

A class-based analysis of Turkey's 2023 elections

Levent Dölek

The 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey offer us many lessons within a complex political landscape that demands scrutiny. However, any attempt to analyze these elections as if they were conducted fairly and lawfully would be highly misleading. There is conspicuous evidence that, from the very beginning to the aftermath, they have been manipulated both by the incumbent president and the unofficial coalition of AKP and MHP, who imposed the unconstitutional candidacy of Erdoğan and enacted election laws designed to favor themselves. While we will elaborate on electoral fraud later, for now, it suffices to say that no comment can be taken seriously if it ignores the fact that the elections were rigged.

Nevertheless, exposing the fraudulent character of the election by itself is not enough to explain how the AKP's manipulations succeeded and, more importantly, why the opposition accepted the results without any objection. That entails us to do a class-based analysis of the elections which needs to focus on what class interests the political programs and actions of the parties represent, rather than on the respective voting bases of the parties.

It is obvious that no bourgeois party can even receive 1%, let alone win the elections, being only voted by the capitalist class. The bourgeoisie, therefore, has to establish a political hegemony over the working class and other classes and strata by convincing them that its own interests represent the public ones. That policy manifests itself in various ideological guises, such as religious fundamentalism,

nationalism, militarism, and secularism. An “identity-based leftism” entirely stripped of class politics may also be exploited by the ruling class similarly. Each bourgeois party utilizes them, depending on their political inclinations and on the factions of the capitalist class they represent. For example, in the US, capitalist factions under pressure from international competition support Trump’s protectionist policies and his trade war against China, as epitomized in the nationalist MAGA (Make America Great Again) ideology, while capitalist factions having been damaged by the fragmentation of the world market promote the so-called liberal ideologies such as globalism, cosmopolitanism and “rainbow of identities”.

These ideologies function more to bring the working masses under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie than to reflect the worldview of individuals or groups belonging to different factions of the bourgeoisie. It is no longer even newsworthy for a boss who seems to be very tolerant in private life to support hardline policies and to take a position in favor of racist, fascist, religious, etc. parties, even if he or she himself or herself belongs to a minority sect or ethnic group. In addition, bourgeois factions also have a hinterland within the population that they can address more easily. In this sense, the Westernist-secular bourgeoisie in Turkey can appeal to the educated modern petty bourgeoisie much more easily and directly. Islamist capital, on the other hand, has a significant hegemonic influence on the traditional petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry.

36 political parties and five alliances participated in the May 14-28, 2023 elections. In the presidential elections, there were four candidates. In reality, the people did not have as many options as the number suggested. In terms of the parliamentary elections, the People’s Alliance (*Cumhur İttifakı*), the Nation Alliance (*Millet İttifakı*), and the Labor and Freedom Alliance (*Emek ve Özgürlük İttifakı*) led by the HDP competed as the three main rivals. Since the current regime is shaped by a strong President and a “chained” parliamentary structure, the main issue of the election was the presidential election. As a matter of fact, the Labor and Freedom Alliance was directly aligned with the Nation Alliance for the presidency, and Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu came to the fore as the two candidates. The fact that the elections were held in two rounds reinforced this bipolar political picture. Muharrem İnce¹ and Sinan Oğan,² on the other hand, were not an alternative to power, neither de facto nor with their programs. Their aim was just to increase their bargaining power. It was of course inevitable that this dual structure would create an atmosphere of political polarization. This was not just a de facto situation, it

1 Muharrem İnce, who had been a presidential candidate against Kılıçdaroğlu in the CHP, and had led an opposition within the party, was surprisingly made the CHP’s presidential candidate by Kılıçdaroğlu himself in 2018. İnce lost the election. He blamed the lack of support from Kılıçdaroğlu and the CHP organisation for his failure. 3 years later, he founded the Homeland Party (*Memleket Partisi*).

2 In 2016, during the split in the MHP, he took part in the opposition wing against the current leader Bahçeli. He became a candidate for the presidency. However, he was not among those who left the MHP and founded the Good Party (*İyi Parti*). Although he was expelled from the MHP in 2017, he continued to aim to return to the MHP and aspire to the leadership of the MHP.

was mainly the result of the fact that the entire electoral process was marked by the interests of the two opposing camps of the bourgeoisie, the Westernist-secular bourgeoisie and the Islamist bourgeoisie. These interests, of course, did not manifest themselves directly but in an ideological guise, often hidden behind a demagogic rhetoric.

The grand contradiction of the elections

Political polarization during the elections has been shaped by four issues, in the order of from the most to the least propagandized: the regime change, the Kurdish question, refugees, and deteriorating economic conditions. In order to properly grasp the political meaning of the electoral process, we need to expose the great contradiction in this ranking. That is, the economy, which is the main burning and decisive issue for the working people (we can also say the vast majority of the electorate), has been the least debated issue of the election period, so to speak. It is interesting that none of the rival alliances made the economy the main axis of its program and propaganda although polls showed that in the run-up to the elections, the public had seen the economy by far as the most important problem.³ There was indeed no need for a survey to see how burning the problems such as the cost of living, housing and unemployment were. So what kept political actors away from bringing up those problems? Since we cannot say that those who produce policies based on these issues and on the interests of the broad working masses and the poor would lose votes for this reason, what was the reason then?

The answer is class politics. The economy is the area where the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are polarized along the lines of their respective interests. The election process has not been marked by this contradiction but by the internal contradictions of the bourgeoisie. The contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is objectively irreconcilable. This objective reality does not change, even though the proletariat is lined up in masses behind the parties of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the internal contradictions of the bourgeoisie are not irreconcilable, no matter how harshly they manifest themselves. In the context of the elections, the clearest expression of this reconciliation is seen in the fact that the economy is not put at the center of politics. Because putting the economy at the center of the alignment means inviting the proletariat onto the political stage. The political representatives of the bourgeoisie have consciously avoided this. They have acted in agreement, almost in coordination, on this issue.

The devastating earthquakes in southeastern Turkey also remained absent from the election agenda, as the state left the people alone under the rubble for days. Reflecting its oppressive nature, the regime gave priority to implementing security

³ For example, in the Metropoll survey conducted in April, 56.1 per cent of the respondents said that the economy was the biggest problem (almost 60 per cent if you include the 2.9 per cent who said that it is unemployment!), while those who gave priority to terrorism (2.2 per cent), migrants and refugees as the biggest problem (2.2 per cent) did not even reach 5 per cent. Many other polls and surveys have been showing similar results for a long time, <https://twitter.com/ozersencar1/status/1650850268261543939?s=20>.

measures aimed at quelling potential mass protests. This took precedence over search and rescue efforts and the immediate procurement of goods for the victims. The government's focus seemed more aligned with creating lucrative investment opportunities for the construction sector, which appeared to be profiting from the rubble. These policies had the potential to incite a popular reaction against the oppressive government and the bourgeoisie, were it not for the overwhelming urgency of survival amidst the debris and the struggle to afford basic necessities. While the AKP suffered significant losses in earthquake-stricken cities like Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Adıyaman, and Gaziantep, it still secured the most votes in those constituencies.

The bourgeois opposition played a significant role in preventing mass indignation from finding its political expression. For instance, the CHP controls the local government in Hatay, the region most severely affected by the earthquake. The mayor of Hatay has been linked to fatal crimes during the earthquake due to his ties with construction capital. Furthermore, the Nation Alliance placed "reconstruction" at the forefront of its political agenda, with Ekrem İmamoğlu, a CHP Mayor of Istanbul and a construction contractor by profession, leading this initiative. Consequently, not only in terms of their political stance but also in terms of their class reflexes, the opposition mirrored the government. This resulted in a shared interest between the government and the opposition to keep the earthquake, much like the economy, out of the election discourse.

Intra-class economic war of the bourgeoisie

The contradiction between the Westernist-secularist capital represented by TÜSİAD and Islamist capital, which has marked almost the last 30 years of the country's political life, has been decisive in the alignments in the elections. In the recent elections, this class divide played a decisive role in the political alignment. The People's Alliance, primarily supported by Islamist capital, consists mainly of small and medium-sized provincial capitalists along with some monopolistic finance-capital groups. On the other hand, the Nation Alliance stands as the direct representative of the interests of Westernist-secularist capital, which still holds a dominant position within the Turkish capitalist class. While this class cleavage was broadly represented by the People's Alliance and the Nation Alliance in the recent elections, there is interplay and permeability between the two sides. The internal contradictions of the bourgeoisie can manifest themselves in various ways, not just through political alliances but also within the power centers of the state. Hence, the electoral success of the People's Alliance did not result in a decisive victory for MÜSİAD capital over TÜSİAD capital. It is evident that Erdoğan's new economic policies have, in fact, contributed to strengthening TÜSİAD's influence in economic management, to the detriment of MÜSİAD.

Erdoğan's economic policies substantially align with the interests of Islamist capital, which predominantly consists of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with limited equity, reliant on loans for their survival. His adoption of a low-interest rate policy is, in essence, a response to their pragmatic economic

needs, regardless of his frequent reference to Quranic verses prohibiting interest for ideological justification. This policy benefits producers for the domestic market, fueled by increased demand driven by loans. Additionally, export-oriented businesses gain a short-term competitive advantage due to the favorable ratio between low interest rates and a high exchange rate, which effectively lowers labor costs. These groups also reap the benefits of tenders opened by local authorities and other public entities, whether for large or small-scale procurement of goods and services.

Conversely, Westernist-secularist capital monopolies, as represented by TÜSİAD, also require financing. However, they simultaneously generate revenue from interest rates by providing loans. Moreover, as these capital groups expand in size, they fulfill their financing needs through substantial syndicated loans from abroad. Erdoğan's policy of maintaining low interest rates and a high exchange rate, resulting in an increase in the country's risk premium, leads to a substantial rise in financing costs for Westernist secular capital. This is the reason why TÜSİAD is calling for an increase in interest rates. Such a move would inevitably lead to a significant economic slowdown. However, if this path is pursued, it poses a risk of bankruptcy or the declaration of a concordat for Islamist capital. Simultaneous economic contraction and corporate bankruptcies would create a scenario where larger capitalists absorb smaller ones, further consolidating their monopolistic control. What is a matter of life and death for one side represents an opportunity for the other.

