

The German incitement to hatred, the Turkish Referendum, and the political realities of European Neoliberalism

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This centre spread in the BILD newspaper led the German, Austrian and Dutch media onslaught telling Turkish voters to vote NO in their referendum on constitutional change (in both German and Turkish). A YES vote would see a separation of legislative and executive branches of Turkish government, where at the moment the Prime Minister heads them both. German and EU political circles are upset by the fact that the current president of Turkey, Erdoğan, would extend his stay in power. BILD, owned by the media giant Axel Springer, is the largest circulation newspaper anywhere outside East Asia.

The question has to be asked why this newspaper told Turkish voters that the founder of their new Republic, Mustafa Kemal “Atatürk” (pictured) would have voted NO in this referendum. After all, Atatürk shaped Turkey with a programme of forced migration of over 2m people based on religious identity. Christians relocated were unsuccessfully integrated in Greece, while tens of thousands of Muslim Greeks were forced into Turkey against their will ([Bedeck 2016](#)). The few Greeks left in Istanbul exceptionally were heavily regulated in a 1932 parliamentary law to limit their freedoms and were subjected to numerous pogroms.

The nature of Atatürk’s rule

Understanding what Atatürk was up to confuses many. Was his insistence that Turkey be 100% Muslim to be defined as a religious or an ethnic policy? As Balkan nationalisms chipped away at the Ottoman empire in the second half of the 19th century, migrations of refugees to Anatolia consolidated Turkish Muslim identity and Abdülhamid II’s policies used this as a nationalist banner to rally a faltering empire ([Zürcher in Kerslake, Öktem and Robins 2010](#): 55-68). Atatürk was part of an élite officer corps trained in France who carried out a coup against Abdülhamid in 1908 to stem the empire’s decline. His ideas were formed from those of August Comte, who taught many of these

officers at the Paris *École Polytechnique* though not Atatürk himself. It was Comte's ideas about "rational religion" that he sought to apply to Abdülhamid's legacy.

Atatürk consolidated Islamic practice into a rational moral code that was characterised as genetic Turkish characteristic. In 1980, General Kenan Evren and Fethullah Gülen would call this *Ataturkism*, an ideology of state under the supervision of a soviet-style "Directorate of Religious Affairs". It didn't allow for variations in belief (viz. Alevis) or ethnicity (viz. Kurds). The straightjacket of *Ataturkism* and its aggressive policing is what lies beneath today's divisions in Turkey and the political psychosis of what Kerem Oktem calls an "[Angry Nation](#)".

Atatürk ruled through a single party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), which is the current bitter opponent of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) founded by Erdoğan in 2001. The multi-party system which stuttered forward from the 1930s onwards, was deemed a "good" European idea, which the Ataturkist (or Kemalist) élite sought to emulate, although they didn't know how to. When after a period of single party rule Atatürk's successors instituted change, a continuous stream of opposition parties would be founded, but would invariably be closed down one after the other when judged unsuitable by a tutelary military.

Atatürk, albeit an iconic figure who wrested the Turkish nation from imperial aggression, was hardly a paragon of tolerance and democracy. Why then did BILD feature him in this way? This can only be understood in connection with an announcement by Bruno Kahl, head of the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), Germany's spy agency, in the run-up to the referendum.

The BND and the Gülenist Organisation

Kahl announced that Erdoğan's principal antagonist, the Pennsylvania-based cleric Fethullah Gülen was not behind the 15th July 2016 attempted coup in Turkey. What is particularly interesting is *how* Kahl [says](#) this. He is not putting forward an analysis of events or in any way producing the results of a forensic examination about Gülen's personal role in the affair. On the other hand, he makes a political statement about the Gülenist Organisation as a whole, which he says '...is a civil organisation that aims to provide religious and secular education'. This is in direct contradiction to what Stuart Smith at the US Consulate in Istanbul had said much earlier ([revealed](#) in the Wikileaks cables), which compares the Gülenist Organisation to a mafia organisation.

