

TERRORISM AND ASYMMETRIC THREAT: ACTIVITIES AGAINST TURKEY, FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

(Armenian Terror Activities and PKK Terror
Organization Activities since 1915)

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Abstract: *This article examines selected armed violence activities, namely Armenian rebellions and terrorism and PKK terrorism, directed against Turkey and Turks. The 1915 Armenian incidents were not a simple, single event where "Ottoman Muslims massacred innocent Armenians," but were part of a sequence of a complex process. One must not forget the root cause of the tragic events: the Armenian national ideology, which aimed to establish a greater Armenia in parts of Ottoman territory. Armenian rebellions of 1915 negatively affected the entire Ottoman population. Between 1975-1984, Armenians and pro-Armenians used terrorism as a method of publicity, to draw the attention of world public opinion to their Armenian genocide claims. Twenty-seven attacks on Turkish diplomats worldwide, with 31 killed, did not prevent their campaign for publicity and the captured suspects did not face any serious prosecution. So long as the international community hesitates on active international co-operation and solidarity against terrorism, global and regional security environments will likely continue to deteriorate.*

Key Words: *Armenians, ASALA, PKK, rebellion, terrorism.*

INTRODUCTION

In general, the relationship between Turkey and the West appears to continue to suffer from a negative effect of mutual lack of confidence.¹ To have a clear understanding of the issue, one must study history. Only then will one understand the roots of the "terrible Turk" image in the minds of the many people of the Western nations. This stereotype to this day is an important popular factor, i.e., in opposing Turkey's accession to the E.U. or used for Armenian genocide claims relevant to the 1915 incidents.²

1 Halil İnalçık, in Devrim Sevımay, "Ünlü Tarihciden 'İtİdal' Çağrısı," *Milliyet*, November 12, 2007, p. 20. Compare: Ian Buruma, "Legislating History," *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 2007, <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-buruma5dec05,0,785333.story?coll=la-tot-opinion&track=ntothtml>; Gregory Rodriguez, "Radical Outspoken Professors: Scholars or Activists?," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 August 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0807/p09s01-coop.html>; "The Courts and History," *The Washington Post*, February 4, 2001, p. B06.

2 Halil İnalçık, in Özlem Kumrular, *Avrupa'da Türk Düşmanlığının Kökeni: Türk Korkusu*, Doğan Kitap, İstanbul, February, 2008, p. 9.

Contrary to current controversy on the place of Turkey and Turks within the Western sphere, between the years of 1520-1590, the Ottoman state already was a prominent member of the European states' system of balance.³ Lack of knowledge on Islamic law of war, coupled with a poor understanding of the two pillars of the Ottoman war strategy and tactics have been major reasons for the emergence of the much spoken-about myths of the "terrible Turk" and the "Turkish fear."⁴

Even today, the West still has a tendency to overlook the fundamental cultural revolution that separates the Ottoman Empire and modern, democratic Turkey, in many respects.⁵ The West especially had perceived Ottoman Turkey as a major threat.⁶ Consequently, through a series of overt and clandestine alliances and policies, Western powers of the time had pursued a complete and final resolution of the "Eastern Question," aiming at driving away Turkey and Turks from Anatolia and partitioning Ottoman territory among themselves by applying concerted measures intended to rapidly cause the complete failure and dissolution of the Ottoman state structure.⁷

Under the new environment created by the victorious Turkish War of Independence, however, this initiative of partitioning Ottoman territories among the members of Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia) ended in limited success. Nonetheless, one may speak of a continuing policy towards Turkey, which may be based on the concept of "anti-Turkism," this time aiming to contain and control Turkey and Turkish affairs to the maximum extent possible. One may detect a trace of this attitude by following the policy patterns of not only the Western countries, but also some other countries' policy practices towards Turkey. In this context, this article will examine two such examples: the Armenian Question and PKK terrorism.⁸

THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

The 1915 Armenian incidents were not a simple, single event where, allegedly, Ottoman Muslims massacred innocent Armenians, but were part of a sequence of a complex process. The root cause of the developments can be found in the

3 İnalçık, in *Avrupa'da Türk Düşmanlığının...*, p. 12.

4 İnalçık in *Avrupa'da Türk Düşmanlığının...*, pp. 15-17.

5 İnalçık in *Avrupa'da Türk Düşmanlığının...*, p. 20.

