

The Role of Diplomacy and Soft Power in Combatting Terrorism

Concepts, Fighting Methods and Case Studies



center for
strategic
research

Republic of Turkey
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Workshop Report

The Role of Diplomacy and Soft Power in Combatting Terrorism

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this seminar is to bring together academics and practitioners who are involved in the field of terrorism, soft power and diplomacy, and ensure that they interact and benefit from each other. Besides conceptual discussions on terrorism, soft power, diplomacy, the use of soft power and public diplomacy in combatting terrorism, various cases such as ETA, IRA, Al-Qaeda and PKK have been discussed by using local information and benefiting from the contributions of the experts.

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INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is considered as an instrument in the hands of weaker actors in their war against stronger systems such as states. During the Cold War, the threat stemming from terrorist groups was insignificant when compared to the threat of the conventional war. Due to the ideological nature of global competition, the ethnic and religious movements were weak either because of the lack of the resources of the movements or because they moved along ideological lines. There were limited grounds for mass movements to be organized at grassroots level. After the Cold War, however, terrorist networks with an ethnic or religious base have increased their grassroots capacities. Gains from globalization and the power gap resulting from the collapse of certain regimes have left the new environment vulnerable to different security threats.

Whereas the traditional security threats have been diminishing after the Cold War, unconventional threats have been more common and pernicious. Terrorist groups relying on ethnical and cultural factors have emerged as a threat to the stability of the international system. Some of the terrorist groups are transnational by nature and this fact makes it difficult for states to fight against them. Such transnational terrorist threats necessitate coordination of diplomatic efforts of several states in the fight against terrorism.

As a form of unconventional threat, terrorism lead states to devise methods for fighting against it, to adapt their security assessments and to take countermeasures in order to overcome them. When central state authorities clearly start to lose their legitimacy, non-state actors increase their

capacities with a view to being organized at the grassroots level. Most of the new terrorist groups are initiated at transnational or regional level. Because of their capacity to build closer and face-to-face networks, they increase their legitimacy and soft power over people. Central authorities have clearly proven that they had more difficulty to connect with people and to develop a force of attraction. In this context, changing security perceptions in the post-Cold War period facilitated a country's relationship with its soft power and expanded the space given to soft power in the country's power ratings analysis; this power was used in foreign policy. With the increase of asymmetric threats at global and regional scale, such as terrorism, states are searching for new methods and tools to combat these types of threats. Soft power and diplomacy are seen as important elements of the state in this context.

Unconventional security threats against the central authority requires states to use both traditional and non-traditional instruments in the fight against terrorism. States have to develop new instruments in order to increase their legitimacy and their capacity to inform people about the problems regarding illegal organizations.

The main issues discussed at the workshop are listed below.

- 1) how soft power and public diplomacy can be used effectively by multiple actors in order to prevent the spread of terrorism and to eliminate the danger of terrorism. The role of diplomacy and soft power in the fight against terrorism,
- 2) the contributions of diplomacy and soft power in preventing international support to terrorist groups,



- 3) the role of diplomacy and soft power in enhancing international cooperation in the fight against terrorism,
- 4) how to isolate terrorist groups by using the elements of diplomacy and soft power.

INAUGURAL SPEECH

In the first session of the workshop, following the inaugural speech of Colonel Isa Aslan, Director of the Center of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism (TMMM), Ambassador Altay Cengizer, Director General for Policy Planning (DGPP) at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed the participants as the guest of honour.

DGPP Ambassador Cengizer stated that terrorism targets the unity and the welfare of societies and that different instruments should be used in a balanced way against this challenge. Although soft power is the most important of these instruments, strong intelligence and the assistance of other supporting units is crucial because terrorist groups can establish a wide network of relations through the means of globalization and can access to technological innovations. This may enable persons who do not have any criminal records to turn to terrorists in a matter of weeks.

Noting that local non-governmental organizations and opinion leaders have positive roles in solving the problem, Ambassador Cengizer maintained that social inequalities, lack of education and poverty pave the way for terrorist groups to gain followers. Developing strategies which take into account the main dynamics,

instead of top-down policies and bringing elements of soft power into the forefront would limit this possibility. Radicalization and having radical opinions should be seen as different concepts and people who have a tendency for radicalization disassociate themselves, first from their immediate surroundings and then from the rest of society.

