

CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS IN TURKEY

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The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi=AKP) has been in power in Turkey in the last 14 years and it has already made big steps forwards in order to legitimize the establishment of an Islamic State in Turkey. The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1924 by Kemal Atatürk and until 1990's, Kemalism has been the state ideology of modern Turkey.

The AKP originated from the religious movement, started by the National Order Party (MNP) of Necmettin Erbakan, who broke apart from the traditional right wing Justice Party (AP) in 1970 and started a separate political party in order to represent independently the political Islamism in Turkey. Erbakan's political movement continued under various parties, which succeeded each other after the proscription of the previous one: National Order Party (1970-1981), National Salvation Party (1983-1998), Welfare Party (1983-1998), Virtue Party (1997-2001), Prosperity Party (2001-today). Those, who did not want to join the Prosperity Party, established the AKP on 14 August 2001 and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the chairperson between 2003 and 2014. The AKP won 34.28% of the votes in the general elections in 2002, 46.58% in 2007 and 49.83% in 2011. In June 2015, the AKP won 40.89% of the votes under its new chairperson Ahmet Davutoğlu, who could increase the percentage in November 2015 up to 49.50%. Davutoğlu was previously the Foreign Minister in Erdoğan's cabinet and he initiated the so-called "Zero-problem with the neighbours" policy, which proved later to be an enemy maker policy for Turkey.

The Islamic religious communities have been very active since 1973 in Turkey and the most influential one of them was Fethullah Gülen's movement. Gülen supported Erdoğan's AKP, starting from the general elections of 1994 until 2009. During the power of the AKP, the state apparatus was not anymore supporting the Kemalist principles of the founder of the Republic of Turkey. It was already under the influence of a Turkish-Islam synthesis, which could be defined as a kind of fascism with Turkish flavour. It is not only anti-communist and anti-democratic, but also anti-humanist and anti-enlightenment. The ideology of the AKP is oppressive and against the classic liberalism in the sense of political rights and freedoms.

After the military regime of 1980, the Turkish state establishment did not disturb the so-called "moderate" religious movement of Gülen, organized as companies, associations and foundations. The security bureaucracy of the Turkish State, like the Ministry of National Education and the Directorate of Religious Affairs were already indoctrinated with the Turkish-Islam synthesis, as well as the Intelligence Services (MIT), the police and

the army. It is not possible to find Kemalist persons anymore, working in the Ministries of National Education or Internal Affairs or among the Security Bureaucracy.

Starting with the military ultimatum on 28 February 1997, the political Islam in Turkey took a neo-liberal course, which brought Turkey to participate in the Great Near East Project of the USA, to start relations with the EU, to implement the programme of the IMF and to privatize the big state enterprises. The big monopolies of Turkey have accumulated a lot of capital during the power of the AKP and they bought almost all of the state properties and benefited from extraordinary subsidies.

According to a survey, done by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, published at the beginning of 2013, Turkey is one of the countries at the top of the list with unequal division of national income. The division of national income is unjust and unequal. 95% of the households live below the poverty line (3.200 TL) and 60% live below the limit of hunger (1.200-1.000 TL). Out of 19.7 million families, the richest 100 were getting 30% of the national income with their wealth of 216 billion dollars. The income of the richest 10% of the population in Turkey is 12.6 times more than the 10% of the poorest population. According to the numbers from 2015, Turkey is the fifth OECD country after Mexico, Chile, USA and Israel and the first in Europe.

According to the study of Research Institute on Turkey, which was based on the Global Wealth Report of the Credit Suisse, the richest 1% of the population in Turkey, used to get 39.4% in 2002, but they got 54.3% in 2014. The remaining 99% got in 2002 60.6% of the total wealth, reduced to 45.7% in 2014. Erdoğan's family, alone, has accumulated in the last 10 year a wealth of 128 billion dollars, which makes 16% of the national income.

The Gülen Movement had 88 foundations, 20 associations, 128 private schools, 218 companies and approximately 500 boarding houses in Turkey. It was also well organized in the mass media with 17 newspapers and magazines, several TV and radio stations. The Gülen imperium, which is supposed to have the support of the CIA, has in 92 countries, approximately 500 elementary and secondary schools and 6 universities, plus many education and language centres. The movement educate more than 100.000 persons worldwide. The schools, which operate in the foreign countries, are all private and enroll the children of the middle and the upper classes.