6 Examples of some popular expressions in local languages will give the reader an idea of how the negative Turk image had been used as a signal of danger, to alert the common public: "Hay moros en la costa" (Northern Africans [Ottomans] are at the shore); "prin na erthoun oi Tourkoi" (hurry, before Turks come); "tourkopaidevo" (Turkish torture – heavy punishment), "horda / orda / hord" (looter – from the Turkish word: "ordu"). According to Kumrular, Western entities of the time used this negative Turk image to educate, alert, unite and mobilize their populations against the common enemy; the Ottomans, on the other hand, succeeded in exploiting that attitude as a means of psychological warfare, to prevent resistance to invading Ottoman armies. See: *Avrupa'da Türk Düşmanlığının...*, pp. 33-42.

7 For a brief explanation on the "Eastern Question," Western plot to drive away Turks from Europe and Asia Minor, see: Mümtaz Soysal, "Şark Meselesi", *Hürriyet*, June 3, 1998, p. 13.

8 See Richard Cohen, "Turkey's War on the Truth," *The Washington Post*, October 16, 2007, p. A 19; Thea Halo, "This Was Genocide, But Armenians Were Not Its Only Victims," *Guardian*, October 31, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329614735-103677,00.html>, and compare: Laurent Pech, "The Armenian Genocide Resolution and the Perils of State-sponsored History," *Jurist*, October 11, 2007, <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/forumy/2007/10/armenian-genocide-resolution-and-perils.php>.

Armenian national ideology, which aimed to establish a greater Armenia (known as “Hay-dat ideology”) and a series of consecutive and complex rebellions against Ottoman rule to that end.⁹ In this context, the genocide claims against Turkey and Turks have been exploited as a most effective political propaganda instrument. Having no legal basis, the basic Armenian strategy consists of first creating a political dispute against Turkey and, via publicity, pressuring the Turkish government first to recognize the existence of a genocide; if that succeeds, continue the political campaign by requesting compensation, return of property and persons, territorial claims, and in the follow up, adding new claims of genocide, to perpetuate the matter.¹⁰

For centuries, the Armenian minority had lived in peace in the Ottoman territory alongside the Muslim majority. This positive situation gradually transformed into hostility when Tsarist Russia occupied the Caucasus and the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War created a favorable environment for the Russians to further their territorial expansion in the region.¹¹ Russians envisaged manipulating Armenians, under the guise of supporting their independence, in fact, to capture more Iranian and Ottoman territories. Coupled with growing Armenian nationalism and observing the inspiring precedents with regard to Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Romania, it was thought to be an appropriate time also for Greeks, Macedonians and Armenians living in Ottoman territories to follow the successful examples of previous secessions, following Berlin Agreement.¹²

ARMENIAN REBELLIONS

In this context, the Armenian national action plan, as one may call it, had begun with the establishment of the Armenian Movement on the centennial anniversary of the French Revolution. Following the Berlin Congress, Armenians were the only non-Muslim population in Ottoman territory who did not receive autonomy or independence. The Ayestefanos (San Stefano) Pact of March 3, 1878, followed by the Berlin Treaty of July 13, 1878, envisaged reforms in the Ottoman state structure, for the benefit of Armenians. These developments had been the first steps towards preparing an international legal ground to interfere with the domestic affairs of the Ottoman State and an important factor to encourage an Armenian political movement. Thus, in 1886 and 1890, the Armenians founded the Hunchak and Dashnaksutyun revolutionary organizations to lead the

9 As an example, for the background of the famous book, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, considered as a key reference in support of the Armenian claims, see: Heath W. Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassadors Morgenthau's Story*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 1990, passim. Compare: “Robert Hanks: First Rule of History – Verify Your References,” *The Independent*, April 16, 2007, <http://comment.independent.co.uk/commentators/article2452406.ece>.

10 Şükrü Elekdağ, in *1915 Olaylarının Ardındaki Gerçekler ve Bugüne Yansımaları*, panel, Başkent Üniversitesi, November 22, 2007, pp. 22-23.

11 For an in-depth analysis of the policies of the great powers of the times, see: Kamuran Gürün, *The Armenian File – the Myth of Innocence Exposed*, London: K. Rustem & Bro. and Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Ltd., 1985, pp. 65-72.

12 Ömer Engin Lütem, *Armenian Terror*, Ankara: Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies, 2007, pp. 7-8; Sadi Çaycı, “Armenian Genocide Claims: A Contextual Version of the 1915 Incidents,” in *The Criminal Law of Genocide*, Ralph Henham and Paul Behrens (eds.), Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007, pp. 20-23.

