

The “Loyal” Narrators. An Examination of Post-Graduate Theses on the Kurdish Conflict and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Turkey

Los “leales” narradores. Un examen de las tesis de posgrado sobre el conflicto kurdo y el PKK en Turquía

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ABSTRACT

The Kurdish question and the PKK have been among the topics that have gained massive importance for almost a century in politics, daily life, and among academics. The declaration of the PKK, the last ideological rebellion against the Turkish state, has translated the Kurdish problem into the problem of assimilation, nationalization, and standardization of the decades-long armed conflict between the Turkish army and the PKK. This article aims to present a discourse and content analysis of the master’s and doctoral dissertations that were submitted to the Turkish Higher Education Institution (YÖK) between 1999–2020 in Turkey. The paper focuses on how and in which context these researchers analyzed and formulated their findings on the PKK and the Kurdish conflict. The two basic theoretical concepts on which the study is based are the “embedded journalist” used in media studies and Antonio Gramsci’s “organic intellectual.” The main argument of this study is that the theses have become an affirmation apparatus that reproduces the official ideology of the state with slight differences and feeds it to the masses, and at the same time, due to their narrative that is built with the eyes of the state, they tend to be examples of embedded journalism rather than scientific studies.

Keywords: Thesis; Embedded; Intellectuals; PKK; Kurds; Turkey.

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RESUMEN

La cuestión kurda y el PKK figuran entre los temas que han adquirido una importancia masiva desde hace casi un siglo en la política, la vida cotidiana y el mundo académico. La declaración del PKK, la última rebelión ideológica contra el Estado turco, ha traducido el problema kurdo en el problema de la asimilación, la nacionalización y la normalización del conflicto armado entre el ejército turco y el PKK, que ha durado décadas. El objetivo de este artículo es presentar un análisis del discurso y del contenido de las tesis de máster y doctorado que se presentaron en la Institución Turca de Educación Superior (YÖK) entre 1999-2020 en Turquía. El trabajo se centra en mostrar cómo y en qué contexto estos investigadores analizaron y formularon sus conclusiones sobre el PKK y el conflicto kurdo. Los dos conceptos teóricos básicos en los que se basa el estudio son el “periodista incrustado” utilizado en los estudios sobre medios de comunicación y el “intelectual orgánico” de Antonio Gramsci. El argumento principal de este estudio es que las tesis se han convertido en un aparato de afirmación que reproduce la ideología oficial del Estado con ligeras diferencias y la alimenta a las masas, y al mismo tiempo, debido a su narrativa que se construye con los ojos del Estado, tienden a ser ejemplos de periodismo incrustado más que estudios científicos.

Palabras clave: Tesis; Inserción; Intelectuales; PKK; Kurdos; Turquía.

1. Introduction

The nation-state that emerged with the dissolution of multinational empires has created radical changes not only between borders but also between power and individuals. The idea of nation-state, which is based on an ideology and identity by its very nature, focused on the reconstruction of bureaucracy, education and culture in the process of creating citizens from the people to try to form both a new society and a new individual. Founded at the end of the Independency War, the Republic of Turkey on the one hand aimed to modernize the country to establish a Turkish nation from the people of the Ottomans, while on the other hand it primarily focused on the usage of social science to find the pillars of the “imagined community” (Calhoun, 2017).

Using the practices of the modern world to the fullest, the Turkish state has given significant importance to education, especially higher education, and the social sciences to create a homogeneous society based on Turkishness. While education was implemented to spread Atatürk’s principles through society, schools became widespread and were eventually Turkified (Mango, 1999). The increasing number of universities, especially after the Second World War, enabled young people to become equipped for capitalist production and strengthened the scientific foundations, more importantly, turning Turkishness into the dominant identity of the university. The existence of Kurds, which became a significant “problem” in creating a Turkish nation, not only caused an armed conflict and political chaos but also created an academic class that would reproduce the state’s ideology (MacDowell, 2014).

The Kurdish problem and the existence of the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, Kurdish Workers Party) have been one of the key research interests among several scientific disciplines that

have been primarily shaped by modern Turkish history and politics. The PKK is an armed organization founded with the manifesto declared in 1978 and shaped by the Marxist-Leninist ideology. There is still an ongoing conflict between the party, which took its first action in 1984 and aimed to establish an independent Kurdistan, and the Turkish armed forces. The party deemed a terrorist organization by the Turkish state, the European Union and the USA, represents the armed wing of the Kurdish freedom movement (Marcus, 2009).

