

Turkey: Affairs in a country with internal enemies

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We should classify countries in two categories: One with internal enemies and one without internal enemies.

I am sure that most of us will ask, "What do you mean by 'a country with internal enemies?'" That's right. Almost every country has separatist or terrorist elements. But no, I am not talking about any of these. Even if these elements exist, they are, in some countries, treated as the "guilty" ones, not as the "enemy." But in Turkey, they are the "enemy" to us. That's what I am talking about.

Military jargon includes the words: "friend" and "enemy." Soldiers are trained to eliminate the "enemy," not to return them to justice for rehabilitation.

A National Intelligence Organization, or MIT, official once said in a conversation while criticizing the Sept. 12, 1980 military coup: "They did grave harm to the Police Department through swapping police training with that of the military which brought the enemy-friend concept to the police."

Actually, I didn't grasp the importance of it then, but eventually saw how right the MIT official was in his criticism. I had learned a similar lesson from the TV series titled, "Battlestar Galactica." Upon unrest in an episode, the president asks Commander Adama for forces to act as the police. Adama refused, saying: "The military is trained to defeat the enemy. When they are used as police, they tend to view the people as the enemy. If you ask my men to act like police, there wouldn't be any democracy left after a while."

This is another way of learning the very same lesson.

Unfortunately, our country uses the categorization: "internal enemies." But if you ask me, a country that sees some of its citizens as "enemies to be killed in any case" cannot be exemplary.

If these citizens have committed a crime, they will be punished. That's all. But if you call them "enemy," you will put yourself in an awkward position.

"Internal threat" is a natural extension of the "internal enemy" concept. That's right. Certain groups represent a "threat" first and then reach a certain level of maturity and become an "enemy." They are "enemies" who should be defeated and disposed. Turkey has a "National Security Policy Document," which is considered a "sacred" document, but its legitimacy and authority is questionable.

The military prepares similar blueprints. But they should be approved by government and then put into effect. This is a secret document. I think, it was only once leaked to the press and published in the daily Hürriyet.

Internal and external threats are listed in the document. I think even external threats should be open to

discussion ... but anyway. What I don't get is the "internal threat" part. Let's say that Kurds and Kurdish nationalism represent an internal threat. What will happen then?

Some will come forward to remove it. Personal track records and reports are kept on them and statistics are prepared. All right, but who is doing all this? Is it the police or gendarmerie under the command of prosecutors? No. Since no crime is committed, why should prosecutors follow some people and keep track records on them for nothing?

It is the military's job and especially that of the Mobilization Investigation Department in the last two days. But is this legitimate? No, it's not. Neither is burying ammunitions and weapons, nor is giving military training to civilians, nor is having drills, nor is keeping records on citizens, nor is following and classifying them.

Yes, there is a threat called "religious backwardness," but no crime under this name exists in the Penal Code. Alevi hard-liner nationalists were seen as a threat in the past. But neither is being an Alevi a crime, nor being a nationalist, let alone a hard-liner.

The only way to normalize the regime in Turkey and to transform it into a liberal-democratic Western state is to abandon the concepts called "internal enemy" or "internal threat."

There is no "internal enemy," but only people who commit crimes. This is defined in the Penal Code. Prosecutors investigate and courts prosecute them. That's all.

Under the rule of law, it is clear who will have to fight crimes and perpetrators. But this is certainly not the Special Forces Commandership.

The reason behind the confusion about the Ergenekon crime gang case, the Kurdish initiative and all other critical cases is this "enemy" issue.

If we manage to remove "internal enemy" from our vocabulary, we will put our mark on a very critical democratic initiative.

Remember that the word "enemy" was uttered in the infamous April 27 e-memorandum issued by the General Staff, as certain people were referred to as that.

The said "enemy," afterward, formed the government by winning 47 percent of the votes. How do you explain this?

* Mr. İsmet Berkan is the editor-in-chief of the daily Radikal in which this piece appeared Monday. It was translated into English by the Daily News staff.

Sources

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