

DEVELOPMENT IN MANAGING TERRORISM IN TURKEY

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In the recent past, the word 'ethnic' ceased to mean 'gentiles' and came to be substituted for 'nation' when convenient, as in the case of group affiliations in former Yugoslavia, or 'religion' in the case of Bosnian Muslims, or 'race' in the case of Spanish or Black Americans. It has become fashionable to use the word for any and every different group identity regardless of a common past, shared by the people concerned. Forces of disintegration were at work; be it instigated by academic revisionists in search of a novel discourse, journalists in search of sensationalism and convenient clichés, politicians in search of a new popularism or, worse yet, by terrorist groups in search of power cum adventurism. Fashionable parlance declared that the nation-state was passé and history had come to an end. Yet history caught up with fashionable trends with a vengeance. The Bosnian tragedy proved once and for all that Tito's emphasis on differences in building a Yugoslavia on so-called ethnic lines was disastrous. Identities, sharpened beyond the point of folklore, cuisine, customs, and religious affiliation, left behind tremendous pain and destruction.

As if Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had a premonition, his basic principle in building a Turkish nation-state, embracing all groups who chose to stay within its borders, was to define this nation on the basis of a common culture and past. Concomitantly, the new nation opted for a unitary state, by accepting only three minority groups, that is Greeks, Armenians and Jews. This would ensure historical continuity by enabling these groups to maintain their schools, hospitals, foundations and places of worship. The common past was thus upheld. That very common past was a given among the Muslims. This consensus was broken a few times by some Kurdish tribes when they rebelled against the secular state.

During the past thirty years, as a fashionable trend of the times, Marxist-Leninist terrorism was on the agenda of many states, including that of Turkey. Since 1983, a branch of such terrorism became the separatist terror organisation, PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party). Wavering between communism, Islam-ism, separatism, as well as calling for a federative state of Kurds and Turks, the PKK decided to play a role in the international arena, not only through becoming a party to organised crime such as drug smuggling, extortion and money laundering, but also by utilising front organisations to show Turkey in a disreputable light. This seems to have worked with people who believe in minority rights. As to the Turkish constitution and the Lausanne Treaty, Kurds in Turkey do not match with the term minority.

For example, a journalist who interviewed Thomas Klestil, the Austrian president, when he visited Turkey recently, concluded:

"It doesn't seem from the way Klestil was speaking that Austria is about to change its long-standing, decisive position on the Kurdish question. As soon as he was asked about the activities of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and the National Liberation Front (ERNK) in Austria, he immediately put on the agenda other issues with which Austria shares with many a western country—human rights and splitting people over democracy and terrorism."²

As of 1995, first the Netherlands, then Belgium and then Austria has been permitting meetings of a self-styled Turkish-Kurdish parliament-in-exile. Abstractions aside, an increasing number of people in Turkey are beginning to feel that the West is simply using the 'Kurdish issue' as an excuse to keep Turkey

at bay—otherwise it would be rather difficult to justify PKK activities, including those of its front organisations in Europe. It no longer suffices to claim that these are civil associations and that, as long as they comply with the laws of the host country, they may continue their activities. A national liberation front spells separatism and racism. Mr. Kestil said, “We have all agreed that terrorism has to be fought against. Separatism has to be fought against, but human rights have to be respected.”³ Something seems to be missing in the semantics, for it is Turkey's contention that terrorism is the grossest of human rights abuses.

THE STATE OF MANAGING TERRORISM

In 1993, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire, but in the meantime massacred 33 off duty, unarmed soldiers and five civilians. Although the PKK repeated its unilateral ceasefire decision in December 1995, fighting and cross-border operations in northern Iraq to maintain border security and to cut off the logistic support for the PKK present in Turkey, continued. Meaningless PKK ceasefire declarations seem to indicate the following: 1. to announce to the international community that the PKK is a force with which to contend, 2. to propagate goodwill gestures, thereby implicating the Turkish security forces for continuing its operations, 3. to camouflage the fact that the terrorist forces have shrank and have been heavily damaged. A case in point is that, according to security forces reports, the age-range of terrorists encountered or captured has been steadily younger, approximately between 14-25 years of age.⁴

A very healthy signal came in June 1996 from leading Turkish businessmen in Istanbul. It was to set up an investment firm to support economic development in the country's poverty-stricken eastern regions. The business community obviously feels that the time is ripe to combat terrorism from another direction, given that the security forces are continuing to do their share to combat terrorism.