In November 2013, Erdoğan decided to break his cooperation with the Gülen Movement and get the whole power in his own hand in Turkey. Therefore he started by preparing a bill for the closure of the preparatory classes for the universities. This was a big challenge for his long-time collaborator, the Gülen Movement, which was recruiting young members

to the movement through these preparatory classes for the universities. The "Zaman" daily newspaper of the Gülen Movement reacted strongly against this decision of the AKP government by saying that this was not done even during the Kemalist military regimes in Turkey. This was a big economic and political blow to the Gülen community, because 60% of all the preparatory classes (4.000 of them registered, 2.000 - 5.000 unregistered) belonged to Gülen Movement and 80% of the publishing materials for the preparatory classes.

Gülen Movement reacted on 17 December 2013 by making some operations, where 80 persons were detained and among them was an Iranian businessman, Rıza Sarraf, who sold the Iranian petrol during the years of embargo and gave the money back to his partner in Iran in gold. The mass media was given some recorded telephone conversations about the corruption of four cabinet ministers, who were bribed by Sarraf. This ended up with their resignation on 24 December, because the sons of Zafer Çağlayan, Muammer Güler, Erdoğan Bayraktar were involved. During the police operations, 4.5 million dollars were found, hidden in shoe-boxes in the house of the director of Halk Bank and a money-counting machine was found at the bedroom of Minister Güler's son! Erdoğan Bayraktar told to the press that what he had done was according to the orders of Premier Minister Erdoğan! But he negated this statement later. On 25 December 2013, a second operation for the arrest of 30 suspected persons for money laundering could not be realized, because the security forces did not implement the order of the state attorney. From that day on, the AKP started to restructure the legal system in Turkey with its own supporters.

Later, the events on 17 and 25 December 2013 were seen as a civil coup d'Etat of Erdoğan, whereas the accused ministers should have been before court, in order to have a clarification, if they did something against the law or not, but the AKP stopped the legal procedure!

In January 2014, the MIT officers did not allow the state attorney to search lorries carrying guns and ammunition for the ISIL. The Minister for Internal Affairs stated on a TV programme that during 35 days, after the incident on 17 December, 5,000 policemen and many state attorneys were appointed to other posts. On 25 February 2014, another voice-recording was popular on the social media and Youtube which was recorded on 17 December 2013. The PM Erdoğan was informing his son, Bilal, about the police operation at the homes of the sons of some ministers and he told his son to get rid of the money, hidden at their own home. Bilal Erdoğan has been accused of involvement in illegal oil smuggling in Syria and Iraq.

After the corruption scandals were made public, Erdoğan decided to abolish the court decisions on Ergenekon case and the similar ones, which made a big blow on the strength and authority of the Turkish Army. Now

the Army was a reliable partner of Erdoğan, who wanted to avoid his cornered position.

The AKP was able to collect 44% of the votes in the local elections on 30 March 2014 and Erdoğan declared war on the Gülen Movement, which he defined as a "parallel state within the Turkish state." On 12 June 2015, 37 judges and attorneys were expelled from their professions.

Erdoğan started also a revenge attack on the Kurdish cities and people in South-Eastern provinces, where his party could not win, but the Democratic Party of the Peoples (HDP) was very successful. Erdoğan broke the alliance with the Kurdish movement, which costed 40.000 lives in 35 years and 6.000 people were killed only in 8 months time!

According to a report, prepared by the TU for Education Labourers (Eğitim-Sen), when the AKP came to power in 2002, the number of students attending 450 Imam Hatip schools were 71,100. In the school year 2014-2015, the number of the Imam Hatip Schools was 1,017 with an increase of 90% to almost 750,000 children, aged between 10 and 18, or 9% of all students. (Hürriyet, 13 June 2015) Government officials, many of them former Imam Hatip pupils themselves, have since argued that the schools' revival responds to demand by Muslim families, who felt discriminated against after 1997.

The Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs, which employs 120.000 personnel, in a total of 84,684 mosques (emlakwebtv.com, 18 June 2015), had a budget of more than 3 billion Euros (6.5 billion TL) for 2016 and the whole amount, spent on religious activities between 2006 and 2015 makes a total of approx. 12 billion Euros. (haber.sol.org.tr, 27 January 2016) In the summer of 2015, more than 3 million children (4-6 year-olds included) went to Koran courses, organized in 60.000 mosques. More than 1 million visited other places than mosques for Koran education. 929 persons and many other associations and foundations organized 16.958 Koran courses in 2013-14. (Birgün newspaper, 31 March 2016)

In Turkey, there are 107,000 doctors and 1,250 hospitals, whereas there are 122,000 imams and almost 85,000 mosques. Every year only 9,000 doctors graduate, whereas there is a need of 105,000 doctors more. On the other hand, there are 122,000 imams and every year 60,000 imams graduate and they are in surplus. (Yılmaz Özdil, Sözcü newspaper, 8 January 2015)

The AKP is very happy with the majority of the media, including some 32 newspapers and 22 television channels, using them in order to dominate the news coverage and attack on opposition parties.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was forced to announce on 5 May 2016 that he was resigning as head of the ruling AKP and giving up the premiership. President Erdogan continued to concentrate the whole power of the state in his own hands and obedience to him within the AKP was openly praised as a virtue and required as a duty.

On the other hand, the country faced now serious challenges on the security and economic fronts. Turkey failed to protect the city of Kilis on the border with Syria, where ISIS attacks with missiles that took lives of 21 people, including eight Syrian refugees, and wounded scores of others. Many buildings have been devastated. One columnist wrote that Kilis is a clear testimony to Turkey's powerlessness in its ambition to be recognized as a regional power.

Erdogan and his party AKP are among the major actors in the ordeal that Syria has been going through since 2011, alongside with Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Erdoğan strives to assume the leadership of the Sunni masses of the Middle East and return to Turkey the glory of its Ottoman past. This is one of the reasons why the AKP government supported ISIL until very recently and continue to support other Islamist groups fighting against the Assad regime in Syria, where he flamed the hatred of war between the Sunni and the Alevi. The Alevites are a minority denomination in Islam and they are closer to the Shia than the Sunni. The AKP does not have good relationship with the Alevites in Turkey. Another problem for the AKP government is the formation of the Kurdish cantons on the Syrian border. The USA asked Turkey to cleanse the line Cerablus-Azez from the ISIL, but Erdoğan does not want that the Syrian Kurds would put these areas under their control. Russia and Syria prefer the Kurdish authority rather than the ISIL.

The relationship between Turkey and Russia have deteriorated significantly since 24 November 2015, when a Turkish fighter jet shot down a Russian warplane in Syria. Russia declared economic sanctions against Turkey and the trade between the two countries contracted 25% in 2015. Since the beginning of 2016, Russia has put restrictions on the supplies of vegetables, fruits and other goods from Turkey and these restrictions included also a ban on hiring of Turkish citizens. It is estimated that the embargo could cost the Turkish economy more than 3 billion dollars.

Erdoğan does not act as an independent President, but continue to govern the AKP as its leader, getting involved in government affairs and breaching the Constitution, which is punishable with life-long imprisonment. He should have cut his relationship with his AKP on the day he was elected as President. On the contrary, he succeeded the resignation of the Premier Minister, who won the elections with 23 million votes. Erdogan intervened also the internal party affairs of the oppositional National Movement Party

(MHP) in order to secure the continuation of the party's support for his power.

The new chairperson of the AKP, Binali Yıldırım, who would be the Prime Minister of Turkey, is a well-known close friend of Erdoğan and one of the founders of the AKP in 2001. He was appointed to the Ministry of Transport in 2002 and served the longest term in the history of Turkey at that post. During his term of office, a lot of corruption allegations were published in the media and many state enterprises were sold cheaply under the guise of privatization. Yıldırım's family owns 17 companies, 28 cargo-ships and 2 super-yachts, but others allege that the real number of ships are higher than this. Now that Erdoğan has a puppet Prime Minister, he would try to get rid of the MP's of the Democratic Party of the Peoples (HDP) in the Turkish Grand National Assembly by removing their immunity, not those from his own party, AKP. The Republican People's Party (CHP) has lost its Kemalist ideology on one hand and takes a nationalist position in the Kurdish question like the MHP. Erdoğan is now a monarch!