

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8109>



Turkey

Schrodinger's Fascism and The Brown Feast

- IV Online magazine - 2023 - IV580 - May 2023 -

Publication date: Sunday 28 May 2023

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Schrodinger's infamous thought experiment exemplifies the mysterious nature of quantum mechanics through a cat: it is neither dead, nor alive, but somehow a combination of both in varying degrees. Turkish and Kurdish people are in a similar psyche. In one hand, thinking everything is hunky dory, the opposition amassed enough power to get rid of Erdogan's government through elections. On the other hand, they feel they're seconds away from Kristallnacht. This borderline bi-polar attitude is a sign of the neo-fascist moment we're going through all around the globe. In Turkish context, this started as an academic debate in early 2010s, and repeated through Gezi uprising and its aftermath, about whether the country should be classified as a "fascist" dictatorship or a populist, competitive autocracy. One decade and a self-fulfilling prophecy later, we're left with a country ruled by an alliance of the most rabid, warring, slave-driving, extractive faction of the capitalist class and petit bourgeoisie, and its echoes in the capitalist state.

This trend started with war in Syria, crystallized in political bombings killing our comrades, and cemented after a self-coup succeeding a failed military-coup. It found its perfect expression in a regime where capitalists and their state execute their overt crimes under day light and in plain sight. Analysing the ongoing elections suffers from the same bipolar fate.

In one hand, there is apparent voting fraud and voter suppression in an election made under an authoritarian regime right after a massive earthquake. It seems voting irregularities could swing vote shares 2-3% in each direction (5%!). It would be disrespectful to thousands of political activists who organize a campaign to become electoral observers against this ongoing fraud not to mention them. They scream at the top of their lungs about the crimes they're witnessing while being physically attacked – especially out of big cities – and call for a recount. In such circumstances it is impossible to use the voting data as given, and construct a proper Marxist analysis. Despite the global far-right, as a boy who cried wolf, keep using similar concerns as a main talking point. These obviously lead to a mass demoralization in the ranks of the opposition. This was exemplified by a high-schooler committing suicide in Istanbul subway with a note stating she couldn't survive under this misogyny and poverty, and elections were her last hope.

On the other hand, the promises by the main opposition of a rose garden without thorns didn't materialize. Their material analysis of the Turkish society and the state were unfounded, and their polls showing Kilicdaroglu leading Erdogan by a 52+% margin were unfounded. Their ship has holes on the main body and is slowly sinking. In an act of despair, at the moment, they are negotiating with the Devil (far-right nationalists having 5.3% of the presidential votes and enjoying the king-maker statue), while pleading to Kurdish & Turkish socialists to come to their rescue with their organizational capacity - especially in the ballot box. I will try to summarize the fallout of the parliamentary election, and the first round of the presidential election leading to runoff, and the actors in both sides in a few points.

First, the ruling party (now "party-state") of AKP has always been an intra- and inter-class coalition materially, politically, and in cadres of the state bureaucracy. Although having a vague islamist ideology and agenda, it has always been a pragmatic and plastic force. The 2001 economic crisis led to the demise of the previous ruling coalition of center-left (DSP, predecessor of main opposition CHP), center-right (ANAP), and far-right (MHP), despite erecting the spine of neoliberal orthodoxy (to be used by AKP) to mitigate the crisis. AKP, splintered from the traditional islamist-nationalist Refah party, rode the wave of the small-business owners' protests to get the 68% of the parliamentary seats despite having 34% of the votes in Nov. '02. It had the following coalition actors 2002 - early 2010s: conservative small and large business owners seeking to extract as much as possible from the peoples and nature of Anatolia via harsh labor discipline (monopolization of all human interactions), pro-EU large business owners

(both conservative and secular), pro-EU liberals, remnants of center-right parties, and the cadres of the pro-US islamist cabal of Fethullah Gulen in the state bureaucracy (especially in security apparatus). This coalition used the economic boom of the neoliberal-orthodoxy erected by the previous coalition, the political aspirations of the masses (Turks equating EU with freedom and prosperity, Kurds demanding peace and collective rights), as well as the support of both EU and the US to leverage against the opposition and to purge the Turkish judiciary, bureaucracy from their rivals (nationalist, pro-Eurasian, secular). Meanwhile, they purged the organized labor via local networks of gangs and religious cults. This coalition came to a halt when EU aspirations failed, and the crisis of 2008 burst the bubble of neoliberal orthodoxy. This led the core of AKP to have its interests diverge from the rest, and seek a material basis elsewhere: extractivism, construction bubble (both condo gentrification and Herrenvolk autobahn infrastructure), arms manufacturing (aggressive foreign policy). When material interests diverged West leaning small & large business owners (both conservative and secular) and their liberals drifted one by one. Slow erasure of coalition and its base became more apparent by 2013 Gezi uprising, 2013 corruption trials (Gulenists), 2015 elections & dissolution of Kurdish peace process and 2016 coup attempt (Gulenists).

