russian and Iranian support, illustrates how geopolitical shocks can destabilize peace initiatives, including Turkey's efforts with the PKK. The Red Sea's Houthi disruptions, further highlight how external interference complicates regional stability, impacting trade routes like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and hindering cooperative frameworks, although Houthi are doing it in support of Gaza people who are facing genocides from Israel government (Farah, 2024). These dynamics challenge Galtung's peacebuilding model, which assumes stable conditions for structural change, underscoring the need for adaptive strategies in volatile regions (Galtung, 1996).

Proxy conflicts exacerbate tensions. US support for Kurdish in Syria, Israel supports for Druze in south Syria, and Russia's role in the South Caucasus, intensify conflicts by empowering non-state actors, as seen with the PKK's affiliates in Syria (Minko, 2024). The U.S.'s targeted strikes on Iran-backed groups in 2024 aimed to deter such proxies but strained regional cooperation, complicating Turkey's peace efforts. Globally, proxy wars reflect a broader trend where external powers fuel local conflicts, undermining trust and sustainable resolutions, as evident in the Horn of Africa and Kashmir (Fajrin et al., 2024). Ethically, this raises concerns about the marginalization of local voices, as external agendas often overshadow community needs (Autesserre, 2017).

Economic and security interests both drive and disrupt peace. The BRI and competing corridors like the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) foster cooperation but also spark rivalries over resources and trade routes, as seen in disputes over the Al-Durra gas field involving Iran and Gulf states (Dahal, 2024). In Turkey, economic incentives linked to regional stability promote peace negotiations, but nationalist pressures and security concerns regarding Kurdish autonomy impede progress (Taş, 2016). This reflects global external factors where economic initiatives, such as the Middle Corridor, seek to circumvent unstable regions but risk exacerbating tensions if inclusivity and equity are not prioritized (Minko, 2024; Farah, 2024). inflaming tensions if they exclude key actors. Lederach's transformation framework highlights the need to align economic initiatives with inclusive dialogue to ensure equitable outcomes (Lederach, 1997).

This analysis enhances scholarship by connecting regional geopolitical shifts to the Turkey-PKK peace initiative, addressing a gap in prior studies that often overlook these dynamics (Savran, 2020). It addresses assumptions that stability alone secures peace, highlighting the role of external actors and local trust (Mross et al., 2021). Future research should investigate how regional powers can facilitate mediation without imposing agendas. Practical recommendations include establishing multilateral platforms, such as a UN-supported regional dialogue, to align interests and minimize proxy interference (Ao\*, 2024). Ethically, peace processes must prioritize local agency to prevent perpetuating power imbalances (Firchow, 2020).

Globally, the Turkey-PKK case illustrates the precariousness of peace in geopolitically contested regions. Sustainable conflict resolution demands navigating shifting alliances, stabilizing critical areas, and countering external interference through inclusive, equitable strategies. This approach urges states and international actors to pursue peace not only through diplomacy but also through a commitment to justice and shared prosperity (Lederach, 1997; Farah, 2024).

**Domestic Political Support and Sustainable Conflict Resolution:** Domestic political support is vital for sustainable conflict resolution, shaping the legitimacy and stability of peace initiatives like the 2025 Turkey-PKK peace process. Broad backing from the public, opposition parties, and civil society can build trust and ensure lasting reforms, while its absence risks failure, as seen in the collapsed 2013–2015 talks. This review critically examines how domestic political dynamics drive or undermine peace, focusing on their role in the Turkey-PKK conflict. Through a world-critical lens, it connects these dynamics to global external factors of inclusivity, equity, and democratic accountability, providing new perspectives on building peace in polarized societies (Mor, 1997; Aall & Crocker, 2019).

Public opinion significantly influences peace processes. When leaders ignore public sentiment, they risk losing legitimacy, as seen in Turkey's 2013–2015 process, where nationalist backlash eroded support for Kurdish rights reforms (Huth & Allee, 2002; Çandar, 2019). Strong public backing can legitimize negotiations, encouraging leaders to pursue dialogue over conflict. Yet, in Turkey, anti-Kurdish sentiment often constrains government action, reflecting a global trend where divisive narratives hinder peace, as seen in Colombia and Northern Ireland (Mor, 1997; Kadioğlu, 2018). Shaping public opinion through inclusive campaigns is critical to sustaining peace efforts (Aall & Crocker, 2019).

