



The Turkey's Defense Industry and The Kurds

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Theft itself is a crime, and, if it becomes chronic, it seems to a profession. When this occurs at the state level and the victim is the public, it is a policy. For the thieves themselves, it is important to skillfully sweep the theft itself under the carpet and rebrand it. In the case of Turkey's long-ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), this policy of institutionalized theft is marketed to the masses as "service" (in Turkish, *hizmet*). This idea of public service is used to obfuscate the truth and justify their regime. In this context, the most tactical action of the neoliberal Turkish government is "mystification".

The Islamist AKP regime is built on the "favoritism economy". One of the most important pillars of the rent-based favoritism economy is undoubtedly the defense industry. The Turkish government one on hand portrays its own brand of Islamism as peaceful but, on the other hand, gives citizens arms as a gifts and constantly upgrades its own weapons of war, for near-term use in various campaigns of aggression inside Turkey and beyond the country's borders, all while boasting of its "virtue". While the community, particularly the Kurds, are waiting for the doves of peace, the latest models of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), helicopters, and other military aircraft dance in the sky. The Kurdish people see this remilitarization whip used their body, and the Kurds living under Turkish rule today see little cause for hopes of peace.

Leaders inside and outside of Turkey claim that these weapons will be used to fight “terrorism” and provide peace for the country’s citizenry. However, these weapons are used to bring further terror to the Kurds; indeed, the first test of armed UAV was conducted on a Kurdish village in Hakkari, and it was “successful” in that it resulted in the death of an innocent peasant. Why aren’t these experiments done in Trabzon, Aydin or Aksaray? Why are they conducted especially in Kurdish cities? Just as the Kemalist Turkish administrations regarded the Kurds as subhuman and worthy of subjugation or elimination, Turkey’s current Islamist rulers of today also use their Muslim brothers of Kurdish origin as subjects for deadly tests, nonconsenting participants in many experiments.

Who produces these advanced technological weapons and ammunition for the Turkish armed forces? Unsurprisingly, the producers are entities close to the AKP government. For example, the Baykar A.Ş., the company of Erdogan’s beloved son-in-law Selçuk Bayraktar, produces the UAVs. The Albayrak Group, the company of Berat Albayrak, Erdogan’s other son-in-law (who some speculate is being groomed by Erdogan to succeed him), is also a player in this profitable and deadly game. TUMOSAN, one of the subsidiaries of the Albayrak Group, has participated in the production of the Altay tank. The BMC Group, owned by Ethem Sancak (another ally of Erdogan), undertook the production of these tanks. Furthermore, BMC Group is reportedly working with the German company Rheinmetall on the modernization of Leopard tanks, some of which were used in Turkey’s campaign of aggression against Afrin.

The historic city of Konya must be mentioned in any discussion of the defense industry. In this famous city, most known as the final resting place of the 13th century Sufi poet, scholar, theologian and mystic Rumi, there are plans to establish a weapons facility using an investment of TL 300 million under the leadership of Konya Defence Industry Inc. Turkey’s Islamist regime has turned this spiritual space into a center of weapons production. While Konya may remain known for the dance of Mevlevi Sufis, commonly known as the whirling dervishes (in Turkish, *semazen*) known for their distinctive tall brown hats and wide-skirted garments, it will be a major site for the production of tools of mass killing. The case of Konya is a manifestation of the pathetic evolution of political Islamists from a religious path to one of extreme hostility and lust for both profits and blood. Today, the Konya Eregli Textile Factory, a project of Berat Albayrak, which provides 40% of the Turkish army’s clothing. Through such business relationships, we see how the government is funding its own.

This unlimited nepotism and cronyism within Turkey's Islamist ruling class was previously easily seen in the construction sector. Following a boom in construction, now the weapons trade has become a new prominent avenue for the ruling party's corruption. As with any business, it is essential to create and maintain a consumer market for the product. Thus, the Syrian Civil War has been a godsend. Jihadist organisations such as ISIS and various other Islamist factions, some of whom are now fighting under the banner of the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) have been loyal consumers for years. Many of them had admired Erdogan for years, and now they apparently aim to overthrow the Assad regime of Syria and also expel Kurds from their ancestral homes within Syria. Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) has been caught sending trucks filled with military supplies to jihadists in Syria; indeed, Turkey has functioned as both a transportation hub and supply lifeline for jihadists since the beginning of the Syrian civil war. It is no coincidence that the Turkey-backed jihadists aim not only to establish a draconian form of state inspired by their own extremist interpretations of Islam, but also seek to rid the region, from Kobani in Syria to Sinjar (in Kurdish, *Şengal*) in Iraq of all "faithless" Kurds (including Muslims and non-Muslims alike).

Erdogan's regime, which continues to inflict pain and suffering upon the indigenous Kurdish people of the region, made his attitude plain with recent bombardment and invasion of Afrin (in Kurdish, *Efrîn*), formerly an oasis of peace in northwestern Syria which provided shelter to many tens of thousands of internally displaced Syrians. Officials of the Turkish state proudly declared that 90% of the weapons used in this campaign of unprovoked aggression were sourced from Turkey. This military campaign, cynically called Operation Olive Branch, brought death, destruction and ongoing terror to the people of Afrin, some of whom were formerly fortunate enough to enjoy relative peace in the midst of the Syrian civil war. The international community remained silent as Turkey's armed forces and their jihadist allies used indiscriminate force against the people of Afrin, both the security forces protecting the city and the civilian population, and Turkey eventually accomplished its two major goals: (1) empowerment of jihadist forces within Syria, and (2) forced displacement of the area's indigenous Kurdish population – with the ultimate aim of permanently changing the demographics of the region and eliminating Kurdish presence altogether. Decades ago, when another dictator driven by nationalist chauvinism embarked on a campaign of mass murder of the Kurds, he also employed religious language to justify his crimes against humanity. Of course, I am referring to Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who executed a multi-staged campaign of mass murder and displacement of Iraq's Kurds in the 1980s, labelling this

campaign the Anfal Campaign, taking this name from a chapter of the Qur'an. The world stood by as the Anfal Campaign was executed over many years, and the international community was similarly silent during the aggression against the Kurds of Afrin.

According to Kâtip Çelebi, one of the most important historians and writers of the Ottoman Empire, while hair and beard whitening is the sign of a person getting old, keenness on adornment is the sign of an aging state. In this context, the fondness of luxury and passion for war and armament policy of the Turkish state, aiming to cause the Kurds only pain and suffering and hoping to erase Kurdish expressions of identity and any measure of self-administration, point to the inevitable end.