

# **Terrorism and the Politics of Anti-Terrorism in Turkey**

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## Introduction

Turkey has been fighting against terrorism since its establishment. During its establishment, it faced three threats. Each of the three threats, (1) religious fundamentalism, (2) ethnic (Kurdish) separatism and (3) Soviet (communist) domination somewhat manifested itself in terms of terrorist attacks after the establishment of the Republic. The terrorist organizations in Turkey were strengthened in the 1960s and 1970s especially during the student movements.

Though the 12 September 1980 military coup d'état brought most of the terrorist activities to an almost complete end by harsh measures, after the return to the civilian regime in 1983, terrorist activities started to resurface. The return to the civilian regime made it possible for the old terrorist groups to regroup and new groups to be established. The 1990s witnessed the continuation of the terrorist attacks by illegal organizations which can be broadly categorized in three major groups: (1) Kurdish separatist, (2) radical Islamist and (3) leftist (Marxist) terrorist groups.

However, after the end of the Cold War when the Soviet Union collapsed the leftist movements lost their energy and fervor. In addition, successful operations of the security forces caused the weakening and marginalization of the leftist terrorist organizations by the 2000s. Through the democratization reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s Islamist parties like *Refah Partisi* (and currently the governing conservative *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) have been integrated into the legitimate political system. In that regard radical Islamist impetus has been mostly diffused, causing the marginalization and weakening of the Islamist terrorist groups. So, the two of the three threats that Turkey faced since its establishment are by and large gone. Hence, today, Turkey is faced with only one real significant threat which is the ethnic (Kurdish) separatism and related PKK terrorist activities.

During the past several years, Turkey has taken big steps in preparing and implementing reforms of democratization and broadening the domain of freedoms in line with the Copenhagen political criteria in its bid towards EU membership. In that regard, Turkey has democratized and liberalized its Penal Law and broadened the domain of freedoms, such as freedom of speech, assembly and so forth. However, due to the most recent terrorist incident by (ethnic Kurdish separatist) PKK in March 2006, Turkey started to take some *legal steps* in addition to creating new *institutional bodies* and designing new *public policies* in its fight against terrorism.

The key in fight against terrorism, however, is to be able to strike a healthy balance between security and individual freedoms. What is required here is not just restricting the fundamental individual freedoms by excessive security measures, which will only serve the interest of the terrorist organization. What needs to be done is to find ways of increasing security measures against terrorism with no (or minimum) restrictions of individual freedoms. In that way, it will be possible to separate ordinary people from the terrorists (who are marginalized only in environments where democracy and freedoms are implemented).

In this article, the author first gives a brief history of Turkey in order to set the background for understanding the roots of terrorist activities in Turkey. After describing the three major terrorist groups in Turkey, the author focuses on the current PKK terrorist acts and measures that the current Turkish government has taken in its struggle against PKK terrorism.

## A Brief History of Turkey

The Ottoman Empire had been a major European power in the last few centuries. However, she lost her that particular power especially after WW I when she fell into the defeated side. In the beginning of the 1920s the empire collapsed and was disintegrated, giving way to more than twenty new states. The Republic of Turkey, the inheritor of “the sick man of Europe”<sup>1</sup>, emerged as the most powerful of the new states after a long struggle against the foreign enemies (i.e., the states that had occupied some parts of the present day Turkey during WW I). After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, however, Turkey has tried to be in the Western camp. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the republic, put the country under dramatic revolutions and reforms - to give it a pro-Western outlook in the 1920s. He abolished the sultanate, adopted new laws<sup>2</sup> and established a modern, secular, nation state.

When Republic of Turkey was established it faced three threats. The Republic was faced with two internal threats. Religious fundamentalism and ethnic separatism posed real threats to the young Republic. In addition, the danger of a Soviet invasion of Turkey or at least political domination of Turkey by the Soviet Union was an important external threat to the Republic.

During the 1920s and 1930s, internally Turkey was busy with implementing de-islamization, de-arabization and westernization reforms.

The various reforms of the 1920s and 1930s, and their ideological justification, have come to be known as Kemalism. Kemalism, which promised a peaceful social revolution, was a program aimed at reforming Turkey’s political institutions and at developing a national economy free of foreign domination through statist economic policies. The elimination of the Sultanate, abolition of the Caliphate, and declaration of the Republic were followed by alphabet reform, changes in the legal codes, dress laws, and women’s suffrage. Altogether, these reforms were aimed at moving Turkish society closer to West.<sup>3</sup>

The Sheikh Said rebellions (1924-1925) which carried both ethnic (Kurdish) separatist and religious fundamentalist motives against the Republican regime were harshly suppressed. Furthermore, a special court, known as the Independence Tribunal, was established in 1926 in order to curb the opposition to the Republican regime. In 1931, the People’s Party, in its Third Congress, adopted a program based on six values (tenets) which later became the fundamental tenets of the Republic: republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism and reformism. During the same year, People’s Houses (*halk evleri*) were established in order to spread the spirit (i.e., the six tenets) of the Republic to villages and small towns.

Turkey steadily developed economically during most of the Cold War era (post-World War II until the 1990s) and domestically tried to consolidate the fundamental tenets of the Republic. However, Turkey’s progress on democracy and human rights were curtailed by three military interventions.

