

THE TURKISH DILEMMA

In Turkey's geography one can read its persistent political dilemma. The country exists on both sides of the great channel dividing Europe from Asia, West from East. Since 1923, when Mustapha Kemal Atatürk created the modern secular republic of Turkey after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Turks have sought to preserve his political legacy and find a balance between secularism and Islam, democracy and authoritarianism, aspirations to join the West and a long heritage that ties the nation to the East. Turkey is now a candidate for admission to the European Union, and ironically, at this critical moment, it is not Atatürk's political heirs but Turkey's Islamists who seem most eager to have the country cast its lot with the West.



Istanbul compares to no "work of Nature or Art," the poet Byron said.

*Martin Walker describes the course of Turkey's westward turn
Cengiz Çandar recalls Atatürk's lasting legacy*

The Turkish Miracle

by *Martin Walker*

Earthquakes, usually the most costly in human lives of all natural disasters, tend to be utterly unrelieved calamities. But the deaths of some 18,000 Turks on August 17, 1999, may be remembered as a sacrifice that inspired a kind of miracle. Measuring 7.4 on the Richter scale, the quake devastated the grim but bustling industrial city of Izmit and the packed tenements around the nearby Turkish naval base of Gölçük on the Sea of Marmara. Across the Bosphorus in Istanbul, now the most populous city in mainland Europe, shoddily built apartment blocks crumbled from the shock. The miracle occurred when Turkey's tragedy inspired an outpouring of human sympathy and official aid from its neighbor and long-time nemesis, Greece, which was swiftly reciprocated by Turkey when Greece lost 120 lives in its own earthquake three weeks later. The aid also shifted something fundamental in the power politics of Europe. "All ideological arguments were flattened by the earthquake," said Turkey's young minister of tourism, Erkan Mumçu. "Lying under the rubble is the Turkish political and administrative system."

Only two years earlier, Greece and Turkey had been on the brink of war over the ownership of some uninhabited rocks in the Aegean Sea. But now the mayors of Greek islands whose prosperity rests on military bases that guard against the Turkish threat were taking up collections to help their neighbors. When Turkey's health minister, Osman Durmus, declared that his country had no need of foreign help, least of all from Greece, he was widely denounced as an ignorant buffoon. "Thank You, Friends," ran the headline, printed in the Greek alphabet, in Turkey's largest-selling newspaper, *Hürriyet*. Within the year, Greece and Turkey had signed a number of agreements to cooperate on tourism and protect the environment, to safeguard investments and fight organized crime. The Greek and Turkish foreign ministers exchanged friendly visits, and bilateral talks began on military cooperation. Above all, after long blocking Turkey's hopes of eventual membership in the prosperity club of the European Union (EU), Greece reversed course. Foreign Minister George Papandreou declared it was time for his country to bury the hatchet and "pull the cart" to help Turkey into Europe.

The thaw with Greece was not the only miracle of that Turkish summer of 1999. The long cold war against Greece to the west had been matched by a 15-year anti-insurgency campaign against Kurdish separatists in the east. Indeed, the two struggles had recently seemed to come ominously together. In February 1999, Turkish special forces had seized Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK



Three Turkish women in Muslim dress gaze across the Golden Horn at one of the many mosques that grace the shores of the Bosphorus, the traditional divide of East and West.

(Kurdish Workers Party), the most militant and effective of the Kurdish guerilla groups, at his hideout in Kenya—a hideout, it emerged, that had enjoyed the protection of the Greek embassy. But Öcalan, who had proposed political negotiations even before his capture, called during his trial for a cease-fire. The earthquake gave his PKK a political opportunity to endorse this appeal, and amid the national mood of grief and redemption, it announced in September the end of the armed struggle.

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That wasn't the only significant change to result from Öcalan's capture. In Greece, the breach of international agreements against cooperation with terrorist groups cost the foreign minister his job and lifted the U.S.-educated Papandreu into his place. Papandreu has now staked his career on the belief that Greece's long-term interests are best served by a Turkey locked into prosperity and democracy through the EU.

The Kurdish political problem is far from resolved, even if the war has gone quiet. The struggle against Kurdish separatism, which cost some 37,000 lives and saw repeated Turkish military incursions against Kurdish bases in Iraq, was fought with great ferocity on both sides. At least 2,000 Kurdish villages were razed or cleared, adding floods of refugees to those Kurds already leaving the harsh land for the cities. Thousands of Turkish soldiers lost their lives in the conflict. Feelings on both sides ran high. Despite the cease-fire, angry demonstrations erupted when an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights spared Öcalan from the death sentence resulting from his trial.

With a characteristic lack of political delicacy, and convinced that it finally had the PKK on the run, the Turkish military helped ensure that the miracle was somewhat clouded. It arrested the popular Kurdish folk singer Ali Aktas, a familiar figure on Turkey's government-run TV channel, and threatened to charge him with singing inflammatory political songs. Earlier this year, the leader of the only legal Kurdish party, Ahmet Demir of the People's Democracy Party, was sentenced to a year in prison for a speech proposing an independent Kurdish state.

Education and broadcasting in the Kurdish language remain illegal; only nine years ago did Turkey drop the derogatory official term "mountain Turks" as a classification for the Kurds. Yet many of the roughly 12 million Kurds—perhaps a fifth of Turkey's population—are fully integrated into Turkish society. Prime ministers, presidents, and chiefs of the military staff, and about a quarter of current parliamentary deputies, have all proudly claimed some Kurdish ancestry. Some degree of limited autonomy and a relaxation of laws against Kurdish culture now seem to be on the political agenda, if the military can be induced to agree.

The cease-fire loosened a logjam. Four months after the earthquake, in December 1999, it broke dramatically when the 15 heads of government of the EU, meeting in Helsinki for one of their biannual summits, formally agreed that Turkey was now a candidate for membership. They were reacting in part to the lifting of the Greek blockade on Turkish hopes, in part to sustained pressure from successive American administrations, and in part to the clear signs that the end of the Kurdish war was opening the way for crucial improvements in human rights in Turkey. According to Finnish officials, who were the hosts of the summit and in possession of the rotating presidency of

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Kurdish-language television, beamed by satellite from Brussels, is one of the forces that have helped the scattered and beleaguered Kurds maintain a strong cultural identity.

the EU Council, the decision was not easily achieved. There were long wrangles, and direct pressure from Washington, before agreement was reached on the wording of the EU's position on Turkish accession. Even then, Turkey's response was uncertain, and Finnish and EU officials flew overnight to Turkey for a tense meeting. The eventual formula of the Helsinki Declaration welcomed "recent positive developments in Turkey" and concluded: "Turkey is a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states."

