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SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SYRIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION PARTY (PYD)¹

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine how social inequality influences the ideological development of terrorist organizations, with particular attention to the Syrian Democratic Union Party. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on comparative analysis and case analysis. It investigates how social inequalities intensified by the Industrial Revolution contributed to the development of political and ideological movements and how these historical dynamics can be reflected in the ideological discourse of the Syrian Democratic Union Party. The study employs qualitative document analysis based on academic literature, publicly available documents, and relevant news reports. Documents concerning the ideological discourse of the Syrian Democratic Union Party were selected and examined, particularly those addressing social inequality, social grievances, class differences, collective organization, and demands for social transformation. The collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis by identifying recurring themes, concepts, and arguments concerning inequality and ideology. The Syrian Democratic Union Party was selected as the case because, although terrorism and the organization have been extensively studied, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the relationship between social inequality and its ideological discourse.

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Terörist İdeolojinin Şekillendirilmesinde Toplumsal Eşitsizliğin Rolü: Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi (PYD) Örneği

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, toplumsal eşitsizliğin terör örgütlerinin ideolojik gelişimini nasıl etkilediğini, özellikle Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi örneği üzerinden incelemektir. Çalışmada, karşılaştırmalı analiz ve vaka analizi yöntemlerine dayanan nitel bir araştırma tasarımı benimsenmiştir. Araştırmada, Sanayi Devrimi ile yoğunlaşan toplumsal eşitsizliklerin siyasi ve ideolojik hareketlerin gelişimine nasıl katkı sağladığı ve bu tarihsel dinamiklerin Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi'nin ideolojik söylemine nasıl yansiyebileceği incelenmektedir. Çalışmada akademik literatür, kamuya açık belgeler ve ilgili haber raporlarına dayalı nitel doküman analizi kullanılmıştır. Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi'nin ideolojik söylemine ilişkin belgeler; özellikle toplumsal eşitsizlik, toplumsal sorunlar, sınıfsal farklılıklar, kolektif örgütlenme ve toplumsal dönüşüm talepleri açısından incelenmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, eşitsizlik ve ideolojiyle ilişkili tekrar eden temalar, kavramlar ve argümanlar belirlenerek tematik analiz yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi'nin vaka olarak seçilmesinin nedeni, terörizm ve örgüt üzerine çok sayıda çalışma bulunmasına rağmen, toplumsal eşitsizlik ile örgütün ideolojik söylemi arasındaki ilişkinin sınırlı ölçüde incelenmiş olmasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İdeolojik Radikalleşme, Siyasi Şiddet, Orta Doğu Siyaseti, Terörizm, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Uluslararası Güvenlik.

INTRODUCTION

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rapid advances in production technologies brought about by the Industrial Revolution led to significant transformations in economic policies and further reinforced existing class divisions within society. At the same time, migration driven by industrialization accelerated urbanization and contributed to the rapid expansion of cities. Consequently, challenges associated with population growth, migration, epidemics, and the exploitation of women and children became increasingly visible and emerged as significant social issues within the international system (Rostow, 2012, pp. 250-260).

The transformation of economic policies brought about by the Industrial Revolution contributed to the growing prominence of liberalism within the

international system. During this period, the working classes were subjected to severe forms of exploitation and were often placed in a position comparable to that of slaves in earlier historical societies, including the Roman period. At the same time, liberal thought placed increasing emphasis on the rule of law and sought to promote modernization through legal and institutional reforms. This process gradually resulted in the recognition of various rights for workers, including the right to form and join trade unions. However, an important question arises as to whether the extension of legal rights to workers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries should be understood as a cause or a consequence of modernization. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider whether liberal policies were primarily intended to consolidate the rule of law or whether, as the case of England suggests, the enforcement of the rule of law also served as a means of preventing potential social unrest and anarchic movements as the working-class population expanded. For instance, in 1801, farmers constituted approximately 35% of the total population of England, while 29% were employed in industry. By 1951, the proportion of farmers had declined to 5%, whereas the industrial workforce had increased to 57% (Kazok, 1992, pp.63–66).

Alongside these transformations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ideologies increasingly began to influence international actors and political movements. Marx and Engels argued that class distinctions could be overcome through revolutionary popular movements, introducing an ideological perspective to the analysis of social and political change. The revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie contributed to the emergence and development of radical communist thought. In this context, communist ideology also interacted with nationalist movements and contributed to the formation of distinct forms of revolutionary nationalism. In the mid-twentieth century, the Chinese Revolution contributed to the consolidation of Chinese nationalism and the adoption of strong military and revolutionary policies. Similarly, Che Guevara played a prominent role in organizing and leading guerrilla movements in Latin America, seeking to challenge existing political structures and establish a radical alternative to the prevailing order. These developments demonstrate how ideological movements shaped revolutionary politics and contributed to attempts to transform existing social and political structures (Heywood, 2013, pp. 120–128; Kartal & Kartal, 2020, pp. 46–49; Meriç, 2014, pp. 119–125).