The military in Turkey has always played a role even when the army is seen to be in the barracks. They have usually played the moderator role where they have veto power in the National Security Council meetings which are held once a month. The Turkish military also played a role which was closer to moderator but more intense in that it had similarities with guardian type, in 1971 and imposed a civilian government of its liking, without actually physically coming to power. In 1960 (until 1961) and in 1980 (until 1983), the military coups actually toppled the civilian governments and the military ruled the country with technocrats for brief periods. They even discarded the old constitutions (of 1924 and 1961) and designed new constitutions (of 1961 and 1982). Their basic aim was to fight the three threats against

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<sup>1</sup> Ottoman Empire in its declining period was referred to as "the sick man of Europe" by the British.

<sup>2</sup> A code of penal law from Italy and a civil code from Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> See John M. VanderLippe (2005): p. 16

the Republic and keep Turkey intact within the fundamental tenets of the Republic in the Western camp.

During the 1990s, the capacity, attention and the room for maneuver for Turkish politics, although enlarged due to the end of the Cold War, were heavily curtailed by three chronic domestic problems: Economic crises, political instability and terrorism. Turkey had to struggle with high inflation and severe economic crises during the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> It was almost impossible to design and apply a rational structural economic program in an environment where there was political instability due to several different coalition governments.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Turkey was fighting against the PKK during the 1990s. The war against PKK not only drained Turkey's attention and energy, but also cost Turkey billions of dollars.<sup>6</sup>

It was against a tough domestic background and an international background which was full of uncertainties due to the constantly transforming international paradigm that Turkey was designing and implementing its policies. Hence, curtailed by domestic problems and challenged by the post-Cold War uncertainties, Turkish politics was unable to fully usurp the new opportunities of the post-Cold War era. Instead, Turkey followed its traditional policy making, such as *caution*, *conservatively* following its traditional clichés (*continuity*) and trying not to tilt the boat (*status quo*), in order to erase the threats of the post-Cold War era in most part of the 1990s. In short, Turkey spent the 1990s mostly in a mode of *muddling through*.

### ***New Millennium Era***

Turkish political elite (and the public) have mostly been ambivalent about the relations with the West (EU and the US) and the Middle East. This is due to the *Sevres syndrome*<sup>7</sup> that the Turkish Kemalist elite inherited from the latest stage of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey's foreign relations are still under the impact of the traditionalist Kemalist worldview. On the one hand, there is the latent mistrust towards both the West and the Middle Eastern neighbors. On the other hand, this worldview is mirrored by the narrow notion of security – limited to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state – that characterizes Turkish politics.<sup>8</sup>

Though the Kemalist ruling elite continued to have a good dose of *Sevres syndrome*, they still continued to foster the Turkey-EU relations in the 1990s. Turkey entered the new millennium with optimism and increased political credit, mostly due to the announcement of Turkey, by the EU, as a “candidate country” for full membership in December 1999 Helsinki Summit. However, the pace of the reforms in Turkey to fulfill the criteria to start the accession negotiations with the EU, the Copenhagen political criteria, was quite slow. Decision making, especially on major issues, or implementing reforms in coalition governments is always very difficult and more time consuming, compared to a one-party government, due to the need for a process of negotiation and consensus building. This was the case with the ruling coalition government in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, which was composed of three political parties with ideologies far apart from one another - Prime Minister Ecevit's center-left DSP, Bahçeli's extreme-right MHP and Yılmaz's liberal-conservative ANAP.

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<sup>4</sup> For further details, see Öniş (2000): pp. 95-115.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see Hale (2000): pp. 195-199.

<sup>6</sup> For further details, see Cornell (2003): pp. 123-142, and Radu (2003): 143-164.

<sup>7</sup> See Jung (2003) for further details.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The financial crisis of November 2000 and the more severe one in February 2001 came as a big blow on the ruling coalition government. Due to the February 2001 economic crisis, the value of the Turkish lira dropped almost 50 percent overnight and nearly 65 percent by the end of 2001.

Unemployment mounted rapidly in the financial sector, affecting many younger, urban Turks. The collapse of the commercial credit system had a pronounced effect on the small and medium-sized enterprises across the country. Turkish and foreign observers began to openly speculate about the prospects for social unrest and more violent protest. ...

Since the end of the Cold War, observers have often described Turkey as being at a crossroads. In previous crises, Turkey has simply “muddled through” without pronounced changes in course. By contrast, the events of 2000-2001 have clearly led Turkey to a crossroads, by any definition, and muddling through is unlikely to suffice.<sup>9</sup>

The coalition government introduced a painful economic reform program in order to overcome the present financial crisis and to prevent future crises through structural reforms in the Turkish financial system. Any Turkish government had two options here.

On the one hand, successful implementation of the IMF-inspired economic reforms will require a degree of political change that could facilitate more rapid reforms, greater democratization, and the steps required for closer integration in Europe. ... On the other hand, Turkey’s conservatism and statism may impede economic and political reform. ... The result would be a more inward-looking Turkey, more sovereignty conscious on the international scene. In the worst case, a more chaotic and uncontrolled Turkey would have little energy and resources for foreign policy initiatives.<sup>10</sup>

The Ecevit government chose the first option and gave the full control of the Turkish economy to Kemal Derviş, one of the leading chiefs of the World Bank invited by Ecevit to serve as the Minister of Economics. The Ecevit government was aware that the economic reform program should be supplemented with more political reforms in order to receive the necessary international financial support. Hence, in a way, the Ecevit government combined the economic reform program (for the structural problems of the Turkish economy) with the National Program that it prepared for the political reforms needed for the fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria for the EU. However, the economic crisis of February 2001 had already affected almost all sectors of the Turkish society negatively and the positive results of the reform program had not been reflected on the common people by November 2003 parliamentary election. The 2003 election resulted in all the three coalition government parties to score below the 10 percent national threshold and failing to secure seats in the Turkish Parliament.

