

On the Pyrrhic Victory of Turkey's Modern Sultan

By Alperen Atik

"The two armies separated; and we are told that Pyrrhus said to one who was congratulating him on his victory, "If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined." Plutarch¹

Before the start of referendum campaign, Erdoğan was given a question in a press meeting. Murat Karataş (from HaberTürk) asked Erdoğan's opinion about the possibility of a presidential system without federalism. In this very memorable moment, Erdoğan responded in a highly self-confident way. Erdoğan started his answer by saying that unitary state and presidential system *of course* can coexist together. He continued that there had been many examples in modern world and history: *"For example, when you consider Hitler's Germany you see also this, in a variety of different countries you see also examples for this"*². Interestingly, Erdoğan did not remember any modern examples for his argument, but he preferred to give Hitler's Germany as an example. Erdoğan corrected this mistake by clarifying his speech in following days. Although Erdoğan did not correct a *minor detail* (about Germany's centuries-long tradition of federalism), he defended himself in a highly convincing way: *"They attacked me when I gave the example of Hitler. Germany was governed by a parliamentary system. Despite this system, a dictator like Hitler menaced the country"*³. Probably in future, Erdoğan's words of wisdom might offer a personal account for explaining how parliamentary regimes might end up with dictatorships.⁴ After highly controversial campaign and voting processes, Turkey's people voted for giving executive powers to president, with a small margin (%51,41 to 48,59). The referendum marked an end for parliamentary system and Turkey constructed a unique "party-aligned presidency system". I hope no leader will refer to Erdoğan's words on parliamentary regimes; in the same way Erdoğan refers to Hitler's example - especially after Turkey's recent referendum.

¹ Plutarch, **Plutarch's Lives vol. IX** (translated by Bernadotte Perrin), Harvard University Press, 1950, p.417

² **Yarın TV**, "Erdoğan, başkanlık sistemine Hitler Almanyası'nı örnek gösterdi" [Erdoğan showed Hitler's Germany as an example for presidency system] Source: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Rwp76nOWAw>> (31.12.2015).

³ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan 18'inci muhtarlar toplantısında konuştu" [President Erdogan gave a speech at 18th meeting with muhtars], **Hürriyet**, Source:<<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-18inci-muhtarlar-toplantisinda-konustu-40036539>> (06.01.2016).

⁴ For a discussion in reference to John Keane's concept of democide and the question of self-destructive tendencies of democracies, see: Tezcan Gümüş, "Turkey on the verge of democide as referendum looms", **The Conversation** , Source: <<https://theconversation.com/turkey-on-the-verge-of-democide-as-referendum-looms-74621>> (04.04.2017)

As Turkey started to discuss about proposals on new political regime, Hitler's name appeared accidentally in Erdoğan's unprepared speeches. However, this cannot be read as a true sign of a personal admiration, because there lies a more passionate and complicated story. During his political career, Erdoğan's powerful and impressive rhetoric has reflected many mixed feelings about Hitler. This "hateful love" - or in other words "loved hate" - might be a source for numerous political thrillers and analogies. So often, Erdoğan's propagandists caught with many themes and slogans which were already used in Hitler's era⁵. At the same time, Erdoğan's critics do not hesitate to draw parallels with Hitler and Erdoğan⁶. Controversially, during the referendum campaign, Erdoğan attacked European leaders by accusing them with fascism. Although these speeches found supporters in Turkey's mainstream media; Erdoğan's "anti-fascism" mostly became a humor material for caricatures.

Like in the example of Erdoğan's comments on Hitler and fascism, referring to an example from the past and distinct social contexts would bring the well-known mistakes of an anachronistic perspective. However, I do not agree that anachronism has to be regarded as a wrong perspective in itself. Sometimes an anachronistic look would reveal what ironically and disturbingly remained unchanged in distinct societies and periods of time. Marx's infamous saying: "first time as tragedy, second time as farce"⁷ can be meaningful for exemplifying this potential. Although Erdogan (and probably some of his supporters) may not feel any discomfort, an analogy between Hitler and Erdogan would be misleading. This is not because of the similarities or differences between two leaders. Since the world of 30's and our time cannot be considered as identical, the question becomes how these similarities or differences matter in their own contexts. As Cihan Tugal stated in his Open Democracy article, the path of Erdogan and his

