Turkey's Struggle Against the Foreign Terrorist Fighters of DAESH*

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Abstract

DAESH is a terrorist organisation with a Salafist jihadist ideology that threatens the civilized world. Moreover, like a contagious agent of a cancer cell to the rest of the body, the foreign terrorist fighters of DAESH are a growing threat against their states of origin, the states they transit, and the states where they are active, as well as their neighbouring zones. Turkey falls under all these categories. Between 2014 and 2016, 159 individuals in Turkey lost their lives because of terror attacks executed by the foreign terrorist fighters. Data from these attacks are analysed in the article. While increased international cooperation on the use of no-entry lists, has produced some positive improvements in the efforts against foreign terrorist fighters, such collaboration should extend to other measures as well. In conclusion, the article argues that while Turkey experienced the initial wave of terrorist attacks by returnees, foreign terrorist fighters might cause a metastasis to the rest of the world. Moreover, the contagious effect of foreign fighters for violence is not limited to DAESH and needs to be examined within other terrorist organizations.

Key Words

DAESH, foreign terrorist fighters, Syria, Turkey, terrorism.

Introduction

Terrorist groups, especially those with Salafist jihadist motivations, have expanded their presence and influence in Syria and Iraq in recent years, due to the on-going civil war in Syria since 2011, and the developments in Iraq since 2003. The threat posed by these groups, particularly the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS/DAESH) and the al-Nusra Front (ANF), has become a concern for the security and stability of not only the countries of the region but also different parts of the world where the violence spread by these groups has triggered radicalization and violent extremism.

Turkey, as a neighbour to the conflict zone, has been facing an increased risk and threat to its security at many levels. The reason for the risk is essentially caused not only by the geographical proximity to the conflict zone but also

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by its border neighbours, which include such non-state actors as DAESH, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), and various opponents to the Syrian regime, as well as the Assad regime itself. Although there are many other concerns for Turkey caused by DAESH, the article focuses only on the Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) of DAESH and their effects against Turkey. It also needs to be highlighted that there are other non-state actors whose foreign terrorist fighters create security problems for Turkey, but they are not the focus of this article.

Foreign Terrorist Fighters, in general, were described as illegal by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, on 24 September 2014. Prior to this, foreign fighters were not assumed to pose a threat to civilization, rather they were seen simply as volunteers who were ready to sacrifice their lives. However, the foreign fighters wave in the first decade of the 21st century with the emergence of al-Qaida raised concerns about such individuals. Subsequently, as DAESH has seen, the UN Security Council duly responded to their actions with Resolution 2178, describing them as illegal. The main problem concerning foreign terrorist fighters is their role in spreading violence outside of conflict zones, all around the world.

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In this perspective, this study initially explains the evolution of foreign fighters, especially the most recent generation associated with DAESH. This will lead to the articulation of theoretical explanations of foreign terrorist fighters, established with the al-Qaeda experience of the last decade. Later, the article argues for international efforts to tackle with the phenomenon in general. Within this framework, the theoretical approach will be applied to Turkey to describe the threat potential against the country specifically. Subsequently, a data set encompassing the DAESH terror attacks against Turkey between March 2014 and March 2016 will be used to analyse the effects of foreign terrorist fighters on Turkey. Consequently, Turkey's strategy against foreign terrorist fighters will be discussed. In the conclusion, the article argues that foreign terrorist fighters have a

contagious effect for violence spreading to the rest of the world and the case in Turkey is an indicator.

Emergence of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon with DAESH

Foreign fighters have been seen on battlefields since the emergence of nation states in the 19th century. Until the 21st century, history witnessed devoted foreign fighters on battlefields such as in Greece, the United States, Spain, Palestine, Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, al-Qaeda began recruiting foreign fighters for terrorism, thus leading to these foreign fighters being seen as terrorists instead of volunteers ready to sacrifice their lives to save what they saw as the weak side in a war. This was the start of a second generation in the evolution of foreign fighters. At this point the international community still did not establish a judicial regulation against them due to the fact that their number was relatively low. With the emergence of DAESH in Syria and Iraq however, the United Nations added the title "terrorists" and declared them illegals. This allows us to now talk about the third-generation of foreign fighters.