The “gang of five” or oligarchs of the despotic regime

Holdings such as Cengiz, Limak, Kolin, Kalyon, and Makyol, often referred to as the “gang of five” due to their extensive involvement in public tenders and their close ties with the government, should be analyzed separately from the Islamist capitalist faction represented by MÜSİAD. In reality, there are more than just five of these influential entities. These oligarchs differ significantly from MÜSİAD's small and medium-sized enterprises. While MÜSİAD-affiliated businesses maintain their economic strength through their social influence, the aforementioned oligarchs rely primarily on their close connections within the state.

These groups have been awarded the most significant infrastructure tenders in Turkey and occupy half of the top 10 positions in the list of companies receiving the highest number of public tenders globally. Despite amassing immense wealth through these tenders, they appear unable to utilize this wealth without seeking the state's guidance, let alone establishing themselves as autonomous political power centers. It's worth noting that there's a distinction between the oligarchs associated with the government and MÜSİAD regarding state-backed projects. While TÜSİAD silently endorses these projects, MÜSİAD openly and vehemently supports them. However, MÜSİAD believes that it isn't receiving a sufficient share of the benefits from these projects. To gain a portion of the oligarchs' rewards, MÜSİAD proposes that financing should be facilitated through Sukuk, an Islamic finance instrument, rather than relying solely on transition and utilization guarantees. This way, not

only a handful of oligarchs but also thousands of small and medium-sized members of MÜSİAD capital can benefit from these projects.

Erdoganomics: Fuite en avant

The economic approach known as “Erdoganomics” globally and promoted as the “Turkey model” within Turkey challenges the macroeconomic assumptions found in established economic literature. Erdoğan defends this policy with a pseudo-theoretical approach, coupled with Islamic references, asserting that interest serves as the cause while inflation is its effect. To truly understand the essence of “Erdoganomics,” it is essential to analyze the trajectory that Erdoğan’s economic policy has taken.

Starting in the second half of 2021, Erdoğan initiated an economic policy initially referred to as the “China model” and later officially labeled the “Turkish economic model.” However, this policy eventually faced setbacks as the Central Bank’s foreign currency reserves were depleted due to the economy’s inability to generate the expected foreign trade surplus needed to control the exchange rate. As a result of these challenges, the management of the Central Bank underwent a transformation, with the appointment of “orthodox” experts tasked with setting interest rates based on supply and demand dynamics in the money market, with a primary focus on preserving price stability. However, it is crucial to note that this policy shift occurred against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic. During the initial phases of the pandemic, marked by significant uncertainty, the concept of turning the crisis into an opportunity gained traction. The disruption of global supply chains, triggered by China’s “zero COVID” policy, presented Turkey with a chance to strategically position itself within these chains. Turkey’s advantageous logistics location, particularly its proximity to Europe, played a pivotal role in this strategy.

One of the most critical strategies for capital to seize a competitive advantage in this situation involves the suppression of labor. The government has implemented several policies to achieve this goal, including the imposition of unpaid leave under the guise of banning layoffs, the depletion of the unemployment insurance fund, the introduction of flexible working arrangements facilitated by the pandemic, and the prohibition and repression of strikes and workers’ actions. Furthermore, during the pandemic, the working class was exempted from the “stay at home” campaign and was sent to work in groups, even in the face of life-threatening conditions. Both major capitalist factions, MÜSİAD and TÜSİAD, stood in full agreement on these matters.

TÜSİAD sought to leverage the opportunities arising from the pandemic by focusing on the modernization of the Customs Union with the EU. They supported and actively advanced this process with the ultimate goal of achieving full integration with the EU. In parallel, MÜSİAD put forth a proposal suggesting that Europe could utilize Turkey as a central production and supply hub. Simultaneously, MÜSİAD pointed to an alternative geographic strategy, highlighting Islamic countries where it holds a relative competitive advantage.

Erdoğan's new monetary policy, which favored MÜSİAD, marked the end of the tight monetary policy era. During the summer season, foreign currency revenues played a crucial role in supporting this policy. Consequently, the government opted to open the country, taking a gamble with people's lives while concealing the true number of Covid-19 cases. However, as the tourism season concluded, a new juncture emerged. Touristic revenues fell short of expectations. MÜSİAD proposed taking on this risk, a decision influenced in part by the approaching 2023 elections. Cooling the economy in the run-up to the elections could result in economic contraction and increased unemployment, posing a significant political risk.

The "Turkey model" involved a calculated risk, one that could lead to a severe currency crisis and hyperinflation. Neither Erdoğan, the appointed technocrats overseeing the economy, nor the Palace's economic advisors were oblivious to these inherent risks. They consciously opted to embrace this risk, relying on the hope that fortune would favor their endeavor. Under the banner of a "competitive exchange rate," the deliberately undervalued Turkish Lira was expected to stimulate exports, supported by economic growth in Turkey's key export markets, particularly the EU. Record-breaking tourism figures were also part of the equation. Additionally, as long as energy prices—the linchpin of the current deficit—did not experience a significant surge during this process, they believed they could simultaneously manage inflation and foreign exchange rates. However, during this gamble, they did not wager their own funds; instead, they put the nation's savings on the line. Unfortunately, the dice didn't roll in their favor. When the Central Bank's gross reserves were rapidly depleted, a form of state guarantee was introduced for Turkish Lira deposits. This arrangement meant that if the exchange rate increase exceeded the interest rate, the Treasury and the Central Bank would compensate for the difference. Consequently, the financial burden arising from the depletion of foreign exchange reserves was effectively converted into Turkish Lira and placed upon the Treasury. Predictably, this led to an uncontrollable spiral of inflation.

When the nation's savings were exhausted, they resorted to trading their integrity. The financiers of the July 15th incident found reconciliation. The Jamal Khashoggi murder case was closed and handed over to the perpetrators who brutally killed the journalist inside the Saudi Arabian consulate, seemingly on a platter of gold. With foreign currency deposits from the Gulf, Erdoğan managed to keep the economy afloat until the May 14th elections. However, the exhaustion of reserves made it increasingly difficult to continue with business as usual. As a result, the policy based on Islamic principles was replaced by the discourse of "financial management with international credibility." Following the elections, a new economic management team was appointed, led by Mehmet Şimşek, a British citizen with strong credibility in the eyes of imperialist capital. Şimşek effectively rejected Erdoğanomics and called for a "return to rational policies."

The "empty pot" discussion and the electoral economy

One of the most prominent right-wing leaders in Turkish bourgeois politics, who has been elected prime minister several times and also served as president,

Süleyman Demirel, is known for his phrase “there is no government that an empty pot cannot topple,” which became very popular during the election process. This phrase reflected the opposition’s hope that Erdoğan would lose the election. However, while the Nation Alliance was counting on the empty pot to ensure Erdoğan’s departure, he was already looking for a way to keep the pot boiling, even if temporarily. The “Turkey model” largely contained elements of an electoral economy.

As the elections were approaching, the strategic aspects of the “Turkey model” gradually became overwhelmed by a purely electoral economy. TÜSİAD reacted critically to this orientation, and its criticism of “economic management breaks away from the realities of economic science” became the main discourse of the Nation Alliance (unfortunately, this criticism also resonated with a large section of the left). At one stage, when the credit policy that prioritized consumption made it difficult for SMEs to access commercial loans, even MÜSİAD seemed to embrace a critical stance. In the end, however, MÜSİAD, which was convinced that the continuation of Erdoğan’s rule is preferable to the interests of its own class faction, adopted a much milder attitude towards bearing the costs of the electoral economy.

The electoral economy was largely aimed at manipulating, or more accurately, distorting the perception of the working masses. Moreover, the burden of this extremely expensive method of deceiving the masses has been compensated for by the workers and laborers themselves due to the rising cost of living. In the end, in a narrow sense, the electoral economy served Erdoğan’s most basic aims. However, in general terms, despite the fact that the Central Bank and the Treasury have been turned into party coffers, and all public resources have been mobilized for the elections, Erdoğan has not been able to create (even phony) prosperity. Hence, he failed to convince his voters of the so-called economic success. The People’s Alliance’s electoral economy policy nonetheless succeeded relatively in diverting their voters’ attention to other political spheres through religious, militarist, and nationalist demagogy.

The Nation Alliance’s economic policies were one of the most important factors that made that demagogy influential because its program, which was thoroughly shaped by TÜSİAD’s demands, was in no way a veritable alternative to that of the People’s Alliance. For example, the meeting held by the CHP to inaugurate its vision statement, featuring figures such as Jeremy Rifkin, Daron Acemoğlu, Selin Sayek Böke, and Hacer Foggo, was an attempt to garner the trust of imperialist finance capital. The popular masses were not convinced that these names would solve their problems.

The CHP’s statement, integrated with the Deva Party’s (*Deva Partisi*, founded by Erdoğan’s former Minister of Finance Ali Babacan, who later defected to the opposition), anti-labor liberal program, has become the manifesto of the Nation Alliance. Instead of evoking a TÜSİAD report, it neither mentioned how to entrench the right to unionize nor provided a place for the taxation of capital gains. Conversely, the most regressive anti-labor measures (such as generalized flexible work without seniority indemnification and a government budget exclusively in

harmony with the interests of capital and imperialism).⁴ Any citizen of the Republic of Turkey could conclude, upon reviewing the program, that the Nation Alliance has been a loyal servant of capital and that the policies it has proposed would not improve the lives of working people. This conclusion proved to be accurate.

In short, the “empty pot” served its political function, but the opposition could not challenge the government with a pro-labor programme because the class interests of the big bourgeoisie it represents prevented it from doing so. It thus helped Erdoğan and the front of despotism to shift the political agenda to other areas, and to cling to power again.

