
EPISODE 6

PKK TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AND HARMFUL ACTIVITIES

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kürşat KURTULGAN
Mersin University

Introduction

The concept of terrorism is described as a state or non-state actor's activities to achieve their political goals by using violent techniques. Terrorism implements systematic and organized strategies employed to achieve this goal (Baharçiçek, 2000, p.12).

Terrorism is generally based on an ideological background, social, political, religious, and ethnic foundation. States defined as global and imperialist powers frequently resort to terrorist organizations, one of the most fundamental arguments of the East-West struggle. As in the definition of strategy, one of the most common ways of policies taken as a kind of martial art is the efforts to build an environment of chaos and terror under their control. The ultimate goal is to ensure conflict and confrontation within society. Therefore, it is the systematic change of the existing legal and political structure in the targeted regions (Bozkurt, 2013, p. 8; Akman, 2016).

In the background of the terrorist incidents in the Ottoman period, the imperialist states' destructive policies and the separatist ethnic-based goals they have performed under the so-called liberation. It is observed that the imperialist powers, which are enemies of Turks and Islam, first implemented the strategies of "Break up and destroy" (Dabağyan, 2006, p.22), which they resolved on the axis of the Eastern Question, in the Balkans and they were successful. The next targets of terrorist events and policies focused on the Greeks and Armenians in Anatolia. It is quite significant that, in the report prepared by Captain Clayton, it is stated that the Kurds should be utilized for Armenian ideals. The same report declared that the Kurdish elements should be put under Christianization pressure and integrated with the Armenians (Çöhçe, 2001, p.90). The European imperialist states, firstly in the Balkans and then in Anatolia, step by step achieved success with the policies they put into practice a hundred years ago and were prepared to receive their awards with the Treaty of Sevres. The Turkish nation managed to stop what happened with the last effort. This success was registered with the Lausanne Peace Treaty.

The efforts of those who thought that they had achieved these goals after the Armistice of Mudros, primarily to establish a puppet state under the control of the Armenians, ended with the Lausanne Peace Treaty. After that, the new goal was to end the Turkish-

Kurdish unity and to end the Unitary State structure through the separatist Kurds. Founded by different names in the past and which was launched in the activities of terrorist organizations in the Ottoman Empire Hunchaks , finding life with names like the Dashnaks, the Republic of Turkey ASALA, PKK and DHKP-C have found new life with names like YPG. The end goal is the same.

As we look to the PKK during the period until the rebellion, fifteen rebellion emerged during the Ottoman Period, and the period of the Republic of Turkey has experienced twenty-five rebellions. Significantly, two of these riots took place during the Ottoman state and seven during the Republic of Turkey struggle with foreign states. The open provocation and support of the foreign forces to the rebellions is apparent (Küçükşahin, p.81).

The dream of establishing the State of Armenia, which was revealed clearly by the imperialist states in the Treaty of Sevres, could not come true with the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty. The newly established Republic of Turkey has learned lessons from these incidents and has accelerated its policies, which homogenizes the demographic structure. Separatist Kurds, the only ethnic difference that can be employed in the demographic structure that became homogeneous after the commutation, has become the imperialists' target in the new period. It is noted that there were external factors in all Kurdish rebellions, primarily in Sheikh Sait Rebellion. In this context, it has become the only argument in their hands to disrupt the unitary structure with organizations, such as the PKK, and establish an autonomous Kurdish state under their control.

The Establishment Process and Strategies of the PKK

PKK is the continuation of ASALA, which started armed struggle with KGB assistance. The presence of many Armenians, especially Abdullah Öcalan, in the organization is concrete evidence of this. KGB agent Karen Brutents (<https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/ PKK>) was the founding father behind both organizations.

The initiation of the PKK, whose foundations were laid in the meeting held by Abdullah Öcalan (Artin Aramyan) and a few of his friends in Ankara Çubuk Dam in 1973, is Partiya Karkerên Kurdîstanê (Demir, 2019, p.3). Its Turkish is the Kurdistan Workers Party (İşeri, 2008, p. 59). After this meeting, the organization started the planning phase ideologically. While Abdullah Öcalan stayed in Ankara, sub-managers such as Cemil Bayık and Kemal Pir started to operate in cities like Gaziantep and Siirt. They began to recruit sympathizers into the organization. By 1977, Öcalan made a two-month trip covering provinces such as Ağrı, Kars, Tunceli, Elazığ, Şanlıurfa, and Gaziantep. Information about the latest situation was obtained from the region's organization members during the trip, and military evaluations were made (Özan, 1999: 36-37).