The role of political opposition is equally crucial. Strong opposition parties can reduce escalation by signaling credible government intentions, enhancing negotiation transparency (Schultz, 1998). In Turkey, however, opposition parties often fuel nationalist rhetoric, undermining peace talks, as seen in the 2015 collapse when electoral politics trumped dialogue (Toktamış, 2018). This mirrors global cases like South Africa, where opposition support was pivotal to success, highlighting the need for inclusive political coalitions to build trust (Huth & Allee, 2002). Ethically, excluding opposition voices risks marginalizing diverse perspectives, perpetuating inequities (Lederach, 1997).

**Civil Society and Political Accountability:** Civil society and social institutions play a critical role in shaping societal attitudes toward peace. Resilient organizations, such as NGOs and media, promote cohesion and support for reforms, as demonstrated in the Good Friday Agreement (Aall & Crocker, 2019). In Turkey, civil society has the potential to play a pivotal role in advancing peace and reconciliation. During the 2013–2015 process, however, the combined effects of societal polarization and operational limitations constrained civil society's full participation, thereby reducing its impact (Kadioğlu 2018). This experience reflects broader challenges seen in divided societies, where civil society organizations often face structural and contextual barriers to bridging societal divides. Strengthening inclusive platforms that amplify a diversity of voices, particularly at the community level, can enhance public ownership of peacebuilding efforts (Autesserre 2017).

Political accountability plays a significant role in shaping the direction of peace processes, especially in democratic systems responsive to electoral dynamics. In Turkey, President Erdoğan's responsiveness to electoral sentiment has at times opened space for reform and dialogue, while also creating pressures that influence the pace and scope of policy decisions (Erdoğan and Özpek 2022). This dynamic is consistent with international experiences, such as in Sri Lanka, where peace efforts evolved alongside domestic political considerations (Arena and Palmer 2009). Galtung's peacebuilding framework underscores the importance of addressing structural inequalities as part of sustainable conflict resolution. In this context, enhancing participatory mechanisms may contribute to both accountability and reform outcomes

(Galtung 1996).

This analysis contributes to existing scholarship by conceptualizing domestic political support as a dynamic interplay between public opinion, opposition parties, and civil society. It broadens the scope of existing studies that often focus primarily on executive actions (Savran 2020). Rather than assuming top-down approaches alone suffice, it highlights the value of inclusive engagement that promotes equity and responsiveness to societal needs (Taş 2016). Further research could explore how civil society and media initiatives can help counter divisive narratives and promote trust, drawing on comparative experiences such as Rwanda's reconciliation process (Aall and Crocker 2019). Practical recommendations include encouraging cross-party dialogue platforms and investing in grassroots civic education campaigns to foster broad-based support for peace initiatives (Mross, Fiedler, and Grävingsholt 2021).

Globally, the Turkey–PKK case illustrates the importance of robust domestic support in sustaining peace. Building inclusive political processes that welcome diverse voices and address structural concerns can reinforce trust and national cohesion. This inclusive vision positions peace not merely as the absence of conflict, but as a shared national project built on justice, participation, and reconciliation (Lederach 1997; Çandar 2019).

**International Support and Sustainable Conflict Resolution:** International support plays a valuable role in advancing sustainable conflict resolution, particularly when it is tailored to the local context and implemented through inclusive, well-coordinated mechanisms. In the 2025 Turkey–PKK peace initiative, external engagement has the potential to reinforce positive momentum by complementing national efforts. However, the design and delivery of international support must be carefully considered to ensure alignment with domestic priorities and sensitivities. This section explores how international contributions, ranging from peacekeeping to governance, socioeconomic aid, civil society strengthening, and institutional coordination, can constructively support Turkey's path toward peace (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Autesserre 2017).