Foreign policy and the class interests of the bourgeoisie

We also see a bifurcation within the bourgeoisie in terms of the trajectory of foreign policy. Westernist-secular capital is in favor of the strategic integration of Turkish capitalism with Western imperialism. Islamist capital, on the other hand, is generally in favor of protectionist policies. The Customs Union is profitable for the TÜSİAD-affiliated capitalists who already have partnerships with foreign corporations, but it subjects SMEs to an unbearable competition. Islamist capitalists being deprived of foreign partnership is not the manifestation of an ideologically-informed political stance, but of the inability to offer attractive opportunities to foreign capital. That does not simply mean that they only operate in the domestic market. Islamist capital exports not only goods but also capital (largely as construction capital) abroad. However, the partner of Islamist capital in its integration with the world market is the state rather than foreign capital.

Clearly, the reach of Westernist-secular capital extends beyond just the EU, the US, and Britain. Koç's Arçelik has investments in South Africa, while Otokar is a primary arms supplier to the United Arab Emirates. If it offers access to Middle Eastern markets, a touch of “Rabiism” might indeed prove profitable for Westernist secular capital.⁵ However, the key point is that the opportunities presented by a “Rabiist” foreign policy to Islamist capital are significantly greater.

The Westernist-secularist bourgeoisie doesn't fundamentally oppose Erdoğan's pragmatic ties with Russia and China. It is widely recognized that Tuncay Özilhan's Anadolu Group is instrumental in fostering relations with Russia. Moreover, TÜSİAD itself is a stakeholder in China's “Belt and Road Initiative.” As such, a policy that maintains a balanced relationship with Russia and China—and secures these commercial opportunities—is also in the interests of Westernist-secularist capital. However, the S-400 crisis and the subsequent cancellation of the F-35 project had significant financial repercussions. Companies in Turkey, responsible for producing 188 parts for these aircraft, lost billions in potential revenue. This economic setback was politically manifested in the overt and stern opposition of

⁴ For a criticism of the Nation Alliance's programme, see *Gerçek Gazetesi*, “Millet İttifakı Ehveni Şer Bile Olmadığını Gösterdi”, <https://gercekgazetesi1.net/politika/millet-ittifaki-ehveni-ser-bile-olmadigini-gosterdi>.

⁵ For an analysis of the political character of the AKP based on the concept of Rabiism, see Sun-gur Savran, “Faşizm mi Rabiizm mi?”, *Devrimci Marksizm*, no. 27, Summer 2016, pp. 19-69.

Kılıçdaroğlu and the Nation Alliance to the S-400s. In essence, while TÜSİAD capital is strategically oriented towards integration with the EU and Western imperialism, as a dominant force in Turkish capital, it also seeks to capitalize on global opportunities. Many TÜSİAD members have invested in Russia.

Consider another example: Turkey's recently strengthened ties with Azerbaijan and its proactive approach to the Turkic republics of Central Asia are not primarily motivated by the Turanian ideal, but by the bourgeoisie's pursuit of energy resources. The Westernist-secular bourgeoisie supports these policies, provided they do not jeopardize relations with NATO and the EU. For instance, the Azerbaijani army's victory in the Karabakh War aligns well with the foreign policy priorities of the Westernist-secularist bourgeoisie.

In summary, the collective interests of the bourgeoisie lean towards an expansionist foreign policy. The era of "peace at home and peace in the world" seems to have passed. Yet, questions arise: Under whose guidance and against whom will this expansionist approach unfold? And who will be the primary beneficiary of this policy? These issues are the subjects of intense debate. Concurrently, this situation affords foreign powers an opportunity to continuously influence Turkish politics. The trusted allies of Western imperialism in this context are the Westernist-secular bourgeoisie and the Turkish Armed Forces, given their intrinsic association with the NATO. Islamist capital has yet to propose a strategic foreign policy alternative that could challenge this status quo. Its closest approach was the Muslim Brotherhood's endeavor to influence the Arab revolution, particularly in Egypt. It could even be argued that this direction was indirectly supported by dominant Western forces like British imperialism. However, it is evident that Turkey encountered disagreements with the USA and Israel during this period, albeit on a tactical front. The diminishing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood suggests that Turkey might find it challenging to alter the limits set by Western imperialism within the Islamic world. A parallel outcome can be anticipated for Turkey's Azerbaijan strategy, which is driven by Turkic-Turanist ambitions.

Militarism as the common ideology of the bourgeoisie

Another ideological theme prevalent during the election process revolved around militarism. Militarism has increasingly become the shared ideology of capital. Erdoğan's primary campaign focus was Turkey's achievements and ventures in the arms industry. The Nation Alliance did not ideologically counter this; instead, they delegated the militaristic rhetoric to Mansur Yavaş, the MHP-affiliated Mayor of Ankara. He delivered speeches at rallies lauding UCAVs (unmanned combat aerial vehicles) and promised to sustain the arms industry and its associated expenditures. Kılıçdaroğlu's critique of the current administration is not centered on militarism per se. His principal contention is that the Westernist-secularist capital has not secured a significant portion of the military investments. This is why he vowed during the campaign to promote competition within the arms industry.

Turkey's reliance on external energy resources not only deeply influences its foreign policy but also presents a comprehensive strategic challenge for its economic

infrastructure. This dependency becomes more acute given that primary production inputs are purchased using foreign currencies, leading to a persistent current account deficit. This deficit, in turn, hampers the stabilization of the exchange rate, posing a strategic concern for capitalists operating within Turkey. Rising inflation and fluctuating exchange rates make labor more affordable but energy significantly costlier. Consequently, both Western-oriented secular capitalists and Islamist capitalists aspire for the Turkish state to expand its influence into the neighboring energy-rich regions. In this endeavor, the primary leverage of the Turkish bourgeoisie is its military, which boasts the distinction of being the second-largest land army within NATO. Viewing the situation from a capitalist interest standpoint, the assertion by renowned international financier George Soros that “Turkey’s most valuable export is its army” appears to hold true. However, despite the substantial military prowess Turkey possesses, it lacks the decisive edge, both in quality and quantity, to operate autonomously. Additionally, other powerful entities already dominate the regions Turkey aims to influence. Without external support or alliances, the Turkish state’s solo influence in these areas seems unattainable.

There is no difference between the Nation Alliance and the People’s Alliance in their actions under the auspices of Western imperialism. The Nation Alliance is highly critical of moves that create tensions with countries in the European Union, such as Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, France, and Germany, as well as with the USA, especially in the Mediterranean. In contrast, the People’s Alliance adopts a more aggressive stance in regions like Libya, the Caucasus, and Idlib. These are areas where British imperialism competes with EU powers, attempting to carve out a niche for itself.

One might wonder why Islamist capital would show a preference for Christian Britain over Christian Continental Europe. The answer lies in British imperialist foreign policy, which transformed London into an Islamic finance haven for Gulf money. Moreover, Britain has historically used the Muslim Brotherhood as an instrument in the Middle East, continuing to do so until the organization lost its prestige and influence. This distinct and pragmatic approach of British foreign policy also aids Turkey’s arms industry in securing a pivotal position within NATO. The collaboration of British capital, and even the direct involvement of the British state in Turkey’s arms industry, particularly in projects like the National Fighter Aircraft, is a reality that often goes unnoticed. Between 2018 and 2022, Turkey’s arms exports surged by 69 percent. Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman are significant recipients of these exports. Furthermore, Turkey is venturing into the markets of NATO’s Eastern European members, which have bolstered their defense spending in the wake of the war in Ukraine. India, being one of the world’s most heavily armed nations, is another market that beckons the Turkish arms industry. The support of British imperialism appears crucial for Turkey as it seeks to penetrate all these markets.⁶

⁶ In the article entitled “Made in Turkey but British” in the 161st issue of *Gerçek Gazetesi* dated February 2023, we mentioned the special relationship that the arms industry in Turkey had established with British imperialism. See <https://gercekgazetesil.net/politika/yerli-ve-english>.

Following the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016, the gradual emergence of a quasi-military regime has placed militarism at the forefront of political discourse. While militarism has become a cornerstone of the People's Alliance's propaganda, the Nation Alliance has similarly adopted this stance. This adoption can be attributed to two main reasons: firstly, the interests of the capital factions they represent demand such an alignment, and secondly, they acknowledge the powerful impact of militarist propaganda on the general populace.

Anti-immigrant politics

Another dominant theme during the election process was anti-immigrant sentiment. This sentiment was exploited by Sinan Oğan, the third candidate in the presidential election supported by Ümit Özdağ's Victory Party (*Zafer Partisi*), which attempted to introduce European-style fascist politics to Turkey. The class interest behind this anti-immigrant sentiment stems from the bourgeoisie manipulating the anger and tension caused by the economic crisis among the working people, redirecting it against the immigrant population. Undoubtedly, the rapid arrival, settlement, and social integration of millions of migrants would create social tensions in any country. Fascist and proto-fascist movements worldwide are best poised to exploit such tensions. This has been evident in Turkey as well. Following the second round of the presidential vote, anti-immigrant sentiment became central to the Nation Alliance's propaganda. One reason for this pivot was to appeal to the 5 percent of voters who had previously supported Sinan Oğan. But, naturally, there is more to it than just that. The issue should also be examined through the lens of class interests.

In Turkey, the bourgeoisie takes advantage of migrants from countries like Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Central Asian nations by employing them as cheap labor. This influx of migrant labor also has the effect of suppressing the wages of domestic workers, further illustrating that the bourgeoisie generally benefits from the presence of immigrants. The People's Alliance's pro-migrant stance is fundamentally influenced by class interests from top to bottom. It's primarily the small and medium-sized enterprises that exploit migrant labor. The industries where migrants are predominantly employed include garments (31.1 percent), trade and accommodation (17.7 percent), other manufacturing (17.1 percent), construction (13.2 percent), and agriculture (7.8 percent).⁷ Within these sectors, it's primarily the small and medium-sized enterprises that employ migrant labor more extensively. This trend can be attributed to the fact that migrant labor is largely informal. In this context, the statement from AKP's Yasin Aktay, representing the Islamic bourgeoisie, is particularly telling: "If Syrians leave, the country's economy will collapse."⁸ A considerable number of Syrian migrants are also small

7 Mahmut Hamsici, "Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler hakkında güncel bilgiler neler?", *BBC News Türkçe*, August 26, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-58329307>.