It should be stressed that Turkey's full membership is not an immediate prospect. Under EU rules, the long and stately minuet of the accession process can only begin once a candidate country has met Europe's "Copenhagen criteria": democratic institutions, a free press, the rule of law, and property rights. But if the Kurdish cease-fire holds, the formal accession process could probably begin around 2005, to be followed by long and tortuous negotiations while Turkey incorporates more than 80,000 pages of EU rules and regulations, the *acquis communautaire*, into its national law. Formal membership could then follow between 2010 and 2020, depending on the pace of Turkey's economic adjustment.

The implications of Turkey's candidacy are profound for the geopolitics of the Middle East, and for the cultural mix of a Europe that can now expect some 15 to 20 percent of its citizens to be Muslim, including Asians in Britain, North Africans in France, and more than 1.5 million Turks working in Germany.

The bid for EU admission is already beginning to change Turkish politics. Last May, the head of Turkey's constitutional court, Ahmed Neçdet Sezer, took

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office as the country's new president, despite some concern in the armed forces over his liberalism. (While the prime minister governs, the president chairs the National Security Council, which directs Turkey's foreign and security policies, and on which the president holds the deciding vote between the elected civilian politicians and the unelected generals.) Sezer had called for a constitutional amendment to drop the laws that limit free speech, for Kurdish families to have the right to educate their children in their own language, and for rulings in military courts to be open to appeal. Above all, he had suggested that the 1982 Constitution, installed by the Turkish military after the coup of 1980, "imposed unacceptable restrictions on basic freedoms" and should be revised to bring it into harmony with the European Convention on Human Rights. One key sign of the new political climate was the publication this past June of an official report from a parliamentary committee which acknowledged that the use of torture was systematic in Turkish jails, and could be stopped only by bringing the security forces under civil and judicial control.

The EU's long refusal of candidacy status to a staunch North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally, even when former Warsaw Pact members with uneven or flimsy democratic credentials were welcomed into the accession process, had given prolonged offense to successive Turkish governments. Turkey had first announced its desire to join in 1963. The 1997 EU summit in Luxembourg added humiliation to Turkish discomfiture when the summit host, Premier Jean-Claude Juncker, said that he did not wish "to sit at the same table with a bunch of torturers." Helmut Kohl, then chancellor of Germany, had earlier signaled a more subtle exclusion for Turkey when he declared that the EU was "a Christian club."

Greece was not the only obstacle to Turkey's plan to join the EU, but the apparently implacable opposition of Athens allowed others to take shelter behind the Greek veto. In the short term, this was politically useful; repeated nudgings from Washington that EU members should have due regard for Turkey's strategic importance and recognize that a fellow member of NATO deserved better of its partners could be deflected by blaming Greece. But reluctant EU governments were left with little justification for exclusion once Athens softened its opposition last year.

For what seemed reliable historical reasons, the Greek veto had appeared immutable. Greece was the first of the provinces of the old Ottoman Empire within Europe to win its independence, after a long, cruel war of liberation (1821–29)—a cause that engaged the sympathies of liberal Europe and tens of thousands of Hellenophile volunteers, and cost the poet Lord Byron his life. Greek politics and national interests had ever since been defined by hostility to the Turks. Other NATO allies were startled by Greek sympathy for modern Serbia during the 1999 air campaign over Kosovo, forgetting Greek support of the other Ottoman provinces in the Balkans in their 19th-century campaigns for national liberation. In World War I, Greece joined the Allies once Turkey entered the fray on the German side. At the Versailles peace negotiations, Athens sought to win the last Turkish enclave in Europe, the great city of Constantinople and its shrunken hinterland, and sent its troops onto



Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–1566), portrayed here in a 1559 engraving by Melchior Lorichs, presided over the expansionist golden age of the Ottoman Empire.

the Turkish mainland to occupy much of the Aegean coast. The successful campaign to drive them out was led by the founding father of the modern, post-Ottoman Turkish Republic, General Mustapha Kemal, known thereafter as Atatürk, “the father of Turks.”

The histories of modern Greece and modern Turkey were thus each born in war against the other. And despite the age-old fear of Russian designs on the Black Sea outlet to the Mediterranean at Constantinople (which became Istanbul under Atatürk) and the newer fear of communism that led them both to join the NATO alliance, the hostility has continued. Cyprus has been a

The Ottoman Past

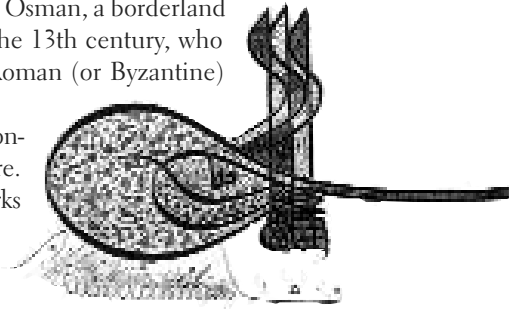
Like a ruined temple of classical antiquity, with some of its shattered columns still erect and visible to tourists, the Ottoman Empire in the decades before World War I was a structure that had survived the bygone era to which it belonged. It was a relic of invasions from the east a millennium ago: Beginning around A.D. 1000, waves of nomad horsemen streamed forth from the steppes and deserts of central and northeast Asia, conquering the peoples and lands in their path as they rode west. Pagan or animist in religious belief, and speaking one or other of the Mongolian or Turkish languages, they carved out a variety of principalities and kingdoms for themselves, among them the empires of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. The Ottoman (or Osmanli) Empire, founded by Turkish-speaking horsemen who had converted to Islam, was another such empire; it took its name from Osman, a borderland *ghazi* (warrior for the Muslim faith) born in the 13th century, who campaigned on the outskirts of the Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) Empire in Anatolia.

In the 15th century Osman's successors conquered and replaced the Byzantine Empire. Riding on to new conquests, the Ottoman Turks expanded in all directions: north to the Crimea, east to Baghdad and Basra, south to the coasts of Arabia and the Gulf, west to Egypt and North Africa—and into Europe. At its peak, in the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire included most of the Middle East, North Africa, and what are now the Balkan countries of Europe—Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria, as well as much of Hungary. It stretched from the Persian Gulf to the river Danube; its armies stopped only at the gates of Vienna. Its population was estimated at between 30 and 50 million at a time when England's population was perhaps four million; and it ruled more than 20 nationalities.

The Ottomans never entirely outgrew their origins as a marauding war band. They enriched themselves by capturing wealth and slaves; the slaves, conscripted into the Ottoman ranks, rose to replace the commanders who retired, and went on to capture wealth and slaves in their turn. Invading new territories was the only path they knew to economic growth. In the 16th and 17th centuries, when the conquests turned into defeats and retreats, the dynamic of Ottoman existence was lost; the Turks had mastered the arts of war but not those of government.