Although communist ideology, as formulated within the Marxist tradition, influenced states such as Vietnam, North Korea, China, and Cuba during the Cold War, its impact in the Middle East remained relatively limited. Nevertheless, Marxist and communist ideas had a significant influence on certain non-state

actors in the region, including the PKK, which incorporated elements of Marxist ideology into its political and organizational framework.

One of the factors contributing to the limited influence of communist ideology in the Middle East was its perceived incompatibility with certain local traditions, cultural values, and social structures. As an ideology that emerged from the European intellectual and industrial context, communism encountered societies in which family, religion, kinship, and tribal affiliations played important roles in shaping social and political relations. In many Middle Eastern societies, collective forms of social solidarity have historically been emphasized alongside, and sometimes over, individual autonomy. Consequently, certain aspects of communist ideology, particularly its approach to religion, private property, and class relations, could conflict with established social values and institutions.

The Soviet Union's position during the Arab–Israeli conflict also influenced perceptions of communism in the region. Although the Soviet Union provided varying forms of political, military, and diplomatic support to several Arab states, its policies did not necessarily translate into broad popular support for communist ideology. Moreover, the political and economic structures of many Middle Eastern states, particularly those governed by Arab political elites, often created institutional and ideological barriers to the expansion of communist movements. Communist movements advocating fundamental changes to existing property relations, class structures, and systems of political authority could challenge the interests of established elites. Thus, the limited development of communist ideology in the Middle East can be understood in relation to the interaction between ideological principles, established social structures, geopolitical developments, and the interests of ruling elites.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. Its theoretical framework examines the relationship between communist ideology and social inequality, with particular emphasis on the ways in which ideological principles concerning class, social organization, and equality have been articulated within political movements. Building on this theoretical foundation, the subsequent sections investigate the extent to which communist ideology has shaped the discourse of the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria. The study further analyzes the relationship between the PYD's ideological discourse and its political and

organizational practices, thereby assessing the extent to which its stated ideological principles are reflected in its actions.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND SOCIAL DIVISION

To examine the Industrial Revolution, which can be regarded as a major turning point in the development of the modern international system following the Peace of Westphalia, it is essential to consider the central role of the cotton industry. During the eighteenth century, the number of factories in Manchester, England, increased rapidly, with cotton processing becoming one of the principal areas of industrial production. This development contributed to the emergence and consolidation of factory-based industrial capitalism, fundamentally transforming existing modes of production and labor relations. As steam-powered machinery and mechanized factories expanded, textile workers increasingly faced deteriorating working conditions, wage pressures, and the displacement of traditional forms of labor. In response to these developments, some workers participated in machine-breaking movements, seeking to resist the introduction of machinery and its perceived effects on employment and working conditions. (Chang, 2009, pp. 55-56; Hobsbawm, 2024, pp. 50-53).

The Industrial Revolution should not be understood merely as a prolonged and gradual process, but rather as a period of **rapid and profound transformation** that fundamentally reshaped economic and social structures. This transformation extended beyond changes in production and brought about significant changes in the individual, society, and the state. Rostow conceptualizes this process by distinguishing between gradual economic progress and the transition toward sustained economic growth. As he explains:

“In an economy, there is a difference between smooth economic progress that can be seen before entering a truly self-sustaining development path and what we call ‘movement’... Although the pre-development stages are essential for later development, the scale and speed of these changes may not be enough to fundamentally alter the economy or, in some cases, to ensure an increase in per capita income beyond population growth” (Küçükkalay, 1997, p. 55).

This distinction highlights the importance of the speed and magnitude of economic transformation in understanding the Industrial Revolution. While earlier stages of economic development created the conditions necessary for subsequent industrialization, it was the acceleration of technological and productive change that generated a fundamental transformation in economic and social structures (Küçükkalay, 1997, p. 55).

As a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, technological advancements contributed to the expansion of commercial and industrial capitalism. Technological innovation, together with developments in credit mechanisms and monetary systems, had a significant impact on the European economy. The increasing speed and efficiency of long-distance trade facilitated the circulation of goods and capital and, to a considerable extent, contributed to the accumulation of capital. These transformations in technology and economic organization strengthened the position of capitalist investors and merchants, particularly the emerging bourgeoisie. At the same time, the expansion of industrial production intensified the exploitation of labor, particularly as workers migrated from rural areas to rapidly growing urban centers. The widespread employment of women and children, excessively long working hours, low wages, and harsh working conditions exposed the exploitative dimensions of the emerging capitalist system and contributed to the development of new forms of social and class conflict (Mahiroğulları, 2011, pp. 43–48; Torun, 2003, pp. 181–185).

