

## THE APPLICATION OF SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION TO TERRORISM

### Ortamsal Suç Önleme Teorisinin Terörizme Uygulanması

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#### Özet

Ortamsal Suç Önleme (OSÖ) teorisini test eden çalışmalar suçun önlenmesinde genellikle olumlu sonuçlar elde etmektedirler. OSÖ teorisinin Beyaz Yaka, İnsan ve Uyuşturucu Ticareti gibi değişik tür suçlara da uygulanabilirliği konusunda akademisyenler arasında yeni bir tartışma başlamıştır. Bu kapsamda, bu çalışma OSÖ teorisinin terörist saldırıları öngörü kapasitesini değerlendirmektedir. Çalışmada iki tür veri kullanılmıştır: (1) Şiddet Gruplarını Çalışma Kurumu'ndan elde edilen veriler, 1998-2008 yılları arasında meydana gelen binalara yönelik saldırıları içermekte, (2) İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediye'si tarafından düzenlenen veriler, saldırının gerçekleştiği binaların çevresel özelliklerini kapsamaktadır. PKK terör örgütü tarafından düzenlenmiş 16 adet bina saldırı olayının analizi sonucu, bu araştırma OSÖ teorisinin de belirttiği gibi, PKK terör örgütünün, suçun hem daha fazla infial uyandırması hem de daha kolay işlenebilmesi için belirli yerleri ve binaları hedef aldığını ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ortamsal Suç Önleme, Suç Önleme, Terörizm.

#### Abstract

Studies applied the principals of Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) theory generally have obtained positive results in preventing crime. A new discussion has emerged among criminology scholars that SCP theory can be applied to very different types of crimes, such as white collar crime, female trafficking, and drug trafficking incidents. In this context, this study evaluates the capability of SCP theory in predicting the

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terrorist attacks. Two types of data were used for the study: (1) buildings attacks (1998-2008) obtained from Institute for the Study of Violent Groups (SVG) and (2) environmental characteristics of buildings obtained from Istanbul Municipality. Based on the analysis of 16 building attacks carried by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the study findings reveal that the PKK targets certain places and buildings to make the crime more influential as well as more feasible as SCP theory points out.

**Key Words:** Situational Crime Prevention, Crime Prevention, Terrorism.

## **Introduction**

One of the most evident characteristics of human beings from other creatures is their intelligence and rationality. People usually act with a certain level of rationality, when they select their actions among their alternatives (Clarke and Cornish, 1985; Felson and Clarke, 1998). Criminals also follow rational preferences to commit crimes. Existing literature indicates that except small portion of crimes, such as homicide with a sudden emotional arouse, crimes are rationally committed (Jacobs and Wright, 1999; Petrosino and Brensilber, 2003; Weaver and Carol, 1985; Wright and Decker, 1994).

Indeed, the assumption of rationality lays down crime prevention theory which theorizes the importance of opportunity structures of environment for a criminal event. Broadly speaking, the main aim of crime prevention theory or environmental criminology is to figure out why and how criminals select their targets, and which factors/opportunities generally lead to patterned criminal behavior (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1981). Theories of crime prevention, such as routine activity theory, crime pattern theory, rational choice theory, and defensible space theory, differently explain criminal opportunity across different ecological units but they all contribute to greater concept of environmental criminology. The most distinct point of environmental criminology is that crime is not mere cause of motivation of offenders. For instance, routine activity theory posits that crime occurs when motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absence of capable guardianship simultaneously converge in time and place (Cohen and Felson, 1979).

Within this context, situational crime prevention (SCP) theory is developed by considering the principles of environmental criminology in

a more practical and systematic way. Clarke (1997) maintains that crime can be prevented by simply blocking any component of crime, such as suitable targets. For instance, certain precautionary measures can reduce attractiveness of a target in the eyes of offenders, and crime may not occur.

