

RADICALISATION, VIOLENT EXTREMISM, AND TURKEY'S FIGHT

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TURKEY'S FIGHT AGAINST RADICALIZATION

Turkey, as briefly mentioned above, has been a target of various forms of radicalisation and has a longer experience of fighting it than many other countries. From ASALA to PKK, and from DHKP-C to DAESH, several groups, with different ideological, ethnic, and religious references have positioned at the extremes of their value set whatever it was/is and carried out terror attacks violating the fundamental rights including the right to live of the people with opposing views including civilians. Still, for the time being, Turkey continues its fights against ethnic, radical, and ideological radicalisation and violent extremism. Therefore, the Turkish case is also an important one pushing us to revisit the disproportionate focus on radicalisation with religious references in the literature. Starting from the 1970s, first, ASALA and almost simultaneously THKP-C and since 1994, the latter's splinter group DHKP-C, posed important challenges RADICALISATION, VIOLENT EXTREMISM, AND TURKEY'S FIGHT ORSAM Report No: 209, May 2017 19 ORSAM for Turkey. In addition to those, fighting PKK which carried out its first terror attack in 1984 has been a major dimension of Turkey's fight with VE. Regarding the current situation, even though ASALA's leader was killed in the late 1980s and the group was split before completely lost its ability to carry out attacks, with the newcomer DAESH, Turkey still carries out a demanding fight against multiple forms of radicalisation.

ASALA, in addition to quite sensational terror attacks in Orly and Esenboga Airports, is widely known for its terror attacks against Turkish diplomats abroad. The terror group was formed in 1975 by Agop Agopyan and in 84 terror attacks carried out by the group, 46 people of which 42 were Turkish diplomats lost their lives and 299 people were injured. Following the Orly Airport attack in 1983, the group gradually went towards split and in 1988 Agop Agopyan was killed after which the group lost

its ability to carry out attacks or even exist. Turkey's fight with the group was an important source of experience considering the fact that the group was a clear example of not only ethnic, but also ideological radicalisation and it has the ability to carry out attacks in different countries, and thus posing a transboundary challenge.

PKK terrorism which can be regarded as started in 1984 with the Eruh attack claimed more than 35 thousand lives of which around 6 thousand were civilians whereas in this period around 25 thousand PKK terrorists were neutralized. Financially, the cost of the fight against PKK has been around \$300-350 billion. Moreover, due to the deteriorated security circumstances in the region where PKK is extensively active, economic conditions also got worse in time and the fight against PKK also had direct and indirect impacts on Turkey's relations with its neighbours. For instance, Syrian harbouring of Öcalan in 1998 brought Turkey and Syria to the brink of a war, the need for advanced weaponry significantly contribute to the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement in the second half of the 1990s, and Turkey's crossborder operations was a major topic in the Turkish-Iraqi relationship for decades. In addition to the fight against PKK within Turkey, with the advances of YPG in Syria, PKK's Syrian off-shoot, cross-border dimension of the fight has come to the fore. The fight against PKK has long been the major component of Turkey's fight against radicalisation and violent extremism with both ideological and ethnic references. Moreover, even though the nature of the relationship is defined in different ways, Kurdistan Freedom Falcons/ Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan (TAK) of which organic ties with PKK is recognised by both Human Rights Watch and the White House, too (Human Rights Watch, 2012; White House, 2016), have been carried out more deadly attacks recently. These more deadly attacks especially since 2010 includes the more recent attacks in Beşiktaş² (December 10, 2016) and Kayseri³ (December 20, 2016). The recent urban operations carried out by the Turkish security forces in Sur, Nusaybin and Cizre should also be included in the fight against PKK.

The split of the Turkey People Liberation Party-Front (THKP-C) established in the early 1970s first gave birth to the Revolutionary Way (Devrimci Yol/Dev-Yol) in 1972. The group gave birth to another smaller faction called the Revolutionary Left (Devrimci Sol/Dev-Sol) emerged in 1978 due to an in-group disagreement among the elading cadre of the Revolutionary Way. The group, in 1994,

evolved into what we know as DHKP-C as a partyfront. Between the 1970s and early 2000s, the group carried out mostly sensational terror attacks targeting some important people whereas after this era, the group turned to bomb attacks directed at critical buildings (political party's branches, police stations, etc.) and armed attacks against higher number of targets. Turkey's fight with DHKP-C provided the country both with the experience of dealing with an ideologically-motivated terrorist group with international connections over decades.

According to the figures announced by the Chief of Staff General Hulusi Akar, in its fight against PKK between July 2015 and June 2016, 7740 terrorists were neutralised, 779 terrorists were arrested and 766 terrorists within Turkey surrendered. With the cross-border operations, PKK and YPG-affiliated 467 terrorists including FTFs had to surrender, too (Sabah, 2016).

