

Review Article

The Prison Radicalization Strategies of Feto Prisoners: A Comparison Between Türkiye And Europe

FETÖ Mahkûmlarının Cezaevlerinde Radikalleşme Stratejileri: Türkiye Ve Avrupa Karşılaştırması

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Abstract

This study comparatively analyzes the radicalization strategies of Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) inmates in Turkey and Europe. Prisons are approached not only as punitive environments but also as spaces where ideological identities and organizational loyalties are reproduced. The analysis is guided by Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism model and Kruglanski's Significance Quest Theory. Findings show that in Europe, the limited number of FETO inmates restricts collective organizational restructuring; however, individual radicalization persists through political-prisoner identity and victimhood narratives. In Turkey, the post-July 15 shift toward F-type prisons, strict communication controls, psychosocial services, and spiritual guidance programs has significantly impeded organizational continuity. The study concludes that prison radicalization is a multidimensional phenomenon and highlights the need for stronger rehabilitation programs and enhanced international cooperation to support policymaking in this field.

Keywords: FETO, Radicalization, Prisons, Türkiye, Europe.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Fetullahçı Terör Örgütü (FETÖ) mahkûmlarının cezaevlerindeki radikalleşme stratejilerini Türkiye ve Avrupa bağlamında karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektedir. Cezaevleri, yalnızca cezalandırma alanı değil, aynı zamanda ideolojik kimliklerin yeniden üretildiği ve örgütsel bağlılıkların sürdürüldüğü mekânlar olarak ele alınmıştır. Analiz, Moghaddam'ın "Terörizme Giden Merdiven" modeli ve Kruglanski'nin "Anlam Arayışı" kuramı çerçevesinde yürütülmüştür. Bulgular, Avrupa'da mahkûm sayısının düşük olmasının örgütsel yeniden yapılanmayı sınırladığını; buna karşın "siyasi mahkûm" kimliği ve mağduriyet söylemlerinin bireysel radikalleşmeyi beslediğini göstermektedir. Türkiye'de ise F tipi cezaevleri, iletişim kısıtlamaları, psikososyal destek ve manevi rehberlik uygulamaları örgütsel sürekliliği belirgin biçimde azaltmıştır. Çalışma, cezaevi radikalleşmesinin çok boyutlu bir olgu olduğunu ortaya koymakta ve politika yapıcılara rehabilitasyon programlarının güçlendirilmesi ile uluslararası iş birliğinin artırılması yönünde öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: FETÖ, Radikalleşme, Cezaevleri, Türkiye, Avrupa

1. Introduction

The radicalization strategies of the terrorist organizations are not confined to the utilization of violent practices that take place in public spaces or in the field. In other words, these strategies are directly

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related to the processes through which individuals maintain their organizational attachment and reproduce their ideological commitment within closed institutions, predominantly prisons. Apart from being mere mechanisms of punishment, it can be indicated that prisons function as social laboratories where terrorist identities are reproduced through radicalization. Consequently, the analysis of radicalization in prisons arises as a critical concern within the domain of contemporary security paradigm.

In Türkiye's context, this dossier has turned into a significant national security dossier following the coup attempt of July 15, 2016. The Fetullah Terrorist Organization had been meticulously expanded its ties over a considerable duration by using the mediums of education, media, and finance. The group had successfully penetrated pivotal state institutions with the aim of establishing a parallel authority. On the night of 15 July, this structure effectively revealed itself as a terrorist organization directly against the national will. The simultaneous imprisonment of tens of thousands of members in the aftermath of the coup attempt highlights the impact of organization's internal radicalization practices. On the contrary, the limited number of FETO members in European prisons has given rise to dissimilar radicalization dynamics. Despite the capacity for organizational restructuring remaining constrained in this context, strategies such as the utilization of individual identity, the adoption of the political prisoner image, and the discourse that prioritize victimhood have assumed prominence.

The theoretical approach used in this study is intended to facilitate a multidimensional nature of radicalization. In this regard, Moghaddam's staircase to terrorism model and Kruglanski's significance quest theory are evaluated within the framework of the analysis. Moghaddam's staircase to terrorism model demonstrates how individuals' perceptions of justice and victimization act as catalysts which force them towards organizational commitment and violent positions. Kruglanski's significance quest theory explains the pivotal role that individuals seek for significance, value, and belonging plays in the process of radicalization.

Despite the extensive body of research on FETO, the existing literature offers almost no systematic analysis of how the organization maintains radicalization processes within prison settings. Previous studies have predominantly focused on FETO's international networks, educational structures, political influence, and post-July 15 transformations, yet they have not examined prisons as strategic environments where ideological continuity is reproduced and organizational allegiance is reconfigured. This study fills this gap by providing the first comparative assessment of FETO's prison-based radicalization strategies across Türkiye and Europe. Unlike prior research, it not only identifies the mechanisms through which FETO members sustain ideological commitment under incarceration but also situates these mechanisms within broader state-level security frameworks. By integrating qualitative content analysis with a cross-contextual comparison of legal, institutional, and architectural factors, the study offers an original conceptual contribution to the literature on radicalization, demonstrating how state policies shape divergent radicalization trajectories in democratic and security-centered environments.

This study aims to provide the comparison of strategies on radicalization processes in prisons by taking Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO) as a case study in the Turkish and European contexts from a critical point of view. The findings of the study demonstrate that in Europe, prisoners prioritize the cultivation of individual identities and victimization strategies as a mechanism against being prisoned. Conversely, in Türkiye, the pre-coup cell culture facilitated the continuation of radicalization process since members of the organizations have chance to develop group identity with other prisoners. Following the July 15 coup attempt, on the other hand, radicalization was controlled at the institutional level through the implementation of Type F prisons, communication restrictions, psychosocial support, and spiritual guidance practices.

In order to have a clear analysis, the article is divided into four sections. The initial section of the text provides a comprehensive discussion of the concept of radicalization and the theoretical approaches. The subsequent section examines the strategic approach adopted by FETO prisoners in Europe while they are in prison. The third section of this study analyses the experiences of FETO prisoners in Türkiye, while the fourth section synthesizes the findings by comparing the two contexts. The last concluding part presents the formulation of policy recommendations and directions for future research.

2. Methodology

Methodologically, the research of the study is grounded in qualitative content analysis. The primary data sources used in analysis include European Parliament reports, European Court of Human Rights rulings, and reports from the Ministry of Justice and the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Türkiye. Secondary sources involve theoretical studies in the literature on radicalization and academic publications regarding prisons. Moreover, news reports from national media outlets such as Anadolu Agency, TRT News, and Daily Sabah, as well as international media outlets such as Deutsche Welle and Reuters were used for evaluation as empirical data.