As a result of the studies carried out in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, the organization phase was completed in five years, and on 27 November 1978, it officially completed its founding by holding its first congress in the Fis (Ziyaret) village of Lice district of Diyarbakır. General Secretary Abdullah Öcalan, Cemil Bayık, Şahin Dönmez, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, Baki Karer, Mehmet Karasungur, and Mazlum Doğan took part in the management of the organization. On 30 July 1979, they declared the establishment of the organization with the armed attack against Mehmet Celal Bucak, who was the Şanlıurfa deputy of the Justice Party, which was against the organization at that time and was a pro-state (İşeri, 2008, p. 60).

The first PKK members moved to Lebanon via Syria in 1979 and started to receive training from the Palestinian Democratic Liberation Front in Beka Valley. In 1981, up to 150 militants from Turkey, 50 from Europe participated in Lebanon's training militants. Öcalan started to stay in a private house in Damascus (Bozkurt, 2013, p.98). Terrorist activities began when Öcalan started to send trained militants to Turkey to carry out actions (İşeri, 2008, p. 60).

The Bucak tribe leader and the tribe members, who survived this assassination wounded, engaged in combat with the PKK. After the casualties, it was decided to direct the PKK actions to the Turkish Armed Forces. For the first time, three private soldiers were martyred on 10 May 1983. Afterwards, PKK supporters, worrying that the Turkish Army would enter Mosul during the ongoing Iran-Iraq war, started to push the organization for action. Öcalan gave an action order in June 1984. The first planned attack was carried out on 15 August 1984 at 21.30 in Eruh and Şemdinli (Özan, 1999, p.94-95).

After this occurrence, the existence of the PKK terrorist organization was officially acknowledged, and a state of emergency was declared in Diyarbakır Center, Bingöl, Van, Siirt, Mardin, Elazığ, and Tunceli with the decree numbered 285 on 19 July 1987. Besides, a Temporary Village Guard System was introduced to help the security forces with the enacted Village Law (Bozkurt, 2013, p. 101). Since then, this system has continued in the region.

Terrorist Activities of the PKK

This struggle of Turkey has been going on for almost 40 years. Even though the strategies, tactics, and weapons used in this process have been reshaped every day, their consequences have caused significant economic and social damage.

Although terrorist acts and anti-terrorism techniques have developed in parallel with the advancements experienced, they generally preserve their unique characteristics. In this context, the PKK has strategically adopted and implemented two main ways since its establishment. The first is the strategy of rising regional tensions with intense conflicts

by increasing the pressure and violence on people. The second is the strategy of armed violence targeting innocent civilians. A large number of people were killed, regardless of age and gender. Thus, they planned to ensure both their existence and continuity in the targeted regions (Altındağ, 2020, p. 37).

The main topics of the organization's activities between 1984-2008 can be listed as bomb attack, armed attack, raid, ambush, burning, sabotage, hostage-taking, and kidnapping. While the number of actions taken between 1993 and 2012 was 1724, 4598 actions of 23 various types were carried out in 2010 alone (Cantener; Tümlü, 2016, p.5-8).

The growing attacks of the terrorist organization in the early 1990s and the general elections held in the same year allowed them to gain strength in the political platform after the SHP-HEP alliance. Therefore, the organization created the image of being robust in society. The organization, which propagated that they would dominate the state in the future, suddenly increased the participation in the PKK. The numerical increase started a new process, and they began raiding military posts (Özan, 1999, p. 133). The state caused significant losses to the organization thanks to the operations that began in the spring of 1994 and lasted throughout the year and new measures implemented.

To compensate for the losses, the organization chose people with low education levels using the recruitment technique, mostly from Anatolia. In an instruction sent by the organization leader to its executives in the 1990s, he determines the PKK's suitable militant profile as ignorant and uneducated. He states that there is little opportunity to benefit from educated people (Ministry of Interior, 2017, p.34). The organization had kidnapped women and men by force, drugs, threats, and religious propaganda. It has implemented all kinds of oppression and persecution, especially rape, in organization camps (Ministry of Interior, 2017, p. 47).