On 24 September 2014, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 21781 and defined foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) as:

> "... individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict..."

With Resolution 2178, the UN Security Council urges the member states to take necessary measures to prevent the actions of such FTFs. The reason for defining any individual as an FTF because of their travels to conflict zones or because they are found to have intentions of terrorism, is a result and reflection of the level of security threat being faced. Admittedly, that approach encompasses a high potential to raise discussions among judicial scholars; however, this issue is not within the scope of this study. Because of the difficulties involved in any de-radicalization process for such fighters, and their contagious effect in spreading violence throughout the world, third-generation FTFs have started to be taken as a serious threat to the civilised world and thus received a reaction at the utmost capacity, resulting in being defined as illegal.

Since the FTF phenomenon is still being conceptualized, there are

different attempts to create models for understanding the FTFs' pathways. In this context, a model developed by the International Centre for Counter Terrorism in The Hague provides a useful framework to understand this phenomenon. According to this model,[2] an FTF will eventually be; either, first, killed in conflict zone, or, second, stay in the conflict zone permanently, or, third, leave the conflict zone. The potential threat of FTFs to the rest of the world begins, ironically, if they want to leave the conflict zone. Essentially, they might either return to their home or travel to a third country. In the first option, they can be either integrated into the society peacefully, or may decide to join other conflicts. Or else, in a very detrimental scenario to the world, these returnee FTFs might engage in terrorist activity in their home country. The last option for the returnee FTFs tops the threat list for the rest of the world.

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As stated, before UN Security Council Resolution 2178, scholars preferred the term "foreign fighters" instead of "foreign terrorist fighters." There are a number of studies on al-Qaeda' foreign fighters covering the first decade of the 21st century within this perspective.[3] Regarding the motivation of al-Qaeda, namely a Salafist jihadist interpretation of Islam, these studies established the theoretical approach for foreign fighters. Regarding the continuation of the Salafist jihadist movement from al-Qeada to DAESH, or alternatively from foreign fighters to foreign terrorist fighters, the theory has the capacity to explain the current wave. Having stated that, the main concern for foreign fighters is the "blowback effect." The blowback effect states that foreign fighters have the potential to spread the violence to different geographies.[4] In essence, the blowback effect portrays the threat capacity of foreign fighters when they return from conflict zones. The theoretical approach also shows us that one out of nine foreign fighters will engage in further terrorist activity after they return.[5] As for DAESH's foreign terrorist fighters, I argue that the proportion is jeopardized because of their evolution. This proportion also fails to show the level for their contagious capacity for violence to the rest of the world. At this stage, the theoretical approach follows previous studies which have found out that

the battlefield experience of returnees makes their lethal capacity twice as much as before they went to the conflict zone.[6]

International Efforts to Deal with the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon

Essentially, there are three institutional fora for international efforts against foreign terrorist fighters and, by implication, against DAESH: the Anti-ISIL Coalition, the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF), and the United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee (UN CTC). The Anti-ISIL Coalition takes hard power measures against DAESH; the GCTF creates a platform to decide on principles against the threat, as well as paving the way for international cooperation; and the UN CTC aims to establish internationally harmonized national regulations. It needs to be noted that the conceptualization process of the FTF phenomenon is an on-going process, and the international community has been seeking to understand the phenomenon in order to tackle with it. Therefore, the efforts of the GCTF and the UN CTC encompass some theoretical attempts, such as defining and regulating international travel standards, etc.