Stuart Smith had not been minded to extend Gülen a US residence permit (at the time). As it turned out, Gülen would still acquire residence through the intervention of certain figures in the CIA, in particular ex-director Graham Fuller. Stuart Smith's assessment was echoed in several independently published books by journalists Ahmet Şık (in [The Imam's Army](#)), Nedim Şener and Soner Yalçın as well as by former police chief Hanefi Avcı (in [The Simons Living on The Golden Horn](#)). The irony is that all these writers would be arrested on trumped up charges by prosecutors belonging to the Gülenist Organisation because of their revelations. Now exonerated, they have all [recently been released](#).

While Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Hulusi Akar testified as to Gülen's personal involvement in the attempted 15th July coup, this isn't important. There still remains the fact of an organisation whose members referred to each other in Turkish terms associated distinctly with the Gülen movement, which, besides, transcended the armed forces to involve large categories of civil society.

This organisation was beyond doubt directly connected with the July 15 attempted coup, as would be uncovered by Turkish intelligence (MİT) after thousands of members of this organisation [used the Bylock](#) messaging app to communicate with each other. Their identities were revealed as a result of the amateur nature of the encryption on the app. After this discovery, all subsequently switched to [using WhatsApp](#) to coordinate the attempted coup itself. But WhatsApp was in turn hacked by al-

Jazeera Turkey during the coup events, which revealed yet further information. Post-coup arrests were made based the information recovered from both those apps.

If, therefore, Kahl at the BND made what amounted to a *political statement* essentially supportive and conciliatory of an organisation such as the Gülen organisation, nine months after the coup, and mere weeks ahead of the upcoming April referendum, then it was presumably supposed to have some kind of effect on the referendum outcome. Why would Kahl randomly come out of the shadows and say these things? The German government and the EU were clearly against the constitutional amendments and had published legal opinions decrying them as a '[dangerous step backwards for democracy](#)'. But before we go into this aspect, it is useful to understand the role of the press in all this and the link between BILD, the press in general and the BND in Germany.

BILD, the German press and the BND

BILD is the tabloid representative of the German political right, and is owned by the Axel Springer Group. Friede Springer, Axel's widow, is Angela Merkel's close confidante and personal friend. In the 2005 elections which brought the CDU/CSU to power with Merkel at the head, Gerhard Schröder, leader of the left of centre Social Democratic Party (SDP), complained bitterly of a media stitch up at the centre of which stood Axel Springer and BILD ([Ulfkotte 2014](#): 73-4).

In the late 1960s, when German politics were dominated by a left-wing student community angry at the Bad Godesberg capitulation, which saw the SDP reject Marxist principles and the original project of replacing capitalism at its 1959 party conference (predating New Labour in Britain by 34 years), Axel Springer led the charge against the student movement. When student activist and leader Rudi Dutschke was [gunned down in 1968](#), his followers and many in the community at large blamed BILD headlines for inciting the public to violence against him and other individuals in the student movement.

Not only BILD, but the entire stable of Axel Springer publications, instructs its journalists to abide by an extraordinary [ideological contractual code](#), which requires them to take the fight to "religious extremism" (however defined by editorial edict), to defend America and "transatlantism", and to protect the State of Israel. There is no reference to "journalistic" values in the code.

Springer was an organisation born out of an Allied occupation when the Americans favoured federalism with a weak central state as the system least capable of threatening a '... private market economy'. Furthermore, that '... the only untarnished social forces [after WWII] were from the Left explains why the Western allies imposed a blanket ban on all organised groups after May 1945...', making it is easy to understand how the political victor of the post-war years had to be the CDU/CSU ([Leaman 1988](#): 37-39). Axel Springer was its mouthpiece.

