NATO Security through Science Series E: Human and Societal Dynamics - Vol. 14

National Counter-Terrorism **Strategies**

Legal, Institutional, and Public Policy Dimensions in the US, UK, France, Turkey and Russia

> Edited by Robert W. Orttung Andrey Makarychev



This publication | The NATO Programme is supported by: | for Security through Science

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ISSN: 1574-5597

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Edited by

Robert W. Orttung

Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center American University, Washington D.C., USA

and

Andrey Makarychev

Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University, Russia

IOS Press

Amsterdam • Berlin • Oxford • Tokyo • Washington, DC Published in cooperation with NATO Public Diplomacy Division

VanderLippe, John M. (2005). The Politics of Turkish Democracy: İsmet İnönü and the Formation of the

Multi-Party System, 1938-1950. Albany: State University of New York Press.

National Counter-Terrorism Strategies R.W. Orttung and A. Makarychev (Eds.) IOS Press, 2006
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Religion-Based Terrorism in Turkey

Ali Caglar Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract. The main aim of this chapter is to explain and discuss the general features of religion-based terrorism in Turkey. The chapter starts with the historical background of terrorism in Turkey and then focuses on the religion-based organizations. The discussion examines the organizations' main goals, strategies, recruitment processes, members' and supporters' education and training, organizational structures, financial sources, types of propaganda, and activities. Subsequent sections describe the socio-economic background of terrorist group members who were arrested by the security forces and the tactics of these groups.

Keywords: Terror, Terrorism, Religion-Based Terror Organizations, Turkey.

Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to explain and discuss the general features of religion-based terrorism in Turkey. The data for this study was mainly gathered from the General Directorate of Security (GDS) in Turkey. A semi-structured interview, conducted with the senior officers (6 people) of the Anti-Terror Department of the GDS, has been used to collect supplementary information. In addition, secondary data from newspaper archives and other similar sources have also been utilized. However, the sensitivity and secrecy of the subject itself created some problems. First, there may be terrorist groups or organizations currently unknown to the security forces. Second, some especially current data concerning new organizations were not given to the researcher for operational reasons. With these limitations, all possible efforts were expended to collect the data needed.

As is already widely acknowledged, terrorism is a worldwide problem. The concept of terrorism is a relative and double-sided issue: the meaning changes according to the point of view. Frequently, the legal authorities and opposition groups label each other as "terrorists". The same person simultaneously is called as a terrorist or a hero by the opposite sides; i.e., one's terrorist is the other's hero (Caglar, 1997, 1998).

Despite these problems, terrorism can be defined as "the threatened or actual use of force or violence to attain a political goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation" (Alexander, et al 1979:4; For similar definitions of terror and terrorism see also Wilkinson, 1974; Laqueur, 1980; Rapoport and Alexander, 1982; Wardlaw, 1982; White, 1991; Whelan, 2005; Bal, 2006). This paper focuses on the groups defined as terrorist by Turkish legal acts. However, it is acknowledged that the subjects of this

paper (i.e. organizations) all have a political goal that they want to achieve through fear, violence, force, coercion and intimidation.

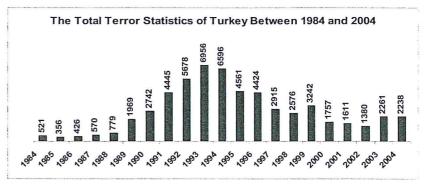
Clearly, each individual country puts its security first, and state security often depends on the goodwill of the people within its border (Alexander, et al 1979; x). However, it is not possible to satisfy all the citizens of a state, in all aspects of life, at all times. Limited individual freedom and/or human rights, and a high level of underdevelopment and/or poverty together lead to social and ethnic disturbances. When a proper solution is not found in a timely manner, the result is inevitably, and most often, terrorism. Many events in the last decade showed that in addition to conventional weapons and small arms, terrorists had, and continue to have, access to biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. There is always a possibility that terrorists could poison a water supply or subway system, detonate a bomb leading to casualties and mass destruction, or infiltrate and destroy an institution's computer system. Recent terrorist activities in Japan and the United States are good examples of these kinds of activities. It is extremely difficult to protect people from the negative social. economical, political and psychological effects of terrorism. That is why an academic study of terrorist activity and terrorist networks from socio-economic, political and psychological perspectives may help us understand what leads to these activities, and the possible future dangers.