Peacekeeping and security assistance, when implemented in coordination with national authorities, can help stabilize transitions and reduce the risk of renewed violence. For instance, symbolic acts such as the 2025 Sulaymaniyah disarmament ceremony could be supported by technical oversight from international actors like the UN. Yet, experience from contexts such as Bosnia suggests that peacekeeping is most effective when coupled with support for governance and institution-building (Mross, Fiedler, and Grävingsholt 2021; Doyle and Sambanis 2000). The Turkey–PKK case offers an opportunity to explore how security-related cooperation can be embedded within a broader framework of inclusive development.

Support for democratic governance and institutional inclusivity is essential for reinforcing long-term peace. Experiences from countries like Colombia show how inclusive frameworks can reduce conflict recurrence and build trust in public institutions (Fiedler et al. 2020). In the Turkish context, constructive international engagement can encourage continued dialogue and institutional innovation, provided it respects state sovereignty and adapts to local realities (Savran 2020; Mross et al. 2021). Galtung's (1996) model reminds us that addressing structural issues, such as equity and participation, can foster resilient peace.

Socioeconomic aid also plays a central role. Development programs in historically marginalized regions can help address root causes of tension, support reintegration efforts, and promote inclusive growth. In Turkey, such initiatives could complement government efforts to enhance

regional development, provided they are equitably designed and locally owned (Jasmin 2024). Lessons from other contexts, such as Afghanistan, highlight the importance of aligning aid with community needs and avoiding overly donor-driven models (Autesserre 2017; Firchow 2020).

Engaging civil society is another crucial avenue for peacebuilding. In Turkey, international NGOs and development partners can help support local organizations and peace education initiatives, in collaboration with national institutions. While past experiences in Iraq and Syria warn against imposing top-down frameworks, Lederach's (1997) transformation model emphasizes the importance of local ownership and bottom-up participation in any external engagement (Vogel 2016; Autesserre 2017).

Coordination among international partners enhances the effectiveness and legitimacy of external support. The UN and EU have an opportunity to coordinate efforts and provide constructive backing for Turkey's peace process. Previous cases, such as the Good Friday Agreement, demonstrate how aligned international support can facilitate trust-building and implementation (Ao\* 2024; Kawosha 2025; Marukhovska-Kartunova et al. 2024). Conversely, fragmented or competing initiatives, as seen in Yemen, can undermine intended outcomes (Taş 2016).

In conclusion, the 2025 Turkey-PKK peace initiative presents an important opportunity for international actors to contribute meaningfully to a locally led and nationally supported process. Effective external support should be inclusive, transparent, and grounded in mutual respect. By aligning with Turkey's evolving priorities and fostering constructive partnerships, international engagement can help reinforce a just, stable, and enduring peace.

**Advancing Scholarship on International Support:** This review enhances scholarship by framing international support as a dynamic interplay of security, governance, and local engagement, addressing gaps in studies that undervalue coordination's role in the Turkey-PKK context (Savran, 2020). It confronts assumptions that external support alone ensures peace, highlighting the need for context-sensitive approaches (Mross et al., 2021). Future research should investigate how regional bodies, such as the EU, can mediate Turkey's process without imposing Western frameworks, drawing lessons from successes like Aceh's peace deal (Fiedler et al., 2020). Practical recommendations include establishing UN-led monitoring mechanisms and funding local NGOs to ensure equitable aid distribution (Ao\*, 2024).

Globally, the Turkey-PKK case underscores the delicate balance of international support in polarized conflicts. Sustainable peace requires coordinated, inclusive interventions that prioritize local needs over external agendas. This vision urges global actors to foster peace through equity and justice, transforming conflicts like Turkey's into models of lasting reconciliation (Lederach, 1997; Firchow, 2020).

**Mutual Trust as a Moderator in the 2025 Turkey-PKK Peace Initiative:** Mutual trust plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of the 2025 Turkey-PKK peace initiative. It influences the effectiveness of leadership, government policy, regional dynamics, domestic support, and international involvement. This section analyzes trust as a moderating factor, drawing on published documents, scholarly literature, and policy reports. Through a world-critical lens, it connects trust-building with global peacebuilding experiences, emphasizing the importance of equity, inclusivity, and ethical engagement (Kim et al. 2018; Lederach 1997).

