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Nine Turkish soldiers have been recently killed by the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK). It was neither the first nor is it likely to be the last such PKK attack. Turkey has been suffering from the terrorist activities of the PKK since the early nineteen eighties. More than 30.000 Turkish people, mostly civilians, have been killed by the PKK so far. Established in 1978, the PKK aims to set up a Kurdish state comprising the south-eastern part of Turkey, northern Iraq, north-eastern parts of Syria and north-western part of Iran. Designated by the US, the EU and the NATO as a terrorist organization, the PKK not only organizes suicide bombings against civilians but also ambushes military troops. Having branches in Middle East and Europe, the PKK also owns a TV channel ROJ TV operating in Europe. Also known as Kurdistan Congress for Freedom and Democracy (KADEK) and Congress for Nation (KONGRA-GEL), the PKK continues its propaganda and attacks all over the region despite the fact that the leader of the organization, Abdullah Ocalan was arrested in 1999.

Apart from the PKK, several terrorist organizations operate in Turkey such as Hizbullah, IBDA-C, which claim to establish an Islamic state and DHKP-C claiming to seek to set up a Communist state in the country. However, the PKK is still the principal terrorist organization in Turkey.

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) conduct military operations against the PKK not only inside the country but also in Northern Iraq, where Turkey believes the PKK has its headquarters. Northern Iraq is currently under the control of the Iraq regional Kurdish administration and Turkey asserts that the PKK enjoys its support there. However, the Kurdish authorities deny Turkey's allegations.

Turkey claims to use its right to "hot pursuit" under International Law whereby a country has a right to enter the territories of a third country in pursuit of the belligerent. However, the "hot pursuit" principle is mainly encoded in the Law of Sea and whether it is applicable to land territories is not certain.

In 21 October 2007, the PKK ambushed TSK forces in Daglica, Southeast Anatolia killing 12 and taking 8 as hostages. This incident shocked the Turkish public and tension in the country intensified considerably. Although the hostages were released in a couple of days, Turkish public opinion had already been determined upon an incursion against the PKK in Northern Iraq. The military operation came in winter when the PKK militants had finished attacking the TSK and returned to bases in Northern Iraq.

Turkey used the new Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), HERON bought from Israel in 2004 in order to track the location of these PKK bases. During the military operations, lasting from 21 to 28 February 2008, the TSK conducted air raids against 272 targets and ground forces attacked 517 PKK positions in Northern Iraq. The TSK destroyed 126 caves, 290 shelters, 12 command

centres, 11 communication facilities, 6 training facilities, 23 logistics facilities, 18 transportation facilities, 40 military bases and 59 anti-aircraft gun positions used by the PKK. While casualties of the TSK were 27, the TSK claimed to have killed 240 PKK militants including the top official who had ordered the ambush against the TSK forces in Daglica.

The regional Kurdish authority condemned Turkey for entering Iraqi territory without official permission and stated firmly that they would fight against the Turks if they had to. However, the political tension did not culminate in a war between Turkey and Iraq, since Turkey only attacked the PKK positions.

In the aftermath of the incursion, intensive debates took place amongst the Turkish public. There were harsh criticisms especially coming from the opposition parties. The top officials of the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party claimed that the United States was influential in the curtailment of the incursion since it warned Turkey to end the operations in the shortest period of time.

Moreover, whether Turkey had been successful in eliminating the PKK existence in Northern Iraq was not certain. According to most critics, a week-long incursion would not be sufficient. General Yasar Buyukanit, Chief of the Joint Staff at the time stated that a single incursion would not be enough to wipe out the PKK completely but it might cause a considerable damage to the terrorists. In this regard, the incursion was successful, he said.

The incursion was also successful in terms of mitigating tension amongst the Turkish public. However, it neither destroyed the PKK nor stopped further PKK attacks, as has now been seen.

The establishment of friendly relations with Northern Iraq based on trust is the key to finding a solution to the ongoing problem. However, trust is the missing component in the relations since Turkey sees Northern Iraq as the backyard of the PKK. It is also the case that the Kurdish authority in the Northern Iraq does not hide its attachments to the Kurds living in Turkey. It declares that the PKK is an internal matter for Turkey and avoids confrontation with the PKK. Yet, Turkey needs to convince Kurds all over the world that the PKK is bad for Kurds as well as Turks, since terrorism is not the way to achieve freedom.

What can be done besides the use of force?

Turkey's economic relations with Northern Iraq are substantial. More than 1200 Turkish firms, mostly construction companies operate in the region. For instance, Turkish TEPE Company works on the construction of the University of Suleymaniye. Another Turkish firm, VESTEL is the leader of home appliances sector in Northern Iraq. The total amount of Turkish investment to the region now exceeds \$3 billion.

However, the economic activities of Turkey do not bring political success in the region automatically. Turkey should develop its "soft power" in the region not only by making economic investments but also social and cultural investments to the Kurdish society in Northern Iraq. For example, Turkey might build a Turkish university in the region giving

scholarship to local students. The universities in Turkey might arrange student exchange programmes for Iraqi students. Turkey might organize free visits for Iraqi people to the historical and cultural places in the country. Turkey might even open a TV channel in Northern Iraq in order to give local people more information and better insight into Turkey. Cultural and social exchanges might increase Turkey's influence in Northern Iraq which would not only contribute to the establishment of stronger ties between the countries but also mitigate the power and influence of terrorism in the region.