Building upon this dataset, the study is based on a multi-stage qualitative content analysis procedure in order to ensure analytical depth and conceptual consistency. The data collection process is developed through a purposive sampling strategy by selecting documents based on their direct relevance to prison practices, state security approaches, and radicalization indicators. The analytical process began with open coding for identifying recurring thematic patterns, followed by axial coding for revealing causal and conceptual linkages across categories that are named as threat perception, legal framing, prison architecture, and ideological continuity. A final stage of comparative coding was implemented to analyze how these themes diverged across the Turkish and European contexts to enable systematic cross-case interpretation of the findings.

Apart from methodological detailing, ethical considerations and potential limitations were also taken into account within the framework of the research design. As the study based predominantly on secondary data, there remains an inherent risk of researcher bias created by the framing and availability of existing materials. To diminish this risk, triangulation was used across legal documents, institutional reports, academic literature, and media narratives for reducing dependence on any single perspective. Data selection was informed by relevance instead of representativeness which may limit generalizability. In relation to this, conceptual transparency was maintained through clearly defining analytical categories and coding procedures. Furthermore, the political sensitivity regarding the subject matter required careful ethical reflection, confirming that interpretations remained grounded in verifiable sources and avoided normative or state-aligned assumptions. Taken all together, these considerations are paid attention for strengthening the credibility of the study and acknowledge the constraints typical of qualitative research based on secondary sources.

3. Radicalization Strategies of Terrorist Organizations in Prisons

The concept of radicalization is a multi-disciplined phenomenon that has long been the subject of both humanitarian, national and international security level of concerns. Despite numerous definitions, radicalization can be simply explained as the process by which individuals reject the prevailing social order and adopt increasingly radical, frequently violent, ideological positions (Sedgwick, 2010). Neumann (2013) conceptualizes radicalization as an intellectual transformation that legitimizes political violence, while Schmid (2013) highlights the dual behavioral and cognitive dimensions of the concept. In this context, radicalization is not only a tendency towards violence, but also a multi-layered process shaped by individuals' search for meaning, belonging, and identity frameworks (Schmid, 2013).

One of the most comprehensive models that highlights the multi-layered structure of radicalization process is Moghaddam's (2005) staircase to terrorism approach. Moghaddam's theory indicates that radicalization is a process originated from the perception of injustice. In the aftermath of being a potential member of the terrorist organization, as individuals face with a progressively restricted hierarchical structure, they are led to perceive violence as legitimate. This model is particularly illustrative when combined with the isolation, perception of justice, and need for belonging that individuals experience in closed locations such as prisons.

In addition to Moghaddam's staircase to terrorism model, the significance quest theory that is developed by Kruglanski, Bélanger, and Gunaratna demonstrates that radicalization is fundamentally rooted in individuals seek for feeling important and finding meaning in their lives. In other words, terrorist organizations create a sense of belonging through providing individuals identities and missions that engender a sense of value. From this angle, the fact that FETO prisoners in Europe present themselves as political prisoners is a result of the individual search for meaning in relation to organizational narratives as explained within the context of the significance quest theory.

Another significant radicalization debate that must be taken into consideration within the framework of cult-organization literature is developed by Lalich and Lifton. Lalich (2004) and Lifton (1989) argue that instruments used in radicalization process such as charismatic leadership, absolute obedience, detachment from alternative sources of information, and the "us/them" distinction lead members to feel unconditional loyalty to the terrorist organization by alienating them from critical thinking. In relation to this argument, it is a clear fact that prison conditions provide a social environment conducive to the strengthening of such radicalization mechanisms since individuals in confined spaces become more open and fragile on information and solidarity networks controlled by the terrorist organization members.

These theoretical approaches are enlightening in terms of analyzing the strategies by which radicalization is perpetuated in prisons. For instance, in Türkiye, the pre-July 15th coup d'état culture paved the way for the rapid escalation of the steps described in Moghaddam's (2005) model since organizational hierarchy, hidden communication means, and messages from leaders facilitated individuals' ascent to higher levels. Correspondingly, in the European framework, while numerical scarcity limited organizational restructuring, within the context of Kruglanski's (2019) SQT model, prisoners' search for meaning and belonging was sustained through the identity of political prisoner and the discourse of victimhood.

In conclusion, it is a clear fact that radicalization is not merely an ideological orientation, but rather a dynamic process affected by individuals' social environments and terrorist organizational strategies. Prisons emerge as critical locations where this process accelerates. By taking Moghaddam's and Kruglanski's approaches into account for evaluation, the radicalization strategies of FETO prisoners in both Türkiye and Europe demonstrates that the organization uses different techniques in line with their aim of expanding its ties.

4. Terrorist Organizations in the Cell System

The dormitory-style accommodation model has functioned as a platform that triggers organizational socialization and radicalization processes. Within the dormitories, organizations have distributed roles and responsibilities in order to guarantee the continuity of their hierarchical structures, providing mechanisms of discipline and obedience through figures such as the big brother. This has facilitated individuals' identification with the organization and has even led to the formation of a parallel order to state authority in some cases (Karagöl, 2017; Balta Paker, 2003; Council of Europe, 1996). In this regard, the cells have been transformed into venues for ideological instruction, collective reading, the establishment of study groups, and the facilitation of political discourse. Consequently, new prisoners were rapidly assimilated into the collective memory through narratives of heroism and martyrdom, thereby ensuring the preservation of the organization's ideological continuity within the prison environment (Neumann, 2010; Silke, 2014).

The cell system has also enabled the development of strong emotional bonds and group solidarity. The integration of prisoners isolated from the outside world into the organization has been enabled through shared meals, cleaning, worship, and sports practices, which have created a sense of familiarity among individuals (Silke, 2014; Balta Paker, 2003). Organizations have established a 'moral economy' through the distribution of external aid, legal support, and visitor resources under their own authority, thereby increasing individuals' reliance on the organization (Human Rights Watch, 2001). In this process, discipline was collectively enforced, and everything from prisoners' courtroom behavior to their petitions was standardized, thereby ensuring unity within and sending a strong message to the outside world (Karagöl, 2017; Silke, 2014).

The cell system also offered organizations the opportunity to form covert communication and information channels. It is evident that the utilization of correspondence, epistolary missives, emblematic tokens, and cryptic linguistics functioned to facilitate the internal coordination of cells, while concurrently ensuring the continuity of the organization's link with external entities. The Council of Europe CPT reports (1996) indicates that cells facilitate such informal communication networks, while Human Rights Watch (2001) emphasizes that organized prisoners continued to receive instructions from outside using these methods.

