The educational biography of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the populist psychology

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Main Article

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Sheth Jerjis

Abstract Many populist attitudes and behaviours lead to the belief that the average populist lacks a full educational resume, especially a university education. Numerous publications have appeared questioning the possession of university degrees by many populists, including populist presidents such as Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, India's president Narendra Modi and even America's former president Donald Trump.

A very high number of articles has been published questioning Erdogan's entire educational biography, which include strange facts, not only in the contents of the published documents, but also in the interventions of higher academic authorities and state departments in Erdogan's defence. Despite the abundance of publications on Erdogan's educational biography and the documents published around it, to date there has been no article that exclusively includes all the aspects of the topic.

Today, Erdogan, who caused a stir regionally and globally, is considered one of the biggest populists. A detailed study of the large gaps in his claimed educational career will certainly help in understanding his populist personality.

In collecting information, we relied mainly on articles published on Turkish newspaper websites and on listening to Erdogan's speeches and various programs discussing Erdogan's policy on Turkish TV channels.



It is found that Erdogan's educational curriculum is full of contradictions, and that the published documents related to his certificates, particularly that of the university he supposedly attended, contain flagrant errors.

In terms of the populist personality, all of the Big Five personality traits, which are Extraversion, agreeableness, degree of conscientiousness, level of openness and emotional stability, contrast with the personality traits of those who have achieved academic success (see Table 1). Low self-esteem also dominates the populist personality and the personality of those who fail academically. Hence it seems that low self-esteem plays an important role in explaining populist behaviour and approach.

In this article, Erdogan's educational history is discussed in detail and brief information on the psychology of the populist is provided.

Introduction

Since Erdogan's appearance on the Turkish political scene and his assumption of the mayorship of Istanbul in 1994, and then the prime minister and the presidency of the republic of Turkey with his landslide victories in many consecutive elections since 2002, he has caused an uproar in Turkey and in international circles with his personality, his reckless religious populist policies and his cunning.

Erdogan has peculiarities and behaviours that raise doubts about his completion of a full educational biography, especially university education, which is a condition for assuming the position of President of the Republic in Turkey. Erdogan is attacking opponents and



governments with harsh words unfamiliar to politicians, cursing the opposition, stirring up emotions in a naked and naive manner, constantly distorting topics to mislead the masses, making scandalous and false accusations to stir up feelings of hatred causing polarization among the people.

Erdogan also habitually makes abnormal, illogic statements, undermining the social values of consistency, straightforwardness and honesty. Typical are the following examples: "Legislature and judiciary are an ankle strap to me" (Ankut 2017: 23), "Democracy is a tram, we go where we go, then we get off there" (Köhne 2018); "Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the people. It is a great lie. ... Sovereignty materially and morally unconditionally belongs to God" (Hansanbarsan 2007) and "How is a joint stock company run, Turkey should be run a like" (Bedri Birdirbir 2015).

As for the abnormalities in Erdogan's political mentality, these reaches sometimes the point of delirium. Thus, he says in one of his speeches in 1991 in the city of Geyve, Sakarya Province: "My dear brothers and sisters, the world is at a new crossroads, at this new crossroads. There are four channels that merge forming one channel in the future. Of these four separate channels, one is the Christian world, one is the Jewish world, one is the atheist world, and one is another, do you call it Shintoism, or ... whatever you say, there is another religion. They all unite in the future and together they form the crusader world. Who is against them, who is against them, who is against them is the Islamic world" (GeyveCom 2021).

Here are some other oddities in Erdogan's mentality:



- Although has great difficulties in proving his secondary and university certificates and the serious errors found in his submitted documents, he constantly mentions in his speeches that he is an economist, even if he speaks to the international media (PBS TV 2017).

- It is known today that with Erdogan the regime in Turkey has shifted towards Islamism and authoritarianism (Altinors & Akcay 2022); the democracy has eroded, the human rights violations have increased and even the confidence in judiciary has severely declined (Orselli & Bilici 2021; Tai 2020). Despite the great clarity of these negatives during Erdogan's rule, which exceeds two decades, he repeatedly emphasises in his speeches on democratic development in Turkey. In one of his speeches, Erdogan describe himself by using a quote from Malcolm X: "I am for truth, no matter who tells it. I am for justice, no matter who it is for or against" (Oder 2021: 473).

Erdogan's supposed university degree, and even high school diploma, was and still is questionable in the Turkish press even before he assumed power in Turkey. He was unable to provide any credible proof of his university education and his high school diploma. In fact, all the documents related to his educational history that are circulated in media circles and state departments, and even those issued by the university, in which he claims to have studied, contain serious errors.

A populist can be defined as 'a politician who mobilises the masses to bring about radical changes in the administrative system'. This process needs two basic factors, namely the person with populist potential and the willingness of the masses. Thus, the populist process is or can be in



itself a legitimate process. However, for reasons having to do with the nature or tendency of populism in general, legitimacy (law) is violated in two areas, namely in the means of mobilising the masses and in bringing about change. At the end, the populist process becomes a negative process that undermines the stability of society. So, populism is a non-constructive political approach that is integrated in its means of using the masses, in its goals of controlling power (rule) and in its results in carrying out administrative changes.

Thus, populism is a socio-political phenomenon that depends on the psychology of the populist individual and society. The populist has a personality and psychological characteristics that give him (or her) such a huge momentum and a huge ability to achieve his or her objectives, regardless of whether the populist achievement is positive or negative. The populist masters the art of developing his or her ideas in the context of mobilising and directing the masses.

The transformation of pent-up feelings and thoughts into extraordinary energy can explain the populist impulse. Alfred Adler's theory provides one of the definitions for this hypothesis, which is that the feeling of low self-esteem turns into a sense of superiority and the individual's attempt to achieve this superiority. The 'substitution' of the psychological defence mechanism provides another explanation for the populist impulses, whereby a feeling of low self-esteem (inferiority complex) can be replaced by a search for a sense of higher self-esteem through achievement. In either case, since self-esteem is a semi-stable state in the individual, the feeling of low self-esteem requires the individual to continually search for a sense of superiority (high self-esteem), which at the same time implies continued achievement.



Educational history of Erdogan

Erdogan attended Piyalepasha primary school in Kasimpasha neighbourhood of Istanbul in 1960 and graduated in 1965. He joined the Istanbul Imam Khatip School (IH) in Fatih neighbourhood as a boarding student, completing the school in 1973.