Mr. Ali Rıza Çarmıklı, Çarmıklı Holding's executive director and a member of the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TÜSIAD), plans to establish a holding company for the Southeast. TÜSIAD has 300 members, each of whom will be asked to contribute at least TL5 billion (DM100,000) to the investment firm. Members of chambers of commerce and industry will also be invited to contribute. This holding will not return profits for at least 10 years, but transfer profits to a Southeastern development foundation. According to Mr. Çarmıklı, providing employment and a decent standard of living will be more attractive to the young people than terrorism.⁵

Mr. Mehmet Yıldırım, chairman of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ITO), announced:

“ITO which has 220,000 members, has invited 400 influential businessmen to a meeting on July 10 to increase contributions in the joint-stock company which plans to begin operations in late July with an expected capital of \$18.7 million.” “It would be easier to break the region's feudal structure with co-operation among the private sector, local people and the government,” Yıldırım said. The Istanbul based company will first try to reactivate unfinished state or private projects in the region and later plan new investments, mainly in agriculture and tourism sectors. ITO's [investment] will be the second biggest investment drive in the region after a ready-to-wear producer and exporter joint venture by an Aegean-based textile industrialist group and a local agro-businessman in the main city of Diyarbakır. “If we are able to send our own people to invest there, then it will be easier to draw foreign capital,” Yıldırım said. Businessmen cite cheap and

plentiful labour and increasing agricultural output, led by cotton, as the main advantages in the east, which lags behind the rest of the country in infrastructure and trained staff.⁶

By November 1996, Mr. Yıldırım reported that capital investment was completed and projects were under way. Consequently, it is very encouraging that the private sector is attempting to live up to its portion of responsibility in eradicating terrorism.

REGIONAL POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN TURKEY

Meanwhile, the PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, has grown increasingly frustrated over the fact that Turkey does not recognise his terrorist organisation, let alone acknowledge it as the sole representative of Kurdish interests. In June, Öcalan threatened that although the self-styled ceasefire would continue, there would be suicide attempts on selected targets.⁷ The threat was carried out by a female nurse pretending to be pregnant, but actually carrying 30 kilograms of TNT tied around her abdomen, which resulted in seven dead and 30 wounded soldiers during a flag ceremony in Tunceli (in southeast Turkey) at the beginning of July.

Moreover, in order to prevent any kind of regional representation at the political party level, PKK activists tore down the Turkish flag and put up Öcalan's banner at the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) congress on June 23, 1996, which took place in Ankara. This act incited a severe reaction from the people as well as condemnation, including from some HADEP members. But, investigations and the arrest of HADEP's leadership on account of neglecting to control such behaviour and some controversial statements, point to the possibility of closing down this party for violating Turkey's integrity and promoting separatism. It seems plausible that the PKK is intolerant of a legal party, functioning within the system as a regional representative. Although HADEP has a questionable past, it nonetheless harbours many moderates and socialists. Previously, the People's Labour Party (HEP), as it was called then, was closed by a Constitutional Court order on July 14, 1993 for inciting separatism. Some deputies who resigned from the party before it was closed established the Freedom and Democracy Party (ÖZDEP), which too was closed on April 30, 1993. The same fate awaited its substitute, the Democratic Party (DEP) on June 16, 1994. The newest formation was HADEP, this time with a broader base established on regional representation, that is of Arab, Turcoman and Kurdish people of the southeast. The party won more than four per cent of the overall votes in the December 24, 1995 parliamentary elections. According to one journalist:

