

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and 'Populism'

Defining populism: appeal to identity orientations (national, ethnic, sectarian) and to fear and other emotions of a target population, whipping up popular rage against 'enemies' at home and abroad for party or personal aggrandizement, seeking political power with support of a particular national or communal group and indulging the prejudices of that group. Target generally a large group (majority, plurality, or minority) that feels threatened. Once in power, impetus towards favouring this group (with definitions of the group varying between narrower – e.g. Trump's base – and wider – e.g. Trump's attempts at national unity). **Othering** is a crucial aspect of populism

Erdoğan's background, 1954-2002

- Anatolian/Black Sea childhood
- Istanbul working class, conservative religious milieu
- Aborted football career
- Student activism, Marmara University business studies
- Adherent of Erbakan's hardline Sunni Islamic national outlook movement
- Islamist politics in 1990s – Mayor of Istanbul, 1994-1998
- Stripped of office, detained for religious incitement
- Proponent of more cautious, patient religiosity cloaked in 'conservative democracy' – avoid direct challenge to secular and military establishment
- With Abdullah Gül founded JDP/AKP 2001 – Islamist split

Seizing the Turkish moment

- Existing coalition parties all discredited in economic crisis
- Widespread tiredness with coalitions and military steerage
- AKP reaches out to liberal secular vote, modulates religious dimension according to audience
- With help of 10% threshold AKP achieves single party majority in parliament Nov. 2002, only one year after foundation
- AKP reverses political ban on Erdoğan – becomes MP and PM March 2003

Dr Jekyll, 2003-2010

- Reaching out to the EU
- Eroding military tutelage of the political system
- A new turn on Cyprus
- Using EU reform criteria, opening to Kurds
- Economic discipline, service to constituents
- Facing military challenge, 2006-2007
- AKP takes presidency
- Using Gülenists for show-down with army
- Constitutional change and the hidden agenda, 2010
- Reaping electoral fruits: 2002-34%, 2007-47%, 2011-50%

Mr Hyde, 2012-2017

- **Enemy 1** – the media (from about 2008)
- **Enemy 2** – the other half of Turkey (CHP opposition, secularists, Alevis) – Gezi Park protests, 2013
- **Enemy 3** – Sour turn with Gülenist allies 2014 – corruption charges, probes – Erdoğan attacks the ‘parallel state’
- **Enemy 4** – Downturn with the Kurds 2015 – Rise of HDP to over 10% plus Kobani plus breakdown with PKK
- Erdoğan as president – now make the hyper-presidency
- 2015 double general election – losing majority, then regaining it as Mr Security
- July 2016 attempted military coup and purge of ‘Gülenists’ – root them out
- April 2017 referendum – hyper-presidency on track

Sharp at home, not so sharp abroad

- Promoting regime change in Syria, expecting others to do the work
- Playing with fire – Turkey and the jihadists
- Zig-zagging in Iraq
- **Enemy abroad 1** – the EU
- **Enemy abroad 2** – the United States
- **New friends?** – Hitching up with Russia and Iran

Erdoğan as populist?

- Majoritarian bulldozer
- Charismatic speaker
- Bully-boy tactics
- Whipping up conservative, traditionalist Sunni Islamic base with multiplying array of threatening 'enemies'
- Evoking past Ottoman glories, gigantist building projects (presidential palace)
- Comparison with Atatürk