

Turkey's Fascist Slide - "All-out resistance is urgently necessary"

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Turkish president Erdoğan is wielding the state to attack anyone who won't capitulate to his authoritarian rule.

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The house raids [1] and detentions of prominent Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) lawmakers on the night of November 3 capped off a week of massive assaults by the Turkish state against the opposition.

On October 29, using state of emergency laws, thousands of academics and state officials in various departments were suspended [2], the process of electing a university president was taken entirely out of the hands of university personnel and placed in those of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and a number of socialist and Kurdish media outlets were shut down.

The following day, the co-mayors of Amed/Diyarbakır, the unofficial capital of North Kurdistan, were taken into custody [3] and replaced with an appointed administrator (as has been done in many other Kurdish cities and districts).

On October 31, we awoke to news that the houses of many journalists from the mainstream newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, the last bastion of the left-liberal opposition, had been raided [4] in the morning hours and some thirteen journalists had been taken into custody, including the editor in chief, Murat Sabuncu. (The paper's former editor, Can Dündar, is already in exile in Germany, facing treason charges for his work on the Turkish state's decision to provide various rebel groups in Syria with weapons.)

This cascade of repression came just a little more than three months after this summer's attempted military coup (on July 15) and state of emergency declaration (on July 20). The abortive coup essentially served as a warning to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP): make a move, or guarantee a continued hegemonic crisis. The AKP has given its response, effective or not.

The recent assaults are just the tip of the iceberg in a deeper process that's taking the country straight towards open fascism.

Erdoğan's Countercoup

The developments since the night of the coup have been as unambiguous as they've been unsurprising. Contrary to some rather optimistic analyses — which claimed the AKP would be forced to temper its political style, cooperate with other parties, and emphasize parliamentary-democratic principles — it has pursued an authoritarian course that's now escalated into a full-blown fascistization process.

The attempted coup served as a justification for a countercoup. Before the coup had even ended, President Erdoğan was describing the night's events [5] as having come by “the grace of Allah,” [6] enabling him to carry out a “cleansing” of the military. The lists of people to be released or imprisoned had been prepared in advance, and the “cleansings” were to take place regardless (knowing this, the coup plotters acted hastily and earlier than initially planned).

The target of the purges was the so-called Fethullah Terror Organization (FETÖ) and later, those that the government deemed supporters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The state of emergency, announced for three months initially, has since been lengthened for another three months. Erdoğan has made statements [7] suggesting a further extension is in the cards [8].

It's unclear at this point how many have been affected by the detainments, arrests, investigations, layoffs, and organizational, institutional, and business closures that increase daily. Differing sources estimate the number of people ensnared as between 100,000 and 130,000. The purges have hit all state apparatuses, from the military, the police, and secret service to the Institute for Religious Affairs, schools, and the judiciary system. Over 30,000 people are still under arrest, hundreds of journalists among them, and well over 100 media outlets have been shut down.

The AKP's tactic is the same one it's been pursuing since the Gezi protests in 2013: offense is the best defense. By now the AKP and its leading cadres have committed so many crimes (ranging from corruption to support of Islamist gangs to open war crimes), and it faces such enormous hatred from wide layers of the population, that a “soft transition” of power would have been out of the question. Every form of retreat would have led to a withdrawal of support from many cadres and supporters.

Of course, there was some withdrawal of support, but considering the scale of the events it was relatively minor. Which brings us to an important point: it is a liberal myth that hegemony cannot be established primarily by force. Under specific conditions, it is possible to coercively impose hegemony even for an extended period of time, as force and authority themselves can produce peculiar forms of legitimation.

With its charismatic authoritarian leader, the AKP was able to push through neoliberal reforms in a way no other government had been able to do. Since there was no viable alternative for the Turkish big bourgeoisie even after 2013, they bowed before the AKP time and again. They knew that the AKP always sought to ensure the profits of capital, and that there was no force on offer that could dispense with the AKP's “negative aspects” and retain the positive ones.

The converse of the liberal myth — that hegemony cannot be established primarily by force — is an equally spurious voluntaristic myth: that hegemony can always be established primarily by force.

