

GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS' ANATOMY: TURMOIL IN AMERICA, IMPACT IN EUROPE, VICTORY IN TRUMP

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Analysis

Illegal and racist practices against blacks in America have long been one of the most important issues in American domestic politics. The rights-law struggle of blacks in America was intensified in the 1960s upon the killing of leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, which was an important turning point for black people in their demand for equal rights in America. However, on May 25, 2020, the killing of George Floyd by the police in Minneapolis took a different dimension and caused protests, backlash, and reactions both in the US and around the globe. What do these cascading events mean? At what stage are blacks' rights struggle in America and where is it heading to?

The US has been facing problems in terms of racism for a very long time. While racist whites and evangelist Christians were increasing their influence politically and socially, both the Democratic and Republican Party tried to address

this demand without touching on the country's structural problems. Financial capitalism, which is the basis of the US system, tried to survive by reproducing itself without any reforms. In the protests that black Americans staged in the past, US political structure reacted in the same way it always had, never touching the essence of the issue. That structure knew how to successfully calm down the protests and then set aside those demands.

Since the 1960s in particular, the Black people's demand for their rights had almost no impact on American politics. The primary reason for this is that they lacked strong, outstanding, and charismatic leaders. Accordingly, the protests were scattered without leadership. The second reason is directly related to the police status in American domestic politics. In the US, the police were not established to protect the public; in fact, the basic philosophy of the police is to protect



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the system. Since the system is considered much more important than the people, mistakes made by individual police officers have never been questioned.

The atmosphere created surrounding Floyd's death is very different from that in the past. Trump's obviously racist and xenophobic speech, the feeling of being marginalized, the systemic racism especially in the police structure, the reaction of most people to financial capitalism combined with the Covid-19 epidemic and its economic fallouts, promoted socially supported and much stronger and broader-than-expected demands.

Following Floyd's death, the protests demanded for the first time a systematic inquiry and a new social contract between the state and the blacks. Nonetheless, systematic inquiries in America would probably lead to a civil war especially if these inquiries resulted in some sort of dissolution and reduction of the police. A total of 2.5 million weapons were sold in the US just in June 2020. Weapon purchase rates have been steadily increasing for the past four months. In a country where everyone is armed or can be easily armed, the perception of "weak" security forces will push people to defend themselves. This kind of development might result in the collapse of the American system.

What was thought to be a game-changer in the issue of racism in America might not be all that in the end? Despite their inclusiveness and the fact that they were widespread nationwide, protests have ended with almost no political impact. This protest wave was quietly withdrawn by firstly looting and then by tearing down statues.

That is the case in the US. But Floyd's death gave birth to something else, somewhere else outside the US.

The major impact of these protests was not in American domestic politics but in Europe. The removal of the statues of rich slave traders in European countries has led the West to confront its own colonial and slaver past. In addition, the demolition of the statues of the founding fathers should seriously question the humanitarian principles of the West. These protests emphasized

that the past of the West is loaded with inhuman practices that can't be bragged about. Accordingly, Europe will have to implement new policies concerning these statues.

But above all else, the biggest winner of this political process was US President Donald Trump. As of the second day of the demonstrations, especially with the increase of vandalism and looting, Trump suddenly turned these events into a public security issue, and in the end, he

was right. Demonstrations were taken under control after the national guards interfered; even the military was involved in the capital Washington DC. Trump, who declared himself president of the war period, soon announced that the protests were taken under control as a result of his determined policy. In addition, Trump quickly gained the political status that he partially lost due to Covid-19 and restored his "successful president" image when he presented the demonstrations as a public security issue. He took advantage of the state mechanism to the end. In this process, he organized his own base and held his first campaign of the election.

The legitimate and justified desire of the blacks who started the protests fell victim to looting and violence. Blacks have been soothed, but the reality in America will not probably change in the short term. Meanwhile, the rights of blacks in the US or better attitude of the state toward them are not discussed anymore. Thus, the issue that started with a rightful claim became a kind

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of public debate in light of Trump's polarizing discourse and the looting of the demonstrators.

Although blacks in the US have been on the continent since the foundation of America, they have never had the same rights and promises as whites. Blacks in America and the West are always excluded. The US is the place where Europe's political and systemic slavery continues. In this sense, the US is interestingly

the place where Europe's colonial and slaver past reproduces itself in a modern system; although it is not explicitly stated in the constitution, it has been the place where it continues with actual practices and in a systematic way. Probably such protests will continue in the future, but their impact will always remain politically ambiguous. In fact, systemic problems can only be resolved with systemic solutions; for now, nobody deals with the problem systematically.