

Looking into the Fighting Against Terrorism from the System Theory Perspective

Terörle Mücadele'ye Sistem Teorisi Perspektifi İle Bakış

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Abstract

Terrorism is one of the war methods that has been used individuals, groups, and even by some states for centuries. Those who used terrorism as a method might get some short term results, but in the long term they certainly harm themselves, their nations and sometimes the whole world. The PKK, which is a brutal and an international terrorist organization, has started its activities in the southeast of Turkey 35 years ago, and today it became a well-known terrorist organization around the world. Policies and strategies applied by Turkey against the PKK for years did not help to finish the PKK and its activities. Today, experts, researchers and politicians believe that it is time to find different but more effective counterterrorism policies. Systems theory offers efficient, comprehensive and unique counterterrorism methods against the PKK terrorism. In order to unearth PKK's recruitment tactics, some conferences for high school students were organized and conducted during the last two years in Diyarbakir. The conference series made it clear that there are some different ways such as enlightening young people to fight against the PKK in the lights of systems perspective. This research shows that security agencies which are responsible of dealing with terrorist organizations need to pay attention to youth and students in the region.

Key words: PKK, Terrorism, Systems theory, Education and awareness.

Özet

Terör hemen her devirde bireylerin, grupların ve bazen de devletlerin amaçlara ulaşmak için kullanılageldiği ve halende kullanılmakta olan bir savaş metodudur. Teröre başvuranlar bazen kısa vadeli sonuçlar elde etseler bile, sebep oldukları zarar uzun vadede sadece kendilerini değil tüm milleti ve bazen de tüm insanlığı etkilemektedir. PKK terör örgütü de 35 sene önce Türkiye'nin Güneydoğusunda faaliyetlerine başlayan ve bugün dünya gündeminde kendisine yer bulan, şiddet yanlısı, uluslararası bir terör organizasyonudur. Türkiye'nin yıllardır PKK'ya karşı yürüttüğü askeri, ekonomik ve siyasi politikaları örgütün bitirilip faaliyetlerinin sonlanmasında etkili olamamıştır. Günümüzde uzmanlar, araştırmacılar ve siyasiler PKK'ya karşı artık farklı ama daha etkili metotların kullanılması konusunda fikir birliği içersisindedirler. İşte Sistem teorisi PKK'ya karşı nasıl bir terörle mücadele

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politikası yürütülmesi gerektiği konusunda farklı, kapsayıcı ve etkili çözüm önerileri sunan bir konsepttir. PKK'nın en etkin olduğu Diyarbakır ilinde sistem teorisi bakış açısı ile yürütülen teröre karşı bilinçlendirme konferansları bu teoriden niçin faydalanılması gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma terör örgütlerinin en önemli sermayesi olan gençlerin neden güvenlik güçleri tarafından daha fazla ilgi ve alakaya muhtaç olduklarını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: PKK, Terör, Sistem teorisi, Diyarbakır

I. INTRODUCTION

When the sources on terrorism are inspected, it is seen that the experts and the researchers cannot make a mutual description of terrorism. Because of their policies, many state security units and relevant research centres describe terror differently. From this point of view, historically and today, the researchers could not reach an agreement on a common description, which could be acceptable to everyone (Gündoğdu, 2003). It is apparent that where there is terror, there is also intimidation, constraint, fear, anxiety, chaos, instability and a great deal of financial and moral damages. According to Özer (2006), terrorism is application of violence and threat to civilians or to civil targets, intentionally and deliberately for achieving a political aim.

The terrorist organisations can cause extensive losses of lives and property by planning activities that may cause horrific results at a minimal cost. For example, El-Qaida terrorist group has arranged the 9/11 attacks at a relatively low cost of \$ 50,000. On the other hand, the Milken Institute estimated that the cost of the same attacks to the US was around \$ 15 billion (Günbeyi, 2006). It will be sufficient to consider these numbers in order to realise the dimensions of the threats of the terrorist organisations today (Navarro and Spancer, 2001).

