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EUPHRATES SHIELD OPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COUNTER-TERRORISM OF TURKEY

Abstract

The counter-terrorism has become a concept that has been frequently discussed and studied in the international arena over the last two decades. In this study, the counter-terrorism has been examined conceptually and its scope has been explained. Within this framework, the methods of counter-terrorism have been mentioned and it has been stated that military intervention option is among the methods in this fight. Then, the Euphrates Shield Operation that had been carried out by Turkey which has been fighting against counter-terrorism in a multidimensionally manner against ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) that adopted a radical religious ideology has been examined. ISIS, deployed in Turkey's southern border, has carried out missile attacks against the cities of Turkey from this region and caused the death of civilians. These attacks can be expressed as the most important reasons to perform the second cross-border operation of Turkey after the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation. Euphrates Shield Operation that was carried out against ISIS, is important in terms of showing how Turkey is determined in counter-terrorism. Also, this operation has demonstrated Turkey's success in the military field, and its ability to perform similar operations in the future.

Keywords: Euphrates Shield, ISIS, Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, Turkey.

TÜRKİYE’NİN TERÖRLE MÜCADELESİ BAĞLAMINDA FIRAT KALKANI HAREKÂTI

Öz

Terörle mücadele, son yirmi yılda uluslararası alanda sıkça tartışılan ve üzerinde akademik çalışmalar yapılan bir kavram haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışmada terörle mücadele, kavramsal olarak incelenmiş ve kapsamı açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu çerçevede terörle mücadele yöntemlerinden söz edilmiş ve bu mücadelede yöntemleri arasında askeri müdahale seçeneğinin de bulunduğu ifade edilmiştir. Daha sonra uzun yıllardır terörle çok boyutlu bir mücadele sürdüren Türkiye’nin, radikal dini bir ideolojiyi benimsemiş IŞİD (Irak Şam İslam Devleti) terör örgütüne yönelik gerçekleştirdiği Fırat Kalkanı Harekâtı ayrıntılı bir şekilde incelenmiştir. Türkiye’nin güney sınırında konuşlanan IŞİD, bu bölgeden Türkiye’nin şehirlerine yönelik füze saldırıları gerçekleştirmiştir ve sivil vatandaşların ölümüne neden olmuştur. Bu saldırılar, 1974 Kıbrıs Barış Harekâtı’nın ardından Türkiye’nin ikinci kez sınır ötesi harekât yapmasının en önemli nedenleri olarak ifade edilebilir. IŞİD’e karşı gerçekleştirilen Fırat Kalkanı Harekâtı, Türkiye’nin terörle mücadele kapsamında ne kadar kararlı bir tutum içinde olduğunu göstermesi açısından önem taşımaktadır. Ayrıca bu harekât, Türkiye’nin askeri açıdan başarısını ve gelecekte benzeri harekâtları yapabilecek yeteneği olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Fırat Kalkanı, IŞİD, Terörizm, Terörle Mücadele, Türkiye.

Introduction

Terrorism is one of the concepts defined in various ways on the international level and does not have a definition on which everyone agrees. Within these definitions, some concepts can be said to be used jointly. Violence, fear, organization and ideology are examples. In addition to the armed dimension of terrorism, there are social, political, economic, psychological and cultural dimensions. The counter-terrorism has expressed a multidimensional systematic when evaluated in this framework. Therefore, when the states that perform counter-terrorism, determining the policies and strategies against terrorism should be considered within this scope.

Turkey has been performing counter-terrorism, especially the PKK terrorist organization for many years, and has lost thousands of security officers and civilians during this fight, and has been fighting against ISIS which has been a new terrorist organization in recent years. With its radical religious ideology and the ability to carry out action on an international level, the organization quickly came to the fore and wanted to expand its geographical area, especially by using the unstable states of the Middle East. ISIS has increased the area of domination at Turkey's southern border, which has seriously disturbed Turkey. Because of foreign fighters who want to use Turkey as a route and participate to ISIS, Turkey has led to take measures in this regard. However, ISIS threat has directly affected Turkey increasingly and Turkey has carried out a cross-border operation starting from the Syrian border city of Jarabulus. This operation called Euphrates Shield Operation, is the second cross-border operation of Turkey that was carried out after Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974.