Second, the 2014 Kobane protests of Kurds and 2015 elections (Erdogan lost and Left-Kurdish alliance became 3rd biggest party) triggered a fault line in the warring capitalists and state, and formed an unholy political alliance in the far-right: gang of August 10 (as in gang of December 10 of Louis Bonaparte in 18 Brumaire). AKP now allying hitherto purged nationalists (different factions of Kemalist, pro-Eurasian, etc), far-right parties of MHP, and Hudapar; a fascist coalition giving life buoy to Erdogan, but also forcing him to surrender. The latter, aka Kurdish Hezbollah, not related to the one on Lebanon, is rather known as state's terror machine against Kurds in 1990s and holds a place in collective memory for their carnage against Kurds, women & children. This coalition kept Turkey and its ruling classes active in all foreign wars: de-facto invasion of Rojava and Northern Iraq, proxy wars in Libya, Caucasus, West Africa, Ethiopia and Sudan, a booming war industry (e.g, drones in Ukraine), aggressive oil drilling in Eastern Mediterranean and Black sea, arms & drug smuggling via affiliated mafia. Inside, this faction ensured the worst form of labor discipline: closed-circuit factories during Covid, replacing China in supply-chain crisis by currency manipulation and refugee exploitation (especially in labor intensive textile), and making sure it runs smoothly by surveilling a worker's each minute through a network of gangs and religious cults ('tariqat'). Making sure Kurdish municipalities are not governed by elected officials via regular purges. When this coalition led to 70% official (200% unofficial) inflation and the worst cost-of-living crisis since 1915s, it triggered a massive backlash in youth movement in big cities, the biggest strike-wave (both official and wildcat) since 1980s, and the biggest surge of socialist left since the 1990s. They didn't stick as Covid was a good cover, and the main opposition coalition had other plans.

Third, a coalition formed by CHP (Kemalist & social-liberal), Iyip (a splinter from far-right with center-right undertones), and Saadet (ex-Refah, islamist-nationalist with social undertones). They found a narrow window in 2019 local elections as the currency crisis ongoing since 2017 led to anger in populace in the big cities, and both the pull of this coalition within security bureaucracy and the hard-work of grass-roots electoral observants (OyVeOtesi) led to fairly less fraud comparing to 2018 election that was hacked. Erdogan's loss in Istanbul triggered renewal of election, and lost with an even higher margin. Through this, more Western leaning cadres dissociated from AKP, and two parties DEVA (liberal islam) & Gelecek came, and with the addition of another traditional center-right party (Democrat) they formed the notorious Table of Six (TOS). Instead of taking the initiative and keeping this political momentum TOS passively banked on slow erasure of party-state's electorate due to economic crisis. This erasure was slower in periphery comparing to the countryside (AKP strongholds) as the party-state was able to bribe the electorate through "election economy", and small concessions as bumping minimum wage. The party-state took its political lesson from 2019 election to make sure ongoing economical crisis didn't lead to mass unemployment, keeping voters at bay. On the ideological front, it consolidated its base through nationalist gestures such as opening Hagia Sophia as a mosque, and extravagant displays of military might with a message of "you can be hungry for a day, but you can't afford to lose your country". This could be countered by mass politics, but TOS sabotaged youth and labor movement's protests and direct-action, prescribing them to wait. Told them "they're going anyway" not to spook the capital & security apparatus cadres who can ensure a smooth transition (e.g, no electoral fraud). But that obviously failed, because the party-state was able to consolidate the security bureaucracy. They openly displayed how high the stakes are for both the TOS and Turkish/Kurdish left by soldiers randomly firing real bullets and gas

Schrodinger's Fascism and The Brown Feast

cannisters towards empty streets in the Kurdish cities. As Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair described the protests of Seattle 1999, a generation can surprise and overwhelm the capitalist state only once with the same tactics. State developed new methods for electoral fraud, especially in the countryside and Earth-quake hit area, in order not to be overwhelmed by grass-roots organizations such as OyVeOtesi again. Meanwhile TOS totally failed in electoral security. Now they have no option but to dismiss fraud allegations as 'conspiracy theory' in order to keep electoral turn-out stable while appealing to the same grass-roots organizers (whom they dismissed) to defend the ballots. At the same time, TOS has to cut a deal with the newly emerging (even more!) far-right forces (Ata coalition, Zafer party, Sinan Ogan and Umit Ozdag). These new forces have been instrumental for the party-state at deflecting the blame and anger in political crises triggered by Covid, cost-of-living, and lastly the earthquake towards the blameless refugees. They organized multiple pogroms with the help of the party-state's troll army.

To sum up, Turkish democracy is in peril, more so than ever. All the different hues of brown got the highest percentage of the votes in their history. This brown feast is served both to those in power and in opposition. It's as if the splintered far-right in Turkey is multiplying by mitosis cell division. The wait and see approach of TOS failed dramatically. Second round of presidential elections is precarious. Kilicdaroglu has to win, or at least not to lose with a small margin. But he is already in a rock (fascist coalition of AKP) and the hard place (fascist coalition of ATA). The Turkish and Kurdish left is holding their nose for now.

23 May 2023

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.