The stability of a hegemony constructed primarily by force depends on the concrete objective conditions and relations of forces. The events since 2013 show that the conditions are not necessarily favorable for a continuation of hegemony-building principally by force, as there is constant crisis, and every attempt at solving the crises has led to new crises. Chances are that the coming convulsions will be even deeper and fiercer as long as the current general mode of politics

continues.

Shifting Forces and the Invasion of Syria

Even before the coup attempt the AKP seemed to have realized that its foreign policy approach was leading to crisis after crisis. Bashar al-Assad was holding on in Syria (despite Turkey's attempts to depose him), relations with Russia were in shambles, and Turkey was increasingly isolated in the Middle East.

The government decided to change course. On May 24, 2016, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım declared that the goal would now be “earning more friends than enemies” [9]; rapprochements with Russia [10] and Israel [11] soon followed.

New alliances within Turkey were forged as well. After the open clash between Erdoğan and the religious order of Erdoğan's former ally, Fethullah Gülen, the AKP — which emerged victorious from the first standoff in December 2013 — had to search for new alliances, as it was unable to fill the state apparatuses with its own cadres.

It found new partners in some ultranationalist groups in the military led by the pseudo-socialist, ultranationalist, and pro-putschist Doğu Perinçek — whom the AKP had persecuted since 2008 (in alliance with the Gülenists) for allegedly preparing a coup against the AKP. Gülen's power in the media and military played a crucial role here. Beginning in 2014, they were gradually released from prison, and the Gülenists were blamed for making the “wrong” arrests [12].

When the war in North Kurdistan resumed in 2015, the military was fully rehabilitated and permitted to take on an active role within state and society. This changing of the guard within the state was intrinsically related to the change in foreign policy. While the Gülen faction and the purportedly more moderate Kemalists in the military (called the “Atlanticist” faction) were strongly oriented toward NATO, the ultranationalists who are now in prominent positions are closer to Russia and Syria and are often referred to as the “Eurasian” or “Caucasian” faction. (Kemalism is the secular ideology associated with the founder of the modern Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.)

The two opposition parties besides the HDP — the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) — backed the AKP in their foreign policy pivot.

Gathering support from fascists and the extreme right-wing is often the main cornerstone of a hegemony constructed primarily by force. That's obviously what the AKP aimed for and indeed achieved.

For some time, the fascist MHP has acted as the AKP's “right fist.” Some of its militants are working together with Islamist groups in Syria. And when the AKP embraced exterminationist tactics in its war in North Kurdistan, the MHP and its leader, Devlet Bahçeli, went into full support mode, declaring that the party would unconditionally back the government in its war against “terror.”

The two are now so close that the MHP approves (and helps carry out) most AKP decisions. The MHP, for instance, will likely assist the AKP in its bid for a presidential system (thus consolidating Erdoğan's power) if the AKP re-introduces the death penalty and executes the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

On the other hand, the state actively suppressed a rival faction within the MHP that was attempting

to take over the party and pursue a course more independent of the AKP. Polls showed that the MHP would rise again in the polls should this faction (grouped around Meral Akşener) seize control of the party. But through “legal measures” and police force, a party congress was repeatedly thwarted, and after the coup attempt Akşener was ostensibly revealed to be a supporter of Gülen and was kicked out of the party.

The CHP, for its part, is so inept it can barely be described as an “opposition.” Every critical word, however half-hearted, is followed by supplication before the AKP and the state.

After the coup, seeking to take the initiative, the CHP organized a massive protest in Taksim Square against the putsch and the state of emergency (which many left and socialist organizations also attended). But the CHP’s party leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, dashed hopes of a more oppositional tack by showing up at a large meeting organized by the AKP and, together with the MHP and some shady fascists and mafia bosses, declaring his commitment to “national unity.”

(It was the spinelessness of the Turkish bourgeoisie and its traditional party, the CHP, that brought this to pass. The bourgeoisie rejected the struggle for democracy, knowing that success on this front would have empowered the popular classes and the revolutionary left. This was an outcome the Turkish bourgeoisie was never willing to countenance.)