5 At first sight, Erdogan's public image and AKP's slogans can be found similar to Hitler's propaganda. Both leaders were presented as hardworking and dedicated figures who do not have any bad habits - smoking and alcohol. Common with Hitler's propaganda experts, Erdogan's propaganda underlined repeatedly about the construction of highways and bridges. Propaganda materials by both parties proudly displayed their solidarity activities such as distribution of coal to poor supporters. In both periods, public demonstrations gathered massive crowds and photographs of demonstrations were circulated in party propaganda. Erdogan's slogan "One Nation, One Land, One Flag, One State" was criticized by opposition, because of its similarity with the propaganda of fascist era.

6 The most well-known example would be Ergün Poyraz. The author has published a best-seller popular book titled *Takunyali Führer* (Führer in Clogs) with a cover depicting Erdogan as Hitler. During Ergenekon trials, Ergün Poyraz spent his 7 years in prison. After having released from prison, Poyraz inspected the mysteries about the university diploma of Erdogan. Due to a series of law scandals and disinformation, Turkey's public has not learned about the validity of these allegations.

7 "Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." Karl Marx, **The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**. Wildside Press LLC, 2008, p. 15.

party AKP⁸ cannot be “simply characterized as fascism”. Although “the continuity with historical fascism should not be completely downplayed”, in AKP’s politics there are also many responses to Third world revolutions, neo-liberal economy policies and rise of Islamism. After discussing the validity of three ideal types (military dictatorship, Bonapartism and fascism) in Turkey’s example, Tugal concluded: “AKP is building a very creative, revised version of fascism.”⁹

Considering the AKP’s efforts for a new regime design, an analogy between two referendums (Germany 1934 and Turkey 2017) would show the differences between the tragedy and the farce. Germany’s referendum in 1934 became a crucial moment of tragedy which legitimized Hitler’s one-man regime. Despite many frightening similarities between two scenarios, Turkey’s recent referendum should be regarded as the farce. In Turkey’s example, the outcome of referendum also reveals the weaknesses and growing legitimacy crisis of Erdogan’s leadership. Therefore the erosion of rule of law and the rise of arbitrary one-man rule have its own political dynamics and limits in Turkey’s example.

To avoid some possible misunderstandings, I have to express my intention clearly. The readers who are unfamiliar to Turkish sense of irony might misunderstand my purpose. In Turkey’s example, the long tradition of irony was born as a historical result of constraints on freedom of expression (penal code, anti-terror law, defamation lawsuits). Implicitly, this tradition of irony reflects to columns and analyses about Turkey. My aim is to explain why Turkey’s recent referendum cannot be compared with Germany’s referendum in 1934. Looking at many analyses in global public, one can easily come across with mourning tones¹⁰ about Turkey’s referendum. In disagreement with the pessimist accounts by many foreign observers, I am following a well-known “tradition” of Turkey’s opposition: Proclaiming the “real winner”¹¹.

8 AKP is the official abbreviation of Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party). AKP’s leaders and supporters prefer their trademark name Ak Party which refers to white and clean. AKP was established in 14th August 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The party came to power after the elections in 3rd November 2003. Except the general elections in 7th June 2015, AKP has gained the parliamentary majority in all elections. According to recent numbers (27.12.2016) AKP has 9.399.688 registered members. Given that political party membership in Turkey is equal to 12 million, AKP has three times more members than the total of all political parties. This number is almost three times more than the combined total of labour union membership in Turkey. For membership counts see: Sources: <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-turkiye-de-95-parti-12-milyon-siyaset-2368763/>>, <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/5201/2017_ocak_6356.pdf> , <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/3341/2016_uyesayilari.pdf>

9 Cihan Tugal, “In Turkey, the regime slides from soft to hard totalitarianism”, **OpenDemocracy**, Source: <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/cihan-tugal/turkey-hard-totalitarianism-erdogan-authoritarian>> (17.02.2016)

¹⁰ Steven A. Cook, “RIP Turkey 1921-2017” , **Foreign Policy**, Source: <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/16/rip-turkey-1921-2017/>> (16.04.2017)