The attack to the World Trade Centre in USA has not only caused economic losses but also caused psychological and social losses. For example, within the first 30 days following the attacks of 9/11, 125,000 people have lost their jobs (Keleher, 2002). According to the Terrorism Information Pool (www.tkb.org) that gathers the statistics of the global terrorist activities and presents them to the use of the researchers, in 32,668 terrorist activities, 114,999 people got wounded and 49,802 people lost their lives in the last 30 years. When the families, friends, the loved ones and the social circles of these people are considered, it will be necessary to increase these figures reflected to the statistics by 4 or 5.

Unfortunately, our country has also received its share of the ongoing global craze of terrorism. When the financial and moral losses caused in Turkey was analysed, it was estimated nearly 40,000 people have lost their jobs and the financial losses have reached between \$ 200 billion and \$ 300 billion. (Sever and

Roth, 2008; Yaya, 2009, and Çiçek, 2008). But, the classical methods used fighting against terrorism has not managed to keep the losses at minimal level.

Although Turkey is a secular and democratic country respecting the superiority of law and human rights, is one of the countries affected most by the national and international terrorism. Turkey, having fought actively against terrorism of all kinds, has not yet reached the desired success. Consequently, these developments are causing the experts and the researchers to focus on certain questions. In reaching the existing point, is Turkey wrong in the strategies used for fighting against terrorism? If wrong, what kind of tactical mistakes have been made / are being made in fighting against terrorism? What are the effective means of correcting these mistakes and deficiencies? The *reactive counterterrorism approach* that is regarded and used as a fighting method against terrorism has not given any results until today. In this model the terrorist is captured, sent to trial and sent to the prison. These terrorists sent to the prison are isolated from the society. When will this method that has proven to be ineffective be abandoned and new models that will lead to sustainable and systematic applications and strategies will be initiated?

In a world where basic concepts such as citizenship, public services and human rights are being questioned and discussed, it is not possible to achieve success in fighting against terrorism without discussing and questioning the classic counterterrorism policies. So far, easily applicable short term solutions have been used and the desired success has not yet been achieved. Instead of this, new systems that are difficult to apply but suggesting long term sustainability and real solutions, such as the *system theory perspective*, bringing new analytical aspect to the problems, are required.

II. WHAT IS SYSTEM THEORY AND HOW CAN IT BE USED IN FIGHTING AGAINST TERRORISM?

The System Theory first got into literature by the book of Peter Senge titled "The Fifth Discipline" (Senge, 1990). The System theory was first considered by the private sector companies and was discussed with the quality development searches of the companies. According to the System theory, all objects and events in the universe are correlated to and interact with each other (Ragan & Carder, 1994). An event happening today is affected from some events in the past and in the same way, some events that will happen in the future will be affected from the events of today. If many of the events today are the results of some event or events of the past, then attention must be given to the relation and connection between these events and must definitely be considered.

System perspective is a method of recognizing and understanding the relations and connections of the roles and services in an organisation, in detail. System theory investigates how an event or a person influences a wider mass or the

environment. This theory, instead of blaming someone or some departments while handling the problems, tries to understand how the whole system / organisation can contribute to the solution (Busch & Busch, 2006).

The main aim of the System theory is to use the whole of the dynamics and relations that form the system in the solution of the problem, in the most efficient way. Since the relations are effecting the actions, the actions are affecting the people and finally the people are affecting the system. Another important difference which separates this theory from other classic and modern problem solving methods is that this theory, instead of approaching the problems as a whole, it divides up the problems to several pieces and investigates each piece in detail (Miller and et. al, 204).

The System theory, while handling the problems, by frequently asking the question of “why”, investigates the real reasons of the events and the problems that seem to be normal (Zipperer & Tompson, 2006). For example, “Why the terrorism policy in our country is not successful?”, “Why is not there a coordination between the institutions?”, “Why is it that only the security forces are fighting against terrorism?” The experts that use the System perspective are successful in reducing the risk factor, in suggesting sustainable solutions, in focusing on process and solution. The theory envisages *mutual wisdom* and *mutual action* as indispensable elements of success in fighting against terrorism. According to the System theory, institutions and the individuals should set aside their priorities and demands and grab hold of values that will enable them to succeed as a complete system.