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Admittedly, DAESH has the initiative and it can easily abuse the liberal international system, especially travel regulations. In other words, the international efforts are only responsive to the actions of terrorist organisations, and these organisations have the upper hand in setting the terms of the debate. The effectiveness of the international efforts is another question, and so far they have not proven capable of controlling this challenge.

Currently, we have some reports published by the United Nations,[7] in addition to some academic assessments of the subject. As well, real time media releases including social media sources give us some hints at how to conceptualize this phenomenon. As mentioned above, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2178, which defined foreign fighters, under specific circumstances, as terrorists, and provided a road map

for its members to deal with the phenomenon. Essentially, UN Security Council Resolution 2178 is the cornerstone to deal with the problem, and has created a capacity for leading the international cooperation to become more effective. Before the Resolution, neither international cooperation nor national mechanisms had a reference point for dealing with the problem. Resolution 2178 has since then paved the way for the global response to the FTF challenge. Previously, even the lack of a definition for FTFs was itself an obstacle for efforts to address this problem. We now have tangible criteria and a roadmap at the national and international levels for tackling FTFs, which used to be a huge gap for international coordination, cooperation, or even collaboration.

On 14 May 2015, the UN Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate released a report entitled "Implementation of Security Council 2178 (2014) by States affected by foreign terrorist fighters".[8] The report underlines that foreign terrorist fighters are a growing threat against (i) their states of origin; (ii) the states they transit; (iii) the states where they are active; and (iv) those states' neighbouring zones. In particular, in the long-term, FTFs pose a risk for their home countries or third countries where they decide to reside as they become returnees, named as "alumni" in the report. The UN CTC identifies 67 most affected member states and mentions the presence of up to 30,000 FTFs in the region.[9] Previously there were reports that relied on limited sources, such as interviews, social network analyses, estimations or gatherings through media. This UN report is the first report that relies on extensive data based on the accumulation of member states' official approvals. At this point, it needs to be noted that previous analyses and the UN CTC report are in accordance with each other and the direction of the international community is on the right path to conceptualize this phenomenon. Essentially, the UN CTC report identifies five urgent measures that need to be taken by member states: (i) Preventing inter-state travel of FTFs; (ii) law enforcement; (iii) countering incitement to terrorism, including through the Internet; (iv) criminalization; and (v) financing of foreign terrorist fighters. These

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five points pass on "what needs to be done" instructions to the international community to prevent FTFs and their travels.

In a nutshell, the UN CTC states that the world has been caught unprepared to prevent FTF travels. Although there have been some improvements, there is still a need for an effective international cooperation to overcome this problem. Essentially, globalization has been encouraging individuals to travel around the world. The global system, which reflects this understanding, lacks effective instruments to prevent mobility of individuals. Hence, the principle of freedom for travelling allows the FTFs to benefit from considerable mobility around the world. As for the other above-mentioned measures, namely law enforcement, countering incitement to terrorism including through the Internet, criminalization, and financing of the FTFs, there are only clues for improvement because of the fact that there have not yet been significant official public statements on them. According to the clues; law enforcement is still ineffective although most countries have criminalized FTFs' activities. The countering measures on the Internet and financing of terrorism are two popular subjects that are being discussed in public. In 2016, the main perception is that the flow of FTFs has decreased to some extent.[10]

Turkey's Challenges with Foreign Terrorist Fighters

As for the application of the abovementioned model to Turkey, the threats have been tripled compared with those of the rest of the world. Turkey, theoretically, perceives exactly the same threat as do her Western allies, in the sense that a Turkish FTF who decides to come back to her/his home might, like any other FTF returnee, engage in a terrorist activity within the country. In addition to that, Turkey's threat perception encompasses two additional dimensions. Turkey's concerns begin when any foreign terrorist fighter decides to leave the conflict zone, as he/she will likely use Turkey on the way back to her/his home, thus creating the first threat to Turkey. For instance, in March 2014, three Turkish citizens, including one police officer and one military personnel, were killed during the return of some foreign terrorist fighters.[11] As this event underscores, even the transiting FTF can create an additional threat for Turkey. As for the third dimension, a foreign terrorist fighter who decides to leave the conflict zone might prefer to reside in Turkey as a third country due to the fact that Turkey is a Muslim-majority country where she/he can blend relatively easily into local society, as well as among Syrian refugees residing in Turkey, the numbers of which reach