¹¹ As the leading figures in main opposition party (CHP) did not face with their defeats after the referendum. Ergün Yildizoglu criticized this attitude in his column. Ergin Yildizoglu, “Referandum: Bir Otopsi”

During last decades in Turkey's politics, no political party leader has accepted to face with the results of his/her mistakes after electoral defeats. If Turkey's high rank officials have forgotten the word "resignation"¹², for party leaders it has not been a part of spoken-Turkish. Therefore, in Turkey's politics, it is quite possible to see that political parties can declare themselves as "real winners" after they faced with electoral losses. In the last 15 years, after almost all elections, Turkey's opposition has suggested that inner contradictions of AKP would become sharper and Erdoğan would face with unavoidable crises¹³. Although Erdogan and his party have consolidated their political power in each election, Turkey's opposition has always remained as the "real winners". Arguably, for the first time, repeating these unfulfilled prophecies about rising inner contradictions and legitimacy crises would be timely. At first glance, this referendum can be considered as the ultimate defeat for Turkey's democracy. However the referendum displays many fragile dynamics and new challenges for Erdoğan's leadership. Given fragilities and challenges, the result of referendum might lead to a Pyrrhic victory¹⁴ for the modern Sultan. However, the current stage of Turkey's politics lacks democratic alternative(s) in opposition. Regarding the content of referendum and political repressions, this duty of construction would be a difficult task for the opposition.

From 1934's Germany to 2017's Turkey: Absolutely No Reason for Comparisons!

At 19 August 1934, after the referendum in Germany, Frederick T. Birchall (1871-1955) wrote in New York Times: "The endorsement gives Chancellor Hitler, who four years ago was not even a German citizen, dictatorial powers unequaled in any other country, and probably unequaled in history since the days of Genghis Khan. He has more power than Joseph Stalin in Russia, who has a party machine to reckon with; more power than Premier Mussolini of Italy who shares his prerogative with the titular ruler; more than any American President ever dreamed of."¹⁵

[Referendum: An Autopsy], **Cumhuriyet**

Source: <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/726697/Referandum__Bir__otopsi_.html#>

¹² Murat Sevinc, "Türkiye'de hiç bilinmeyen çok ilginç bir müessesese: İstifa" [A very interesting institution which is completely unknown in Turkey: Resignation], **Diken**

Source : <<http://www.diken.com.tr/turkiyede-hic-bilinmeyen-cok-iliginc-bir-muessese-istifa/>> (23.03.2017)

¹³ For a summary about how AKP has survived after many crises see: Oguz Alyanak, "The many crises of Erdogan: have we come to an end-game?", OpenDemocracy, Source:<<https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/oguz-alyanak/many-crises-of-erdogan-have-we-come-to-end-game>> (12.01.2014)

¹⁴ For the first published piece that interprets the referendum result as a "Pyrrhic victory" see: Barış Yıldırım, "Gezi'den Referanduma: Yolu Nerede Yitirdik?" [From Gezi to Referendum, Where did We Lose the Track], **Siyasol**

Source:<<http://siyasol.org/geziden-referanduma-yolu-nerede-yitirdik/>> (20.04.2017)

¹⁵ Frederick T. Birchall, "Hitler Endorsed by 9 to 1 in Poll on his Dictatorship, but Opposition Is Doubled",

This ageless and timeless comment by Birchall became also relevant to Erdoğan's victory but in an utterly fragile and ironic way. At first sight, many disturbing similarities can be seen between the Germany's referendum in 1934 and Turkey's referendum in 2017. These similarities lie in the content of proposal and series of events. Depending on the different historical contexts of both examples, drawing parallels on these points may not represent the social realities. However the most worrying aspect is the party-state unification which showed its early effects during the referendum process. On the other hand, the political situation after Turkey's referendum has new challenges for Erdogan and his opposition.

The similarities between the two referendums are not solely because Erdoğan has gained competencies which might make his modern counterparts (Putin, Orban, Trump) jealous. Although the content of proposal has similarities with Hitler's referendum, such comparisons do not fit fully in the context. Similar to Germany's 1934 referendum, Turkey's recent referendum proposed the fusion of prime minister (Reichskanzler) competencies with president's (Staatsoberhaupt) competencies. Although some AKP figures tried to present these changes as a new "government system", a unique political regime was formed under the names of "party-aligned Presidency System" and "presidential government system". However, unlike Hitler, Erdoğan did not confine himself with the combined authorities of president and prime minister. In the content of proposal, Erdoğan's regime design has introduced new executive competencies and made the shield of impunity stronger.