As a nation-state born at the beginning of the 20th century, education and social science have been directly influenced by the idea and the formation of the state based on Turkishness and the reproduction of republican values. However, not surprisingly, like all nation states the Turkish state has focused special attention on the use of social science to on the one hand create the imagined community and on the other hand to produce and disseminate the corresponding values.

The rise of the nation-state as a new form of politics and society has not only fundamentally changed power relations but has also shaped the making and the usage of science in the hands of the state. While fields like physics, engineering and chemistry changed the outlook of the state in terms of capitalist needs in the process of nation building, social science has been systematically applied to create a new identity, a memory and a common discourse on different aspects of the society. What is important here is the role of social science; quite contrary to its role in the western academia, in the Middle East it turned toward an identity politics. With the establishment of the Turkish Republic and the transformation of society and politics to build a unified Turkish nation, social disciplines such as history, literature, sociology and political sciences became the new pragmatic tools to build Turkishness, while also reproducing the values that were introduced by the founding elites of the state. The history writing in Turkish academia that was primarily based on serving the Ataturk’s principles succeeded in producing not just, as Gramsci named them, organic intellectuals, but has gone beyond to create an “organic academia.”

As the mainstream approach to an academic career was mostly aligned among all levels of schooling, a PhD degree has been the key phase in becoming a member of the scientific community. Based on this importance, to be recognized as academic in the modern world individuals are required to have a PhD after conducting research on a given topic in a particular field. While the mainstream understanding of doctoral research is based on the originality of the contribution to the given field, the role of post-graduate research regarding its use as a political and ideological tool has been mostly ignored. Such an approach is crucial not only to understand how the organic academia works but beyond it provides a toolbox to diagnose the implications of science as a type of “journalism” that is shaped by the performance of the researcher to fulfill the needs of power.

2. Theoretical Framework

*"We were a propaganda arm of our governments.
At the start the censors enforced that,
but by the end we were our own censors.
We were cheerleaders."
Charles Lynch
(Knightley, 1975, p. 333).*

Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci with his capacity to consolidate theory and practice and comprehensively formulate and interpret Marxist theory has been one of the most influential thinkers in modern times. For Hobsbawm, he was the philosopher of political praxis and that is why one cannot separate him from the consideration of political reality (Hobsbawm, 2010, p. 16). Among his several critical contributions to the understanding of Marxist theory, his introduction of intellectual ideology and hegemony has been one of the key concepts that has been analyzed in several fields of social sciences. Since his approach to the role and features of intellectuals is one of the key theoretical approaches of this paper, the focus is directed toward interpreting intellectuals in Gramsci's terminology.

Gramsci argued that the main characteristics of intellectuals come from their class differences and claimed that intellectuals played a major role in constructing the intellectual development of the dominant and their opposing classes (Gramsci, 1997, p. 10). While he discusses that the intellectuals are shaped and affected by the society they live in, based on such interaction they also interpret the world around them. Additionally, for him, intellectuals not only have the capacity to understand and evaluate the world, but beyond that they have ability and capacity to organize, lead and educate the society, which eventually helps them to build "force and consent" for the sake of a given group within society (Forgacs, 2010, p. 374; Portelli, 1982, p. 98). Contrary to the traditional approach to intellectuals, Gramsci argued that since everyone has intellectual ability, all people are intellectual (Gramsci, 1971, p. 9). In his terminology there are two distinct categories of intellectuals, organic and traditional. While the former term refers to the intellectual who is needed for almost all "progressive" groups to build a new social and political order, the later one is shaped by the historical and traditional values and mindsets of a particular society (Gramsci, 1971, p. 5). Therefore, he finds an inseparable relation between individuals and society; for him these two types of intellectuals are shaped by the political reality of a given time (Gramsci, 1971, p. 6). While he discusses the ideological production and reproduction of social and political life, he sets the concepts within the framework of means of ideological construction in society and the relationship between intellectual and political power through the creation of force and consent. Such an evaluation not only refers to the organic intellectual as "the puppet" in the hands of bourgeoisie and/or a dominant class who have the means of ideology, but it goes a step further and indicates that this group works as an "approval mechanism" for the given system.

Based on this argumentation, such an approval mechanism occurs with new power and production relations in the western societies that lead revolutions which have created a new social and political reality through education, bureaucracy and hierarchy. In this context, the organic intellectuals work as an approval mechanism, and they become the “transmitters” of the new values and principles. It might be argued that while the organic intellectual is a member of the bourgeoisie-led world, yet one cannot analyze their functions without a strict consideration of the industrial-bourgeoisie-led society and politics. It might be articulated that the organic intellectuals are a class that affirms the “correctness” of the political and economic order in which they live and work to spread the ideology of the ruling class and power to the masses, and thus they become the “ideological apparatuses of the state” (Althusser, 1970).