AKP won the 2003 election with the two-thirds of the seats in the Turkish parliament. It was after twelve years of coalition governments (1991-2003) that Turkey was once again ruled by one party government of AKP. The AKP government came to power calling for more democratization and carrying Turkey to the EU. The AKP government adopted and implemented the economic reform program of the previous government without much change. By and large, the AKP government has so far showed its commitment to democratization and Turkey’s EU membership process by measurable deeds.<sup>11</sup> On 6 October 2004, the EU Commission in its annual Regular Report on Turkey indicated that Turkey had fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria and recommended that the Council open accession negotiations with Turkey. After tough negotiations at the EU Council Summit on 17 December 2004, the Council decided to start the accession negotiations with Turkey on 3

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<sup>9</sup> Larrabee and Lesser (2003): p.16.

<sup>10</sup> Larrabee and Lesser (2003): pp. 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> Sözen (2005): pp. 300-304.

October 2005 and the actual negotiations indeed started where Turkey is now an “acceding country” for the EU membership. This is a historic decision of the EU to take the first step towards the *consensus of civilizations*.<sup>12</sup>

Starting with the 1999 Helsinki Summit where Turkey was declared a “candidate country,” more and more changes in the traditional Turkish political behavior have been observed. The changes in Turkish politics have been more visible and pronounced especially since the 2003 election that brought AKP to the government. However, although Turkey is performing brilliantly in terms of economic performance and political reforms, recently it has been poisoned by a wave of terrorism.

## **Terrorism in Turkey**

Although modern Turkey was faced with terrorism during the very beginning of the Republic by the Sheikh Said rebellions (1924-1925) which were harshly crushed, serious terrorist activities started to take root in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s which were the decades witnessing serious political and social turmoil. There are several factors that can explain the reasons behind the turmoil:

(1) rapid urbanization as the population migrated from rural Turkey to its cities; (2) economic hardships as employment failed to keep up with an exploding urban population; (3) growing unrest in the southeastern Kurdish provinces; and (4) nascent radical Islamic and leftist student movements. Also exacerbating this upheaval was the Constitution of 1961, which guaranteed Turkish citizens the right to political protest, and a succession of civilian governments that failed to control these worsening problems.

By the late 1970s, both left-wing and right-wing political extremes had given rise to numerous domestic terrorist organizations. As a result, terrorist bombings, shootings, and threats were commonplace... with an average of 28 deaths per day due to terrorist attacks.<sup>13</sup>

Though the 12 September 1980 military coup d'état brought most of the terrorist activities to an almost complete end by harsh measures, after the return to the civilian regime in 1983, terrorist activities started to resurface. The return to the civilian regime made it possible for the old terrorist groups to regroup and new groups to be established. The 1990s witnessed the continuation of the terrorist attacks by illegal organizations which can be broadly categorized in three major groups: (1) Kurdish separatist, (2) radical Islamist and (3) leftist (Marxist) terrorist groups.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Kurdish Separatist Terrorist Groups***

The main aim of the Kurdish terrorist groups in Turkey has been to establish an independent Kurdish state on the southeastern part of Turkey which is heavily populated by people with Kurdish ethnicity. The final goal of these groups is to expand this territory to include parts of northern Iraq, northern Syria and western Iran which would constitute “greater Kurdistan.” The PKK (Partiya Karekeren Kurdistan), the Kurdistan Worker’s Party, has been the major Kurdish separatist terrorist organization which has been responsible for majority of the terrorist attacks and related casualties of more than 35,000 since the mid-1980s. Although almost all of its attacks in the 1980s were conducted in eastern and

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<sup>12</sup> Sözen (2005): p. 303.

<sup>13</sup> Rodoplu et al (2004): p. 155.

<sup>14</sup> Remember the three threats to the Republic of Turkey during its establishment!

southeastern provinces of Turkey, in 1990s PKK extended its terrorist attacks to many urban targets in Turkey and Turkish institutions abroad (mostly in Western Europe).

PKK was originally established in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan as a Marxist-Leninist organization aiming to establish a Kurdish state through communist revolution. Later in the 1980s and 1990s PKK “established lucrative economic base in drug-trafficking, while extending its political base through Islamic agitprop.”<sup>15</sup> The leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured in Nairobi in 1999. Although in jail since then, Öcalan continues to be the leader of PKK. “Since Öcalan’s arrest, the majority of full-time guerillas have remained in camps in Northern Iraq, where some 10,000 continue to stay, but some groups of PKK activists have broken with the central leadership.”<sup>16</sup>

PKK changed its name to KADEK (Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress) in 2002 signaling as if it were interested in operating on the legal and legitimate platform. However, the real motive behind this change was to escape the consequences of the post-September 11 efforts of the international community to fight against terrorism. In 2003 during its second congress, KADEK changed its name to KONGRA-GEL (Kongreye Gele Kurdistan) or Kurdistan People Congress without any structural, ideological or political change from KADEK (PKK), again another tactical move to escape from being listed as a terrorist organization by the US and European countries. See Tables 1-3 in the Appendix for more details of PKK’s terrorist actions.

### ***Radical Islamist Terrorist Groups***

The major aim of the radical Islamist terrorist groups in Turkey is to replace the secular Republic with a theocratic state based on Islamic *Sharia*, similar to the Iranian theocratic state. According to Karmon (1997)

The first stage is the message (*teblig*), and calls for an effort by the radicals to persuade the people to adopt the Islamic religion, establish an Islamic state and administration, live in accordance with Islamic rules and struggle to safeguard the Islamic way of life. The second stage is the community (*cemaat*) and calls for the restructuring of communities in accordance with the requirements of the first stage. The third stage is the struggle (*jihad*), and calls for the armed struggle to safeguard the Islamic way of life.