When central state authorities clearly start to lose their legitimacy, non-state actors increase their capacities with a view to being organized at the grassroots level.

Ambassador Cengizer added that Syria has turned into a center for illegal acts. International cooperation is crucial in the fight against terrorism within this scope, an international legal framework should be set up for this purpose, and Turkey maintains its close cooperation with its international partners against every form and method of terrorism. He also expressed that diplomacy and soft power are somewhat different: it is possible to compensate for wrong moves in diplomacy, whereas this is not possible for soft power. Post-modern terrorism has emerged after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Terrorist organizations stopped being a tool that some States use in accordance with their political aims and became structures that have their own economic resources and chain of commands. Various instruments for fighting against terrorism should be used in a planned and coherent way within the framework of democratic values.



CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSIONS

The Effects of 9/11 Terrorist Attacks to the Concepts of Terrorism, Diplomacy and Soft Power

Professor Tarık Oğuzlu from Antalya International University, pointed out that 9/11 created an intersection between terrorism, soft power and diplomacy. Terrorism is a transnational concept. Terrorists have spread all over the world; and they have a communication network. Such threats cannot be deterred through traditional methods as terrorists sacrifice their lives for the aim they believe in and it is not easy to overcome this situation.

He emphasized that combatting terrorism has been strengthened thanks to cooperation among the states following the emergence of public diplomacy activities. Countries such as Russia, China and the United States rarely come together for solving global problems but they cooperate when terrorism is concerned. On the other hand terrorism has contributed to the development and transformation of international organizations such as NATO and EU as the cogency and charm of soft power are more useful leverages in the fight against terrorism than pressure. He noted that when the issue is considered from the perspective of Joseph Nye, persuading opponents to cooperate is more compatible with today's interests. Among important steps taken towards counter-terrorism, it would be purposeful to devise different strategies to gain the consent of the terrorists; to take into consideration how they define themselves and that developed Western countries and other developing

countries should increase their support in development aids.

Pointing out Turkey's experience in this context, Professor Oğuzlu mentioned the PKK terrorist organization and the terrorist groups in the Middle East and stated that in order to fight with these groups, it would be right to persuade these groups or search for ways of cooperation with the ones who provide support to these groups; it is not possible to arrive at solutions simply through hard power; soft power need to be used in these efforts.

The Security Dimension of Terrorism

Associate Professor Tuncay Kardaş from Sakarya University expressed that terrorism cannot be considered as a modern issue, on the contrary it can be traced back to antiquity. The Cold War period was an era of terror among different powers based on nuclear balance, and it was built on deterrence. Today's research focuses on the roots and dynamics of terrorism. He considers terrorism as an element of "revolt against the West" following the term coined by Professor Hedley Bull. Each element of this revolt stems from deep philosophical and historical roots and can be studied under the headings of legal, racial, economic and cultural struggles, respectively.

Dr. Kardaş argued that the aforementioned legal struggle corresponds in some way to the struggle for equality and independence, the racial struggle in the revolt against slavery, and the political struggle in the process of decolonization after the 1950s. The economic struggle corresponds to the resistance to the exploitation of the Western countries through global, commercial and



financial means and the most difficult struggle to be conducted is in the cultural field.

Referring to Clausewitz that “War is the pursuance of politics through other means”, Dr. Kardaş stated that the most irrational aspects of warfare can be understood and integrated to the system. Even if terrorists have irrational motivations and behaviors individually, terrorist organizations can behave rationally. In this context, the aims of Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra and various organizations are “comprehensible”. These organizations claim to stimulate “self-respect” for the beliefs that they exploit. Taking this into consideration, using policies under different forms such as public diplomacy will be useful for understanding sufficiently the sources of motivation of the opposite side. Reaching a solution is not possible if expectations and fears cannot be understood.