Armenian community in organizing a political and military campaign against the Ottoman State via activating armed committees in selected regions.¹³

These groups had planned to follow the successful example of the Bulgarian strategy. In the first phase, a bloody rebellion would be staged. Followed hopefully, by a harsh and bloody response and suppression of their rebellion by the Ottomans, it was expected to trigger a humanitarian intervention by the Western powers to save “innocent” Armenian lives. Several unsuccessful attempts were made between 1890-1894 like the Musa Bey Incident, in Erzurum, Kumkapi, Merzifon, Kayseri, Yozgat, and Samsun.¹⁴ Until then, functioning only as a “think tank,” but seeing these negative developments, the Ottoman’s Union and Progress Party started to think about developing an action plan to counter the growing threat posed by such rebellions.¹⁵

Previously, Eastern Anatolia (in the eyes of European countries, historical “Armenia”) had been treated as an inter-European issue, under the arrangements contained in Berlin Congress. Just like in the Ayestefanos Agreement, a new agreement concluded with the Russians on February 8, 1914 at Yeniköy placed the Russians again in a unique position to unilaterally control the Ottoman Armenian issue, with a view of establishing an Armenian state in the future. Yet, the outbreak of World War I precluded implementation of this agreement.¹⁶

HUMAN TRAGEDY

Therefore, the tragic events of 1915, affecting the entire Ottoman population, had been a direct result of Armenian insurgencies against and massacre of the Muslim population during the World War I years.¹⁷ From 1910 to 1922, Armenian bandits had killed 523,955 Ottoman Muslims.¹⁸ In the same period, Armenians collaborated with the enemy (namely, the Russians and the French) in the time of a world war.¹⁹ Armed Armenian bandits also conducted attacks and committed

13 For programs and methods of these organizations, see: *The Armenian File...*, pp. 120-127.

14 For a detailed analysis on Armenian terrorist activities and rebellions during 1880s, see: *The Armenian File...*, pp. 127-162.

15 Sina Akşin, *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 5th Edition, February 2008, pp. 47-48.

16 *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi*, pp. 91-92; Kemal Çiçek, in *1915 Olaylarının Ardındaki Gerçekler ve Bugüne Yansımaları*, pp. 7-8.

17 *1915 Olaylarının Ardındaki...*, pp. 8-9; Justin McCarthy, “Ermeni İsyancıları ve Osmanlılar,” in *Ermeni Sorunu-Temel Bilgiler ve Belgeler*, Ömer Engin Lütem (ed.), ASAM Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2007, pp. 69; *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amaçları ve İhtilal Hareketleri*, (a report prepared by the General Directorate of Security of the Ottoman State in 1916 and translated into modern day Turkish by Rıza Açıkan), Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı, Ankara, 2003, pp. 141-144 (example: Zeytun – Maraş), 167-191 (example: Van), 241-264 (example: Armenian atrocities against Muslims). During various rebellions and massacres, Armenians killed a total of 518,105 Ottoman Muslims in Eastern Anatolia between 1914-1921. See: *Armenian Terror*, p. 12; Hikmet Özdemir, “Çatışmalar,” in *Türk – Ermeni İhtilali – Makaleler*, TBMM Kültür, Sanat ve Yayın Kurulu, Hikmet Özdemir (ed.), Ankara: April 2007, pp. 155-209; Yusuf Sarıınay, in *Massacres of Turks Throughout History*, a panel discussion, Başkent University, 25 February 2005, pp. 23-29.

18 Information based on documentation provided by the General Directorate of the State Archives of the Turkish Prime Ministry: Nuray Babacan, “Ermeni Çeteleri 523 Bin Türk’ü Katletmiş,” *Hürriyet*, 18 April 2005, p. 19.

19 For Armenian – Russian collaboration, the inside story of the Zeitun rebellions, role of the missionaries, and the rationale for the relocation decision at the Ottoman government level, see: *The Armenian File...*, pp. 191-204, 216. For details concerning British, Russian and French involvement and policies regarding Ottoman Armenians, see: *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu*, Ankara: Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı, 1992, pp. 167-181.

acts of sabotage against the Ottoman Army. All areas for rebellions had been very professionally selected to best serve the military interests of the invading Russian troops.²⁰

In this overall context, the Ottoman government logically determined what any other state would conclude: All necessary and proportionate administrative, military and legal counter-measures were taken for the sake of territorial integrity preservation, homeland defence and the very survival of the state.²¹ This took place in the time of a world war, where the Ottoman state was a belligerent, although already at the brink of total collapse. Nevertheless, the Ottoman government did not hesitate to prosecute responsible individuals, including military and civilian public servants, to the extent possible for any wrongdoings.²² In sum, contrary to common perception of the international community, a humanitarian tragedy first had been experienced by the Ottoman Muslim population and later by the Armenians. The tragedy was not limited to Ottoman Muslim civilians and Armenians, but affected also many members of the belligerent Ottoman armed forces.²³

The second pillar of the campaign against Turkey and Turks is related to the terrorism aspect of the applied policies. Since 1882, first the Ottoman state and then the Republic of Turkey have been the target of several waves of terrorism. Indirect aggression, in the form of terrorism continued via various phases of Armenian terrorism perpetrated by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) militants.²⁴ This has been followed by the terrorism of the secessionist Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan – Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Below is an analysis of Armenian terrorism, which will be followed then by an examination of PKK terrorism.