Every attempt at creating national unity needs some “Other,” and thus it was no surprise that the HDP received no invitation to the event. Whatever their differences, all of the non-HDP parties and factions agree on one thing: Turkish nationalism.

With these new allies inside and outside the military — and with the MHP fascists acting as “auxiliary forces,” flanked by spineless Republicans — the flurry of diplomacy continued in the weeks after the attempted coup. High-ranking Turkish state officials went to Moscow, Damascus, and Tehran several times. Immediately afterwards, on August 24, Turkey began Operation Euphrates Shield in order to “preserve the territorial integrity of Syria” and cleanse the border area of “terrorism.”

For some time, Turkey had tried to bring down Assad. But the United States had declined to support any Turkish land invasion since Russia enforced a stalemate in 2013. On top of this, Russia made any unilateral Turkish move impossible by deploying advanced technology, anti-aircraft missiles, and cruisers to Syria following Turkey’s decision to shoot down a Russian bomber in November 2015. Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria threatened to go to war with Turkey if Erdoğan took any offensive action.

With the Euphrates Shield operation, however, Turkey — at least in the beginning — enjoyed full US support in the form of airstrikes. “[W]e believe very strongly that the Turkish border must be controlled by Turkey, that there should be no occupation of that border by any group whatsoever, that Syria must be whole and united, not carved into little pieces,” said Vice President Joe Biden [13], echoing the rhetoric of the Turkish government. “[W]e’re supportive of the operation.”

The invasion, in other words, was predicated on the tacit support of Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria. As Turkish presidential spokesperson İbrahim Kalın noted [14]: “[I]t was good for us to improve relations with Russia. . . . [O]therwise we might not have been able to undertake the current operations in Syria and send assistance there.” The Turkish invasion of Syria rested on a (fragile) alliance of all involved parties against the Kurdish forces, the fight against ISIS serving as pretext and nothing more.

It was the interests of Turkey and shifting international power relations that cleared the way for the Euphrates Shield operation. On the domestic front, the AKP tried to divert attention from the

political crisis by drumming up “national unity” using the military invasion. At the same time, the AKP took a step backward in its foreign policy: it became obvious that it was impossible for Turkey to push through its maximal aims (getting rid of Assad) while the Kurdish forces and allies made impressive gains in northern Syria. Destroying or curtailing the revolution in Rojava became the top priority.

The Russian government [15] appreciated this change in priorities. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov commented: “Ankara realizes that the terrorists in Syria are a threat for them. Turkey and other countries begin to show a certain flexibility on the topic of ultimatums [relating to the toppling of Assad].” High-ranking Iranian officials [16] said that while big differences remained between Ankara, Moscow, Damascus, and Tehran, the parties had reached an agreement concerning the unity of Syria.

The United States was ready to play along, especially so Turkey could be brought back into the NATO fold in the face of deteriorating relations (following the US’s dubious, to say the least, role in the failed coup).

Russia has accepted the Turkish move so long as Erdoğan doesn’t move against Assad and stops cooperating with Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda’s Syrian branch). Chances are high that they too want to appease Turkey and don’t want to see the Kurds strengthened [17].

Iran has the same fear as Turkey: namely, that Kurdish gains in Syria will spill over into Iran.

On top of this, as the PKK leadership pointed out to Öcalan in 2015, all international and local powers agree that curtailing a revolutionary democratic alternative is paramount. Otherwise revolutionary democratic struggles could break out across the entire Middle East — providing an alternative to all imperialists as much as to local collaborators, governments, and petty bourgeois dictatorships.

But this antidemocratic alliance also reveals its fragility when the balance of interests is forced too much in favor of one party. This can be seen most clearly in Turkey’s recent pushing for an occupation of al-Bab, Syria and its attempts to gain a more significant role in the Mosul and Rakka operations.

Amid improving Turkish-Russian relations, the Russian chief of the general staff visited his Turkish counterpart in mid-September and warned him not to extend the operations beyond the planned scale, as it would involve military and political risks. All involved international parties fear that Turkey might turn overly self-confident again. Russia, Syria, and Iran especially are against Turkey and Turkey-backed brigades taking over al-Bab since they claim this would provide reinforcements for the Islamist brigades fighting in Aleppo.