These structural breaks were also revealed in the organizational practices of FETO prisoners prior to the July 15 coup attempt. Despite their limited numbers, members of the FETO who remained in custody re-established their internal hierarchy, adopted a unified stance in court based on instructions from external sources, and maintained solidarity within the cells (Anadolu Agency, 2017). In certain penitentiaries, clandestine signalling methods were devised, and insurrectionist strategies were formulated, thereby evidencing that the organisation sustained its discipline even within the confines of the institution (Daily Sabah, 2016). As demonstrated by the practice of prisoners in different cells sharing messages of encouragement through letters and small notes, this situation has been shown to maintain organizational loyalty (Anadolu Agency, 2019). This phenomenon is further evidenced by the actions of inmates inserting SIM cards into mobile phones to connect with the outside world in Kars Prison (Kars Güncel, 2016), and the organization's leader Gülen sending morale-boosting letters to prisons (Anadolu Agency, 2018). These findings reveal that the cell system is not merely a housing model, but in fact a tool employed by organizations in terms of radicalization, ideological reproduction, and propaganda activities. Türkiye's transition from the cell system to the F type prison was therefore a security necessity since the FETO's organizational ties and prevent its re-organization in prisons.

5. Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO)

The Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO) emerged in Türkiye in the late 1960s as a religious community group. However, gradually, this organization transformed into a hierarchical structure that penetrated transnational networks and key state institutions. In its nascent phase, the organization engaged in the recruitment of members through a variety of strategies such as including student residences, discussion groups, and private tutoring centers. Since the 1990s, it has expanded on a global scale, establishing a network of schools and associations that now extends to Central Asia, Europe, and America (Ebaugh, 2010; Tittensor, 2014). During this process, loyalty relationships were established through scholarships, housing, and job opportunities, facilitating the integration of younger generations into the organisation's ideology (Hendrick, 2013).

However, by the 2000s, the organization had expanded its ties beyond educational and social activities. The most critical part of this expansion was related to the allegations of infiltration into state institutions, particularly the judiciary and security forces. In the extant literature, this process has been defined as the gradual politicization of a movement with a civil society appearance and its shift towards building a parallel authority (Demiralp, 2016; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017; Yavuz & Balcı, 2018). At this point, it is also remarkable that the organization reveals cult-like characteristics. The organizational structure that has composed of the impact of Fethullah Gulen's so-called religious leadership, closed communication, intermediate leadership figures such as "abi" and "imam," and micro-cells based on conversation houses on the identification of the individual with the organization demonstrates that FETO has exhibited not solely a religious community identity but also an organizational identity that is reminiscent of a cult.

A detailed examination of radicalization processes reveals that the organization's strategy is predicated on the strengthening of ideological commitment through exploiting individuals' search for meaning and belonging. As indicated by Kruglanski, Bélanger, and Gunaratna (2019), radicalization is characterized by three fundamental elements: need, narrative, and network. In parallel with this, it is seen that the FETO has integrated these three dimensions and has directed individuals' search for meaning towards organizational identity. Moghaddam's (2005) "terror ladder" model posits that the radicalization process commences with perceptions of justice and victimization, ultimately culminating in increasingly hardline ideological positions. The organization has sustained this escalation by producing discourses of victimhood and external conspiracy narratives during times of crisis (Hendrick, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2017; Yavuz & Balcı, 2018). Subsequently, individuals have sustained both their ideological dedication and internal group cohesion by means of organizational narratives.

The radicalization process has been further reinforced by the organization's resource mobilization and secrecy strategies. Within the juncture of FETO's organizational structure, it is evident that economic activities undertaken by FETO's sub-institutions such as schools, business associations, media outlets and foundations have been efficiently used as a mechanism in terms of providing both ideological legitimacy and financial support (Ebaugh, 2010; Tittensor, 2014). The recruitment process was realized with scholarships and educational activities, and students were gradually subjected to organizational

discipline in discussion groups where they stayed together and radicalized through making Fethullah Gulen's notes and books read. These radicalized new 'members' then placed in the bureaucracy (Hendrick, 2013). Consequently, the organization gained social legitimacy through its open, civil facade, while developing an alternative decision-making network within the state through its closed core (Demiralp, 2016; Esen & Gümüştü, 2017).

A further peculiar feature of FETO is related to its transnational institutionalization. The sub-group organizations such as international aid centers, international schools, women meetings established and controlled by the FETO in the 2000s provided the terrorist organization an international image and a protective shield (Tittensor, 2014; Ebaugh, 2010). By taking these sub-groups and institutions into account, diaspora organizations in Europe and North America have attempted to depict the FETO's public image as that of a civil and moderate actor. In line with this acceptance, subsequent to 2016, the FETO has evaluated the opportunity to undergo a transformation with the objective of sustaining its pursuit of international legitimacy (Tee, 2018; Yavuz & Balci, 2018).

In conclusion, the historical development of the FETO provides a critical illustration of the transition from a religious group to an international terrorist organization. The FETO has demonstrated cult-like characteristics in terms of charismatic leadership and a closed hierarchy. In addition to these, recruiting personnel through education and social activities, securing financial and social legitimacy through resource mobilization and transnational institutionalization and reinforcing radicalization processes through narratives of victimhood and conspiracy reveals the expanding structure of organizational networks from national to international level. This multidimensional structure has transformed FETO from a religious group into one of the most complex terrorist organizations of the modern era (Esen & Gümüştü, 2017; Yavuz & Balci, 2018; Hendrick, 2013).

6. The Security Dimension of the Prison System in Türkiye

In addition to the initial interpretation, prisons are also accepted as social spaces in which ideological identities are reproduced and organizational allegiances are reinforced. In the case of Türkiye, this experience has been particularly evident through the cell system. The cell-type accommodation model which has been used for long term periods has enabled disparate political groups and terrorist organizations to preserve their internal hierarchies, maintain ideological training, and recruit new members to the organization. Indeed, the extant literature emphasizes that prisons can function as a 'social laboratory' that accelerates individuals' radicalization processes (Neumann, 2010; Silke, 2014). The cell culture in Türkiye has had a profound impact on the daily lives of prisoners along with the political practices and collective strategies that are specific to organized structures. Subsequently, the state has regarded prisons not uniquely as institutions for the detention of criminals but also as sites for the reproduction of security risks.

It is apparent that the mass uprisings, hunger strikes and death fasts that took place during the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated the efficiency of the cell system in terms of fostering organizational solidarity and collective radicalization. In light of these occurrences, the state considered the transition to a cell-type accommodation system as fundamental in order to enhance discipline and security within prisons. The Return to Life Operation in 2000 represented a pivotal moment in this transformation, with the cell system, predicated on individuals or small groups, being implemented in an effective manner. Although this change were hotly debated at both the national and international levels, the fundamental goal of the state was unambiguous, that was to prevent the establishment of organized structures within prisons and to ensure security. In this regard, the cell system had a significant impact on limiting terrorist organizational ties. Despite the fact that the psychological effects of individual isolation were criticized by international human rights organizations, Türkiye's primary concern was the protection of national security (Council of Europe, 1996; Human Rights Watch, 2001).