The aim of this study is to evaluate Turkey's attitude in the scope of counter-terrorism against ISIS, which has deployed at Turkey's southern border and menacing attitude. For this reason, this cross-border operation that was performed by Turkey, which supports the international coalition established to fight against ISIS, has been investigated in the present study. The hypothesis of the study is that Turkey is in a multi-dimensional fight against ISIS, which is a radical religious organization, in addition to fighting against ethnic-based separatist terrorists for many years. In the scope of counter-terrorism, Turkey has the will to organize a military operation across its borders if it is necessary.

Scope Of Counter-Terrorism

When we look at the Western sources about the concept of the counterterrorism, we see that the concept was first used towards the end of the 19th century. In this period, the concept of counter-terrorism was used to express that measures were taken against the attacks aimed at the leaders of Western countries. It was the New York Times that pioneered this concept in an article published on April 2, 1881 (The New York Times, 1881). The popularity of counter-terrorism concept increased after the British fight against a Jewish terrorist organization in Palestine in 1940. The British explained their fight against the Lehi terrorist organization by using this concept (Demirci, 2011: 194). The fact that the concept gains its meaning today corresponds to the period after the 9/11 US attacks.

The main element of the counter-terrorism is to be able to address the causes of the problems that constitute the source of terrorism and to read this situation correctly. The analysis of the causes of terrorism and revealing them, however, is very important in determining what measures can be developed. Measures to be taken in this way may be more effective. In this respect, it is useful to think of the multidimensional problems that constitute the source of terrorism. These problems may arise from political, economic and sociocultural areas (Baharçipek and Tuncel, 2011: 4).

The methods used in the early periods of terrorism also changed over time. Developments in science and technology, especially in today's conditions, have become more violent due to the fact that terrorist acts can reach people all over the world. In this way, the fact that only an armed fight against terrorist organizations that want to spread fear to the whole world will not work. The counter-terrorism can be made more effective by spreading to social and cultural spheres as well as military measures. The fight against terrorism requires different and broad perspectives (Özer, 2015: 56).

In the classical approach, the issue of terrorism has been dealt with only as a military-oriented security problem, and strategies have been developed to focus on the elimination of terrorism. Mere military measurements in counter-terrorism is not enough without considering the underlying social, cultural, political and economic reasons. Therefore, terror is a problem that can be dealt with by dealing with all its dimensions. In addition, another important point in counter-terrorism is to treat terrorism in terms of time and location. Incomplete assessments at the point of time and location may reduce the impact of counter-terrorism. The inadequacy of assessments related to the analysis of developments in technology and communication in the classical approach may lead to a misconception that terrorism is affected by a narrow location (geographic region) or that it affects a narrow location. Therefore, it can be said that the classical understanding about counter-terrorism causes many problems in the social field rather than eliminating terrorism. It is not sufficient for this understanding to act in a security

perspective, to reduce the counter-terrorism to the physical intervention of the security forces and to think that it can achieve success by doing this within a narrow geographical area (Baharçipek and Tuncel, 2011: 4-5).

Counter-terrorism is an issue that is directly affected by the change and development of the international system as well as being multidimensional. In particular, the effects of globalization on the world system and the disappearance of borders reveal that terrorism is not a mere internal security problem of countries. During the Cold War, the fact that terrorist incidents increased and affected many countries caused them to change the scope of counter-terrorism. They began to evaluate terrorist activities in a multi-dimensional way not only with the security dimension and the elements of this dimension, but also with the addition of new actors (Bal, 2006: 351). Cooperation started between the countries in counter-terrorism.