In Iraq, prime minister Haider al-Abadi has recently argued that the presence of the Turkish army in the country violates Iraq’s sovereignty, and that Turkey should not participate in operations against ISIS [18] and told him that Turkey does whatever it likes. Support for al-Abadi came from the US state department, who said that it should be Iraq’s decision who participates in the operations [19].

While the tensions between Baghdad and Ankara continued, and Turkey postured by deploying its elite 28th Mechanized Infantry Battalion on the Turkish-Iraqi border [20], precedents were created on the field [21]: Turkey is not involved in the Mosul operation, the Iran-backed Shiite Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) — seen as a threat by Turkey — are moving towards Tel Afar (which Turkey dubiously claims to be within its area of influence), and the People’s Protection Units/Syrian

Defense Forces (YPG/SDF) have declared that they have begun the Rakka operation in coordination with the United States.

Amid all of this, Turkey is talking loud and flexing its muscles. But in practice it can merely watch as it again loses steam on all fronts.

Running Towards Open Fascism

Meanwhile, on the home front, the process of fascistization proceeds apace. For some time, critics have pointed out that the AKP uses apparently legitimate occasions to carry out far-reaching offensives that extend far beyond the original, apparently legitimate occasion. The same critics have noted that Erdoğan won't stop when he's rid the state of supposed "Gülenists," but that sooner or later he will strike the Kurds and the Left. And that's exactly what's happening. For a few months, the entire Turkish left has been under full-fledged attack.

All of the PKK's proposals to return to the negotiation table have been summarily dismissed. On August 20, Prime Minister Yıldırım declared that there would be no more peace process [22], only the fight against "terrorism." Immediately after Yıldırım announced the cleansing of the state of "PKK-sympathizers," [23] eleven thousand teachers (more than nine thousand of them organized in the leftist, pro-Kurdish union Eğitim-Sen) were suspended [24]. Soon afterwards, the local mayors of twenty-four (by now thirty) predominantly Kurdish communities (all of the local pro-Kurdish Democratic Regions Party [DBP]) were replaced by Ankara-appointed trustees [25], who literally marched into the communes as if they were colonial governors.

At all times accompanied with heavily armed special police forces, they occupied the municipalities, threw out the democratically elected representatives, and — in many cases in the first days — hung up Turkish flags and enormous Atatürk posters, dismantled plates in Kurdish, and posted pictures of themselves posing in this colonial manner.

This colonial-style occupation was followed by the near-complete elimination of the DBP's entire local legal political structure: the local bureau heads of the DBP in most towns in the southeast were imprisoned on terror charges; more than 180 local heads and leading figures of the DBP and HDP were thrown into prison in one week in early October alone [26].

Directly after the installation of colonial trustees and the elimination of the local leading structure of the DBP, the Turkish state closed down dozens of pro-Kurdish and leftist print papers, radio, and TV stations (including a Kurdish children's TV station!) [27]. Even the left-liberal, pro-Kurdish TV station IMC TV — widely followed in the West and outside of Turkey — was shuttered.

This time around, the state also extended its repressive measures well beyond its usual targets (i.e., leftists and Kurds) to include liberal journalists as well. Ahmet and Mehmet Altan, two well-known liberal journalists and long-time AKP supporters [28], were detained under the pretense that they sent "subliminal messages" in support of the coup attempt before it occurred. For good measure, the state withdrew the press cards and even passports of many journalists and their partners so they can no longer leave the country.

Attacks on Cumhuriyet and the HDP

The biggest attacks, however, were yet to come.

On the night of October 31, a major operation was launched against the oldest Turkish newspaper, the Republican flagship *Cumhuriyet*, which takes its name from Atatürk himself. Thirteen editors and writers, including Editor in Chief Murat Sabuncu, were taken into custody when police aggressively searched their residences. Nine of them were detained on the completely absurd charge of “committing a crime in the name of FETÖ and PKK without being a member of the respective organizations.”