The period of study in IH at that time was seven years, which was divided in to two stages. Four years as intermediate stage and three years as high school stage. In 1971, the four-year IH intermediate stage was abolished and the three-year IH high stage was increased to a four-years, shortening the years of IH study to four years. Erdogan completed his IH School in eight years (Celik 2016: 521). This means that Erdogan had at least a one-year failed class.

The diploma obtainable from the Imam Hatip School in Turkey at that time was not equivalent to the diploma of general high school. According to the official biography of Erdogan published on the electronic page of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, he passed exams for additional lessons in 1973 at Ayyub High School, which required the equivalence of the diploma taken from Imam Hatip with a diploma of general high school (Presidency website—see Bibliography).

According to Erdogan's official biography, which is published in both the Turkish and English versions on the Turkish Presidency's website, he had graduated at the University of Marmara in 1981. This means that Erdogan had completed his university study in eight years (Ibid).



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There are many uncertainties in Erdogan's entire educational (school) biography, and there are prominent defects which clearly invalidate documents that he has submitted for disseminated. The subject can be studied under the following headings:

- The inconsistencies in the educational history;
- The critics and complaints;
- The shortcomings and errors in the published documents.

The inconsistencies in the educational history

If Erdogan's claim is correct that he joined the Istanbul Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences, then according to the history of this academy published on the Marmara University webpage, Erdogan attended an institute and not a college. Because the Istanbul Academy opened institutes between 1972 and 1974, during which time Erdogan claims that he joined the university, and these institutes turned into colleges in the 1977-1978 academic stage (Marmara university 2022).

Interestingly, Erdogan did not talk about his university studies, only very little. He did not respond to the hundreds of criticisms directed at most of his education stages and published documents with the exception of a few of them with insufficient responses. Moreover, no one has any clear and reliable information about his undergraduate studies and exams to equivalence his certificate from the Imam Khatib School. According to some sources, Erdogan was not a bright student in IH (Cakir & Calmuk 2001: 19).



In Turkey, it is accustomed that every school keeps all notes, assessments and records of its students. The question which arise here is, why the schools at which Erdogan studied have never published the documents related to him. It is well known that the schools, whose students become president of a country or take up another high position, will certainly proudly publish their reports, school notes and certificates of that student. But this have not happened in the case of Erdogan.

It is known from the published information about Erdogan's education that in 1973 he graduated from Imam al-Khatib School, studied to equalise his certificate and passed the exams, then studied for the university exams, passed the exams and joined the university in the same year, or the following year according to other sources. These stages require a lot of preparation, periods of formal study, and many exams that in fact cannot be completed in the same year or in one year. To match his Imam Hatip diploma to a general High School diploma, Erdogan should have studied extra lessons for one year in Eyup high School and should have passed the exams (Birgun 2021).

Moreover, according to the records of the Imam Al-Khatib School, Erdogan did not succeed in the lessons on the Arabic language and the Qur'an in the final exams, which required additional effort in that period (Dundar 2007). However, not a single document has been provided by Erdogan or by any other reliable source which proves that Erdogan had had a diploma of equivalency from Eyyup high school.

Erdogan had completed his alleged university study in eight years, while according to Article 54 of the University Law at that time the university



student would be dismissed from college if he did not graduate in a period of one and half times the official period of the study. In the case of Erdogan, the study period in the Institute of Economics and Commercial Sciences was three years; therefore, Erdogan should have been expelled from the faculty even if the study period was four years, as Erdogan claims (Sozcu 2016; Cumhuriyet 2015). One should note that when Erdogan obtained sufficient parliamentary power to change the Turkish Constitution, the article related to the university study of the presidential candidate was drafted by deleting the requirement of four years (Ileri Haber website 2016).

Erdogan claims to have graduated from the Aksaray Faculty of Commercial Science in 1981. However, there is no reliable evidence that Erdogan has ever joined and completed this study and the documents that were published about Erdogan's education stages are full of errors (see Photos 1-5 in the Appendix). Here are some notes that refute Erdogan's claims:

- No photo taken of Erdogan during his studies at the university was published, neither by Erdogan nor by his colleagues even though Turkish politicians and the Turkish press have challenged him to publish even a single photo that he supposedly took while studying at the university.

- There is no colleague of Erdogan who gave sufficient and reliable information about Erdogan's graduation from the Aksaray faculty of Commercial Sciences.

- Many students graduated from the same faculty and in the same academic period, and they did not know or get to know Erdogan during their studies (Colasan 2014).



- Erdogan talks about his primary school period and his studies in Imam Khatib High School in an enthusiastic manner in the audio-visual press, but he never talks about his university life. It is remarkable that those who conduct interviews with him do not ask him about his university life on television programs, especially in the media loyal to him (Beyaz TV 2013).

- Erdogan, who has filed thousands of lawsuits for the simplest criticism directed at him, has not sued anyone who wrote or spoke about the falsity of his graduation certificates, and there are many.

- Yusuf Ziya Ozcan, a former head of the Turkish Higher Education Council (a government department at the level of a ministry) in which he served from December 11, 2007 until December 11, 2011, said that he had searched for Erdogan's university degree, when he was head of the council, but could not find it (Duvar 2023).

- According to the Refah Party's 1994 files, when Erdogan was candidate of the party and won the elections for the Mayor of Istanbul province, Erdogan attended university in the "1974-1975" period and graduated in 1979. Yet Erdogan now claims that he had graduated in 1981 (Odatv 2016).

Erdogan's insurance record shows that he has been working full-time for the Istanbul Electric, Tram and Tunnel Company during the years he claims he was studying at the faculty (Yalcin 2014: 57; Odatv 2015).

The English version of Erdogan's biography, published on the website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, states that Erdogan graduated from the Faculty of Economics and *Administrative* Sciences (Presidency website in English), while the Turkish version on the same website



mentions another specialisation, which is the faculty of Economics and *Commercial* Sciences (Presidency website in Turkish; see Photo 10).

The critics and complaints

Although the assessments of the educational stages, teachers' impressions, reports and grades obtained by Turkish presidents and prime ministers have been announced by themselves or by official or unofficial sources, these did not happen with Erdogan. Three documents related to Erdogan's alleged university degree were published (Photos 1, 2, 4), two of them endorsed by two rectors of Marmara University and another published by the Turkish press. All these documents contain obvious and serious errors.

