

Turkey-U.S.A. Cooperation against the PKK

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The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was formed in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish terrorist organization in Turkey. Its aim is to establish an independent Kurdish state on the territories of southeastern of Turkey and the northern Syria. For this purpose, the PKK carried out numerous terrorist attacks in Turkey. 35,000 thousands people including governmental officials and Turkish-Kurdish civilians lost their lives due to the PKK attacks. It is out of debate comparing to human cost; however, the PKK also cost to Turkey for over 125 billions of dollars.

Beginning of the 1990s were the heydays of the PKK; however, the support of Kurdish people even on this period was also symbolic. The PKK never has drawn attentions of Kurdish people for its aim for autonomous Kurdish state. Finally, after the capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999 by a joint operation of the U.S. and Turkish forces, PKK activity within Turkey considerably reduced. The terrorist organization had difficulties to recruit new members for its activities. However, the war between the U.S. and Iraq in 2003 has commenced a new period for the PKK. The weakness of the new Iraqi government gave new opportunities to the PKK to train their recruits, to provide weapons, and safe bases to attack Turkey. As a result, the PKK has again begun its terrorist attacks by crossing the border since April 2007. The first assessment of Turkish people regarding increased PKK terrorist attacks was that the weakness of Iraqi government caused these outrages terrorist activities, and military action for Northern Iraq was inevitable to stop the PKK. Therefore, increased public and political pressure on Turkish government for the military operation forced Turkey to take immediate necessary steps for effective and permanent solutions.

For the first step, rather than crossed border military operation to finish the existence of the PKK, Turkish government gave priority in gaining the support of many countries including Iraq and the U.S. through diplomacy. Turkey started intensive diplomatic campaign, while focusing on military measures as well. Normally, Turkish Parliament authorized the government to carry out

crossed border operation, but according to the previous experiences, Turkey has realized that though military measures alone cannot effectively resolve the problem. Although neither the U.S. nor the Iraqi governments were unwilling to carry out military operation considering that any military action would more destabilize the Northern Iraq, Turkey was decisive to stop the PKK at any cost after consuming diplomatic efforts.

For this purpose, minister of foreign affairs, Ali Babacan, visited all countries in the region. In this regard, Turkey signed an agreement with Iraqi central government to close down all PKK offices and stop its activities in Iraqi territories. However, Iraqi government could not meet the requirements of the agreement. Despite this negative feedback, Turkey wanted to finish all diplomatic steps before taking the military action.

In this respect, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the U.S. president George W. Bush and asked from the U.S. government to take immediate action to stop the PKK in using Iraqi territories as a safe haven. The meeting was successful and the U.S. president George W. Bush said that "PKK is a terrorist organization and enemy of Turkey, enemy of the United States and enemy of freedemocratic Iraq."

As a result, the U.S. government had an agreement with Turkey to create a system that ensures to share intelligence and to establish a military partnership between Turkey, the U.S., and Iraq. In this way, Turkey managed to obtain international support as a result of her diplomatic efforts. For an immediate outcome, Central and Northern Iraqi governments closed down the PKK offices to finish its activities in their territories.

The other aspect of this meeting was that Turkey gave a message to the world showing her decisiveness to stop the further PKK activities. On the other hand, diplomatic efforts of Turkey towards finding a democratic solution made Turkey more respectful in the international arena. Rather than taking military action in the first step, implementing cold-blooded policies confirmed Turkey's rightness in her struggle against the PKK.

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