Soft Power and Conflict Resolution

Associate Professor Talha Köse, from Istanbul Şehir University stated that perception of

differences may be a possible motivator in the emergence of confrontations as much as real differences. False perceptions can be changed by working on them. Conflict resolution should include efforts to comprehend people’s needs and problems. On the other hand, the definition of violence is also significant. Conflict resolution research predominantly concludes that direct violence is fundamentally based on cultural and structural elements such as welfare distribution. Cultural violence is more difficult to deal with compared to other types of violence and paves the way for physical violence. Within this framework, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, intolerance and radicalism are used as instruments for legitimizing direct violence. Besides, a power distribution exists among transnational agents. Those groups which emerge as human rights organizations, financial institutions or religious-ethnic groups have a tendency to weaken the state by gaining power over it in time. Examples can be found in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Social media and the growing influence of the public opinion have nowadays gained



even more importance. Ideas spread quickly following the democratization process and social protest movements can easily be organized. As great powers weaken, there emerges a competition among regional actors. For instance, Iran uses Shiism, Saudi Arabia Salafism and Turkey uses the democratization process, and such efforts of regional actors will continue to spread in Afghanistan and Africa.

Emphasizing that all these developments have made soft power a more useable concept, Köse pointed out that the concept will assume a non-traditional role when merged with influential personality and leadership and that shared values, successful policies, respect to human values, international aid and religious groups are some of the sources of soft power.

DIPLOMACY AND THE ROLE OF SOFT POWER IN COMBATTING TERRORISM

Criminal Justice, Diplomacy and International Cooperation in Combatting Terrorism

Mrs. Fatma Ceren Yazgan, Deputy Director General for Security and Intelligence Affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed that diplomacy and the criminal justice system have key roles in combatting terrorism. The United Nations Charter and the Council of Europe agreements which set the international legal framework for combatting terrorism have been drawn up through negotiations carried out between various countries through diplomatic channels. As every country has a different set of regulations, diplomacy is the most fundamental instrument to ensure convergence between these regulations and

develop a common understanding in the fight against terrorism.

International cooperation is crucial in the fight against terrorism within this scope, an international legal framework should be set up for this purpose, and Turkey maintains its close cooperation with its international partners against every form and method of terrorism.

Mrs. Yazgan pointed out that although there is no definition for terrorism provided by the United Nations, there are decisions in this direction. She said that even though States lack confidence in each other, they tend to cooperate as they perceive threats. Such a process occurred after 2001. Turkey could not obtain sufficient support in the fight against terrorism from the international community before that date. Additionally, PKK terrorism was often considered as a matter of human rights in multilateral platforms. Although Turkey might have had past deficiencies in its legal framework for criminal justice, this does not change the fact that PKK is a terrorist organization. Turkey also adopted soft power elements as fundamental political instruments to fight against the PKK without alienating its Kurdish citizens in any way. For example expressions like “Kurdish terrorism” have never been used. She also stated that the European Union listed the PKK as a terrorist organization in 2002 as a result of the post-2001 threat perceptions.

Underlining the importance of international cooperation and experience-sharing in the



fight against terrorism, Yazgan reminded that the Global Counterterrorism Forum, co-chaired by Turkey and the United States, was established with the participation of 29 countries and the European Union in 2011. The main objectives of the forum are to strengthen the fight against terrorism by sharing experiences and reinforcing the criminal justice approach. Educational and collaborative projects are planned to be carried out through the “Fund” established under the Forum. Radicalization continues to exist in Western Europe despite all countermeasures. Terrorist organizations in Syria have strengthened also taking advantage from the current economic crisis environment. Although al-Qaeda lost its power in Afghanistan, the ideology influenced by this organization has gained ground in the Middle East. In this context, Turkey will continue to share its experiences through both NATO and its individual initiatives.

Organizational Structure of the United States Department of State in use of Soft Power

Heidi Meyer, Political Advisor to the Commander of NATO Allied Land Command (LANDCOM), pointed out that the U.S. Department of State has been trying to organize in the field of soft power since 2010 and taken serious decisions to that end; U.S. President Barack Obama instructed to mainly employ soft power elements instead of armed forces in the

fight against terrorism, thus a document titled “the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review” was produced as the first institutional step in this direction in 2010. This document draws a framework on how to shape foreign policy on soft power and aims to create a consistent capacity for civilians against terrorist threats. Accordingly, different units at the Department of State with the same purpose gathered under the so-called “J Bureau”. She expressed that the “J Bureau” has been created since threats are multifaceted today, thus strategies could be developed in a coordinated way; bilateral and multilateral diplomacy could be conducted and efforts

and practices could be carried out to increase the capacity of resident partners in different regions of the world.