Doubts about the legitimacy of Erdogan's educational certificates came every time with Erdogan's attempts to make changes in the Turkish Constitution. The first of them was in 2007, when Professor Ergun Ozbudun stated that he had prepared a special constitution for Erdogan (Odatv 2014). After that, the talk about changing the constitution stopped, and with it the debate about Erdogan not having a university degree.

With Erdogan announcing his candidacy for the Turkish presidential elections in 2014, discussions erupted again as to whether or not Erdogan had a university degree. This question is vital, because one of the basic conditions for running for the presidency of the Republic of Turkey is obtaining a four-year university degree.



Among the many complaints was a request for parliamentary interrogation submitted by MP Ali Ozturk to the Presidency of the Turkish Parliament, but it was left unanswered (Birgun 2016). In this regard, another MP, Barış Yarkadaş said: "I asked (Prime minister) Davutoglu and there was no answer. I applied to Marmara University to obtain information. They told me that they had replied to Ali Riza Öztürk, who was a member of parliament for the previous term, and that the issue had become public. Unfortunately, the answer is rather vague. I applied to the supreme board of Information. I expect a response on the 12th or 15th of this month" (Hacaloglu 2016).

The first official response to discussions about Erdogan not having a university degree came from a source that has no responsibility to interfere in such matters. On April 24, 2014, the Rector of Marmara University, Zafer Gul, got involved in the matter and posted on his personal Twitter account a statement in response to politicians and media who claimed that Erdogan did not have a university degree. Gul published what he called Erdogan's temporary graduation document (Photo 1), which contains flaws and deficiencies that give a clear impression that it is forged. One should know that Rector Zafer Gul was appointed by the second authority in the Justice and Development Party (AKP—*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) after Erdogan, then president of Turkish republic Abdullah Gul (Firat 2016; Odatv 2015, 2014).

To prevent further investigations into Erdogan's university degree, the Fifth Anatolian Criminal Court in Istanbul decided on July 18, 2014 to block access to Marmara University's certificate archive (Birgun 2016).



Meanwhile, Professor Yusuf Halacoglu, the deputy head of the parliamentary group of the National Movement Party (*Milli Hareket Partisi*), of that time had published the temporary graduation document of Erdogan (Photo 1), which the rector Gul published, and a duplicate of Erdogan's certificate (Photo 2 & 3). He confirmed that the period of study at the Aksaray High School of Commercial Sciences was three years, making Erdogan ineligible to become the President of the Republic of Turkey (Sozcu 2016B).

On September 17, 2015, investigative writer Ergun Poyraz, who wrote several articles and a book on Erdogan's life, published for the first time another duplicate of Erdogan (Photos 4, 5) explaining when, why, and where the three (Photo 1, 2, 4) published documents belonging to Erdogan were organised (Odatv 2015).

On June 10, 2016, this second duplicate (Photo 4) of Erdogan's alleged university degree was officially posted on the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Twitter account with the following note: "*Upon our application, we share the notarized diploma sample sent by YSK*" (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*—Supreme Election Council)" (HDP 2016).

On September 28, 2015, the People's Liberation Party (HKP—*Halkın Kurtuluş Partisi*) submitted a request to the supreme election council demanding the dismissal of its president on the grounds that he had approved Erdogan's candidacy for the presidential elections based on Erdogan's forged university degree (Sozcu 2015).

None of the official and unofficial complaints submitted to government agencies concerned with obligating Erdogan to produce his university



degree or verifying the authenticity of his documents, which contain errors that would render these invalids, have not been reasonably answered.

With Erdogan's accelerating steps towards imposing an Islamic character on the Turkish secular system and his relentless march towards tyranny, he began preparations in 2016 to change the Turkish Constitution towards presidential dictatorship to greatly increase Erdogan's powers.

Debates broke out again in the Turkish media and among Turkish politicians and intellectuals about whether Erdogan had a university degree or not and about doubts about Erdogan's published documents submitted to government departments. Once again, complaints began to be submitted to the competent authorities, to demand confirmation of the legitimacy of Erdogan's documents, including complaints by members of Parliament to the Presidency of Parliament, as for example:

- In April 2016, a parliamentarian from Ankara, Ali Haydar Hakverdi, submitted a request to the administration of Marmara University to obtain information about Erdogan's university degree. In June 2016, Hakverdi submitted another request for parliamentary interrogation about the validity of Erdogan's university degree (Birgun 2016).

- In June 2016, a parliamentarian from Istanbul, Baris Yarkadas, submitted a request for parliamentary interrogation about the validity of Erdogan's university degree (Hacaloglu 2016).

- In June 2016, the former head of the Turkish Union of judges and prosecutors, Omer Faruk Eminagaoglu, submitted a request to the supreme election council to investigate the university degree which



Erdogan had submitted to the council. The council rejected the request unanimously (Sozcu 2016C).

- In the same month, Eminagaoglu opened a lawsuit against the Rector of Marmara University, accusing him of illegal behaviour, failure to fulfil duty requirements and abuse of office (Cumhuriyet 2016).

- In July 2017, the People's Liberation Party brought the claim that President Erdogan's university certificate was forged to the Constitutional Court (HKP 2017). The party also submitted various requests to various authorities such as Marmara University, requesting information about Erdogan's university degree.

- On 10 October 2016, the deputy head of the Republican People's Party (RPP—*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), Tur Yildiz Bicer, submitted a parliamentary interpellation to the Presidency of the Turkish Parliament, asking: what is the diploma that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gave to the Turkish army departments so that he could serve as a reserve officer? The Turkish parliament responded to the questioning by saying that the relevant documents had been destroyed (News site 2016; see Photo 6 in the Appendix).

All complaints remained without result, whether they were rejected from the outset or excuses were made that the matter could not be investigated. Then came the legal step to obstruct the scrutiny of Erdogan's diploma on April 30, 2018, when the supreme election council abolished the requirement to attest the university degree from a notary public for those who run for the presidential and parliamentary elections. This is because Erdogan does not have a legally documented university degree. On May 2, 2018, parliamentarian Mehmet Tum asked in a parliamentary debate, "Has this decision been taken by the supreme election council in Favor of President Erdogan?" (Ahval 2018; see Photo 7 in the Appendix).