The most important Islamist terrorist group in Turkey is the Turkish Hizbullah which has no apparent connection with the Lebanese Hizbullah. The group does not have a clear origin. However, it became known after the Iranian Islamist Revolution in the early 1980s. The group had internal division in the 1980s which led to the emergence of two factions: the *İlim* and the *Menzil*. On the one hand *Menzil* was supporting the Iranian regime, while *İlim* had an anti-Iran and anti-*Shi’a* orientation. After severe fight between the two factions in 1993 and 1994, *İlim* gained the upper hand and became responsible for almost all the terrorist attacks in Turkey by Hizbullah.<sup>17</sup>

Although there are some arguments that Hizbullah operated against PKK in the early 1990s through some sort of a “support” from the Turkish government, “the anti-PKK attacks largely ended in 1993 when the Hizbullah and the PKK signed a “cooperation protocol.””<sup>18</sup> According to Cline (2004: p. 324)

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<sup>15</sup> Rodoplu et al (2004): p. 156.

<sup>16</sup> Cline (2004): p. 327.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pp. 323-324.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 324.

Hizbullah began attacks against societal and governmental targets that posed a direct challenge to the Turkish government. A concerted government crackdown began about 1998. ... In the ensuing widespread search, police uncovered bodies of nearly 70 businessmen and journalists who had been tortured and killed. ... The Hizbullah ... reacted by focusing its attacks on government figures, including a sophisticated assassination of the Diyarbakır police chief in January 2001 and a reported plot against three retired generals. ... The security forces have continued their campaign against Hizbullah infrastructure. ... Given the frequently strained relationship between the military and Islamic political elements, the extent to which some of these so-called Islamic terrorists actually are engaged in terrorist acts versus being politically Islamist remains problematic.

During 2000, Hizbullah had a major blow when the Turkish government organized a series of major operations against it where 1,366 Hizbullah operatives and supporters were arrested.

In addition to Hizbullah, though less significant, IBDA-C (Great Eastern Islamic Front) is another domestic Islamist terrorist group which became known in the late 1990s. IBDA-C is a very anti-Semitic and anti-Christian in its ideology. Similar to Hizbullah, it targeted important secular public figures.

Its most prominent victim has been Ahmet Taner Kışlalı in 1999. Killed by a bomb planted on his car, Kışlalı was a very well-known columnist for a leftist newspaper, and used his column to attack Islamic fundamentalism. He also was a former member of parliament and a government minister in the 1970s. ... [IBDA-C] has continued to launch small-scale bombing attacks, including such targets as Christian churches and publishing houses, government-supported mosques, churches, secular TV transmitters and newspapers, statues of Atatürk, bars, and other “sinful” businesses, and assaults on middle- and lower-class businessmen.<sup>19</sup>

Although the IBDA-C’s real strength is unknown, it is thought that the number of its operatives and supporters are not more than a few hundreds. See Tables 1-3 in the Appendix for more details of the terrorist actions of the Islamist groups.

### ***Leftist (Marxist) Terrorist Groups***

The main goal of the leftist terrorist groups in Turkey is to establish a communist state where the wealth would be redistributed in accordance with the Marxist principles of classless society. The leftist terrorist groups started to become strong in the student organizations in the 1970s. Today, there are two major leftist terrorist groups which are active in Turkey: TIKKO and DHKP/C.

The first is Turkish Communist Party – Marxist and Leninist Turkish Worker and Peasant Liberation Army (TKP-ML-TIKKO; usually known simply as TIKKO). Its ideology predominantly is Maoist, and had a strong Kurdish membership, along with a base in the minority Alevi community. ... TIKKO has conducted both urban and rural operations, including attacks against both civilian and government targets. ...

The second terrorist group of note is the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C). This group is a splinter of the historically better-known Dev Sol, and like Dev Sol, recruits heavily among student groups. The DHKP/C was founded in 1994 as a result of factional infighting within Dev Sol. Its operations have followed the pattern established by Dev Sol, targeting “imperialist” and “capitalist” figures and facilities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 325.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 330.

Today both terrorist groups are in decline, mostly due to “periodic internal discord, leading to several divisions and the branching-off of multiple, less potent factions.”<sup>21</sup> See Tables 1-3 in the Appendix for more details of the terrorist actions of the leftist groups.

### ***Recent Developments and the Re-Emergence of PKK Terrorism***

Rodoplu et al (2004: p. 158) observed that, although Turkey had been carrying the burden of terrorism for a very long time, the risk of terrorism (in 2004) was lower than the previous years due to several factors. First of all, most of the terrorist groups had been weakened due to the arrests or deaths of their leaders after successful operations conducted by the security forces. Secondly, due to the full integration of Islamist *Refah Partisi* (and currently the governing conservative *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) into the legitimate political system, radical Islamist impetus has been mostly diffused, causing the marginalization and weakening of the Islamist terrorist groups. Thirdly, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist regimes made it almost impossible for extreme leftist ideologies to find popular support, thus leading to more marginalization of the leftist terrorist groups. Fourthly, Turkey has been “a proactive partner in the international war against terrorism” as a country who signed all twelve international conventions and protocols against terrorism. In addition, significant democratization reforms since the late 1990s and early 2000s, start of the accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU, as well as steady high economic growth of the Turkish economy in the last few years have been making the Turkish context less attractive to domestic terrorist groups.