millions. Alternatively, returnees might be stuck in Turkey due to policies aimed at revoking their passports or cancelling their citizenships by their home countries. This particular model shows us therefore that threats against Turkey have two additional dimensions compared to those of its western allies.

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Turkey is a Western state, which is located at the very edge of the current conflict in the Middle East. Undoubtedly, this reality creates not only threats against Turkey in itself, but also raises its vulnerability as a transit country for FTF mobility. In fact, FTF travel through Turkey to Syria has been triggered by Turkey's liberal visa regime and the porous Turkish land border with Syria. Turkey receives more than 35 million tourists annually from all around the world through its land borders, ports and especially airport gates. Its attempts to have a more liberal visa regime are not only aimed at supporting its tourism industry but also to facilitate its economic and trade interests, which are very legitimate necessities in a globalized economy. In the meantime, Turkey's long–more than 900 kms–border with Syria has been historically a problematic issue for Turkey. The border, crossing from rural and urban areas, dividing towns, families, and tribes, has long been a matter of concern in terms of terrorist infiltrations from Syria, particularly by the PKK terrorist group. Furthermore, the border area has been known to be an arena of smuggling networks that are connected on both sides of the border. Last but not least, as it is a well-established fact, securing borders requires constant sustained struggle and can never be guaranteed.

Turkey is an active member of the international coalition against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Institutionally, both at the national and international levels, Turkey has been fulfilling its responsibilities to fight against violent extremism and terrorism. Turkey's experience in fighting against PKK terrorist organisation for more than 30 years makes it an active contributor to the efforts against terrorism around the world, as shown by Turkey's role in Afghanistan soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In fact, one can argue that Turkish citizens' participation in the militant Salafi movements, especially al-Qaida, has been very limited,[12] considering that 98 % of Turkish society is comprised

of Muslims. Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) has been an important mechanism in preventing extremism in the country. Nevertheless, as stated in the Soufan Group report with reference to Turkish authorities, 2,100 FTFs have joined terrorist organisations in Syria and Iraq, counting those who are alive, dead or returnees.[13] This number represents an enormous increase of Turkish FTFs compared with those to former violent extremist movements motivated by religious reasons. In other words, the current foreign terrorist fighter wave has changed the tendency in Turkey, thus creating a high-risk threat to the country. The atrocities in Syria have reflections in Turkey and the hostilities between groups in Syria feed terrorist activities in Turkey in the shape of a two-flank terrorism. It could be argued that the two terrorist fronts in Turkey, namely the PKK and DAESH, have reflections from the conflict between the PYD and DAESH in Syria. Thus, one could argue that the Salafist jihadist recruitment in Turkey has increased due to the atrocities against the PKK in Turkey.

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Turkey's other dilemma started after the DAESH threat to the Syrian and Iraqi people became more visible. Becoming involved in a military operation, in other words opening a ground front against DAESH, was out of question because of the difficulty of performing military and humanitarian operations simultaneously. Almost three million refugees within Turkey increased the country's vulnerabilities for several reasons, not only because of the potential infiltration of terrorist organisations. According to official statements, Turkey has spent over US$ 10 billion for the refugee operations.[14] In every sense, the scale of the relief operation for refugees is no less than a military one. In essence, with its humanitarian operation, Turkey focused on saving three million people fleeing from the Assad regime, DAESH, and other non-state actors. The alternative would have been fighting against the Assad regime and DAESH. However this option was out of the question when public opinion in Turkey is taken into account, in particular, Turkish society's sensitivity toward military casualties. The loss of almost 30,000 people over 30 years due to PKK terrorism still shapes public perceptions. It is safe to assume that the public would not tolerate more deaths caused by terrorism, including by DAESH terrorism. Additionally, the Turkish public would not support

ground operations against DAESH considering the on-going PKK terrorist attacks within the country. In contrast, the Turkish public, interestingly, has not reacted openly against the USD 10 billion bill spent for Syrian refugees, or in other words, on the humanitarian operation.