Shortcomings and errors in the published documents of Erdogan

It seems that Erdogan did not need the graduation document except when absolutely necessary and in cases outside his specialisation. And every time he provided a document other than the one that preceded it. The first time Erdogan needed a graduation document was when the time to perform his compulsory military service came. And in order to shorten the period and serve as a reserve officer, he prepared the first certificate, which was the temporary graduation document (Photo 1). Then Erdogan presented the graduation document on two other occasions. The first occasion was in 1994 when he ran for the position of mayor of Istanbul, as he prepared the first duplicate (Photo 2). The second occasion was when Erdogan planned to run for the presidency of the Republic of Turkey in 2014, so he provided the second duplicate then (Photo 4).

As for the published documents regarding Erdogan's graduation from the university, these are the following:

- 1. Temporary graduation document;
- 2. The first duplicate;
- 3. The second duplicate.

1. The Temporary Graduation Document (Photo 1)

This document was presented in April 2016 by Zafer Gul, the Rector of Marmara University, who claimed that it was Erdogan's temporary graduation document, even though it contained serious errors.



The Temporary Graduation Document is not a university diploma, but rather a document given to a graduate when he needs a certificate that has not yet been completed. According to the Marmara University, the Temporary Graduation Document is valid for six months (Marmara University 2023, Marmara University 2018). It is usual for the entity to which the temporary graduation document is brought to require the original certificate when it is issued.

Before this document was published by Gul, no one knew about it. As for the original copy of this document, no one has seen it. In September 2015, National Party (*Ulusal Parti*) chairman and journalist Gokce Firat declared that Erdogan had possibly used this document to perform his military service as a reserve officer, as Erdogan claimed, otherwise he should have served as a regular soldier (Firat 2016). As mentioned above, the parliamentarian Bicer submitted a request to the Presidency of the Turkish Parliament asking to investigate which university degree Erdogan used for military service, which remained without reaching to a conclusion.

The Rector of Marmara University defended the authenticity of this document. One should note that it is not the responsibility of the university rector to defend the validity of such documents (certificates), especially those related to senior state officials such as the prime minister. As mentioned above, one of the former presidents of the Union of Judges and Prosecutors opened a lawsuit against the President of Marmara University in this context (Cumhuriyet 2016). Additionally, the document contains many serious errors. In addition, the Rector of the university did not provide any evidence to substantiate his claim. There are specialised



departments in every country responsible for verifying the authenticity of official documents or detecting forgeries in documents.

Gul indicated that Erdogan studied at the university for four years, without referring to any source. In contrast, there are Turkish academic authorities claiming that Erdogan studied at an institute where the study period was three years (Sozcu 2016B; Cumhuriyet 2016B).

Another Rector of Marmara University, Muhammad Emin Arat, who claims to be Erdogan's classmate in the same faculty, does not write in his autobiography that he graduated from Marmara University as Erdogan does, but rather writes that he graduated from the Istanbul Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences (Arat Biography, Marmara university website).

As for the major errors in this temporary graduation document of Erdogan, particularly when compared to another original document (Photo 8), these are:

- The design and title of the document is neither a design nor a title of a temporary graduation document, but rather a design and title of a regular graduation certificate. For a temporary graduation document, its title must be a temporary graduation document of another design (Zileli 2023).

- On this document is written in Erdogan's handwriting the phrase "I received by hand *the original of my temporary graduation document*" and this phrase is signed by Erdogan's signature. The writing of such phrases on any temporary graduation document by the document holder is illegal, and the content of the writing is wrong as well. There is no document called 'an original temporary graduation document'.



- There is no picture of the owner of the document (Erdogan), which is mandatory in such a document.

- There is no the stamp of the school that gave the document. This is also mandatory.

- The Dean's signature is forged.

In mid-2016, the pro-Erdogan press published a number of photos of Erdogan in the uniform of a reserve officer among a group of reserve officers, claiming that the photos were taken during Erdogan's military service. The purpose of publishing these photos of Erdogan was to convince the Turkish public that they are proof that Erdogan is a four-year university graduate (Kokdemir 2016).

To reiterate, Erdogan used the temporary graduation document when he joined the army (Firat 2016). According to Erdogan's provisional graduation document, he graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Commercial Sciences on April 3, 1981, and joined the military service in March of 1982 (Yalcin 2014: 86). This means that Erdogan's temporary graduation document was no longer valid when he joined the military. As mentioned above, the temporary graduation document is only valid for six months (Marmara University 2018).

Based on these facts, this temporary graduation document belonging to Erdogan is *invalid*, even false or forged.

2. The First duplicate (Photos 2, 3)

According to Marmara University, the definition of a duplicate is as follows: "If the original certificate is lost, torn, or damaged to the point



of being unusable, a new design duplicate is issued in a new format. The original diploma number must be written on the duplicate. The applicants for a duplicate should attach two photos of the graduate and the damaged or torn certificate. The address, name, surname, and occupation of the signatories are written on the signature and approval sections of the duplicate, as on the original certificate, but without the signatures" (Arat Biography, Marmara University 2018).

Although this duplicate appeared in 2014, investigative writer Ergun Poyraz posted it on his Facebook and Twitter accounts in September 2015, explaining when, why and where this duplicate was organised. According to Poyraz and various other sources, it was prepared in 1994 for use by Erdogan in the Istanbul mayoral elections, which he won (Poyraz 2015).

There are several major errors in this first duplicate related to Erdogan's university degree, namely:

- Erdogan did graduate neither from Marmara University nor from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences of Marmara University as it is written on the duplicate. Marmara University was not yet established in the year 1981, as is written on the invalid provisional graduation document.

Moreover, if Erdogan actually had graduated from a college as he claims, then he had graduated from the Faculty of Commercial Sciences, not Administrative Sciences—and not from Marmara University, but rather from the Istanbul Academy of Economics and Commercial Sciences, according to his invalid Temporary graduation document (Photo 1).

It seems that the position of mayor and the political field are areas of administrative competence, so the administration specialisation is



more suitable for Erdogan; so the specialty of commerce had been replaced by the specialty of administration. Such changes in the essence of the testimony can only occur in forged documents and in a case full of large and prominent forgeries, as in the case of educational certificates related to Erdogan. As it is mentioned above, this error also appears when comparing the biography of Erdogan published on the website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, as it is written in the English section (administrative) and in the Turkish section (commercial). Erdogan's change of field of specialty from commercial to administrative with such ease indicates his willingness to manipulate and distort facts.

