

Zones of Rebellion: Kurdish Insurgents and the Turkish State

By Aysegul Aydin, Cem Emrence



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How do insurgents and governments select their targets? Which ideological discourses and organizational policies do they adopt to win civilian loyalties and control territory? Aysegul Aydin and Cem Emrence suggest that both insurgents and governments adopt a wide variety of coercive strategies in war environments. In *Zones of Rebellion*, they integrate Turkish-Ottoman history with social science theory to unveil the long-term policies that continue to inform the distribution of violence in Anatolia. The authors show the astonishing similarity in combatants' practices over time and their resulting inability to consolidate Kurdish people and territory around their respective political agendas.

The Kurdish insurgency in Turkey is one of the longest-running civil wars in the Middle East. *Zones of Rebellion* demonstrates for the first time how violence in this conflict has varied geographically. Identifying distinct zones of violence, Aydin and Emrence show why Kurds and Kurdish territories have followed different political trajectories, guaranteeing continued strife between Kurdish insurgents and the Turkish state in an area where armed groups organized along ethnic lines have battled the central state since Ottoman times.

Aydin and Emrence present the first empirical analysis of Kurdish insurgency, relying on original data. These new datasets include information on the location, method, timing, target, and outcome of more than ten thousand insurgent attacks and counterinsurgent operations between 1984 and 2008. Another data set registers civilian unrest in Kurdish urban centers for the same period, including nearly eight hundred incidents ranging from passive resistance to active challenges to Turkey's security forces. The authors argue that both state agents and insurgents are locked into particular tactics in their conduct of civil war and that the inability of combatants to switch from violence to civic politics leads to a long-running stalemate. Such rigidity blocks negotiations and prevents battlefield victories from being translated into political solutions and lasting agreements.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Zones of Rebellion is a slim book, but it manages to fit plenty in. It is determinedly wonkish and non-ideological, divided into sections examining the origins and tactics of both the PKKand the Turkish military. It shows how decisions taken in response to particular circumstances set the future direction of the conflict and limited the options of both players. Ultimately, this path dependence led to political stalemate. At critical junctures each side pursued policies that might seem inefficient to an outside observer."?William Armstrong, Hurriyet Daily News

"Zones of Rebellion offers a significant and original contribution to political science. The book's combination of ecology/geography-based theories and institutionalism and the authors' faithful adherence to employing those approaches throughout is unique. There is an undeniable elegance to such a disciplined, scholarly presentation of material on an extremely complicated topic."?David Romano, Missouri State University, author of *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization, and Identity*

"It is difficult to mobilize a disgruntled group against the state; even harder is to end the ensuing civil war. In no hurry to compromise, the side that is winning squanders opportunities for a peaceful settlement. *Zones of Rebellion* develops this insight with reference to the clash in Turkey between the state and Kurdish nationalism. Clearly written, extensively documented, and laced with fascinating new findings, it carries valuable lessons for civil wars around the globe."?Timur Kuran, Duke University, author of *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*

About the Author

Aysegul Aydin is Associate Professor of political science at the University of Colorado. She is the author of *Foreign Powers and Intervention in Armed Conflict*.

Cem Emrence is a historical sociologist. He is the author of *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*.

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