1. The Historical Background of Terrorism in Turkey

Turkey has suffered from terrorism throughout its modern history. The roots of the problem can be traced back to 1950, when the multiparty system was established. University students and workers carried out sporadic illegal demonstrations from time to time. During these events, for the first time in Turkish history, government forces killed a university student during a street demonstration in 1959 (Turan et.all., 1983:1). As a result of this death, the number of strikes and demonstrations steadily increased over the years, especially in the late 1970s. The non-violent student and worker demonstrations that took place mostly in large cities were replaced by bloody street battles involving different groups or organizations all over the country. "... Bank robberies, machine gun raids of buses, restaurants and coffee houses, and bomb explosions in schools, streets and cars were a routine part of daily life. Every day, bomb-throwing, street battles and Mafia-type murders were leaving dozens of dead and hundreds of wounded behind" (Turan et al., 1983:1-2). For example, from December 1975 to April 1983, 40,037 terrorist attacks occurred (Itil, 1984:29-46), while 30,000 of them were carried out between 1975 and 1980 (Criss, 1995:155). While 319 people were killed in 1977, that number increased to 1,095 by 1978, and to 1,362 by 1979 (Dilmac, 1997:168). Between 1978 and 1980, 5,000 people were killed; 822,632 various types of weapons including rifles, revolvers, machine guns, mortars and missiles, and 5,454,925 types of ammunition were captured by security forces (Criss. 1995:166).

Under these circumstances, a military coup occurred on September 12, 1980, and terrorist activity sharply declined. By the end of March 1983, 12,307 people were arrested, 7,200 people were convicted and 650 people were under surveillance because of their involvement in terrorist activities (Turan et. al., 1983:2). There were no terrorist incidents between September 12, 1980 and August 15, 1984. However, on

August 15, 1984, the PKK (The Kurdish Worker Party) carried out its first attack on military and governmental institutions in Eruh - Sirnak, a province in the southeastern part of Turkey. Since then, the number of events has increased. The following chart gives a clear picture of terrorism and its results in Turkey.



Source: General Directorate of Security, Turkey

As the chart shows, terrorist activities peaked in 1993 with 6,956 events. According to the GDS data, 58,003 terror events occurred across the country between 1984 and 2004. Although Marxist-Leninist ideological and religion-based terror organizations carried out some of these attacks, the PKK – Kurdish Worker's Party, a separatist organization, committed a majority of the terror events.

The GDS data showed that around 100 different terrorist organizations, ranging in size and type, have operated in Turkey from the founding of the state to the present day. The data presented here demonstrate that Turkey has experienced a significant, and destabilizing, amount of terrorist activity since the 1950s.

Although terrorist organizations have many similarities, they have clear differences in their main goals and aims. Some groups state that they are fighting for national salvation or seeking independence. Good examples include the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and PKK. Others say that they fight to take revenge for past events. Examples include the Armenian organizations ASALA, JCAG, and ARA, which direct their activities against Turkey. Still others try to impose their racial, religious, political or socio-cultural views on all of society, such as the Ku Klux Klan, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah or Al-Qaeda.

In the terrorism literature, it is possible to find different typologies for terrorism and classifications of terrorist groups (See, for details, Wilkinson, 1974; Bell, 1975; White, 1991). However, a different classification is necessary for the terrorist organizations in Turkey because of their local characteristics, ideology, goals and activities. The most logical breakdown is:

- (1) Organizations Based on Marxist-Leninist Ideology,
- (2) Ethnicity-Based or Separatist Organizations,
- (3) Organizations Based on Racist and Extreme Right Ideology,
- (4) Organizations Based on Religion.

This chapter focuses on religion-based terror organizations in Turkey .