- In accordance with the conditions of Marmara University to grant a duplicate of the university degree to the graduate:

o The original certificate must be lost, torn or damaged to the point of being unusable. In the first possibility, the news of the loss of the original certificate must be published at the time in a newspaper and in the second possibility, the damaged original certificate must be presented. In either case, there is no information about Erdogan providing the required evidence.

o The original certificate number must be written on a duplicate. But Erdogan does not have an original certificate. Even the number on this duplicate is not the same as on the only error-riddled document Erdogan submitted about his alleged university studies, the invalid temporary graduation document.

o There must be a photo of the owner of the certificate on a duplicate. There is no photo of Erdogan on this duplicate.

o The address, name, surname and profession of the signatories, which are written on the signature and approval sections



of the original certificate, should be written on a duplicate, but without the signatures. But:

- Erdogan does not have an original certificate which show an address, name, surname and profession of the signatories;
- The names of rector and the dean on this duplicate of Erdogan are not the same as the names on his invalid temporary graduation document, which Erdogan illegally uses as an original certificate.
- 3. The Second duplicate (Photo 4, 5)

It is not clear why Erdogan needed a second duplicate. The only two main differences between the first duplicate and this one is the difference in design and the presence of the signatures of the dean of the college and the rector of the university in this second copy. As it is mentioned above, according to Marmara University there should not be any signatures on the duplicate.

On June 3, 2016, the second rector of Marmara University, Mehmet Emin Arat, published on the university's website a four-page statement bearing his signature giving an almost complete educational biography of Erdogan, which included various discrepancies and inaccuracies. The statement supported the authenticity of documents related to Erdogan's alleged university diploma. According to Arat, this duplicate was issued on April 1, 2011 (Arat 2016).

It seems that Erdogan participated with the rector of Marmara University, Mehmet Emin Arat, in writing the latter's statement about Erdogan's educational career, because Erdogan was at Marmara



University on the same day that Arat published his report on Erdogan and gave a speech there. In his speech, Erdogan spoke in a manner as if he was ordering the academic staff of the university to bring for him a university degree in any way. This is what Erdogan said:

"They started a discussion these days about whether he (Meaning himself) has a diploma or not. Extract it from the archive, will you publish it, what will you do? ... Maybe they will believe it if the rector declares" (T24 2016).

In addition, Erdogan gave in his speech some key points about his alleged university graduation, which the university president had included in his statement. The statement included detailed and minute information about Erdogan's educational biography, as only people close to the person can know this information, or the person himself provided this information to the other directly (Ibid).

When this second duplicate of Erdogan's university degree was prepared in 2011, the Rector of Marmara University was Zafer Gul, who published the first statement in April 2014 and supported the authenticity of Erdogan's suspicious documents. Gul's deputy at that time was Mehmet Emin Arat, who became rector of Marmara University in 2014 and published the second lengthy statement in June 2016 to support the authenticity of Erdogan's alleged documents. Note that the appointments of university presidents were and still are made mainly by Erdogan.

The following are some comments on the statement of the President of Marmara University, Muhammad Amin Arat, about Erdogan's alleged university degree:



- Arat described all criticisms of Erdogan's education as baseless and contradictory to facts. As in the case of the statement of the former university rector, Zafer Gul, Arat did not provide any evidence to support his claims or to prove the invalidity of the many serious criticisms of all of Erdogan's educational stages.

- Arat claimed that Erdogan graduated with a good grade from 41 lessons, which contradicts the fact that Erdogan completed his studies in eight years. Nor did Arat give any document to prove his claim, and there is no publication or neutral or independent source that supports such a claim.

- Arat indicated that Erdogan had graduated from the administrative department of the faculty and not from the commercial department, although according to the invalid temporary graduation document that Arat himself relies on, and on which all other documents related to Erdogan's university degree are based, it is written that Erdogan studied commercial sciences and not administrative sciences (Photo 1).

- As in the first duplicate, the names of the rector and dean mentioned in this duplicate also are not the same as the names in Erdogan's invalid temporary graduation document.

- It is known that Erdogan claims that Arat graduated from the same faculty as him. Arat defends the mentioning in Erdogan's educational biography that he had graduated from the faculty of economics and commercial sciences at *Marmara University*. But Arat himself writes in his own biography that he is a graduate of the Istanbul Academy of economic and commercial sciences (Arat biography).

- In 2011, when Marmara University issued this second duplicate of Erdogan's university diploma which contains a number of significant errors, Arat was the Vice Rector of the university (Ibid).



In 2013, when Arat was the vice Rector of the university of Marmara, the university awarded Erdogan a honorary doctorate in political sciences.
In 2014, Erdogan had appointed Arat as Rector of Marmara University (Ibid).

This second duplicate of Erdogan's certificate has been attested by a Notary, which cannot be achieved without seeing the original certificate. Because when attesting, it is necessary for the notary to see the original and to write on the back of the document that it is identical to the original certificate. However, without the original certificate, the notary attested the duplicate, writing on it "It is identical to the original".

The Turkish Notary Public Union has punished an employee of the notary office, who has certified this duplicate (the second), with a warning penalty. Erdogan submitted this duplicate, which is full of errors and illegally certified by a notary, to the supreme election council as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey and was approved by the council. All complaints submitted to the supreme election council requesting the rejection of Erdogan's candidacy or investigation of the authenticity of his documents (Cumhuriyet 2019).

On the other hand, to certify any document with the notary, the owner of the document must either bring the document himself to the notary or give the mandate to another person to complete the transaction. There is no evidence that these two possibilities have been realised. The person who brought this duplicate of Erdogan's certificate to the notary for certification was Hasan Tukenmez, Erdogan's office director's driver, Hasan Dogan (Cumhuriyet 2019B).



It seems that the first duplicate (Photos 2, 3) of Erdogan's university certificate was illegally prepared outside Marmara University; otherwise, Marmara University would not have prepared a duplicate (Photos 4, 5) for the second time, or the rectors of Marmara University who provided detailed information about Erdogan's education would have referred to it. Moreover, its design is not a design affiliated with Marmara University.

Another document (Photo 9)

The Alumni Directory of Istanbul Academy of Economics and Commercial Sciences, Faculty of Commercial Sciences for the year 1980-1981 (Odatv 2016B) contains detailed information about the student's university life, including full name, dates of study periods including date of entry to university and date of graduation, student number, student photos with short notes, and statements about their behaviour and personalities. The directory also includes the names of the members of the directory's preparation committee, the names of the rector, dean of the faculty, vice-rectors and lecturers.

Among the information that is given in the Alumni directory about a student is how his attendance at the faculty has been, for example: "He came to school occasionally", "He neglected school", "He came to school only on exam days" and "He continued school and work together". Erdogan constantly uses the chaotic years of the 1970s in Turkey as an excuse for that no one knows anything about his university life or no one has seen him at university.