6.1. The Expansion of F-Type Prisons in Türkiye

The July 15 coup attempt can be accepted as one of the major turning points in terms of Türkiye's prison strategies. Tens of thousands of FETO members were simultaneously imprisoned that exacerbate the potential of cell culture to strengthen organizational solidarity. In regard of this threat, the state took decisive steps for preventing radicalization of terrorist members in prisons. The Ministry of Justice enlarged the use of F-Type prisons in order to place FETO suspects in solitary confinement or small-

group cells. This maneuver significantly prevented organizational communication, collective resistance, and ideological reproduction mechanisms. Despite the fact that international human rights literature has criticized the psychological effects of individual isolation, from Türkiye's security perspective, this step was the most critical strategic issue to prevent FETO from expanding its ties in prisons.

In addition to implementing physical isolation, Türkiye has prioritized strengthening institutional capacity to prevent radicalization of FETO members in prisons. The Twinning project that has been supported by the European Union and coordinated by FIIAPP stands out in this context. The project has aimed to provide comprehensive training to prison staff in terms of identifying, analyzing, and responding to radicalization risks. In this sense, the training focused precisely on thematic areas such as identifying radicalization indicators, using risk assessment tools, and intervention methods for prisoners engaging in violent extremism (FIIAPP, 2021). The training of trainers' approach has enabled the sustainable enhancement of institutional capacity (FIIAPP, 2021). According to a report by the European Union External Action Service (EEAS, 2022), approximately 12,600 prison officers have been trained in this context as of 2022. This figure reveals that Türkiye has prepared the vast majority of its prison staff against the threat of radicalization process in relation to terrorist organizations through aligning them with international standards. Moreover, a rehabilitation-based approach has been developed alongside security-focused measures by preparing online platforms, application guides and pedagogical guides (EPTA, 2023).

In the aftermath of the July 15th coup attempt, one of Türkiye's prison strategies has been focusing on communication restrictions. FETO prisoners' family visits, meetings with lawyers, and the right to letters and phone calls have been subjected to firmer controls in order to prevent the organization's possibility to generate messages and disseminate propaganda from the inside out. As reported in Anadolu Agency (2019), the continued organizational communication between cells through letters and notes has forced prison administrations to control these channels. Human Rights Watch (2001) reports also confirm that strict communication controls in high-security prisons are a tool to prevent radicalization.

Türkiye's prison policy is also combined with de-radicalization process of FETO prisoners with psychological and social support programs. Within the scope of EU-funded projects, the number of psychologists and social workers in prisons has been increased, and prisoners have been encouraged to cope with traumatic experiences through individual counseling and to develop individual identities rather than organizational ones (EEAS, 2022). This approach has mitigated the negative effects of individual isolation and prevented the development of a discourse of collective victimization. Similarly, the literature highlights the detrimental effects of psychosocial support programs on radicalization (Silke, 2014).

As a result, after July 15th, Turkey arranged F-Type prisons efficiently not only for physical isolation of FETO prisoners but also for providing comprehensive security reforms and rehabilitation-focused strategies. Therefore, FETÖ prisoners' chances for organizational communication and ideological reproduction were severely restricted and the state's definite policy of prioritizing national security was effectively implemented in prisons.

6.2. Deradicalization Programs Provided to FETO Prisoners

In the aftermath of the coup attempt on July 15, the most important element of the strategies formulated to anticipate radicalization among FETO prisoners in Türkiye has been the spiritual guidance programs undertaken by the Presidency of Religious Affairs. Within the framework of the protocols with the Ministry of Justice, imams, preachers, and experts with backgrounds in theology were assigned to prisons. These individuals were tasked with one-on-one meetings with FETO prisoners, the organization of religious discussions in prison cells, and the conducting of group programs. The primary aim of these steps has been to dismantle the organizational loyalty cultivated by FETO through the manipulation of religious references, thereby offering inmates with an alternative discourse originated on correct religious knowledge (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2017).

In addition to religious discussions, spiritual guidance programs also serve to transform individuals' psychological and social orientations. As Çakır (2018) highlights the presence of the Directorate of Religious Affairs in prisons plays a significant role particularly in combating organizations that exploit religious references such as the FETO. Within the context of the programs, a re-examination of the

religious concepts employed by the organization to legitimize its authority was undertaken. The dissemination of accurate information on subjects such as violence, obedience, community relations, and individual responsibility in Islam was explained to dismantle the organization's false religious authority. In this particular deradicalization circumstance, prisoners were informed about the activities of the FETO organization, which were being conducted under the guise of religion and were incompatible with Islamic values.

These applications conducted by Directorate of Religious Affairs are associated with faith-based deradicalization approaches in the literature. Silke (2014) indicates that the active role of religious leaders in prisons can provide to prevent radicalization by offering an alternative framework to radical religious discourse. In the case of Türkiye, this model supported individual transformation and turned into a strategic tool that strengthened the state's national security at the end. Thus, it can be mentioned that the Presidency of Religious Affairs provided spiritual counseling in prisons and served to weaken FETO's ideological ties.

7. FETO Prisoners in Europe

A comparison of the experiences of FETO convicts in European countries with those in Türkiye reveals major differences. The significant dynamics contributing to this phenomenon are the comparatively limited number of FETO prisoners in Europe, the shaping of prison conditions within dissimilar legal and political contexts, and the more noticeable influence of international public opinion. This state of affairs offers members of the organization the opportunity to present themselves as 'political prisoners' that brings about gaining legitimacy on the international stage through victimhood narratives. In contrast to the mass remark of organizational networks in Türkiye after a coup threat that directly aims national security, members of the FETO organization in Europe mostly preserve their presence through both individual identity construction and ideological allegiance. This portrait demonstrates the apparent discrepancy in Europe's approach to combating terrorism, thereby validating Türkiye's classification of FETO as equally an ideological and a security threat.

At this point, three dynamics that are predominantly noticeable in the radicalization literature – the search for individual belonging, identity frameworks, and victimhood discourse – can be taken into consideration in terms of explaining FETO prison experiences in Europe (Moghaddam, 2005; Kruglanski et al., 2014). On the other hand, it must be noted that a critical distinction emerges when comparing Europe and Türkiye. In Europe, these three dynamics are conducive to organizational success whereas in Türkiye, the state's security policies have counteracted these processes. Indeed, as confirmed by European Parliament reports, terrorist offenders are known to maintain their ideological identities through victimhood in conditions of isolation (European Parliament, 2023). Nevertheless, Türkiye has not permitted organizational continuity by closing FETO's channels of radicalization in prisons through employing a combination of security, legal and spiritual rehabilitation measures.