The empire was incoherent. Its Ottoman rulers were not an ethnic group; though they spoke Turkish, many were descendants of once-Christian slaves from Balkan Europe and elsewhere. The empire's subjects (a wide variety of peoples, speaking Turkish, Semitic, Kurdish, Slavic, Armenian, Greek, and other languages) had little in common with, and in many cases little love for, one another. Though European observers later were to generalize about, for example, "Arabs," in fact Egyptians and Arabians, Syrians and Iraqis were peoples of different history, ethnic background, and outlook. The multinational, multilingual empire was a mosaic of peoples who did not mix; in the towns, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and others each lived in their own separate quarters.

Religion had some sort of unifying effect, for the empire was a theocracy—a Muslim rather than a Turkish state—and most of its subjects were Muslims. The Ottoman sultan was regarded as caliph (temporal and spiritual successor to the Prophet, Muhammad) by the majority group within Islam, the Sunnis. But among



The tuğra (official seal) of Sultan Süleyman, c. 1555–1560

others of the 71 sects of Islam, especially the numerous Shi'ites, there was doctrinal opposition to the sultan's Sunni faith and to his claims to the caliphate. And for those who were not Muslim (perhaps 25 percent of the population at the beginning of the 20th century), but Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Gregorian, Jewish, Protestant, Maronite, Samaritan, Nestorian, Christian, Syrian United Orthodox, Monophysite, or any one of a number of others, religion was a divisive rather than a unifying political factor. . . .

Until the early 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was for most of the time under the absolute personal rule of the sultan. In at least one respect he was quite unlike a European monarch: As the son of a woman of the harem, he was always half-slave by birth. Under his rule, civil, military, and Holy Law administrations could be discerned in an empire carefully divided into provinces and cantons. But the appearance of orderly administration—indeed of effective administration of any sort—was chimerical. As Gertrude Bell, an experienced English traveler in Middle Eastern lands, was later to write, “No country which turned to the eye of the world an appearance of established rule and centralized Government was, to a greater extent than the Ottoman Empire, a land of make-believe.” There were army garrisons, it is true, scattered about the empire, but otherwise power was diffuse and the centralized authority was more myth than reality. Gertrude Bell, in the course of her travels, found that outside the towns, Ottoman administration vanished and the local sheikh or headman ruled instead. There were districts, too, where brigands roamed at will. The rickety Turkish government was even incapable of collecting its own taxes, the most basic act of imperial administration. . . .

What was more than a little unreal, then, was the claim that the sultan and his government ruled their domains in the sense in which Europeans understood government and administration. What was real in the Ottoman Empire tended to be local: A tribe, a clan, a sect, or a town was the true political unit to which loyalties adhered. This confused European observers, whose modern notions of citizenship and nationality were inapplicable to the crazy quilt of Ottoman politics. Europeans assumed that eventually they themselves would take control of the Ottoman domains and organize them on a more rational basis. In the early years of the 20th century it was reasonable to believe that the days of Turkish dominion were numbered.

By 1914 the much-diminished Ottoman Empire no longer ruled North Africa or Hungary or most of southeastern Europe. It had been in a retreat since the 18th century that finally looked like a rout. For decades, in the Ottoman army and in the schools, discontented men had told one another in the course of clandestine meetings that the empire had to be rapidly changed to meet the intellectual, industrial, and military challenges of modern Europe. Stimulated but confused by the nationalism that had become Europe's creed, intellectuals amongst the diverse Turkish-speaking and Arabic-speaking peoples of the empire sought to discover or to forge some sense of their own political identity.

In the final years before the outbreak of the First World War, obscure but ambitious new men took power in the Ottoman Empire, relegating the sultan to a figure-head position. The new men, leaders of the Young Turkey Party, were at once the result and the cause of ferment in Constantinople, the Ottoman capital, as they tried to meet the challenge of bringing Turkey's empire into the 20th century before the modern world had time to destroy it.

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major irritant. The island's Greeks and the Turks who joined them after the Ottoman conquest in the 14th century coexisted reasonably enough after the British took over in 1878. But United Nations peacekeepers arrived four years after Cyprus won its independence in 1960, and in 1974 extremists among the Greek majority, backed by the unsavory regime of the Greek colonels, sought through a coup d'état to bring about union with Greece. Turkey invaded the north to protect the Turkish minority, establishing an occupation that continues today under the fig leaf of nominal independence for the northern third of the island, which is recognized only by Turkey.

Turkey nonetheless has a claim to share Europe's cultural identity that reaches back more than 2,000 years. Troy, the city of Homer's *Iliad* and, later, Virgil's *Aeneid*, was built on what is now Turkish soil, across the narrow Dardanelles straits from Istanbul. The letter of Paul to the Ephesians, which commands an honored place in another of the prime texts of European civilization, was addressed to subjects of ancient Rome who inhabited the Greek city of Ephesus on what is now the Aegean coast of Turkey. Magnificent Greek and Roman ruins still testify to Turkey's ancient connection to the West. The fall in 1453 of the imperial Byzantine capital of Constantinople to the siege cannon of the Ottomans, fighting under the banner of Islam, was a religious interruption of a far older cultural association with Europe.

The Sublime Porte, as the seat of Ottoman power was known in the chancelleries of post-Renaissance Europe, may not have been a part of Christendom, but it held a prominent place in the councils and calculations of European power politics. Having laid siege to Vienna in the 16th and 17th centuries, the empire commanded the Balkans into the late 19th century. Modern Turkey retains a foothold there to this day in the province of Thrace, the hinterland of the giant city of Istanbul. As an ally of Britain, the Ottoman Empire helped defeat Napoleon at the siege of Acre in 1799, and as an ally of France and Britain in 1854, it helped defeat Russia in the Crimean War. Indeed, even during the erosion of its Balkan rule in the 19th century, as Greece (1827), Romania (1866), Serbia (1882), and Bulgaria (1908) won their independence, the Sublime Porte sustained a crucial element of the European balance. With the backing of most of the European powers, it fought off Russia's efforts to escape the confines of the Black Sea through the Dardanelles. This tradition of deep involvement in European affairs, continuing to the present day, illustrates the way that both the old Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, while never quite being seen as a component of Europe's cultural family, always played the role of a European power.

This ambiguity in Turkey's position has been matched by its equally uncomfortable connection to the wider Islamic family. Atatürk first rebelled against the old Ottoman system in the Young Turks' revolt of 1908, in the name of modernizing an antique government whose claim to its broader Arab empire rested on a dynasty that traced its ancestry back to the Prophet Muhammad. After World War I, and the loss of the empire that had stretched through Syria to regions that are now Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Atatürk founded modern Turkey as a resolutely secular state. He went so far

as to ban the fez and replace Arabic script with the Latin alphabet. After 1945, when Turkey was connected to the Western security system through NATO, its secular system of government kept the country officially (but not always politically) aloof from the surges of Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism that coursed through the Middle East. The Turkish armed forces, which stand to this day as guarantor of Atatürk's secular constitutional legacy and have mounted three military coups to preserve it, have resisted the growing influence of Islamic political parties and have even banned them at various times. These military interventions served to justify some of the EU's long reluctance to accept Turkish membership; so did the political instability that inspired them.