In March 2016, Turkish newspapers published an alumni directory for the faculty from which Erdogan claims he had graduated, and for the same year of graduation, i.e. 1981. There was no information at all in it about Erdogan.

In the directory there are different pictures of students at different stages of study, inside and outside the school, with lecturers, on school trips and in sports teams. Erdogan is not present even in these photos. As Erdogan is known for his interest and professionalism in football, and his joining football teams in the Turkish League. However, he is not present even in the school's football team photos. Notably it is stated in the directory that no student has been excluded.

Populist psychology

A large number of populists emerged over the past two decades across the globe; some of them have strong populist behaviours, and they succeeded in winning power: some of them ruled for many years, and many are still ruling. They made radical changes to the systems of governing of their states, and sometimes turned it upside down.

Since years, the academic community and the global media are intensively discussing populism and populist leaders in their negative meanings. There are factors at the core of the populist approach that make it deviate from the usual way of conducting politics.

Populism is a political approach that relies mainly on a leader and the use of feelings, as one person plays the primary role in obtaining and



maintaining the support of great masses. Relying exclusively on the leader and exploiting feelings (emotions) often leads to:

- Deviations in appealing to the masses

Having the support of so many masses make deviations in addressing the people inevitable, such as polarising communities (Roberts 2021) and exploiting national, religious, patriotic sentiments, or the grievances of poverty of the economically disadvantaged.

- Abuse of the power

Maintaining the support of so many masses and making radical changes in the ruling system makes the abuse of power inevitable.

There are many other downsides to populist behaviour:

- Misleading statements and disinformation are at the heart of populist discourse (Heinrich 2017);

- The populist uses hate speech, profanity and arbitrary interpretations, and does not hesitate to tell lies (Dale 2021) (Endnote 1);

- The populists frequently use conspiracy theories, and they are good at creating enemies for the people, the state and the country, both internally and externally (Bergmann 2018);

- The demonisation of the opposition and the emotional pressure on the masses are among the main features of populism;

- Abusing democracy is considered one of the most serious negative aspects of the populist approach (Kyle & Mounk 2018) (Endnote 2) and they easily violate laws and legislation and even the constitution (Adamidis 2021; Kovalcík 2022).



Thus, the populist approach is a massive effort by almost always one individual and a challenge to large segments of society, such as the entire existing political system, the press, minorities and human rights defenders.

All these specifications reveal a typical personality with different yet mutually reinforcing characteristics. The foremost among these characteristics are an unbridled desire for supremacy and domination, huge ability to work and persuade and the lack of hesitation in misusing rules, laws, and even moral and social values.

In this case, education, which today occupies a large part of the practices of a person's daily life, must have a role in influencing the populist's psychology and personality, and consequently on his behaviour and politics. The voters' lack of education, let alone higher education with a university degree, also plays important roles in the emergence of populism (Brewer 2020).

Although education is considered one of the basic functions of the state and society as a whole—and aims to educate people about values that benefit society, which is also one of the main goals of United Nations institutions concerned with education (Bergan & Damian 2010: 122-123) there nowadays are ethical failures and challenges in universities and other places of higher education at the global level, which require that ethics and values be placed at the centre of attention when searching for solutions (Prisacariu & Shah 2016: 152).

The emergence of populism, which has the unconstructive characteristics mentioned above, undermining the familiar political and social foundations, cannot be explained by the inadequacy of the education system alone. In trying to justify education or at least so one

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should not exclusively blame lack of proper, ethical education entirely for the rise of populism, it can be found that many seasoned populists lack a full educational biography.

As shown above, Erdogan lacks true milestones in his educational career, and his lack of university education is almost constant. Just as there are many doubts about the educational biography of America's former President Donald Trump (Valania 2019; Elliott 2011), there are flaws in the story of university studies by India's prime minister Narendra Modi, and the doubts are still circulating in the media (Bhattacharya 2018). Regarding Bolivia's former president Evo Morales, even his high school education is questionable. Bulgaria's former prime minister Boyko Borisov began working as a firefighter after graduating from high school, which did not require a university education; then he graduated in the ranks of the Communist Party earning through there his university degrees. South Africa's former president and veteran populist Jacob Zuma never went to school.

An analysis of the relationship between the populist's Big Five personality traits, (academic) achievement or good performance and self-esteem, reveals crucial characteristics (Table 1):

- The five big personality traits data of the populist show a complete mismatch with the personality traits of (academic) performance and/or achievement;

- Low self-esteem dominates the personality of the populist, while genuine high self-esteem dominates the personality of an individual with high performance and/or good achievement in higher (academic) education



(Infante & Marin 2008; Soufi, Damirchi & Sedghi 2014; Aryana 2010; Hearn 2019: 44; Kumar 2017);

- The fact is that the populist actually realises a very great achievement, which does not mean that this achievement is positive, contradicting the classic equation that low self-esteem generally leads to a low level of achievement or performance;

Here, the role of extraversion appears as one of the five main personality traits of the populist, which has a positive relationship with high self-esteem (McCarthy 2017). Extreme extroversion is also one of the absolute necessities of populist behaviour. In other words, a populist must be extremely extroverted in order to attract the masses and win their support;
It may be that the populist's extreme extroversion helps him realise great achievements as over-compensation for his generally state of low self-

esteem, which is considered against achievement or good performance; - The four non-constructive traits (low agreeableness, low degree of conscientiousness, low level of openness, and low emotional stability) of the Big Five personality traits of the populist that are all associated with low selfesteem, can explain the negative aspects of populist behaviour (personality); - The individual's sense of self (self-esteem) is generally present at the age of five, will be relatively stable at the age of eleven, and then remains relatively constant throughout one's life (McElroy 2015; Ducharme 2018). Usually, personality traits begin to emerge after many years, in adolescence (Thill 2019). Since low self-esteem appears and settles before the appearance and establishment of personality traits, then what is the role of low self-esteem in building the personality traits of the populist? In other words, what is the role of feeling inferior (inferiority complex) in the emergence of populism? A subject that needs to be studied further.



The hypothesis is that the individual replaces his general state of (extreme) low self-esteem with (extreme) extraversion, which is a component of positive self-esteem (substitution), giving rise to the populist personality. In other words, the general condition of the populist's extremely low self-esteem excites and amplifies his extroverted state, creating the populist's tremendous ability to win over large masses and achieve and maintain supremacy and superiority.