Trust has the capacity to enhance positive outcomes. Secondary sources indicate that Abdullah Öcalan's July 2025 directive calling for disarmament and political engagement was met with cautious optimism among Kurdish communities, contributing to increased compliance within

PKK ranks (Balancar 2019). Published accounts from civil society organizations suggest that belief in Öcalan's vision has historically fostered cooperation, similar to the role trust played in Colombia's peace process with FARC (Autesserre 2017; Kim et al. 2018). Nevertheless, reflections on the 2013–2015 peace process underscore how residual mistrust between the PKK and the state continues to pose challenges. Trust in government commitment tends to grow when reforms are perceived as genuine; however, when such efforts are viewed through a political lens, particularly during electoral cycles, confidence can be eroded (Akgül and Akgül 2022; Padma, Rosa, and António 2017; Erdoğan and Özpek 2022).

At the regional level, trust has helped to mitigate tensions. The stability of Iraqi Kurdistan, for instance, enabled the 2025 Sulaymaniyah disarmament ceremony, viewed as a credible and neutral setting for symbolic action (Minko 2024). Conversely, regional and global concerns, such as uncertainty surrounding Israel and US's role and its support for proxy actors, introduce elements of distrust, echoing challenges seen in conflicts like Yemen (Swärd 2016; Farah 2024). Domestically, inclusive and transparent peace processes can help build trust and counter nationalist backlash. However, media-driven polarization and competing narratives may inhibit the growth of public confidence, a pattern observed in other divided societies, including Sri Lanka (Huth and Allee 2002; Çandar 2019). On the international front, coordinated engagement by multilateral institutions like the UN may enhance trust, though past efforts have sometimes been hindered by bureaucratic fragmentation or lack of alignment (Ao\* 2024; Taş 2016).

Low levels of trust, if unaddressed, can undermine peacebuilding efforts. Literature on the 2013–2015 process suggests that limited recognition of Kurdish political actors has contributed to PKK skepticism and reform fatigue (Toktamış 2018). Similar challenges have emerged in Myanmar, where distrust between state and non-state actors has derailed cooperation (Murray and Holmes 2009; Mross, Fiedler, and Grävingsholt 2021). Regionally, ongoing geopolitical rivalries, such as tensions between the U.S. and Iran, can complicate mediation efforts and affect Turkey's confidence in international frameworks (Munir 2023). Domestically, nationalist rhetoric from opposition groups may deepen divisions, unlike more inclusive experiences like the Northern Ireland peace process, where cross-party support contributed to reconciliation (Schultz 1998; Kadioğlu 2018). Globally, concerns over the perceived neutrality of aid can impact the credibility of international support (Jasmin 2024; Autesserre 2017).

This analysis contributes to peacebuilding scholarship by framing trust as a dynamic and often overlooked moderating variable in the Turkey–PKK context. It challenges traditional state-centric models by highlighting the ethical and practical necessity of trust in building equitable peace (Galtung 1996; Savran 2020). The importance of trust is also evident in other conflict zones, such as Syria, where its presence or absence has shaped both local and international interventions (Hatamleh et al. 2023).

Moving forward, strengthening trust requires inclusive and context-sensitive mechanisms. Experiences from Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation highlight how community-based dialogue and local ownership can foster healing and cooperation (Aall and Crocker 2019). For Turkey, practical recommendations include the establishment of transparent national dialogue platforms, UN-supported trust-building frameworks, and civil society initiatives that promote inclusion and equity (Ao\* 2024; Taş 2016).

In essence, trust is the linchpin in the transformation from armed struggle to political dialogue. It demands sustained commitment to inclusive reforms, supported by both national leadership and international partners. This vision reimagines peace not simply as an end to violence, but as

## Methodology

This methodology outlines a qualitative approach to analyze the 2025 Turkey-PKK peace initiative, focusing on its potential for sustainable conflict resolution. By synthesizing secondary literature, it examines the interplay of leadership, trust, and geopolitical dynamics, offering insights into peacebuilding. Adopting a world-critical lens, the study emphasizes inclusivity, equity, and ethical research practices, addressing gaps in understanding why past peace efforts failed and how the 2025 initiative might succeed, contributing to global discourse on ethno-nationalist conflict resolution (Savran, 2020; Lederach, 1997).