ARMENIAN TERRORISM

The first generation of Armenian terror covers the period between 1882 and 1909. Armenian secret organizations (Black Cross, Homeland Defenders) and political parties (Armenekan Party, Hunchak Committee Party, The Armenian

20 Examples: Van, nerve centre of the Ottoman administrative system for Eastern Anatolia. Erzurum, Ottoman logistics and communication lines. Saray – Başkale, two vital passages to be secured for advancing Russian armies. Çatak, vital mountain passes for the Ottoman army to be able to deploy military forces to the Iranian border area. Sivas, ideal area to launch guerilla type raids to interrupt logistics flow for the Ottoman army. Kilikya, British military objective for invasion, to control the Ottoman movements via railways towards southern territories. See: *Ermeni İsyanları ve...*, p. 74; *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu*, pp. 202-220.

21 *1915 Olaylarının Ardındaki...*, p. 10; *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amaçları...*, pp. 195-241. For the text of document dated 25 February 1915 – from the Supreme Command Hqs. to all military units about duties and responsibilities of the commanders in case of an Armenian uprising, see: *Turkish – Armenian Conflict – Documents*, Hikmet Özdemir – Yusuf Sarıncay (eds.), Ankara: TBMM Kültür, Sanat ve Yayın Kurulu, 2007, pp. 4-5.

22 *1915 Olaylarının Ardındaki...*, p. 11. For an example, see: minutes of the Council of Ministers meeting dated 29 September 1915 regarding establishment of a commission for inquiring about the officials who abuse their duties during the relocation, in *Turkish – Armenian Conflict – Documents*, p. 294.

23 For a detailed analysis of the Armenian atrocities against the Ottoman Muslim population, even after the Russian Revolution of 1917, and after the conclusion of the Mondros Truce on October 30, 1918, see: *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu*, pp. 293-338; 367-385.

24 For brief background information on late Armenian terrorism, see also: Erich Feigl, *Armenian Mythomania – Armenian Extremism: Its Causes and Historical Context*, Amalthea Signum, 2006, pp. 124-129.

Revolutionary Federation / Dashnak Federation) had been active in this period. All employed terrorism, rebellions, attacks and assassinations as political tools. The Ottomans had to respond to 37 consecutive Armenian rebellions.²⁵

The basic motivation of many Armenian revolts came from Russian provocations and Armenian responses to these provocations. Some examples include the raid at the Office of the Ottoman Prime Minister (Bab-i Ali) on September 28, 1895; the assassination attempt on Sultan Abdulhamid on July 21, 1905; and the raid at the Ottoman Bank and the taking of hostages on August 14, 1914.²⁶

The second generation of Armenian terror covers the years between 1914-1922. The Ottoman military campaign during World War I first started against invading Russian armies. Armenian bandits cooperated and collaborated with Russian armed forces. Seeing that Ottoman defeat in the war was almost certain, Armenians had begun killing Muslims in Eastern Anatolia.²⁷ Large numbers of Muslims had been internally displaced towards the interior regions of Anatolia. Just as Armenians later faced their own tragedy, which they themselves triggered, many Muslims, due to unfavourable environmental conditions, died on their way to safer regions. Armenian collaboration with the enemy had not been limited to the Russians. Between 1919-1920, in South-eastern Anatolia, the majority of the troops constituting the invading French Légion d'Orient was Armenians and there they had massacred and tortured the Muslim population. After the war, Armenians continued extra-judicial killings by assassinating top Ottoman officials: Talat Pasha (March 15, 1921), Sait Halim Pasha (Rome, December 6, 1921) Bahattin Sakir Bey and Cemil Azmi Bey (Berlin, April 17, 1922), and Cemal Pasha, along with his aides Maj. Nusret Bey and Lt. Sureyya Bey (Tbilisi, April 21, 1922). The Armenians' objective was first, revenge; second, to prepare the ground in support of the imminent Greek invasion of western Anatolia.²⁸

The third generation of Armenian terror was a result of different attitudes between the first and subsequent generations of Armenians towards Turkey and Turks. First generation Armenians had been critical solely of the activities of the high-level Ottoman officials, whereas later generations transformed that attitude into a fully racist animosity against Turkey and Turks. Thus, genocide claims had increased from the end of World War II. A series of attacks on Turkish diplomats had started with the assassination of Turkey's Los Angeles Council-General Mehmet Baydar and Consul Bahadır Demir on January 27, 1973. Several bombings, raids and assassinations directed against Turkish diplomats and institutions had continued since then.²⁹

25 See *The Armenian File...*, pp. 133-135, 139-142, 148-156.

26 Due to the diplomatic pressure from the great powers of the time, the Ottoman government could not prosecute caught suspects. The European press, however, presented these counter-insurgency efforts as torture and cruelty against Armenians (*Armenian Terror*, pp. 8-11).

