

Turkey's Erdoğan Regime: Terrorism Unleashed

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The October 12, 2015 terror bombing in Ankara, resulting in the death of 127 trade unionists, peace activists, Kurdish advocates and progressives, has been attributed either to the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan regime or to ISIS terrorists.

The Erdoğan regime's '*hypothesis*' is that ISIS or the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) was responsible for the terrorist attack, a position echoed by all of the NATO governments and dutifully repeated by all of the Western mass media. Their most recent claim is that a *Turkish* member of ISIS carried out the massacre – in a 'copy-cat action' after his brother, blamed by the Turkish government for an earlier bombing which left 33 young pro-Kurdish activists dead in July in Suruc, on the Syrian border.

The alternative hypothesis, voiced by the majority of the Turkish opposition, is that the Erdoğan regime was directly or indirectly involved in organizing the terrorist attack or allowing it to happen.

In testing each hypothesis it is necessary to examine which of the two best accounts for the facts leading up to the killing and who benefits from the mayhem.

Our approach is to examine those behind various acts of violence preceding, accompanying and following the massacre in Ankara. We will examine the politics of both the victims and the Erdoğan regime, and their conception of political governance, especially in light of the forthcoming November 2015 national elections.

Antecedents to the Ankara Terror Bombing

Over the past several years the Erdoğan regime has been engaged in a violent crackdown of civil society activity. In 2013, massive police action broke-up a major social protest in the center of Istanbul, killing 8 demonstrators and injuring 8500 environmental and civil society activists defending Taksim Gezi Park from government-linked 'developers'. In May 2014, over 300 Turkish coal miners in Soma were killed in an underground explosion in a mine owned by an Erdoğan supporter. Subsequent demonstrations were brutally suppressed by the state. The formerly state-owned mine had been privatized by Erdoğan in 2005 – many questioned the legality of the sale to regime cronies.

Prior to and after these violent police actions against civilian demonstrators, thousands of officials and public figures were arrested, fired and investigated by the Erdoğan regime for allegedly being supporters of a legal Islamic social organization – the so-called Gülen movement.

Hundreds of journalists, human rights activists, publishers and other media workers were

arrested, fired and blacklisted at the behest of the Erdoğan regime, for criticizing high level corruption in the Erdoğan cabinet.

The Erdoğan regime escalated its domestic repression of the secular opposition in order to concentrate power in the hands of an Islamist cult-ruler. This was particularly the case after the government deepened its support of thousands of foreign jihadi extremists and mercenaries streaming into Turkey on their way to the Syrian jihad.

From the beginning of the armed uprising in Syria, Turkey became the main training ground, arms depot and entry-point for armed Islamist terrorists (AIT) entering Syria. The Erdoğan regime directed the AIT to attack, dispossess and destroy the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds whose fighters had liberated a significant section of northern Syria and Iraq and served as an *'example of self-government'* for Turkish Kurds.

The Erdoğan regime has joined the brutal Saudi monarchy in financing and arming AIT groups and especially training them in urban terror warfare against the secular government in

Damascus and the Shiite regime in Baghdad. They specialized in bombing populated sites occupied by Erdogan's enemies or the Saudi targets especially secular Kurds, leftists, trade unionists and Shiites allied with Iran.

The Erdogan regime's intervention in Syria was motivated by its desire to expand Turkish influence (neo-Ottomanism) and to destroy the successful Kurdish autonomous government and movement in Northern Syria and Iraq.

To those ends, Erdoğan combined four policies:

- (1) He vastly expanded Turkish support for and recruitment of Islamic terrorists from around the world, including Libya and Chechnya.
- (2) He facilitated their entry into Syria, and encouraged them to attack villages and towns in the ethnic Kurdish regions.
- (3) He broke off peace negotiations with the PKK and re-launched a full-scale war against the militant Kurds.
- (4) He organized a covert terrorist campaign against the legal, secular, pro-Kurdish electoral party, the People's Democratic Party (HDP).

The Erdoğan regime sought to consolidate dictatorial powers to pursue and deepen its *'Islamization'* of Turkish society and to project his version of Turkish hegemony over Syria and the Kurdish regions inside and outside Turkey. To accomplish these ambitious and far reaching goals, Erdoğan needed to purge his Administration of any rival power centers.

He started with the jailing and expulsion of secular, nationalist Kemalist military figures. He continued with a purge of his former supporters in the Gülen organization.