In today’s world, where the media has become widespread and strengthened, it plays a vital role in shaping societies, so that organic intellectuals include not only academic people but also journalists and columnists. Such expansion and deepening of organic intellectuals might be formulated as creating “embedded writers.” It may be argued that organic intellectuals have a more important role in guiding the public rather than the knowledge that they embed. Hence, it is not a group that spreads the ideology of the ruling class only, as organic intellectual implies. Particularly in countries like Turkey, where politics is based on “the winner takes all,” the organic intellectuals act conformist and redefine their role in accordance with the given time and ruling party. Embedded journalism refers to reporters working in a conflict zone and presenting one side of the war, ignoring the civilians (Cockburn, 2010). It might be proposed that this group plays the role of a transmitter between the military wings and civilians, and they tend to play up more the soldiers that they are with, civilians being presented and reported upon less in their reflections. Though the term embedded journalism gained popularity during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, its implementation may be tracked to the Second World War. It is known that the Soviet Union made many films for this purpose to both show how the soviet soldiers were brave and sympathetic and how the war was fair to its people (Dauce, 2014).

As was experienced in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, as well as other examples in the 20th century, embedded journalism shows only the military strength of the countries to which they are affiliated; on the other hand, they tend to present the people as being as satisfied as possible, and more importantly such reporting shows that there is harmony rather than conflict and chaos between civilians and military forces, to in a way justify the war and to promote it among the masses.

The Turkish state that is ideologically based on Turkish nationalism and the centrality of power, regarding ideology and bureaucracy, has a tradition of censorship both over media and academia since its establishment. Given the scope of this research, although it is a huge challenge to present several examples to show how “embeddedness” works in Turkish media, concerning the

conflict with the PKK and the Kurdish problem it is essential to present a vital instance to clarify the construct of embedded reporting.

As I discuss in the following pages, it would not be an exaggeration to note that traditionally most of the Turkish academia and media tend to not show the severity of the conflict between the state and the PKK, and to portray the acts of official security forces in the Kurdish regions as being as humanitarian as possible, or to depict the Kurdish movement and the PKK as being quite abhorrent. For example, on the evening of December 28, 2011, 34 Kurdish civilians were killed in an attack by Turkish warplanes, which was not shown on any news channel for a long time, and then many news channels presented the massacre as “deaths of 34 PKK members” (Cizmecioglu, 2011).