2. Religion-Based Terror Organizations

While it is possible to find religion-based terrorist organizations all over the world, they appeared in Turkey mostly after Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979. They aim to destroy the entire social, political, cultural and economic system of the Turkish Republic, and to establish an Islamic Ser'i (canonical) system instead. They believe in revolution. Sayar divides them into two: 'traditionalists' and 'radicals' (Cited by Dilmac, 1997:171). The number of traditionalist organizations is high and they are on the side of a moderate Islam. The radicals, mainly influenced by the Iranian Islamic Revolution, prefer a continuous struggle to reach their goals.

The main foundation of these organizations is religion. They use the concept of 'ummet' (the Muslims) instead of the term 'millet' (nation). According to them, the Holy Book (the Quran), is the only true guide and it should be made dominant over all aspects of daily life. For example, the Constitution would be the Quran, while the flag would be the Kelime-i Tevhid (Word of Unification). The capital of the country would be Istanbul. The new year would start from the first day of the month of Muharrem, the first month in the Arabic lunar calendar. The weekly day of rest would be Friday. The surname system used in Turkey would be abolished, and the people would use Islamic clothing. Arabic characters (script) would replace the Latin alphabet, which has been used in Turkey since the 1920s. Attempts to join the European Union would be ended; replaced by closer ties with Mecca. In short, all Kemalist institutions in the country would be destroyed. In contemplating these changes, one should not forget that Turkey is a unique country, the only secular and democratic one among the world's majority Muslim countries.

Some of the organizations² aim to combine all of the Middle East's countries into a "United Islamic State" with a federal form of government. More radical groups³ say that this state would cover the current Islamic countries and Asia Minor (Anatolia) in the short term, and the entire world in the long term. According to the data analyzed here, the thoughts and writings of Shiite intellectuals have a heavy influence on these organizations. Some of them⁴ believe that Iran is the only truly Islamic country, so the system and dominance of this country and her leader should be accepted and obeyed (Dilmac, 1997:190). According to the information taken from arrested members of these organizations, Iran provided them with educational and training opportunities. However, this influence has declined because of the recent policies enforced by Iran's political administration.

The data obtained also show that most of these organizations are located in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. There are 11 different organizations in this group. The most well known are Hezbollah, IHO (Islamic Action Organization), IBDA-C (Islamic Great East Raiders-Front), ICB (The Unification of Islamic Communities), HD (Caliphate State), AFID (Anatolian Federal Islamic State) and Tevhid-Selam (Kudus Ordusu – Jerusalem Army) (See also Dilmac, 1997:192-197; Criss, 1995:165; GYMD, 1990:39). Additionally, the PKK also has a few sub-

organizations, which use religion to further their activities, such as YOWK (Kurdistan Yurtsever Din Yayanlar Birligi-The Unity of Religion Missionaries of Kurdistan), YMK (Kurdistan Mollalar Birligi – The Unity of Kurdistan Clergymen) and YDK (Kurdistan Dindarlar Birligi – The Unity of Kurdistan Religious People). There are 5 main organizations, which are currently active and operate in Turkey or abroad against the Turkish Republic⁵.

In early 1993, Hezbollah split into two groups, named "Menzil" and "Ilim". While the Menzil group rejected the armed struggle at this stage, the Ilim group accepted it, and launched into its first battle with the PKK. These two groups were in competition with each other. The fight between them intensified, especially in 1994, and around 50 people were killed from both sides. However, this struggle now has lost its importance.

The religion-based terrorist organizations classify countries and their political regimes as Darul-Harb (Non-Islamic countries) and Darul-Islam (Islamic countries). They easily violate the religion's rules in non-Islamic countries when they struggle for Islam. They often justify their non-Islamic behaviors by claiming that Islamic rules are not valid in these countries, since they have to blend into the society in order to be successful in their struggle. For example, they can drink alcohol, shake women's hands, and go out without a headscarf. Besides that, according to the data obtained, they ask their supporters not to do anything which would be beneficial to the non-Islamic regime. For example, they tell their supporters to avoid paying taxes as much as possible. The idea behind this measure is that the tax will serve the regime they want to demolish.

