

An unproductive way to start an analysis on Turkey is to give precedence to prior knowledge. Turkey has changed so much the last few years that what was known until recent past may prove deceptive leading one's judgment astray.

In the first decade of 2000 the protagonists in the political arena – I presume it is still remembered – were, on one hand, the forces that were for European Union (EU) and its values (democracy, transparency, rule of law, respect to human rights, etc) and on the other hand, the political forces that were very skeptical vis-à-vis this EU vision. The latter group was labeled by its friends and its rivals as Kemalists, nationalists (this term still has a positive meaning, like patriotism, in Turkey) and even sometimes as “the deep state”. There was a political tension between the Europeanist “politicians” and the “military”.

There was even an ala-turka separation of powers. The parliament and the government corresponded to the executive power and on the other side, the commanders of the army with the Constitutional Court made up a kind of a judiciary and legislative body. Both sides had to respect some unwritten but well-known red lines. Otherwise interventions were very probable. There were therefore, the two (successful!) coups of 1960 and of 1980, the four military memoranda against the politicians (12/3/1971, 27/12/1979, 28/2/1997, 27/4/2007) that caused political changes and the five unsuccessful military uprisings which ended with the supremacy of the politicians: 21/10/1961, 22/2/1962, 20/5/1963, 20/5/1969, 15/7/2016.

All these are obsolete. There is now a strong man in power with unrestricted authorities. The once (so called “Islamist Democratic”) Justice and Development Party (AKP) of the first decade of 2000 and which was in favor for a rapprochement with the West through EU, is at present in close collaboration with its old phobic opponents: Basically with the Nationalist Movement Party and the “military”. This alliance has a special image of the West: The West is perceived and presented as a “negative” block. The main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP) is clearly against the present government but in practice it does not differ in matters concerning the “West”.

What is new is not the negative image of the West; “Christianophobia” in the East is as old as the Ottomans and it is the flip side of “islamophobia” of the West. These prejudices are the historical legacies of centuries-long crusades and jihads. What is sad is that the parties see only what lies in front of their eyes; they do not look at a mirror. It is also heart breaking that paranoia cannot be demonstrated to the obsessed. There is also a high probability that R.T. Erdoğan's extreme anti-West rhetoric is not a tactical choice but a sincere conviction.

The meaning attributed to the persistently used term “international law” is probably the most indicative sign of the big changes that have lately occurred in Turkey: It is a self-proclaimed and nationally interpreted “justice” and “our right”. In other words, this is a blatant nationalist declaration of arbitrariness with which “international” law is openly defied on a “national” basis.

If this is the situation, i.e., if in Turkey there is a deep anti-west conviction and a nationalist alliance, then an expectation of reinstalling Turkey of the past anew may prove to be a chimera. The changes that occurred in Turkey the last few years are not some “manoeuvres on policies”; the core body of decision making has been replaced. The old state has been toppled. This is a new Turkey that needs to be re-discovered and re-evaluated. Limited ingredients necessitate new recipes.

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