The state of its economy is another hurdle for Turkey's European hopes. With a per capita gross domestic product that is less than a third of the EU average, Turkey is far more prosperous than either Bulgaria or Romania, whose formal candidacies for EU membership were accepted in 1998. It can plausibly claim to be in the same economic league as Poland or the Czech Republic, which expect to be full members by 2005. But Turkey's prosperity is unevenly distributed. Its industrial and service jobs are concentrated in the western districts and in the booming textile industry of the south. The plateaus and mountains in the east, largely inhabited by Kurds, are desperately poor. More than 40 percent of the work force remains on the land; the EU average is less than five percent. While the econ-



Turkey, with 65 million inhabitants, may one day represent the European Union's eastern border.

omy grew at an average rate of more than four percent annually during the 1990s, inflation has touched 100 percent, and interest payments on the national debt claim more than 40 percent of government revenues.

These are the economic contours of an unstable and developing economy, which is precisely why Turkish governments have been so eager to join the EU's great sphere of affluence. Having seen the strains imposed on the vigorous German economy by the still-incomplete absorption of the former German Democratic Republic, the EU is already bracing itself for the accession of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic states, and Slovenia over the next decade. Then, along with the costly and difficult task

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of rebuilding the shattered Balkans, will come the accession of the much poorer Bulgaria and Romania. Adding Turkey to this list means that the EU will be investing heavily in the development business for a generation to come.

The picture is not entirely bleak. As the new members become richer and their markets more attractive, they may themselves become growth locomotives, just as the recovering economies of Western Europe were during the 1950s and 1960s. Turkey's youthful population, with a third of the citizenry below the age of 15, promises some relief from the demographics of a Europe that is aging so fast that it fears having too few adult workers to sustain its swelling ranks of pensioners. Overall, however, and despite their stunning record in bringing stability and prosperity to Spain, Portugal, and Greece, Europeans might be forgiven for suspecting that the combination of Turkey's religious, cultural, and economic differences makes it a most difficult candidate for their club.

One aspect of the modern Turkish identity has never been in doubt. Turkey's reliability as a NATO ally and as a bulwark against the spread of fundamentalist Islam, along with its strategic location in the Middle East and on the southern flank of the former Soviet Union, has made it a particularly valued ally of the United States. At an annual cost of more than \$2 billion in lost trade and pipeline transit fees, Turkey continues to enforce the embargo against Iraq that began after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. It also made its airfields available for military operations during and after the Persian Gulf War. The Clinton administration worked closely with Turkey on the agreement to open a route to the West for oil from the Caspian Sea that would not be dependent on Russian pipelines. Ankara further endeared itself to the Americans by reaching a military agreement with Israel in 1996 that opened Turkish airspace to Israeli air force exercises and included the sharing of military intelligence and personnel. An

The Kurdish Question

Kurdistan is real, and Kurdistan is a dream. The physical region of Kurdistan covers an area of some 200,000 square miles, roughly the size of France, and includes portions of eastern Turkey, northern Syria, northeastern Iraq, southern Armenia, and northwestern Iran. The dream Kurdistan is the sovereign state to which the the Kurdish people who inhabit the region have aspired for the past century. Slightly more than half of the world's estimated 25 million Kurds live in Turkey, where they were present as farmers and herders in the rugged mountains and plateaus of the southeast long before the arrival of ethnic Turks.

"A thousand sighs, a thousand tears, a thousand revolts, a thousand hopes": That's said to be the lot of a Kurd in an old poem, and the poem takes its cue from reality. The Kurds have fought invaders and oppressors throughout several thousand years of history, extending back at least to the time of the Sumerians and the Hittites in the 14th century B.C. That fierce warrior tradition continues to the present day. The campaign waged by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the 1980s and 1990s against the Turkish government was but the latest and longest and deadliest of a series of rebellions the Kurds have mounted in Turkey since the end of World War I.

In the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, the victorious Allies forced the government of the Ottoman Empire to consent to a semiautonomous Kurdistan. But Atatürk's new Turkish nationalist government predictably rejected the treaty. Atatürk insisted on Kurdish assimilation, and his policy was brutally enforced. The government banned the Kurdish language, Kurdish music, and even Kurdish place names as it set about destroying the cultural and political identity of the Kurds. But the memory of the independence the Treaty of Sèvres had promised did not fade among Turkey's Kurds.

There was a period, from the 10th to the 12th centuries A.D., when, thanks in part to Kurdistan's strategic location on the overland trade routes between Europe and Asia, the Kurds knew some success in architecture, astronomy, history, music, mathematics, and philosophy. But the success was not sustained. In later centuries, Kurdistan suffered the Black Death and became a ravaged battlefield on which Mongols, Ottomans, and Persians successively fought. After Ottoman victories in the 15th century, the Kurds became part of their empire. And they suffered a worse disaster still. When Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1497 and made the sea the primary trade route between Europe and East Asia, the Silk Road became obsolete. As Jonathan Randal notes in his book *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?: My Encounter with Kurdistan* (1997), along with the calamities of pestilence and war, the abandonment of the traditional East-West trade route helped turn a reasonably cultivated and prosperous region into an enduring economic and political backwater.

The Kurds were never able to establish a durable and unified state of their own, and not just because of external aggression or the harsh physical terrain that isolates and divides Kurdistan's tribes. There's a long record as well of internal dissension and of rival Kurdish tribes collaborating with outside governments against one another. With the end of the PKK's struggle in 1999, Kurdish nationalists seem to have abandoned their dreams of a Kurdish state in favor of a future within the Turkish Republic. But they remain wary. Ankara's promises of massive postwar aid for Kurdistan have already been forgotten, and most Kurds displaced by the conflict have still not been allowed to return to their homes. Ironically, the nations of the West, which let down the Kurds after World War I, may turn out to be their best hope of fair treatment by the Turkish government: A Turkey that fails to do right by its Kurdish population stands little chance of acceptance by the European Union.

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important step in reducing Israel's military isolation, the agreement also left Syria militarily sandwiched between the two countries. Indeed, Turkey was able to use this new leverage to demand that Syria expel the PKK's Öcalan from his sanctuary in Damascus, the event that led to his eventual abduction from Kenya.