Being able to go to the source of terrorism is very important in determining the scope of counter-terrorism. It can be said that there is a sense of inequality on the basis of social, cultural, economic or political causes of terrorism. In particular, inequality in income distribution within the country and inequalities between regions can be cited as examples (Baharçipek and Tuncel, 2011: 5). As another example, it may show political constraints. The fact that an individual or a group think that their own ideas are not expressed directly or in a representative way may lead them to express their opinions through illegal means (Bakan, 2010: 66).

Another concept developed in parallel with the phenomenon of globalization, localization, has also played an important role in the increase of terrorist activities based on ethnic causes. Terrorist actions, taken on the basis of ethnic identity, are very destructive of today's international system. In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that localization expresses itself through ethnic-based terror in the face of globalization (Castells, 2006: 2). Ethnic elements that differentiate themselves from the dominant society have engaged in terrorist activities on the pretext that they are guerrillas (Taşkın, 2004: 123).

The Methods of Counter-Terrorism

Counter-terrorism is a multidimensional issue. Various methods are used in counter-terrorism covering many areas. In this section, active use of counter-terrorism methods will be briefly mentioned.

Political Methods

The applications of states that can make the institutional structures required by the concepts of democracy and justice can be interpreted as complying with the principle of equality by their citizens. In this sense, the inequality, which constitutes a source of terrorism, will be prevented. As a matter of fact, when the perception of democracy and law on society starts to shift to the negative direction, the field of terrorism will be opened (Wilkinson, 2001: 54).

A wide range of research has been conducted on counter-terrorism. One of them is related to the process of laying down the arms of the terrorist organizations that abandon their weapons. In this research, 2658 terrorist organizations operating between 1968 and 2006 and laying down arms were examined. Looking at the results, it was seen that 43% of these terrorist organizations agreed to lay down arms by negotiation or as a result of a legal space within the political structure (Demir, 2017:134). This shows the importance of political methods for the prevention of terrorism.

There are two different views on whether or not states should negotiate with terrorist organizations. According to the researchers who support the first opinion, states do not sit at the negotiating table with terrorist organizations, and they should not. On the other hand, the researchers who advocate the second opinion suggest that political solutions and negotiations like this can have positive results, and therefore a negotiation table should be established. The two views have agreed that the negotiations would not be a solution alone and should be considered as a supportive factor (Erdoğan, 2018: 41).

Negotiating with terrorist organizations poses a number of risks. It is directly proportional to the potential action forces that the terrorist organization can obtain at the table. For this reason, they can plan to obtain more profit from the table, by taking terrorist actions in the negotiation process (Gurr, 2003: 210). Cronin has stated that the negotiation process strengthened the hand of terrorist organizations (Cronin, 2007: 40). Negotiation processes are always open to manipulation. If there is a negotiation, it should not be ignored that there may be third parties who would like to conclude this negatively (Demir, 2013).

One of the risks of negotiating with terrorist organizations is to give the organization an important opportunity to restructure. At the same time, when terrorist organizations are not satisfied with the developments at the table, they can take action and cause different perceptions on the relevant institutions of the state. Most of the negotiations developed in this direction fail. According to the study by Kydd and Walter on the subject, only 25% of the negotiations were concluded positively if terrorist acts occurred during the negotiation process (Kydd and Walter, 2002: 264).

Criminal-Justice System (CJS)

The concept of the Criminal-Justice System (CJS) is a process that encompasses all state-controlled actions including identifying, arresting, bringing the suspect into prison, sending him to prison if convicted, and carrying out the execution. In other words, law enforcement, and judicial and penal institutions are included in this scope. The purpose of the Criminal-Justice System is to neutralize terrorist organizations through the use of legal means. In this sense, the integrity of the state and the rule of law will be further strengthened (Wilkinson, 2006: 62).