According to the data gathered, the organizational structure of these groups can be given as follows: Most of them have a sheikh, an emir or a leader at the top. There is a consultation (Sura-Mesveret) committee under the command of the leader. Below them, there is a fatwa committee, regional executives, provincial and town executives. There are different units named medresse, course, dergah (dervish convent) and halka (circle of dervishes) under the power of provincial and regional executives. However, the menzil group has two leaders. One of them is the religious leader, the other is the political leader. Almost all of them adopted an organizational style with various subdivisions (kol). These subdivisions are:

- The social division (Ictimai kol): This division works to introduce the idea and basic rules of Islam in an understandable way to the general public.
- Transmitting division (Teblig kolu): It is in charge of introducing the main ideas, thoughts, aims, principles, and activities of the organization in order to transform passive supporters into active supporters. It also collects information about these people and transmits it to the leadership.
- 3. The intelligence division (Istihbarat kolu): This division receives and collects information, evaluates it, and warns the executives in case of an emergency. It also makes some inquiries about the other communities and groups.
- Military division (Askeri kol): In addition to the militaristic armed struggle for reaching the goals of the organization, it also robs, steals, and kidnaps in order to raise money for the organization.

¹ Kemalism is the ideological and political thought of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who is the founder of the modern Turkish Republic.

² For example, AFID (Anadolu Federal Islam Devleti - Anatolian Federal Islamic State).

³ For example, IBDA-C (Islami Buyuk Dogu Akincilari-Cephe – Islamic Great East Raiders-Front).

⁴ For example, Hezbollah and Tevhid-Selam (Kudus Ordusu – Jerusalem Army).

⁵ They are: Hezbollah, HD, IBDA-C, Al Qaeda and Tevhid-Selam (Kudus Ordusu).

Additionally, there are also a number of different sub-units in some organizations. For example, a number of people who are sympathetic to the goals of the IBDA-C but have no connection to the organization come together by their free will, and establish cells or fronts in their areas. There is no connection between these cells or fronts. The members of each cell read and discuss the writings, messages, and publications of the IBDA-C, and work from there. In these writings, the organization sometimes indirectly conveys a message about targets or events, that can then be carried out by whichever independent cell is closest to the target. These kinds of organizations are called "self-generating (*Kendinden Zuhur*)". If the event carried out is in favor of the organization, the organization declares that its members did it. Otherwise, they disassociate themselves from the event. If the event is successful, the organization publicizes it in order to encourage the other cells to perform similar actions. This system of organization makes it difficult to track and arrest the groups' members and supporters.

Religion-based organizations recruit their supporters and members mostly in mosques, from religious people. They believe that they should follow three stages for their struggle: Transmitting their message (Teblig), Community building (Cemaat), and Holy War (Jihad).

In the "transmitting" stage, they use propaganda, such as the following: "Ataturk⁶ is not a national hero. He took the worst action against Islam by adopting and putting into practice the secular system in Turkey. The secular system means atheism (being irreligious), and is not in accordance with Islam. This system divided Muslims into nations. It should be destroyed as soon as possible; Islam should be put into practice with its whole structure instead. The people who adopt a secular system and who do not wage war for Islam will go to hell."

If the groups succeed in spreading this message, then they may pass onto the second stage, namely the community-building stage. At this point, their aim is to organize the public and to prepare it for the next stage, which is Jihad (struggle).

In Jihad, it is time to fight with 'hizbuseytans' (barriers on the road to achieving an Islamic system encompassing individuals and institutions), and the armed struggle starts (Caglar, 1998:137-38). However, according to existing data, the religion-based terrorist groups in Turkey are mostly in the first and second stages.

3. Evolution of Terrorism in Turkey

The Turkish Republic has had a recurring problem with terrorism since its establishment. However, terrorism and terror organizations only became a dominant part of the sociopolitical agenda since the 1960s. Terrorist groups took root because of the following conditions:

- the internal migration of villagers from rural to urban areas,
- an increasing rate of unemployment and growing economic hardships,
- the international youth movement,
- new regulations adopted in the 1961 Constitution, which legalized a relatively larger degree of freedom of speech and organization,
- and the Kurdish problem.