Fitting up the security forces with all kinds of military armaments while they are unaware of the system perspective and their inability of taking advantage of this aspect is causing waste of effort, time and sources. In order to fight effectively against terrorism that is foreseen to increase in the oncoming years, the subject must be handled with different aspects such as statistical analyses, behavioural science and system perspective. The use of the System theory in fighting against terrorism examines not only stopping and controlling the existing terrorist activities but, in the mean time, the dynamics in the system and the relations triggering these dynamics, which cause terrorism in long term.

The System perspective handles terrorism as a social problem with different dimensions. Multidimensions of the problems make it necessary to be handled from all aspects. It is not sufficient to solve the problem, just to see the security forces as responsible for the fight. Such a misconception is both effecting the collaboration between the institutions negatively and is also causing the problem not to be taken so seriously by other members of the public. The other institutions that do not see themselves as responsible in fighting against terrorism are either subjected to misinformation and misdirection of the terrorist groups, or deliberately or unwittingly encumbering the security forces in the fight (Gündoğdu and et. al,

2008). Such conditions prevent the security forces in taking rational decisions in the fight mentioned before.

According to the System theory, terrorism is not an individual, self realised event. If there is terrorism, then that means that there is a problem in the system or in the system dynamics. The institutions that provide security services should be aware of this reality and should adjust their policies accordingly. In fighting against terrorism, the System perspective ensures healthy communication between the individuals and the institutions, efficient use of the sources, the results to be sustainable and prevents the fighting to conflict with science and ethic rules. The mentioned theory describes which dynamic malfunctions in the terror problem and which relation effects what and how much, and where it should be focused in the big picture.

It is not rational to see only the security forces as responsible from fighting against terrorism and to expect them to be successful. Instead of approaching the terrorism problem from an integral point of view of dynamics and relations, seeking short term solutions with so called “*magic bullet*” approach has caused nearly 40,000 people to die in Turkey in the last 35 years. *Magic bullet* is a terminology used for defining all types of methods derived for achieving fast results without having to consider the problems long term and without having to search for sustainable solutions by eliminating the elements that cause the problems (Busch & Busch, 2006). The System theory suggests in fighting against terrorism to dry out the marshland instead of catching the mosquitoes, to continue the fighting systematically and to rehabilitate those that clash with the SYSTEM, without pushing them outside the system.

Reducing the terrorism problem down to just one of the important reasons such as economic, cultural, ethnical and religious in order to understand the problem and to fight against it, is not increasing the possibility of success, but decreasing it. All these reasons are effective for terrorism and they should be dealt with cautiously. Simplification of a problem for solving it is different to showing a problem as simple, when it is not. The System theory, while it suggests searching for integral solutions to the problems, also makes it necessary to pay attention to the details as well. Identifying a policy for fighting against terrorism by taking advantage of the System theory will both reduce the expenses to be made in the fighting and will create sustainable solutions. It will be sufficient to inspect Figure 1 in order to understand better the new aspects of the System theory in fighting against terrorism.

Figure 1: Comparison of Classic method and System Perspective Approach for Fighting against Terrorism

Anti-terror Activities Carried out by Classical Method	Anti-terror Understanding by the System Theory Aspect
Not focused on the crime but generally on the criminal. (Catch, judge, if necessary catch again), short term solutions are popular.	Focused on crime and the reasons of the crime. Involved in search for long term solutions.
Distant from Planning (Reactive)	Gives importance to planning and after implementation evaluation (Proactive)
Focused on the result	Focused on process and Solution
Does not see cost as very important, the high costs are covered by the general budget; the real costs can never be calculated.	Tries to keep costs under control by analysing inputs -outputs
The security units are seen as the sole and main responsible in fighting against terrorism (criminal and self-oriented)	Delegates responsibilities and duties in fighting against terrorism to security, educational, non-governmental, religious organisations and institutions and to the public. (Community-oriented)