Just a few days later, on the night of November 4, the second massive attack was launched: the houses of leading HDP politicians, including both co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, were raided and eleven parliamentary deputies taken into custody on charges of “membership in a terrorist organization” — namely, the PKK. On the next day, nine of them, again including Yüksekdağ and Demirtaş, were arrested.

The state speaks of a “normal judicial procedure.” But this is absolutely absurd, as even the editor in chief of the pro-government *Hürriyet Daily News*, Murat Yetkin, acknowledges — it is Minister of Justice Bozdağ from the AKP who supervises the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), the top-down state institution that appoints all prosecutors and judges in Turkey in the first instance [29].

All central state institutions and top bodies are now, by *law*, directly controlled by the party in power — that is, the AKP. Erdoğan appoints all police chiefs (he just recently changed over sixty of eighty-one provincial police chiefs [30]), the body that appoints all university deans is dominated by the executive, the president chooses most of the judges of the constitutional court, etc.

In short and put bluntly, there is no such thing as a judicial system in Turkey. The entire state — and especially the judicial system — is run directly by the cliques in power.

The AKP wasn’t even quick enough to replace the old Gülenist cadres within the judiciary with its own cadres. In one embarrassing instance, the prosecutor who runs the investigations against *Cumhuriyet*, Istanbul chief prosecutor Murat İnam, is being detained on charges of being a FETÖ member while the prosecution demands a life sentence in solitary confinement with no possibility of parole [31].

The same goes for the show trial against HDP lawmaker İdris Baluken: his case was prepared by prosecutor Ahmet Karaca [32], who is being held on charges of treason. On top of that, charging direct enemies of the Gülenists (*Cumhuriyet*, HDP) and enemies (*Cumhuriyet*), or at least severe critics (HDP), of the PKK, with membership in the FETÖ and PKK underscores that this has absolutely nothing to do with an independent judiciary.

That these cases have received support from senior state officials such as Prime Minister Yıldırım [33] (“Those that came with elections but united with terrorism have to pay”) and Vice Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmuş [34] (“The process that began with the constitutional amendments [lifting parliamentarians’ immunity] . . . may now come to an end”) makes it patently clear: these are show trials aimed at silencing and eliminating the last remnants of organized opposition within the media and politics.

The HDP Fights, the CHP Wavers

While the HDP has called for permanent action, absolute resistance, and the construction of a democratic bloc against the fascistization process, the upper echelons of the CHP are still wavering.

Following the suppression of its own media flagship, CHP vice president and spokesperson Böke declared that it “will never surrender the *Cumhuriyet*,” [35] only to add that it will bring those that attack democracy “to justice in front of the judiciary” — thereby fostering illusions about the country’s justice system. To be fair, CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu did condemn the operations against the HDP. But he said “not to worry oneself with flies” if there’s a whole marsh to be dried out (by which he meant the PKK) [36].

In fact, it was the CHP’s pro-state stance that made it possible for the AKP to advance the fascistization process in the first place. The post-coup environment found the AKP at its weakest state, and the CHP alone could mobilize more people (over two hundred thousand for its July 24 “republic and democracy” demonstration [37]) than the AKP could in the entire first week after the coup.

Yet the CHP did not use the momentum and the dominant democratic mood (“no coups, people’s power!” the popular slogan went) to strike against the government and push for a democratic alternative. Instead, the CHP chose to rally with the AKP, the MHP, and mafioso elements, rescuing the AKP via “national unity.”

The CHP’s actions before the coup also laid the groundwork. The CHP voted to lift parliamentarians’ immunities in May of this year, supported the invasion of Syria, and backed the holding of the Bashiqa camp in northern Iraq against the will of the Iraqi government. In other words, the CHP leadership chose to rally with the state and the powers that be when the bourgeois order was threatened instead of pushing for a popular democratic alternative when conditions were ripe.

Things are different, however, in the CHP base. The left, social-democratic, and liberal elements in particular are deeply worried by the fascistization process and understand that all is about to be lost if there is no decisive, united, popular-democratic counterattack soon.