Ankara's efforts were rewarded with the staunch support the Clinton administration gave to Turkey's hopes of joining the EU. This support has gone far beyond routine diplomatic pressure. During the 1996 EU summit in Cardiff, Wales, President Bill Clinton startled some European leaders by his unprecedented intervention into their affairs. He telephoned the Greek premier, Constantine Simitis, to urge him to soften his opposition to EU efforts to resolve a tariff dispute that had cost Turkey some \$350 million. Acknowledging that on EU membership "the United States doesn't have a vote but it certainly has interests," Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott issued a firm warning in May 1997: "There are those who resist vehemently the idea that any nations to the east of what might be called 'traditional Europe' can ever truly be part of a larger, 21st-century Europe. We believe that view is quite wrong—and potentially quite dangerous."

President Clinton has pressed Turkey's claims repeatedly in meetings with EU leaders. Along with the Clinton administration's efforts to mediate the problem of Cyprus, largely by leaning on the Greeks, this has been the most assiduous use of American leverage upon the European allies in behalf of another country since the Kennedy administration's support of British attempts to join the European Economic Community during the early 1960s.

Why this extraordinary effort? No doubt it owes something to Turkey's loyalty. But part of the answer seems to be a deliberate American strategy to help set the future direction of the enlarged EU in a way that will be friendly to the United States and the Atlantic alliance. The alternative course for Europe, to become a counterweight to American power, has long been a goal of French foreign policy. In a tradition that dates back to President Charles de Gaulle (1959–69), France has tended to see a united Europe as an independent strategic player on the global stage, and as the political as well as the economic equal of the United States. De Gaulle took this to extremes, evicting NATO troops from French soil, for example, and redefining French strategic doctrine as aimed "*à tous azimuths*," or in all directions, not just against the Soviet threat. Successive French governments have adopted a softer version of this strategy, a prickly independence rather than de Gaulle's open suspicion of "the Anglo-Saxons" of Washington and London. Current French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine has complained of "the overriding predominance of the United States in all areas and the current lack of any counterweight" — what he has dubbed American "*hyper-puissance*" (hyper-power) — and has been eager to offer the EU as an alternative pole.

The French vision of Europe worries the United States, which insists that it too should be seen as a European power. Washington's long and bipartisan support of European integration, dating to the 1940s, has been predicated



Chess (1999), by Nevzat Akoral

on the prospect of a close and mutually rewarding partnership. On July 4, 1962, speaking in the same Independence Hall in Philadelphia where the Declaration of Independence was signed, President John F. Kennedy announced a “Declaration of Interdependence” with the European allies. In Frankfurt the next year, Kennedy even held out the prospect of an eventual political union between Europe and the United States. Insofar as the French conception of Europe threatens that long-held idea of transatlantic partnership, American policymakers have always been ready to rally their friends in Europe (in particular the British and Dutch) to support the Atlanticist rather than the Gaullist tradition. American support for the EU’s enlargement into central and eastern Europe has thus carried the subtext that a Europe that includes pro-American and NATO allies such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic is a Europe that will be more reliably Atlanticist. The same logic, in Washington’s thinking, applies to the inclusion of Turkey.

But Turkey’s membership has some serious geopolitical implications. With Turkey, the EU suddenly acquires as immediate neighbors Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Azerbaijan. This thrusts Europe directly into the tangled politics of the Middle East, a region where Europeans and Americans have seldom seen eye to eye. So long as their strategic relationship was based in mainland Europe, and anchored in NATO, European and American foreign policy interests were closely aligned. In the Middle East, European and U.S. poli-

cies toward Israel, toward terrorism, and toward Iran and Iraq have often been opposed, and not only because of Europe's dependence on Arab oil. It was in the Middle East that the defining clash of interests took place. France's double decision to commit its strategic future to the new European Community and to develop its own nuclear weapons was a direct result of the American refusal in 1956 to support the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt to recapture the Suez Canal. The Eisenhower administration engineered runs on the pound and the franc, and refused to support Britain and France against Soviet threats to "rain missiles" on Paris and London. America's blunt insistence that its principal allies could not be permitted, in the context of the Cold War, to embark on independent strategic adventures, remains a watershed in transatlantic relations. Britain responded by pursuing its vision of a special relationship with the United States, accepting an increasingly subordinate role, while France sought freedom from American tutelage, and under de Gaulle bitterly resisted American efforts to steer Britain into Europe.

Successive oil crises sharpened these transatlantic tensions. The Europeans, including usually loyal Britain, refused to allow the United States to use their airfields to resupply Israel during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In the U.S. air strike on Libya in 1986, U.S. warplanes were forced to fly a dogleg around French and Spanish airspace. More recently, American sanctions on Iraq and Iran, and the threat to punish under U.S. law offending European business executives who defy them, have provoked serious arguments. The prospects for a clash of interests, between a United States committed to its Israeli alliance and an EU that has traditionally been more sympathetic to the Arab cause, are serious. With its close links to Israel and the United States, Turkey would face difficult choices if its EU partners urged it to support the Arabs.

Turkey's accession also would make the EU an immediate neighbor of the turbulent lands between the Black and Caspian Seas. Attractive for the energy resources of the Caspian basin, the Transcaucasus region is forbidding for the ethnic clashes that have in the past decade led to wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan, between Georgia and the Abkhazian separatists, and between Russia and the Chechen rebels. After the dispiriting and often divisive experience of coping with a war on its borders in the Balkans throughout the 1990s, the EU is very wary of proximity to another unstable region. South of the Caucasus, Turkish membership involves further security problems. Even if a reformed Turkey achieves reconciliation with its Kurdish minority, the Kurds across what would become the new EU border in Syria, Iraq, and Iran have their own political agendas, and their own histories of uprisings against national rulers.

The EU is an extraordinary experiment, which is changing and growing apace. Americans have been accustomed to think of it as a plump and complacent club of wealthy Western European allies, an economic giant and political dwarf, content to leave the great dramas of defense and grand strategy to the United States. But the EU is no longer a Western European body with its center of gravity in Brussels and its strategic loyalties fixed on the Atlantic

alliance. It is within measurable distance of expansion to more than 500 million citizens from 28 different countries, with a greater combined GDP than that of the United States, with its own currency, and with a geographic reach that includes the Baltic, the Black Sea, Central Asia, and the Middle East. While NATO, trade and investment links, cultural values, and sheer habit keep it tied to the United States, its strategic concerns now drive it to the east and south, into intimate and neighborly relations with Russia, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Central Asia. These are regions where the United States is accustomed to primacy. But like it or not, and thanks in no small degree to consistent American policy, future administrations are going to have to come to terms with the EU as a Eurasian power, with its own interests to assert.