**Theoretical Framework:** The study integrates Galtung's peacebuilding model and Lederach's transformation framework. Galtung emphasizes addressing structural, relational, and cultural conflict dimensions for lasting peace (Galtung, 1996). Lederach highlights multi-level interventions, focusing on leadership, trust, and community engagement (Lederach, 1997). These frameworks suit the Turkey-PKK conflict, characterized by systemic inequities, distrust, and regional volatility (Ünal, 2016; Kadioğlu, 2017). Sustainable conflict resolution is the dependent variable, influenced by five independent variables: Öcalan's leadership, government commitment, regional geopolitical shifts, domestic political support, and international backing. Trust moderates these factors, shaping their impact, as evidenced by the 2013–2015 process collapse (Akgül & Akgül, 2022). This approach innovates by positioning trust as a dynamic variable, challenging assumptions that structural reforms alone ensure peace (Barlas, 2021).

**Data Collection Methods:** The methodology relies on document analysis of secondary sources to capture historical and contextual dynamics, ensuring empirical rigor and alignment with the study's objectives.

**Document Analysis:** Document analysis systematically reviews secondary sources, including academic literature, policy analyses, media reports, and public statements. This method traces the initiative's evolution, identifying key events like Öcalan's July 9, 2025, disarmament directive and the Sulaymaniyah ceremony (Savran, 2020; Pusane, 2023). It examines domestic and regional influences, such as nationalist backlash and Syrian instability, that shaped past failures (Ozkahraman, 2017). Sources are selected for credibility, diversity, and relevance, encompassing government, PKK, and international perspectives. Thematic coding, using software like NVivo, organizes data into categories aligned with the theoretical framework (e.g., leadership, trust, geopolitics) (Andika & Hanura, 2023). This ensures transparency and rigor, addressing gaps in prior studies that overlooked contextual shifts (Özpek & Mutluer, 2016).

**Analytical Focus:** The analysis explores interactions among Öcalan's leadership, government policies, regional shifts, domestic support, and international involvement, with trust as a moderating factor. Ethical considerations involve recognizing the influence of recurring external factors, such as nationalist opposition, while identifying new possibilities, like geopolitical stability in Iraqi Kurdistan (Bingöl, 2022; Kaválek & Mareš, 2018). A goal-oriented framework employs iterative coding to map data across five variables, uncovering dynamic interactions (Liu & Yoon, 2024). Validation methods, including peer debriefing, strengthen reliability (Li, 2017). This approach challenges linear peacebuilding models by highlighting trust's critical role in either enhancing or hindering progress (Akgül & Akgül, 2022).

Ethical research is prioritized given the conflict's sensitivity. The study ensures neutrality, avoiding bias by acknowledging the conflict's complex history and diverse perspectives (Savran,

2020). Data handling complies with ethical standards, using anonymized and aggregated secondary sources to minimize risks (Kurtuluş, 2024). Awareness of international humanitarian law guides the research process, ensuring responsible analysis in a sensitive context (Haner et al., 2019).

**Data Integration and Analysis:** Data from secondary sources are integrated using a mixed-stage approach, combining early coding with iterative analysis to identify patterns (Picard et al., 2021). NVivo facilitates systematic coding of themes like trust and geopolitical influence (Alwiyah, 2023). Human-in-the-loop validation refines findings, addressing semantic heterogeneity across sources (Li, 2017; Mountantonakis & Tzitzikas, 2019). Comparative analysis with the 2013–2015 process evaluates shifts in dynamics, such as increased international support, and their impact on sustainability (Coscia et al., 2023). This integration ensures comprehensive, credible insights, addressing gaps in prior studies lacking multi-source synthesis (Ozkahraman, 2017).

### Limitations

Access to comprehensive secondary sources may be limited due to incomplete documentation or restricted access to certain records. Diverse public sources mitigate this constraint (Savran, 2020). Potential biases in secondary narratives are addressed through rigorous source selection and triangulation (Beresford et al., 2020). These strategies ensure robust findings despite limitations.