And that’s why a new democratic action alliance called Demokrasi İçin Birlik (Unity for Democracy) is being forged that includes many former CHP MPs and former CHP ambassadors, in coalition with HDP MPs, various anticapitalist groups, and organizations on the revolutionary left.

The recent demonstrations against the HDP detentions and attacks on *Cumhuriyet* showcased a partial coming together of the HDP and CHP base, shouting Kurdish and Turkish antifascist and internationalist slogans. The tentative alliance showed that there is still massive potential for the democratic forces even if they remain demoralized. Further developing this line of resistance will be paramount in order to combat rising fascism in Turkey.

PKK Intensifies Efforts

The PKK hasn’t remained dormant amid the slide toward fascistization.

In September, the PKK launched a major guerrilla offensive in the provincial region of Çukurca, where fighting was so intense that the general commander of the Turkish gendarmerie, Yaşar Güler, said that they would fight a “life-or-death struggle.” The PKK also began assassinating targeted AKP politicians, especially those it deemed determined to be involved in massacres.

In reaction to the appointment of colonial trustees to Kurdish municipalities, Duran Kalkan [38], founding member of the PKK, commented: “Those that occupy with violence the municipalities elected by the people shall know that they will be the target of the same violence they exert.”

Assassinations and warfare still remain at a low to mid-level compared to the capacities of the PKK, and its leaders (such as Karayılan and Bayık [39]) had called upon all elements of the Kurdish liberation movement to develop their own actions and dynamics and to avoid relying solely on the guerrillas.

However, with the detention of the HDP MPs, the tone changed rapidly: the KCK [40], the political umbrella group to which the PKK belongs, stated on November 4 that “the time of words is over,” and Karayılan said the same day that the war would intensify and that they would “respond on all fronts.” [41]

Turkey on the Edge of Collapse

The AKP is clearly trying to use the coup attempt as a pretext to consolidate its power and cope with its hegemonic crisis. In doing so, it is pushing the system to its limit and unleashing social conflicts that could explode and dismember the society.

The AKP’s major misjudgment in handling the hegemonic crisis has been its assumption that the cracks and ruptures within the ruling class and the state are merely personalized power issues, and hence, that it can smooth things over if a sufficient share of the state consists of its own people. But Erdoğan overlooks the fact that a decent number of his “own people” — not only those affiliated with the Gülenists, but also, for example, the party’s entire liberal wing — have left the AKP.

The fault lines in the ruling bloc are deeper, and point to a general hegemonic crisis of the Turkish bourgeoisie. On the one hand, consent (or approval) towards the leading political subject — namely the party in government and its specific regime — was revoked by more than half of the society. On the other, all sub-imperialist initiatives have hit a brick wall.

The PKK, in many ways stronger than ever, has been keeping NATO’s second largest land army at bay for months now. The Turkish state’s crusade of destruction in the Kurdish regions, which have left nothing but rubble fields behind, have caused the Kurds to become even more alienated from the state.

Ongoing discontent, political instability, and bomb attacks are poisoning the bourgeois order and frightening off investors as well as tourists. Fitch and Moody’s already cut Turkey’s credit rating to junk, while S&P sees no positive growth indicators.

All of this happened mainly because the AKP overestimated its power, applying enormous force without the capacity to handle the implications. In this sense, not much has changed. The invasion of northern Syria is not well thought out, as many military theorists emphasize. And Turkey will be perceived even more as an aggressor in the Arabic world. Nobody will easily forget that the commander in chief of the Turkish military’s elite commandos, Zekai Aksakallı, hugged one of the commanders of the jihadist FSA brigades immediately after arriving in Jarabulus, and allowed pictures of the event to be taken. The political, ideological, military, and economic costs of this invasion will steadily increase, likely wiping out any of its benefits.

Whether Turkey can afford an increase in troops — either politically and militarily — is dubious. But Turkey still entertains Great Power fantasies. Erdoğan keeps saying that without Turkey, no plan in the region is possible anymore. The truth is, Turkey has simply lost the support of various forces because it’s tried to force an occupation of al-Bab and has been attempting to claim decision-making power in the Rakka and Mosul operations. (Currently, it is excluded from the Mosul operations, the Iran-backed Shiite PMU are on the march to Tel Afar, and the YPG/SDF is leading the Rakka

operations — and Turkey is relegated to stand-by.)