The irony is that the United States has brought this new and potentially delicate strategic situation upon itself. By pushing steadily for Turkish membership, it is deliberately steering the Europeans into commitments and neighborhoods that it has been at pains to keep to itself. American pressure on Europe to enlarge has not stopped with the campaign for Turkish membership. In June, President Clinton urged the EU to “leave the door open” for Ukraine and Russia, echoing the Bush administration’s 1990 call for a “transatlantic security system that stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok.”

Irony piles upon irony. Europe’s new military capability, feeble as it is, follows directly from American demands that Europe shoulder more of the responsibilities of the Atlantic alliance. But when the EU, at its Cologne summit in June 1999, agreed in principle to establish its own “European Security and Defense Identity,” Washington was deeply alarmed that the official communiqué suggested that such an identity might be “autonomous” from NATO. The next EU summit in Helsinki, six months later, stressed that “this does not imply the creation of a European army,” and promised “full consultation, cooperation, and transparency between the EU and NATO.” Nonetheless, the Helsinki Declaration emphasized that “the European Council underlines its determination to develop an autonomous capacity to take decisions and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and conduct EU-led military operations in response to military crises.”

The Turkish miracle has been an extraordinary and striking moment, a triumph of Greek vision, Turkish dreams, and American diplomacy. But in the process Europe is being molded into a new shape, pushed into a new role, and directed into new terrain—and Americans may one day come to regret this. All great strategic decisions are something of a gamble. The prospect of a Greater Europe’s one day becoming a serious rival to U.S. interests in the Middle East has to be balanced against the possibility of a happier outcome, with a democratic and prosperous Turkey exercising a liberalizing, even civilizing influence in Central Asia and elsewhere. This has to be the policy goal of future U.S. and European leaders, because the alternative to such a benign outcome would be unpleasant, for Turkey and its neighbors alike. □

Atatürk's Ambiguous Legacy

by Cengiz Çandar

As if nature had not been generous enough, history has endowed Istanbul with extraordinary beauty. Its skyline is a parade of mosques, with pencil-like minarets that climb toward the sun, more than a few of them touched by the genius of Sinan (1489–1588), the Michelangelo of the Ottoman Empire. Its streets and avenues are graced by aqueducts, obelisks, and great churches that survive from the Byzantine era, including the spectacular domed Hagia Sophia, completed by the emperor Justinian I in A.D. 537. This is the only city in the world that has served as the seat of two great empires.

Yet the first thing a visitor to Istanbul today would notice is the dominating presence of modern Turkey's founder, Mustapha Kemal Atatürk. A traveler arriving on the Turkish national airline would see the founder's picture on the wall of the passenger cabin and his name on the façade of Istanbul's perennially renovated airport. To reach the heart of the city he would take a taxi to Taksim Square, which is dominated by the imposing Atatürk Cultural Center. At some point he would have to cross Atatürk Boulevard; in almost every Turkish city the pattern is more or less the same. The personality cult surrounding Atatürk is perhaps as strong as the cults that existed in the Soviet Union, and is rivaled—though many Turks would consider it blasphemous to say so—by the officially orchestrated adulation that has been showered on some Arab leaders.

For the past 10 years, however, the sanctity of Atatürk and the domination of his self-proclaimed successors over this complex land have grown ever more precarious. Coming to power amid the debris of the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire in 1923 by leading a successful national struggle against invading foreign forces, the former general embarked on an ambitious program of modernization, replacing an absolute monarchy with





In Istanbul, Turkish soldiers march past an image of Atatürk in the annual Zafer Bayramı (Victory Day) parade that celebrates his crucial 1922 victory over Greek invaders.

a constitutional republic, a fractured administrative system with a centralized bureaucracy, and an Islamic identity with a commitment to secularism. There is no doubt that Atatürk's guiding principles were instrumental in the making of modern Turkey. But in the hands of the Kemalist elite, the soldiers and the bureaucrats who have retained control over Turkey since his death in 1938, those principles have hardened into an unyielding orthodoxy that has become an obstacle to further democratic and economic progress in a changing world.

The Kemalist elite that followed Atatürk envisaged a militantly secular, ethnically homogeneous republic ready to join the Western world. It banished Islam from school curricula, glorified Turkish history, and "purified" the Turkish language in order to foster national pride and unity. Intent on creating a new Turkish national consciousness, this elite denied the existence of the many non-Turk ethnic identities within Turkey, most notably that of the Kurds. Above all, Kemalists were determined to banish Islam from the public sphere. Only with religion confined to the home and mosque, Kemalists believed,

could Turkey become a functioning nation-state. The Caliphate was abolished in 1924, and with it, religious courts and schools. The reforms touched virtually every aspect of Turkish life. A 1925 law banned the fez, replacing it with the Western-style hat, and also banned Muslim religious leaders from wearing clerical garb outside of places of worship. As Atatürk explained two years after the fact: “It was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on the heads of our nation as an emblem of ignorance, negligence, fanaticism, and hatred of progress and civilization, to accept in its place the hat, the headgear used by the whole civilized world, and in this way to demonstrate that the Turkish nation, in its mentality as in other respects, in no way diverges from civilized social life.”

There are striking resemblances between Turkey’s Republican People’s Party (CHP), founded by Atatürk, and Mexico’s Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Both were revolutionary-nationalist movements that emerged from violent struggles in the 1920s. Both believed that the solution to their national problems lay in rapid economic and political modernization. Both resorted to autocratic rule, and

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both enjoyed unusual political longevity. (The PRI’s reign ended only this past summer, when it lost a presidential election for the first time in 71 years.) The two parties’ experiences diverged in one highly significant respect, however: While

Mexico relied on a political party to modernize the nation, Turkey looked to the military. It abandoned one-party rule in the years after World War II in an effort to win the favor of the Western allies whose support it desperately needed to help keep the neighboring Soviet Union at bay. In the nation’s first multiparty elections, in 1950, Atatürk’s party was promptly voted out of office.

The Turkish military, which had launched Atatürk into power, became the self-styled guardian of Kemalist values, particularly secularism. The army, which is the most respected institution of the Turkish state, vigorously defends the republic against what it perceives as imminent threats from Islamic fundamentalism. Three times between 1960 and 1980 the military overthrew governments it judged to be a danger to the secular state. Most recently, in 1980, a rash of violent, politically radical dissent prompted the army to suspend the constitution, impose martial law, arrest leading politicians, and dissolve the parliament, political parties, and trade unions.

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On the streets of Istanbul, 1994

However, as they have after each takeover, the generals voluntarily restored civilian rule, and in 1983 a newly elected government took office.

The army draws support from two vitally important groups in Turkish society: the urban middle class, which has reaped many of the economic benefits of Atatürk's modernization, and the formidable state bureaucracy, which is itself a product of Kemalism's strong centralizing tendencies. The military has *carte blanche* to intervene when these groups feel threatened by public manifestations of Islamic sentiment. Few in the Turkish elite objected in 1997, for example, when the army engineered the removal of the elected coalition government led by Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Islamist Welfare (Refah) Party. The constitution promulgated by the generals who carried out the 1980 coup also provides formal channels for military influence, notably through its five seats on the National Security Council, which oversees national defense, a term defined so broadly that topics from education to foreign policy fall under its umbrella.

