

THE GROUND ZERO MOSQUE and the Koran (non)burning are but two recent examples of overreported and misrepresented stories that reflect the sorry level of media discourse in the United States. Meanwhile, an event took place on September 12 that has vital importance for the United States' declared strategy in the Muslim world, in general, and in the Greater Middle East, in particular. Yet it is an even bet that not one American in a hundred can put a name to it.

On that day, thanks to a referendum on constitutional changes supported by 58 percent of her electorate, Turkey ceased to be a "secular democracy" based on Kemal Atatürk's reforms of 85 years ago. The event was either ignored by the media, or else—on President Obama's and Hillary Clinton's cue—presented as a triumph of democracy in a friendly Muslim country that provides America with a vital bridge between the East and the West. In reality, it was the final step in a long sequence of moves by Turkey's Islamists, who have been in power for the better part of the decade and now feel strong enough to proceed with their endgame.

Over the past eight years, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) have been successful in undermining Mustafa Kemal's legacy and the character of the state founded upon that legacy. What remained, until the referendum, was an increasingly hollow shell of constitutional secularism. That shell was nevertheless an obstacle to the formal grounding of the new legitimacy in Islam at home and neo-Ottomanism abroad. Erdoğan and his team were determined to remove it, and on September 12 they succeeded. Turkey's voters approved a 26-article package that will end the army's role as the guardian of secularism. On current form, there is but little doubt that Erdoğan will be reelected by a simple majority when he calls the general election next spring—yet more proof that "democracy" in the Mus-

lim world means more Islam.

The process was predictable, and it was facilitated by the self-deception of our "foreign-policy community." As I noted on *ChroniclesMagazine.org* many years ago ("Who Lost Turkey?", April 2, 2003), the Bush administration was fatally mistaken to pretend—as Paul Wolfowitz did earlier that year—that Turkey was "a truly indispensable nation" with an "indispensable partnership with the United States," a nation "central to building peace from Southeastern Europe to the Middle East and eastward to the Caucasus and Central Asia . . . crucial to bridging the dangerous gap between the West and the Muslim world":

In his pitch to the West Mr. Erdoğan is unsurprisingly eager to minimize his party's Islamic connections by stressing his "secular" and "conservative" credentials. His assurances were keenly accepted in Washington . . . During a recent trip to Turkey by The Rockford Institute's fact-finding team we were repeatedly warned that things were no longer as they used to be a decade ago . . . The escalating crisis of Turkey's economic and political system over the past decade reflected a deeper malaise, the loss of confidence of the old Kemalist elite. The implicit assumption in Washington—

that Turkey would remain "secular" and "pro-Western," come what may—should have been reassessed after the Army intervened to remove the previous pro-Islamic government in 1997. Since then many voices . . . have warned that "democratization" would mean Islamization, and that America needed alternative scenarios and regional strategies.

Fast-forward to the fall of 2010: Erdoğan and his team claim that the constitutional reform has no other purpose than the country's further democratization. Practicing the Islamic art of *taqiyya* (lying to infidels) in its pure form, foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said that the referendum was all about advancing civil rights and Western-style liberties, that it reflects "the Turkish nation's will to live in a freer and more democratic environment in compliance with European Union standards." It is "an important turning point for democracy in Turkey," he continued, and "a result of the Turkish nation's interest in the reform process carried out in light of universal and European norms." With an eye to the cultural Marxists in Brussels, he also noted that the amendments introduced "constitutional guarantees for positive discrimination for women, children, the elderly and the disabled."

With the predictable exception of once-ultra-Turkophile neocons, Washington's self-deception is continuing. Only



Neo-Ottomans Triumphant

hours after the polls were closed in Istanbul, during a telephone conversation with Erdoğan, President Barack Obama praised the “vibrancy of Turkish democracy” by citing high turnout in the referendum. The following day State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said the United States “hopes” the reforms endorsed will “further enhance Turkey’s democratic process and human rights protection.” Asked if he disagrees with the claims of Turkish secularists that the changes will inhibit the judiciary’s ability to “oversee” the executive, Crowley replied that this was, in fact, a

decisive vote to move towards greater civilian oversight of these democratic institutions . . . We respect that statement by the Turkish people. And we hope that the government will, again, use this mandate to deepen democratic processes in Turkey as well as guarantee human rights protections.