It is very ironic that the recent terrorist attacks by PKK took place in a time when Turkey was most democratic compared to the past; Kurds were given some, though restricted, cultural right such as to broadcast in Kurdish and open private Kurdish language courses; and everyday life was normalizing in the southeast provinces of Turkey. After the killing of 14 PKK militants by the security forces on 26 March 2006, there were demonstrations in Diyarbakır and other southeastern provinces, planned and encouraged by PKK. In the demonstrations, PKK used women and children in the frontline. This was a tactical move by the PKK in order to clash the women and children with the security forces, so that to project the “ugly face” of the Turkish security forces towards “innocent” women and children. Then PKK carried its terrorist attacks to Istanbul where four public busses were set on fire. A total of 15 people lost their lives in the demonstrations and the terrorist attacks in Istanbul. Şahin Alpay, a prominent Turkish columnist and intellectual, explains the recent incidents plainly and rationally.

It is clear that the PKK is extremely uneasy about the democratic progress in the country, and that it is determined to undermine this process, and that as its isolation grows, it is going berserk. There are, undoubtedly, certain circles much eager to use the PKK’s furor to halt Turkey’s progress towards full democracy and civilian rule. The conflict in Turkey is not between Turks and Kurds, but between those who want a freer and more prosperous Turkey and those who oppose it.<sup>22</sup>

There are several factors that can be attributed to the recent resurfacing of the PKK terrorism in Turkey. First, although Turkish security forces had been quite successful in fighting against PKK and virtually eradicating all PKK militants in Turkey by early 2000, the Turkish governments have been very slow in designing and implementing a development plan for the southeast Anatolian provinces which are mostly inhabited by Turkish citizens of

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<sup>21</sup> Rodoplu et al (2004): p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> Daily Zaman newspaper, 4 April 2006.

Kurdish origin and where unemployment is extremely high. Today, regional disparities are still very much a reality in Turkey where most of the provinces of the southeast Anatolia are relatively poorer than the rest of the country. Second, the war in Iraq, which helped the Iraqi Kurds to strengthen their self-rule and virtually create an autonomous Kurdish state in northern Iraq, triggered the Kurdish problem in Turkey by posing an attractive model for some Kurdish groups in Turkey.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the significant reforms of democratization in Turkey in the last few years where Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria and started the accession negotiations with the EU, expanded the domain of freedoms in which different groups could operate more easily in voicing their demands. Of course, terrorist groups are no exception to be able to usurp such a domain of freedom.

Hence, today the most dangerous terrorist risk for Turkey is coming from the separatist terrorist group PKK (KADEK, KONGRA-GEL) that should be dealt with in urgency and comprehensively without jeopardizing the democratic reforms that it has since the late 1990s.

### **Turkish Response to PKK Terrorism: Legal, Institutional and Public Policy Reactions**

During the past several years, Turkey has taken big steps in preparing and implementing reforms of democratization and broadening the domain of freedoms in line with the Copenhagen political criteria in its bid towards EU membership. In that regard, Turkey has democratized and liberalized its Penal Law and broadened the domain of freedoms, such as freedom of speech, assembly and so forth. However, due to the most recent terrorist incident by PKK in March 2006, Turkey started to take some *legal steps* in addition to creating new *institutional bodies* and designing new *public policies* in its fight against terrorism.

The government prepared a new Anti-Terrorism Bill (ATB) and sent it to the Turkish Parliament in April 2006 to be approved and become the Anti-Terrorism Law (*Terörle Mücadele Yasası - TMY*). According to the new ATB, there will be increased penalties for the individuals who organize and work for terrorist groups; some restrictions on the press and on some freedoms; and extended authorities for the security forces in fighting against terrorism.<sup>24</sup>

The organizers and administrators of terrorist groups will have 10-15 years of imprisonment while the members of the terrorist groups will have 5-10 years of imprisonment if found guilty. Persons will be penalized 1-3 years of imprisonment for revealing the names of the security forces who fight against terrorism and publicize the statements of the terrorist organizations. If such crimes are committed through press, then the owner of the newspaper or periodical as well as the responsible publication managers will be financially penalized. In addition, newspapers and other periodicals which transmit propaganda of the terrorist organizations could be closed.

Persons who reveal, through carrying the emblem or signs of the terrorist organization or cover their faces in meetings and demonstrations, that they are the members or supporters of the terrorist organization will be punished with 1-3 year imprisonment. Legal parents who could not prevent their children from participating in the activities of the terrorist organizations could be given the punishment of imprisonment.

Through the ATL the security forces will be able to tap the telephones of persons who are suspected to be members or supporters of a terrorist organization, follow such persons

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<sup>23</sup> Jordanian Nehar newspaper, 6 April 2006.

<sup>24</sup> See Radikal newspaper, 19 April 2006, for further details of the new ATB.

through modern technological devices and establish special covert investigation teams to deal with such terrorist group members.