"However, the incidents at the HADEP convention in Ankara on Sunday has shown once again that the party is under threat by the PKK. PKK militants openly highjacked the convention, tearing down the Turkish flag, replacing it with their own PKK flag. They also held up posters showing photos of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and chanted anti-Turkish slogans. This was not only a provocation on the part of the PKK but it was also a death blow to HADEP. Instead of disassociating themselves with the PKK, the leaders of HADEP actually seemed to pay lip service to them. ... HADEP chief Murat Bozlak was speaking as the militants tore down the Turkish flag before his very eyes. Yet, Bozlak did not even bother to try to stop the militants and just continued with his speech ... Thus HADEP now has to pay the bill for whatever the PKK did on Sunday."⁸

The article drew a parallel between Sinn Fein's problems with the IRA. While Britain and Ireland accepted Sinn Fein as a party in talks for a settlement, the IRA ruined everything by exploding bombs in English cities. Now Sinn Fein has

been excluded from the talks. Therefore, speaking to 'moderate' Kurds or to HADEP about the problems in southeastern Turkey would be to no avail since the PKK would not give them a free hand.

Political parties on the left, including HADEP, could have favourably made alliances with each other in future elections. However, the flag scandal leaves no room for alliance with HADEP, as was obvious from the serious condemnation of such a scandal by Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party.⁹ Subsequently, three provincial HADEP leaders were murdered on route to their hometowns by the so-called Turkish Revenge Brigade which assumed responsibility. While flag sales have reached a soaring high, and many homes and work places are displaying flags all over the country, there are calls from various writers to contain chauvinism and not fall into the trap of racism.¹⁰ Mr. Taha Akyol, one of the most analytically-minded and sensible journalists in the country asked, "Does HADEP represent one of the forces of democracy or is it a party-in-proxy for chauvinism and terrorism?"¹¹ Akyol related a complaint registered to him by a Kurdish politician who said that militants tried to dictate terms to them, acting like armed political commissars. Akyol pointed to the differences in the status of a legal political party in Turkey, or of primitive terrorists from the Bekaa valley, and of those activists living in a country such as Germany and dream of a "large and eternal Kurdistan", under the influence of what he defines as "Diaspora psychology." Actually, HADEP has to choose between these three statutes if the party wants to avoid falling into tactical traps such as the flag scandal by wavering between these alternative courses.

COUNTERING ANTI-TURKISH PROPAGANDA ABROAD

Although this discussion section is entitled as is, it is not just propaganda, but re-exportation of trained militants that hurts Turkey and some of its international relations. For example, in June 1996, eight PKK terrorists, two of whom are women, were apprehended in Istanbul with plans and large amounts of ammunition to blow up the Istanbul Aksaray metro. This group had a history of violence, ranging from murders to bombings to recruitment for the PKK. According to the Istanbul police, one of the team leaders had been trained in Greece to become a bomb expert.¹² It is no secret that Greece has been flirting with the PKK and covertly or overtly uses the argument that there is no need for a dialogue with Turkey for resolving differences because Turkey will soon be disintegrating. It is next to impossible to have a dialogue with Greece so long as that country upholds its national identity by fighting an imaginary 'expansionist' Turkey. Moreover, Greece has recently concluded a military 'defence' agreement with Syria, yet another country which is implicated internationally in the harbouring of terrorists, including the PKK.

Amnesty International's accusations that Turkey violated human rights drew the response of "biased viewpoint" from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs because Amnesty plays down "terrorist violence but exaggerates alleged abuse by the forces of law and order."¹³ Amnesty retorted that none of the cases in its report involved people who were accused of membership of the PKK nor was there acceptable evidence that they were members of the PKK –these people were simply members of human rights groups.¹⁴ It would require hard evidence and sound intelligence to argue that human rights groups in Turkey, willingly or otherwise, are mouthpieces of PKK front organisations in Europe which find an enthusiastic welcome from Amnesty International itself. But, the question remains.

Peculiar support for the PKK comes from the Committee on Geopolitical Problems of the Russian Duma. It is plausible that Russia has found a very convenient way of warning Turkey not to support Chechen separatism and not to develop meaningful relations with its former satellites. Moreover, reports presented to the committee accused Turkey of expansionism and labelled the Black Sea Economic Co-operation initiative an "Ottoman federation." These reports openly argued that support for the PKK would help bring about Turkey's disintegration, which then would cease to be a threat to Moscow. Accordingly, Turkey would stop claiming a role in the oil pipeline projects from the Caucasus and stop challenging Russia regarding oil tankers' unlimited access to the Turkish Straits.¹⁵ Fortunately, one can begin dialogue with Russia in this regard, in marked contrast to Greece.