From 1960 to 1980, Marxist-Leninist terror organizations were very powerful in Turkey. However, after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, they lost their previous strength. Instead, both Kurdish separatism and radical Islamic organizations gained strength. America's "green generation project", which sought to block the Soviets from gaining access to warm water ports, created fertile ground for the Islamic groups to grow in Turkey.⁷

Although Turkey's democratic tradition and principles allowed Islamic political parties, such as the Welfare (RP) and Justice and Development (AKP) parties, to come to power and be integrated into the legal political regime, marginalizing and weakening the radical Islamic terrorist groups, religion-based terrorism is still accepted as one of the two top threats to the Turkish Republic's political regime (the other one is the Kurdish separatism of the PKK).

The effects of both the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the Al-Qaeda movement cannot be ignored in the development of religion-based terrorism in Turkey. In one sense, Marxism was replaced by fundamental Islamism in Turkey. Globalization did not happen only in political and economical terms, but in terrorism as well. Turkey is not only under attack from local-national religion-based terror organizations, but also from the threat of internationally-connected Islamic-based terror organizations, such as Al-Qaeda.

4. Socio-economic Background of the Terrorists

If a general comparison is made among all types of terrorist organizations in Turkey, it is safe to say that the people who join these organizations have similar characteristics in terms of their education level, ethnic characteristics, socio-economic background, and ideological, psychiatric and psychological characteristics (See also Landau, 1979; Ergil, 1980; Sterling, 1981; Songar, 1984; Karacan, 1984; Alkan, 2002). The data I examined show that the leaders of terrorist groups are mostly from urban areas and have a very high level of education in comparison to their supporters. Also the data showed that illiterate people make up 5 percent of left-wing organizations, 20 percent in the ethnicity-based (Kurdish origin) organizations. particularly the PKK, and just 2 percent of the religion-based organizations. People who graduated from primary school make up 21 percent of the left wing, 48 percent of the ethnicity-based, and 10 percent of the religion-based organizations. Secondary school graduates comprise 13 percent of the left wing, 22 percent of the ethnicitybased, and 13 percent of the religion-based organizations. High school graduates make up 35 percent of the left wing, 7 percent of the ethnicity-based, and 46 percent of the religion-based organizations. University graduates make up 26 percent of left wing, 3 percent of ethnicity-based, and 29 percent of the religion-based organizations (See also Comertoglu, 1995: 141-142).

The data related to the occupational background of the people who have been arrested for engaging in terrorist activities in Turkey can be given as follows:

⁶ The founder of the Turkish Republic.

⁷ The Islamic groups in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan were supported to create "a green line" to block the Soviets. However, after the collapse of the USSR, they were left by themselves. When the enemy disappeared, it was replaced with "the new enemy". This new enemy was the West, America in particular, for these fundamentalist-radical organizations.

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Unemployed: 42.5%

Student: 12% Worker: 14%

Public officers: 5.5%

Independent business people: 26%

The breakdown of their parents' occupations are:

Worker and public officer: 29%

Farmer: 24% Retired: 14%

Independent business people: 33%.

The data also showed that all organizations use people who are under 18 years old. One reason for the popularity of this technique is that, according to Turkish law, minors under 18 receive more lenient punishments than adults. Another reason is that younger people are easier to indoctrinate.

5. Terrorist Group Tactics

Almost all organizations harshly punish their members in the case of betrayal. The left-wing organizations judge them in "People's Courts" (Halk Mahkemeleri) and the religion-based organizations use "Canonical Courts" (Seriat Mahkemeleri), which are formed according to their ideological backgrounds. With the exception of the Turkish Revolutionary Communist Party (TDKP), a left-wing organization, all other terrorist organizations (left-wing, extreme right, separatist and religious organizations) use the death penalty as punishment for betraying the organization.

All Turkish terrorist groups use every kind of mass media to publicize their ideologies and to gain support. Distributing tapes, using mobile phones, preparing radio broadcasts, hosting web sites (not all of them), publishing journals and newspapers, operating TV channels from abroad, and spraying graffiti, are among the means used in dissemination of their messages and propaganda. They use mostly the concepts of honor, religion, the holy book, the nation, motherland, freedom, and national salvation in their messages to the public.