Another reason for not comparing Turkey's recent referendum with Germany's 1934 referendum lies in the different historical contexts of two examples. It is true that both referendums emerged after a series of highly controversial events such as Reichstag fire in Germany and 15 July coup attempt in Turkey¹⁶. The impact of these suspicious events became deeper with the declaration of state of emergency and the waves of purges against the opposition. While in German example, the enabling act (Ermächtigungsgesetz) played the role in Hitler's gaining the unbridled and extra-parliamentary powers, the government decrees enabled Erdoğan to bypass the parliament in Turkey. After Turkey's constitutional court rejected to monitor government decrees during the state of emergency¹⁷, Erdoğan gained a "de-facto" position above the legal constraints of constitutional court. However these highly controversial events and

New York Times, 20 August 1934

Source: <<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0819.html>> (20.08.2010)

¹⁶ For an early reference to Reichstag Fire in Turkey's context see: Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Coup d'état attempt: Turkey's Reichstag fire?", **OpenDemocracy**

Source: <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/ay-e-kad-o-lu/coup-d-tat-attempt-turkey-s-reichstag-fire>> (16.07.2016)

¹⁷ Kerem Altıparmak, "AYM, artık bir anayasamız olmadığını ilan etti!" [Constitutional Court declared that we do not have a constitution anymore], **T24**

Source:<<http://t24.com.tr/haber/aym-artik-bir-anayasamiz-olmadigini-ilan-etti,369214>> (05.11.2016)

political atmosphere of state of emergency did not bring an ultimate support in referendum. In Turkey's example, rather than a display of power, the referendum result has revealed the limits of Erdogan's power. The similarities in series of events and political strategies may not bring the similar results under different time contexts and social dynamics.

One worrying reason which raises a strong parallel with Germany's 1934 referendum is the blurring borders between the ruling party and the state institutions. Practically, recent constitutional amendments brought no clear measure about how the ruling party leader would neutrally decide on state policies and keep the equal distance from her/his non-supporters. Erdoğan and his party disregarded all criticisms about the weakening division of powers and neutrality of institutions, at the cost of constructing an efficient government.¹⁸ Additionally, given the following two key characteristics of Turkey's political culture, this problem of blurring borders would probably bring a state-party unification under the strict control of one man. These two structural problems are the strict party discipline and absence of infra-party democracy in Turkey's political life. Due to the anti-democratic aspects of political party law, all political party leaders are able to determine their candidate lists in parliamentary and municipal elections, alone. Practically, most party leaders determine their candidates without initiating an inner-party election mechanism.¹⁹ In other words, in Turkey's elections, voters elect among candidates who were already chosen by political party leaders. For a member of parliament, the chance for getting elected in next term depends on how strictly s/he follows the party discipline. According to the new amendments, party-aligned president appoints judges in key positions and high-rank bureaucrats, in the same way s/he determine the party members for elections. This means all crucial decisions in bureaucratic and parliamentary bodies would likely to follow the directives of party-aligned president. Furthermore, new constitutional amendments gave the president power to declare state of security without getting the approval from the parliament. The arbitrary and unbridled use of these executive powers would lead to tragic results, as the party-aligned president will be the head of Turkey's military forces.²⁰

The early examples for possible dangers of this party-state unification became visible

¹⁸ The detailed analysis on the content of amendments can be compared both in AKP's propaganda brochures (in Turkish) and a detailed study by Turkey's Union of Advocate Bars (in Turkish) AKP, "Kararımız Evet, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükümet Sistemi" [Our Decision is Yes, Presidential Government System] (25.01.2017) Source: <<http://www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/cbhukumetsistemi.pdf>> ; Türkiye Barolar Birliği, "Anayasa Değişikliği Teklifinin Karsılaştırılmalı ve Açıklanmalı Metni" [The Comparative and Explanatory Text on Constitutional Amendment Proposal] Source: <http://anayasadegisikligi.barobirlik.org.tr/Anayasa_Degisikligi.aspx> (27.01.2017)

¹⁹ As an exception, the main opposition party CHP decided to initiate an inner party election for determining the candidates for parliamentary elections in 2015. This decision came after the rising criticisms during municipal and presidential elections in 2014.