III. DIYARBAKIR PILOT STUDY

a) Diyarbakır and the PKK

Diyarbakır is a long established city in south east, where Turkish, Kurdish and other ethnic origin citizens live. Some years back, religious terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah were active and in the last 35 years the PKK has been very active. It can be seen that especially in recent years the PKK terrorist organisation has been carrying out aggressive propaganda activities towards the young people of Diyarbakır and is trying to convince the high school and university students to join them. Again recently, the PKK that has made a lot of losses in the military side is trying to compensate these losses among the young people Kurdish origin. Having established in second half of 1970's and based its ideology on Marxist-Leninist discourse, PKK is a separatist terrorist organisation, has been concentrating its activities in the eastern and south eastern cities of Turkey. The organization was formed under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan, who is currently in prison at İmralı Prison, is allegedly continuing its activities (Özer & Günbeyi, 2008).

It has been observed at the end of the classic anti-terror method, which has been used until today that, by condemning the terror or by frightening the people in the

region by punishment, is not influencing or changing the people's viewing of terrorism. The southeast needs jobs and more investments, especially for young people. Therefore, in order to normalize the region, the government should make new investment and improve the living standards for Kurdish citizens. Also, the government needs to fight against high unemployment which has fed the PKK for decades. The current government introduced a massive economic package in the southeast worth as much as \$12 billion to create new jobs. At the beginning of 2009, the government launched a Kurdish language channel on state television, and this is a good opportunity for the government to understand and maybe solve the Kurdish people's cultural and social problems, or at least to talk about these problems in their language.

On the other hand, the existing anti-terror methods are not sufficient for educating the people in the region about terrorism and are not effective. Many individuals believe that public education in the southeast is in poor shape today because there is no consensus on what students should learn at school in terms of cultural and social trends. The current education system does not pay any attention to students' cultural, language and religious preferences. Thus, the ongoing classic education system at the schools and the inflexible, short term and result oriented policies of the security forces are not creating any differences in the region regarding fighting against terrorism.

b) The Existing Situation in the Region

The terrorist activities took place in Diyarbakır and the arguments regarding these are affecting the feelings and opinions of the people living in the region and of the people who originate from Diyarbakır. In order to be able to fight successfully against terrorism, the System theory suggests that the psychology of these people, the social relations they have developed with the other individuals of the society and the behaviour of the people in the region to be put under microscope.

The anti-terror policies used in the region that have so far been unsuccessful have now got to be examined by systematic and scientific methods, without wasting time and the necessary corrections should be made. The security methods / precautions used in the past for anti-terrorism such as deserting villages, giving continuous economic support to the people, tight security measures during daily life and frequently taking people into custody did not bring the desired success. Because of the terrorist activities, many of the families in the region have either lost some lives or were subjected to the investigation of the security forces and were exposed to the ugly face of the terror, one way or the other. Being scared of the security forces or the terrorist organisations or dreading their activities have affected their spirits and behaviour. By taking the System theory in hand, the Diyarbakır reality or rather realities - such as the relation of the security forces with the people, the connection and interaction of the public workers with the people in

the region and the perception of the state and the terrorist organisations by the people in the region - will give very important clues in determining the anti-terror policies of Turkey for the future.