The technological, economic, and social transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution also contributed to the emergence of the Luddite movement. The term “Luddite” is commonly associated with individuals who resist technological innovation or industrialization and favor traditional methods of production. Historically, however, Luddism was a specific labor movement that emerged primarily in England during the early nineteenth century. It consisted largely of skilled workers who opposed the introduction of machinery that they believed threatened their employment, wages, and established working practices. In response, some Luddites engaged in collective actions against factories and destroyed industrial machinery as a means of resisting these changes. Although the term “Luddite” is now commonly used more broadly to describe opposition to technological progress, the historical movement was rooted primarily in concerns over labor conditions and the socioeconomic consequences of mechanization. The movement was eventually suppressed by the British authorities through severe legal and military measures. The suppression of Luddite resistance weakened organized opposition to mechanization and enabled the continued expansion of industrial production and the growth of industrial cities (Fox, 2002, pp. 330-335; Günay, 2002, p. 9-10).

Class Division and the Increase of Violence After the Industrial Revolution and the Impact of Marxist Ideology

During the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution contributed to the emergence and expansion of organized labor movements, while radical political groups also became increasingly prominent. In Britain, the Chartist movement

emerged as a significant working-class movement in response to political exclusion and deteriorating social and economic conditions. The *People's Charter*, which articulated the movement's political demands, reflected growing concerns regarding workers' living and working conditions and called for broader political representation and reform. At a meeting held on February 4, 1839, the Chartist movement declared that its demands would be pursued through peaceful means but did not exclude the possibility of force if these demands were not addressed (Uslu, 2014, p. 4).

The class divisions intensified by industrialization also encouraged workers to express their grievances through demonstrations, rallies, and strikes, some of which developed into violent confrontations. As working-class organizations became increasingly active, employers and other groups sometimes sought to undermine strikes by employing strikebreakers, commonly referred to as "scabs." These individuals were brought in to replace striking workers and, in some cases, became involved in violent confrontations with organized labor. Such conflicts resulted in injuries and deaths among workers and demonstrated the growing tensions between capital and labor during the industrialization process (Nazlı, 2020, pp. 2472-2483).

In the early nineteenth century, workers' protests and demonstrations against harsh working conditions were frequently suppressed through restrictive and coercive measures. Against this background, Karl Marx developed a systematic critique of the capitalist mode of production, most notably in *Capital*. Marx and Friedrich Engels had already offered a distinct analysis of the relationship between labor and capital in *The Communist Manifesto*, published in 1848. They argued that the class divisions emerging under nineteenth-century capitalism represented a transformation of earlier social hierarchies rooted in the medieval feudal order. According to their analysis, the development of industrial capitalism progressively weakened the position of the traditional middle classes and intensified the polarization between the bourgeoisie, which controlled the means of production, and the proletariat, which depended on the sale of its labor. Thus, the relationship between capital and labor increasingly developed into a fundamental and antagonistic class division, creating a widening social divide between the two classes (Marx, 2003, pp. 45-50; Marx & Engel, 2003, pp. 22-28).

The revolutionary ideas developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels against capitalist and imperial structures began to exert greater influence during the early twentieth century. In several societies experiencing colonial domination and political and economic inequality, Marxist ideas were incorporated into anti-

colonial and revolutionary movements. Within this context, armed struggle came to be regarded by some communist movements as a legitimate means of achieving revolutionary political transformation. Mao Zedong (1965) articulated this approach in his statement that “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun” (p. 225). From this perspective, Mao emphasized the role of organized armed force in securing and consolidating revolutionary political power (Zedong, 1965).

Over time, communist ideology developed into various theoretical and political traditions, among which Leninism became particularly influential. Leninist theory emphasized the necessity of revolutionary organization and argued that the existing capitalist state could not simply be transformed through gradual reform; rather, it would ultimately have to be dismantled through revolutionary action, including armed insurrection under certain historical conditions (Heywood, 2013, p. 139).

The Industrial Revolution, which accelerated the process of industrialization during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, transformed production through the establishment of factories and the increasing mechanization of labor. However, these economic and technological transformations were accompanied by severe working conditions that raised significant concerns regarding labor rights and human welfare. Workers were frequently subjected to low wages, excessively long working hours, unsafe workplaces, and inadequate occupational health and safety conditions. These circumstances contributed to the emergence of organized labor and the formation of trade unions, which sought to protect workers’ interests and improve their economic and social conditions.

Trade unions played a central role in organizing collective action, particularly through strikes and demonstrations. Such forms of resistance, however, often resulted in violent confrontations between workers, employers, and state authorities. The suppression of labor movements and the conflicts surrounding industrial disputes generated broader social criticism of the emerging capitalist order. At the same time, these conflicts contributed to the development and expansion of movements advocating workers’ rights. Thinkers and reformers such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Robert Owen played important roles in shaping debates concerning labor, capitalism, and social reform.

Child labor constituted another major social issue during the Industrial Revolution. The widespread employment of children in factories, often under hazardous conditions and for extended working hours, generated increasing criticism from social reformers and labor advocates. These criticisms contributed to the introduction of legislative measures aimed at restricting and, in some contexts, prohibiting certain forms of child labor. Consequently, the

industrialization process became an important period of struggle over workers' rights, labor conditions, and the protection of human dignity. Although these struggles contributed to the development of labor protections and improved working conditions over time, they also demonstrated how collective political and social conflicts could become increasingly organized and confrontational. In this sense, the experience of industrial-era labor movements constituted an important historical context for understanding the subsequent institutionalization of organized forms of political violence.