Stating that “J Bureau” allows to create a versatile, robust and integrated

fighting system, Meyer expressed that the aim is to develop cooperation between all the institutions and agencies within the state and collaborative work culture between diplomats and other government employees and to fight against terrorism in an integrated structure. She also added that efforts aimed at maintaining civil security and reducing poverty and unemployment are being exerted via USAID and similar organizations with a view to narrowing social grounds where terrorist organizations could gain footholds, taking into account that ideological and military presence of terrorist organizations is not limited to a single country.

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Brain Washing Activities of the Terrorist Organisations towards the Youth and Possible Measures to be Taken

David Blose, political analyst at LANDCOM, stated that defining the fight against terrorism should have priority. Otherwise the instruments used in combatting terrorism cannot achieve their goals. It is necessary to have good command of the cultures of the societies providing a base for the terrorist organizations and in this way local actors can be incorporated into the efforts.

Pointing out to the fact that terrorist organizations have developed their sphere of influence and activity areas at a great pace, Blose expressed that these organizations deployed in different regions of the world spread their ideology thanks to the educational programs developed especially towards the youth. Soft power instruments used by states in combatting terrorism are implemented more effectively by terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda; schools and madrasas in countries such as Pakistan and Syria are put to use to brainwash the youngsters and these threats exist also in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

While the process of the Arab Spring is expected to be an opportunity to promote the values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda expanded their bases by spreading the belief that they are protectors and securers of justice. Sabotage the educational programs of the respective states; the main activities of terrorist organizations to be emphasized and fought against, which could be seen as an iceberg, are the educational programs they provide

for the children and young people in order to spread their ideology.

CASES

IRA

Dr. John Morrison, academic in the University of East London, stated that the Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998 after a successful negotiation process held between the English government and Sinn Fein gave the international community the impression that “peace was fully ensured in Northern Ireland”, but this process still continues; serious fragilities are still felt in relations between the state and the organization, state and the society, and organization and the society in the region. Therefore, the ability of the parties to proceed patiently is a strategic necessity to succeed.

Morrison, referring to the complacency of English and Irish security forces and the challenges faced by Sinn Fein to maintain its influence on the republican population as among the major risks to reach absolute peace in Northern Ireland by 2014, carried on his analysis over Real IRA (R-IRA). It is one of the “splinter” organizations desiring to fill the gap in this field after renunciation of violence by the “Provisional IRA (P-IRA)” organization which was the armed wing of Sinn Fein. Morrison, pointing out that R-IRA benefited from the gap arising from feelings of insecurity against official security forces in the regions where Irish people live and from the disarmament of P-IRA which held the violence monopoly in the region, and accused Sinn Fein of “getting away from the republican cause of Ireland and joining to the British Establishment”. It is essential to perceive the developments, which can



be abused by the present and possible terrorist groups in time so as to invalidate such criticisms of the parties managing the process and eliminate them. Therefore, expectations of the people forming the potential base of these organizations should be considered carefully.

PKK

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Süleyman Özeren, Director of the International Center for Terrorism and Transnational Crime (UTSAM), argued that all the countries can have a grasp of new details and methods by following each other's experiences although methods to combat terrorism and that terrorist organizations may consist of various factors and combinations in different countries. He also stated his belief that works for examining the aspects of PKK terrorist organization and Turkey's fight against it can shed light on other incidents and contribute to international literature.

Özeren underlined that underestimating or exaggerating the role of soft power in combatting terrorism will be deceptive

and that Turkey, like similar examples in the world, tried to combat PKK terrorism by approaching to the issue through the security prism. However, as it was gradually understood that this method is alone not adequate, new elements, which aimed at improving political, economic and social conditions contributing to the establishment of the mentioned terrorist environment, were put into effect.