Udo Ulfkotte's book *Gekaufte Journalisten* describes the pervasive influence in the press of the BND, and its subservience to the CIA. As editor of *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (FAZ), Ulfkotte's description of the sheer extent of the BND's interference in what was, unlike Alex Spinger newspapers, an independently owned and edited newspaper is astonishing. The BND would rent rooms near the paper's offices where their own staff would write the stories Ulfkotte admits he *had to* accept and publish wholesale ([Ulfkotte 2014](#): 24). He goes on about the BND's '... pervasive influence on literati, musicians, publishers or public broadcasters' (198), a fact corroborated by many, including the retired head of German broadcaster [ZDF](#), Wolfgang Herles.

If Ulfkotte's description of how the BND operates is correct, an announcement like that of Kahl suggested a coordinated effort was underway by the BND to influence the outcome of the Turkish referendum through the media, with specialised boiler-room operations dedicated to the effort. The overt campaign against the YES camp, which included ARD TV broadcasting in German and Turkish, was therefore accompanied by a covert one.

The April 16 Turkish Referendum

European institutions waited in the wings to weigh into the fray in the aftermath of the referendum result in the event of a victory for Erdoğan and the YES camp. Within an hour of the result, which saw a 51.4% win for YES out of 49.7m votes cast (from a total electorate of 58.3m), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) declared the campaign unfairly biased towards the YES camp. Various EU institutions made rapid fire announcements demanding transparency.

In Turkey, the CHP, whose leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu had so far failed to use his party's resources in an energetic campaign, sprang into action and now sought the referendum's annulment. Kılıçdaroğlu based his demand on the Electoral Board (YSK)'s acceptance of "unstamped" ballot papers as valid. No sooner were the CHP's complaints filed, than a stream of images about contraventions filled social media, chatter mushroomed and the YSK was charged with being in Erdoğan's pocket. Newspapers globally [carried claims](#) that the '... supreme election board unexpectedly decided to accept ballots without the official seals'. The YSK, on the other hand, said that all ballot papers without exception carried the official watermark and the voter's own mark. An additional stamp had been missing on a few occasions due to the failure of some officials to do their job. This, [said](#) the YSK head, could have been due to '... error, neglect or manipulation'. It had occurred in past elections when the CHP itself had [advised](#) overlooking the problem, since not accepting the ballots would unfairly penalise the voters in question.

As it was, the audit confirmed the correct total number of ballots counted originally supplied to the polling stations. The NGO 'Vote and Beyond', formed to improve transparency in Turkish elections after the Gezi Park protests, [detected](#) inconsistencies in a mere 0.22% of the total vote count, or 100,000 ballots (the difference between the YES and NO camps was close on 1.5m).

The indecent haste of EU institutions, whether the OSCE or the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), to discredit these democratic procedures without waiting for the YSK to make their statements, tells its own story. These are institutions who give unqualified support to Israel and the current Egyptian junta, and who according to, for example, [Richard Youngs'](#) assessment of the EU's role in world politics, pursue policies which are '...increasingly illiberal... [using] the ostensible principles of multilateralism as a means of shoring up its own relative power in a more multipolar world... [and seeking] containment of, rather than forward-looking engagement with, political Islam'. Youngs' analysis would prove essential in understanding the EU's approach to the Arab Spring.

The Gülenist Organisation, the ultranationalists, and the attack on the referendum

So what were Kahl and BILD up to? Atatürk is a totemic figure in ultranationalist circles, and Gülenists, to whom they were appealing, are largely ultranationalist. They are, furthermore, deeply ensconced in Turkish coup history. Gülen backed the 1980 military coup by General Kenan Evren, and became a purveyor of *Ataturkism*. At that time the West was panicking about Khomeini's 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Much later Gülen would back yet another military coup, this time in 1997 against his supposedly close friend and ally, Islamic politician Necmettin Erbakan.

With this background in coup-culture, Gülen joined Erdoğan in the AKP project in 2001, until they fell out when Erdoğan launched the "[Kurdish Opening](#)" in 2009, which sought to make inroads into the Kurdish problem in Turkey, legalising the use of the Kurdish language, launching Kurdish studies in schools and universities and allowing Kurdish media. The Kurdish Opening involved a reconciliation process with the Kurds which, as an ultranationalist, Gülen couldn't stomach. Gülen would always take a hard line on the Kurdish question ([Assange](#) 2015: 230).

