



“Research form on Organization to look at” (RFO) n° 07

<b>Title of the program/project name</b> <b>Powering new generations against extremism</b> <b>Tackling Radicalism in Turkey</b>
<b>Level of dissemination</b> International
<b>Short Summary (important points)</b> Despite of Turkey’s strategic importance for regional security in both the Middle East and Europe, remarkably little scrutiny has been paid to Turkish responses to radical threats. Turkey today faces multiple security threats both from within its own borders and from international groups. Although the Turkish government typically prioritises Kurdish radicalism, over the last two years greater energy and resources have been deployed to confront other groups, such as ISIS. The state’s primary response has been to confront such threats through tough security measures. What is more, many would argue that the AKP government, like many of its predecessors, has used the label of radicalism to police and suppress critics of its policies. To further complicate the picture, the challenges the Turkish state faces today are increasing in complexity following the onset of the Syrian civil war. This paper provides a three-fold analysis to explain the factors that determine the AKP government’s responses to radicalism. Firstly, it traces how radical threats are defined in Turkey by looking at (1) legislative definitions of terrorism and (2) the groups and ideas that are suppressed within the public sphere, even though they may not necessarily fulfil the legislative definition of a terrorist group or engage directly in violence. Such an examination reveals that the perceptions and definitions of radicalism deployed by the government today derive, in large part, from a long-standing constitutional and legal tradition that emphasises the territorial indivisibility of the nation and its secular character. Secondly, this paper posits that definitions of radicalism used by the state are often vague in nature, and this has enabled successive governments to generate security policies towards various groups based on the government’s political interests. Regrettably, the AKP government has not been an exception to this historical trend. While secularist governments before AKP considered anti-secularism to be a radical threat and prosecuted those including members of the AKP, today the AKP government applies the same approach to critics of their brand of mildly Islamist and authoritarian conservatism. Thirdly, the paper analyses the regional complexities and incentives that emerged due to the Syrian civil war, highlighting how these are shaping the AKP government’s responses to radicalism. It presents the reasons from the Turkish government’s perspective for its prioritisation of the PKK over threats from ISIS.
<b>Countries involved</b> Turkey
<b>Duration of the project</b>
<b>The website (if it exists):</b> <a href="https://www.isdglobal.org/programmes/">https://www.isdglobal.org/programmes/</a>