Table 1Relation between the big five personality traits, academic
achievement (performance) and self-esteem of the populist

Populist	Self-esteem ⁴	Achievement (Academic)	Self-esteem ⁵
Extraversion ¹	Positive	Introvert	Negative
Low agreeableness ¹	Negative	High agreeableness	Positive
Low degree of conscientiousness ¹	Negative	High degree of conscientiousness	Positive
Low level of openness ²	Negative	High level of openness	Positive
Low emotional stability ³	Negative	High emotional stability	Positive

1. Nai & Martinez i Coma 2019; Nai 2019. 2. Nai 2019; Czikora 2015.

3. Nai & Martinez i Coma 2019. 4. Amirazodi 2011; Eswari, Kaur & Kavitha 2019.

5. Amirazodi 2011; Eswari, Kaur & Kavitha 2019; Infante & Marin 2008.

Conclusion

This study shows that the absence of the original university degree for Erdogan is the main reason for the failure of his attempts to prove that he obtained a university degree. All his attempts are based on what Erdogan calls a temporary graduation document (Photo 1), which contains errors that clearly make it invalid. The other problem with validating Erdogan's



claim that he has a university degree, is that even the invalid provisional graduation document has not been investigated, and has not been seen—simply because it does not exist.

Two of the rectors of Marmara University were involved in defending Erdogan, that is, in defending the invalid temporary graduation document; they tried to justify its validity without providing evidence. They even issued a duplicate (Photo 4) of this document, which in turn contains major errors—even according to the conditions of Marmara University itself.

It is a fact that the individual's lack of any educational stage or degree does not necessarily reflect on his behaviour or personality. But naivety, contradictions, inconsistencies, the absence of boundaries in the individual's words and actions, and anomalies in his or her opinions can be clear indications of his or her low level of education. Not to mention that the populist often violates laws and the social values that are—or should be—among the primary aims of education. Many of these characteristics are evident in Erdogan's rhetoric and behaviour. Note that Erdogan made religious and national political rhetoric a passion of his, and took politics as a profession since his youth in high school, which made him improve and master the art of political rhetoric.

Despite the big and continuous uproar in the Turkish press about Erdogan's illegal graduation documents, especially about actually forging these, it was not taken into account by any relevant government departments—which indicates the extent of Erdogan's (or populist's) dominance over the state's executive and judicial departments and his or her control over the feelings of the masses who perpetuate their support for him or her.



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The course of the story of discussions of Erdogan's certificates, which is the subject of this study, is a clear indication of Erdogan's imposition of falsehood on society. It indicates other primary characteristics of Erdogan and populists in general too, namely "misleading" and "unbridled desire" to obtain and maintain power as well insistently "violating laws".

Many factors play a major role in how society accepts such impolite behaviour, perpetuates its support for the populist in question and keeps him or her in power, as in the case of Erdogan.

Among the main reasons for this phenomenon are:

- Daily needs occupy the attention of a large percentage of society, especially in developing countries such as Turkey;

- A large percentage of the society does not reach to news and for many reasons, including the lack of internet penetration in many remote regions in developing countries;

- The populist subjugates most of the media to him- or herself, which never publish news against the government; Erdogan is a typical example in this context;

- The populists are supported mainly by the less educated, "simple" people (Brewer 2020, Marques 2019) who have a very low reading tradition. Note that the low reading tradition includes many other sections in a community.

There is a high possibility that Erdogan or any other populist is aware of these social characteristics, because it seems that influencing the masses is an instinctive state of the populist or he or she has mastered it later in life.



The other major factor accounting for the acceptance of such behaviour by a large proportion of society is the underlying ideology on which the populists rely on exploiting the sentiments of the masses. Adherence to Islamist behaviour by the country's leadership and administration prompts the Islamic(ised) masses to provide absolute support to any politician, here Erdogan.

In addition, Erdogan is exploiting the sentiments of nationalism and patriotism as well. Such ideologies are sacred to the hardliners, and they are sufficient to maintain the support of the masses and keep the populist in power despite all his or her negative behaviour patterns. Here the creation of polarisation is a natural consequence of populism, because hardliners view others as enemies, especially their immediate opponents. This is very evident in the speeches of Erdogan and Devlet Bahceli, the leader of the National Movement party, which they present weekly in parliament.

One should bear in mind that religion or Islam plays an equally important role as ethnicity, perhaps even more so, in Turkish nationalism. Economic deprivation in itself or as a secondary factor is a powerful synergist with extremist ideologies in creating populism.

As regarding a typical populist, such as Erdogan, Orbán, and Morales, who is characterised by an unusual orientation and an extraordinary ability to mobilise large masses, challenge large social strata and continue to cling to power, indicate that the populist is characterised by strong psychological motive(s), which at the same time means strong desire(s). For example, an exaggerated sense of responsibility or excessive sensitivity to inequity and injustice or any other motive.



Since the feeling of low self-esteem, which at the same time means a feeling of inferiority or an inferiority complex, dominates the populist personality (Table 1), the question that arises here, is the inferiority complex the main motive in the formation of the populist personality, and thus the cause of its negative aspects?

Note that some of the most important factors causing low self-esteem are present in Erdogan's case, such as extreme poverty and extreme exposure to violence in childhood. Erdogan was a naughty and bad-mouthed child; therefore, he was subjected to constant punishments from his father. For instance, his father once tied Erdogan to a fan on the ceiling of a room. Also, low self-esteem leads to academic failure, and academic failure in turn constitutes another cause of low self-esteem.

Note that the personality of the populist and the personality of the voter who votes for him or her has received a good share of attention of researchers hitherto. However, studying other psychological aspects of the populist individual may add crucial insights to our understanding of the populist phenomenon.

Two of the important factors explaining the emergence of populism and the increase in the number of populists are: first, the massive advances in the means of communication in recent decades that have allowed politicians to reach large audiences constantly and maintain communication easily. Secondly, the democratic developments and their spread that have made it possible for anyone to engage in politics. Moreover, the developments and spread of the principles of human rights expanded freedom of thought and expression and narrowed the scope of responsibility for speech, which opened the way for misuse of political discourse in particular. It seems that



these two factors will continue to develop, which will logically lead to the development of populism and the increase of the number of populists. Consequently, it is of vital importance that populism becomes part of the curricula in schools and universities.

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Endnotes

Note 1 Some examples of the many inconsistences in Erdogan's speeches.