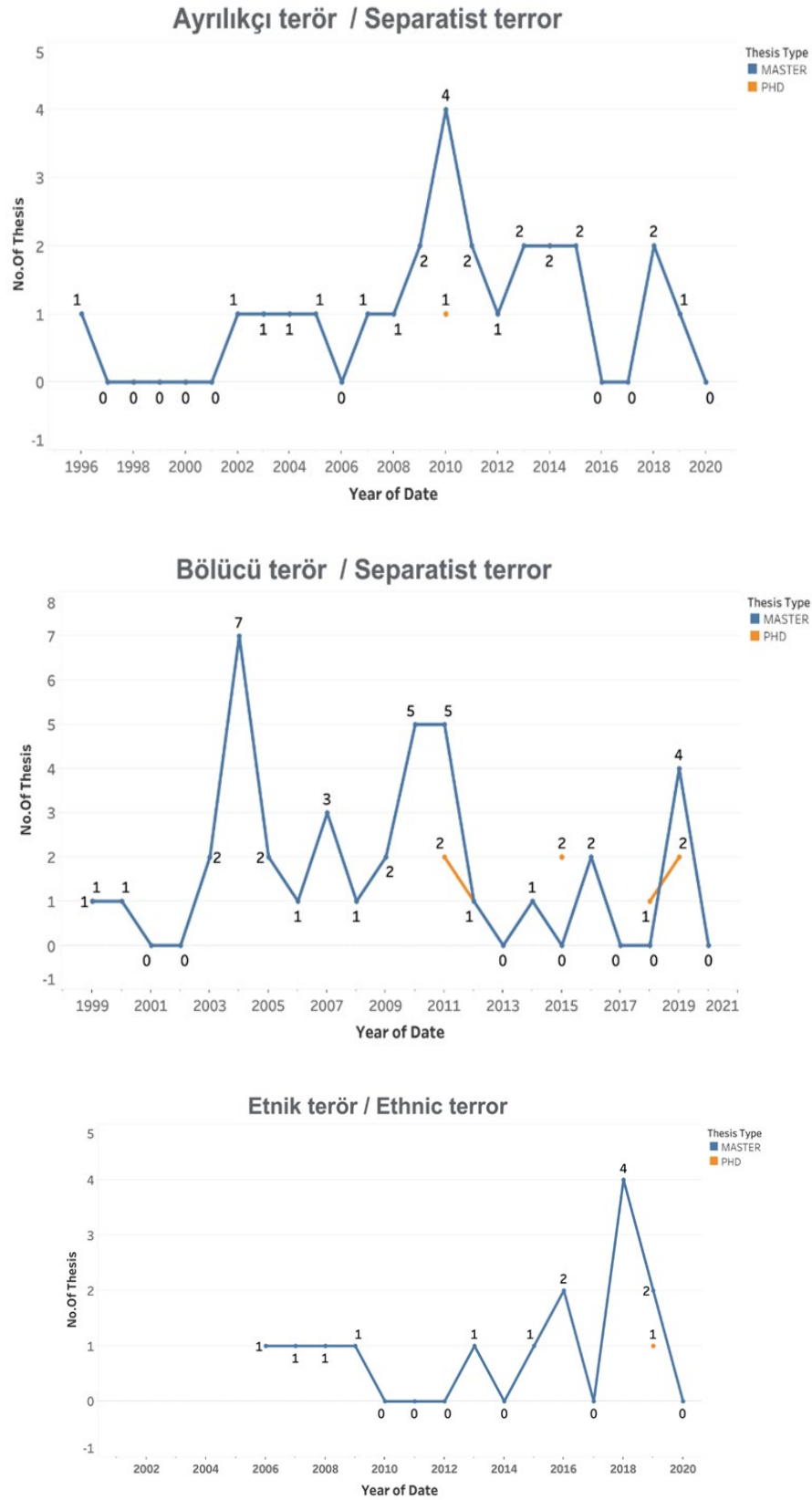
By drawing upon the concept of “organic intellectuals” from political philosophy and “embedded journalism” from media studies, I aim to discuss how and in which context the dissertations work voluntarily to put the Turkish state’s ideology, regarding the Kurdish problem, on an academic basis that not only spreads the official discourse but also appropriates embedded journalists’ report of one side of the conflict, presenting the state in a more passive position.

3. Data and Methodology

An academic inquiry is required to be based on data and the analysis of obtained evidence, and it is not surprising that science without data is regarded as nothing more than speculation. In a topic like the Kurdish conflict which has caused thousands of deaths and long-lasting armed conflict, on the one hand it has been an “arena” open to blame of another, while on the other hand it pushes researchers to challenge the complexity of objectivity. Based on this understanding, my goal is to derive a picture of the academic stance concerning the topic and demonstrate this on an analytical framework.

According to the law, all master’s and doctoral theses written in Turkey are obligated to be submitted to the Turkish Higher Education Institution/ Council of Higher Education, regardless of field and research topic (Higher Education Law, 1981). The institution, which was established after the military coup of 12 September 1980, has been constantly criticized for causing universities to be controlled by the state, both representing the state-academia relationship and showing the centralism of the state. All the dissertations obtained and analyzed within the scope of this study are available on the institution’s website. To cover as many theses as possible, the research using the words “PKK, Kurdish issue, Kurdish movement, separatist terror, ethnic terror” in the main titles of their research were collected and graphed. Considering the numerical size of the data obtained, only the contents of doctoral dissertations were examined. To convey the data more systematically, they are divided into three categories: category 1, category 2 and category 3, according to the words and word groups used in the headings.

Figure 1. Category 1: “Terror”