27 For Ottoman and Russian documents on Armenian atrocities, see: Halil Kemal Türköz, *Osmanlı ve Sovyet Belgeleriyle Ermeni Mezalimi*, Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 2nd Edition, 1982, passim.

28 *Armenian Terror*, pp. 12-14.

29 Organized new generation Armenian terror started with ASALA, with the objective of liberating Armenia (Eastern Anatolia). ASALA had been financially supported by the Armenian diaspora. ASALA planned and executed 581 of 699 terrorist raids between 1973 and 1986. The second major terrorism actor had been the "Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide." The Justice Commandos ended their violent campaign after the Orly Massacre (24 September 1981), following the public's reaction to the murders. See: *Armenian Terror*, pp. 15-22.

ASALA TERRORISM

On August 7, 1982, Levon Ekmekciyan and Zohrap Sarkisyan opened gunfire at Ankara's Esenboga Airport, killing 10 people and injuring 72 others.³⁰ On July 15 1983, the explosion of luggage left close to the Turkish Airlines check-in desk at the Orly International Airport in Paris killed 8 and wounded more than 60 persons. ASALA claimed responsibility. After nearly each raid, Armenians succeeded in putting pressure on relevant authorities to stop or divert criminal prosecutions. As in several other cases, all convicted individuals were freed, including Garbidiyan of the Orly attack, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment.³¹

Briefly, between 1975-1984, Armenians and pro-Armenians used terrorism as a method of publicity, to draw the attention of world public opinion to their genocide claims. It appears to a great extent that they have succeeded in doing so. Twenty-seven attacks on Turkish diplomats worldwide, 31 killed, did not prevent their campaign for publicity and the captured suspects did not face any serious prosecution.³²

PKK TERRORISM AGAINST TURKEY

For some, indirect military aggression is seen as a workable paramilitary option to intervene or influence policy practices of targeted governments. Low intensity conflict, operations other than war and other similar concepts function as feasible strategies to change governments or to force a government to accept or change certain policies.³³ Through subversion, terrorism, insurgency and full-scale civil war, the basic concept includes a wide spectrum of phased strategy.³⁴

PKK HISTORY

In this context, Kurdish irredentism is one important aspect of the PKK terrorism question in Turkey.³⁵ The PKK came to the scene during the Cold War years. From the U.S.S.R.'s entrance to the Middle East state of affairs, several initiatives have been launched to counter-balance the regional power represented in the alliance between the U.S. and Israel. In this general context, guerrilla-training centers in the region had been transformed into common training grounds to cover the entire spectrum of Marxists-Leninist movements.

30 *Armenian Terror...*, p. 28.

31 *Armenian Terror...*, pp. 28, 30.

32 *1915 Olaylarının Ardındaki...*, pp. 23-24.

33 See Michael Radu, "The PKK Strategy in Europe to Place Turkey on Trial," Foreign Policy Research Institute, 26 February 1999, <http://fpr.org/enotes/balkansturkey.19990226.radu.pkkstrategy.html>.

34 Sait Yılmaz, *21. Yüzyılda Güvenlik ve İstihbarat*, İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, June 2006, pp. 498-503.

35 This is not something new. Starting from 1919, for example, the British had been the first foreign power to manipulate Kurdish insurgencies against Turkey and Turks. For a list of Kurdish rebellions from 1806 to 1999, see M. Ali Birand, "Bugüne Kadar Kaç Kürt İsyanı Oldu?", *Milliyet*, January 3, 2008, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2008/01/03/yazar/zbirand.html>. For a detailed analysis of the "Islamic" – Kurdish rebellions between 1919-1925, see: Uğur Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması, 1919-1925*, UM:AG Vakfı Yayınları, 21st Edition, August 1996, passim.