²⁰ Murat Sevinc, "Eğer Anayasa Değişikliği Kabul edilirse ne mi olacak? Sunlar olacak" [What if the Constitutional Amendments will be accepted? These will happen], **Diken** Source:<<http://www.diken.com.tr/eger-anayasa-degisikligi-kabul-edilirse-ne-mi-olacak-sunlar-olacak/>> (18.01.2017)

during the parliamentary voting for constitutional reform proposal. Deputies in Erdogan's party (AKP) and allied nationalist party (MHP) violated the clause in parliamentary procedure for secret ballot. Deputies got into a competition for proving their loyalty to their party leaders. In campaign process the indicators of party-state unification became more worrying. AKP's use of state facilities and public funds during the referendum campaign became a matter of concern in reports by OSCE observers.²¹ Turkey's media channels (both state and private) offered almost no screen time for the opposition and Turkey's major cities were covered with the materials of YES propaganda. Furthermore, Erdogan's speeches criminalized opposition campaigners by linking them with terror organizations. Hence police intervened to the campaigning activities of the opposition. Unsurprisingly, the problem of political freedom in world's worst journalist jailing country became deeper with new waves of arrestments. Just before the referendum campaign, the leading figures of pro-Kurdish party, renowned journalists and opposition figures were put in jail.

The serious violations during the campaign and counting processes showed that Turkey's regime transformation has arguably moved towards a more authoritarian direction. In political science literature, Levitsky and Way claims that a regime should be considered not fully democratic if the incumbent "violates at least one of the three defining attributes of democracy". These "three defining attributes" are: "a) free elections b) broad protection of civil liberties and c) a reasonably level playing field". According to authors, the serious problems in "at least" one of these aspects would lead to competitive or full authoritarianism²². In Turkey's example during the campaign process, observers reported about "unequal playing ground" and weakening civil liberties in Turkey. In addition to these two serious problems, during the counting process the highest official authority for elections (YSK) violated the legal principles for fair elections. The controversial decision by YSK, led to a scandalous electoral fraud over 2 million suspicious votes. Under the light of Levitsky and Way's theory, Turkey's referendum violated all three defining attributes of democracy. Considering the new executive powers of one-man, the future direction of Erdogan's regime design would be placed between a competitive or full authoritarianism.

Such a profound transformation in Hitler's Germany required a tiresome and systemic work in public law doctrine, which became the most important scholarly agenda of 30's. In Turkey, there is not much need for constructing logical foundations of the regime transformation. AKP figures even defended themselves by voicing an unusual line: System already functions in this way. Turkey brought the concrete example first, then the outlines of new regime model

²¹ OSCE, "Interim Report 17 March- 7 April" Source: <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/310646?download=true>> (07.04.2017); OSCE, "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions"

Source: <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/311721?download=true>> (16.04.2017)

²² Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, **Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the cold war**, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

appeared. The biggest “accomplishment” of Turkey’s new regime can be found in the idea of bringing a set of rules in which no elected ruler would feel her/himself constrained or limited. Although Erdoğan complained about the legal constraints during his post in all positions (municipal leader, prime minister, president) and dynamically redesigned many parameters of Turkey’s regime, this referendum marked a new stage in AKP’s experiments on political regime.²³

Unlike Germany’s 1934 referendum, Turkey’s proposal left two crucial points open. Firstly, Turkey voted for a regime change, but voters did not elect the next president. In Turkey’s example, powers of Führer was constructed in the position of “party-aligned President”; but the omnipotent and politically irresponsible one-man was not elected. Therefore, Erdoğan’s tactical moves during the end-game became more critical. Another most remarkable difference between Turkey and Germany can be seen in the electoral outcome. In 1934, almost nine of all citizens voted for the proposal; whereas in Turkey, YES won with only a small margin (51.41 to 48.59 percent). Furthermore, opposition claimed that mass electoral fraud determined the result. The scandal on unsealed ballots raised the doubts on counting process. Because of these reasons, despite many similarities with Hitler’s rise to power (the ingredient of proposal, series of events, state of emergency, government decrees), Turkey’s referendum cannot be read as people gave a full approval towards regime transformation.