In terms of financing, we see that they are organized with the support of several states with political aspirations in Turkey. Besides, they obtained financial gain within activities such as extortion and road blocking during the establishment phase. Over time, they continued to provide financing through illegal means, including drug, arms, and human trafficking. The most significant evidence of this is that in 23 of 41 drug operations carried out worldwide in 1992, PKK connections were detected (Altındağ, 2020, p.37).

In the new strategies planned within the Great Middle East project's scope, efforts to create new state administrations were initiated by provoking ethnic and religious differences and utilizing the pressure and oppression of existing administrations politically. The first step of this policy was initiated in Tunisia. The PKK is the counterpart and the argument used in Turkey by the forces behind the Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia as of 2010 and soon spread to the Middle East and North Africa (Pusane, 2014, p. 116). The organization thus assumed a new mission. It converted into the most used organization in the triangle of Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

While the PKK actively engaged in terrorist activities at sometimes, at other times, with the effect of losing its power, it began to declare a so-called ceasefire. In particular, a planned ceasefire was declared between 1999-2004 when the organization leader, Öcalan, was captured and brought home on 15 February 1999 at the Greek embassy in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Although the organization started the disintegration process with the effect of being leaderless in this process, it began to be restructured as the administration, taking advantage of the 2001 crisis and the developments in the following period. In this context, it changed its name in 2002 and took the name KADEK. Although the AK Party government, which came to power in the same year, pledged reform and relieved the restrictions, this goodwill was abused. The organization quickly started recruiting militants and illegal activities. The organization, which was renamed the PKK in 2005, resumed its armed activities. During the democratic initiative process that started in 2009, the organization retook a breath and gained great power (Cantener; Tümlü, 2016, p.12). The opportunity, which was seized with the solution process initiated in good faith, was missed in 2015 as the attacks increased gradually. Unquestionably, European states, which have connections with the organization, have significant impact on missing this opportunity.

When we look at the terrorist activities of the PKK, in the 1990s, it mostly carried out ambushes and attacks on military points, but after 2004 it turned into mined attacks. As of 2007, it as concentrated on military points again. Since the initiative process, terrorists have started to infiltrate city centres and organize attacks there. The organization, which is getting more robust in the city centres, has become more assertive in recruiting militants from Anatolia as before. Especially since 2015, we see that children of Kurdish origin in the terrorist organization have increased, and children are abducted and forced to receive militant training. In the Human Trafficking Report prepared by the United States, it was noted that the PKK and the Syrian branch of the PYD/YPG, including under the age of 15, abducted boys and girls to make members of the organization and trained in camps (Ministry of Interior, 2017, p.5-5. 6). The organization employed children in arson, reconnaissance, and intelligence work, expanding the audience, and making black propaganda (Ministry of Interior, 2017, p.5-6; 19).

The massacres of this bloody terrorist organization, which has murdered 100,000 people since its establishment in 1984, resemble the Armenians' massacres. It is not acceptable for a Kurd to kill its people; children, old and women without exception. Notably, most of the village raids' militants are of Armenian origin, and the deceased are Muslim Kurds. It is an indication that ASALA and the PKK are marching for the same ideology and goal. The activities carried out with the support of the imperialist states to these two organizations not only kill people but also harm Turkey's economy. When the investments that could have been made with the one trillion-dollar spent in this struggle

by Turkey considered, the magnitude of the damage of Republic of Turkey and its people will be better recognized (Çankaya, 2020, p.37).

Conclusion

The concepts of terror and terrorism are a universal problem that does not only involve violence. The reasons active in the background are political. In processes where states cannot directly fight each other, they support these formations underhand and use them like pioneering forces. The deterioration of peace and trust through these activities among societies and, if possible, turn into a civil war is a desired outcome by the imperialist states.

In this context, the role and interests of the great imperialist states behind the terrorist incidents in the Ottoman and the Republic period has unquestionably existed. The memories of Captain Clayton and Russian General Mayewski, who came to inspect the reforms against minorities in the Vilayet-i Sitte during the Ottoman period, confirm this situation. When we look at the activities of the Armenian terrorist organizations known as Dashnak and Hunchak at that time, it is recognized that there are remarkable similarities with the criteria imposed under the name of EU accession during the Republic period and the activities of terrorist organizations such as ASALA, PKK, and YPG.