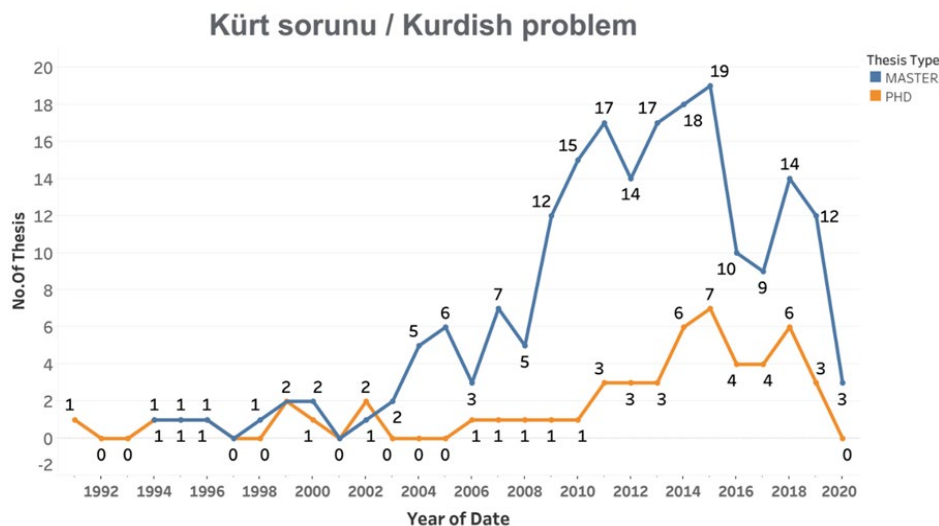


Source: Council of Higher Education Thesis Center, 2022

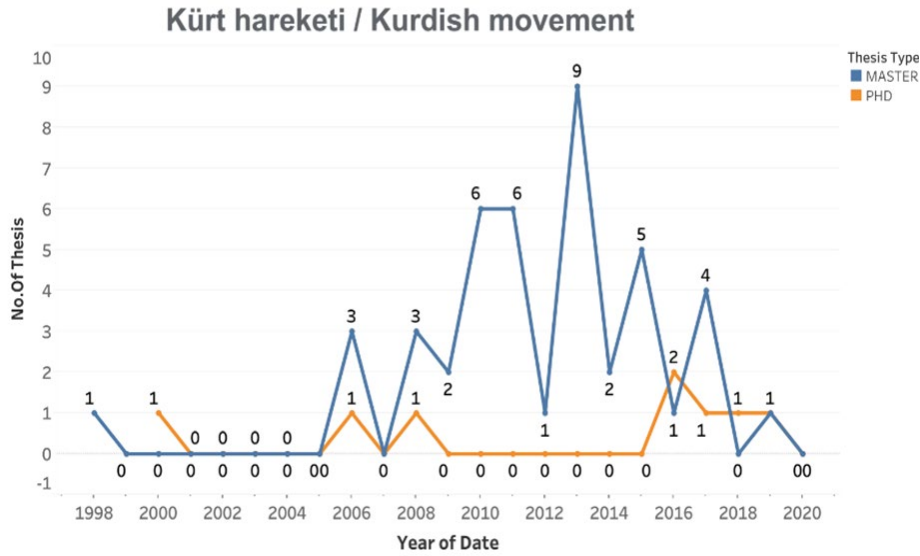
The graphs presented above show the numbers of master's and PhD theses over time that used "separatist terror" and "ethnic terror" in the main title. The charts clearly indicate the major differences in numbers of submitted master's and doctoral theses; while the number of PhD studies is only 5, the master's theses reach 78. What is significant here is that the gap not only presents the increased interest in the topic but even more it represents the flexibility of interpretation of the students. Since a PhD is long-lasting research activity and is vital in an individual's academic career it might be claimed that PhD students take more risk in conducting research on such sensitive topic. Looking at the table of contents of master's theses and abstracts, titles such as democracy, human rights and equality are found as more prevalent than in the PhD theses. Additionally, as I present below, the focus of PhD studies is mostly on the PKK rather than the ethnic and movement aspects of the problem. Another conclusion derived from these graphs is that the numbers of studies increased especially after 2008 due to AKP's "democratization politics" and "peace process" with the PKK (Savran, 2020).

Hence, it might be professed that the relative freedom of speech and expression of ideas on the Kurdish conflict both in politics and in public created a freedom zone for students to study the topic. For instance, the category 2 which shows the numbers of master's and PhD theses on the "Kurdish problem" and "Kurdish movement" prove the impact of the peace process on academic investigations.

Figure 2. Category 2: "Kurdish problem, Kurdish movement"