The Unhappy Victory for the Winner

What made the outcome of this referendum an “unhappy victory” for the winner? Why Erdoğan and other government figures seemed so sad during the first press release after the referendum? Although Erdoğan took the advantage of all state facilities and a huge political party apparatus (over 9 million registered members) during the campaign process, the referendum proposal won with just a close margin, despite strong evidences of electoral fraud. Moreover, this unhappy victory came after the failed coup attempt in July 2016 which carried

²³ During the discussions on referendum, Kemal Gözler criticized the general line of AKP’s authoritarian transformation on political regime by referring to Landau’s concept of Abusive Constitutionalism. With Landau’s words, abusive constitutionalism is “the use of mechanisms of constitutional change to erode the democratic order” (p.189) The implication of abusive constitutionalism can be seen as: “The resulting constitutions still look democratic from a distance and contain many elements that are no different from those found in liberal democratic constitutions. But from close up they have been substantially reworked to undermine the democratic order”(p.191). Kemal Gözler, “Elveda Kuvvetler Ayrılığı Elveda Anayasa, 10 Aralık 2016 Tarihli Anayasa Değişikliği Teklifi Hakkında Bir Eleştiri”, [Farewell to Division of Powers, Farewell to Constitution, A Criticism about Constitutional Amendment Proposal dated at 10 December 2016] **Türk Anayasa Hukuku Sitesi** Source:<<http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/elveda-anayasa-v2.htm>> (23.12.2016);

David Landau "Abusive constitutionalism.", *UCDL Rev. vol 47* (2013): 189. Source:<http://lawreview.law.ucdavis.edu/issues/47/1/Articles/47-1_Landau.pdf>

Erdoğan's public support to its highest point. The referendum result showed that Erdoğan's party failed to maintain the public support.

As many commentators agreed that outcome of referendum revealed the ruling party's failure to maintain its electoral support. Despite the high electoral turnout (%83,89), Erdoğan and YES block gained 51,4 percent of national votes which was at least 10 percent below of incumbent power's expectation. In addition, the major cities which play key roles in Turkey's economic, cultural and political life did not support Erdoğan's proposals for regime transformation. While main centers of commerce (İstanbul, İzmir), bureaucracy (Ankara) and tourism (Antalya, Muğla, Aydın) voted against constitutional amendments, Erdoğan received the largest support in small cities. Surveys by IPSOS revealed that a majority of primary school graduates tend to vote for YES (%70), whereas university graduates tend to vote for NO (%61). Furthermore, according to the findings of same survey, %58 of youth preferred to cast their first votes against the proposal²⁴. Turkey's liberal columnists have criticized that AKP's strong control on education policies failed to raise a youth in support of their policies.²⁵ These findings show that, although Erdoğan seems to maintain the "quantity" of his electoral base, the "quality" of electoral support in terms of cultural and economic capital declined. Another remarkable point in NO front is two opposite poles in Turkey's politics, Kurdish people and Turkish nationalists in major cities voted for the same option. Any political alliance among seculars, Turkish nationalists and Kurdish movement was not imaginable before this referendum. Moreover, some commentators found out that Erdoğan's votes dropped tragically in many conservative neighborhoods of Istanbul.²⁶ Analysts emphasized that these conservative neighborhoods participated in pro-Erdogan demonstrations most actively, after the failed coup attempt in July 2016.²⁷ These indicators showed that the most diverse and dynamic groups in Turkey's politics united against Erdogan's designs for regime change.