Towards the end of the 1970s, Kurdish groups based on the same ideology had also exploited the same facilities. Thus, the U.S.S.R. found leverage to counter-balance the efforts of the U.S., Israel and Iran in the region, all of which, beginning from the 1960s, had manipulated the Kurdish movement to further their national interests. Thus, in the beginning, PKK activities in Turkey provided the U.S.S.R. with the opportunity to take part in the processes.³⁶

The PKK was established on November 26-27, 1978 in Lice, Diyarbakir. From the first meeting, Abdullah Ocalan emerged as the leader. Frequently causing foreigners to have a misperception, as if the case concerns a political party in the traditional sense, the meaning of its name, Kurdistan Workers Party, only implies the Marxist – Leninist ideological basis of the terror organization.³⁷

In the beginning, the group called themselves “Kurdistan Revolutionaries.” On capture of several prominent figures in May 1979 in the Elazig region by the martial-law authorities, Abdullah Ocalan had to move into Syria. The plan for publicity and declaration of the establishment of the organization was to assassinate a local prominent political figure and a traditional local leader: Mehmet Celal Bucak. On July 29, 1979, the PKK attempt for his assassination had failed, but still the event made headlines in the Turkish media. In a written communiqué left at the scene of the assassination attempt, the establishment of the PKK had been made public for the first time.³⁸

PKK: STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Kurds in Turkey enjoy similar status and rights as any citizen, without any negative discrimination.³⁹ Yet, the strategic objective of the PKK has been to establish an independent, united and democratic Kurdistan in the region. The PKK's goal, as proclaimed in its manifesto, dated October 27, 1978, is to establish an independent Kurdish state in parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Adapting the strategy to the requirements of the developing conditions, statements in this regard have been modified to make references to other concepts such as regional autonomy, human rights, even mere cultural rights, etc.⁴⁰ Because of the contradiction between words and deeds of the PKK terror organization and pro-PKK political activists, Turkish public opinion is far away from taking it seriously, with similar opinions and analysis being expressed by some human rights activists and some of Western politicians.⁴¹

36 Nihat Ali Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi), Tarihi, İdeolojisi ve Yöntemi*, Ankara: Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1999, pp. 12, 323.

37 PKK / KONGRA-GEL / KADEK (various names used to change the public image of the same organization) is considered as a terror organization, not only by Turkey, but also by the U.S. and the E.U.

38 Operational procedures of the PKK suggest that it had been initiated by secret services of the Eastern Block of the time, namely, Syria and/or Bulgaria. The basic concept appears not to leave the fate of an oil rich region solely to the influence and activities of the U.S., acting through Barzani groups. See: *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi)*..., pp. 42-51.

39 See Bruce Fein, “Unveiling the PKK,” *The Washington Times*, January 3, 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com...>

40 *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi)*..., pp. 64-65.

41 The general conviction of the common public in Turkey is that, in the present environment, under the cover of promoting broader human rights practices, Turkey is being asked to support a “nation building operation” for future steps in the direction of a Kurdish secession. This conviction appears to have sound grounds. For

MILITARY STRATEGY: TERRORISM AND GUERRILLA WARFARE

Inspired by the strategy set and successfully implemented by Mao during the Chinese communist revolution via guerrilla warfare and in the context of a long-term “peoples war,” in order to establish effective control in the countryside, propaganda, informing and educating local populations, applying revolutionary violence would be the basics of the PKK’s operational framework. In the first phase, founding safe base areas and afterwards creating liberated zones would have priority in the operational progress. Taking guerrilla warfare as the basic military tactic, long-term armed struggle would be completed in three phases: strategic defence, strategic balance, and strategic attack. The PKK, throughout the preparatory phase of so-called “armed propaganda,” committed many atrocities, acts of terrorism, all in the name of the so-called “revolutionary violence.” To date, the PKK’s terrorist attacks have killed almost 40,000 to include their fellow Kurds.⁴²

REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE

The basic military capability could only be developed by the assistance provided by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in collaboration with Syria. Guerrilla training had been completed in 1981-1982. The PKK’s guerrilla groups entered Turkey beginning from April 1980. In the context of cooperation between Iran and Syria, the PKK could find safe havens in and around the I-KDP camps of Barzani in northern Iraq. Armed propaganda units began touring the “Botan” region from the beginning of 1983. The first large-scale attacks had been directed against Erzurum and Semdinli on the night of August 15, 1984. The vital problem was that people living in the region did not support PKK activities. To eliminate this lack of cooperation with the PKK, the revolutionary violence turned