6.1. Low Number of Prisoners

In comparison to the position in Türkiye, the number of FETO members in European countries is limited. Following the failed coup d'état attempt in Turkey, a significant number of organization members were imprisoned as a consequence of posing a considerable security threat. As a response to this threat, the state showed a robust reaction. In Europe, though, the number remained restricted to only a few hundred that seriously prevented the organization's opportunities for internal restructuring (European Parliament, 2023). Indeed, reports by the Council of Europe and Eurostat demonstrate that prisoners with terrorist links are issued across different prisons in small numbers in order to weakening their ability to re-organize. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that Europe considers this situation sufficient in terms of taking security measurement and ignores the ideological continuity of FETO.

The small numbers do not necessarily entail a complete severance of organizational ties. FETO members in Europe have been observed to preserve their identity and sense of belonging through communication channels with the outside world, such as family ties, lawyer visits and international human rights mechanisms. This finding aligns with Moghaddam's 'Staircase to Terrorism' model (Moghaddam, 2005), which suggests that individuals can sustain their ideological dedication even when challenged with structural impediments. In Europe, this manner in conjunction with the organization presenting itself as political prisoners, lead to a search for international legitimacy in contrast to the situation in Türkiye.

At this stage, Kruglanski's Significance Quest Theory (SQT) also provides an explanation for the FETO members in Europe. According to SQT, radicalization occurs when individuals' quests for meaning, value and belonging converge with radical ideological beliefs (Kruglanski, Bélanger & Gunaratna, 2014). As the limited number of FETO convicts in Europe hinders the formation of communal organizational networks, it brings about individuals to identify as victimized political actors and preserve their ideological commitment. Thus, it is a clear fact that prison practices in Europe reinforce ideological radicalization rather than organizational radicalization. In Türkiye, however, the large numbers involved have forced the state to foster comprehensive security strategies, thereby shutting down both the organizational and ideological channels of radicalization.

6.2. “Political Prisoner” Identity

A substantial strategy employed by FETO members in Europe is the self-definition as political prisoners. In essence, it is a critical fact that this identity creation is an attempt to conceal a security threat and it is employed as an individual defense mechanism as an organizational propaganda tool. This strategy can be particularly detected in applications to the European Court of Human Rights where numerous FETO members have adopted a narrative of themselves as individuals punished for political reasons. This has resulted in the organization's victimhood narrative being transferred into the institutional sphere and gaining traction in the international public sphere (Anadolu Agency, 2019; TRT News, 2020). Thus, the organization's constituents relinquish their status as subjects of national justice instead of becoming victimization actors that are utilized by international politics.

The concrete manifestations of this plan have been detected in a number of European countries. In 2018, the Sarajevo Court in Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected Turkey's extradition request on the grounds of "risk of politically motivated prosecution" (Reuters, 2018). This decision efficiently provided legal approval to the defendant's strategy of presenting himself as a political prisoner. Similarly, in Germany, FETO members presenting themselves as individuals "targeted for political reasons" in extradition proceedings has become a concrete part of the victimhood narrative produced by the organization in Europe (Turkish Minute, 2025a, 2025b). These examples reveal that the notion of the 'political prisoner' is not merely an individual assertion, but is also implicitly approved by judicial bodies and political decision-making mechanisms in Europe.

Members of the organization comprehend the European legal system as a "safe haven", within which court proceedings are transformed into an extension of organizational propaganda (Daily Sabah, 2023). In this regard, it must be noted that this phenomenon cannot be explained solely with reference to the pursuit of individual rights; rather, it is a deliberate strategy to gain legitimacy for FETO at the international level. By evaluating the portrait from the perspective of Kruglanski's Significance Quest Theory, it is seen that the adoption of the identity of political prisoners by FETO members can be related to their attempt to make individuals' quest for values and belonging visible in the international arena (Kruglanski, Bélanger, & Gunaratna, 2014). Nevertheless, this situation demonstrates a dichotomy in Europe's approach to the fight against terrorism, as evidenced by the protection it affords to an entity that has directly jeopardized Turkey's national security. In this regard, this protection is repeatedly justified under the umbrella of political identity. Thus, it can be indicated that the notion of 'political prisoner' is a strategic tool to bolster the ideological allegiance of FETO members in Europe and is used as a means to attain external legitimacy.

6.3. The Discourse of Victimhood

The most prominent component in the radicalization strategies of FETO members in Europe is the discourse of victimhood. Members of the organization position themselves as victims who have been unjustly penalized, subjected to political pressure and deserving international attention. Hence, they utilize their time in prison as means of individual defense. In this regard, for FETO prisoners, prisons have been turned into a platform for legitimizing organizational propaganda. Applications to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) demonstrate that this discourse has transcended individual rhetoric and reached the institutional level. Indeed, according to reports by Anadolu Agency and TRT News, some FETO members have requested measures from the ECtHR on health grounds, but the rejection of these requests has exposed the organization's systematic efforts to create victimization (Anadolu Agency, 2019; TRT News, 2020).

Despite the fact that the FETO prisoner's victimization strategy was hotly debated, the ECtHR accepted some FETO prisoners' requests. For example, in 2025, the Court deemed the prison administration's blocking of a letter written by a FETÖ prisoner named Emrah Uygun to his fiancée a violation of private and family life (Daily Sabah, 2025). Correspondingly, in the Yalçınkaya case, the unlawful ruling of a conviction based on digital evidence such as ByLock use supported the organization's narrative of victimhood on legal grounds (Greene, 2024). These examples express that the FETO members have successfully used Europe as a basis to have international audience for their victimhood strategy that indirectly created space for the organization. The European Parliament's report on radicalization in prisons can be accepted as evidence on FETO's victimhood strategy. In the report, it has noted that isolated prisoners frequently resort to victimization-themed discourses to protect their identities and connect with the outside world (European Parliament, 2023).

The prison experiences of FETO prisoners in Europe differ profoundly from the mass sample in Türkiye. This differentiation can be analyzed through three dimensions that can be listed as numerical scarcity, political prisoner identity, and victimhood discourse. First, the numerical limitation of FETO members in Europe has severely constrained their capacity for organizational restructuring. In other words, since the prison population in Europe has limited to only a few hundred, the radicalization possibility of the FETO members has weakened (European Parliament, 2023). Despite this possibility, FETO members in European prisons has continued to maintain their ideological commitment to the terrorist organization as explained within the framework of Moghaddam's (2005) staircase to terrorism model and Kruglanski's (2014) significance quest theory.

Secondly, the FETO prisoners' framing of themselves as political prisoners is actually a tactic to cover a security threat and garner international legitimacy in Europe. The rejection of Türkiye's extradition request in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the grounds of risk of political prosecution (Reuters, 2018) and the emphasis placed on political victimization by FETÖ members during extradition proceedings in Germany (Turkish Minute, 2025a, 2025b) reveals that this discourse also finds a resonance in European law. As mentioned in the Daily Sabah (2023), the organization's members' view of European law as a safe haven further reinforces this identity.