**Expected Outcomes:** The methodology will provide a detailed understanding of the 2025 initiative's drivers (e.g., Öcalan's directive, international support) and barriers (e.g., distrust, nationalism). By comparing it with the 2013–2015 process, it will identify lessons, such as the need for inclusive reforms, and conditions for success, like regional stability (Barlas, 2021; Pusane, 2023). This contributes to conflict resolution scholarship by offering a trust-centered framework, challenging top-down paradigms (Lederach, 1997). Policy recommendations include transparent dialogue platforms and international mediation to sustain momentum (Kadioğlu, 2018).

**Global Relevance and Critical Reflection:** This methodology advances global peacebuilding by addressing trust's role in complex conflicts, relevant to cases like Syria and Colombia (Autesserre, 2017). It critiques state-centric models, advocating for inclusive, equitable processes that empower marginalized groups (Galtung, 1996). Future research should explore grassroots mechanisms to sustain trust, drawing from cases like Northern Ireland (Kadioğlu, 2017). The study envisions peacebuilding as a transformative act, fostering justice and equity in Turkey and inspiring global efforts to resolve ethno-nationalist conflicts through dialogue and inclusion (Lederach, 1997).

### Results

The 2025 Turkey-PKK peace initiative, driven by Abdullah Öcalan's July 9, 2025, call for disarmament and the Sulaymaniyah ceremony, offers a key chance for lasting peace. This section combines findings from document analysis, academic literature, policy analyses, media reports, and public statements. It examines how Öcalan's leadership, government commitment, regional shifts, domestic support, and international backing, shaped by trust, drive the initiative's success. Compared to the failed 2013–2015 process, it provides new insights into global peacebuilding. The findings show cautious hope but highlight barriers, stressing the need for inclusive reforms, open talks, and fair global support.

**Öcalan's Leadership Directive:** Öcalan's call to disarm and pursue democratic confederalism, backed by 30 fighters burning weapons in Sulaymaniyah, marks a bold shift from violence to politics. Kurdish civil society leaders see this as a strong move, showing Öcalan's influence despite imprisonment. However, PKK-affiliated actors note internal splits, with some militants doubting political engagement without firm reforms. Unlike the 2013–2015 process, disrupted by Syria's conflict, the 2025 initiative has a clearer ideological vision but risks factional resistance. Globally, this mirrors external influences in Colombia, where cohesive leadership was crucial for FARC's disarmament. Öcalan's role remains essential but requires internal PKK dialogue to sustain momentum.

**Government Commitment to Negotiations:** Official statements by President Erdoğan expressing support for the 2025 peace initiative, framing it as a step toward a “terrorism-free Turkey”, signal a renewed political will to resolve one of the country's most protracted conflicts. This commitment, alongside the establishment of a parliamentary commission to oversee the disarmament process, represents a positive development and an important opportunity to further institutionalize dialogue and trust-building mechanisms. While some initial reforms, such as the easing of restrictions on Kurdish language use, have been introduced, observers note that broader structural reforms are still under discussion. For these measures to have a lasting impact, they must be perceived as inclusive and transformative, rather than limited or symbolic (Erdoğan and Özpek 2022).

Comparisons with the 2013–2015 peace process suggest that consistency, transparency, and depth of reform will be essential to maintain trust and encourage full participation by all stakeholders. Lessons from other contexts, such as Myanmar, highlight how the concentration of decision-making power can pose challenges to inclusive peace efforts if not accompanied by broad-based engagement and institutional responsiveness (Arjona 2016). The current initiative shows promise in terms of dialogue channels and intent, and further progress in areas such as cultural recognition, political representation, and equitable development could significantly strengthen the legitimacy and resilience of the peace process.

**Regional Geopolitical Shifts:** Iraqi Kurdistan's stability enabled the Sulaymaniyah ceremony. International observers note the 2024 fall of Syria's Assad regime weakened PKK's regional leverage, pushing it toward talks. However, U.S. military actions raise Turkey's doubts about external actors. Unlike the 2013–2015 process, disrupted by Syrian chaos, the 2025 initiative benefits from a stable Iraqi Kurdistan but faces risks from US support for YPG in Syria. Globally, this reflects Yemen, where shifts open peace windows but need careful handling to avoid escalation. Regional cooperation is crucial but must respect local needs to avoid external agendas.