24 Murat Yetkin, "İste Referandum Sonrası İlk Anket" [The First Survey after the Referendum], **Hürriyet**
Source: <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/murat-yetkin/iste-referandum-sonrasi-ilk-anket-40432232>> (20.04.2017)

25 Ertugrul Özkök, "Acaba Dindar ve Kindar Nesil Projesi İflas mi Ediyor?" [Has the Project of Religious and Vindicative Generation Bankrupted?], **Hürriyet**,
Source: <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/ertugrul-ozkok/dusunun-2019da-ikisi-de-ikinci-tura-gecememis-40437310>> (25.04.2017)

²⁶ Hakkı Özdal, "İstanbul Türkiye'nin özüdür ve kaybedilmiştir " [Istanbul is the core of Turkey and It was lost by AKP] **GazeteDuvar**
Source: <<http://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2017/04/17/istanbul-turkiyenin-ozudur-ve-kaybedilmistir/>> (17.04.2017)

²⁷ Hakkı Özdal, "Üsküdar, Fatih, Eyüp, Başakşehir: Ne oluyor? " [Üsküdar, Fatih, Eyüp, Basakşehir: What is Going On?], **GazeteDuvar**
Source : <<http://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2017/04/18/uskudar-fatih-eyup-basaksehir-ne-oluyor/>> (18.04.2017)

Considering these dynamics, Erdoğan's policies would be more vulnerable to the waves of legitimacy crises. The early example can be seen in the new protest waves against the electoral fraud. Just after the counting process, street protests appeared in a spontaneous, independent and peaceful character like Gezi protests. The emergence of these protests showed people's frustration with electoral frauds, while a strong parliamentary opposition and powerful civil society organizations were absent. Remarkably, under the repressive conditions of state of emergency, people displayed more courage than political parties and civil society organizations. The future of these spontaneous protests depends mostly on their stubborn "long march through institutions"²⁸ which has already started during Gezi protests. Protesters will struggle not only with the one-man regime of Erdoğan; but also against the other one-man regimes in all existing social and political institutions. The problem of Turkey's regime is not only about a centralist one-man government; but also a wide network of one-man regimes in social institutions. In addition to one-man regimes in media, police and universities which follow Erdoğan's directives; even the political parties of opposition (CHP and MHP), labour unions and civil society organizations function in a similar logic with Erdoğan's one-man regime. Common with Erdoğan's AKP; the chronic problems of Turkey's opposition are anti-democratic leadership structures and serious democratic deficits. Therefore, spontaneous protests would not only face with police barriers; their biggest challenge would be the institutionalized barriers during their long march through institutions.

On the other hand, there are some other dynamics which cannot be understood by focusing merely on referendum results. Firstly, Erdoğan started to face with the end of economic growth which had been driven by financial speculation and construction boom. Turkey's economy did not take the advantages of economic growth by strategically investing on structural and technological improvements. Instead AKP government focused mainly on creating a new class of party-loyal rich. AKP constructed this new elite by transferring the public wealth through non-transparent public procurement and privatization mechanisms. Thus, the period of economic growth only produced a new class of party-loyal rich, while the figures on private sector debts and unemployment have reached at their highest points. During the referendum campaign, Erdoğan's economy policies hardly balanced important economic indicators such as interest rate and foreign exchange values. At first the impacts of economic instability became

28 Rudi Dutschke (1940-1979), a leading figure in German student movement coined the slogan Long March through Institutions [Lange Marsch durch die Institutionen] in 1967; in reference to Long March (1943) in Chinese Revolution. Instead of a strategic retreat or a preparation for the next attack; Dutschke uses this slogan for struggles "within the system of late capitalism" (p.253) as a form of "practical and critical action in all social spheres" (p.249). The long-term struggle for organizing and transforming the existing institutions in everyday life appears as the main challenge. This challenge becomes relevant, when a series of spontaneous protest actions evolve into social movements. In this case, struggles "within the system" and transforming the existing social institutions would serve the aim of bringing a systemic change. I think this term would be relevant for addressing a general axis in the discussions of Turkey's activists after Gezi protests. Rudi Dutschke, "On anti-authoritarianism", (Translated by: Salvator Attanasio), *The New Left Reader*, (1969): 243-253.

