



# ENQUIRY

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#ChangingHistory

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## History: A Changing Discipline

By ANDREW JUCHNO  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A professor recently asked our class if we believe biographies offer a fair account of the historical record. After some debate, he asserted that they tend to overemphasize the subject's actions and downplay the roles of supporting characters. He cited Joseph Ellis's biography of Thomas Jefferson, *American Sphinx*, as an example – one that exaggerates Jefferson's centrality to history and, at least by implication, understates others' significance.

To support this point, my professor noted Ellis's treatment of Maria Cosway, an Italian woman who held Jefferson's

*“many historians are now sacrificing an understanding of these supposedly overblown men in the spirit of inclusivity for its own sake.”*

romantic attention while he served in Paris. He argued that the essential problem with Ellis's portrayal is that he describes Cosway only in reference to Jefferson. Instead of elaborating on her successful artistic career, the author limits her role to one of romantic interest, thereby insinuating that she was historically significant only as an object of Jefferson's flirtation. By refusing Cosway importance on her own, in other words, Ellis supposedly exemplifies a sort of misogyny typical of biographies as a genre. The professor maintained further that Ron Chernow, Alexander Hamilton's most celebrated biographer, fell victim to this same “misogyny” in his portrayal of Hamilton's wife, Eliza. The greater point made in this class discussion seemed to be not the pitfalls of biography, but rather that history should

not just be the study of “old, white, aristocratic men.”

In presenting his views, my professor implicitly touched upon a relatively recent trend in the study of history. Over the past 20 years, scholarship has shifted away from studies of prominent military and political figures toward portraits of “everyday people.” Accordingly, when I used JSTOR to research a paper on the First World War, articles like “Expanding the Narrative: A First World War with Women, Children, and Grief” and “The Homosexual Scare and the Masculinization of German Politics Before World War One” popped up in the results tab.

There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to unearth a more complete history than the one previously presented by scholars. Women, children, and gay men all contributed to the greater political and cultural climate of the early 20th century. However, I fear that increased attention to these groups has led some scholars and students to perceive a false dichotomy between “old, white, aristocratic men” and everyone else. One cannot

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## Erdogan and the State of Turkey

By SAM BENEVELLI  
STAFF WRITER

On April 16, the Turkish government underwent a seismic constitutional shift. With the referendum results uncertain till late into the night, Turkey voted to centralize power in the hands of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The referendum, which won with 51.3 percent of the vote, abolishes the post of prime minister and transfers executive power to the president. This allows him to appoint the judges and officials responsible for scrutinizing his decisions. This not only violates many Turks' sense of proper constitutional order, but also sets the stage for Erdogan to

## This Week's News in 140 Characters

### EDITORIAL REPORT

- AP** The Associated Press @AP · 23m  
BREAKING: Turkey: Council of Ministers to extend state of emergency for 3 months; decision to go to parliament for approval  
16 143 63
- Dave Blount** @Moonbattery1 · 33m  
At Arizona State, Students Allowed to Stage Moonbat Protest Instead of Taking Final Exam shar.es/1QPQTs  
1 1
- Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump · 12h  
Our military is building and is rapidly becoming stronger than ever before. Frankly, we have no choice!  
21K 16K 79K
- Bill Kristol** @BillKristol · 2h  
Turkey is a reminder of the colossal failure of Obama's foreign policy. What country is freer or friendlier to us than when he took over?  
218 153 250
- NBC News** @NBCNews · 38m  
BREAKING: VP Pence lands at Camp Bonifas to visit the Demilitarized Zone with commander of U.S. Forces Korea  
43 189 203

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assume a more dictatorial role in the long run. (Additionally, however, the referendum limits the president to two five-year terms.)

The supporting campaign argued that a stronger centralized government would better enable Turkey to take on its challenges: a struggling economy, the world's largest Syrian refugee population, a war against Kurdish insurgents, and the Syrian war on Turkey's southern border.

The opposition worried that the new presidential powers will, according to the *New York Times*, “threaten the separation of powers on which liberal democracies have traditionally depended.” Judicial independence in Turkey was already weak before the change, and now it is in more peril. President Erdogan will now have unilateral authority in selecting the judges, as well as other administrators,

*“Erdogan immediately imprisoned more than 45,000 of the 130,000 state employees he fired after the coup attempt.”*

who will review his actions to decide their constitutionality. This tightens his grip on the Turkish

## Dealing With America's Opioid Addiction

By WILL UTZSCHNEIDER  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

President Trump recently formed a task force to deal with the opioid epidemic that is sweeping the nation. Among its members are Governor Chris Christie, who favors an emphasis on treatment for those affected by the drugs, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who prefers an emphasis on prison or jail for people who have abused these substances. The split between these two prominent Republicans suggests a hazy outlook for the task force. Who knows what will result from it?

In the meantime, many areas of the country – including many that voted for Trump – are locked in a grim battle with addiction, which has ripped apart families in states such as New Hampshire and Ohio. During the recent campaign, parents crying over lost children, and images of people overdosing in cars, became disturbingly common. Opioids killed more than 33,000 Americans in 2015

simply celebrate a history that ignores the so-called great men to whom, until recently, scholars paid a disproportionate amount of their attention.