Examples of the Impact of Marxist Ideology on Societies

Karl Marx's communist approach became particularly influential during the Cold War, constituting one of the principal ideological foundations of the political division represented by the Iron Curtain. Communist movements and states challenged U.S.-led capitalist and imperial policies, although communist ideology failed to establish comparable political influence or mass support in certain countries. While Marxist thought is often examined within sociology and related disciplines because of its emphasis on class relations and social structures, its implications also extend to political history, particularly in relation to state power, political organization, and revolutionary movements.

In countries such as Türkiye, communist movements struggled to secure broad political and social support. Baskın Oran argues that political culture in Türkiye has historically been characterized by strong attachment to authority and leadership, suggesting that political conflicts have often been approached through the elimination or marginalization of political opponents rather than through sustained political competition. According to Oran, these patterns are associated with historical experiences involving warfare, religion, and cultural traditions (Altaş, 2011, pp. 20–30; Oran, 2009, p. 20). From this perspective, the persistence of traditional social norms and historically rooted patterns of authority constitutes an important factor in understanding the development of Türkiye's political culture and the limited influence of communist ideology within the country.

For a revolution to emerge, the sociopolitical structure of a society must be sufficiently conducive to fundamental political transformation. In this context, the relationship between the state and society may become weakened, while political, economic, and institutional crises within the state can create conditions favorable to revolutionary change. Another important factor concerns how societies respond to international crises and external pressures. Historical cases such as Russia and China demonstrate how international conflicts and crises interacted with domestic political and socioeconomic conditions and contributed to the emergence of revolutionary movements. From a Skocpolian perspective,

however, state repression alone does not necessarily produce revolutionary outcomes. Rather, revolutionary transformations emerge from the interaction of state structures, social relations, and broader domestic and international conditions (Öztürk, 2016, pp. 14–16).

Communism exerted a relatively limited influence in the Middle East compared with other regions during the twentieth century. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and other communist states sought to expand their political and strategic influence among several Middle Eastern countries; however, these efforts did not generally result in the establishment of explicitly communist regimes. Rather, countries such as Syria and Iraq developed political and strategic relations with the Soviet Union while adopting forms of Arab nationalism and state socialism that differed from orthodox communism. These political systems subsequently underwent significant transformations rather than developing into durable communist regimes.

The limited influence of communism in the Middle East can also be examined in relation to the region's historical, cultural, and political structures. Islamic traditions, Arab nationalism, and the legacy of Western intervention provided alternative ideological frameworks that often attracted greater political and social support than communist movements. *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* divides the history of communism in the region into three main periods: 1917–1950s, 1950s–1980s, and 1980s–the present. This periodization highlights the changing relationship between communist movements, nationalism, and regional political developments. Nevertheless, countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria maintained varying degrees of political, military, or diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union at different points during the Cold War. Popular and political sympathy toward the USSR was also influenced by regional geopolitical developments, particularly the Arab–Israeli conflict and opposition to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East (Laqueur, 2021, pp. 100–150).

For regions in which communist regimes were established, the human cost of revolutionary transformation was substantial and remains the subject of extensive historical debate. Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party sought to transform the country's economic and productive system through collectivization, state planning, and rapid industrialization. These policies, particularly those associated with the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), contributed to a catastrophic famine. Estimates of the resulting excess deaths vary considerably across the literature, ranging from approximately 16.5 million to 30 million in several demographic

studies, while Frank Dikötter estimates that at least 45 million people died between 1958 and 1962 from starvation, disease, overwork, and violence.

The famine was accompanied by coercive policies and severe forms of punishment. According to Dikötter's archival research, millions of people were subjected to torture, beatings, execution, or deliberate deprivation of food during this period. He estimates that approximately 6–8% of those who died prematurely were tortured or executed, although these figures and the broader death toll remain debated among historians. Such evidence illustrates the extent to which the implementation of radical economic and political policies under Mao's leadership could involve coercion and violence, particularly when local authorities sought to enforce production and grain-collection targets.

The People's Republic of China provides one example of how communist ideology was incorporated into broader struggles against perceived imperial domination. A comparable development can be observed in Vietnam, where the division of the country into North and South generated profound political and social divisions. While the government of South Vietnam was supported politically and militarily by the United States, the communist-led government of North Vietnam sought to unify the country under a socialist political system. These competing political orientations contributed to a prolonged and highly violent conflict that became known as the Vietnam War. The eventual victory of North Vietnam in 1975 resulted in the reunification of the country under communist rule (Devrimler Karşı Devrimler 1, 1975, pp. 5–50).

The cases of China and Vietnam demonstrate that Marxist and communist ideas were adapted to diverse national and historical contexts rather than producing uniform political outcomes. In different societies, communist ideology interacted with nationalism, anti-colonialism, state-building, and existing social structures, contributing to revolutionary movements as well as prolonged armed conflicts. Consequently, the historical impact of Marxist ideology varied considerably across societies, depending on their particular political, social, economic, and historical conditions.