The Kurdish Opening involved trying to defuse the situation with the militant Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). Gülen's followers in the police wiretapped Hakkan Fidan, Erdoğan's MIT chief, while he met with PKK representatives in an Oslo hotel on five occasions between December 2009 and

January 2010. They released the tapes to the press on the basis that the government was negotiating with a proscribed terrorist organisation, [causing a furore](#) in nationalist circles. Gülen later tried to have Fidan arrested on that charge while Erdoğan lay in hospital. Ever since, he and Erdoğan have been enemies and Gülen's followers in the police and judiciary would lay ambush after ambush for the Turkish leader.

The Kurdish issue has always been at the centre of Turkish politics, exploited by factions in and out of country for different political ends. The same would be the case in the April referendum.

In order to pass the legislation for the referendum campaign in parliament the AKP had no choice but to partner the Nationalist Party (MHP) with Devlet Bahçeli at its head, given the refusal by Kılıçdaroğlu and the CHP, and by the HDP, to countenance such a move. However, while Bahçeli delivered the necessary votes in parliament to pass the referendum law, his grassroots deserted him.

In fact, the NO campaign was more energised by a dissenting group of MHP members of parliament than by the CHP. Meral Akşener, Koray Aydın, Ümit Özdağ, Sinan Oğan and Yusuf Halaçoğlu had earlier tried to remove Bahçeli as leader [but failed](#). Furthermore, the leader of this group, Akşener, is [widely held](#) to be an ally of Gülen, despite her fervent denials. While Erdoğan is used to carry the Anatolian vote in his elections in its entirety, Ankara went against him by 51.15%. Those bureaucratic heartlands, with their concentrations of MHP voters, were won over by the dissident ultranationalists for the NO campaign.

Ironically, what seems to have saved the day for Erdoğan is the Kurdish vote. Out of 19 Kurdish-majority provinces 10 voted yes (Adiyaman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Kars, Malatya, Muş, and Sanliurfa). Out of 5.5m people in those areas, 3m voted YES or 54.5%; the crucial development being, however, of a shift in votes which occurred in NO-voting areas like Hakkari, Şırnak, and eastern Ağrı (as well as YES areas like Muş) compared with the November 2015 AKP results.

This handed close on 1m votes to bail out the YES camp and defeat the ultranationalist insurgency supported by the German state. It was said that [suggestions of a federalist](#) solution to the Kurdish problem, which Erdoğan might seek had he the presidential powers to do so, angered the ultranationalists: perhaps, but there was also the fact of the attempted stitch-up. Within hours of the failure of the insurrection the dissident MHP MPs were [appealing to Bahçeli](#) to keep them on.

European Neoliberalism and the German hegemon

What kind of Germany is it which is behind this aggressive posture towards Turkey? German dominates the European economy, but the fault lines are clear if we consider the region's sharp imbalances. TARGET 2 (Trans-European Automated Real Time Gross Adjustment System) sees the Bundesbank at this time of writing advancing over EURO 7,800 billion to the European Central Bank (ECB) to finance (primarily) Spain and Italy [according to Greenspan](#).

Greece may have been crushed like a gnat, but Italy is a different matter. Breaking all EU, ECB and IMF rules its largest bank – Monte dei Paschi - was bailed out, but bad debt in all Italian banks is quickly running up again as they are forced to absorb more and more public debt (running at 133% of Italian GDP). Italy – the 8th largest economy in world – has had negative growth since joining the EURO in 2002. Stifled by the terms on which it trades with Germany, some of the most productive businesses in the world – the Milanese and Lombard fashion, car and furniture designers, textile manufacturers, printers, artists, and restorers, chemical, bio and agritech engineers – most of them with legendary names – have been crucified over the past 15 years. They have to, and are going to come out of the EURO. The ECB meanwhile frets about how TARGET2 can be paid down when that happens.