Thirdly, the victimhood discourse has become the most significant tool for FETO prisoners in Europe for maintaining ideological continuity. The ECHR's deeming the blocking of Emrah Uygun's letter a violation of the right to privacy (Daily Sabah, 2025) and the Yalçınkaya decision, which rendered convictions based on digital evidence like ByLock controversial (Greene, 2024), show that this strategy has found a basis in international law. The European Parliament's (2023) reports also clearly state that prisoners in solitary confinement resort to victimhood-based discourses to protect their identities. In preference to re-establishing organizational networks, FETÖ prisoners in Europe continue their radicalization through individual loyalty, political prisoner identity, and victimhood discourse. Thus, they develop an ideological strategy that transcends prison walls and appeals to the international public.

8. Comparative Analysis: Türkiye and European Countries

In order to provide conceptual clarity in the comparative evaluation of FETO radicalization dynamics in Türkiye and Europe, this study is based on a set of analytically defined criteria. These criteria include state-level threat perception, legal and judicial context, prison architecture and management, organizational and ideological continuity mechanisms and institutional capacity. These analytically grounded dimensions establish the foundation of the comparative analysis and structure the interpretation of empirical findings. To illustrate how each criterion operates across the two contexts, the following table provides a systematic and concise overview of their practical manifestations in Türkiye and Europe.

Table 1: Comparison of Prison-Based Radicalization in Türkiye and Europe

Comparative Criterion	Türkiye	European Countries
State-Level Threat Perception	FETO classified as a terrorist organization and direct national security threat after July 15.	FETO members often framed as political prisoners or asylum seekers; political dossier interpretation.
Legal & Judicial Framework	Security-centered legal approach; anti-terrorism legislation; restricted communication channels.	Rights-based legal structures; extradition refusals; broad access to human rights mechanisms and advocacy networks.
Prison Architecture & Management	Individualized F-Type cells; controlled communication; prevention of collective radicalization.	Dispersed, small FETO inmate groups; traditional dormitory or mixed systems; limited organizational capacity.
Organizational & Ideological Continuity	Organizational hierarchy disrupted; ideological continuity weakened through spatial isolation and spiritual programs.	Ideological continuity maintained through victimhood narratives and political prisoner identity; propaganda capacity outward-focused.
Institutional Capacity & Rehabilitation Programs	Extensive staff training, psychosocial support, spiritual guidance, structured de-radicalization programs.	Limited specialized rehabilitation frameworks; reliance on general prison procedures without counter-radicalization specificity.

Taken together, the comparative criteria summarized in the table clarify the structural dimensions. By mapping these factors from a critical perspective, it becomes possible to detect not only the institutional and legal contrasts between Türkiye and Europe, but also the dissimilar mechanisms through which these differences form prisoners' ideological paths. This analytical grounding offers the context necessary to interpret how each state's predominant security perspective informs the daily realities of FETO prisoners and ultimately forms the radicalization patterns observed in both cases.

An assessment of prison experiences in Türkiye and Europe may offer an esteemed insight into the radicalization trends of FETO members. Nevertheless, the essential element in this comparison is related to the states' perspectives on the organization. The European perspective on the Gülen movement has predominantly considered it as a political dossier, with its adherents often being titled as "political prisoners". Türkiye, contrarywise, has straight experience of the organization as a direct threat to national security following the July 15 coup attempt and has therefore decisively rebuilt its prison policies around the axes of security and rehabilitation. This divergent classification constitutes the primary causal factor in terms of shaping the radicalization dynamics in both contexts. While Europe's political framing provides structural space for FETO members to present themselves as political prisoners, Türkiye's security-oriented perspective constructs institutional barriers that prevent this strategy. Thus, it can be indicated that the meaning attributed to the organization by the state directly determines the direction of prison-based radicalization strategies.

The number of FETO members in European prisons is relatively low, with the majority being held in several locations. Thus, collective organization is found to be deficient. However, this deficit is being addressed through the utilization of a "victimhood narrative" and the adoption of a "political prisoner identity" in international press. In other words, it is apparent that organization members present themselves as victims of political oppression through a variety of international human rights mechanisms and media channels. This practice is devoted to ensure both ideological continuity within the organization and to assured support from the international public (European Parliament, 2023;

Greene, 2024). This phenomenon can be explained through the theoretical framework of Kruglanski's Significance Quest Theory. This theory indicates that when opportunities for collective organization are limited, individuals seek to fulfil their need for purpose and meaning by seeking external sources of legitimacy (Kruglanski, Bélanger & Gunaratna, 2014). The European states' tolerance of this discourse indirectly contributes to the organization's strategy. In this regard, the causal chain in the European context reflects that the limited number of inmates restricts organizational restructuring. This limitation, in turn, increases individual-level narratives of victimhood and political prisoner identity that subsequently withstand ideological loyalty. Therefore, the mechanism strengthens identity-based radicalization rather than collective or organizational radicalization.

A remarkable disparity exists between Turkey and Europe in terms of the legal status of FETO detainees. Within European nations, members of the FETO are predominantly accepted as either political refugees or political prisoners. For example, in Germany and the Netherlands, extradition requests relating to individuals with FETO connections to Türkiye have frequently been declined on the basis that they could face political persecution (Reuters, 2018; European Parliament, 2023). This approach has helped out the reinforcement of FETO's narrative of victimhood and enabled the utilization of international human rights mechanisms as a propaganda tool. For Türkiye, the July 15 coup attempt clearly revealed that the organization is not merely a religious movement, but rather a terrorist structure that poses a straight threat to the national security of the state. Thus, Turkey has implemented anti-terrorism legislature within the framework of the state of emergency regime, and has assessed FETO members in prisons. In this regard, a major divergence has developed between European law and Turkey's security-centred approach: Europe is originated on the premise of individual rights, whereas Turkey is emphasized the principle of collective security (Neumann, 2010; Silke, 2014). Consequently, while Europe's rights-based legal structure legitimizes and reinforces FETO's victimization discourse at an institutional level, Türkiye's security-centered legal method systematically restricts the organization's communication channels both inside and outside prison. Hence, the legal environment itself functions as a causal factor of radicalization paths in each context.