TRANSITION FROM COMMUNISM TO TERRORISM

One of the central objectives of communist ideology is the establishment of greater economic equality through the collective ownership of the means of production and the elimination of class-based inequalities. In theory, such an economic system is intended to reduce disparities in income and wealth and promote a more equitable distribution of resources. However, the extent to which

these objectives have been achieved in practice remains subject to considerable historical and academic debate. In several historical cases, privileged political and party elites maintained access to greater economic and social advantages, while poverty and socioeconomic inequalities persisted among broader segments of the population.

Under communist systems characterized by extensive state ownership and central planning, the state generally assumes substantial control over economic activities, including production, distribution, and the allocation of resources. The concentration of political and economic authority in state institutions has, in some historical cases, also been associated with restrictions on civil and political liberties. The Soviet Union, for example, imposed extensive restrictions on freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly. Thus, the relationship between economic equality and individual freedoms constitutes an important issue in the historical evaluation of communist systems.

At the same time, communism emphasizes collective interests, social solidarity, and cooperation, placing the interests of the broader community above individual economic interests. Communist political systems have also frequently incorporated the principle of democratic centralism, particularly within communist parties. In China, for example, this principle has historically involved the transmission of decisions and political directives through hierarchical party structures, with central party organs retaining significant authority over major policy decisions.

Although communism seeks to establish a classless society, the process of overcoming existing class structures can itself generate intense class conflict. In revolutionary contexts, struggles between workers and existing political and economic elites have sometimes developed into violent confrontations. The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia provides a prominent historical example, as the Bolsheviks mobilized workers and other social groups against the existing political order and the economic interests associated with the bourgeoisie. Consequently, the pursuit of class equality has historically been accompanied by both efforts to eliminate socioeconomic divisions and conflicts over political and economic power.

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, communism's negative effects on society also include human rights violations such as forced labor and torture. In some communist systems, work in state-controlled enterprises and industries is made compulsory, and these labor conditions often violate human rights. Moreover, in certain cases, political dissidents, intellectuals, and other opponents may be subjected to forced labor or be exposed to torture and other inhumane

treatments. Widespread poverty and inequality within society are also common. While communism ideologically aims to achieve income and wealth equality, in practice, it has not always been successful in achieving these goals. In some communist systems, despite the advantageous positions of party elites and other privileged individuals, poverty and income inequality have persisted. Essentially, communism has often created more distinct class divisions.

Terrorism poses a profound threat to contemporary societies and significantly disrupts social structures. Across the globe, terrorist acts—often marked by extreme violence—are employed to instill fear and panic within populations. These acts frequently target specific societal groups or core societal values, aiming not only to cause harm but also to manipulate public perception and political processes. Historically, non-state actors have played a considerable role in shaping the international system, and terrorism has emerged as a powerful tool for such actors. Although early manifestations of terrorism can be traced back to events such as the French Revolution, the concept itself remains elusive and difficult to define with precision.

Despite the complexity of defining terrorism, scholars have identified certain key characteristics that are widely acknowledged in the international academic literature. In his influential work *Terror and Society*, Zafer Cihriçlioglu outlines several defining features of terrorism. According to him, terrorism possesses the following attributes: (1) it serves political objectives; (2) it is inherently violent and aims to generate fear within the public sphere; (3) it targets innocent civilians or strategically important societal points; (4) it has historical depth, and thus cannot be fully understood without considering its historical background; (5) it operates on both national and international levels; (6) it is planned, systematic, and organizationally structured; and (7) due to its multifaceted nature, analyzing terrorism requires an interdisciplinary approach. These characteristics underscore the complexity of terrorism as a phenomenon that transcends simple legal or military frameworks. Understanding its motivations and implications requires not only political analysis but also insights from sociology, psychology, history, and international relations. As terrorism continues to evolve in form and scope, a comprehensive and nuanced understanding remains essential for developing effective counterterrorism strategies and policies (Cihriçlioglu, 2004, pp. 77-78).

Terrorist organizations are those that carry out violence through sophisticated weapons and tactics, thereby amplifying the scale of terror. Especially in the early 20th century, as communism grew, an increase in terrorism was observed. The workers' uprisings and the natural social reactions during the Industrial Revolution were quickly replaced by terrorist organizations.

The conflict between communism and imperialism, while appearing to be interstate, can also be observed on societal and individual levels. In the ideological war, success in influencing and organizing societies has often led to regional and historical successes. The clearest example of the physical manifestation of armed action movements, the cornerstone of communism, is seen in Che Guevara. Guevara, with his guerrilla tactics, remained on the fine line between violence and its horrific consequences. However, after Guevara's death, many non-state actors around the world found inspiration in his example, and these organizations reached the extreme of violent terror.