Almost all organizations seek to destroy the legal system and political regime of the Turkish Republic. With the exception of extreme rightist organizations, all others carry out attacks on security forces' members, buildings and cars, and assassinations of governors, ex-military and security forces' personnel. The religion-based organizations additionally attack restaurants and shops selling alcohol. Some of the Kurdish groups, the PKK in particular, and some religion-based organizations kill government officers, including teachers and religious clerks who serve in the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey. The PKK is known for setting fire to government buildings, including schools, especially in villages. The reason behind these attacks is to prevent the assimilation of Kurdish children via the education system. In addition, the police data showed that destroying the economic activities and setting forest fires, mostly in the western part of the country, are also among the main goals of this organization. Religion-based organizations stated that they have to stop Kemalist (meaning non-Islamic) education both in schools and mosques.

The terrorist groups' military education and training includes techniques of assassination, robbery, surprise armed attacks, preparing bombs and Molotov cocktails, guerrilla war, undercover work and intelligence, kidnapping VIPs, misleading the public and the security forces, as well as providing first aid and general health education.

All organizations raise money through illegal and legal means. They rob, steal, and especially the larger organizations, deal with drug smuggling in order to gain the finances they need. In sum, all means are valid in reaching the final goals.

6. Conclusion

Turkish officials are committed to fighting and defeating terrorist organizations. However the problem is that it is very difficult to achieve this goal without making life more difficult for the general public. In other words, when any country seeks to fight terrorism, there is always a high possibility of human rights violations. The public suffers from the activities of both sides. It should not be forgotten that restricting citizens' freedom by tight security measures only serves the interests of terrorist organizations. It will not be easy, but the governmental forces and institutions have to separate citizens from terrorists, on the one hand, and not forget that "the terrorists" are also citizens, on the other. Terrorism can be controlled where democratic values are implemented decisively. Otherwise, the legality of governmental institutions and forces would be questioned and jeopardized, erasing any difference between them and the terrorists.

There are around 50 different Islamic countries throughout the world. Each one has practiced Islam in its own context. i.e., there are 50 different Islams, and today the world is experiencing an invisible war between Islam and Islamism. In Islam, people would like to practice their religious faith in peace. In Islamism, some people would like to use Islam and Islamic values to realize their own projects and to make their sociopolitical and economic systems dominant. If Islamism wins this war, then the main struggle or war will happen between Islamism and all others.

No one is safe if there is a terrorist organization operating in any country in this global age. Terrorism aims to breakdown the ties and relationships between individuals and their states. Terrorism is also globalized. No matter where it happens, it has multiple impacts -- social, economic, political, psychological and cultural. It affects financial institutions, aviation, insurance, tourism and many other sectors in different countries at the same time.

In the past, terrorist organizations were mainly operating inside the border of a country or were against only one state. Today, there are no borders for terrorist organizations and they aim to make a global impact (i.e., it is possible to explain this with 3Rs: no race, no religion and no region for contemporary terror organizations). They define their enemies in a global context. That is why all countries should collaborate with each other in combating all forms of terrorism.

In other words, we must first agree on a definition of terrorism. Inconsistency means that every country has its own definition and approach. The main reason for that is the use of terrorism as a tool in international conflicts. Second, to control terrorism, it is necessary to share all kinds of intelligence in an effective way at a moment's notice. Third, we must cooperate in educating and training each other's forces on possible prevention, pursuit, protection and preparedness issues, and the effectiveness of these efforts. Such measures will help to avoid duplication of ineffective struggle,

and will help to save money and human capital. However, it should not be forgotten that duplicating exactly the same method of combating one terrorist organization might not work for others. It is necessary to analyze each organization in its own context, then to develop appropriate responses.

Consequently, although Turkey has learned how to live with this chaos, it seems that she will still suffer more in the short and medium term, if she does not democratize her political system further. According to consensus opinion, it is not possible to win the battle against terrorism without having the full support of the general public. In other words, public support is vital for combating terrorism. There is something to be done by every single citizen against terrorism.

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