- In 1994, Erdogan said: "Sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation, it is a great lie". After taking power, Erdogan started to say the opposite. As on 5 September 2010, Erdogan said: "Because sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation, is there any doubt?"
- On 5 December 2013, Erdogan said: "There was no airport. It came to Muş with us". But the Airport of the province of Muş was opened to civil traffic in 1992, ten years before AKP came to power.
- On 1 June 2018, Erdogan said: "Was there an airport in the province of Adıyaman? We have built, we." The airport of Adıyaman was put in service four years before AKP came to power.
- On 26 December 2010, Erdogan said: "Dear Friends, the language of my nation is one, this is the Turkish nation". On 27 May 2011, he said: "I said neither one language nor one religion. Nowhere do I have made such a statement, because they are a lie machine".



The following statement was made regarding the permission for the Blue Marmara operation, which concerns and is called after a passenger ship known for its participation in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and the deadly confrontation by the Israeli army on 31 May 2010. On 17 July 2014, Erdogan said: "Who is the authority, are they the loved ones in the south? If we are the authority in Turkey, we have already given permission. But for them is Israel". On 29 June 2016, Erdogan said, "Did you ask the prime minister of

On 29 June 2016, Erdogan said, "Did you ask the prime minister of the day that you are bringing such humanitarian aid?".

Note 2 In this regard, there are Netanyahu's attempts to rein in the judiciary, Erdogan's relentless march towards dictatorship, constitutional changes, for Morales to preserve his presidency despite the laws and Trump's attempts to politicise America's judiciary system and influence the supreme court.

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Appendix

Photo 1 Erdogan's Temporary Graduation document

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Photo 2 The First duplicate of Erdogan



••••

Bu diploma eksik olan imzalar.Üniversite 1982 temmuzda kuruldu.Mezuniyet 1981. Translate Tweet

IKTISADİ ve İDARİ BİLİMLER FAKÜLTESİ isans Aintomasi Recep Jayyip Erdoğan

8:01 PM · Apr 24, 2014



Photo 3 The back of the first duplicate of Erdogan

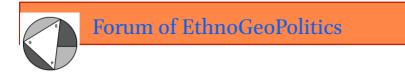


Photo 4 The second duplicate of Erdogan

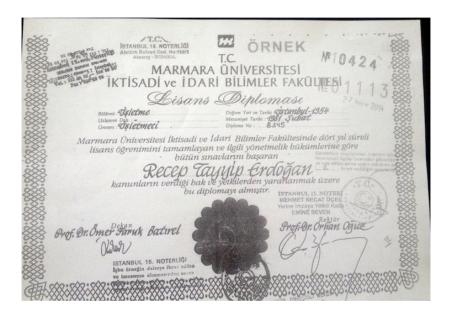




Photo 5 The back of the second duplicate of Erdogan

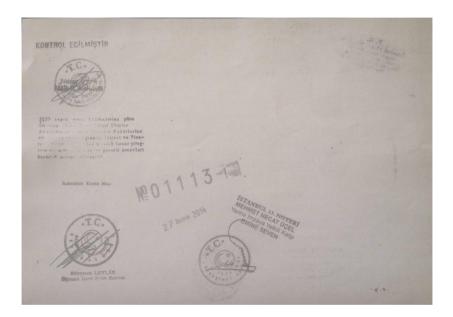




Photo 6 A request for interrogation from parliamentarian Tur Yildiz Becer to the Turkish Parlia-ment about which university diploma Erdogan had submitted to the Turkish military departments when he joined the compulsory military service

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Photo 7 The law abolishing the requirement to attest the university certificate, which is submitted to the supreme election council, by the public notary



İnsan Kaynakları Staj Duyurusu 歲

Sağlık Duyuruları



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Photo 8 An original certificate belonging to another person who graduated from the same faculty that Erdogan claims to have graduated from

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Photo 9 Alumni Directory of graduates of the Istanbul Academy of Economics and Commercial Sciences, Faculty of Commercial Sciences for the year 1980-1981, the faculty and university year that Erdogan claims to have graduated from

> The whole book can be found on this link: <u>www.odatv4.com/siyaset/okul-yilliginda-da-erdogandan-iz-yok-</u> 1203161200-91089.



1980 - 1981 SON SINIF YILLIĞI



Photo 10 The English and Turkish versions of the CV of Erdogan published on the webpages of the presidency of the Turkish republic

* * * * REPUBLIC	ICY OF THE OF TURKEY
Home Recep Tay	yip Erdoğan First Lady Activities Presidency Contact Sourch Q EN
Biography	Biography
Speeches & Statements	With roots in Rize, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was born in Istanbul on February 26, 1954. He graduated from
Interviews	Kasımpaşa Piyale Primary School in 1965 and completed his high school education at Istanbul Imam Hatip School (Religious Vocational High School) in 1973. Having succeeded in the necessary examinations for additional courses.
Articles	(Religious vocational righ School) in 1973. Flaving succeeded in the necessary examinations for additional courses, Mr. Erdoğan received a diploma from Eyüp High School as well. He received his graduation diploma from
Exclusive	Marmara University's Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in 1981.

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(Advertisement)

Turkey's Iraqi Turkmen Policy Merciless Exploitation and Violation of International Law

By Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation (SOITM Foundation)



About "Turkey's Iraqi Turkmen Policy"

The Turkmen in Iraq are of ethnic Turkic communities living in several countries neighboring Turkey.

The animosity and the hatred that had developed towards the Ottomans in the later decades of the Empire reflected onto those Turkic origin communities in the newly created countries after the Ottomans dismembered, which all were ruled by non-Turkish governments. The Turkic communities in the Balkans were exposed to massacres, in Greece they are still deprived of their ethnic rights, and in the Arabic countries, they are marginalized and exposed to serious assimilation policies, as in the cases of the Iraqi and Syrian Turkmen.

These suppressed communities had no other choice than to consider Turkey as their only rescuer and subjugate themselves to Turkey. At the same time, this has increased the animosity against them in their new countries and removed the possibility of getting help from any other national, regional or international powers.

On the other side, Turkey had neither ability nor intention to help these Turkic communities, in contrary, Turkey remain inattentive to their sufferings, even misused these communities benefiting from their blind obedience.

This book presents the history of 3 decades of the Turkish policy towards the Turkmen of Iraq, which can be considered a vivid view of the Turkish relation with Turkic communities in the neighboring countries.