Turkey, as the writer Çetin Altan observes, is "squeezed in the struggle between the mosque and [military] barracks." But Islam is not the only problem for Kemalist orthodoxy. The rise of supranational governments such as the European Union (EU) has reduced the primacy of the nation-state and unleashed new centripetal forces, while the advent of a global free-market economy has rendered Kemalism's statist economic policies increasingly obsolete. In the decades after Atatürk's rule, Turkey's large government-owned industrial sector and its fervent pursuit of a policy of "import substitution" (building the capacity to manufacture goods at home rather than buy them abroad) helped transform the agrarian cradle of the Ottoman Empire into

The Father of the Turks

Among dictators of recent times, Mustapha Kemal, who later took the honorific name Atatürk, is the exception. In common with the others, he believed that social engineering justified whatever means were required, and he had no qualms about destruction and murder. But where the others left behind nothing but the memory of their evil, Mustapha Kemal, out of the wreck of the Ottoman empire, fashioned Turkey into the thriving nation-state it is today. Official photographs of his handsome if haughty face, prominent in public places throughout the country, attest to his enduring and genuine popularity. The Turkish military, in particular, sees itself as the steadfast guardian of the nationalism he taught Turks to value above other ideals. . . .

Mustapha Kemal was born about 1880, in Salonika, then a cosmopolitan city. The empire was already in its last throes. For 13 years, he attended a military school. As a junior officer, he served in Syria, in Libya against the Italians, and afterward as military attaché in the formerly Ottoman-held city of Sofia, Bulgaria. Like many in his position, he despaired of reform, and dabbled in conspiracy to overthrow the regime.

In 1908, other officers undertook an unfinished or rolling coup against the sultan. These so-called Young Turks proved as incompetent as they were ambitious. At the outbreak of World War I, they struck an alliance with Germany that would consummate the ruin of the empire they meant to save.

In the meantime, recognizing in Mustapha Kemal someone as ambitious as themselves, they kept him at arm's length. Much of his career during the war would consist of skillful maneuvering to capitalize on the mistakes and limitations of the Young Turks, to come out on top at the end. . . .

After the war, extreme foolishness on the part of the victorious Allies played into his hands. They had already occupied the empire's Arab and European provinces. In search of spoils, French, British, Italian, and Greek forces then invaded the Ottoman heartlands. As the sultan and his ministers in Istanbul pursued a policy of appeasement and surrender, Mustapha Kemal built in Anatolia the means of resistance. In a brilliant solo performance, he set up a tame assembly to certify his powers and mobilized the Turkish army to pick off the invaders one by one. Undoubtedly, this was his finest hour.

Though he might with justice have despised the European countries in whose imperial quarrels and vanities his people had been so disastrously caught up and ruined, Kemal was no hater of Europe. On the contrary: In many a speech and many an incident, he revealed that he admired his enemies almost uncritically, while at the same time he viewed his own compatriots as contemptibly backward and superstitious, "ignoramuses" living in dirty and tightly packed "oriental" towns. This shame could no longer be endured. Turkey, he insisted, had to become "a progressive member of the civilized world," and by "civilization," a favorite word of his, he meant Westernization. There was to be no distinctly Turkish or isolationist future.

In 1923, Mustapha Kemal declared himself president of the new Turkish republic. The sultan, accepting the loss of his temporal power, pleaded to be allowed to continue as caliph, even if this was only "fancy-dress," as Andrew Mango wrote recently in *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey*. He was instead sent into exile, and would die in Paris in 1944. At home, the changes introduced by Mustapha Kemal were radical and immediate. New legal and penal codes were imported from countries like Switzerland and Italy. The Roman alphabet replaced traditional Arabic script, effectively cutting off much of the Ottoman past. Culture, manners, and dress were Westernized,

down to such apparently insignificant details as the compulsory replacement of the fez by a hat. Atatürk himself read and wrote French, and frequently resorted to that language among friends. A womanizer, he enjoyed nightclubs, waltzing, and drinking with his cronies. Alcoholism would contribute to his premature death in 1938.

There seems to be no explanation for the ferocity with which Mustapha Kemal attacked Islam. “The evils which had sapped the nation’s strength,” he declared, “had all been wrought in the name of religion.” In a swift and brutal reversal, Turks were obliged to repudiate the Ottoman assumption that their faith had entailed superiority over others.

Revolutionary as all these changes were, however, they concerned only the outward forms of Westernization, and were at a complete remove from its spirit. Western strength derived in the final analysis from the spectrum of institutions, political and otherwise, through which a citizenry could express its energy. The Ottomans had had no such institutions, and the Turks did not now acquire them. Mustapha Kemal’s powers were every bit as absolute as the sultan’s, but, thanks to improved techniques of communication, far more effectively applied. Much as the sultan had relied on faithful janissaries to execute orders, Atatürk recruited his People’s Party, which held all but one seat in the assembly, to do his bidding.



Atatürk framed by a train window, in 1932

Tailored to one-man rule, the resultant party-state had no place for a loyal opposition, for accountability, for free association, for civil rights, or indeed for any of the essentials of democracy. Whoever stood in Mustapha Kemal’s way was murdered, either secretly or through scandalous judicial fixes. . . .

Luckily—and it has been as much by luck as by skillful management—Mustapha Kemal’s heirs have been able to proceed further down the road to Westernization. Turkey is now the only Islamic country (leaving aside the questionable example of Pakistan) in which a free and fair election has led to a change of government. Even so, it still suffers from the repercussions of Atatürk’s rule. The military has taken power several times on dubious nationalist pretexts, while extremists of one kind or another have engaged in campaigns of mutual and reciprocal murder. Kurds, even if they do not engage in terrorism but strive for a pluralist solution to their plight, encounter state terror in response. Immune to extirpation by decree, Islam has made a comeback, and about a quarter of the Turkish electorate now votes for the Islamic fundamentalist party.

—David Pryce-Jones

David Pryce-Jones is the author of The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of Arabs (1989). Reprinted from Commentary (July/August 2000) by permission; all rights reserved.

a semi-industrial nation, but in more recent times they have bred budget deficits and runaway inflation. Economic development has suffered. In 1950, Turkey's gross domestic product per person was greater than Spain's; today Spaniards can claim four times the wealth of Turks.