Within Turkey, the AKP is hoping that the PKK will not react proportionally against the state's repression in the Kurdish regions, which is becoming more and more overtly colonial and fascist. Both sides are well aware that the PKK is only partially putting its military capacity to use.

In previous years, the PKK has proved a number of times that it can seize control of more than one city or region for several days or weeks, then retreat from these, and then claim others. The PKK could initiate a major offensive, which the state would respond to with its own major offensive and massive air operations, leading the country towards a bloodbath.

The state, which knows the PKK well, is counting on the latter not risking this descent into mass bloodshed. But the same state is increasingly leaving the PKK with few other options, and there are important regional actors who would be pleased with a destabilized Turkey and thus back the PKK in the case of an escalation.

Recently published notes from the negotiations between the state and imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan indicate that the latter clearly warned the government in 2013 that if talks broke down, war would break out again on a massive scale, that Iran and Israel would arm the PKK against Turkey, that the PKK would have to accept weapons from them to stay alive, and that there would be a big and bloody war engulfing the entirety of Turkey.

The state would not be able to control such a war, and the country would sink into bloody chaos.

At first, this might seem like an unsavory outcome from a capitalist point of view. However, as we have seen in Libya and Syria, ruling power blocs can opt to take this risk in order to retain power in moments of crisis. There is no such thing as a "guarantee of rationalism" under capitalism. On the contrary, the rational irrationality of capitalism always bursts out precisely when the class and hegemonic conflicts sharpen.

It is possible, of course, that parts of the bourgeoisie would take the initiative and try to formulate an alternative to the AKP before the entire order sunk into total chaos. But the CHP's stance since the coup indicates that the Turkish bourgeoisie's historic spinelessness has continued, at least for now.

As for the AKP, it's in a poor position itself. High-ranking soldiers are now being re-employed in place of the putschists, despite being former putschists themselves. They are opportunistically cooperating with the AKP for the moment and will immediately turn against the AKP again if the situation permits and/or necessitates it. Even pro-AKP analysts are warning of the danger of the ultranationalists gaining too much strength under the guise of "fighting against FETÖ".

In addition, Erdoğan can't have forgotten what happened on the night of the coup: a large part of the army waited for hours to take action, meaning they would have joined the coup if they believed it could have succeeded. If international and domestic crises rock the country again and the military feels firmly seated in its saddle, it may well try to mount another putsch again.

There are endless possible scenarios, none of them promising from a left point of view, if things remain on their current course.

Under the current circumstances, there can be only one slogan for the Left and democrats: "total resistance against the regime, for a democratic republic." All the institutions forced to close (such as the theater in the predominantly Kurdish city of Batman, whose crime was performing Molière in Kurdish!) should keep operating against the state for as long as possible; all teachers and academics

who were laid off should keep lecturing and teaching, possibly in alternative buildings and institutions; all the media outlets raided by the police should barricade themselves and fight for it.

Kurdish communities have already provided the model. They defended themselves to the last inch, and then kept up their work in the buildings of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP). If the state is attacking all the forces that do not passively capitulate, then it has to be countered with all possible means rather than being accepted with moral and judicial appeals to human rights or the rule of law. Not even bits of the latter remain in Turkey. Everything has been boiled down to the question of power. And for those controlling the state, they'll opt for a fascist path if it means remaining in power.

The political, economic, and ideological costs of the fascistization of the state have to be spotlighted by all means possible. Only this will stop the fascistization or bring about crises that will shatter it. Only this will break through the wall of fear and awake the demoralized democratic forces, which — as the streets have shown over the last several days — still wield a considerable and potentially decisive power.

We are living the last moments in Turkey where legitimate resistance in the (pseudo-)legal space is still somewhat possible. If things continue, the country might very well descend into overt fascism and possibly sink into a bloody nightmare like Syria, making today's authoritarian morass appear a desirable moment by comparison.

All-out resistance is urgently necessary.

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P.S.

* Jacobin. 11.10.16:

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