On the contrary, totalitarian regimes have come to life in the Balkans, the Middle East, and other geographies where they came with the slogans of so-called freedom, democracy, and civilization. No one cares about the murder of innocent civilians and the suffering to achieve this. The blood and tears that begun with Dashnak and Hunchak in the past continue today with the PKK. The PKK is a bloody terrorist organization that has killed innocent civilians and poisoned them with drugs and attacked the security forces with armed violence. Now, the PKK, tomorrow YPG, and all of the terrorist organizations organized under a separate name the next day will continue to serve their ambitions as a toy of the imperialists.

The Republic of Turkey was in a fierce struggle with ASALA from 1975 to 1985 and suffered material and moral losses. After this date, the organization changed the tactics and sought political requests from Turkey in the international arena. It is not a coincidence that the PKK emerged and started terrorist activities at the moment ASALA withdrew. Their superior minds and supporters believed that the Kurdish people would give their support that they did not give to ASALA, to the PKK, which they put into action under the so-called Kurdism.

Although the names of the organizations have evolved, the goals and demands have not changed. While ASALA makes territorial claims from Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia for Great Armenia, it is observed that the PKK has undertaken terrorist activities with

the demand for land from the same region. These are confirmed by the treaties between ASALA and the PKK.

In this context, both ASALA and the PKK terrorism that has been going on for nearly 40 years have harmed the Turks and the Kurds. The fact that most innocent people who died in the massacres are Kurds is evidence that this movement is working for Armenians, not for Kurds. The Republic of Turkey is in a deep sadness for the experienced losses. But it must be accepted that Turkey cannot give up this struggle until the end.

As a result, the Republic of Turkey's legitimacy in combating the PKK is regarded as a reasonable reality by a neutral perspective. Yet, it is also a reality that this fact is not accepted as an absolute truth in line with the states' interests dominating world politics. Turkey will be successful in its valid fight against this evilness, as long as it is strong economically and politically. Like the Ottoman State at the time, we can assume that the Republic of Turkey was left alone against terror supported by internal and external powers. In this context, the military strength of the state depends on its economic strength. Being able to become a self-sufficient country again is remarkably essential for the survival of the state.

Knowing that Turkish-Kurdish unity, integration, solidarity, and brotherhood is a result of a very long historical process, we must protect this unity at all costs and carry it to future.

References

- Akman, Ö. (2016). The importance of using archive in Social Studies Education. *Research Highlights in Education and Science 2016*, 28.
- Altındağ, N. (2020). Türkiye'nin PKK Bölücü Terör Örgütü İle Mücadelesine Dair Bir Analiz. *Anadolu Strateji Dergisi ANASAM*, 2(1), 33-48.
- Baharçipek, A. (2000). Etnik Terör ve Etnik Terörle Mücadele Sorunu. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 10(1), 11-27.
- Bozkurt, İ. (2013). *Terör, PKK ve dış destek*. [Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi]. Celal Bayar Üniversitesi
- Cantenar, Ö.F & Tümlü, F. (2016). PKK Terör Örgütünün Eylemlerinin Güvenlik Güçleri Zayıflığı açısından Analizi. *Kara Harp Okulu Bilim Dergisi*, 26(1), 1-22.
- Cöhçe, S. (2001). Büyük Ermenistan'ı Kurma Projesi: Ermeni Araştırmaları, *ASAM Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü*, (1), 87-108.
- Dabağyan, L.P. (2006). *Kemalizm ışığında azınlık gözüyle Atatürk*. IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık.

Demir, C.K. (2019). “Terörizm ve Terörizmle Mücadele”, *Güvenlik Yazıları*, Serisi, No.26, Ekim.(https://trguvenlikportali.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/TerorizmTerorizmleMucadele_CKDemir_v.1.pdf).

<https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/PKK>

İçişleri Bakanlığı. (2017). *PKK/KCK Terör Örgütünün Çocukları ve Kadınları İstismarı*, Şubat, Ankara.

İşeri, R. (2008). *Türkiye’de etnik terör: asala ve pkk örneği*. [Yüksek Lisans Tezi]. Atılım Üniversitesi

Küçükşahin, A. (2005). *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu’yu PKK Terörüne Hazırlayan Nedenler*; file:///F:/PKK%20B%C3%96L%C3%96M/GSD_2_Art_4_122005.pdf.

Özcan, N.A. (1999). *Pkk (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) tarihi, ideolojisi ve yöntemi*, Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi Yayınları ASAM.

Pusane Ö. K. (2014). Türkiye’nin Kürt Sorunu: Arap Baharı ile Değişen Yurtiçi ve Bölgesel Dinamikler. *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 11(41 Bahar), 115-138.