

Turkey: A coalition government adrift

Via [Sin Permiso](#)

A former Turkish mafia boss, Sedat Peker, who was involved in right-wing paramilitary activities since his youth, has suddenly become the focal point of political life in Turkey and a thorn in the flesh of the ruling coalition. His YouTube channel is breaking all records: he announces in advance what his next video will be about, and his videos are awaited by a captive audience, mesmerized by revelations about the corruption of politicians as well as the upper echelons of the bureaucracy.

For those who have been following Turkish politics for years, there is nothing new or that they did not know, but for the younger generation, who have grown up under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's regime, such revelations are startling. Under Erdoğan's regime, the exemplary role model proposed to the younger generation is that of a nationalist-Islamist-xenophobic-mafioso fighting infidels and Kurds, a theme that is repeated over and over again in the media controlled by Erdoğan and his cronies.

So who is the target of Peker's video rants? The list goes from top to bottom. Ministers, police chiefs, members of parliament, the judiciary and the press, former and current; former members of the special forces, all involved in shady business, manipulation of investigations, prosecutions and sentences, who torture in police stations, assassinate opposition leaders; and are responsible for extortion, rape and murder. The list goes on.

Just as an example, let me mention some of the revelations.

*Erdoğan's henchmen provided millions of dollars as an

unsecured loan to the leader of a financial capital group, which allowed him to buy opposition media channels, including the largest daily newspaper. To date, not a penny has been paid back and no one is asking for it.

*A former Interior Minister participated in the takeover of a marina on the Aegean coast at the invitation of an Azerbaijani businessman. He was accused of being a member of the "terrorist" Gülen movement, but in exchange for handing over the marina complex he received a short sentence and was released.

*The current Interior Ministry played an important role in persuading the representative of the Utah-based Mormon equity fund to transfer shares he held in one of its major holding companies to a lawyer acting as a front man for another group. The lawyer is a highly decorated former special forces colonel who played a key role in the capture of Kurdish political prisoner Abdullah Öcalan in 1999.

* Former special forces officers and mafia hitmen were involved in the murder of a well-known Turkish Cypriot investigative journalist. He was investigating an illegal excavation in one of the monasteries in Cyprus, where some valuable objects seized by the officers had been buried, waiting to be recovered at the right time.

In fact, this kind of behavior has been commonplace in Turkish capitalism since its inception in the early 20th century. Its primitive accumulation was facilitated by the massacre and expropriation of the Christian population. Later, in the first period of the Republican era, a new Turkish capitalist class emerged with the help of funds usurped from the state. Former military and state bureaucrats became "entrepreneurs", especially after the establishment of the armed forces mutual assistance fund in the early 1960s.

Expiration date

So what's new? Simply put, the expiration date of Erdogan's ruling coalition has passed.

His main coalition partner, the MHP (Nationalist Action Party, the infamous Grey Wolves), are in crisis. Its leader is very old and unable to make a meaningful contribution. He can barely walk to the podium to proclaim his fierce but rancorous messages against the opposition every Tuesday during the televised parliamentary group meeting. The formation of the 'Good Party' dealt a severe blow to the MHP, and now the ruling coalition plans to lower the threshold for parliamentary representation to five percent of the total votes cast, cutting the current 10 percent, designed to prevent the Kurdish opposition from winning seats. But the MHP may not be able to overcome that threshold either.

Erdogan's own AKP (Justice and Development Party) is also in crisis. The dogmatic pursuit of a peculiar monetary policy, implemented by his son-in-law and his team of young officials, has been a disaster. The Central Bank's accumulated foreign exchange reserves of \$128 billion were squandered in a vain attempt to support the exchange rate. The Finance Minister and Central Bank managers were quickly replaced one after another and interest rates were raised, but the Turkish lira is still collapsing.

The massive public infrastructure investments of Erdoğan's early years, in Turkish parlance 'cement for votes', are barely maintained through 'build-operate-transfer' (BOT) schemes, which actually double or even triple the cost in the long run. Highways, bridges, rail depots and airports built under BOT do not generate the necessary traffic and revenue, so guaranteed payments to construction and management companies are draining the state coffers.

Corporate and business tax revenues are falling despite several attempts to write off penalties and interest on unpaid taxes. Easy international credit is coming to an end, and

worsening international relations with the United States, the European Union and Russia have also put the brakes on the “borrow and spend” policy (not to mention the “hope for the best” attitude). Turkey can barely import the Covid vaccines it needs, while international tourism revenues are falling due to the inability to contain the pandemic.

The foreign adventures, along with the military spending involved, are also choking the economy. The financial support received from the Gulf countries after the ‘Arab Spring’ to create and maintain a mercenary army in Syria, Libya, Azerbaijan, as well as in some African countries, is dwindling.

The specter of uncontrolled hordes of migrants pushing their way through the gates of Fortress Europe still serves to maintain a line of credit and subsidies from the EU, but colonizing occupied Syrian lands still costs more money. The number of bases, fortifications and troops blockading Syrian forces and the Russian air force on the M5 highway in Idlib to protect Islamist jihadists is increasing, but with diminishing returns.

The Kurdish thorn in the flesh of the government’s “offensive defense” policy has made it a prisoner of senior army commanders as well as jihadists. The growing aerial bombing campaign is complemented by helicopter raids by troops moving deeper and deeper into Iraqi territory. Old-fashioned bombers and domestically manufactured armed drones cause a stir in the international press because of their effects in Libya and in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, but their effectiveness against Kurdish militants, despite all the hype, only serves to carry out targeted assassinations of a few cadres targeted by military intelligence. Each incursion meets fierce resistance and, despite suffering heavy losses, the Kurdish fighters have not moved.

The Qandil Mountains, where the headquarters of the Kurdish

PKK guerrillas are believed to be located, is still beyond their reach. However, Mount Sinjar and the Makhmour refugee camp have become targets. And the clearest example of a thorn in the Turkish flesh, Kobanê and its surroundings, is still not under Turkish control.

Policies inherited from the Ottoman Empire are still being applied: for example, the creation of a loyal militia among the Kurds so that "dogs bite dogs". The various methods employed in an attempt to isolate or impose absolute rule over the areas controlled by the Kurdish liberation movement on Iraqi territory have not exactly succeeded despite the enormous loss of human lives, and many more are expected.

In Turkey, the pro-Kurdish center-left Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) has been targeted, and its leading figures have been prosecuted and imprisoned, while some 500 rank-and-file members have been banned from participating in political life. All this in an attempt to bolster Erdogan's chances of re-election. Kurdish votes are crucial to both sides of the political spectrum, but if the HDP is removed from the equation, Erdogan believes he would stand a better chance of gaining the support of the Kurdish population, as the opposition parties are further mired in anti-Kurdish sentiment and rhetoric.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has so far rejected all attempts by Erdogan to improve relations with the US, following his open support for Donald Trump: the first face-to-face meeting has taken place at last week's NATO summit. Add to this the many years of pollution of the Sea of Marmara, into which the sewage of Istanbul and all the other industrialized cities along its shores have discharged their water, and it has had a devastating effect. And, while all this is going on, the Peker revelations are ongoing.

It is clear that the current regime is in crisis, but what is the alternative? Where is the organized left?