DAESH Terror Attacks against Turkey and the Role of Foreign Terrorist Fighters

So far, the conceptual framework and the status of Turkey against the FTFs have been explained. Now it is also necessary to analyze the terrorist attacks executed in Turkey that are connected to DAESH. These terrorist attacks, conducted between March 2014 and March 2016, killed a total of 163 and left more than 766 people wounded in Turkey. Just looking at these terrorist attacks and casualties would be insufficient, however, to assess the true DAESH threat against Turkey. To get a complete picture, it is necessary to analyze the wave of attacks in order to understand DAESH's stance in general, and the effects of the FTFs specifically toward Turkey. During the above-mentioned period, one of the attacks was an armed clash at a road checkpoint, five were cross-border assaults, and six were suicide bombings.

In this regard, one can observe four different categories for DAESH attacks against Turkey. First is the threat caused by the FTFs passing through Turkey as transit terrorist fighters. Second are the suicide bombings against selected targets in Turkish territory. Third are the rocket attacks on Turkish soil as a response to Turkey's artillery fire conducted as part of the anti-ISIS coalition attacks against DAESH in Syria. The fourth category involves the attacks against the Bashiqa Camp, where the Turkish military trains local forces against DAESH in Iraq. Undoubtedly, Turkey's relocation of the Suleiman Shah Tomb to an area nearer to the border has prevented a similar confrontation in Syrian territory. The last two categories, the attacks along the border, which were mainly against the border town of Kilis, and those in Iraq, which have been immediately responded to by the Turkish side, are outside the scope of this analysis.

A closer look at the attacks in the first and second categories suggests that the suicide bombings, which killed 156 people and injured 755, are the bloodiest of the various attack types. FTFs were the perpetrators of suicide bombings and the transit passing attacks. The threat posed by FTFs particularly stand out in DAESH's terrorist attacks against Turkey. According to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, everyone

recruited by terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq is considered as an FTF. In other words, all individuals recruited either from Turkey or from third countries are similarly considered as FTFs. The definition matters because of the combat experience of the FTFs and the level of threat they pose, which gets amplified upon their return as compared to the level they posed when they first departed from their home countries. In sum, DAESH terrorist fighters, whether from Turkey or not, pose a serious threat against Turkey when they return.

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Three of the DAESH FTFs' suicide bombings took place in Sultanahmet and Taksim, while the other three attacks were carried out in Diyarbakır, Suruç and Ankara. A close assessment of the attacks and their timing show that DAESH has a high capacity to select its targets in Turkey in accordance with the agenda of the time period. Undoubtedly, Turkey's high proportion of Muslim population is definitely a factor. DAESH has not yet executed indiscriminate attacks in Turkey because it has not yet been able to recruit as many people from Turkey as it desires.

DAESH leader, el Bağdadi, through his spokesperson Abu Muhammed el Adnani, invited the group's sympathizers to travel, in Islamic glossary "Hijrah," to the so-called Islamic State.[15] He added that, alternatively, sympathizers can fight for DAESH in their home countries if they do not have any access to travel. Following his words, some DAESH sympathizers have been executing terror attacks in the West.[16] Meantime, in Turkey, DAESH's returnee FTFs have been executing terror attacks as well. Since Turkey is geographically next to the conflict zones and, thereby, Syria is relatively accessible for them, instead of DAESH sympathizers, it is the returnee FTFs with battlefield experience that have been executing more lethal terror attacks in the country.[17] Therefore, in accordance with the theoretical approach, in reality, the FTFs are creating a high threat to Turkey.