Failing to gain a majority in national elections because of the growth of the HDP, he proceeded with a systematic terror campaign: organizing street mobs made up of his followers in the *'Justice and Development Party'*, who burned and wrecked HDP offices and

beat up activists. Erdoğan's terror campaign culminated with the July 2015 bombing of a leftist youth meeting in Suruç whose activists were aiding Syrian Kurdish refugees and the beleaguered fighters resisting Islamist terrorists in Kobani, a large Syrian town across the border controlled by the Erdoğan-backed ISIS. Over 33 activists were murdered and 104 were wounded. Two Turkish covert intelligence officers or 'policemen', who knew in advance of the bombing, were captured, interrogated and executed by the PKK. This retaliation for what was widely believed to be a state-sponsored massacre provided Erdoğan with a pretext to re-launch his war on the Kurds. Erdoğan immediately declared war on both the armed and unarmed Kurdish movements.

The Erdoğan regime trotted out the claim that the Suruç terrorist attack was committed by ISIS suicide bombers, ignoring the regime's ties to ISIS. He announced a large-scale investigation. In fact it was a perfunctory round up and release of suspects of no consequence.

If ISIS was involved in this and the Ankara massacres, it did so at the command and direction of Turkish Intelligence under orders of President Erdoğan.

The Suruç Massacre: A Dress Rehearsal for Ankara

Suruç was a '*dress rehearsal*' for Erdoğan's terrorist attack in Ankara, three months later.

Once again the main target was the Kurdish opposition electoral party (the HDP) as well as the major progressive trade unions , professional associations, and anti-war activists.

Once again Erdoğan blamed ISIS, without acknowledging his ties to ISIS. Certain facts point to Turkish state complicity:

1. Why were the bombs placed in the midst of the unarmed demonstrators and not next to the police and intelligence headquarters within a block of the carnage?
2. Why did Erdoğan's police attack and prevent emergency medical assistance to the demonstrators in the immediate aftermath of the bombing?
3. Why did he block popular leaders, independent investigators and representatives from targeted groups from examining the bombing site?
4. Why did Erdoğan immediately reject a cease-fire offer from the PKK and launch a vast military operation while promoting rabidly chauvinistic street demonstrators against Kurds engaged in legal political campaigning?
5. Why did the police attack mourners at the subsequent funerals?

Who Benefited from the Terror Attacks?

The terror attacks benefited Erdoğan's immediate and long-range strategic political goals - and no one else!

First and foremost, they killed activists from the HDP party, anti-war leftists and trade unionists. The violent government attacks against the HDP in the aftermath of the massacre has increased Erdoğan's chances of securing the electoral majority that he needs in order to change the Turkish constitution so he can assume dictatorial powers.

Secondly, it was aimed at (1) reducing the ties between the Turkish and Syrian Kurds; (2) breaking the ties between progressive Turkish trade unions, secular professionals ,peace

activists and the Kurdish Democratic Party; (3) mobilizing the rightwing ultra-nationalist Turkish street mobs to attack and destroy the electoral offices of the HDP; (4) intimidating pro-democracy activists and progressives and silencing dissent to Erdoğan's domestic power grab and intervention in Syria.

To the question of who is responsible for serial violent attacks on civil society organizations, opposition political parties, and purges and arrests of independent officials in the lead-up to the terror attack? The answer is Erdoğan.

Who was behind the campaign of violence and bombing in Kurdish neighborhoods in Istanbul and elsewhere leading up to the Suruç and Ankara terrorist attacks? The answer is Erdoğan.

Conclusion

We originally counter -posed two hypotheses regarding the terrorist attack in Ankara: The Erdoğan regime's hypothesis that ISIS – as a force independent of the Turkish government - or even the PKK were responsible for brutally killing key activists in Turkish and Kurdish civil organizations; and the opposite hypothesis that the Erdoğan regime was the mastermind.

After reviewing the motives, actions, beneficiaries and interests of the two hypothetical suspects, the hypothesis, which most elegantly and thoroughly accounts for and makes sense of the facts is that the Erdoğan regime was directly responsible for the planning and organization of the massacres through its intelligence operatives.

A subsidiary hypothesis is that the execution – the placing of the bombs – may have been by an ISIS terrorist, but under the control of Erdoğan's police apparatus.

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