8 *Cumhuriyet*, "Erdoğan'ın Danışmanı Aktay: Suriyeliler Giderse Ülke Ekonomisi Çöker", <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/erdoganin-danismani-aktay-suriyeliler-giderse-ulke-ekono->

capital owners. They have set up company partnerships in several provinces, most notably in Gaziantep, with the number of these established companies approaching 1000.⁹ Another group that has benefited from the influx of migrants is property owners, who have seen significant increases in their income due to rising rents and housing prices. Notably, property owners in the border provinces, where migrants have predominantly settled and where there has been a marked uptick in housing demand, have particularly benefited.

It is also important to emphasize that not all migrants are individuals fleeing from war. Those who deposit \$500,000, purchase government bonds of the same amount, or buy real estate valued at \$400,000 can acquire Turkish citizenship. The revenue generated from selling citizenship in this manner has reached 7.5 billion US dollars.¹⁰ From these figures, it is evident that the sale of citizenship plays a significant role in financing the despotic regime, especially given its shortage of foreign currency. These details provide clear insights into the class dynamics underlying the purported “immigrant-friendly” stance of the capital represented by the People's Alliance.

The capital affiliated with TÜSİAD, which employs migrant labor only to a limited extent, indirectly benefits from the competition brought about by the increased supply of migrant labor. As the economic crisis deepens and the cost of living surges, exacerbating class contradictions, this particular segment of capital reaps direct and strategic advantages from the growing hostility towards immigrants, thereby diverting and misdirecting class anger. The specific class interests of TÜSİAD-aligned capital form the foundation for Ümit Özdağ's fascist, anti-immigrant rhetoric becoming the cornerstone policy of the Nation Alliance.

In conclusion, the conspicuous silence of the socialist left on this issue demands an explanation. The EU-funded illusion of “fraternity” with migrants, as popularized within left-liberal circles, was swiftly deflated under the weight of order-based politics. Anti-immigrant sentiments resonated easily with the self-interest of the modern petty bourgeoisie, the primary demographic that the left targets. Examining the class relationship between the modern petty bourgeoisie and migrants, we observe that they neither garner rent from migrants nor exploit migrant labor directly. Their economic interaction might extend to employing a Central Asian babysitter, and when this babysitter requests a pay raise due to a soaring dollar, it is animosity, not empathy, toward immigrants that gets stoked. While anti-immigrant sentiment is undeniably prevalent among the working class, their objective interests do not lie in opposing immigrants. Instead, they should be aligning in class unity with immigrants to challenge the bourgeoisie. In a society where the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, governs culture, ideology, and intellectual discourse, it is not surprising that the masses might be oblivious to their objective

misi-coker-1855405.

9 *Yeni Şafak*, “Göçle Gelen Ekonomi”, <https://www.yenisafak.com/ekonomi/gocle-gelen-ekonomi-2991973>.

10 Nedim Türkmen, “Satılan Vatandaşlık Sayısı: 25.969”, *Sözcü*, May 16, 2022. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2022/yazarlar/nedim-turkmen/satilan-vatandaslik-sayisi-25-969-7136848>.

interests. So, if the past chauvinism of the masses during imperialist wars did not deter socialists from denouncing those wars, it is untenable for them to now remain silent in the face of rising anti-immigrant sentiment.

Furthermore, even if the working class is swayed by chauvinism, the inherent dynamics of the class struggle possess the potential to unify both migrant and native workers in opposition to capital. History provides numerous examples of this. One personal experience worth noting is the Adkotürk strike in Çerkezköy. Here, Syrian workers sided with the strike against a Syrian company partner, highlighting an intention to include these migrant workers in the strike. Although this particular strike did not culminate in a united front between migrant and local workers, the potential for such unity was evident.¹¹ On one side, the animosity exhibited by Syrian employers towards their workers fueled anti-immigrant sentiments. Yet, on the flip side, workers passionately applauded and backed the agitation of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (*Devrimci İşçi Partisi*, DİP), which urged immigrant workers to strike and championed unity. Such a dynamic is hard to discern in the political stances backed by the Western secular bourgeoisie, or in the day-to-day lives of the modern petty bourgeoisie steeped in self-centeredness. This explains why the identity-centric, post-modern, post-Leninist narrative of “brotherhood”—championed by social-democratic and green parties of the European Union (like Die Linke in Germany, NPA in France, Syriza in Greece, and others)—dissipated so readily. It's been reaffirmed that the most effective path to freeing the working class from chauvinistic influences lies in genuine proletarian class politics.

The Kurdish question

The Kurdish question emerged as one of the pivotal issues during the election process. Yet, instead of engaging in discussions about potential solutions, the Kurdish political movement, primarily through the PKK, was vilified. Even critiques of the unlawfully appointed officials in HDP municipalities were framed as acts in concert with terrorism. In this context, the People's Alliance predominantly wielded the tool of chauvinism. The HDP's endorsement of Kılıçdaroğlu, along with the press coverage of statements from PKK leaders echoing this sentiment, became central to the People's Alliance's propaganda campaign.

In contrast, the Nation Alliance did not counter this wave of chauvinism with proposals to address the Kurdish issue. Instead, it attempted to use chauvinism to its advantage. The alliance spotlighted Erdoğan's inclusion of Huda-Par, which has ties to the Kurdish Hezbollah — a political Islamist group that historically received state support as a counter to the PKK. They consistently brought up Erdoğan's past peace initiatives and the events that unfolded during those times. All these tactics only amplified the prevailing chauvinism in the political discourse.

11 From our first-hand experience, we're fully aware of this dynamic's existence. At one point during the strike, there was a decision to create a banner in Arabic, urging Arab workers to join the strike alongside their Turkish counterparts. Our video recording from the strike site serves as a testament that the working class can indeed overcome anti-immigration sentiments. See *Gerçek* newspaper's Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_Ki0Ty3i0.

Interestingly, the HDP, which stands as the primary representative on the Kurdish question, did not prioritize this issue in their agenda. The HDP seemed to believe that the rising chauvinism would naturally consolidate Kurdish votes in their favor. With this strategy, they were almost certain to secure their position as the third-largest party in the new parliament. Yet, political power seemed to lean towards the party perceived as “less chauvinist” among the chauvinistic alternatives. To be more precise, even if a party’s political stance was rooted in chauvinism, the influence leaned towards the victory of the party perceived to be more aligned with the Kurdish issue.

The political dynamics surrounding the Kurdish question demand a class-based explanation. Central to this analysis are the colonial interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie. These interests extend beyond the Kurdish regions within Turkey’s borders, reaching into northern Iraq (Bashûr) and, to a degree, northern Syria (Rojava), both of which are rich in energy resources. The bourgeoisie shares a common interest in exerting influence over these regions, accessing their energy resources, and integrating them into the Turkish economy in a manner that allows transactions in local currency—akin to the model employed in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, even if it does not involve direct conquest. While there is general agreement within the bourgeoisie regarding these overarching interests, the divergence arises when determining the method and alliances necessary to achieve them. It is important to consider that, in the post-July 15 quasi-military regime, the decision-making power regarding the Kurdish question within the People’s Alliance is not solely in the hands of the AKP leadership or Beştepe. Instead, the crucial decisions are largely influenced by the military wing of the government, including the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, and the National Intelligence Organization. Consequently, it is logical for the People’s Alliance to base its Kurdish policy on the military and political neutralization/suppression of the Kurdish movement’s tradition, as broadly represented by the HDP.

We must also consider the following historical perspective. In the past, a line of thinking widely held within the military rejected the language, culture, and identity of the Kurds. This stance, as perceived by the Kurdish movement, was termed as the “policy of denial and annihilation.” Ideologically, it resonated with the Kemalist principle of “peace at home, peace in the world,” accompanied by a firm declaration that not “a single pebble” would be conceded. Conversely, this approach viewed the second republican project—with figures like Turgut Özal leveraging the Iraq war to engage in imperialist aggression and support Iraqi Kurds, and Tansu Çiller suggesting discussions around the BASK model—as jeopardizing national security. However, there has always been an inherent tension between the military’s concept of national security and the Turkish bourgeoisie’s colonial aspirations extending beyond national borders. Currently, this tension has largely been reconciled. The “denial” aspect of the “denial and annihilation” policy has been largely abandoned. The MHP’s ideological reconfiguration, even in its most pronounced form, serves as an example of this shift, aligning more closely with these evolving interests.

The strategy of partnering with Barzani against the Kurdish political tradition, represented by the HDP, has transitioned from being tactical to becoming a core

strategic approach. Within Turkey, this cooperation manifests as strengthened ties with Kurdish landowners and pro-government village guard tribes. There is a clear carrot-and-stick approach aimed at pulling the political Islamist faction of the Kurdish movement away from the HDP. This was evident with Hûda-Par's shift first towards the People's Alliance and subsequently into parliament. This strategic pivot goes beyond the People's Alliance's mere rejection of Kurdish politics, and it actively pursues a specific Kurdish political agenda. At its foundation, this strategy is built upon the Kurdish bourgeoisie, tribal leaders, and landlords, many of whom are interconnected with Islamist capital. This political trajectory is set on the military and political neutralization of the PKK. In parallel with this, it seeks to either eliminate the HDP from the political landscape or, if that proves challenging, to minimize its influence, especially at the local governance level. Such decisions and directives will not merely be the domain of the civilian arm of governance. Instead, they will be executed directly by the Ministry of Defense and the National Intelligence Organization. The appointment of trustees in HDP-led municipalities, the incarceration of Selahattin Demirtaş, the successive arrests of HDP members, and most recently, the move to disband the HDP, all epitomize this policy in action.