Majority of the families living in the region, more or less, were exposed to terror and the effects of terror and have experienced this unfavourable condition. The System theory will provide useful outputs for fighting against terrorism for the future, by evaluating the reasons and the results of the above mentioned individual experiences as a whole. System theory claims that there exists always a strong affiliation between the reasons and the results of problems. Hence, it is not reasonable to tie terrorism with just a couple of common reasons. There may be some motives that affect individuals' behaviours against terrorism. Namely, each actor (ethnicity, unemployment, poverty, etc.) might be part of the problem; therefore, they should be examined individually without ignoring their influence on the results. In summary, the System theory tries to examine how the people in the region, the security forces and other public workers and the administration separately perceive terror and the relations of these with each other and what kind of place they occupy in the big picture, tries to achieve a better success in fighting against terrorism by considering the data obtained and the typical characteristics - hospitality, honesty, wide and strong family ties - of the people in the region.

c) The Aim of the Study and the Contents

When the image of PKK terror organisation on the third generation (born in 1990 and later) was evaluated, it was understood that they see the PKK as an *innocent organization* (Gündoğdu et al. 2008). As of their age, these young people have never experienced the activities of the PKK at its wildest terms, neither personally, or via written-visual media. On the contrary, they have experienced the so called peace discourses of PKK used within the politisation period. Naturally, these young people who are high school students are exposed to disinformation and misinformation of PKK terror organisation.

As of their age, these high school students are under the influence of their family members. If any members of the family have previously joined the organization or subjected to bad behaviour of the security staff, then the information given to them are biased, incorrect and directive. When evaluating this condition, it must also be taken into account that the family ties in the region are stronger and deeper compared to the western parts.

These young people are also influenced by their friends. Friendship relations, as the family ties, are based on strong foundations in the region. In the region where an average family has 9-10 children (Özer, 2006), frequently the young people have blood bound relatives as friends as well. In Turkish, there is an expression that "tell me who your friend is, I'll tell you who you are" is sufficient to explain the effect of the group of friends on these young people.

When it is analysed why the fight against terrorism did not achieve the desired results, besides the emotional and parental results indicated above, another reality, which surfaces, is that these young people that keep the organisation on the move and keep it alive, are not informed properly by the relevant state office. In this concept, considering that better success in fighting with the terrorism can be achieved by system theory aspect, within the last year, instead of the classic anti-terrorist precautions, a systematic work was initiated in Diyarbakır, especially for the *High School Students*. Primarily a field study was carried out and the target population was determined.

At the analyses which lasted six weeks at the city and town centres, it was determined that the best way to inform these young people was to give conferences by the experts, face to face and by interactive methods. Hence, it was planned to give *Informative Conferences* for an average of 90 minutes, primarily to cover grade 3 students in 62 high schools for the 2006 - 2007 academic year, by the Diyarbakır Police Department, Department of Anti- Terrorism. In these series of conferences, sessions were made in 62 high schools and 76.14% of the target population was reached and the illegal structuring of the terrorist organisations, the type of activities carried out, and the tactics they use for convincing the young people to join them were explained.

In 2007-2008 academic years, out of 60,000 students, 43,460 students at grades 1, 2 and 3 of the high schools were reached in 165 sessions. The contents of the conferences were not kept fixed and were re-structured according to the feedback received from the students and they were informed on the issues, which they felt useful to themselves. Also, it was tried to continuously measure the adequacy, necessity and success of the seminars by questionnaires distributed. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the first section with multiple choice questions and the second section with open ended questions. The evaluation of the questionnaires started with classification of the answers in the second section. The conference team classified the answers under different headings and the classified questionnaires were scanned and all of them were downloaded to the computer in jpeg format.

d) Outcomes of the Study

Majority of the students participated in the survey have expressed that they liked the conference and they would recommend it to the others. Especially the second part of the questionnaire which was left blank and the participants were asked to put down their personal feelings had very striking expressions. For example, “before coming here, the probability that I went up to the mountains was 60%, now it is 10%”, “You can never guess how important it was that I came here. It was a good decision that I came here.” To the 25th question of the survey [According to you, is this conference you have attended, one of the correct applications for fighting

against terrorism?], 38.7% of the students answered “*absolutely yes*” and 27.9% of them answered “*yes*”, so 66.6% of participants agreed and expressed the necessity of the conference.