As mentioned, the situation in Turkey is fundamentally different within the context of national security concerns. Although the cell culture preserved organizational hierarchy and secret communication prior to 15 July, following the coup attempt, the state did not disregard the risks of this structure and prevented collective radicalization by switching to an individual cell system through Type F prisons (Council of Europe, 1996; Human Rights Watch, 2001). This spatial plan, in line with Moghaddam's (2005) staircase to terrorism model, prevented the steps leading individuals towards organizational action by ensuring that radicalization was controlled at individual level. In this regard, it can be argued that this transformation demonstrates a clear causal pattern. The collective dormitory system enabled the reproduction of organizational hierarchy and covert communication that increased the risk of radicalization. Moreover, the transition to individual F-Type cells weakened organizational socialization and it interrupted radicalization at the individual stage. Thus, spatial architecture occurs as a direct mechanism shaping the pace and form of radicalization.

This discrepancy is also apparent in the statistical data. Following the July 15 coup attempt, a significant number of FETO members were detained in Turkey, with many being imprisoned in high-security F-type prisons (Anadolu Agency, 2017). By way of contrast, the situation in Europe is extremely 'narrowed': In Germany, following 2016, more than 600 individuals with affiliations to FETO submitted asylum applications although only a limited number of these were prosecuted (European Parliament, 2023). Moreover, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a FETO member who was the subject of Turkey's extradition request was not extradited with the mention of risk of political persecution (Reuters, 2018). The figures presented reveal the extent of the threat faced by Türkiye, thereby distinguishing it from the dispersed, diminutive groups present within the European framework. Additionally, the fact that 12,600 prison staff in Türkiye have experienced training to prevent radicalization as part of an EU-supported twinning project (EEAS, 2022) shows that the state has built a resilient capacity in terms of both quantity and quality.

Türkiye has not limited itself to security measures alone. It is a clear fact that the EU-supported twinning project has assisted the training of over 12,000 prison staff for radicalization detection and risk analysis. This progress has contributed to the improvement of institutional capacity, aligning it with international

standards (EEAS, 2022; FIIAPP, 2021). Additionally, the Presidency of Religious Affairs has introduced spiritual guidance programmes within prisons, in order to counteract the false legitimacy produced by FETO through the exploitation of religion (Çakır, 2018; Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2017). When these two maneuvers – institutional capacity and spiritual rehabilitation – are taken into account together, it is seen that Türkiye's prison policy serves not only to penalize, but also to rehabilitate and reconstruct social peace. Thus, Türkiye shows a distinct causal pattern that high prisoner density after July 15 led to elevated security risks. This prompted Türkiye to invest heavily in institutional capacity-building such as staff training, F-Type architectural design, communication restrictions and religious guidance programs. These maneuvers collectively suppressed both organizational and ideological radicalization in prisons.

Subsequently, while the radicalization of FETO members in Europe is grounded on outward propaganda activities through ideological continuity and victimhood rhetoric, Türkiye's radicalization policy has been encompassed through institutional capacity, a cell system, and spiritual guidance. This difference underlines Türkiye's significant state reflexes and resolute determination in relation to national security challenges. While Europe has provided a platform for the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization by turning a blind eye policy to the organization, Türkiye has established order in prisons and protected national security with effective policies. By taking all of these points into account, the findings reveal that Europe's pattern of low inmate numbers, political framing, and rights-based legal structures creates an environment that conducive to identity-centered radicalization. Nevertheless, Türkiye's security-oriented approach and strong institutional capacity systematically restrict both organizational and ideological aspects of radicalization. This difference emphasizes how state policy frameworks function as structural elements of prison-based radicalization patterns.

9. Conclusion

Within the framework of radicalization process of terrorist organizations, prisons stand out in the security strategies as critical social spaces where ideological identities are reproduced and organizational allegiance is reinforced. This study aims to examine radicalization processes in prisons using the example of FETO by using different experiences in Türkiye and Europe from a comparative perspective.

In the European context, it has been observed that the small number of FETO prisoners has limited organizational restructuring. On the other hand, ideological allegiances at the individual level have continued to be used through the political prisoner identity and victimhood discourse. Europe's rights-based approach and the opportunities provided by international mechanisms have increased the organization's propaganda capacity at international level. Thus, even if the organization could not carry out a mass restructuring in the prison environment, it continued to reach messages to the outside world and seek legitimacy.

In Türkiye, conversely, the portrait is different. Although the cell culture prior to July 15 allowed for the continuation of organizational solidarity, following the coup attempt, the state's strong security reflex response led to the prevalent use of type F prisons in order to eliminate the basis for organizational solidarity. Furthermore, radicalization has been controlled through communication restrictions, psychosocial support programs, and the spiritual guidance programs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in addition to the classical security measures. Counter measures such as individual rehabilitation and the prevention of religious exploitation against FETO provided to the prisoners as de-radicalization programs. This comprehensive program demonstrates that Türkiye has not only developed a prison system against the radicalization of prisoners but also aims to break the ideological continuity of a terrorist structure that threatens national security.

One of the most critical findings of the study is that states' security policies in terms of counter measures against radicalization strategies directly affect radicalization processes. Europe's approach to FETO has largely catalogued its members as political prisoners that has enabled the organization to sustain its existence through a narrative of victimhood. Türkiye, however, has viewed the organization as a threat to its national security and has turned prisons into a strategic instrument not only for neutralizing this threat but also for de-radicalization programs. This difference in approach has also significantly affected the strategies of FETO prisoners in prisons.

Within the light of these analyses, it is a clear fact that prison-based radicalization necessitates a multidimensional policy approach grounded simultaneously in security, rehabilitation, and international cooperation. In parallel with this, strengthening prison rehabilitation programs must be accepted as a fundamental necessity. Psychological therapy, planned social reintegration trainings, and religious support mechanisms are effective elements that diminish prisoners' dependency on organizational narratives and offer alternative identity bases that are based on individual resilience instead of group loyalty. Such programs are particularly fundamental for organizations that manipulates religious rhetoric since they help dismantle the ideological foundations which used to legitimize collective allegiance inside prisons.

Another policy implication focuses on the need for improved cooperation among institutions that operate in the criminal justice and correctional system. In this sense, as it is argued, radicalization is not a phenomenon that can be analyzed solely by prison administrations and it requires systematic collaboration among correctional authorities, law enforcement units, judicial bodies, and religious institutions. Within this framework, coordinated interventions, information sharing, and unified monitoring mechanisms can ensure that radicalization risks are detected early in order to prevent extremist actors from exploiting institutional blind spots.

Concerning the transnational nature of FETO and similar organizations, international cooperation is another crucial policy priority that must be taken into account. The divergent legal and political approaches observed between Türkiye and various European countries demonstrate that fragmented responses open the doors of opportunities for extremist groups to exploit cross-border inconsistencies. Thus, establishing shared monitoring practices, harmonized procedural standards, and strengthened channels for information exchange would be a solution in terms of reducing the mobility of propaganda, limiting the strategic use of asylum systems, and addressing the cross-jurisdictional complexities of prison-based radicalization.