The CJS contains some risks. For the members of the terrorist organization arrested and brought to justice, terrorist acts may be carried out by other members of the organization for the purpose of revenge. At this point, it is necessary to prevent the actions that may take place due to the members of the organization delivered to the justice system and to take extra precautions for this (Pillar, 2003: 81).

States can have a positive or negative impact on society through their application of the rule of law and human rights. The citizen's belief that the crime committed will not remain unpunished will have a positive effect. The perception that the state will not allow the restriction of the rights and freedoms of its citizens will also have positive reflections. Terrorism is less common in states that can manage the security-freedom dilemma in a balanced way (Wilkinson, 2006: 81).

Effectiveness of Intelligence

The concept of intelligence is the process of classifying the raw data collected in various ways, analyzing and interpreting the classified data, and then distributing the data that are ready for use to the relevant persons or institutions (Özdağ, 2011: 17). According to another

definition, intelligence is defined as the collection, analysis and use of data about the enemy (Taylor, 2007: 250).

When looking at the historical background of the concept of intelligence, it can be seen that there is a history dating back to very old times. China's famous commander Sun Tzu (in the 500s BC) stated that the war could last for many years unless he had the right and accurate information about the enemy and that this could only be achieved by espionage (Tzu, 1992: 113).

Intelligence is categorized in many different ways. It can be divided into two parts as internal and external intelligence. External intelligence is considered as the process of collecting, processing, evaluating and distributing information on the elements of terrorists, managers, and groups of other countries. Internal intelligence can be defined as the operation of this process for internal threats (Richelson, 2012: 2). Intelligence is a continuous process. The collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of information continue with the resumption of the process.

Intelligence plays an important role on the counter-terrorism. Intelligence, which is produced correctly when it is needed and shared with relevant institutions, is one of the most effective elements in the success of the counter-terrorism. However, intelligence in counter-terrorism is equally important not only for states but also for terrorist organizations. With the right intelligence, the terrorist organization will be able to achieve its goals in a much shorter time and without problems. In order to prevent terrorism, the reasons that constitute the source of terrorism need to be understood; and in order to do so, reaching the right and timely intelligence is a sine qua non (Cline, 2011: 194).

Using Military Force

The use of military force comes to the fore in cases where law enforcement and other methods are ineffective on counter-terrorism. This method is frequently used, especially when terrorist attacks are intensified and officials and civilians lose their lives.

Using the military force method in the face of the increasing incidents of violence in the process of counter-terrorism will be able to meet the public's expectation of a harsh response to terrorism. In a sense, military methods can be used to provide psychological superiority. In this way, the morale of the public can be kept high (Pillar, 2003: 101). Another result of the use of military force is at the point of influence it has on the terrorist organization. Heavy losses can be inflicted on the terrorist organization with the military force. In this way, a deterrent effect can be created by creating a moral disorder among the terrorist organization and its supporters (Wilkinson, 2006: 90). On the other hand, research shows that members of the terrorist organization facing military force have increased their loyalty to the organization (Crenshaw, 2001: 25).

Public Diplomacy

The concept of public diplomacy is the transformation of the policies of a nation to the usefulness of the policies of that nation by affecting the people and intellectuals of other countries (Potter, 2002: 3). According to another definition, public diplomacy is the communication process in which they try to explain the goals, policies and ideas of their country to the nations of other countries (Tuch, 1990: 3). However, it will be very useful to

learn the history, culture and language of the nation to be contacted for the success of public diplomacy (Malone, 1988: 12).

The first use of public diplomacy on counter-terrorism took place in 1985, following consecutive terrorist attacks in Europe, the United States and the Middle East (Kraft and Marks, 2012: 55). As mentioned earlier, globalization has been effective in the growing of terrorism. The characters of terrorist acts have changed and spread over a dynamic and wide geographical area. In return, there has been a change in the international system, and a multi-dimensional security understanding has emerged (Ural and Shilibekova, 2016: 7).