Crowley ended by reaffirming U.S. support for Turkey’s membership in the European Union.

THE REACTION IN ISRAEL was quite different. Amos Gilad, a senior Defense Ministry official, warned that Erdoğan was rapidly dismantling the secular state. “If there is not a change in personality,” warned former National Security Council director Uzi Dayan, “then Turkey will become Iran No. 2.” In the *Jerusalem Post* (September 22), Caroline Glick noted that Turkey’s Islamist leaders have used the Western language of democracy to destroy its foundations, while Washington and the European Union acted as enablers. NATO was also complicit, she went on:

NATO has stood at a distance as Turkey has undermined its mission in Kosovo and transformed it into a virtual Turkish colony.

So too, NATO has had no comment as Turkey has worked consistently to disenfranchise Bosnia’s non-Muslim minorities and intimidate the Serbian government. At this late date, it would have been shocking if NATO had a comment of any kind on the AKP’s consolidation of its Islamist thugocracy.

The supine posture of Brussels and Washington may have been predictable, but the rapid and terminal loss of confidence of the old Kemalist elite, which had been expected to put up more of a fight, was not. But Erdoğan and the AKP had succeeded in obtaining the compliance of the secularist elite in the crucial early years, seducing them with the vision of an autonomous sphere of Turkish influence in the old Ottoman domains in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. This activist foreign policy has enabled the Islamists to co-opt many senior civil servants, diplomats, and generals who are not sympathetic to the ideological assumptions of the neo-Ottoman paradigm, but who were ready and willing to support its “quantitative” aspects. They subscribed to the ostensibly traditional, nationalist components of Davutoğlu’s neo-Ottoman concept of multilayered “strategic depth,” without realizing that it was a Faustian pact.

In May 2009, on the day of his appointment as Turkey’s foreign minister, Davutoğlu asserted that Turkey had an “order-instituting role” in the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus, quite apart from her links with the West: “Turkey is no longer a country which only reacts to crises, but notices the crises before their emergence and intervenes in the crises effectively, and gives shape to the order of its surrounding region.” He further declared that Turkey had a “responsibility to help stability towards the countries and peoples of the regions which once had links

with Turkey”—an explicit reference to the Ottoman era, in a manner unimaginable only a decade ago:

Beyond representing the 70 million people of Turkey, we have a historic debt to those lands where there are Turks or which was related to our land in the past. We have to repay this debt in the best possible manner.

For the sake of Turkey’s renewed status as a first-rate regional power, the secularist elite were prepared to close their eyes to the fact that Islam is the backbone of the project. Back in the fragile days of 2002-03, the AKP leadership wisely grasped the need for the secularist nationalists to be given a slot in the national consensus on Turkey’s multilayered identity. Those days are now over.

MANY WEIMAR OFFICIALS, *Wilhelmstrasse* diplomats, and top officers of the Reichswehr were likewise not supportive of the Nazis when Hitler came to power. Yet during the early years of the Third Reich, they were willing to offer their services to his revolutionary project in the name of promoting traditional German national interests and objectives. In early 1938 they were inevitably swept away by a fresh wave of *Gleichschaltung*, heralded by the removal of General Von Blomberg and foreign minister Konstantin von Neurath.

With September’s referendum, Turkey’s Islamists are finally able to do the same to the Kemalist civil service and army cadres. The aim of the Kemalists, for many decades before Erdoğan, had been to resist the lure of irredentism abroad, and to turn Islam into a matter of personal choice separate from the Turkish state and distinct from Turkish society.