Table 1: Opinions Regarding the Conference

According to you, is this conference you have attended, one of the correct applications for fighting against terrorism?		
	n	%n
Absolutely No	2234	5.9
No	2353	6.2
No comment	5767	15.3
Yes	10527	27.9
Absolutely Yes	14623	38.7
No Answer	2257	6.0
Total	37761	100.0

When both the multiple choice section and the free opinion sections were analysed, it was seen that the results were quite important. The problem was diagnosed correctly. The young people at the high schools were under danger if they did not receive the right information support from their families, because, the curriculum given at schools did not give the sufficient and correct information to keep the young people away from terrorism. The school, teachers even the lessons were authority figures in the eyes of the students, which represented boredom and status quo, and they were to be resisted. Again in the survey, to the question [Do you believe that the measures taken until today have been effective in solving the terror problem?], 14.5% of the students answered “*absolutely not*” and 21.0% replied saying “*not*”. It means that 1/3 of participants showed their dissatisfaction about classic anti-terrorism measures practiced at the region.

Table 2: Opinions on Anti-terror Methods

Do you believe that the measures taken until today have been effective in solving the terror problem?		
	n	%n
Absolutely No	5472	14.5
No	7915	21.0
No Comment	12373	32.8
Yes	6795	18.0
Absolutely Yes	3144	8.3
No answer	2062	5.5
Total	37761	100.0

Another interesting and important outcome was suggestions of almost all of the students were that the conference should not have been given to them only, but to their friends, families and all the people more systematically and with wider contents. This observation and insistence of the students alone was sufficient to show the necessity in trying some new methods with the System theory aspect.

IV. RESULT AND SUGGESTIONS

There are obviously some important differences between System perspective and classic methods. The differences are accepted as the strengths of the System theory. For instance, the fight given against terrorism today, with the classic method does not concentrate on the crime oriented but on the criminal. Whilst the System theory does not focus on the criminal, it focuses on the crime and reasons for occurrence of the crime. Additionally, classic method looks for short term solutions and is more popular. But the System theory looks for long term solutions. While the classic method is far away from planning, the System theory gives great importance to planning. While the understanding of fighting today is focused on result, the System theory is focused on process and solution. While the classic fighting conception perceives fighting against terrorism as the sole responsibility of the security forces, the System theory gives this responsibility to educators, to religious leaders, to non-governmental organizations and in short to the community itself.

From the security services point of view, the System theory, while the security policies for a region are identified, investigates what kind of data will be used, *why* these data should be used, what kind of sub-over systems could be formed for problem solving and the functionality of these systems. Thus, the experts will be able to effective and successful in the future time scale, will be able to guess the terror policies and will be able to receive the help of the security forces to draw up a route map for them.

More specifically, System theory may require decision makers, governmental forces and other individuals, who can contribute to solving terrorism problem, to discuss how several systems relate to each other. Namely, police, military, educators, and non-profit organizations need to come together and discuss the possible solutions. Because if the connection between these actors is healthy and effective, then each element which forms the system will both fulfil his obligations satisfactorily and will also give positive support to the other parties during the fight. The System theory gives importance to the connection and interaction between the organizations and the individuals carrying out the fight together rather than themselves.

The conferences given to the High school students by interactive methods were accepted as useful and helpful. According to the feedbacks received after each seminar, the conference should also have been given to families more systematically. However, because of some limitations such as time and money, the conferences were planned just for students. In the future, therefore, the content of the conference should be changed accordingly and students' parents and relatives be included.

The system theory is not interested in short term solutions and magic bullet approaches, which discussed before. In order to succeed against terrorism implementing some effective and rightful actions are required. Nevertheless, the interaction and dialogues between the organisations and the individuals do not develop immediately and easily. Therefore, the experts who are administrating the fight against terrorism should grasp the importance of dialogue and collaboration and should never forget that this requires time, patience and extra effort. Besides, terrorism is not the only problem in the region. There are several problems in Diyarbakir that should be discussed and dealt with. Lack of education, poverty, and unemployment are some of the important problems. This is the reason why System perspective is needed there: to find long term and more effective solutions. System theory will give the responsibility to educators, to religious leaders, to non-governmental organizations, and to the community itself.

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