The internationalization of terrorism has also led to a change in the idea of fighting terrorism. In this fight, the communication and interaction between the institutions has become more efficient. Reducing the bureaucracy in the exchange of information between state institutions will create a structure that can act more quickly on counter-terrorism (Bizina and Gray, 2014: 75).

Public diplomacy is an important pillar of the counter-terrorism. Public diplomacy, which tries to counteract the arguments against the messages and perceptions of people who incite violence and hatred, is very important in counter-terrorism. Public diplomacy is of particular importance for the establishment of a dialogue involving leaders, clergy and some other people, especially respected by the public (Aydemir, 2018: 514). However, of course, the promises made during this dialogue process must be kept, and policies towards these promises should be developed. Otherwise, public diplomacy will be far from achieving its objective (Seib, 2011: 9).

Public diplomacy practices form the basis of the long-term steps on the counter-terrorism. These practices have a structure that goes back to the source of terrorism. At the same time, public diplomacy promotes international cooperation on the counter-terrorism through multilateral strategies and policies that complement these strategies (Aydemir, 2018: 515).

When looking at the situation of Turkey in the light of the scope of counter-terrorism and methods used, it can be mentioned that there is a multidimensional structure. Turkey has been fighting against the separatist terrorist organization (PKK) nearly 40 years and recently has been continuing to fight against ISIS that is a terrorist organization fed by radical religious ideology. Operation Euphrates Shield, which is the subject of this research, constitutes only one leg of the fight against ISIS. In the next section, Euphrates Shield Operation, which was realized within the scope of Turkey's multi-dimensional fight against ISIS, and its importance will be mentioned.

The Cross-Border Intervention of Turkey Against ISIS: Euphrates Shield Operation

In terms of the terrorist attacks of ISIS terrorist organization in Turkey, especially in 2015-2016 period, it is seen that Turkey is clearly targeted by the organization. On 18 January 2016, ISIS targeted Kilis by using a missile. This incident also shows that ISIS has a different dimension in terror attacks against Turkey. The organization, which has turned to certain targets in its previous actions, has attacked random civilians this time. ISIS, with this event, the first time from its encampments in Syria (about 15-20 km depth in Syria), attacked with missiles to Turkey. Of course, there are reasons behind this situation. Turkey's support to the moderate opposites' fight, located on the north side of Aleppo, against ISIS, is one of those reasons. After March 2016, the opposition, Azez, Dudy and in the Rada line, achieved significant gains against

ISIS. This situation motivated ISIS on point to retaliate against Turkey (Yeşiltaş, Seren and Özçelik, 2017: 15).

In April and May 2016, ISIS launched an attack against Kilis with 54 Katyusha rockets. As a result of these rocket attacks, 12 Turkish citizens and 7 Syrian citizens lost their lives and 67 people were injured. These attacks have brought to the agenda the option of a military operation against ISIS elements in Syria for Turkey (Mevlütöğlu, 2016).

Following the missile attacks, ISIS carried out a suicide attack at a wedding in Gaziantep, and caused the death of 54 civilians. The attack carried out by ISIS made it mandatory to fight ISIS at military level for Turkey. Also, solving the problem that took place between Russia and Turkey called "airplane crisis" eliminated one more reason preventing military intervention. Another factor that paved the way for military intervention was the PKK's attempt to establish an autonomous region through YPG / PKK in northern Syria. The PKK / YPG elements received support from the anti-ISIS coalition by claiming that they were fighting the ISIS. Then, the PKK, by making acts in Turkey, tried to draw the attention of Turkey into the country. In this way, PKK/YPG aimed to move more easily in the geography that controlled by themselves in the north of Syria (Yeşiltaş, Seren and Özçelik, 2017: 17).

Map-1: Map of Syria Before the Euphrates Shield Operation

Source: Thomas van Linge, retrieved from <https://setadc.org/bidens-address-turkish-concerns-pyd/screen-shot-2016-08-24-at-9-17-37-am/>, November 20, 2019.

