

Southeast : economy versus security ?

Wednesday 24 October 2007, by [Lale Sariibrahimoglu](#)

There has been yet another striking study made public on Turkey's terror-stricken eastern and southeastern regions, once again revealing how the country was hijacked by a security-first approach rather than addressing the grievances of those areas.

Turkey earmarked one-third of its budget for fiscal year 2006 for security and defense expenditures for the eastern and the southeastern regions, according to a report prepared by economist Mustafa Sönmez titled *"Increased Poverty in the East and Southeast and Solutions: Peace"* (ANKA news agency, Oct. 1, 2007).

In Turkey's East and Southeast, 18 percent of expenses are earmarked to ensure public order and security and 11 percent for defense — altogether a rate of 29 percent, though it generally stands at 13 percent in other parts of Turkey, said the report.

Thus a significant proportion of the resources allocated for both regions are diverted toward defense and security rather than boosting local development and welfare. Sönmez urges in his report that this balance be changed in favor of helping the regions develop.

Resources allocated for security and defense (police and military) are higher in some provinces, such as in Diyarbakır — where 80 percent of the people are at the poverty level — with 30 percent, Tunceli with 64 percent and Hakkari with 43 percent.

Despite the fact that all 21 provinces in the eastern and the southeastern regions are considered priority provinces for development, none of them have received adequate incentives to that end, Sönmez's report stated.

The share of investment made in the East and Southeast between 2002 and 2006 stood at around 4.44 percent of the total investments made in Turkey during the same period.

The report once again highlighted something obvious: if Turkey is sincere in seeing peace prevail in the terror-stricken regions in particular and in Turkey in general, more resources should be allocated for development and not for defense.

Yet there have been those state actors in Turkey who deliberately ignore the simple fact that acting in line with self-interest, sacrificing the nation for the good of maintaining your own status quo, will at the end of the day threaten your own power.

There is a universal reality that poverty can only breed unlawful acts, bringing more misery to the nations concerned.

It has been almost 23 years since Turkey began fighting outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorists, resulting in more than 30,000 deaths.

Very recently, 12 people were killed on a minibus in the Beytüşşebap district of Şırnak, and the PKK was blamed for this attack. Turkey's Aegean city of İzmir also witnessed two bomb attacks in one day on Tuesday, killing one person.

The long-term problem of installing democracy

The core reasons behind ongoing terror-related incidents are obvious — the inefficiency of Turkish decision-makers in finding solutions to the problems through democratic means and their choice to instead hide behind fear-based politics imposed on us from the top for decades.

For example, in the absence of a policy to find a solution to the internal Kurdish problem, is there any rationale behind seeking a cross-border operation into northern Iraq under the guise of cracking down on PKK terrorists ?

Cross-border arguments can make temporary improvements, but cannot address Turkey's long-term problem of installing democracy and supremacy of the rule of law.

Sönmez's report gives us a guideline for the solution to the problems in Turkey.

"Acting upon the reality that it is not possible to reach democracy without peace in society and that it is not possible to reach peace in the absence of democracy, it has become inevitable that, without further delay, a political, social and cultural environment that regards differences as legal should be installed. All the war fighting units [state] in the region have constituted a heavy burden on the budget, and introduction of a peaceful climate in those regions will also result in productive usage of the resources allocated for defense and security," the report stressed.

Yet from the ongoing debates taking place among the state actors in Turkey, from the headscarf issue to cross-border operations, it does not seem that those actors are yet able to diagnose our core problems and apply a recipe for remedy.

Sources

Source : TDZ, 04.10.2007