Neoliberalism was invented by the Germans. Economists Alexander Rüstow and Wilhelm Röpke extolled this concept as a “third way” between state socialism and laissez-faire capitalism ([Nicholls 1994](#): 96). At a conference organised in Paris in 1938 by philosopher Louis Rougier to honour Walter Lippmann upon the publication of the French translation of his *An Enquiry into the Principles of the Good Society*, Rüstow commented on the impossibility of achieving social justice with a standard “liberal” laissez-faire doctrine. He sought a “neoliberal” alternative, in which a strong state would legislate and police a decentralised competitive system, structured to avoid cartels, where natural monopolies would be run for the equal benefit of all. After the launch of this new utopia, the state would play no further active role other than to keep it on track. Even social security would be legislated for at the outset and would come out the earnings of individuals, with only a very basic redistributive factor. Everybody thought this was good idea, even, in the beginning, Milton Friedman ([1951](#)).

But after the idea had travelled through various think tanks – which Friedrich von Hayek called “*second-hand dealers in ideas*” – and landed on Friedman’s brother-in-law’s desk at the Chicago Law School, the man in question – Aaron Director – noticed a problem. In the US, the state is not truly autonomous ([Domhoff 1986](#)), and Neoliberalism as conceived by Rüstow was therefore impossible. So he did what every good lawyer does and forced a strained reinterpretation that aligned with the actual US system of corporate liberalism ([Van Horn in Emmett 2010](#): 204-237). This is what we understand today as Neoliberalism and what the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT), led by Pehr G. Gyllenhammar (Volvo CEO), and infiltrated by the CIA (Ulfkotte 2014:199) brought about in the European Commission’s Single European Act (February 1986), followed by the EU, the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the EURO (2002).

Such as Italy’s businesses have suffered, Erdoğan’s constituency among the members of the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD), and the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MÜSİAD) of the shackles set by the terms of the Customs Union; one that currently make it is difficult for Turkey to outgrow the “[middle-income trap](#)”.

Rüstow’s “Neoliberalism” became known as “Ordoliberalism” (after the ORDO periodical) to differentiate it from the Friedman-Director Chicago doctrine. The brochure entitled the *Düsseldorf Principles [Düsseldorfer Leitsätze]* published in July 1949 which launched the CDU/CSU, originally contained all the Ordoliberal buzz-words: “economic advantage and social justice for all”, “genuine competition”, “independent monopoly control” where “social” did not refer to a wealth-transferring welfare state apparatus, but rather to a policy of competition which indirectly would allow the formation of private social security funds ([Leaman 1988](#): 51-52).

As Jeremy Leaman writes, this model failed ultimately because it defied ‘... the reality of an internationalised market dominated by highly concentrated blocks of capital which are essentially immune to the isolated tinkering of individual nations’ (1988: 58). Although the “Law against Restraints on Competition”, passed in July 1957 became Germany’s “Basic Law of the Economy”, it was a mere ‘...caricature of an anti-monopoly law...’ in which ‘...the original idea was barely discernible... [and was] clearly a capitulation to those very interests it was seeking to control, as the historical development of capital concentration in West Germany shows’ (1988: 61).

The German nation went on from there essentially to live a lie. CDU ideologues went on to emphasise ‘... not monopoly control as the “social” attribute of the economic order, but the social security system attributable to the original Ordoliberal conception’ (1988: 74). This was supposed now to be the “specialness” of Germany. The betrayal of the original idea, however, came back to bite them, because, ever since the initial 1950s and 1960s post-war reconstruction boom, the system has stalled and the old growth rates, generated from the rubble of Allied bombing sites, could never be recovered in an oxygen-deficient oligopolistic economic environment.