In addition, as the media reports indicate, the suicide attackers responsible for the bombings in Turkey had participated in DAESH activities in Iraq and Syria as well. In other words, it is the returnees who have carried out the attacks, and their high battlefield experience has increased their

capability to execute more fatal terrorist activities. DAESH suicide bombings in Turkey have caused a terrifying average number of 31 deaths and nearly 151 wounded individuals per attack. This proportion clearly demonstrates the lethal impact of the experienced FTFs. It should be emphasized that Turkey is facing terrorist attacks because it shares borders with conflict zones and these attacks have a high potential to spread to the rest of the civilized world. In other words, the attacks between March 2014 and March 2016 against Turkey would be an initial indicator for the spread of the violence caused by DAESH terrorism to the rest of the world through FTFs.

Turkey's Strategy against Foreign Terrorist Fighters

In order to grasp Turkey's strategy to counter DAESH, a significant point must be taken into consideration. With the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Turkey started sharing borders with non-state actors. As of 2016, Turkey faces the PYD, DAESH and the Syrian opposition groups. Sharing a border with non-state actors, which are also fighting each other, further triggers Turkey's security concerns. In addition, the situation becomes further complicated as Turkey is also neighboring the Assad regime, against which Turkey repeatedly uttered its rejection in diplomatic platforms. It needs to be noted that most of the Syrian refugees in Turkey fled from the Assad regime.

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Turkey's position against DAESH can be elaborated at two levels: international and domestic. At the international level, the anti-ISIL coalition, the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and the UN Counter Terrorism Committee (UN CTC) are the main pillars of the international efforts against DAESH, as well as against FTFs. Turkey is a member of the anti-ISIL coalition and was the co-chair of the GCTF. Turkey has also opened its air bases to the anti-ISIL coalition since 2015 and has begun taking hard power measures against DAESH, in addition to the on-going humanitarian operation of sheltering almost three million refugees in the country. This greater involvement raises Turkey's vulnerabilities, raising the possibility of terrorist engagement risk to the top level, compared to that of any other member of the coalition.

Turkey's activities in the GCTF, as co-chair, were remarkable and led to the establishment of some tangible mechanisms relying on international cooperation, such as the no-entry list or programs for countering radicalism. At the same time, as a member of the United Nations, Turkey is making contributions to the UN CTC at both the state and society level. The UN CTC report released in May 2015 defined Turkey as one of the most-affected countries worldwide.[18]

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At the domestic level, Turkey's strategy against DAESH involves four different phases. First, Turkey opted for preventing the travels of the FTFs at the beginning of 2014. The main instrument for Turkey to prevent their passage through Turkey is a no-entry list of potential FTFs established through international cooperation. Essentially, the UNSCR 2178 has paved the way to accelerate work toward improving the no-entry list. The second instrument, the Risk Analysis Groups, have been established by Turkish security units to identify potential foreign terrorist fighters at borders, ports, and airports.[19] Any individual who fits the profile might be prevented from travelling through the country and swiftly deported back to her/his country. According to the information that was made public; the number of people on the no-entry list reached 38,624 persons from 128 different countries as of March 2016.[20] This number was around 5,000 during the summer 2014, around 7,000 by fall 2014, 9,915 in January 2015, and around 19,000 persons in March 2015.[21] The rapid acceleration of international cooperation is welcome, but also shows the failures of the past, which had put the total estimated amount as up to 30,000. It needs to be stated at this point that every case of FTF travel to Turkey, in addition to other neighbouring countries, is a failure of international cooperation regarding information sharing. In addition to that, thanks to the no-entry list, in the course of four years, 3,335 individuals from 95 different countries were deported from Turkey as suspected foreign terrorist fighters.[22]

As for the Risk Analysis Units, as of February 2016 they had interviewed 5,734 individuals and described 1,748 of them as inadmissible.[23] This shows that the Risk Analysis Groups is functioning to some extent as an

innovative tool to address possible shortfalls of the no-entry list.