example, according to the President of the DTP (Democratic Society Party, pro-PKK) the government should negotiate with the PKK: “Demirtaş: PKK’yla Masaya Oturulsun,” *Radikal*, December 5, 2007, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=240729>. According to another DTP member of the parliament, Turkey needs to establish a confederation: Emine Ayna, in “DTP’li Milletvekili Konfederasyon İstedi,” *CNN-Türk.com*, January 27, 2008, <http://www.cnntrk.com/interactive/yazdir.asp?PID=318&haberID=423478>; finally, according to a provincial president of the DTP, the PKK is a revolutionary movement: Murat Polat in “DTP’li Başkan: PKK Devrimci Bir Hareket,” *NTVMSNTC.com*, February 9, 2008, <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/print.asp?pid=435145>. Leyla Zana, former DEP (pro-PKK) member of the parliament, suggests that Abdullah Öcalan should be allowed to participate in politics, together with the people: Leyla Zana, in Okan Konuralp, “Öcalan’ı Halkın Yanına Getirin, Siyaset Yapsın,” *Hürriyet*, 27 October 2007, p. 23. Seemingly, Turkey’s accession to the European Union will not satisfy DTP: Ahmet Türk, in Neşe Düzel, “AB, Biz Kürtler İçin Yeterli Değil,” *Radikal*, April 17, 2004, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=184669>. (Compare with Doğu Ergil, “International Terrorism and Turkey’s Kurdish Problem,” *Turkish Daily News*, December 25, 2006, http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/editorial.php?ed=dogu_ergil; Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, “The Cultural Situation of the Kurds,” Res. 1519 (2006), dated October 4, 2006.) Not fully understanding the multi-nationalistic past of the Republic of Turkey and its present consequences appear to be an important factor in making irrelevant human rights interpretations on the status of Kurds in Turkey. (See Toktamış Ateş, “Batılı’nın Derdi,” *Cumhuriyet*, January 6, 1998, p. 3.) It is often forgotten that, contrary to the common belief, “The Kurds are not monolithic, linguistically or politically.” (Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the State*, Syracuse University Press, 2005, 238 pp., reviewed in Michael Rubin, “Brief Reviews,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2007, <http://www.meforum.org/article/1666>.)

42 For a complete list of PKK chronology, to include information on PKK atrocities between 1976-2006, see: “Chronology of the Important Events in the World/PKK Chronology (1976-2006),” *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, September 13, 2006, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/articles.php?id=217>.

directly on the local and other populations.⁴³ An attempt to use the local population as militia failed. As a result, the Turkish government established temporary village guard units, recruited from among the local population.⁴⁴

PRESENT SITUATION

Upon the capture of the PKK's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999, and already suffering heavily from the effective Turkish military operations, the PKK ceased to launch terrorist attacks and used the following years to pursue a "wait-and-see" policy and internal restructuring. As it had been the case following the Gulf War, the U.S.-led Coalition Forces' intervention in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, again, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, developments in Northern Iraq, and the U.S. indifference to its existence and activities of the PKK in that region once more created a favorable environment for the terror organization. This author is in the opinion that the said U.S. military action had been in gross violation of the international law and that even if Turkey had actively taken sides with the U.S., the situation in Iraq would not be any better. Thus, the last wave of PKK terrorism started in 2004 and still continues. During the counter-terrorism campaign against the PKK in the 1990s, Turkey did not receive any meaningful understanding, assistance or support it expected from the international community. On the contrary, it had been harshly criticized.⁴⁵ As a result, Turkey had been put in a position to assess, determine and apply counter-terrorism measures all by itself. In the light of these developments, it is very difficult to conclude that Turkey and Turks received fair treatment from their Western friends and allies in the context of legitimate international cooperation against terrorism.⁴⁶