Horst Siebert's [warnings](#) back in 2005 about Germany's sclerotic performance ushered in the CDU reign of Angela Merkel to reform the very social security system (HARZ reforms) that earlier CDU ideologues had reified as Germany's "specialness". But this was yet another lie, because for the regeneration of Germany's fortune had ultimately little to do with the HARZ reforms and more to do with the élite's ability to reduce the real wage and therefore boost growth [through neocolonialism](#).

Reunification with East Germany was followed by the *Drang nach Osten* under the NATO umbrella, which Trump now begrudges Merkel, to begin the process of acquire neocolonies. This ended up dividing Ukraine, in which project Axel Springer helped the BND by demonising the Russians as Ulfkotte tirelessly explains in his book. But this was part of a long process which started in the 1990s when Yugoslavia was destroyed in a civil war, launched by Germany's backing of Franco Tujman's Croatian declaration of independence with the demonisation of the Serbs in the German press giving Tujman cover for the ethnic cleaning which started with the battle (massacre) of Borovo Selo in May 1991. This new Germany has a lot to answer for.

The BND's and Axel Springer's policy of inciting Erdoğanophobia has run since about 2007, although it doesn't seem to have made much difference to Erdoğan's progress. The Turkish establishment has broadly rallied around him from those days when historian and Figaro columnist Alexandre Adler was [explaining](#) how European élites were taking the Turks for fools '... deliberately pursuing hypocritical maneuvers of forces hostile to Turkey, within Europe, that are lighting a wick of which they do not quite have measure of the capacity for collateral damage... constantly backing PKK terrorism and baiting Turkey with the Armenian question...', simply using the EU accession talks to bait Turkey. Even today France's favourite public intellectual Bernard-Henri Lévy takes it upon himself to do [some more baiting](#).

Judging the Venice Commission's findings and Erdoğan's "Putinisation"

The constitutional amendments passed on April 16 will come into effect in March 2019, when new Presidential and parliamentary elections will be held, if and only if a whole raft of new laws can be passed in the current parliament in the meantime, to put flesh on the new framework. Erdoğan's ability to continue to effect legislative and legislative/constitutional change is based on an unshakeable [core support](#) of about 32% of the Turkish population. The "black Turk" meme used in his speeches exploits the divisions in Turkish society left over from the Atatürk legacy, but if he didn't ally himself with other sections of what is a "multi-polar" society by using the "big tent" approach for which he is renowned, he could never have achieved necessary majorities.

It is the contention here that the fact of the EU in its post-2005 reactionary pursuing *exactly the same type of policy* in Turkey, by exploiting the other side of these divisions that provides Erdoğan with his majorities. More importantly, it is the perception that PKK violence, and Gülenist subversiveness is supported by foreign powers that gives Erdoğan not only his majority, but the backing of a post-Ataturkist (Kemalist) establishment. Furthermore, this new establishment would not back the AKP and support emergency laws and the arrest of thousands of people if there was any inkling of government skulduggery in this regard. If there had been the fragile alliances Erdoğan relies on would melt away.

Most importantly, if it is a parliamentary expression of democracy that Erdoğan's critics are keen to maintain, then criticism must also be levelled at the unwillingness of opposition parties to capitalise on *parliamentary* processes to achieve their aims. The CHP, for instance, continues its relentless obstructivist stance in parliament, whilst preferring to use extra-parliamentary pressure tactics such as street protests (Gezi Park). In the case of the HDP, it is the backing of a violent organisation like the PKK which is problematic, whatever the arguments.

But if the argument is that ending the reconciliation process between the Turkish state and the PKK was the fault of the Turkish government: this is incorrect. Even the 2017 UK House of Commons

Foreign Affairs Committee report on “The UK’s relations with Turkey” admits to having been ‘... too unequivocal [in the past] in placing the primary responsibility on the Turkish government...’ (49). Even then the UK body does not go on to try to understand the internal conflicts and divisions within [Kurdish society](#) behind the attacks which led to collapse of peace. It was inevitable that the AKP would seek to lift the immunity of MPs that refused to disassociate themselves from the PKK, and to seek to prosecute them under anti-terror laws (including not just HDP members but also some AKP MPs).