## **1. Theory Assumptions**

Clarke (1997) proposes three main assumptions of SCP theory to make targets less attractive as judged by offenders:

### ***1.1. Highly Specific Form of Crime***

Specificity of crime emphasizes that modus operandi of each crime is different than each other. Burglary, for instance, is very different from robbery (breaking into a house vs. threatening someone for personal property). Therefore, differences in modus operandi across different crimes entail differential methods/tactics to commit that type of crime. Clarke and Cornish (1985) suggest that selecting a specific type of crime helps us to develop specific preventive measures, which in turn increase the success of intervention.

### ***1.2. Manipulation of Immediate Environment***

SCP theory tries to block opportunity structures of a specific crime by manipulating immediate environment. For instance, lightening an area may deter likely offenders since it increases risk of detection.

### ***1.3. Offender Judgment***

SCP theory offers five principles to make crime less attractive in the eyes of offenders. These are: (1) increase the effort that makes crime more difficult to commit, (2) increase risk of detection before, during, and after a crime, (3) make crime less reward that can be obtained engaging in a crime, (4) remove excuses that offenders may justify their wrongdoings, (5) remove precipitator factors that can provoke unplanned criminal activities (Clarke, 1997; Wortley, 2001; Cornish and Clarke, 2003).

Studies applied the principals of SCP theory generally obtained positive results in preventing crime (Eck, 1993). Guerette (forthcoming) reviewed 206 studies all over the world and found that 75% of SCP studies reported significant crime reduction.

A new discussion has emerged among criminology scholars that SCP theory can be applied to very different types of crime, such as white collar crime, because all crimes arise out of opportunities (Benson and Tamara, 2007), and stopping female trafficking incidents, because traffickers take advantage of certain situations to traffic targeted females (Akbas, 2009). In this context, recently, Clarke and Newman (2006) tailored the assumptions and principles of SCP theory to terrorist incidents. Normally, many people believe that motivation of terrorism is highly different than motivation of ordinary street crimes (i.e., burglary). However, it is overlooked that crime prevention theory explores distribution of opportunity across places rather than distribution of motivation across populations. Putting it differently, crime prevention theory and as well as SCP theory examine which external factors make crime more likely and which factors reduce target attractiveness of a specific crime. In this regard, differential motivation of terrorism and traditional crimes is not the focus of SCP theory.

## **2. Opportunity Structure of Traditional Crimes and Terrorism**

In their book, *Outsmarting the Terrorists*, Clarke and Newman (2006) attempt to answer the question “Can terrorism be prevented by applying situational crime prevention techniques?” By exploring similarities and differences between crime and terrorism, the authors conclude that terrorism is not much different from traditional types of crime. They both require certain opportunity structures. For instance, Clarke (1999) posits that the perpetrators of traditional crimes (i.e., house burglary, shoplifters) look for certain opportunities of targets. First of all, they look something that should be *concealable* in order not to be easily detected during the time of stealing, such as shoplifting. Similarly, the item should be easily *removal* for transportation. Once having it, an illegal market should be *available* for that. In other words, stolen item should be demanded in the market. The inherent part of this availability in terms of offender is that the stolen item has to be valuable. Another aspect determining the value of the item is that it should be *enjoyable*. For the last, the target item should be *disposable* to convert it to pecuniary gains.

By merging the first letters of this each opportunity structure, Clarke (1999) produces an acronym CRAVED.

Similarly, terrorists or terror organizations also require opportunity structures to carry out their activities and select their targets based on certain criteria. Clarke and Newman (2006) use an acronym EVIL DONE to explain target preferences of terrorists. First and inherently, the target has to be *exposed* and visible for a possible attack. (2) It has to be *vital* for the society in order to draw enough attention of public. Similarly, (3) *iconic* feature of the target is important for terrorist organizations. (4) Otherwise, the *legitimate* necessity of the activity in the view of other people would be in trouble. For instance, terrorist organization exploiting religion cannot attack to their own prayer places. This place is neither iconic nor legitimate targets in terms of their target selection. (5) Terrorists also select their targets for their *destructible* feature. Non-destructible targets fail the attacks of terrorist organizations that reduce their credibility in the view of their members and followers. (6) Certain types of terrorist organizations, which legitimize killing innocent people, also look for *occupied/crowded* targets. They aim to kill as many as people in order to give their message at the highest possible degree. (7) In order to avoid being caught, they select their targets *near* their living places. Or they select targets where they can easily escape by using accessible transportations. (8) For the last, the selected target should be *easy* to carry out. Each activity/attack has to be successful to give their message to both government and to public. In addition, each successful attack carries a message to the followers of the organization that “we are still alive and strong enough to manage our goals” (Clarke and Newman, 2006).