This policy starkly contrasts with the Kurdish strategy of the Nation Alliance, which reflects the interests of the Westernist-secular bourgeoisie. This segment of the bourgeoisie perceives an initiative process, overseen by the USA and the European Union, as more congruent with its strategic objectives. Consequently, it is predisposed to view the HDP and its foundational policy as potential partners. The Good Party (*İyi Parti*) emerges as the wildcard in this equation. Given its fascist origins, one might anticipate the İyi Parti to fundamentally oppose this strategy. Yet, that is not the case. The party's main shortcoming is its inability to defend this stance against the critiques of the MHP. Nevertheless, the İyi Parti has consistently engaged with the HDP, including during constitutional discussions. In fact, the inaugural effort to align the İyi Parti and the HDP in a tacit and unofficial coalition during the 2019 local elections was both initiated and realized. But with the intensifying chauvinistic undertones in politics, the İyi Parti initially adopted a defensive position, and as that proved insufficient, it amplified its anti-HDP rhetoric.

As events unfolded, we observed the CHP similarly aligning with the chauvinist campaign. At a certain juncture, the Nation Alliance was primarily accompanied by parties such as the Deva Partisi, the Future Party (*Gelecek Partisi*), and the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*). These parties acknowledged the legitimacy of Kurdish politics and voiced the demands of the Kurdish people, albeit from a liberal and bourgeois standpoint. Given that the HDP, with its support base grounded in the Kurdish vote, has garnered around 10%, it is evident how crucial their support is for the Nation Alliance to achieve the 50+1% threshold, especially in the presidential elections. However, there exists a palpable contradiction. The Nation Alliance, while recognizing the importance of the HDP's support, not only refrained from addressing the Kurdish question during the electoral period (with the issue being conspicuously absent from the joint consensus text of the Nation Alliance) but also seemed to rival the People's Alliance in its demonization of the Kurdish movement and its endorsement of chauvinism. When we endeavor to unpack this paradox, we

are met with the profound dilemma faced by the Kurdish movement.

This is the crux of the tragedy: For a long time, the Kurdish movement viewed the global imperialist powers—primarily the USA, EU, and NATO—as not only potential solution-brokers to the Kurdish question but, more gravely, as allies to the Kurdish people. Such a reactionary and perilous policy was rationalized as a tactical necessity borne from the situation. Over time, this stance evolved into an ideological and political endorsement of Western imperialism. We have consistently posited that for the Kurdish people, seeking the aegis of imperialism is not only an act of betrayal against other nations, but it also bears direct repercussions for the Kurdish people itself.¹² Today, the repercussions of this dynamic are evident. When the Kurdish movement placed its trust in the patronage of imperialism, the Westernist secularist bourgeoisie felt little need to genuinely engage with Kurdish politics to secure its support. They operated under the assumption that the intermediation of the USA and the EU would suffice to bring Kurdish politics onboard. Regrettably, this exact scenario played out. The Kurdish movement operated under the belief that, despite the Nation Alliance's escalating chauvinistic rhetoric, if the alliance ascended to power, negotiations would ensue through the mediation of the USA and the EU. This misplaced confidence culminated in a conspicuous self-censorship throughout the electoral phase, where the Kurdish question was notably sidelined.

Nationalist votes or fascist danger?

A prevailing narrative in the post-election analysis was that nationalism emerged as the dominant sentiment. To illustrate, the MHP garnered 5.4 million votes (10%), the İyi Parti 5.2 million (9.7%), the Zafer Partisi 1.2 million (2.23%), and the Great Unity Party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi*, BBP) 530 thousand (1%), amounting to a collective 12.6 million votes or 23.2% of the total. It is worth noting, however, that the authenticity of the MHP's 10% share is a matter of debate. Nevertheless, cumulatively, this marks the highest vote share historically achieved by the MHP's political lineage. But the significance goes beyond mere numbers. The chauvinistic rhetoric championed by parties stemming from the MHP tradition influenced both the AKP and CHP, the election's primary contenders. This influence was unmistakable. Numerous articles and commentaries have highlighted this trend, but a fundamental flaw persisted in these analyses: a misdiagnosis. If the discourse is centered on nationalism and nationalist parties, then the focus should not be limited to the 23.2% vote share. Rather, it should encompass the combined votes of both the People's Alliance and the Nation Alliance, which, throughout the election, were embroiled in a tug of war over nationalist sentiments. Together, their vote share approached 90%. What is truly at the heart of this discourse is the combined vote share of the four parties with MHP roots, as well as the influential political position

¹² The resolution of the 5th Congress of the DİP, which expresses our policy on this issue, titled "The Historical Decline of the Kurdish Movement and the Requirements of a Proletarian, Anti-Imperialist, and Internationalist Politics" can be read here: <https://gercekgazetesi1.net/dip-bildirileri/kurt-hareketinin-tarihsel-geriledi-ve-proleter-anti-imperyalist-internasyonalist>.

of the third presidential candidate, Sinan Oğan, also of MHP origin, who secured 5% of the votes.

When discussing parties and figures that trace their roots to the MHP, the conversation should pivot towards fascism rather than mere nationalism. The MHP stands as the foundational fascist entity from which the other parties have branched out. These parties often reaffirm their ties to this fascist lineage by referencing “idealism” (*ülküçülüük*). While it is debatable whether these offshoots (with the notable exceptions of the MHP and BBP, which historically had paramilitary affiliations) can be fully categorized as fascist in the traditional sense, their trajectory suggests an inevitable evolution into a distinctly fascist movement. It is crucial to recognize that branding such a movement—historically antagonistic to workers, responsible for violent actions, and intertwined with NATO’s counter-insurgency strategies against progressive movements— as simply “nationalist” is a significant misrepresentation.

When analyzing the electoral success of fascist (MHP-BBP) and proto-fascist (İyi Parti-Zafer Partisi) parties, a recurring assertion is the inherent right-wing and nationalist predisposition of the Turkish populace. This perspective is misleading. It fails to account for the global upswing in fascism and proto-fascist movements as a response to the severe downturn in world capitalism. Attempts to explain this trend through sociological lenses—highlighting conservatism or cultural codes— oversimplify the issue, sidestepping the crucial class dynamics and interests underpinning the rise of fascism. In the current era, the nationalism and racism we witness aims to obscure the deepening class divisions exacerbated by the Great Depression, substituting these class-based tensions with racial and nationalist divides, notably between indigenous populations and immigrants.¹³ Driven by this underlying class interest, both conflicting factions of the bourgeoisie not only incorporate fascist and proto-fascist parties within their ranks but also embed chauvinism, fascism, and overt racism into their policies and narratives.

It is a grave mistake to overlook these class interests. Those who do are entirely vulnerable to the threat of fascism, confusing the claims of “democracy” made by a faction of the bourgeoisie for its own legitimacy with genuine democracy. They fail to recognize the discrepancy between the subjective statements of the bourgeoisie’s political agents and their objective interests, and thus, do not derive the essential inferences. The problem is expecting freedom, democracy, etc., from the internal contradictions of the bourgeoisie. At present, it’s unreasonable to even anticipate the separation of powers from the bourgeoisie. Why? Because the significant downturn of capitalism makes it exceptionally challenging for the bourgeoisie to govern the vast majority of the working and impoverished individuals. The fear of revolt and revolution intensifies the bourgeoisie’s inclinations toward autocracy, dictatorship, imperialism, war — in essence, all forms of reactionary measures. This explains the disillusionment of those who hoped for democracy from Biden as opposed

13 For an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of the rise of pro-fascist movements in the period we live in, see. Sungur Savran, “The Return of Barbarism: Fascism in the 21st Century (2) The Rise of Proto-Fascism”, *Revolutionary Marxism* 2020, p. 65-102.

to Trump, or from Macron as opposed to Le Pen. In Turkey, the expectation of democracy from Kılıçdaroğlu was shattered without him even coming to power. His advancement to the second round of the election was enough. Kılıçdaroğlu quickly aligned with Ümit Özdağ, inspired by the growing fascism in Europe, displaying posters proclaiming “Syrians will leave.”

The absurd political orientation of allying with fascists against “fascism” has emerged. The socialists have remained silent when they should have exposed the real face of fascism, when they should have explained the crimes of the fascist movement in Turkey against the working class, that the bosses use fascists as strikebreakers, as fratricides for the imperialists and that they are the most significant source of personnel for the NATO counter-guerrilla. It would be completely wrong to think that taking a stand on this issue would cut socialists from the masses. The opposite is true. When socialists are engaged in the class struggle, they are fighting shoulder to shoulder with the workers who vote for all these parties, and they can discuss all sorts of political issues thanks to the confidence gained in the struggle. The target of the socialists should be the fascist parties and their leaders who serve the bourgeoisie. Not the workers and toilers who vote for these parties. But we observed the opposite. The leftists who supported the Nation Alliance treated the fascist parties and leaders as if they were democrats who had repented of their hostility against the workers and the people and did not raise their voice against Kılıçdaroğlu's propaganda with the symbol of “bozkurt” (grey wolf) and “nationalist” rhetoric. This reckless attitude paved the way for an approach that insulted and belittled those who voted for the People's Alliance or for Sinan Oğan and supported Erdoğan in the second round. Once again, while identity politics paralyzed the left, it became the lifeblood of reaction; fascism, the most extreme expression of reaction, gained mass support, and fascist discourses gained hegemonic influence.

The class dimension of electoral security

At this stage, we can examine electoral security from a broader perspective. As mentioned at the outset of this article, our discussion encompasses more than just repression, irregularities, and fraud in elections. Why did these events transpire? This is the question we seek to answer. Electoral security emerged as a hotly debated topic throughout the election process. Members of the Nation Alliance unanimously advocated for strengthening the parliamentary system in their political program. However, in practice, they repeatedly emphasized their joint preparations for election security from the outset. After most of the “Table of Six” meetings, it was reported that election security commissions had been established and that collaborative preparations were underway.