Ankara's latest attempt was to convince Britain, France and Poland not to issue licenses to MED-TV, which is the PKK's mouthpiece. A license was issued to MED-TV in Britain in 1994, a transponder was rented from France and two companies were established in Belgium for ciphering broadcasts which went back to Britain for final broadcast. The Turkish Foreign Ministry provided the countries in question with video cassettes to prove that these broadcasts were actually in violation of the Independent Television Commission's own regulations and rules that govern trans-boundary broadcasting. A Foreign Ministry official said: "We have also had successes for example in having it established that incitement to violence, racism and separatism, cannot be allowed in trans-boundary broadcasting. Unhappy as many European countries may be over this, they have had to go along with it, because opposing it would fall contrary to their own national criteria."¹⁶

And, at long last Turkey has managed to convince the United Nations and NATO to officially acknowledge that terrorism represents a violation of human rights in the hope that the concept will be accepted by other international organisations also. Perhaps it is the connection between organised crime and terrorism that forced at least some organisations to take heed not only of this factor, but also to be on the alert for front organisations of terrorist groups. Consequently, by the end of June, MED-TV broadcasts were shut down. Kurdish propaganda immediately began in London about freedom of the press by attracting to their side Edward Mortimer of the Financial Times, an 'expert' on Turkey, and as an amazing contradiction MED-TV restarted its broadcast through INTELSAT, based in the US, which claims to play an ardent role in international fora, for combating terrorism.

CONCLUSIONS

It is still a mystery to this author why some EU members refuse to see international terrorism for what it is as well as refusing to acknowledge it in the context of organised crime, while extortion and drug trafficking fall within the description of serious crimes drawn up by the United Nations.

"Until now, the terrorist identity of the PKK has been frequently underlined, but the fact that it is at the same time a fully fledged international organised crime outfit has escaped attention together with its ramifications regarding international law. Through the front organisations it has set up in several countries, the PKK has created an efficient infrastructure for itself to carry on with drug trafficking, arms smuggling and money laundering operations which help it to maintain its existence. In this way, the PKK has ceased to be merely a terrorist organisation, and has become a part of the international organised crime network whose tentacles engulf the world. This fact alone calls for the treatment of the PKK problem, not exclusively in its political dimensions, but also within the framework

of global security initiatives. The inclusion of terrorism in the scope of international crimes is among the controversial issues under debate in the West. The EU members, in particular, remain opposed to the idea on the grounds that terrorism has diffuse borders and lacks a universally accepted definition. This attitude from the EU was most marked at the 5th meeting of the UN Commission for the Prevention of Crime and Criminal Justice held in Vienna between May 21-31. It is interesting to note the parallels between the stances of the EU members and such countries as Syria, Libya, Iran and Lebanon which have advanced reservations that the struggle for self-determination by peoples resisting foreign occupation cannot be defined as terrorism."¹⁷

Yet it should be very clear that Syria, Iran, Libya and Lebanon had in mind only the Palestinians and Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Otherwise the countries in question would hardly consider self-determination for different groups within their own borders. For example, for a country such as Iran, where forty per cent of the population comprises non-Persians, it would be suicidal to promote self-determination indiscriminately. Therefore, it must be concluded that some EU members and parliamentarians tend to over generalize and read matters out of context. Turkey, for example, is clearly not in occupation of a foreign land and is struggling against a terrorist organisation which has become an active component of international crime. For example:

"The evolution of the PKK into an organised crime outfit comes as part of an ever-clearer global problem. This is the emergence of an international order in which criminal organisations impose their own rules. For the organised crime groups are trying to create lebensraum for themselves in a grey area where the accustomed rules of the game do not apply. That's why the argument that such organisations, which cannot be approached with current methods, do not fit the description of terrorism are misleading. The Mafia, international terrorist organisations, drug traffickers, the arms smugglers who have enlarged their field to include nuclear material, and money-laundering organisation have found themselves a broad 'grey area' with the end of the Cold War and have begun further enlarging that area. If the world fails to become sufficiently conscious of this reality, the materialisation of the 'new world disorder' predicted by international relations analysts or on era of chaos defined by Alain Mino as the 'New Middle Ages' will not be a distant prospect."¹⁸

It is in this sense that the PKK is a threat to global security. And, unless Turkey receives international support against the PKK and its front organisations, the current trend will only contribute to the making of the 'New Middle Ages.'