Referring to the solution process in Turkey which continues since 4-5 years for the termination of terror activities, Özeren pointed out that both PKK terror and the ongoing solution process have certain differences in comparison to the process in Northern Ireland. While the armed group in Northern Ireland is controlled by a political organization, there is not a supra-political structure above PKK. In addition, considering that the problem of Northern Ireland occurs in a stable and geographically isolated region between two countries, PKK takes advantage of the chaotic environment in the Middle East and directly affects at least four different countries.



Emphasizing that the terrorist organization perceives opportunities in this chaotic environment and has an unstable and incoherent approach to the process, Özeren stated that during this process, local and foreign circles should preserve their stress on the organization's current structure being a terrorist organization. Özeren underlined the fact that such an approach will lead the organization to approach the process more seriously in order to shed this reputation.

ETA

Diego Muro, Assistant Professor at the Barcelona Institute of International Studies, gave a presentation assessing the processes of ETA throughout its history, a terrorist organization which has been active since 1959 in the Basque region in the north of Spain, in parallel with the democratization process of Spain.

Muro, stated that when the casualties caused by ETA are examined periodically, Spain suffered the biggest number of killings during the transition period towards democracy between 1978 and 1983 after the dictatorship of General Franco. He pointed out that this observation conformed to the findings in their studies related to terrorism worldwide indicating that “the dictatorial or authoritarian regimes displayed the lowest levels of terrorism, that the probability of terror in the institutionalized democracies was slightly higher and that the periods where the risk of terror was at its highest level were the transition periods from authoritarian regime to democracy”.

The rigid policies (martial law, state of emergency, extrajudicial execution) implemented during the Franco period

within the context of fighting ETA were also adopted after 1983 by the democratic leaders to some degree. In this regard, the state carried out a “dirty war” using their own counter-terrorist (counterinsurgency) instruments against ETA in the 1980s, which hardened to refute the allegation that “Spain is a dictatorship and that the only resort for the Basque people is achieving independence” which is embedded in the core of ETA propaganda towards the people in the Basque region. Muro expressed that the radicalization continued in the Basque region after the post democratic period.

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Muro, noting that the state abandoned the policies in question almost wholly in the 1990s and adopted soft methods (cross-border security cooperation opportunities with the EU provided by the Maastricht Treaty, weakening the prison branch of the organizational resistance by dispersing the ETA convicts across separate prisons, breaking the political monopoly of ETA in the Basque region by authorizing the establishment of Basque national parties both in the Constitution and Political Parties Act which would not disturb the national and foreign public opinion.



Owing to these measures taken, the national and foreign public opinion held ETA responsible for damaging the peace talks which were held between 2004 and 2006 and the power of the support of organization's fervent followers has been weakened severely. As a matter of fact, while people disapproving and approving ETA's activities were equally divided with 40 % in 1998 in the Basque region, 70 % of the Basque public currently reject ETA's activities, consider them within the scope of terrorism and start to tend towards other parties moving away from the parties related to ETA.

Al-Qaeda

Dr. Rashid Aftab, Director of the Riphah Institute in Pakistan, stated that if the 9/11 attacks are considered as the beginning of Al-Qaida terrorism, the roots of it would be overlooked. He underlined that in order to comprehend this phenomenon, it is of crucial to look at the period of 1979-89.

In the mentioned period, the predecessors of Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements were identified as "freedom fighter mujahedeen's" by the USA during the proxy war conducted over Pakistan against the USSR, which invaded Afghanistan. They were equipped and supported by the Pakistani intelligence with weaponry and logistical materials for a long term. However, with the end of the war and the collapse of the USSR, the USA left the region on its own and Taliban came to control Afghanistan until 2001. Aftab added that since the leadership of Taliban refused to deliver the senior leaders of Al-Qaeda, responsible for the September 11 attacks, to the USA in 2001 on the grounds that it would be "contrary to

"their honor and hospitality", received the harshest response from the USA. During the operation in Afghanistan, Taliban as well as Al-Qaeda was targeted, and as they were forced to leave their positions in Afghanistan after this operation, they were re-deployed in the Afghan-Pakistan border and in the regions of Pakistan inhabited by tribes (FATA).