Even as the Turkish economy sputters, the Kemalist tenet of a homogeneous Turkish identity has come under challenge. Turkey is hardly alone among the nations of the world in confronting a revival of ethnic loyalties, but its historical circumstances are certainly unique. The territory occupied by modern Turkey was once the heartland of the Ottoman Empire, serving as the refuge for a variety of Muslim peoples. Crimean Tatars arrived in Anatolia following Russia's invasion of the northern shores of the Black Sea in 1774. They were succeeded by wave after wave

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of Muslim communities from the Northern Caucasus once Russia's greedy eyes turned in their direction. Beginning in the 1860s, these Circassians, from the Abkhaz to the Chechens, were forced to flee to the Ottoman Empire. Tens of thousands of Muslims came from Bosnia-Herzegovina when it was annexed by Austria in 1877. The Balkan Wars

of 1912–13, which ended Ottoman Turkey's dominion over present-day Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria, brought yet another flood of immigrants. Finally, under the terms of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, Muslim Turks living in parts of Greece exchanged places with a sizable portion of the Greek Orthodox population of Turkey. All of these groups lived easily under the Ottoman mantle and had little difficulty shifting their allegiance to Atatürk's new nation. And why not? To the outside world, the Ottoman, the Turk, and the Muslim were all one and the same anyway. But today, many of these groups, including the Circassians, Georgians, and Laz, express a heightened awareness of their distinct identities (although not to the same extent as the Kurds).

However momentous these new challenges to Kemalist orthodoxy may be, one looms over all the others: the challenge to the Kemalist concept of secularism. Western observers praise Turkey's secularist commitments, holding the Turkish example up as a model for other Muslim states. The eminent Princeton University historian Bernard Lewis, for example, approvingly points out that "Turkey alone [among Muslim countries] has formally enacted the separation of religion

and the state.” Yet Turkey’s secularism is not what it seems to be. Many outside political observers have been seduced by a simplistic understanding of the clash between “secularism” and “fundamentalism.” In reality, Turkish secularism is not as democratic as it appears to some Westerners, and Turkish Islam is not as fundamentalist as it is portrayed.

In their secularism (and in their statecraft generally), Atatürk and the Kemalist elites were powerfully influenced by French ideas, particularly those of French revolutionary Jacobinism. There is no word in Turkish for “secularism,” for example, except for the approximations *laisizm* and *laiklik*, which are borrowed from the French *laïcisme*, a term steeped in the French Revolution’s anticlericalism and hostility to religion. Unlike the secularism of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, with its emphasis on religious tolerance and pluralism, this idea of secularism carries overtones of irreligion and atheism. The advocates of this radical secularism consider Islam a totalist worldview that is incompatible with pluralism and democracy—a view bolstered by the Euro-Christian perception of Islam as an inherently militant or subversive faith.

In the late 19th century, a number of the army’s reform-minded Young Turks—a group to which Atatürk belonged—absorbed such ideas directly as exiles in Paris. They concluded that, just as the Catholic Church was said by French liberals to pose a threat to the French Third Republic, so Islam presented a threat to modern Turkey. Since Islam does not have an institution that functions as a church, their attempt to enforce secularism was transformed into a quasi-atheist crusade against individuals. The Kemalist authorities ruthlessly manipulated the law to quiet those they considered dangerous, a practice that continues today. In 1998 Tayyip Erdogan, the popular Islamist mayor of Istanbul, was banned from politics for quoting a poem that allegedly “fomented public discord,” an accusation that is broadly interpreted and widely invoked by Kemalists. Necmettin Erbakan, former prime minister of Turkey and chairman of the banned Welfare Party, was barred from political life for five years in 1999 and is now under the threat of a ban from politics for life. Many of Turkey’s universities have expelled students and instructors who wear headscarves, the garb of observant Muslim women. In the hands of today’s leaders, secularism has become as “radical” as the purportedly “fundamentalist” Islam it aims to defeat. Kemalism is now a kind of state religion in its own right.

Surprisingly, political Islam in Turkey takes perhaps the most benign and benevolent form found in the Muslim world. Although three major Turkish Islamist parties have been banned during the past 30 years—most recently the Welfare Party in 1998—activists have never resorted to subversive activities or violence but have simply established new parties. Erbakan is perhaps the closest equivalent in Turkish public life to a fundamentalist Islamist, but it is he who established, led, and then re-established each of these parties, actively participating in Turkey’s electoral process and always remaining well within the limits of the constitution-

al system. His “fundamentalist” credentials mainly consist of his efforts to foster closer relations with Islamic nations such as Iran and Libya, yet he has served as vice premier in many of the coalition governments led by secularist politicians, including one led by Bülent Ecevit, the current prime minister of Turkey. From 1996 to 1997 he briefly served as prime minister, leading a coalition government with one of the most pro-Western politicians in Turkey, Tansu Çiller, until he was ousted in response to pressure from the military.

Turkey’s Islamic parties, most significantly the Virtue (Fazilet) Party, resemble Europe’s Christian Democratic parties far more than they do the fundamentalist Islamic political organizations found elsewhere in the Middle East. The Virtue Party embraces the free market and electoral democracy, advocates social justice, and frames its defense of Islam in terms of civil liberties, arguing, for example, that it is a violation of individual rights to deny Turks the freedom to wear a headscarf or military officers the freedom to express Islamic sentiments. Its ranks include conservative technocrats and some secular-minded women, as well as many of the more traditional Muslim faithful.

It is the unwillingness of the Kemalist “secular fundamentalists” to endure a peaceful cohabitation with the country’s popular Islamic groups that has kept Turkey in a state of political turmoil. And, ironically, that unwillingness is now one of the major obstacles to securing a place for Turkey within the EU, and thus to fulfilling the Kemalist dream of winning a secure place for Turkey in the Western constellation. Just as ironically, Turkey’s traditionally anti-Western Islamists have become enthusiastic supporters of accession to the EU, which they view as the best path to strong guarantees of civil liberties, through institutions such as the European Court of Justice. No group now seems less enthusiastic about joining the EU than the traditionally pro-Western Kemalists, who are anxious about sacrificing “national sovereignty” and object to democratizing political reforms that might reduce the military’s role in the political process.

Kemalism today finds itself in the absurd position of threatening to negate the ultimate purpose of its founding figure and of denying the Turkish people the democratic rights and responsibilities treasured elsewhere in the “civilized world” Atatürk was so eager to have Turkey join. This is not a Kemalism of Atatürk’s making. It is the product of a narrow, authoritarian interpretation of his ideas and policies by successors who transformed Atatürk into an untouchable national icon and Kemalism into an inflexible dogma. Turks must begin to see Atatürk clearly, not as an icon but as an outstanding historical personality who invented the tools necessary to make an empire into a republic. Now Turks must use those tools to become a more inclusive and flexible democracy. Only then can Turkey hope to contain its many contradictions and complete its transformation into a fully modern nation—democratic, secular, European, and Muslim. □