It could not be done. The Kemalists’ replacements, steeped in Islamism and neo-Ottomanism, are being groomed at the lower levels of the hierarchy as I write. ♦

IT'S BEEN A BAD YEAR for terrorism in the United States. Not bad, fortunately, in the number of actual attacks (at least at the time of this writing), but in the continuing debasement of the word *terrorism*, so that it ceases to be a useful characterization of behavior and becomes merely a propaganda slogan for interest groups.

The U.S. Supreme Court contributed to this sad process when, last June, it decided the case of *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*. The State Department maintains a list of so-called Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and U.S. law prohibits giving support or aid to these groups. In *Holder*, the Court decided that this blanket prohibition applied when sympathetic groups were merely providing advice to alleged terrorist organizations, even when that counsel was intended to push the recipients in peaceful or constitutional directions.

What's wrong with that decision is the whole concept of "terrorist organizations." For scholars or professionals, terrorist acts can be defined clearly. They are acts of violence carried out by organized groups, in order to serve a political purpose, and (critically) they are directed against civilian targets, usually with the goal of creating fear or intimidation. Armed attacks against military objectives are not terrorism. U.S. law, sensibly, defines *terrorism* as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents." The cause in which such acts are committed is irrelevant to the definition.

But "terrorist organizations" are a very different matter. Countless groups around the world undertake terrorist acts, but only a tiny proportion are officially defined as terrorist organizations. In U.S. law, the term applies to groupings that "engage in terrorist activity," but with no sense of the proportion of the group's actions that fall into this category. Does a single terrorist action qualify a group for legal perdition? Must the group carry out, say, 25 percent of its acts against noncombatants before

qualifying? In the real world, a movement might commit terrorist actions at some times, while at others it would better be described as a guerrilla movement or even a political party.

Nor is the labeling process applied with any consistency. The term was never applied to the Provisional IRA, although that movement regularly slaughtered noncombatants. (The tiny successor group Real IRA has subsequently qualified for inclusion.) Nor did Washington label the African National Congress of the early 1990's as a terrorist group, although, on rare occasions, it did target civilians. On the other hand, the damning classification invariably includes Hamas, which likewise alternates between terrorist and guerrilla actions.

Even more questionable, a group can be labeled if its "terrorist activity or terrorism [threatens] the security of U.S. nationals or the national security . . . of the United States." And who exactly decides that? In the context of the late 1980's, we might think that the Provisional IRA was clearly undermining U.S. interests, by striking at a vital ally. Alternatively, who is to say that any and all violent acts against the state of Israel automatically subvert U.S. national security?

There's no great mystery here. The definition of organizations as terrorist is a negotiated political process, subjective and partisan in nature, which depends on the interest groups that bring their efforts to bear. The key question is whether or not the U.S. government, or a substantial part

of the political establishment, sympathizes with the movement and its cause. In the Irish or South African cases, that question is easy: We (or a lot of us) like the groups, so they aren't terrorists. Hamas has few influential defenders.

Another case in point is the Lebanese Hezbollah, which undoubtedly has carried out terrorist attacks through the years. On other occasions, though, as when the movement was fighting Israel in 2006, it looks much more like a guerrilla army resisting foreign invasion. No such nuances, however, prevent the group from being firmly included on the State Department listing.

Holder segued perfectly into the thorny Ground Zero Mosque controversy of this past summer. Without exploring the rights and wrongs of that case yet again, one lively issue in the debate was whether the mosque's sponsor, Imam Feisal Rauf, was sympathetic to terrorism. After all, crowed critics like Andrew McCarthy, Rauf could not bring himself to admit that Hamas is a terrorist organization. "Hamas is a shibboleth. If you want to know whether an ostensible Muslim 'moderate' is really moderate, ask him if Hamas is a terrorist organization," wrote McCarthy in *National Review*. "It is not a complex question . . . It is a straightforward question that Islamists complicate with clever casuistry." Rauf failed McCarthy's test. And so would virtually any competent terrorism scholar, of any faith or none, who knows just how tendentious the question is. ♦



Myths of Terrorism