*Classification of EVIL DONE:* From the definitions of Clarke and Newman (2006:15), “*exposed, destructible, and easy*” refer to physical features of a target. That is, target that gives enough opportunity to carry out successful terrorists attacks is preferred. *Vital, iconic and legitimate* features represents ideological component of a target. For this reason, while a target can be an attractive to leftist terrorist organizations, it can not be accounted as the same for terrorist organizations exploiting religion. On the other hand, “occupied” is highly difficult to classify because terrorist organizations generally pay attention iconic feature of a target to give their messages. In rare situations, terrorist organizations consider occupancy of the target to strongly give their messages. In this context, occupied and iconic feature can be thought together, but

classification is still highly difficult. For the last, “near” emphasize the location of target. Normally, studies reveal that offenders generally commit their crimes close to their living places for two reasons. First, offenders better know opportunity structures of a target near their living places (Brantingham and Brantingham, 2003; Eck, 1993). Second, near places give terrorists an opportunity to easily and quickly escape and hide themselves.

Taken together, EVIL DONE is highly operationalized form of environmental criminology, since this acronym systematically explains terrorist incidents with external factors rather than motivation of terrorists.

### **3. Differences and Similarities of Terrorism and Traditional Crimes**

The motives and the aim of terrorists can be different from traditional criminals; however, they both require opportunities for their end goals. Situational crime prevention theory is developed to understand how perpetrators take the advantage of certain vulnerable situations, places, products, and tools. Rather than motivations of criminals, the theory deals with opportunity structure of each crime to convert vulnerable places into more defensible areas. For this reason, it is not necessary to know the motivations of terrorism to fight with it. Sociologists and criminologists still should work on terrorism in order to stop it by exploring the reasons of terrorism; however, in the short run, certain situational steps should have to be taken to mitigate the devastating nature of terrorism into possible minimum level.

Clarke and Newman (2006) and Dugan, Lafree, and Piquero (2005), for instance, stress that installing high-tech detection tools in airports systematically reduced hijacking all over the world.

Taken together, studies suggest that even though motivation of traditional crimes and terrorism is highly different, both classes of crime use certain opportunity structures. In addition, it is expected that terrorist incidents are more rationally carried out because almost all terrorist incidents are planned by a group of people. Moreover, a growing body of research shows that terrorists are rational and disturbingly normal people (Silke, 1998). Like criminals, they also select their targets based on less risky situations among the other alternatives.

#### **4. Current Study**

EVIL DONE suggests that terrorists select their targets based on certain characteristics. According to Clarke and Newman (2006), physical and zonal characteristics (design, layout, and location) of a target are generally considered in target selection. In addition, as noted above, ideology of terrorist organizations is also important in target selection because ideology of terrorist organization determine the iconic and legitimate characteristics of a target. For instance, a certain ideology of a terrorist organization may allow their members attacking civilian targets; on the other hand, it may not allow attacking civilian targets. In brief, SCP theory and its assumptions (EVIL DONE) suggest three main issues for target selection regarding terrorism.

##### ***4.1. Specific Crime Type and Specific Terrorist Organization***

As previously stated, each crime is committed with different tactics; therefore, specific crime type is important to understand offenders' decision making process. On the other hand, generally terrorist organizations are different from each other in terms of their ideology. It is not surprise that target selection of leftist terrorist organization will be different than target selection of terrorism exploiting religion. Therefore, aside from specific type of crime, specific terrorist organization should be selected in order to understand the process of target selection.