Considering that the problem of Northern Ireland occurs in a stable and geographically isolated region between two countries, PKK takes advantage of the chaotic environment in the Middle East and directly affects at least four different countries.

Expressing that the public opinion in Pakistan disapproved a full-scale war against the Afghans and Taliban of Pakistan for a long time, Aftab said that this approach changed at certain level as Taliban also started to inflict casualties to Pakistani security forces although Taliban continued to enjoy serious support from its constituency. Aftab also argued that the tribes in the FATA region which has been governed by a British special law and military circulars since 1901, breed a great deal of negative feelings against Pakistani security forces; therefore, Taliban and other extremist elements easily found support in the region.

Aftab briefly mentioned the policies of the Pakistani government in order to ensure that soft power will accompany hard power policies, conducted by the 140 thousand



Pakistani stationed in the region, to solve a problem which cost 50 thousand lives and damaged the economy of Pakistan amounting to US \$78 billion. The inclusion of madrasas in the national education system by curriculum supplements to curb their control by extremist elements in the region are examples of these efforts.

Pointing out that extreme poverty is one of the main factors for extremist elements in the region to gain ground, Aftab expressed that the most effective measure against the ideological appeal of the Al-Qaeda and extremist elements is socio-economic development and in this respect, involvement of international assistance is required.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following issues were raised:

- The dynamics used by terrorist organizations to influence their constituency should be properly analyzed and it is necessary to engage with these organizations at various levels,
- Use of different soft power elements simultaneously in combatting terrorism leads to weaknesses in terms of

conducting an efficient fight; therefore, adoption of an effective and timely policy by structuring proper tools will ensure the achievement of the desired result in the long term,

- Soft power practices, collaboration with local NGOs as well as cultural activities will facilitate the transmission of the intended messages and people who may come into contact with terrorist organizations should be employed within the structures in question,
- Within the framework of the fight against terrorism, policies should be developed for conflict management and resolution, as well as for the transformation of societies in the post-conflict period,
- The role of women should be enhanced as a soft power element in the fight against terrorism,
- Initiatives for combatting terrorism developed on multi-sided platforms should not be left to the responsibility of certain countries, but supported and adopted by many countries,
- A phased strategy should be defined in the fight against terrorism; considering



that the results of soft power policies will emerge in the long term resilience should be preserved,

- Consideration should be given to the timing of the policy implementation and inconsistencies between the form and content of the messages should be avoided,
- Instead of developing counter-discourses against terrorist organizations, discourses and ways of life which will disable the ideological discourses of these organizations should be introduced beforehand by implementing preemptive and preventive policies against social inequalities emerging in different countries,
- It was noted that the United States allocates more budget to its soft power policies and to the related institutions, seeing that the hard power policies it conducted before 2010 did not yield the expected results,
- It was a timely decision to discuss the use of soft power in the fight against terrorism in this workshop,
- In the process of the fight against terrorism, consistency and continuity of the state's attitude is important for the preservation of the faith of the people,
- There should be no misconception that poverty is the single factor that opens operating areas to the terrorist organizations; therefore, measures should be taken to counter the ideological appeal of these organizations,
- The reason for the US to play an active role during the Northern Ireland peace process was partly the numerous Irish

population in the US; the Clinton administration took a great risk by inviting Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, to talks by granting him the necessary visa; but, thanks to this initiative, it became possible to achieve an important turning point in the process,

- Bold steps taken by a single leader/sector/actor in a country can open the way for a process towards terminating terror, but this will not suffice alone in moving the process ahead; processes depending on the will of a single actor run the high risk of encountering severe vulnerabilities and being derailed through provocations.

EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mesut Özcan, Director of the 'Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Diplomacy Academy, outlining the above-mentioned issues, pointed out that this fight is a long term process requiring strategic resilience and that they had the opportunity through the presentations to underline once again that necessary steps should be taken at the right time.

COE-DAT Director Colonel İsa Aslan said that in order to take the right steps and to use soft power effectively in this process, the experiences of all related parties are valuable; developing ideas by this and similar activities will contribute catching the right questions that need to be asked for planning the most accurate methods; and in this sense, the workshop achieved its purpose.

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