Currently, however, there is a lot of debate in the Turkish media regarding the new ATB. Many liberal intellectuals are criticizing the new ATB as a move by the government to curtail the domain of freedoms and dilute the reforms of democratizations which Turkey has been adopting for several years. The government spokesman and the Justice Minister Cemil Çiçek, on the other hand, has made it clear that the government has no such intention. Çiçek stated that the ATB did not target the common people, but precisely those persons who were deliberately and consciously helping the terrorist organizations. He also stated that the ATB should not be seen as a panacea and that the problem of terrorism can not be erased by only legal actions, but with a comprehensive approach.<sup>25</sup>

The Turkish government is currently working on creating a new institutional body, operating directly under the Prime Ministry that will be used in the fight against terrorism. The new institution is called the Directorate General of Security Affairs - DGSA (Güvenlik İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü – GİGM). The aim of the DGSA is to help the Prime Ministry to deal with the issues of security and anti-terrorism more efficiently. The DGSA will also take on the secretariat of the Higher Council for Anti-Terrorism - HCAT (*Terörle Mücadele Yüksek Kurulu – TMYK*) which was originally established in 1998 by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, but was later forgotten and non-operational until recently.<sup>26</sup>

The National Security Council – NSC (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu - MGK*) on its 29 December 2005 meeting decided to advise the government that the HCAT should be re-operational and possess a secretariat. After the 23 February NSC meeting, the government decided to upgrade the level of the Chairmanship for Security Affairs – CSA (Güvenlik İşleri Başkanlığı – GİB), established in 1984, to Directorate General and decorated it with wide range of authority. Hence, the government sent the bill regarding the establishment of DGSA to the Turkish Parliament on 7 March 2006. According to the bill DGSA, when operational, will have the following competences:

1. To administer and when necessary coordinate the relations between the institutions (Turkish Armed Forces, National Intelligence Organization, Commandership of Coastal Security and the Foreign Ministry ) dealing with internal security, external security and anti-terrorism.
2. To investigate, research and evaluate on issues related with internal and external security and anti-terrorism and make proposals.
3. To compile, evaluate and coordinate on issues related to the establishment of martial law and extraordinary situation (in certain regions).
4. To act as the secretariat of the institutions dealing with related issues (i.e., with internal and external security and anti-terrorism).
5. To do similar tasks given by Office (i.e., the Prime Ministry).<sup>27</sup>

In addition to new legal steps and new institutional bodies in fight against terrorism, the AKP government has also adopted a new public policy, more precisely a new discourse, in fight against, specifically, PKK terrorism. Similar to ex-President Süleyman Demirel, who talked about the “Kurdish problem”<sup>28</sup> in the 1990s, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan

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<sup>25</sup> See Çiçek’s press release in the news portal site

[http://www.dunyahaber.com.tr/news\\_display.asp?upsale\\_id=259185](http://www.dunyahaber.com.tr/news_display.asp?upsale_id=259185).

<sup>26</sup> See Murat Yetkin’s column in Radikal newspaper, 23 April 2006, for further details.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> “Kurdish problem” is loosely used to indicate a range of issues such as, ethnic separatism, lack of cultural rights of the Kurds, underdevelopment of the southeastern provinces and so forth.

emphasized the importance and the need to solve the “Kurdish problem” of Turkey. Here, the Prime Minister was implicitly stating that the continuation of the Kurdish problem is helping the hands of the terrorist PKK. In other words, the PKK was exploiting the problems of the people with Kurdish origin in order to support, popularize and legitimize its terrorist attacks.

Erdoğan publicly stated that there are Turkish citizens with Kurdish origin in Turkey who have certain problems that need to be resolved. Similarly, Prime Minister Erdoğan talked about *sub-identity* (*alt kimlik*) and *supra-identity* (*üst kimlik*). According to Erdoğan people had sub-identities, such as Kurdish, Albanian, Circasian, Bosnian and so forth, but the supra-identity in Turkey was the Turkish citizenship that bound every person living in Turkey. Erdoğan’s new discourse, however, received lots of criticism from the opposition parties who claimed that Erdoğan should deal with Kurdish problem and problem of terrorism separately. The criticisms came from two fronts. One group, including the extreme right wing party MHP, blamed the Prime Minister for pronouncing the “Kurdish problem” which, in their opinion, was a concession to the illegal PKK and a weakness in anti-terrorism efforts in Turkey. The other group, including the main opposition social democrat CHP, blamed the Prime Minister for being vague about and failing to fully describe the Kurdish problem. According to this group, Erdoğan fell into the trap where he helped to legitimize the demands of the illegal PKK which was a very unfortunate situation for the country.<sup>29</sup> The Prime Minister, however, was insistent on his approach: “Kurdish problem and many other problems can be solved through democratization, with republican principles and within the constitutional formwork. We are dealing with what is lacking and imbalances that the organization (PKK) exploits together with terrorism.”<sup>30</sup>

A day before his trip to the southeastern province of Diyarbakır, Erdoğan, in his meeting with the group of intellectuals who called on the PKK to give up weapons, gave some important messages. Erdoğan stated that his government has two principles through which they intended to solve the Kurdish problem.

1. We don’t subscribe to the attitude where problems are ignored, their existence denied, and caricaturized as divorced from historical and social dynamics, and suffocated in a cruel approach. Denying problems existent in the society is a political engineering attempt which is the worst enemy of democracy. We accept every problem as real and intend to solve these problems within the democratic republic and constitutional order through more democratization and more reforms. Kurdish problem and many other problems are, for us, problems (that can be solved with-) in democratization.
2. We state firmly that we shall not allow (or be lenient to) those who, by using the problems in the society as an excuse, attempt to create violence, massacre our innocent citizens and kill our brave security forces.<sup>31</sup>

The group of intellectuals, after meeting with the Prime Minister, made another call to the PKK. “We call on the PKK once more. It should stop armed actions immediately and without any condition. Because the message of democratic opening (opportunity) was given (by the government). This should be followed through. We are sure that the Prime Minister will give a warm message in Diyarbakır.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the Prime Minister gave a warm message of more democratization the next day in Diyarbakır, as well as in the following days, weeks and months. However, the PKK terrorism has not stopped. In fact, PKK terrorist acts continued in 2006.