Apart from this, the standardization of risk assessment tools is a critical point that must be evaluated as an important recommendation for policymakers. The use of internationally recognized frameworks to analyze radicalization indicators would provide authorities to distinguish between high-risk individuals and those whose radical tendencies remain at an early stage. At this point, this would allow for tailored interventions that match the specific radicalization profile of each prisoner and help prevent the escalation of extremist behavior inside prisons.

Continuous training for prison personnel is a crucial element for policy makers against radicalization strategies in prisons. Radicalization often shows itself through subtle behavioral cues and shifts in interpersonal interactions in addition to coded communication patterns that may not be immediately recognizable to untrained staff. Hence, regular, specialized training programs would provide officers the essential skills in order to detect early signs of extremism for intervening appropriately and managing crisis situations more effectively. Improving institutional capacity in this manner directly provides to limit the organizational visibility and influence of terrorist structures within correctional environments.

Finally, long-term prevention demands attention to the post-release phase. Many radicalized individuals continue to preserve ideological commitment after leaving prison, particularly when reintegration mechanisms are weak. For dealing with this problematic issue, establishing structured follow-up programs, community-based monitoring, and reintegration support systems can mitigate the risk of re-engagement with extremist networks. These measures safeguard that deradicalization efforts inside prison are sustained beyond release and contribute to broader societal resilience against extremist ideologies.

In conclusion, this study shows the radicalization strategies of FETO members in prisons and emphasizes the decisive role of state policies that shape these dynamics. Türkiye's firm and multidimensional approach that combines security measures, institutional capacity-building, and rehabilitation mechanisms in one framework has directly restricted both ideological and organizational continuity. Different from Türkiye, Europe's rights-based and politically shaped perspective has brought about an environment that is more permissive to identity-centered radicalization and external propaganda strategies. These divergent trajectories underline that prison radicalization cannot be evaluated solely as an internal security issue. Instead, it necessitates integrated policy responses created

with international cooperation, standardized risk assessment tools, coordinated institutional action, enhanced staff training, and comprehensive rehabilitation frameworks. Accordingly, the findings of this study reassert that prison radicalization is a complex and transnational phenomenon that requires holistic strategies based on both security governance and evidence-rooted correctional policy.

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Derleme Makele

The Prison Radicalization Strategies of Feto Prisoners: A Comparison Between Türkiye And Europe

FETÖ Mahkûmlarının Cezaevlerinde Radikalleşme Stratejileri: Türkiye Ve Avrupa Karşılaştırması

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışma, Fetullahçı Terör Örgütü (FETÖ) mahkûmlarının cezaevlerindeki radikalleşme stratejilerini Türkiye ve Avrupa bağlamında karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektedir. Araştırma, cezaevlerinin yalnızca bir cezalandırma mekânı değil, aynı zamanda ideolojik kimliklerin yeniden üretildiği ve örgütsel bağlılıkların sürdürüldüğü kritik toplumsal alanlar olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Çalışmanın temel özgün katkısı, literatürde büyük ölçüde ihmal edilmiş olan cezaevi temelli radikalleşme olgusunu FETÖ örneği üzerinden çok boyutlu bir analitik çerçeveye ele almasıdır. Önceki araştırmalar örgütün uluslararası ağları, eğitim yapıları veya siyasi etkisine odaklanırken, bu çalışma kapalı kurumlarda radikalleşmenin nasıl sürdürüldüğünü açıklayan sistematik bir değerlendirme sunmaktadır.

Araştırma, 15 Temmuz 2016 darbe girişimi sonrası döneme odaklanmakta ve Türkiye ile Almanya, Hollanda ve Bosna-Hersek gibi seçilmiş Avrupa ülkelerindeki FETÖ mahkûmlarını karşılaştırmalı biçimde ele almaktadır. Nitel içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılarak resmi raporlar, yargı kararları ve medya belgeleri incelenmiş; örgütün cezaevlerinde radikalleşmeyi nasıl sürdürdüğü tematik kodlama yoluyla değerlendirilmiştir. Mahkûmlarla doğrudan görüşme yapılmaması yöntemin bir sınırlılığı olmakla birlikte, ikincil veriye dayalı analiz farklı siyasal ve hukuksal bağlamların karşılaştırılmasına olanak tanımıştır. Analiz Moghaddam'ın Terörizme Giden Merdiven Modeli ve Kruglanski'nin Anlam Arayışı Kuramı çerçevesinde yürütülmüş; adalet algısı, mağduriyet söylemi ve anlam arayışı kavramları radikalleşme sürecinin temel göstergeleri olarak kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular, Türkiye ve Avrupa bağlamları arasında belirgin bir yapısal ayrışma olduğunu göstermektedir. Avrupa'da FETÖ mahkûmlarının sayısının düşük olması örgütsel yeniden yapılanmayı sınırlamakta; buna karşın "siyasi mahkûm" kimliği ve mağduriyet söylemi üzerinden bireysel düzeyde ideolojik radikalleşme devam etmektedir. Avrupa'nın hak temelli hukuk sistemi ve insan hakları mekanizmaları bu söylemin uluslararası düzeyde meşrulaşmasına imkân tanımaktadır. Buna karşılık Türkiye'de 15 Temmuz sonrasında uygulanan çok katmanlı güvenlik yaklaşımı —F tipi yüksek güvenliğin cezaevlerinin yaygınlaştırılması, sıkı iletişim kısıtlamaları, psikososyal destek hizmetleri ve Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın manevi rehberlik programları— örgütsel hiyerarşiyi ve ideolojik yeniden üretimi önemli ölçüde zayıflatmıştır. Avrupa Birliği destekli projeler kapsamında yaklaşık 12.600 cezaevi personelinin radikalleşme tespiti ve önlenmesi konusunda eğitilmiş olması, Türkiye'nin kurumsal kapasitesini uluslararası standartlara uygun biçimde güçlendirdiğini göstermektedir.

Genel olarak çalışma, cezaevi radikalleşmesinin tek boyutlu bir güvenlik sorunu olarak değil, devlet politikaları, hukuki çerçeveler, kurumsal yapı ve ideolojik anlatıların etkileşimiyle şekillenen çok katmanlı bir olgu olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı analiz, Avrupa'nın hak temelli

yaklaşımının FETÖ'nün mağduriyet söylemini dış dünyaya taşımasına imkân verdiğini; Türkiye'nin ise güvenlik ve rehabilitasyon politikalarını bütünleştirerek örgütsel radikalleşmeyi etkin biçimde sınırlandırdığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, cezaevi radikalleşmesini uluslararası güvenlik ve terörle mücadele bağlamlarında ele alan özgün bir çerçeve sunarak hem akademik literatüre hem de politika yapım süreçlerine önemli katkılar sağlamaktadır.