As a result of all these developments, Turkey, on August 24, 2016, began a military operation called Euphrates Shield Operation (ESO) starting from Jarabulus that is the city in the north of the Syrian against terrorist elements in Syria. This cross-border operation, after the

1974 Cyprus Peace Operation, was the second cross-border operation of Turkey (Özalp, 2018: 178).

Turkey has carried out the Euphrates Shield Operation, based on the “self-defense” right mentioned in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Turkey began the Euphrates Shield Operation (ESO) to eliminate the threats posed by terrorist organizations including ISIS in the north of Syria, particularly in the context of this article.

The operation that started on 24 August in Jarablus, continued between 3 September and 16 October in Çobanbey (Rai) and Dabik. Between October 17 and December 20, the Dabik-Al Bab phase continued, and finally the Al Bab phase was completed on December 21, 2016-20 March 2017, and the ESO officially ended on March 29, 2017. As a result of the ESO, the ISIS organization was moved 35-40 kilometers south of the Turkish borders, and a buffer zone was established between the YPG/PKK corridor that was to be formed. In addition, a safe zone was established in northern of Syria for 90 km along and 35-40 km deep (Yeşiltaş, Seren and Özçelik, 2017: 32).

Map-2: Latest Situation in Syria After Euphrates Shield Operation

Source: Daily Sabah, retrieved from <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/08/24/one-year-on-turkeys-euphrates-shield-still-model-of-effective-counterterrorism-fight>, November 20, 2019.

Turkey achieved the clearing of terrorist elements along the border of Syria, except for Afrin and the eastern of the Euphrates River by Euphrates Shield Operation. Within the scope of this operation, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which had been working with the Turkish Armed Forces, seized the settlements between Al Rai, Azez, Jarablus, Cobanbey and Al-Bab. During this operation, Turkey's 71 soldiers were martyred, and 245 soldiers were wounded. The number

of martyrs of the FSA was 600. In contrast, more than 3.000 terrorists were neutralized (Özalp, 2018: 182).

Turkey offered to United States of America to neutralize the ISIS terrorists in Raqqa after Euphrates Shield Operation. However, the United States did not accept it (Ağralı, 2019). Following the removal of the terrorist organization in Jarabulus after ECO, 450 police officers were commissioned to that region by Turkey. Mine clearing activities in the region continued in the same period. After Azez was cleared of terrorists, there was an intensive migration to the city with a population of 150 thousand and its population reached 300 thousand. Also, 500 police officers who were from Syrian origin and who were trained in Turkey deployed to this city. In this way, it is aimed to provide security in the region (Yeşiltaş, Seren and Özçelik, 2017: 34).

Conclusion

Terrorism has become one of the issues on the agenda of many countries in the international arena. Under the influence of the globalizing international system, terrorist acts have gained the ability to be effective in many different regions of the world. In this sense, especially the ISIS terrorist organization has become frequently mentioned. ISIS, has attracted the world's attention by sharing execution videos that were recorded professionally via internet, and with professional video capture, and international actions and also because of being deployed on the border of Turkey geographically, which made Turkey become more interested in the organization.

In response to Turkey's fight against ISIS at homeland and support to international coalition, ISIS has carried out missile attacks beyond the borders of Kilis. Turkey declared that its borders' security were in danger, in response to attacks that targeting civilians, and launched cross-border operation against ISIS on the basis of Article 51 in the United Nations Convention. This operation, called the Euphrates Shield, started on 24 August 2016 and lasted for about 7 months and ended on 29 March 2017. ISIS threats was terminated in the Syrian border of Turkey at the end of these operations and were largely defused more than 3.000 terrorists. In this sense, Turkey, so to speak, has provided the security of border by hand-to-hand combatting against ISIS and has demonstrated its will and determination to fight counter-terrorism.

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