## **Conclusion: Balance Between Security and Freedoms**

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<sup>29</sup> See Radikal newspaper, 16 August 2005, for more details.

<sup>30</sup> Radikal newspaper, 11 August 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Turkey has been fighting against terrorism since its establishment. Each of the three threats, (1) religious fundamentalism, (2) ethnic (Kurdish) separatism and (3) Soviet (communist) domination, which it faced during the period of its establishment, somewhat manifested itself in terms of terrorist attacks after the establishment of the Republic. The terrorist organizations in Turkey were strengthened in the 1960s and 1970s especially during the student movements. However, after the end of the Cold War when the Soviet Union collapsed the leftist movements lost their energy and fervor. In addition, successful operations of the security forces caused the weakening and marginalization of the leftist terrorist organizations. Through the democratization reforms in the 1990s and early 2000s Islamist parties like *Refah Partisi* (and currently the governing conservative *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) have been integrated into the legitimate political system. In that regard radical Islamist impetus has been mostly diffused, causing the marginalization and weakening of the Islamist terrorist groups. So, the two of the three threats that Turkey faced since its establishment are by and large gone. Hence, today, Turkey is faced with only one real significant threat which is the ethnic (Kurdish) separatism and related PKK terrorist activities.

The key in erasing the PKK terrorism is to separate PKK from the Turkish citizens with Kurdish origin. It is known that the PKK does not represent the majority of the Kurds in Turkey. However, it is also known and should be acknowledged that the PKK has been exploiting the “Kurdish problem” in popularizing and legitimizing its use of violence and terrorist attacks. Hence, once the Kurdish problem is solved, the PKK will be left with no excuse in using violence and terrorist attacks and will be automatically marginalized. In that regard, the Turkish government should deal with the PKK terrorism in a comprehensive manner. That is, in addition to physically fighting against PKK terrorism without any concession, the government should simultaneously implement a comprehensive economic, political and social program aimed at solving the Kurdish problem. The most immediate and urgent steps in resolving the Kurdish problem is now openly indicated by many intellectuals.

1. Designing and implementing an economic development plan in the southeastern part of Turkey in order to erase the high rate of unemployment and poverty in the region. Hence, it would be less attractive to especially young unemployed people to become PKK militants.
2. Broadening the domain of freedoms to include cultural rights for the Turkish citizens with Kurdish origin. In that regard, Kurdish identity should be freely expressed without restrictions in legitimate and legal platforms.
3. Lowering the electoral threshold from 10% to 5% so that the representation of small parties (including parties supported by Kurdish population) in the Turkish parliament will be possible. Hence, the Kurdish demands could be voiced in legitimate political platforms, rather than by PKK.
4. Preparing a comprehensive amnesty for PKK militants who do not have blood on their hands. This will give the opportunity to these people to free themselves from the criminal terrorist PKK and return to normal life.

The key in fight against terrorism is to be able to strike a healthy balance between security and individual freedoms. What is required here is not just restricting the fundamental individual freedoms by excessive security measures, which will only serve the interest of the terrorist organization. What needs to be done is to find ways of increasing security measures against terrorism with no (or minimum) restrictions of individual freedoms. In that way, it will be possible to separate ordinary people from the terrorists (who are marginalized only in

environments where democracy and freedoms are implemented). In that regard, the recent messages of the Turkish government that in Turkey's anti-terrorism struggle there would be no return back from the democratic reforms and individual freedoms are encouraging.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 1: Terrorist organizations active in Turkey since 1990**

English Name	Turkish Acronym	Major Ideology	Major Goal
Kurdistan Worker's Party*	PKK	Kurdish separatism, Islamism, Marxism	Establishment of an independent Kurdish state in southeast Turkey
Kurdistan Democratic Congress*	KADEK	Kurdish separatism	Establishment of an independent Kurdish state in southeast Turkey
People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan	ARAK	Kurdish separatism	Establishment of an independent Kurdish state in southeast Turkey
Kurdistan Liberation Party	-	Kurdish separatism, Marxism	Establishment of an independent united socialist Kurdistan in southeast Turkey, with portions from Syria, Iraq, and Iran
Northern Kurdistan Democratic Party	PDK/BAKUR	Kurdish separatism, Marxism	Establishment of an Independent Socialist Kurdistan Republic uniting Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran
Union of Kurd Laborers	-	Kurdish separatism, Marxism	Establishment of an independent Kurdistan in southeast Turkey, with portions from Syria, Iraq, and Iran
Turkish Hizballah**		Radical Islamism	Establishment of an Islamic state in Turkey
Islamic Great Eastern Raiders' Front	IBDA/C	Radical Islamism	Establishment of an Islamic state in Turkey
Islamic Kurdistan Party	PIK	Radical Islamism, Kurdish separatism	Establishment of an Islamic Kurdistan
Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front	DHKP/C	Marxism	Establishment of a Marxist state in Turkey
Turkish Communist Party/Marxist-Leninist	TKP/ML-TIKKO	Marxism	Establishment of a Marxist state in Turkey
Marxist-Leninist Communist Party	MLKP	Marxism	Establishment of a Marxist state in Turkey
Turkish Revolutionary Communists' Union	TIKB	Marxism	Establishment of a Marxist state in Turkey
Turkish Workers and Peasants Liberation Army	TIKKO	Marxism	Establishment of a Marxist state in Turkey

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**Table 2: Terrorist bombings that produced  $\geq 10$  casualties in Turkey 1984–2003**