While Marx's views began to spread across Europe like a plague, Lenin, in contrast, acted more cautiously. During the Russian Civil War following the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin did not hesitate to apply revolutionary terror in the most severe manner to retain his revolutionary policies. The most notable example of this is the "Lenin's Boys" (Leninist youth group) conducting terror actions in Hungary between 1919-21 (Bödök, 2018, pp. 2-7; Worley, 2010, pp. 5-6).

Towards the end of the Cold War, the ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna – Basque Homeland and Freedom) terrorist organization, which had rapidly expanded its operations in Spain, intensified its violent activities. Although ETA's ideological orientation has long been debated, it is not explicitly classified as communist. Nonetheless, elements of leftist revolutionary thought can be traced in the group's rhetoric and operational strategies. In his article *"Spain's ETA Terrorist Group is Dying"*, Christopher C. Harmon (2012) sheds light on ETA's ideological positioning and external affiliations. According to Harmon, intelligence documents from East Germany revealed in the 1980s provide evidence of a connection between ETA and communist states. These documents indicated that communist regimes supplied ETA with weapons, which were reportedly smuggled into Spain via Hungary. This support highlights the strategic relationships developed during the Cold War, in which communist states occasionally assisted violent non-state actors to destabilize Western-aligned governments. However, Harmon emphasizes that such material and logistical support does not equate to ideological alignment. ETA's core objective remained the establishment of an independent Basque state, rather than the promotion of global communist revolution. In contrast, the Italian Red Brigades, a terrorist group founded in the 1970s, was ideologically rooted in Marxist-Leninist doctrine. The Red Brigades explicitly aimed to transform the workers' movement into a revolutionary armed struggle, seeking to overthrow the capitalist state through direct violence. During their peak, they carried out kidnappings, assassinations, and bombings across Italy. Harmon also notes that during this

period, the Soviet-led communist bloc expressed ideological sympathy toward movements like the Red Brigades, seeing them as part of a broader global struggle against Western capitalist powers. This contrast underscores the ideological distinction between nationalist-separatist movements like ETA and doctrinaire communist organizations such as the Red Brigades. Terrorism increases fear and anxiety within society, threatens people's lives, and undermines social structures. Terrorist attacks cause loss of life, injuries, and material damage. This leads to the loss of people's sense of security and the experience of traumatic events that affect their daily lives. The effects of terrorism create a sense of insecurity and division within society, negatively impacting social structures. Terrorists create fear by targeting specific segments of society or society's values, causing these groups to feel threatened. This leads to further division and hostility within society (Harmon, 2012, p. 589).

Terrorism not only creates panic and fear within society but also damages the authority of governments. Terrorist attacks create a sense of weakness in governments and erode public trust. In response, governments take harsh measures to increase security. However, these measures can lead to the restriction of civil liberties and undermine the rule of law. Terrorism also highlights cultural, religious, and political differences within society. Terrorists, because they share a particular belief or ideology, come together with others who share these views and organize. This accentuates differences in society and contributes to division.

From Social Inequality to the Terrorist Organization Democratic Union Party in Syria

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) emerged as a political organization within the broader ideological and organizational framework associated with Abdullah Öcalan. Its formation was influenced by Öcalan's political ideas regarding the organization of Kurdish communities in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Türkiye within a confederal structure. In this context, the PYD developed as a political entity advocating a form of Kurdish political organization based on these ideas (Wilgenburg, 2013, pp. 2). With the influence of the Arab Spring, Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD), which emerged as a terrorist organization in response to the oppressive regimes and the unjust income distribution stemming from the ethnic structure, has particularly harmed Syria's democratic framework.

The Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD), which has publicly emphasized that it has no organizational connection with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), has sought to distinguish itself from the PKK through its political discourse and practices (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 1). Nevertheless, the fact that both organizations are associated with the same ideological leader, Abdullah Öcalan,

represents an important point of discussion in analyses of their ideological relationship. Within this framework, Öcalan has emphasized the importance of women's active participation in political and organizational structures as part of his approach to addressing social inequality. This emphasis on women's participation has also contributed to the development of a gender-related dimension within the ideological discourse associated with the PYD.

In her article *Kurdish Women in Rojava: From Resistance to Reconstruction*, Pinar Tank describes women participating in the armed struggle associated with the PYD as "women warriors." This terminology highlights the prominent role attributed to women in the movement's political and military structures and reflects the broader ideological emphasis placed on women's participation and gender equality (Tank, 2017, pp. 404-405).