For instance, one cannot deny that President Wilson exercised more influence over the course of history than, say, a poor woman from Detroit. This is not a value statement; it is merely a fact. I am not arguing that historians should not consider this woman's experiences during the war, merely that someone else – Wilson – was more influential and should be treated as such.

One result of the current academic culture is the conflation of identity politics with sound historical inquiry. What concerns me most is that many historians are now sacrificing an understanding of all these supposedly overblown men in the spirit of inclusivity for its own sake.

Consider how one such historian might address the German general Ludendorff. His German and Polish ancestry put him outside the category of Anglo-Saxon descent – which people have begun to interpret as the real meaning of the altogether useless ethnic category of “white.” Yet he could easily, nonetheless, get lumped into this group on account of his fair skin and duly ignored. Offering a history that disregards, based on his “whiteness,” General Ludendorff and his actions is nothing more than academic laziness.

There should not be two opposing schools of thought on these matters. An accurate account of history would recognize the greater influence, for good and for ill, of the actions of those in charge while explaining the larger world made up of common folk.

ERDOGAN cont.

bureaucracy even further, a process that began after the attempted military coup last summer.

Since the failed coup, Erdogan has constantly monitored the media, and journalists themselves, for anti-government opinions. One journalist, Kadri Grusel, has been imprisoned since October. His work at *Cumhuriyet*, Turkey's last major independent media outlet, was questioned due to his alleged connections to the Islamist Gulenist movement and the Kurdish Independence Movement. Mr. Grusel and at least 81 other journalists are held in detention at Silivri prison, just south of Istanbul, where shuttle services are provided so families can visit

the large number of imprisoned newspaper employees. Turkey has now surpassed China as the world's biggest jailer of journalists. Furthermore, Erdogan's actions concerning the press have garnered attention from several international human rights organizations.

In addition to silencing the press, Erdogan immediately imprisoned more than 45,000 of the 130,000 state employees he fired after the coup attempt. These imprisonments include punishment for alleged anti-Erdogan sentiments, insulting Erdogan directly over social media, or being suspected of participating in the coup. A former Miss Turkey, Merve Buyuksarac, posted on Instagram a satirical rewording of the country's national anthem: *I am like a wild flood, I smash over the law and beyond / I follow state bids, take my bribe and live.* She was sentenced to fourteen months.

Moreover, the legitimacy of the vote is already under scrutiny. The results will take time to confirm, but the opposition Republican People's Party is already calling for a recount of more than one-third of the ballots – around 2.5 million votes. The opposition claims the president's campaign on behalf of the referendum was corrupt in that it supposedly threatened people who intended to vote “no.” Many Turks either voted “yes” or stayed away from the polls in fear for their safety. Additionally, a last-minute raising of the standard for proving allegations of ballot stuffing made it easier to tamper with the election results. As of the day after the referendum, there was only one case of voter fraud caught on camera.

The result of the vote, if it holds up, cannot bode well for Turkey. Erdogan has been exceptionally power-hungry and on guard after last year's coup attempt. All the evidence we can see points to the likelihood that given the opportunity, he will continue to limit the media and centralize more power to himself. This constitutional change will not benefit Turkey in the long run, particularly if Erdogan is elected for a second term.

AMERICA'S OPIOID ADDICTION cont.

– a number that continues to rise. Opioid addiction is now the number-one cause of accidental death in this country, and may well be a major cause of the decline in life expectancy, for the first time, among middle-aged whites.

The economic implications remain enormous as well. Some estimate that it has already cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

Three issues are central in dealing with the problem of opioid addiction: prevention,

treatment, and saving lives. On the prevention side: Although securing the border would help, many of these opioids – including the deadly fentanyl – are arriving from China via the U.S. Postal Service. An international treaty set forth by the UN prohibits any carrier that transports international shipments from opening a package until it arrives at its destination. (Thanks, UN.)

In recent years, limits on the prescription of pain medications have somewhat eased the rate of increase in opioid-related deaths. For example, Massachusetts

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governor (and 2017 Hamilton commencement speaker) Charlie Baker signed a bill that limits the duration of opioid prescriptions to one week. Since many addicts start on such pain medications, this law is a good start. Other states have followed suit with similar laws, but more must be done to fight the epidemic.

Expanding access to treatment is important in mitigating America's opioid addiction as well. Unfortunately, some health care providers are reluctant to provide suboxone (or Buprenorphine) to their addicted patients. Although clinical studies have shown that this medication helps addicts stay in treatment, many have had trouble finding access to it.

Finally, reviving the economy, especially in states – such as Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky – that have faced so much of this tragic

problem, will help too. People are less likely to abuse these drugs, and more likely to kick the habit, if they have jobs, intact families (over which the government has no control), purposeful lives, and strong support systems.

In addition, private philanthropy is helping. Billionaire private equity investor John Grayken and his family, for example, donated \$25 million to create a Center for Addiction Medicine. Hopefully, such generosity will continue until a larger, government-funded program to combat opioid abuse is implemented.

## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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