Date	City/village	Site	Number injured**	Number dead	Type of bombing	Terrorist group attributed to
Nov 1992	Hani	Houses	16	14	Rockets***	PKK
June 1993	Antalya	Tourist hotel	28	0	-	PKK
July 1993	Kudadasi	Trash can on street	18	0	-	-
Aug 1993	Istanbul	Hungarian tour bus	11	0	Hand grenade	-
Oct 1993	Midyat-Kayapinar	Village road	30	26	Landmine	PKK
Feb 1994	Istanbul	Trash can at Tuzla Train Station	55	5	-	PKK
April 1994	Istanbul	Inside Covered Bazaar	19	2	-	PKK
June 1994	Fethiye	Tourist site	10	0	-	PKK
June 1994	Marmaris	Tourist beach and park	21	1	2 bombs	PKK
Aug 1995	Istanbul	Trash cans in central city	32	2	2 bombs	-
Sep 1995	Izmir	Outside café/grocery store	34	5	-	PKK
June 1996	Tunceli	Military parade	44	9	Suicide bombing	PKK
Nov 1996	Cigli	Minibus on road	26	17	Rockets	PKK
Sep 1997	Gaziantep	Book fair	25	1	Hand grenade	-
Oct 1997	Hakkari	Transportation vehicle	16	1		PKK
Dec 1997	Dargecit	Minibus on road	16	10	Landmine	PKK
Dec 1997	Temelli	Minibus on road	24	12	Landmine	PKK
May 1998	Hatay	Military vehicle	10	0	Landmine	-
May 1998	-	Police van	20	20	-	ARAK
June 1998	Istanbul	Train	15	1	-	PKK
June 1998	Istanbul	Brothel	12	0	-	IBDA/C
Nov 1998	Kirikale	Bus	21	4	-	PKK
Dec 1998	Lice	Grocery store	24	16	Suicide bombing, hand grenades	PKK
Dec 1998	East Turkey	Outside army barracks	24	2	Suicide bombing	PKK
Feb 1999	Esenler	Coffeehouse	17	0	Hand grenade	-
Mar 1999	Cankiri	Governor's car on street	16	3	Car bomb	TIKKO
Mar 1999	Istanbul	Police van at Taksim Square	12	1	Suicide bombing	PKK
April 1999	Yukseova	Governor's car on street	11	2	Suicide bombing	-
July 1999	Istanbul	Trash can in park	26	1	Metal additive	PKK
July 1999	Adana	Outside police headquarters	15	1	Suicide bombing	-
Sep 1999	Istanbul	Elevator in Treasury building	20	0		-
Jan 2001	Istanbul	Street near Taksim Square	10	0	Pipe bomb	DHKP/C
Sep 2001	Istanbul	Outside police post at Taksim Square	24	3	Suicide bombing	DHKP/C
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,497</b>	<b>211</b>		

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**Table 3: Terrorist events involving shooting that produced  $\geq 10$  casualties in Turkey 1984–2003**

Date	City/village	Site	Number injured**	Number dead	Terrorist group attributed to
Sep 1986	Istanbul	Synagogue	25	22	Black June, Al-
June 1987	Ömerli-Pınarcık	Village square	38	30	PKK
July 1987	Peçenek and Yuvalı	Private houses		25	PKK
Aug 1987	Kılıçkaya	-	--	25	PKK
Oct 1987	Sırnak -Meseici-Çobandere	Private houses	25	16	PKK
May 1988	Sırnak -Taraklı	-	--	13	PKK
May 1988	Sırnak -Dereler	Outside	11	11	PKK
May 1988	Mardin-Nusaybin-Tasköy	Outside	17	15	PKK†
Aug 1988	4 villages southeast Turkey	-	14	13	PKK
Nov 1989	Yuksekoa-Ikiyaka	2 private houses	30	28	PKK
June 1990	Siirt-Eruh- Çevrimli	Houses	28	26	PKK **, †
June 1992	Kokarsu	Minibus on road	15	15	PKK
Mar 1992	Sırnak -Cizre	Centrum	39	13	PKK
Oct 1992	Cevizdali	-	80	40	PKK
Oct 1992	Aksakalli	Minibus on road	19	19	PKK
July 1993	Kemaliye-Basbaglar	Outside	33	30	PKK
July 1993	Van-Bahçesaray-Sündüz	Tent	26	25	PKK
Oct 1993	Siirt- Daltepe	Village courtyard	33	23	PKK
Oct 1993	Siirt- Günbulak-Derince	Inside school	30	24	PKK††
July 1995	Van-Gürpınar-Atabinen	4 homes	25	12	PKK ***
Oct 1993	Erzurum-Cat-Yavi	-	47	31	PKK
Jan 1995	Kulp-Hamzali	-	--	19	PKK
Aug 1995	Gazelusgi	Homes	18	8	PKK ***, ††
Sep 1995	Sırnak-Bulakbasi	-	22	9	PKK
Jan 1996	Guclukonak	Minibus on road	11	11	PKK
June 1996	Diyarbakır	Altındag Recreational Facilities/ TV studio	20	8	PKK
April 1998	Agri-Diyadin	Cafeteria	10	4	PKK
June 1998	Near Iraqi border	-	10	10	PKK
June 1998	Sagman	Bus	12	9	TIKKO
Nov 1998	-	Helicopter	16	16	PKK
Mar 2000	Istanbul	Sports facility	15	0	-
Dec 2000	Istanbul	Police vehicle	14	2	TKP/ML
<b>Total</b>			--	<b>552</b>	

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