The elections have concluded. During the first round, it was discovered that thousands of ballot boxes lacked representation from the opposition. In these boxes, Erdoğan secured a significant lead. While the security of the ballot boxes was a topic of concern, the primary issue that emerged was the integrity of the voters' registers and lists. Recent studies revealed an alarming trend: the number of registered voters has increased at twice the rate of the population growth, hinting at the possibility

of double registrations. Ever since the adoption of the address-based population registration system in 2007, the number of voters has grown disproportionately compared to the population. Furthermore, since 2009, the use of fingerprints was eliminated, leaving only voter ID cards and wet signatures as means to verify voting authenticity. In the 2023 elections, this discrepancy between the population growth rate and voter turnout widened to 6.7 million, and no logical explanation for this gap has been provided to date.¹⁴

It is inconceivable that the Nation Alliance, which boasts of its rigorous preparations for election security and established a special commission a year earlier, failed to spot these anomalies in the voter lists. Neither the Supreme Election Council (SEC) nor any other state institution has offered an explanation for the inexplicably high voter count, which defies the natural course of events. Yet, even more concerning is the absence of any significant pressure from the opposition on the SEC and the state regarding this matter.

While the Nation Alliance claims to be highly committed to electoral security, its actions suggest a more passive acceptance of the prevailing electoral conditions. The People's Alliance highlighted this passive stance when it openly endorsed Erdoğan's bid for a third term, disregarding the constitutional mandate. Moreover, the People's Alliance approved the new electoral law, which largely favored them. Astonishingly, this law was enacted for the upcoming elections even though it was introduced less than a year prior, again bypassing constitutional protocols.

The Nation Alliance's claims to champion electoral security seem to be undermined by underlying class interests. The evidence is unmistakable. The "front of despotism" has tailored the electoral process to its liking. This is evident from the voter lists, the electoral campaign process, the participating parties, the composition of the opposition, and even the political campaign against İmamoğlu — including the selection of the contender to run against Erdoğan. This control was achieved by harnessing state institutions, armed state bodies, and the judiciary.

For genuine election security, a force capable of challenging and overturning the current situation is essential. This force can only arise from the mass mobilization of the working class operating within legitimate frameworks. Yet, the very idea of such a mass political mobilization terrifies the bourgeoisie. The Westernist secular bourgeoisie, which underpins the Nation Alliance, would rather tolerate even the harshest, least meritocratic, anti-Western, pro-Islamic capital, and undemocratic governance of Erdoğan than see the working class mobilized for freedom, both at the polls and in public squares. They fear the empowerment of workers, their newfound confidence, and their direct pursuit of their interests. This core issue clarifies why the Nation Alliance never genuinely intended to confront the "front of despotism" decisively on election security from the outset.

Rather than genuinely safeguarding electoral security, the Nation Alliance's fervent claims seem more intent on preempting any significant confrontation. They

14 For comprehensive research on this subject, see Füsün Sarp Nebil, "Seçmen sayısı nüfusa göre neden 6,7 milyon fazla?", <https://yetkinreport.com/2023/05/24/secmen-sayisi-nufusa-gore-neden-67-milyon-fazla/>, 24 May 2023.

have artfully cultivated confidence in the electoral system, effectively stifling the autonomous spirit of the masses in the process. Such a feat could not have been accomplished by either Erdoğan or Bahçeli. When Minister of the Interior Süleyman Soylu, a figure closely associated with repression and capricious governance, proclaimed that “the security of the ballot box is entrusted to us,” the implications were unmistakable. Thus, the Nation Alliance was instrumental in ensuring that intense electoral battles among various bourgeois factions never escalated to a point that could jeopardize the capitalist order.

In reflecting upon the outcome, the conclusion is unambiguous: The Nation Alliance deceived the public. Tragically, even some socialists fell for this deception. Drawn into opposing Erdoğan, the socialist movement mistakenly viewed the Nation Alliance as a natural ally. By adopting the Nation Alliance's rhetoric, they reduced election security to a mere technicality rather than recognizing it as a pivotal class issue. The DİP, however, advocated a distinct perspective, urging socialists to rally for electoral security independently of the bourgeoisie. This is because ensuring electoral security through mass mobilization before, during, and after elections requires acting not alongside bourgeois political entities, but in defiance of, and often in opposition to them. Furthermore, one must be wary: the bourgeoisie might manipulate popular sentiment for their own gains or resort to provocations to justify illicit actions. To counteract these tactics, both class and political independence are imperative.¹⁵

15 The DİP's “Detach from the Politics of Order! Let's Unite to Defeat Despotism, Defend the Will of the People, and Oppose Sibling Fighting!” It would be meaningful to quote the relevant part of the paper: “The ‘Front of Despotism’ is evidently willing to deploy every conceivable provocation and manipulation throughout the electoral process to maintain its grip on power, as evidenced by recent occurrences. Amid such a provocative and repressive climate, forging an independent front, distanced from mainstream politics, is paramount. Alliances outside the dual bourgeois centers within the prevailing political landscape must craft a separate fulcrum, especially when confronting threats to ballot security and the potential subversion of the popular will. This is the only avenue to prevent the theft of votes, the stifling of public sentiment outside of polling booths, and the dangerous pitfall of internal strife irrespective of electoral choices. To think of collaborating with the institutional opposition in safeguarding ballots would be as misguided as endorsing the presidential candidate from the Table of Six. We recall with clarity the muted stance of the establishment's opposition, seemingly aligning with the AKP, during the tumultuous period between June 7 and November 1, 2015, characterized by violence and intimidation. We remember the unchallenged, unsealed referendum that ushered in the presidential system, with established parties seemingly in acquiescence. Memories remain fresh of Kılıçdaroğlu, post his ‘March for Justice,’ swiftly leveraging his newfound prestige to back Abdullah Gül as a consensus candidate. Likewise, Muharrem İnce's quick concession to Erdoğan on election night, after portraying himself as the sole contender, is not forgotten. Aligning with establishment politics cannot effectively champion the will of the people! Only by standing apart from this mainstream narrative can the true desires of the populace be safeguarded. Even if erstwhile allies fail to find common electoral ground, unity in defending ballot security and preventing the theft of the public's will is crucial. The focus must be on fostering worker solidarity and promoting communal harmony against potential divisions. In light of these reflections, the DİP reiterates its call to all forces championing the interests of the working class, laborers, and the marginalized, especially socialists. We urge the establishment of a center

What should the socialists not have done?

Let's reiterate our core argument. We have provided evidence that the political polarization seen in the electoral process arose from the internal contradictions and conflicts of the bourgeoisie. This occurred even though the primary contradiction in society during this electoral period was between labor and capital. With class politics that prioritize and place the working class in direct opposition to capital, this situation could have been reversed. However, it is pointless to seek political entities capable of this within the established order of politics. Such potential could only be located within the socialist realm of politics. But in this electoral process, the socialists not only distanced themselves from the working class but also appeared to abandon socialist principles. Both the Labor and Freedom Alliance and the Union of Socialist Forces (*Sosyalist Güç Birliđi*) exemplify this trend. With the HDP at the center of the Labor and Freedom Alliance, it was normal that left-liberalism would dominate the main direction of this alliance. And so, it was. The participation of non-HDP parties such as the Labour Party (*Emek Partisi*, EMEP), the Labour Movement Party (*Emekçi Hareket Partisi*, EHP), the Social Freedom Party (*Toplumsal Özgürlük Partisi*, TÖP) and the Federation of Socialist Assemblies (*Sosyalist Meclisler Federasyonu*, SMP) in the alliance in addition to the Workers' Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, TİP) did not have the opposite effect. On the contrary, these socialist parties gradually distanced themselves from class politics and surrendered to the left-liberal line. The political platform of the Labor and Freedom Alliance was, in many points, even behind the CHP, not to mention that it did not put the class contradiction at the center.¹⁶ Although TİP participated in the elections with separate lists, it did not draw a different profile from the Labor and Freedom Alliance in terms of its political program.

The Union of Socialist Forces appeared on the scene as an alliance of the Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*, TKP), Communist Movement of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Hareketi*, TKH), and Revolutionary Movement (*Devrimci Hareket*), which came from the SİP-TKP tradition, and the Left Party (*Sol Parti*), which was founded as a continuation of the Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi*, ÖDP). However, the Union of Socialist Forces differed from the Labor and Freedom Alliance only in its emphasis on secularism. The political positioning of the Union of Socialist Forces did not correspond to a class distinction, and the adjective "socialist" did not go beyond the defense of socialism as an identity. In the economic sphere, where the class conflict was most acute, the Union of Socialist Forces made its political debut

distinct from the prevailing political order, covering everything from presidential candidacies to ballot security" (https://gercekgazetesi1.net/dip-bildirileri/dip-bildirisi-duzen-siyasetinden-kopun-istibdadi-yenmek-halkin-iradesini-savunmak-kardes_kavgasina).

16 A more comprehensive criticism of the political position of the Labor and Freedom Alliance was made in the declaration of the DİP Politbüro titled "An Alliance of Labor and Freedom Cannot Be Established Without Breaking with Capital and Imperialism." The declaration can be accessed on the website www.dip.org.tr and from this link: <https://gercekgazetesi1.net/dip-bildirileri/dip-politburolu-bildirisi-sermayeden-ve-emperyalizmden-kopmadan-emegin-ve-ozgurlugun>.

with a vague defense of nationalism that pointed to left Keynesianism rather than socialism and used middle-of-the-road formulas such as transforming the economy. As a result, the working class was not even mentioned in the Union of Socialist Forces's political platform. The working class was dissolved into concepts such as "workers" and "toilers", typical of petty-bourgeois socialism.¹⁷

To understand how the socialists reached their current position, we must trace back to the initial misstep. The crux of this misjudgment lies in not running a distinct presidential candidate against the People's and Nation Alliances. This decision marked the beginning of a political surrender to the established political order. Why? Primarily because, in the existing system, the presidential election is of paramount significance, given the executive power vested in the president. Consequently, any entity aiming to present itself as a viable alternative for solving social problems must do so through the presidential candidacy. In this context, supporting Kılıçdaroğlu, the TÜSİAD's candidate, while simultaneously upholding a socialist agenda aligned with the working class' interests, is not only contradictory but also unrealistic. The gravity of this decision goes beyond mere political strategy. Backing Kılıçdaroğlu essentially equates to renouncing socialist ideals and sidelining class-based politics. We have already emphasized that the bourgeoisie's class interests necessitate this shift, evident in the Nation Alliance's decision to remove economic considerations from their political focus, even if it inadvertently aids Erdoğan. So, the real question arises: What is holding the socialists back? The answer: Kılıçdaroğlu!