The greatest tragedy was been the inability of the HDP to capitalise on its unprecedented June 2015 success in the general elections, ultimately forcing Erdoğan, given the CHP’s rejectionism, to ally himself with the MHP on constitutional reform matters.

So while a discussion such as David Hearst’s “[Putinisation](#)” of Erdoğan does make some important and valid points, especially about the retirement of Ahmet Davutoğlu, but they are blown out of all proportion. The discussion needs to be qualified by noting the stark difference in the political trajectories between Putin and Erdoğan, and also between the two very different social and political contexts in which they operate. It is absurd to equate the FSB- centred Russian state, with the Turkish political party system at the centre of which stands the AKP.

Clearly, the concern is: what now? Is the future trajectory different from the past? Close analysis of the constitutional changes point to the fact that although Erdoğan has indeed bought himself some extra time in power, nothing changes. Should a credible opposition form from the diverse elements of Turkish society with a common programme, there is as much if not more chance for it to replace Erdoğan (for instance in the March 2019 elections) as in the past. In the future, streets protests and armed violence simply won’t do to achieve power in Turkey. Only party organisation and a commitment to constitutional processes can work.

The legal opinions issued by the Venice commission which decry the April 16 constitutional amendments present objections that are typical of formulaic EU institutions working through templates and directives. They focus especially on the ability of the presidency to issue executive orders, the concurrent nature of presidential and parliamentary elections, and the ability of the presidency to dissolve parliament. But as with all formalism, which cannot see the wood for the trees, it is not only myopic but wrong about what Turkey is trying to achieve. For instance, parliament can actually pass a law by a majority vote, which immediately replaces any executive order from the president. Moreover, the presidential impeachment processes put in place by the new constitution do have more teeth than its critics concede.

The Venice Commission fails to recognise that really nothing has changed in a system where the dissolution of parliament is not possible without the simultaneous resignation of the president and where a concurrent cycle elects presidents and MPs at the same time. All that has happened is that the “prime minister” has simply become “president”.

If there is no change there, significant changes however that will take place as laws are passed prior to March 2019 will shape the actual nature of the administrative structure, especially with regard to the intelligence services and the armed forces.

It is these last aspects of the new reforms which Erdoğan has long sought to bring into a centralised and reduced structure, in order to consolidate the “security state”, to use the terminology from [Hans J.Morgenthau](#)’s School of Political Realism, on which the country’s sovereignty is deemed to depend. Crucially, on this, likewise, depends the “democratic state” and all its institutions. If the US and Europe struggle in the modern age to keep the correct balance between these two aspects of the modern state, Middle Eastern states suffer not so much from an imbalance between them, as from a spectacularly overbearing “security state”.

However, if we have learned no more from the Arab Spring, we have at least learned that this unfortunate situation has been caused as much by the presence of the western security state in the region as by anything else. Independence from this particular interference is necessary for democracy to succeed in the region. This is essentially what Erdoğan's Turkey is trying to achieve.

If Erdoğan and the AKP are seeking structures to minimise the kind of foreign interference in Turkish affairs witnessed in the events being related here, it is inevitable that Kurds will be granted federal status eventually, as Erdoğan undertook way back in 2005 when he said 'the Kurdish problem is my problem'. Then the PKK will have to face not the Turkish state, but the Kurdish constituency itself, and the lever European powers have over Turkish politics will disappear.

If Erdoğan succeeds in putting the security state fully under civilian control in Turkey in a centralised fashion, the traditional competition between different deep state actors will end, together with their solicitation of different foreign backers to pursue colliding interests. The resulting stability will allow the democratic state inherent in the multi-polarity of Turkish society and culture to flourish.

And as far as the deception on which Germany's "Neoliberal" democracy is based... to use James Callaghan's imagery '...the sky is dark with chickens coming home to roost'.