visible in tourism sector. Due to a series of terrorist attacks and Erdoğan's imbalanced foreign policy, tourism-related business faced with closures. The worsening economic indicators and Erdoğan's arbitrary policy choices made investors to think cautiously about the new investments. These factors would raise the vulnerability of Turkey's economy under the conditions of increasing debt and growing unemployment. In current situation, Turkey's big companies would try to harmonize their plans according to their predictions on Erdoğan's decisions. Furthermore, due to the rising costs of credits, small business owners and households would be more open to economic risks. Therefore, Turkey's economy becomes a risky playground for investors, but an appetizing hunting field for speculators. Moreover, Turkey's unorganized working class and the unemployed population may struggle with the deepening results of neo-liberal transformation and the arbitrary one-man regime. Given that Turkey has one of the highest levels of income inequality (4th in OECD²⁹, 2015 data) and one of the lowest levels of labour union membership (with %6,3³⁰; the 2nd worst in OECD, 2013 data), it can be said that political and economic instabilities would likely to trigger social tensions. Therefore, the success of Erdoğan's short-term strategies would depend on how successfully his economic policies distribute the benefits to his allies and silence the social demands from below.

Secondly, the vote losses of political parties in YES front (two right-win parties AKP and MHP) may trigger some defections from both parties. Especially for MHP, some analyses mentioned the growing "legitimacy crisis" in party leadership and the rise of Meral Aksener³¹. For Erdoğan, rather than the emergence of a new Turkish nationalist party or a leader from MHP cadres; potential splits in his own party would be more threatening. Currently, AKP cadres appear as a strictly disciplined party under the indisputable leadership of Erdoğan. However, if some dissented AKP figures decide to depart from party lines, this would become a serious challenge for Erdoğan's leadership. In this case, the dissented party figures might cause a split in AKP which can be comparable to the effects of Gülen-Erdoğan conflict. Some pro-Erdoğan journalists intimidated AKP figures who did not participate actively in referendum campaigns³². While the current leadership cadres in Turkey's opposition parties fit already well with

²⁹ "OECD Forum 2015: Income Inequality in Figures", Source: <<http://www.oecd.org/forum/issues/oecd-forum-2015-income-inequality-in-figures.htm>>

³⁰ OECD Stat, "Trade Union Density"
Source: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=UN_DEN>

³¹ Güney Işıkara, Alp Kayserilioğlu and Max Zirngast, "Ten Thoughts on the Turkish Referendum", **Jacobin**
Source: <<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/04/constitutional-amendments-hdp-akp-dictator/>> (17.04.2017)

³² **Cumhuriyet**, "Cem Küçük: Gül ve Davutoğlu 'Evet' vermedi", [Cem Küçük: Gül and Davutoğlu did not Vote for Yes],
Source: <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/725734/Cem_Kucuk_Gul_ve_Davutoglu_Evet_vermedi.html> (21.04.2017)

Erdogan's future regime design, the emergence of a charismatic leader in right-wing may endanger Erdoğan's political calculations. However, in current situation, any courageous leader in opposition has to face with the threats of investigation and imprisonment, like in the example of Selahattin Demirtaş. Despite these threats, if an alternative leader in right-wing opposition overcome these fears and decide to run in next elections; this may potentially divide Erdoğan's right wing electoral base.

As Erdogan constructed the world's biggest presidential palace designed an omnipotent presidency system and won in referendum; he faced that his last steps will be harder. What if "the first Genghis Khan" would be the one who did not design this system? What if a strong opponent gets into the presidential race, win with a close margin and uses these competencies against Erdogan and his supporters? Such fears were voiced also by Erdoğan's supporters, at the early points of campaign process. One even raised a "reasonable" proposal: Giving Erdogan these executive competencies temporarily and turning to the old system after the end of Erdoğan's term.³³ Nowadays Erdogan's supporters are preparing for party congress (to be arranged at May) and discussing the possible revisions in government. The congress process will determine if the splits inside party would become deeper.

Until now, the growing polarization in Turkey's society has served to Erdogan's strategic games for dividing the opposition and manipulating the public. However, no political actor can predict whether s/he finds her/himself in the marginalized position in the next election. At the same time all commentators ponder in thoughts after the recent referendum results: Will Erdogan be a modern Sultan or a modern Pyrrhus?

³³ **Birgün.** "Referandum incileri-6: Bu yetkiler Erdoğan'dan sonra kaldırılın" [Referendum Goofs-6: These competencies should be abolished after Erdogan] Source: <<http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/referandum-incileri-6-bu-yetkiler-erdogan-dan-sonra-kaldirilsin-155096.html>>