##### ***4.2. Environmental Factors***

SCP theory posits that terrorists select their targets based on their vulnerabilities. As noted above, physical (i.e., exposed, destructible, and easy) and zonal (near) features of a target are important in target selection. Considering the military base attacks of the PKK in the Eastern part of Turkey, for instance, the PKK attacked certain military bases, such as Aktütün and Dağlica, more than once. The evaluation of these military bases in terms of their zonal and physical features reveals that the PKK selected these two bases since they are both close to border, easy to escape after an attack, and both military bases were not so strong in respect to their physical conditions.

### **4.3. Offender Judgment**

Environmental factors are important because they interact with offenders' decision making before they select their targets. In other words, we assume that the vulnerability of targets positively influence decision making process for a terrorist attack.

Taken together, two important data are needed to evaluate whether SCP theory predicts terrorist attacks: (1) Specific types of terrorist organization and terrorist attack and (2) environmental characteristics of targets. In this context, this study attempts to analyze terrorist building attacks of Istanbul carried out between 1998 and 2008 as a specific form of terrorist attack. In addition, by comparing both targeted and non-targeted buildings' environmental characteristics, we explore whether environmental factors are effective in target selection as proposed in EVIL DONE. Finally, according to environmental characteristics, rationality of terrorist attacks will be discussed.

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1. Data**

Data come from two different sources: Buildings attacks (1998-2008) come from Institute for the Study of Violent Groups (ISVG) and environmental characteristics of buildings were obtained from Istanbul Municipality ([sehirrehberi.ibb.gov.tr](http://sehirrehberi.ibb.gov.tr)).

There are 58 terrorist building attacks in Istanbul between 1998 and 2008 years. However, we do not know the perpetrators of all of these building attacks (N=58). On the other hand, records/data suggest that 16 of 58 building attacks were carried out by the "Kurdistan Workers Party"<sup>1</sup> (PKK), 4 carried out by Al-Qaida, and remaining three carried out by the

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<sup>1</sup> The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was formed in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish terrorist organization in Turkey. Its aim is to establish an independent Kurdish state on the territories of southeastern of Turkey and the northern Syria. For this purpose, the PKK carried out numerous terrorist attacks in Turkey. Forty thousand people including governmental officials and Turkish-Kurdish civilians lost their lives due to the PKK attacks. It is out of debate comparing to human cost; however, the PKK also cost to Turkey for over 300 billions of dollars (Criss, 1995).

“Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front” (DHKP/C). As noted above, SCP theory needs specific type of terrorist organization to apply its assumption. In this regard, the building attacks of PKK (N=16) terrorist organization were selected to analyze/test the assumptions of the SCP theory on terrorism, specifically on building attacks.

Istanbul Municipality has a unique database in their web-site that shows geographical location, environmental characteristics, and address of each building. In addition, it allows researchers to search buildings by their types (i.e., business, governmental). Thus, it is possible to compare attacked and non-attacked buildings from this source.

**5.2. Assumptions**

- 1.Environmental characteristics of buildings are important in target selection as proposed in EVIL DONE assumptios.
- 2.Terrorists rationally select their targets.

**6. Results**

**Table 1:** Different Targets

	<b>Al Qaeda</b>	<b>PKK</b>	<b>DHKP/C</b>
Synagogues	+		
Touristic/Civilians	+	+	
Police Station		+	
Political Party building		+	+
Governmental building		+	+

The above table indicates general target types selected by different terrorist organizations during the decade of 1998-2008. As can be seen, while Al Qaeda and PKK attacked civilian targets, DHKP/C only selected official and governmental buildings. Indeed, it is known that DHKP/C attacked police stations in previous years; however, no attack against civilians has been observed during this decade.

### 6.1. Environmental Characteristics

In this section of the study, only PKK's 16 building attacks will be analyzed in terms of EVIL DONE assumptions.

#### *Exposed and Vital*

All selected targets of the PKK were visible and accessible by everyone (exposed). In addition, those targets were highly vital or important to draw attention of other people right after the terrorist attacks. The below table indicates building types attacked by the PKK. As Table 2 suggests all targets are visible and reachable by everyone. On the other hand, selected targets were capable to draw attention to terrorist attacks (vital).