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In the second phase, Turkey has started from summer 2015 onwards to reinforce its Syrian border controls in order to prevent the border-crossings and has started to get positive results. As a first priority, Turkey has erected a wall and fortified its border against DAESH. As has been reported through the media releases by the Turkish military,[24] the border fortification made it almost impossible for foreign terrorist fighters to cross from the end of 2015 onwards. It was necessary to analyse Turkey's efforts to improve security on its borders with Syria and Iraq due to the fact that the border was porous. Historically, the Syrian border of Turkey was subject to illegal crossings and smuggling. Moreover, the superficial demarcation of the border had split tribes and towns during the first quarter of the 20th century, when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated. Hence, the divided families and tribes traditionally have been crossing the border, which made it hard to prevent and control passes because of its humanitarian nature.[25]

The measures for the third and fourth phases are yet to be developed. The third phase is about preventing attacks by FTFs returning to and travelling through Turkey. It will definitely be a very difficult and arduous task. However, it will not be enough and the fourth phase has to involve a de-radicalization of these people.

Conclusion

DAESH is a terrorist organisation with a Salafist jihadist ideology that threatens the world. However, the foreign terrorist fighters of DAESH create yet another threat to the civilized world, just like a contagious agent of a cancer cell to the rest of the body. Even if the world could overcome DAESH itself as a threat, the FTFs can still spread the violence out of the conflict zone. In fact, they have already begun spreading the violence, and the case of Turkey is an indicator of their potential.

The FTFs are a growing threat against their states of origin, the states they transit, and the states they are active in, as well as their neighbouring zones. Turkey falls under all these categories. While 159 individuals lost their lives

in Turkey between March 2014 and March 2016 because of terror attacks executed mostly by returnee FTFs, the DAESH terror attacks in Europe and, in one case, the USA, were mostly executed by sympathizers in Europe and in the USA. This has meant that Turkey has been facing more fatal terror attacks compared to the West. I would argue it was because of Turkey's proximity to the conflict zone and one might expect the wave would spread to other regions.

As the experience on FTFs' travels has increased, the international community has witnessed some positive improvements, thanks to international collaboration through no-entry lists. This collaboration should extend to other measures. However, national concerns might prevent the development of thinking beyond national borders, whereas this kind of threat does not have any border. In other words, the foreign terrorist fighters of DAESH impose a serious threat to the world, showing that a local violence might harm the international security, and this necessitates a way of thinking that can move beyond national borders so as to be globally effective.

It is obvious that UNSCR 2178 does not only describe DAESH's foreign terrorist fighters as illegal; it also describes all terrorist organisations' foreign members as illegal. Additionally, the resolution urges all member states to take some specific measures against them.[26] That is to say, there is not any good or bad foreign terrorist fighter dichotomy. The others, such as the foreign terrorist fighters of the PYD also spread their violence to the rest of the world.

In conclusion, this article argues that while Turkey has experienced the brunt of the initial wave of terrorist attacks by returnees, foreign terrorist fighters might cause a metastasis to the rest of the world. Moreover, the contagious effect of foreign fighters creating further violence is not limited to DAESH and it needs to be examined for other terrorist organizations as well.

Endnotes

* This article has extracted and updated from the author's two policy briefs and an analysis report at ORSAM (Center for Middle East Strategic Studies), which were published in 2015 and 2016. "International Cooperation against Foreign Terrorist Fighters: The Experience of Turkey" ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs, No.22, February 2015. "Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Turkey: An Assessment at the First Year of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178" ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs, No.31, October 2015. "Analysing the ISIS Attacks in Turkey and Turkey's Struggle" ORSAM Foreign Policy Analysis, 22 March 2016.

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