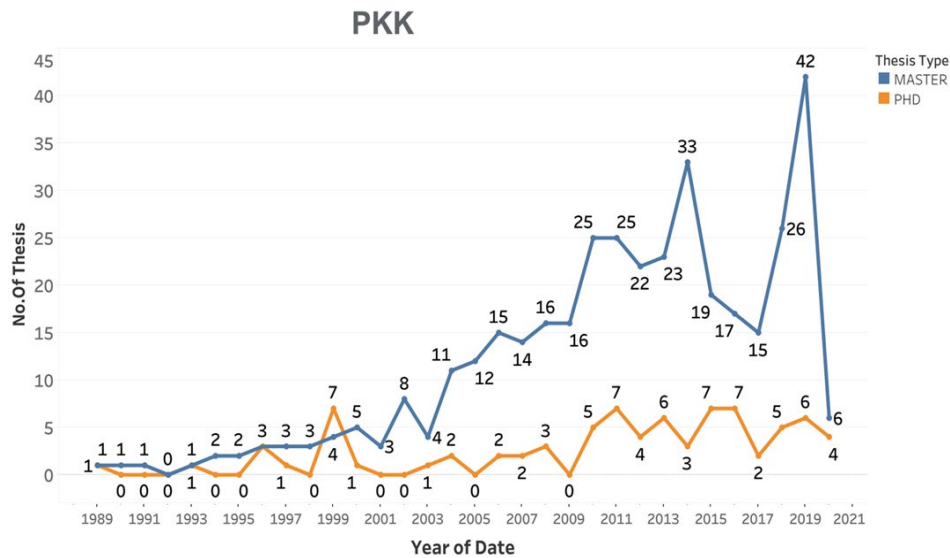
Source: Council of Higher Education Thesis Center, 2022



Source: Council of Higher Education Thesis Center, 2022

What is more, looking at the contents, abstracts and conclusions of these studies demonstrates that although they define the PKK as a “terrorist” organization, yet they imply a “softer” language to discuss the conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK. Furthermore, the usage of these two groups of words not only expresses the content of the subject, but also reflects the daily political language used in Turkish political and public life. While people with left-wing and pro-Kurdish tendencies, especially academics, mostly use the terms “Kurdish problem” and “the Kurdish movement” while discussing the issue, the right-wing groups who are close to the state’s discourse and official ideology canvas name it as “the terror problem.” This distinction shows that the difference in tone in the daily usage of the language is also reflected in academic studies. The hegemony of the state’s discourse on academic life is reflected by the fact that although the number of master theses is high, students in doctoral studies approach the subject more distantly because of academic career concerns.

Figure 3. Category 3: The PKK



Source: Council of Higher Education Thesis Center, 2022

When looking at the graph of the theses that use the PKK in abbreviation form in their main title, the most striking result is that there are more doctoral dissertations compared to other titles which were discussed earlier. One of the most common features of these theses is the constant use of PKK with the words “terrorist and terror.” Such frequency shows that not only do their titles reflect the state’s ideology, but the authors also continually used the words “terrorist and terror” on every page to build their arguments. Looking at both the way in which the PKK is framed and the intensity of the repetitive “bloody” and “blood-shedding” adjectives, it might be postulated that these inquiries characteristically do not measure up to the standards of academic writing. One of the reasons doctoral dissertations on the PKK are numerous is the difficulty of using a soft language and academic career concerns as in other titles. What is worth underlining is that these theses are more like research reports presented to politicians rather than academic studies. Another striking point that emerges when the parts of the theses are analyzed is that they take a more militarist, fundamentalist approach and deny the Kurds’ existence as a distinct ethnic group as if almost the same people wrote all. This category of students tends to avoid using sub-titles such as the “Kurdish movement” and the “Kurdish problem,” and they have systematically focused only on the PKK without any consideration of the Kurdish policy of the state.

Even though there is apparently no legal obstacle for students and researchers to work on the Kurd related topics, because of the state’s hegemony over higher education and academia, postgraduate students fail to go beyond the official discourse to investigate not only the PKK but the other side of the long-lasting armed conflict. Due to such hegemony which has turned into an “unwritten law,” reproduction of the state ideology became the “academic purpose.” Therefore, as will be exemplified, all the doctoral studies on the PKK not only remind us of proposal reports that reproduce the discourse of the state, but further base such one-sided stories on “academic” analysis.

4. Discussion: A Narrative of Loyalty

Given the limits of this study, analyzing hundreds of theses one by one is exceedingly difficult. However, close examination of some studies is crucial in showing the researchers’ embedded character. Based on the assumption that doctoral dissertations are the most serious stage and the basis of the academic career of individuals, it is crucial to present some examples of the relevant parts of the doctoral dissertations written on the PKK, both to show the effect of the official ideology on the academic studies and how and to what extent researchers reproduce such official discourse from an academic point of view. One of the most common aspects of doctoral dissertations written on the PKK is that they repeatedly use the words “terrorism” and “terrorist” in adjective form in their studies and base all their arguments on this controversial approach. These studies, which give the reader the impression that they were written by one person, often lack theoretical foundations and fall into methodological error.

Following the declaration of the PKK and the start of the armed conflict with the Turkish state, the Kurdish problem has not only become almost an indispensable subject of politics and the daily debates of the people but has also attracted the attention of domestic and foreign social scientists. As I have mentioned before, the theses that have been analyzed tend to show only one side of the war, like embedded journalists, and have focused on “exposing” the Kurdish movement and the PKK. When we look at the doctoral dissertations written with this biased tendency, it is seen that academicians and young researchers carried out the task of reporting the problem that the parliament and politicians once had.