- 43 On March 13, 1999, three PKK militants set fire to a large shopping center, Mavi Çarşı, in Göztepe, İstanbul, burning 13 shoppers to death: "İşte Eseriniz!", *Hürriyet*, March 14, 1999, p. 1, 2, 3, 27. One hundred thirty-eight elementary school teachers were among the casualties of the PKK's terrorist attacks, almost all killed before the eyes of the pupils, in the classrooms: Hasan Pulur, "138 Şehit", *Fiesta - Milliyet Pazar Dergisi*, March 12, 1995, No 86, p. 9; Celalettin Çetin, "Gözyaşı Çok Şey Anlatıyor!", *Milliyet*, September 19, 1994, pp. 1, 6. In one separate incident, the PKK ambushed a village, Yavi, Erzurum, gathered the residents to the main square and executed 35 individuals by shooting: "Köy Basıldı: 35 Ölü," *Cumhuriyet*, October 26, 1993, pp. 1, 15. On the night of August 16, 1993, the PKK launched an attack on the Yüksekova town, in the Southeast. Many homes and business places burned. Responded to by the security forces in the area, the engagement lasted the whole night with almost 400 PKK militants involved: "Cehennem Gecesi," *Milliyet*, August 17, 1993, pp. 1, 18. In Kemaliye, Erzincan, PKK militants ambushed Başbağlar village, executed 28 innocent people by shooting and burning to death four other individuals together with their homes, to include one woman and one child: Macit Gürbüz-H. İbrahim Özdemir-Şeyhmus Çakan, "Kemaliye'de Vahşet!", *Milliyet*, July 7, 1993. Among the casualties in six different cities of Southeast Turkey had been 362 troops and 72 security police who were ethnic Kurds: Mehmet Faraç, "Terör Kardeşini Vuruyor", *Cumhuriyet*, December 19, 2005, p. 6.
- 44 *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi)...*, pp. 73-105. Temporary village guards proved to be an efficient local defense capability and thus a major target for the PKK's terrorist attacks. In one instance, the PKK attacked an elite unit of the temporary village guards, killing 16. Temporary village guards, in defense, killed 48 PKK militants: "PKK'dan Hain Saldırı," *Milliyet*, October 15, 1998, pp. 1, 16.
- 45 In the course of countering PKK terrorism, consecutive governments have frequently asked for the support of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). The TAF launched cross-border operations to eliminate the terrorist threat. Such cross-border operations started from 1983 onwards. (For a chronology, see: "Sinir Ötesi Operasyonlar 1983'te Başladı," *CNN-Türk.com*, February 22, 2008, <http://www.cnnturk.com/interactive/yazdir.asp?PID=318&haberID=430959>. In many instances, the Western media did not hesitate to distort the objectives and consequences of these military operations. For examples, see: Jason Burke, "Turkish Onslaught Paves Way for Major Assault on Iraq Kurds," *Guardian*, February 24, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/24/turkey.iraq>.
- 46 As an example, according to the 2007 Annual report published by the German Agency for the Protection of the Constitution, the PKK has 11,500 members in Germany and could collect millions of Euros, in support of the PKK activities: Süleyman Bağ, "Alman Raporu: PKK, Hala Milyonlarca Euro Topluyor," *Zaman Online*, May 16, 2008, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazdir.do?haberno=690139>. (Compare with: Ergin Saygun, in "PKK

CONCLUSION

In this overall context, overt and clandestine support provided by some members of the international community to the terrorist or extremist organizations has had an intensely negative effect on the general state of the global, regional, and national security environment.⁴⁷ Under the present circumstances, where the territorial integrity and national unity of states that are targeted by third party states, it is very difficult to enhance and strengthen nations such as a modern and pluralist democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, which represent core human values in the region.⁴⁸

So long as the international community is hesitant to engage in active international cooperation and solidarity against terrorism and overlooks the fact that the distinctive criteria of terrorism (notwithstanding its political, religious or ideological objectives, which sometimes may be an acceptable or tolerable reason for sympathy and even may be a legitimate concern) is not the political, ideological or religious objective pursued, but is the unacceptable tactics, means and methods of armed violence employed which if allowed to continue, the international community will not be able to reduce the terrorist threat to an acceptable and manageable level.⁴⁹ To the contrary, in the face of asymmetric threat and warfare, global and regional security will likely continue to deteriorate towards a more complex and difficult security environment.

Revenues Reach 500 million Euros," *Today's Zaman*, March 12, 2008, <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/>..). Within the ongoing period, which started from Al Qaeda's terror attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, Turkey has observed a relatively positive shift in Western attitude towards Turkish counter-terrorism efforts. Seeing the terrorist threat directed against them, Turkey's Western friends and allies put into practice their own strict means and methods of countering terrorism.

- 47 For an assessment of financial and other aspects and consequences of the struggle against PKK terrorism, see: Cemil Çiçek, in Abbas Güçlü, "Çiçek: PKK'ya 300 Milyar Dolar Harcandı," *Milliyet*, November 23, 2007, p. 20; Güngör Uras, "Terörle Mücadelenin Faturası Var," *Milliyet*, October 24, 2007, p. 7. As of October 2007, the Turkish government paid compensation to 85,000 applicants in the region: Yalçın Doğan, "85 Bin Kişiyse Tazminat Ödendi," *Hürriyet*, October 2, 2007, p. 11.
- 48 For a comprehensive analysis, see: Mesut Hakkı Çaşın, *Uluslararası Terörizm*, Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, Ankara, February 2008, pp. 543-578.
- 49 See Emine Kart, "Turkey Taking PKK Complaints to UN, NATO," *Today's Zaman*, June 2, 2007, <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/>.. For nuances between human right issues - political activism and supporting PKK terrorism, see: Hasan Cemal, "Kürt Sorununda Barışçı Çağırının Yanlışları Üzerine Bir Yazı," *Milliyet*, May 22, 2008, p. 17. As an example of indirect support to an ongoing terrorist activity; Roj-TV is known as the main TV station serving the PKK. Denmark, however, overlooking the administrative and security nature of the fact, still appears to continue to collect evidence, in order to close the station (see Mahmut Gürer, "Danimarka Kanıt Topluyor,"