Anadolu Agency (Anadolu Agency, 2016) reported that Eva Savelsberg, Head of the European Kurdish Studies Center, described the PYD's practices in Syria as comparable to those of the Syrian regime. According to the statement reported by Anadolu Agency, Savelsberg argued that the PYD had established a system similar to the Ba'ath regime: "The PYD has initiated a process that is no different from the human rights violations committed by the Syrian regime. The only difference now is that the torturers speak Kurdish instead of Arabic. The PYD has established a regime similar to the Ba'ath" (Anadolu Agency, 2016). Although the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) has emphasized gender equality, in 2020, Syrian Kurds organized protests against the party's activities related to recruiting terrorists. In the Hasakah region of Syria, Syrian Kurdish women in 2020 reported that Kurdish young girls were being forcibly conscripted and sought support from authorities regarding this issue. The Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) has sought to strengthen its presence in Syria by attempting to intimidate the Kurdish population through torture. It has been reported that the cousin of political activist Usib Berkel, Muhammed Süleyman, was abducted and tortured by PYD terrorists. Usib Berkel stated, "After enduring severe torture, Muhammed Süleyman was placed under close supervision at a hospital in Kobani to treat his injuries." (Kurdistan24, 2021)

According to Wietse van den Berge, Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) does not openly define itself as Marxist; however, according to Berge, the party's rhetoric aligns with Marxist discourse. The activities of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a terrorist organization led by Abdullah Öcalan, within the Syrian regime are also significant for Syrian Kurds. Considering that the PKK's political goal is to establish a Kurdish state based on a Marxist ideology in Türkiye, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, it must be noted that the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) is

a Marxist-based terrorist organization (Berge, 2015, p. 163; Sökmen, 2016, pp. 231-235).

The Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) emerged in 2005 within the ideological framework associated with Abdullah Öcalan. The organization initially advocated the political organization of Kurdish communities in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Türkiye, with the broader objective of establishing a form of Kurdish political autonomy. Following the outbreak of the Arab Spring and the subsequent escalation of the Syrian conflict, the PYD became an important political actor in northern Syria and developed a complex relationship with the Syrian regime and other actors involved in the conflict.

Ideologically, the PYD has emphasized women's participation and gender equality as important components of its political framework. At the same time, its governance practices and the conduct of its affiliated armed structures have generated criticism and allegations concerning human rights violations, authoritarian practices, and forced recruitment. The organization has also faced allegations of involvement in terrorist activities. Although the PYD has articulated opposition to radicalism and conventional forms of nationalism, critics argue that elements of its political discourse and practices, including its use of Marxist terminology and centralized governance structures, create tensions with these stated principles. Consequently, the PYD's ideological discourse and practices remain subjects of significant political and academic debate, particularly regarding human rights, political pluralism, and the treatment of the Kurdish population in areas under its administration.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that social inequality and related social grievances constitute important themes in the ideological discourse of the Democratic Union Party. The analysis shows that concepts associated with social equality, collective organization, class differences, and the transformation of existing political and social structures are present in the ideological framework examined in the study. These findings also demonstrate that Marxist and communist ideas provide an important historical reference for understanding elements of the Democratic Union Party's ideological discourse. However, the findings do not indicate that social inequality alone determines or directly causes the ideological development of the organization.

The analysis further identifies a distinction between the Democratic Union Party's ideological discourse and the practices attributed to the organization in the

sources examined. While the discourse emphasizes social equality, collective values, and social transformation, the documented allegations concerning practices such as forced conscription, restrictions on political opposition, and human rights violations indicate tensions between these stated principles and reported practices. These observations should be understood within the limits of the documentary evidence examined in this study and should not be interpreted as establishing a direct causal relationship between ideology and specific actions.

The study also has several limitations. First, the research is based primarily on qualitative document analysis and therefore cannot establish causal relationships between social inequality and ideological radicalization. Second, the analysis focuses on publicly available academic, political, and documentary sources, which may not represent all dimensions of the Democratic Union Party's internal ideological structure. Third, the ideological development of the organization may also be influenced by political, historical, regional, and security-related factors that extend beyond social inequality and Marxist thought.

Overall, the findings suggest that social inequality provides a relevant analytical dimension for examining the ideological discourse of the Democratic Union Party. Nevertheless, the organization's ideology cannot be adequately explained through social inequality or communism alone. A broader analysis that considers the interaction between socioeconomic conditions, historical developments, political structures, and regional dynamics is necessary to explain the formation and transformation of its ideological discourse.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç: Bu çalışma, toplumsal eşitsizlik ile siyasi ideolojiler arasındaki ilişkiyi, Marksist ve komünist düşüncenin tarihsel gelişimi üzerinden incelemeyi ve bu ideolojik mirasın Suriye'deki Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi üzerindeki yansımalarını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, Sanayi Devrimi'nin ortaya çıkardığı ekonomik ve toplumsal dönüşümlerin sınıfsal farklılaşmayı nasıl derinleştirdiği ve bu koşulların Marksist düşüncenin gelişimine nasıl zemin hazırladığı ele alınmaktadır. Bu tarihsel çerçeveden hareketle araştırma, toplumsal eşitsizlik, sınıf çatışması ve komünist ideoloji arasındaki ilişkinin siyasi hareketlerin söylemlerine nasıl yansıdığını incelemektedir. Çalışmanın temel odağı, Marksist ve komünist düşüncenin Orta Doğu'daki sınırlı tarihsel etkisine rağmen, bu ideolojik unsurların Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi tarafından geliştirilen siyasi söylemde nasıl yeniden yorumlandığını ortaya koymaktır. Bu kapsamda araştırma, toplumsal eşitsizlik, toplumsal eşitlik, kolektivizm ve mevcut siyasal düzenin dönüştürülmesine ilişkin unsurların partinin ideolojik söylemindeki yerini analiz etmektedir