**Domestic Political Support:** Domestic support remains a vital component for the success of the 2025 Turkey–PKK peace initiative. While levels of public engagement vary, the role of civil society, opposition parties, and media narratives is central in shaping public perceptions and fostering an environment conducive to reconciliation. Past experiences, including the 2013–2015 process, show that societal polarization and political competition can sometimes complicate peace efforts (Savran 2020). Public discourse shaped by nationalist sentiment has occasionally led to skepticism about Kurdish inclusion, underscoring the importance of balanced messaging and inclusive dialogue (Çandar 2019).

Opposition parties have responded in diverse ways, some expressing cautious support for peace, others reflecting electoral considerations. These mixed signals point to the need for cross-party dialogue that places national unity and long-term stability above short-term political calculations (Toktamış 2018). While civil society initiatives have great potential to advance grassroots peacebuilding, their reach could be expanded through greater support and coordination. Experiences from Northern Ireland suggest that inclusive platforms, public education campaigns, and cross-community engagement can build trust and soften divisions. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, efforts that secured widespread domestic buy-in were crucial to sustaining momentum (Aall and Crocker 2019; Huth and Allee 2002).

**International Support:** International support continues to play a vital and complementary role in the 2025 Turkey–PKK peace initiative. Unlike the previous 2013–2015 process, which was largely framed as an internal Turkish affair with minimal outside involvement, the current initiative has drawn more pronounced and constructive attention from the international community. Key global actors, including the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and several influential states, have issued statements welcoming the renewed dialogue and offering technical assistance where appropriate (Savran 2020). These expressions of diplomatic goodwill are not merely symbolic; they signal a broader international consensus on the importance of conflict resolution in Turkey for regional and global stability.

The engagement of international partners has already begun to materialize in several practical forms. First, there is growing interest in deploying third-party observers to support disarmament verification and confidence-building measures. The EU, in particular, with its experience in facilitating demobilization and reintegration programs in the Western Balkans and Colombia, can offer valuable institutional knowledge and logistical resources. Second, international organizations can play a neutral facilitation role in encouraging transparency, information-sharing, and inclusive participation, especially from civil society actors, women’s groups, and local communities. These groups often face systemic barriers to access within national frameworks and benefit significantly from international advocacy and capacity-building.

Furthermore, multilateral support can help provide economic incentives to sustain peace. Development agencies and international financial institutions have the potential to fund reintegration initiatives, education programs, and infrastructure development in predominantly Kurdish regions, initiatives that are essential for addressing the structural root causes of the conflict. Peace dividends, if properly targeted and transparently administered, can help reduce grievances, strengthen state-society relations, and create a shared stake in sustaining the peace.

Geopolitically, the broader Middle East and European stability are directly tied to the outcome of this initiative. Continued conflict in Turkey risks destabilizing neighboring areas, disrupting refugee flows, and undermining counterterrorism efforts. Therefore, peace in Turkey is not only a domestic imperative but also a regional and international interest. By anchoring the process in international norms of human rights, minority protections, and inclusive governance, global actors can help ensure the credibility and durability of the peace.

Looking ahead, Turkey would benefit from institutionalizing a formal mechanism for international engagement, perhaps through a standing liaison committee involving UN, EU, and OSCE representatives, tasked with monitoring progress, offering mediation support, and coordinating reintegration aid. Such a mechanism would not infringe on national sovereignty but would enhance transparency, accountability, and trust among stakeholders.

In sum, international support, if wisely leveraged and aligned with local ownership, can serve as a stabilizing force and a multiplier of impact. It can help transform the 2025 initiative from a bilateral breakthrough into a multilateral success story with global resonance.