In terms of Turkey's fight with DAESH, since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, has a no-entry list of 37,000 people; has banned almost 52,000 terror suspects from entering the country; prevented 7,500 people coming to Turkey from Europe; has deported 3,719 people and detained 700 more; prevented 40,000 people from joining IS; and stopped 223,000 people entering Syria illegally. In its efforts to curb cross-border militant activities, Turkey – which listed IS as a terrorist group in 2013 and has been a member of the anti-IS coalition since 2014 – has built a 561 kilometre (km) wall and placed 161 km of barbed wire fencing along its border. It has dug 356 km of ditches, erected 74 km of barriers and installed or upgraded lighting along all 422 km of the Turkey/Syria border so that it can be patrolled more effectively. Turkey has also established Risk Analysis Units at its border with Syria, which have investigated 6,000 people and added 1,300 of them to a no-entry list. Turkey also formed Risk Analysis Units along its Syrian border in order to better monitor people's movement back and forth, which helped arrest of more than 700 DAESH terrorists. (Hurriyet Daily News, September 8; Anadolu Agency, April 7; Habertürk, March 23). Moreover, with the Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey further deepened its fight with PYD and DAESH militarily with a cross-border component. With the operation, Turkey cleared its border from DAESH presence. In the late February 2017, an important stronghold of DAESH in Syria, namely al-Bab was also controlled. In addition to the fight against DAESH, Turkey also underlined its intention to avoid a merger of PYD-controlled cantons in Northern Syria and its position that PYD presence in the west of Euphrates is unacceptable for Turkey.

Disagreement between Turkey and its anti-DAESH coalition partners still persist at the time of writing this report.

Besides this “counter-terrorism” dimension referring to “the use of ‘hard’ or coercive measures” (European Commission, 2017), drawing from the definition of P/ CVE presented earlier, focusing on noncoercive means to tackle violent extremism, how Turkey performed in terms of using non-military means in its P/CVE efforts so far will be briefly mentioned.

In terms of non-military measures put forward by Turkey, there are several points which deserve a great deal of attention both in terms of best practices and efforts to reach out people via direct contact as well as counter-narratives. Some of these efforts are directly directed at radicalisation whereas some of them are expected to engender indirect achievement and some underlines the fact that the country has both expertise and practice (know-how) within this context. The infrastructure to reach the target audiences that is utilised on for the efforts that are not particularly directed at radicalisation can be easily enriched and/or transformed and shows the country’s overall know-how that would significantly contribute to the efficacy of tailored programmes with a clear focus on radicalisation.

In 2015 only, 921 thousand people were reached by the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sports as well as the police and military within the context of briefing and information activities aimed at weakening the ideological and social base of radical groups. Social and cultural projects, which has long been believed to be a key component of any smart power strategy aiming at inflicting a major blow to radical groups’ especially young human capital succeeded to gather more than 65 thousand people.

The Presidency of Religious Affairs act as a key institution to produce and spread counter-narrative. In order to produce and publicise religious counter-narrative, 700 preachers are charged by the Presidency of Religious Affairs in prisons where radicalisation can produce and reproduce itself. Moreover, the Presidency of Religious Affairs published two reports, entitled “The Fundamental Philosophy and Religious References of DAESH” and “Religious Exploitation and Terrorist Organization ISIS” in August 2015 and October 2016 respectively. The two reports published by the Presidency of Religious Affairs on making sense of the religious references and narrative used by DAESH is also an important endeavour. The reports do not only cover the DAESH’s religious

references and its historical background, but also shows how the terrorist group distorts religious concepts and abuse them in order to gain legitimacy and how to respond this distortion. Nevertheless, as mentioned in earlier sections, a state institution disseminating countermessaging and counter-narrative could easily suffer from legitimacy issues in the eyes of radical groups. The institution itself as well as the scholars, academics etc. who took part in the production of such reports could be labelled as the “state’s mere tools” to fight “us” and “only serving the state’s interests” which is the “enemy” itself. Moreover, even the inconsistency in the titles of the reports regarding ISIS/ DAESH seems further weakening its intellectual reach.

Personnel in the prisons are also trained specifically to get better equipped in terms of the ways that can radicalize people and how to prevent them. Hotlines 183 and 144 have also been effectively used. Turkey’s massive immigrant population has also been subject to education programmes and personnel in the refugee camps were also educated in areas including personal communication, law, economics, media and health. The youth camps organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports succeeded in attracting around 60 thousand youth only in 2015. In 352 projects directed at the youth run by the Ministry, around \$9 million was spent and 328 thousand youth could benefit from them (Radicalisation Awareness Network Meeting, Ankara, May 31, 2016). Even though these youth camps and projects were not organised/run for the goal of preventing radicalisation, the youth camps are one of the key measures in the literature on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). Therefore, either incorporating brief curriculums regarding the fight against radicalisation or designing individual camps or projects to that end could be quite useful measures which are absent in the case of Turkey for the timebeing.

Due to the multiple radicalisation threat along with its long shared land border beyond which numerous international, regional and individual actors are actively involved, the future of Turkey’s fight against radicalisation and violent extremism would be affected by international and regional coordination and informationsharing as much as its own national success. In that regard, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism put forward by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the significant place of fighting radicalisation and violent extremism in the OSCE’s Belgrade Ministerial Council meeting of the last year are some of the most important efforts in terms of international

measures and coordination (OSCE, 2016). It should also be noted that amidst such a difficult atmosphere, it is important to have a clear national strategy which would not only formulate and declare Turkey's CVE&PVE strategy, but also act as the basis of interagency coordination. Considering the fact that even the countries such as Kosovo, Macedonia, Australia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with relatively much less direct threat felt the need to produce such documents, Turkey needs to have a clear, comprehensive, holistic and effective national strategy agreeable to all concerned institutions. Even though there might always be the possibility of having some difficulties due to different repertoires of bureaucrats, law-makers, law-enforcement officers, and experts on the field, the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina with 14 constitutions, 10 cantons and 23 law-enforcement institutions is an important one in terms of achieving the agreeable optimum in terms of inter-agency coordination. (Regional Cooperation Council, 2016). By doing so, Turkey would not only have the chance to revise and if necessary amend and improve its own capability, regulations, and practices, but also would further to the international and regional literature on the subject its experience and fight.