**Table 2:** Building Types of Selected Targets

<b>Attack Type</b>	<b>Building Type</b>
Bombing	Blue Mosque
Bombing	Misir Bazaar
Armed Assault	Fatih Police Station
Bombing	Supermarkets
Bombing	Market Place
Bombing	Tourist Hotels
Arson	Electronic House
Bombing	Political Party Building
Bombing	Touristic Places
Arson	Textile Factory
Arson	Cosmetics Factory

#### *Iconic and legitimate*

The PKK is such terrorist organization that purposely kills even babies to intimidate others. For instance, the PKK destroyed a village and killed all villagers (from baby to old people) to frighten adjacent villages (Ozer and Frank, 2008). Since its foundation, the PKK has killed many civilians (Teymur and Smith, 2008).

Table 2 reveals that the PKK attacks both civilian and governmental buildings. The reasons of the civilian/tourists attacks of the PKK are twofold: (1) it gives messages to foreigners that Turkey is not a safe country to visit. In this way, the PKK also wants to negatively affect Turkey's tourism income. (2) It gives to its supporters a message about its strength and ongoing power, since civilians always are easy target.

The above two reasons justify PKK attacks against touristic places (i.e., Blue Mosque, Mısır Bazaar) and governmental buildings (political party building, police station); however, it seems irrelevant to attack market places and factories. We checked pro-PKK web-sites and noticed that the PKK sees all Turkish people as the enemy and legitimates attacking Turkish people in factories (TAK, n.d.) While most of the terrorist organizations do not attack civilians, the PKK does. Therefore, even touristic hotels, factories, and supermarkets are legitimate and iconic places for likely building attacks.

### *Near*

Figure 1 reveals that the PKK generally selects its targets in places where they are close to its members' living areas. The "square" symbol represents concentrated places of PKK members. These places are known based on pro-PKK demonstrations and number of arrested terrorists. The information was obtained from a police officer who worked for 12 years in Istanbul as a riot police. In addition, the information obtained from the police officer was also confirmed by checking pro-PKK public demonstrations in these places (Netgazete Archieve, n.d.). "Round symbols" represent PKK's terrorist attacks. Building attacks are highly concentrated in peninsula where touristic places (i.e, Blue Mosque, Mısır Bazaar) locate in it. This peninsula is not a residential area. There are a few Bosphorus villas alongside the cost. In sum, Figure 1 to some extent reveals that terrorist select their target based on proximity criteria to their living areas. As noted before, in the Eastern part of Turkey, the PKK also carried its attacks to military bases that are close to borders of Turkey and the living places of members of the PKK are just across the borders.



**Figure 2:** Zonal Location of Fatih Police Station

## Conclusion

Crime prevention theories, which also include Situational Crime Prevention Theory, posit that criminals follow rational preferences to commit crimes. Recent studies on terrorism also suggest that terror crimes contain certain degree of rationality. Based on this premise, Clarke and Newman (2006) applied the principles of Situational Crime Prevention Theory to terror crimes in order to predict where terrorists most likely to attack.

In his previous study, Clarke (1997) identified opportunity structures of traditional crimes (i.e., robbery, theft) and generated an acronym (CRAVED) to systematically evaluate the opportunity component of crime. With his effort, Clarke (1997) stressed that without an opportunity, criminals cannot find a way to commit their crimes. Moreover, he posits that removing the opportunity structure of crime will end up no crime.

Given this context, Clarke and Newman's (2006) new conceptualization of CRAVED for terrorism offers innovative ideas to

predict where terrorist attacks most likely to occur. In this study, we analyzed 16 building attacks of the PKK and experienced that newly tailored assumptions of SCP theory (EVIL DONE) for terrorism may successfully predict likely terrorist attacks.

In our study, our hand was not so strong because the data were limited to 16 cases. This aspect of the analyses represents the limitation of the study. By examining large number of cases may provide additional information to find out how terrorist organizations select their targets. Moreover, if target selection patterns of terrorist organizations can be identified from adequate number of cases, crime prevention techniques can be developed using environmental criminology principles. In this context, Clarke and Newman's (2006) EVIL DONE may provide a good framework for researchers.

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