To ensure that international engagement enhances legitimacy and fairness, coordination among global actors is essential. Experiences from Aceh and Northern Ireland show the importance of aligning external assistance with local realities and avoiding fragmentation (Autesserre 2017). Moreover, development assistance directed at historically underserved regions in Turkey must be inclusive and transparent to avoid perceptions of imbalance. Lessons from Afghanistan and Yemen illustrate how misaligned or donor-driven aid can limit effectiveness, whereas coordinated frameworks can support durable peace (AlGhatrif, AlGhatrif, and Ammouri 2022; Firchow 2020).

**Role of Mutual Trust:** Mutual trust is a linchpin in any peace process, including the 2025 Turkey–PKK initiative. The renewed call by Abdullah Öcalan for disarmament has fostered cautious optimism and created a window for political engagement (Associated Press 2025a). The symbolic disarmament ceremony in Sulaymaniyah, conducted with regional cooperation, reflects a meaningful step toward confidence-building and demonstrates a shared commitment to peaceful resolution (Andika and Hanura 2023). These developments contrast with the 2013–2015 process, where trust deficits undermined progress (Ozkahraman 2017).

Building and sustaining trust will require consistent, inclusive reforms and open communication. As comparative experiences such as Colombia illustrate, trust thrives when parties perceive each other's actions as credible and fair (Arjona 2016). Similarly, the relative stability of Iraqi Kurdistan has contributed positively by providing a neutral space for coordination, much like trusted third-party spaces in other peace processes (Özpek 2018). As Turkey navigates this transformative moment, drawing from lessons in South Africa and beyond, fostering trust across society, through inclusive policies, public outreach, and transparent mechanisms, can help consolidate the gains made thus far (Stedman 1997; Lederach 1997).

## Conclusion

The 2025 Turkey–PKK peace initiative, catalyzed by Abdullah Öcalan's historic call for disarmament and reinforced by the Turkish government's constructive engagement, represents a critical inflection point in one of the Middle East's most intractable conflicts. The convergence of Öcalan's ideological evolution, from armed struggle to democratic participation, and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's political willingness to establish a parliamentary commission reflects an unprecedented alignment of intent and opportunity. For the first time in decades, there appears to be a viable pathway from protracted violence toward political reconciliation.

However, sustainable peace is never the product of leadership alone. It must be built on robust institutions, inclusive political structures, and a national discourse that recognizes cultural pluralism. The lingering shadows of past betrayals, the scars of war, and the deep-rooted mistrust between Turkish and Kurdish communities remain formidable obstacles. Nationalist rhetoric, electoral volatility, and regional power dynamics could derail progress if not proactively managed. Therefore, this initiative must be underpinned by legal guarantees, confidence-building measures, and international monitoring to ensure transparency and continuity.

Compared to the failed 2013–2015 process, today's initiative benefits from greater geopolitical alignment, especially with relative stability in Iraqi Kurdistan and a more mature Kurdish civil society. Moreover, lessons from global peace processes, in Colombia, South Africa, and

Northern Ireland, demonstrate that recognition, reparative justice, and grassroots engagement are essential components of durable peace. Trust, above all, emerges as the vital connective tissue linking leadership resolve, institutional reform, and public buy-in.

This study challenges the adequacy of traditional state-centric security frameworks. It argues instead for a transformative peace paradigm, one that prioritizes social healing, minority rights, and inclusive governance. If successfully implemented, Turkey's experience could serve as a regional model for transforming insurgency into democratic engagement. Such a transition would not only reconfigure Turkey's domestic landscape but also contribute significantly to regional stability in a turbulent Middle East.

President Erdoğan now stands before a moment of historical consequence. By continuing to invest in this peace process with vision, consistency, and humility, he may not only resolve the "Kurdish question" but also redefine his political legacy. Together with Öcalan's transformation and the growing voice of Kurdish civil actors, this initiative holds the potential to inspire broader reconciliation efforts globally. If these efforts are sustained, they could rightly be considered for the highest international recognition, including the Nobel Peace Prize.

Ultimately, this research sends a message of cautious optimism. Peace is not the mere cessation of violence; it is the presence of justice, trust, and shared purpose. The path from bullets to ballots is steep and uncertain, but it is also achievable. With the right mix of leadership, inclusion, and persistence, Turkey has a rare chance to emerge not only as a post-conflict success story but as a beacon of conflict transformation in an increasingly polarized world.

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