Tasarım/Yöntem: Bu çalışmada tarihsel ve analitik bir araştırma tasarımı benimsenmiş ve nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın teorik çerçevesini toplumsal eşitsizlik, Marksizm ve komünist ideoloji arasındaki ilişki oluşturmaktadır. İlk aşamada Sanayi Devrimi'nin ekonomik ve toplumsal dönüşümleri ile sınıfsal farklılaşmanın Marksist düşüncenin ortaya çıkışındaki rolü tarihsel literatür üzerinden incelenmiştir. İkinci aşamada Marksist ve komünist ideolojinin farklı coğrafyalardaki gelişimi ve Orta Doğu'daki etkisi değerlendirilmiştir. Üçüncü aşamada ise Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi vaka çalışması üzerinden bu ideolojik mirasın partinin siyasi söylemine ve faaliyetlerine yansımaları analiz edilmiştir. Bu kapsamda akademik çalışmalar, tarihsel kaynaklar ve siyasi analizlerden yararlanılmıştır. Partinin ideolojik söylemi; toplumsal eşitlik, sınıfsal farklılıklar, kolektif örgütlenme, ekonomik eşitsizlik ve mevcut siyasal düzenin dönüştürülmesine ilişkin temalar üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir. Ayrıca Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisinin belirlemiş olduğu bu teorik yaklaşım ile pratik arasındaki farklara değinilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Bulgular: Araştırma, Sanayi Devrimi sonrasında ortaya çıkan ekonomik ve sınıfsal eşitsizliklerin Marksist düşüncenin gelişimi açısından önemli bir tarihsel

zemin oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Marksist düşüncenin sınıf çatışması, ekonomik eşitsizlik ve mevcut toplumsal düzenin dönüştürülmesine ilişkin yaklaşımı, farklı tarihsel ve coğrafi bağlamlarda çeşitli siyasi hareketleri etkilemiştir. Komünist ideolojinin Orta Doğu'da güçlü ve kalıcı bir siyasi taban oluşturması ise bölgenin kültürel ve toplumsal yapıları, siyasi elitlerin direnci ve tarihsel gelişmeler gibi çeşitli faktörler nedeniyle sınırlı kalmıştır. Bununla birlikte, Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi örneği, Marksist ve komünist düşünceden kaynaklanan bazı kavramların çağdaş siyasi söylem içerisinde varlığını sürdürdüğünü göstermektedir. Özellikle toplumsal eşitlik, kolektivizm, ekonomik ve sınıfsal farklılıkların eleştirisi ile mevcut siyasi düzenin dönüştürülmesine yönelik yaklaşımlar, partinin ideolojik söyleminin anlaşılması açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bulgular, toplumsal eşitsizlik ile komünist ideoloji arasındaki tarihsel ilişkinin, Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi siyasi söyleminde doğrudan veya yeniden yorumlanmış biçimlerde görülebileceğine işaret etmektedir. Bununla birlikte, partinin ideolojik yapısının yalnızca klasik Marksizm veya komünizm üzerinden açıklanamayacağı ve bölgesel koşulların da dikkate alınması gerektiği görülmektedir. Diğer bir yandan söylem ile eylem arasındaki farklılıklara değinilmiştir.

Özgünlük/Değer: Bu çalışma, toplumsal eşitsizlik ile siyasi ideoloji arasındaki ilişkiyi tarihsel bir perspektiften ele alarak Marksist düşüncenin çağdaş bir siyasi aktör olan Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisinin ideolojik söylemindeki yansımalarını incelemektedir. Çalışmanın özgün değeri, Sanayi Devrimi ve Marksist düşüncenin tarihsel gelişimini yalnızca genel bir modernleşme tartışması içerisinde değerlendirmek yerine, bu ideolojik mirası çağdaş Suriye bağlamındaki bir vaka üzerinden incelemesidir. Araştırma ayrıca komünizmin Orta Doğu'daki sınırlı tarihsel etkisi ile Marksist düşünceden etkilenen çağdaş siyasi hareketlerin ideolojik söylemleri arasındaki farklılığı ortaya koymaktadır. Bu açıdan çalışma, toplumsal eşitsizlik, ideolojik dönüşüm ve siyasi mobilizasyon arasındaki ilişkinin farklı tarihsel ve bölgesel koşullarda nasıl şekillendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Suriye Demokratik Birlik Partisi'nin söyleminde toplumsal eşitlik, kolektivizm ve mevcut siyasi düzenin dönüştürülmesi gibi temaların incelenmesi, komünist düşüncenin çağdaş Orta Doğu'daki dönüşümünü anlamaya katkı sağlamaktadır.

ıkar atıřması Bildirimi

Bu makalenin arařtırılması, yazarlıęı ve/veya yayınlanmasına iliřkin herhangi bir potansiyel ıkar atıřması bulunmamaktadır.

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