It is found that these studies not only have methodological and theoretical fallacies but also do not comply with academic standards. For example, one of the researchers in the section “purpose and importance” clearly expresses that “the purpose of this study is to help the state fight against terrorism” (Tegin, 2019, p. 2). Likewise, another researcher used the text “these strategies should be supported by academic studies” in the preliminary suggestions part of his thesis, which might be considered an example of how the “field of approval” works. For instance, in the doctoral dissertation entitled as “the PKK terrorism and Turkey’s right to use force in terms of international law,” in the concluding paragraph the author describes the Turkish state as “the victim of the terror of the PKK” and argues that “it is hoped that the south east problem will be solved peacefully but if not military operation of Turkey will come again” (Hancilar, 2011, p. 196).

Almost all the doctoral theses have concluded their studies with the section of “recommendations,” where the necessary measures for the state to be successful in combating PKK terrorism are listed. The most striking point about these chapters is that from time-to-time racist suggestions that ignore human rights have been expressed without hesitation. For example, in the recommendations of a doctoral dissertation submitted in 2018, the author has made the following statements: “...the Kurds have a high birth rate, and the state should systematically reduce this, given

immunity to security forces in places of conflict, ensure that children spend more time at school than with their families, and cities where Kurds live should be redesigned with immigrants and Turkmens from Syria” (Baysal, 2018, p. 542). Even more striking is that although the author claims that the PKK does not represent the Kurds, their suggestions were made not on the PKK but on the Kurdish civilians, which is in fact an acknowledgment of the fact that a sociological, political and cultural link exists between the PKK and Kurds. Not surprisingly, in the last part of the research, they have introduced a separate section titled “suggestions,” and even though the author suggests several proposals to solve the problem, the emphasis of the suggestions is to keep the unity of the country and “eliminate the terrorists with support of the academic research” (Baysal, 2018, p. 532).

Aluclu’s research entitled “the evaluation of the discourse of the PKK terrorist organization,” which aims to present the changes in the discourse of the PKK through time in a similar way as the other thesis, has repeatedly used the words terror and terrorist 220 times to presents their ideological standing. By describing the PKK as “the bloodiest terrorist organization in the world,” the author argues that the PKK has misused the concept of ethnicity and identity and manipulated the ideology of the establishment of the Republic that is based on everyone being Turkish (Aluclu, 2020). For the author, by not accepting Turkishness as the cover and common identity, the PKK has been manipulating the Kurds within the country (Aluclu, 2020). In the conclusion, the author claims that the PKK has been systematically accusing the Turkish state for “every bad thing” and constructs its ideology on the “sacrifices of its guerrillas,” with an exclamation mark (Aluclu, 2020). What is interesting is that they make a clear-cut distinction between the PKK and the Kurds and argue that the PKK has been manipulating the “loyal Kurds” within the country (Aluclu, 2020). It might be argued that not only by putting the word terror on the title of the research, but the author also presents, one way or another, that they accept the PKK as a terrorist organization and remind the readers and the authorities that they hold to the same state ideology, that the PKK is a “bloody terrorist organization.”

Tegin provides an exploratory approach to the people who left the party, to analyze how and why those former members decided to leave the PKK. Compared to other dissertations, the research has a more complex approach to the problem since it is based on surveys and interviews. From an academic point of view, the research offers some key issues concerning the PKK and its members; however, the author indicates that the research aims to “help” the authorities identify the people who tend to favor the PKK (Tegin, 2019). Tegin found that due to poverty, swayed by pro-PKK media, family members who follow the PKK are also those who support the party (Tegin, 2019). Like the other PhD dissertations, it has been constructed as a report more than as an academic investigation, and the author specifically underlines that “the research aims to provide a tool for the Turkish authorities to fight against the PKK.” Further, in the part about the importance of the research, the author wrote “... to show the difficulty of the mountain environments, the internal conflict within the PKK and to understand and reduce the sympathy of the people who

want to join to the party” (Tegin, 1999, p. 14). Tegin concludes by listing the findings and provides a section in which they make some exclusive suggestions to the authorities and argue that the Kurdish problem and the PKK are different things (2019, pp. 300–303).