At this stage, for the sake of clarity, it would be best to leave it to the owners of this policy. Erkan Baş, the leader of the TİP, argued that it was necessary to support the Nation Alliance candidate in the first round, justifying it as follows: "We have experienced the 2018 elections and a perception has been formed: If there are many candidates, Tayyip Erdoğan cannot win in the first round, and whichever opposition candidate is left in the second round, we will all vote for him. It looks good on the surface, but in practice, the opposition candidates fought against each other instead of fighting against the government. It became a race to see who would make it to the second round. In the meantime, we forgot our real duty and Tayyip Erdoğan won." This statement is a very clear political position. The TİP made it very clear that the real task was to defeat Erdoğan. It subordinated everything else to this task. It criticized the opposition candidates for fighting against each other. The suggestion for the future was also clear: the opposition should not fight each other. It is understandable for an opposition party to produce policies against the government and to focus on these policies. But what does it mean to condemn the opposition parties for fighting each other? How can a workers' party not deal with the policies of the opposition bourgeois parties, which are based on the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism? How can a workers' party not deal with the

¹⁷ A more comprehensive criticism of the Union of Socialist Forces was made in the DİP Politburo's declaration titled "The Union of Socialist Forces Should Not Be a New Two-and-a-Half Front." The declaration can be accessed on the website www.dip.org.tr and the following link: <https://gercekgazetesi1.net/dip-bildirileri/sosyalist-guc-birligi-yeni-bir-iki-bucukuncu-cephe-olmali>.

policies of the opposition bourgeois parties that are based on the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism? It can't and won't because the only real task that TİP set for itself and the opposition was "defeating Erdoğan." In other words, the task was to make Kılıçdaroğlu win. Therefore, nothing should be done to make Kılıçdaroğlu lose votes. Kılıçdaroğlu's NATOism, his TÜSİADism, his hostility towards the workers, and his program to abolish severance pay would be ignored. Let's go on; his concessions to political Islamism would be ignored. It is not over yet. In the second round, when Kılıçdaroğlu replaced the liberal demagoguery of "spring will come" with the fascist demagoguery of "Syrians will leave," when he negotiated ministerial deals with fascists, when he became a partner in the policy of shackling the will of the Kurdish people with trustees, they remained silent. Because the calculation was clear!

We need to emphasize that suggesting one can vote for Kılıçdaroğlu without endorsing his program is misleading. The presidential election, by design, directly determines the executive body. In this system, the government is formed directly by the president, not by parliamentary selection. Therefore, the traditional parliamentary vote of confidence has been replaced by the presidential election. Voting for Kılıçdaroğlu, in essence, means endorsing the Nation Alliance's consensus document, which he announced as his program. Some argued they saw the election as a referendum. They contend they supported Kılıçdaroğlu as they favored a shift from a single-man presidential system to a parliamentary system. However, this assertion lacks weight. We have already outlined the hollow political substance behind Kılıçdaroğlu's and the Nation Alliance's pledges of a parliamentary system. Notably, they first sidelined this promise in practice and then formally abandoned it in their 12-point declaration that named Kılıçdaroğlu as the shared candidate. Despite the Nation Alliance distancing itself from the idea of shifting to a parliamentary system, socialist factions persisted with their referendum rhetoric. Kılıçdaroğlu's messaging was inconsistent. He oscillated between calls for a "new era" and others like "halalization." Meanwhile, TİP framed its election campaign around the slogan "You will be judged" – not "We will judge." This implies that some officials might be tried, though individuals like Süleyman Soylu might be exempted due to their parliamentary immunity. Ultimately, this approach might not be as radical as it first appears. The underlying theme is consistent with class collaborationism.

The class collaborators' stance evidently mirrors the broader left's perspective. We heard various slogans like "you will be judged," "we will send you away," and "they will go away." Yet, these slogans culminated in one overarching implication: political opposition to the Nation Alliance from the left became taboo. A stark example of this was the Labor and Freedom Alliance's passive stance, even in the face of Kılıçdaroğlu's chauvinism. The Sol Parti's position encapsulates this trend. Claiming "Let Erdoğan lose" is essentially the same as asserting "We should ensure Kılıçdaroğlu wins." The Sol Parti's stance did not end there. Alper Taş clearly articulated the prevailing tendency of the left to align with the bourgeoisie, stating: "The Nation Alliance will wield power in the coming era, and the Sol Parti aims to

be its revolutionary opposition.”¹⁸

The underlying sentiment of class collaborationism in voting for Kılıçdaroğlu was widespread. However, various entities that advocated this policy differed in the degree to which they justified their stance. Take, for instance, TKP. While they championed a vote for Kılıçdaroğlu, they adopted a notably more critical position than either TİP or the Sol Parti, their ally. The TKP openly commented on the Nation Alliance, stating, “The Nation Alliance is endorsed by both local and foreign capital which, years ago, propelled the AKP into power. Moreover, this alliance neither outwardly upholds secularism and republican values nor diverts from a NATO-centric worldview.” These are quite strong assertions. Rewording their stance for clarity gives us: “We are endorsing Kılıçdaroğlu, the representative of an alliance that has the backing of capital sources that once elevated the AKP. This alliance does not even pay lip service to secularism or republican ideals and adheres to a NATO-centric view.” Can any group backtrack and claim they never made such a statement? Certainly, individuals and parties are free to interpret statements as they wish. However, socialism does not provide the luxury of confession or selective memory!

The class character of the left's policy of support for Kılıçdaroğlu

Many socialists' decision to back Kılıçdaroğlu was not merely incidental. It was the culmination of a deliberate and sustained political strategy. The recurring theme of seeking and endorsing a progressive faction within the bourgeoisie—regardless of the various justifications like freedom, democracy, or respite—has deep roots in the socialist movement. Sungur Savran aptly described this phenomenon as “Menshevization.” Recognizing and naming it as such is crucial. When Menshevism becomes the prevailing strategic direction, assertions like “this election differs from that one” or “this will be the final time” lose their significance. The cycle will continue ad infinitum unless the socialist movement decisively breaks away from Menshevism. Without this break, the movement will invariably find itself leaning on a section of the bourgeoisie for one reason or another, resulting in history repeating itself.

When the left detaches from Marxist foundations, it struggles to understand the depth of global economic downturns like the Great Depression. If one prioritizes macroeconomics over Marxist class analysis—a trend seen in much of the left's economic thinking—the furthest they can journey in leftism is left-Keynesianism. Labeling it “publicism” does not alter its essence. By shedding Marxism, there is an implicit belief that bourgeois-led economic policy decisions can resolve crises. It

¹⁸ While we recognize that Alper Taş speaks of a “revolutionary opposition,” we don't need to wait for a Nation Alliance government to anticipate the nature of this proclaimed opposition. Hayri Kozanoğlu, a prominent figure within the Sol Parti, has already given us glimpses. In his articles published in the *Birgün* newspaper, Kozanoğlu endorsed Kılıçdaroğlu's austerity measures under the guise of achieving macroeconomic balance. Additionally, he portrayed NATO and a European Union-focused foreign policy as the “lesser evil” when compared to the AKP's current policies. See <https://www.birgun.net/makale/14-mayis-secimi-neden-onemli-435587>.

is concerning to see many leftists naively assume that the bourgeoisie can navigate out of crises by merely raising wages and boosting aggregate demand. These leftists hold that if only the bourgeoisie heeded social democrats, prosperity would ensue. This outlook overlooks the larger debate on the role of the bourgeoisie in revolutions. In fact, we seem to lag behind even the discourse Lenin had with the Mensheviks about the bourgeoisie's place in democratic revolutions. Within the prevailing leftist milieu, the focus is not on crafting a revolutionary strategy. Those discussing revolution are often deemed delusional. The prevailing sentiment seems to be resignation, a quest for respite rather than revolutionary change.

A Marxist analysis reveals that during depressive economic periods, the bourgeoisie typically intensifies the pressure on labor, reduces wages, and amplifies flexibility and deregulation in economic policy. Additionally, the political landscape sees a rise in autocratic, militaristic, imperialistic, and eventually, fascist elements. In other words, no class struggle, no bread, no freedom! Regardless of how some bourgeoisie factions might label themselves—be it democratic, libertarian, or champions of social justice—in today's era, the bourgeoisie symbolizes retrogression. Having lost its revolutionary vigor after 1848, the bourgeoisie, in the 21st century, now threatens the very essence of human progress. In the face of this rising imperialist brutality, the call is not just for reactionary measures but revolutionary ones. As the bourgeoisie strategizes global insurance against uprisings and prepares for systemic risks—crises potent enough to jolt the entire capitalist framework—many socialists remain in denial, doubting the possibility of a genuine revolution.

The current trajectory of many socialist movements can be attributed to a class-based root cause: the widespread abandonment of both Marxism and the working class. Nowadays, the stances and priorities of the socialist movement often align more with the perspectives of the modern petty bourgeoisie and the educated semi-proletariat. The modern petty bourgeoisie is a class stratum characterized by individuals who possess specialized higher education in fields like health, law, finance, and informatics. They deploy their skilled labor in the realm of service production and subsequently sell their services/products to secure relatively high incomes. On the other hand, the educated semi-proletariat represents individuals who offer their educated intellectual labor in exchange for compensation. However, they differ from the classical proletariat in significant ways. While they are skilled, they do not necessarily receive compensation commensurate with their education level. Additionally, they possess the potential for upward mobility, perhaps even joining the petty bourgeoisie. This potential is further bolstered by familial support and resources, allowing them the luxury of surviving without continually selling their labor.¹⁹

The modern petty bourgeoisie and the educated semi-proletariat represent broad

19 For a detailed definition of these class layers and the Marxist classification of social classes in general, see. Sungur Savran, "Mapping Classes: How To Distinguish Between Classes", in this issue. See also for an analysis of the political and ideological orientations of these class strata. Sungur Savran, "The Age of Egoism", *Revolutionary Marxism 2022*, p. 53-89.

social strata with a significant degree of interconnectedness. Their political stances are characterized by ambivalence and a middle-of-the-road attitude, stemming from their position between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Consider the social organizations where the socialist movement holds considerable sway: Professional Chambers, Medical Chambers, Bar Associations, and university branches of the Education and Science Workers' Union. However, their influence is not as pronounced in the metal, petrochemical, textile, and food unions.