As for cleaning its own house of terrorism, the Turkish security forces have managed to confine the PKK, which is desperately trying to infiltrate Sivas in eastern Turkey. Thus far, the group or groups of the PKK have not been able to move west of Tunceli in the southeast.¹⁹ Furthermore, despite threats from the so-called Kurdistan Liberation Movement directed at potential German tourists to Turkey, there has not been a decline in the number of German tourists or those from other countries.

Öcalan may find other female suicide bombers, for he does not seem to sacrifice 'manpower'; he may continue to stimulate them with drugs and attempt to unleash them on Turkish soldiers.²⁰ Or worse yet, the PKK may begin using children to carry out its murderous schemes. Then, human rights quo vadis?

- 1 Criss, Nur Bilge (1995), 'The Nature of PKK Terrorism in Turkey', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 18:1 (January-March), pp. 17-37.
- 2 Demir, Gül (1996), 'President Klestil; A Historic Guest in a Historic City', *Turkish Daily News*, 1 July.
- 3 Ibid.; 'Viyana'ya PKK Uyarı' (Warning Vienna against the PKK), *Cumhuriyet*, 26 June 1996.
- 4 'Terör örgütü PKK'nın 'çocuk' ordusu' (Terrorist organisation PKK and its army of children), *Cumhuriyet*, 12 June 1996.
- 5 'Doğu'ya Kalkınma Vakfı' ('Development Foundation for the East'), *Milliyet*, 24 June 1996.
- 6 'Turkish businessmen plan huge investment in impoverished east', *Turkish Daily News*, 20 June 1996.
- 7 'Suicid Saldırıların Tehdidi' (Threat of suicide attacks), *Milliyet*, 12 June 1996.
- 8 Çevik, İnanır (1996), '...and PKK becomes liability for HADEP', *Turkish Daily News*, 25 June 1996.
- 9 'Bayrak Skandalı Kapıları Kapatıldı' (The Doors of Alliance are closed by the flag scandal), *Milliyet*, 26 June 1996.
- 10 Alpay, Şahin, 'Bayraktan Dersleri' (Lessons to be derived from the flag), *idem*.
- 11 Akyol, Taha, 'HADEP ve PKK' (HADEP and PKK), *idem*.
- 12 'PKK'liler eylem planlarıyla yakalandı' (PKK militants caught with plans of terrorist activity), *Cumhuriyet*, 26 June 1996; 'Metroyu bombalayacaklardı' (They were to bomb the metro), *Milliyet*, *idem*.
- 13 'Ministry attacks Amnesty report', *Turkish Daily News*, 25 June 1996.
- 14 'Amnesty International replies to the Turkish Foreign Ministry', *idem*, 29 June 1996.
- 15 Ba?lam?, Cenk (1996), 'Türkiye'yi bölme planı' (Plans to disintegrate Turkey), *Milliyet*, 27 June.
- 16 <idiz, Semih (1996), 'Ankara's sleuthing providing the facts Europeans maintain they lack on PKK's cover organisation', *Turkish Daily News*, 26 June.
- 17 Birlir, Hayri (1996), 'PKK as an international organised crime outfit', *Turkish Daily News*, 2 July.
- 18 Birlir, *Ibid*.
- 19 'PKK Tunceli'de kuşatma altında' (PKK is under siege in Tunceli), *Cumhuriyet*, 4 July 1996.
- 20 A young girl on her way to a suicide bomb attack before the July attack which killed 7 soldiers, was blown up before she reached her target because the bomb exploded prematurely.