One of the points that these studies insist on is that they constantly try to prove that the Kurds are not a separate nation of their own. Baysal, in their research titled “The separatist politics of the PKK,” aimed to analyze the ethnic-based violence and its development through time, and the aim of the research “is to provide and help to build a great strategy” which is needed to fight against the PKK (Baysal, 2018). Like all theses that have been analyzed, the author differentiates between the Kurds and the PKK, claiming that the Kurdish history writing “has no sources to prove that they are a distinct ethnic linguistic nation in history” (Baysal, 2018).

5. Conclusion

The theses evaluated within the scope of the study, it is noticed that there is a relationship of “loyalty” between the state and the individual, the state and the academic. Although they use the word “terrorism” in the main title of their works, most authors constantly use words like “terrorism and terrorist,” and all arguments have been shaped around the proof of these two concepts. Although the conflict is continuing between the state and the guerrilla movement, the theses focused on the PKK have presented the state as a more passive entity, which has created not only an objectivity issue but also a methodological problem.

Another conclusion drawn from the data is the large disproportion between studies conducted at masters and doctoral levels; and compared to doctoral research, masters’ theses cover a larger ratio of the total number. Compared to researchers who were more flexible and relatively less biased in their master’s theses, all the doctoral dissertations supported the official ideology and discourse of the state regarding the interpretation of the problem. While such a fragmented approach has turned the academia into an “approval center,” it has also created an intellectual class working to produce and reproduce the official discourse. Although there is no evidence to test whether these researchers in fact believe the phrases they have used, it might be argued that these people either act ideologically by choosing to serve the official discourse voluntarily, or they act conformist to facilitate advancement in their academic career.

Considering these theses, one of the striking results is that doctoral dissertations written on the PKK are formulated in the form of reports presented to politicians and administrators rather than as academic analysis. All these studies were found to have completed their theses with the suggestions section and these suggestions are listed on the methods that the state should apply to solve the problem rather than the related questions and research suggestions about the given topic as in mainstream academic studies. Looking at these proposals, it is revealed that, without taking academic ethics into account, recommendations are made that are directly contrary to human

rights and freedoms, such as population control of the Kurds, evacuation of Kurdish cities and giving immunity to the security officers in the region.

As a modern form of governance, the nation-state expects the individuals whom it has transformed into citizens to be “loyal” to itself and to the order it has established. In geographies based on democratic foundations, such loyalty is based not only on the compliance of individuals with the established order but also on the tools available to individuals to hold the government and the state accountable through elections and taxes. However, to ensure the continuation and reproduction of the ideology of the state, in nation-states such as Turkey where politics is based on one group’s supremacy, the loyalty is spread through education and social science to the masses. In such circumstances, loyalty, one of the most important parts of the private and political life of human beings, places a specific type of responsibility upon individuals.

Even if the state guarantees this “compulsory loyalty” through laws and regulations, individuals take loyalty as a duty after a while to both stay within the system and benefit from it. Social scientists who deal not only with people but also with what people do give the masses an identity and memory; on the other hand, they become the narrators of the order they live in. While loyal narrators who gain the respect of the masses due to being scientists are in the guiding positions as Gramsci’s organic intellectuals, they also build the analytical foundations of the order by redefining events, situations and concepts like embedded journalists. Although this approach seems to portray the academics passively, it must be pointed out that they actively internalize official ideologies and discourses, which eventually lead them to prove their loyalty to take advantage of the system and gain a place for themselves. Even though we are not able to test the loyalty relationship for individuals that I have tried to formulate above, and to prove its accuracy, when we look at the submitted masters and doctoral theses, we do see how strongly the state’s official discourse on the Kurdish problem is reflected in academic studies conducted by young researchers who are at the beginning of their academic careers. By repeatedly showing only one side of the war, like what the embedded journalists did in Iraq and Afghanistan, these researchers stubbornly and deliberately failed to demonstrate the state dimensions of the Turkish–Kurdish war.

When the doctoral theses written on the PKK were examined in detail, it was concluded that they almost never mentioned the issue of village evacuations, the state of emergency that prevailed in the east and southeast of Turkey, the violence of the military and police officers against the Kurdish civilians, the ban on their mother tongue and the violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms. These academic gaps not only show us the systematic flaws in the studies, but they also, even more importantly, provide examples of voluntarily being the analysts of war. Depicting a two-person fight as a single person’s fight, these researchers have turned their studies’ organic bonding with official ideology into reports presented by consultants to politicians. It seems that such loyalty-based relationships that the young Turkish academicians were born into have not only turned them into the propaganda tools of a bloody war but also caused them to serve to build a narrative of the war rather than providing a solution, by closing their eyes to the tragedy caused by one of the longest conflicts in the 20th and 21st centuries.

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