While these strata can often find common ground with the proletariat, they can also diverge just as swiftly. For instance, the ease of obtaining visas from European countries holds significant importance for the modern petty bourgeoisie and the educated semi-proletariat but is largely irrelevant to the proletariat. Issues related to lifestyle resonate more with these intermediate groups than with the proletariat. The proletariat, on the other hand, is deeply enmeshed in the class struggle, with pressing class-related concerns at the forefront of their concerns. For academics, the proletariat often becomes merely an object of sociological study. Similarly, for lawyers, engineers, and doctors, their perspective on the proletariat is somewhat detached. Geographically, there is a notable divide: the modern petty bourgeoisie, the educated semi-proletariat, and the working class typically reside in different parts of a city. A cursory glance at districts where the TIP garners the most votes in major cities illustrates this point. This spatial distinction is also observed in the case of socialist parties belonging to various alliances. In conclusion, the modern petty bourgeoisie and the educated semi-proletariat tend to gravitate towards identity politics due to their specific class position, whereas the proletariat leans more towards class politics.

For the identitarian, petty-bourgeois socialist, the conservatism of the working class becomes merely an object of sociological study. Time and again, social realities underscore – not just for Marxists but for everyone – that there can be no genuine progressive transformation without winning over and mobilizing the proletariat. Yet even the most sincere petty-bourgeois socialist, without the guiding principles of Marxism, often finds themselves seeking that elusive formula, those magic words, to sway the right-leaning proletariat towards the left. The typical approach? Watering down leftist ideology with a conservative twist, downplaying its radical aspects, and marketing it to the working class or, broadly, the economically disadvantaged. This strategy does not bear fruit. It has not in the past, and it is unlikely to in the future. When such endeavors inevitably fall short, the initial zeal to win over the working class often sours, eventually morphing into resentment.

We have painfully observed this phenomenon manifest in the opposition's accusatory stance towards earthquake victims. The fact that votes in earthquake-affected regions favored Erdoğan and the People's Alliance prompted a flurry of derogatory remarks about these people from certain opposition groups. Delving into the specifics of these insults is a task too distasteful to even consider. Yet, to underscore the pitfalls of identitarianism, consider this: Did the voting behavior of İzmir residents significantly shift after the devastating İzmir Seferihisar earthquake in 2020? Did those who deride people voting for the AKP/MHP also demand the resignation of the CHP mayor in Hatay? The answers are telling. Furthermore, it is

paradoxical for those who expect votes in return for aid—and disparage those who do not vote as anticipated—to accuse the government’s social assistance policy of being mere bribery. It is evident that they, too, perceive their own assistance as a form of political bribe.

What should the socialists have done?

It is evident how baseless is the assertion that supporting Kılıçdaroğlu is the sole strategy to counter Erdoğan. Equally groundless is the notion that withholding support from Kılıçdaroğlu would bolster Erdoğan’s position. It is startling that socialists are perceived as potential voters for the CHP and Kılıçdaroğlu. Why should socialists inherently back a bourgeois party, even if it self-identifies as social-democratic? One might think that, as socialists, they would naturally be disinclined to support the CHP. For instance, throughout its history, DİP, and its forerunners, has never advocated voting for the CHP or its affiliated entities. Sadly, this stance is now an anomaly. The tradition of the socialist movement’s support for the CHP and similar entities has largely ceased. The true anomaly, however, is the prevalent belief that if socialists don’t sway their base, their audience might drift to the AKP or even the MHP. While this might be inconceivable for those involved in politics in areas like Kadıköy, Çankaya, or Karşıyaka, it is a palpable reality in places like Gebze, Çerkezköy, İzmit, and Kocaeli. For socialists rooted in class work, this is a primary concern. Yet, those genuinely engaged in this endeavor are in the minority. Among them, a smaller subset, like us, does not rally behind Kılıçdaroğlu but focuses on class politics. We are confident that our efforts do not benefit Erdoğan. In fact, it is likely the contrary. Had the socialists focused on class issues and created an alternative, Erdoğan might have lost more support than what Kılıçdaroğlu could have achieved. Consequently, the votes drifting away from Erdoğan would not have necessarily gone to the likes of Sinan Oğan or Muharrem İnce.

While Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu each represent distinct class interests within the bourgeoisie, it is crucial to clarify that we do not view Erdoğan’s despotic regime, in which he has played a pivotal role, as equivalent to other bourgeois regimes that leaned more towards parliamentary forms. Our stance is that relying on the bourgeoisie to dismantle this despotic regime and advance freedoms is a misplaced trust. Such expectations are bound to end in disappointment. We contend that their resistance to despotism pales in comparison to their animosity towards the working class. We argue that they neither possess the strength nor the intention to truly challenge and overcome such despotism. Hence, we believe it was misguided to cast a vote in favor of Kılıçdaroğlu. This stance, however, is not because we equate both sides, but due to our evaluation of their inherent limitations and motivations.

We envision the path forward in the following manner: Socialists must ground their efforts in class politics, establishing a focal point free from bourgeois influence. Class politics means directly opposing the interests of both MÜSİAD and TÜSİAD. It signifies countering the anti-Western demagoguery of despotism with a genuine and robust opposition to imperialism and NATO. Pursuing this agenda involves reaching out to the vast majority of workers, laborers, and the economically disadvantaged

who have shown support for Erdoğan, and who identify closely with the People's Alliance, to present an alternative vision. We posit that had socialists chosen not to align with the Nation Alliance and instead presented their united presidential candidate, Erdoğan's victory might have been less certain. Regardless of the election outcome, strategically, curtailing the momentum of fascism, as represented by the positions of Sinan Oğan and the Zafer Partisi today, would have been a significant achievement. This approach would have foregrounded the class struggle as a central issue in the nation's discourse.

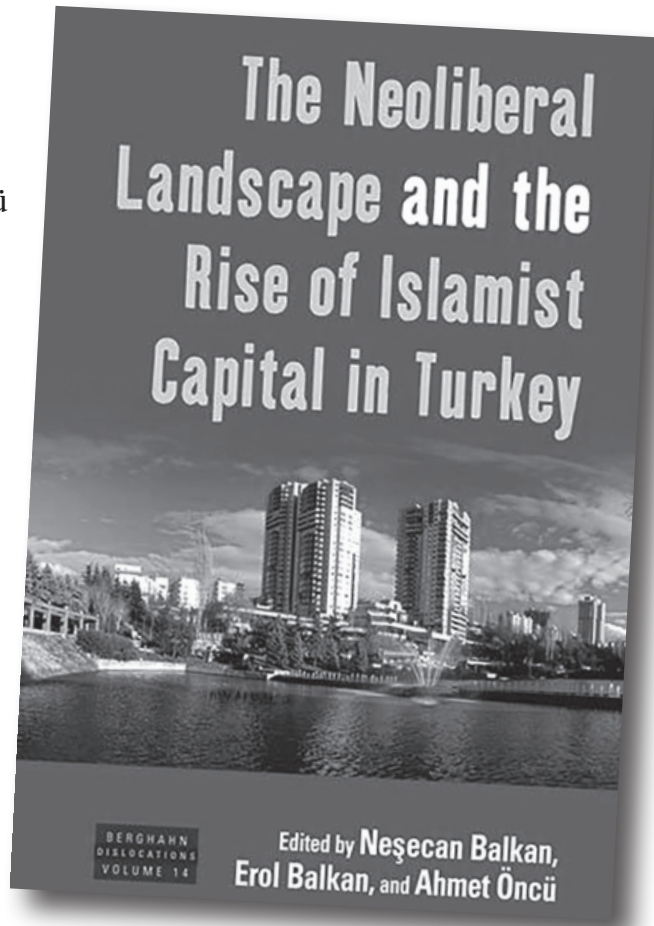
Erdoğan might have still secured a win. However, the aftermath would have been vastly different. Instead of an opposition mired in despair, disappointment, and poisoned by resentment against 52 percent of the population, we could have advanced with a stance that resonated with, or at least grabbed the attention of, workers and laborers across the spectrum. We would have confidently positioned ourselves as a force that appeals to both sides, breaking the mold of traditional politics. We would have asserted that we were the sole entity championing the majority's interests, rather than being merely part of the 48 percent against Erdoğan. Even in a scenario where Kılıçdaroğlu emerged victorious, significant momentum would have been garnered for rallying workers and laborers, further widening the divide within the bourgeoisie. When the CHP critiqued strikers for aligning with the AKP, it would have been the socialist direction that gained traction, not the AKP. And when the CHP displayed its overt capitulation to imperialism and NATO, the proletariat's discontent could have been channeled toward the socialists' anti-imperialist stance, rather than being ensnared by political Islamist and nationalist rhetoric. Granted, some might view this as mere speculation. But it is far from that. We are convinced that solid evidence exists, both in the palpable shortcomings of today's bourgeois-centric politics and in the working class' favorable response to our unwavering dedication to class politics, pursued against considerable odds and with limited but steadfast resources.

The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey

Berghahn Books,
New York, 2015

Edited by Neşecan Balkan,
Erol Balkan and Ahmet Öncü

Chapters by Burak Gürel,
Sungur Savran,
Kurtar Tanyılmaz,
Özgür Öztürk,
Evren Hoşgör and others



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey and the party he leads, the AKP, have been analyzed in many different ways. What was lacking was a materialist analysis using the methodology of Marxism. This is what this book does: it provides the reader the complex class dynamics that lie behind the rise and resilience of this leader and his party.

The hardback edition was published in February 2015 and the paperback edition came out in January 2017. The book has already been published in Turkish translation. It has also been published in two different Farsi translations in Iran.