Turkey at a Crossroad

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*"As the country faces a new century, the ideological,
cultural, political and economic debates that are
flourishing in all sections of society directly question the
centrality of state institutions and practices and
promise to take Turkey in a different direction."*

Beginning in the fall of 1999, many of the institutions, policies and practices that characterized Turkey during the 20th century started to unravel, paving the way for a future that is full of uncertainty for the country and its people. In the closing years of the 20th century, the slow transformation that had been going on for some time culminated in a period of accelerated change that is likely to affect all aspects of life in the country. This period of uncertainty, which causes many people to be apprehensive and downright fearful, also inspires hope and optimism among some. Rahmi Koç, one of the most influential industrialists in Turkey put it this way: "We are surfing on the crest of a terrific wave… a series of events have [sic] cleared our way to the future. We have passed a highly significant turning point."[1] While the particular interpretation of these changes depends on the vantage point from which they are observed or experienced, few people would disagree that over the past year Turkey has moved to a new phase in its history.

There are at least three areas in which the Turkey of the 21st century is likely to be profoundly different from that of the 20th. The first of these areas pertains to Turkish identity. When the modern Republic of Turkey was established, it was assumed that ethnic and linguistic differences would eventually disappear and

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[1] Stephen Kinzer, "Turkey Finds Quake Brings Improved Ties To Neighbors," *New York Times*, 30 January 2000, p. 5.

a homogenous community of Turks would form the core of the new state. Today, it is no longer possible to ignore or minimize the ethnic fault lines that divide the people of Turkey and assume that these are residual divisions that are bound to disappear over time. The second area of change relates to the growing power and assertiveness of Islamist groups in Turkish politics. This also constitutes a significant departure from the early years of the Republic, when Islam was considered the most significant threat to the new state. Today, the Islamist Virtue Party is one of the five largest political parties in the Turkish parliament and is accepted as one of the key players in mainstream Turkish politics. The third area relates to the changes that have accompanied Turkey's growing participation in the new international economy and post-Cold War diplomacy. As the world economy becomes integrated with unprecedented speed and intensity, countries such as Turkey are finding that they have little choice but to adapt their economies and policies based on the imperatives of this new global system. After years of hesitation, Turkey has finally started to take steps in this direction. It has eliminated some of its state-centered economic policies, taken steps to bring its domestic political structure in line with international norms and started to practice a more active and effective foreign policy, both in the Middle East and beyond.

In this essay, we first examine the changes that are taking place in these three areas. We then identify the earthquake of 1999 as the factor that jolted not only the physical terrain of Turkey but also the institutions of society and pushed the changes in these three areas beyond their respective points of no return. We end with descriptions of how these changes have combined with the legacies of Ottoman and Turkish history to create a hybrid, diverse and dynamic cultural environment.

Ethnic Identity

The first way in which the Turkey of the 21st century is likely to be substantially different is how it perceives and presents its ethnic identity. When the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the other leaders of the new regime embarked on a comprehensive program of creating an ethnically homogeneous community and turning it into the foundation of the new state. To a large extent, this policy was formulated to break with the Ottoman past that had provided a

framework, albeit hierarchical and inegalitarian, for the coexistence of a vast range of religious and ethnic groups in a region spanning the Near East and the Balkans. The new state, on the other hand, was founded on the assumption that it would be for the Turks and by the Turks. But, obviously, to state something is not to make it so.

With the departure and elimination of the two largest non-Turkish groups, Armenians and Greeks, the Kurds, the largest remaining minority in Turkey, took up arms against the new state within a year of the establishment of the Republic. The Kurdish fight for recognition and representation in Turkey has continued, with greater or lesser intensity, ever since. Today, it is estimated that, of the 25 million Kurds living in the Middle East, about 12 million are in Turkey. Most but not all of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims, and they speak a multiplicity of dialects that are not always mutually comprehensible. Even though a large number of Kurds have moved to urban centers in the West of Turkey and assimilated into the Turkish mainstream, about two-thirds of Turkey's Kurds remain in their ancestral homeland, a large swath of territory that extends from Turkey's southeastern provinces into Iraq, Syria and Iran. The 14 provinces in Turkey that are claimed as part of Kurdistan are among the poorest in the country; the per capita income is as low as one-tenth that of the wealthier western provinces.[2]

Given this background of poverty, religious schism and linguistic divisions, it is not surprising that the Kurdish movement has remained disjointed and incoherent for most of its history and that the Kurdish and the Turkish sides have grown increasingly farther away from the possibility of reconciliation and mutual compromise.

In the first months of 1999, this already bleak situation took a turn for the worse. In February, after years of insurgency and armed struggle against the Turkish army, Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), was captured in Kenya. Forcing Öcalan out of his sanctuary in Syria and making it impossible for him to find a safe haven anywhere in Europe was

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[2] Henri Barkey and Graham Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996); Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (New York: Random House, 1997); Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); Servet Mutlu, "Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: A Demographic Study," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28, no. 4, November 1996, pp. 517-41.

clearly a success for Turkey's foreign policy, but it soon appeared that having Öcalan in custody might also become a liability for Turkey. After years of demonizing him as a violent murderer, and whipping up a nationalist frenzy around the Kurdish War, the government had little choice but to press the harshest charges of treason and mass murder against Öcalan. It was certain that he would be tried, sentenced to death and executed quickly, in accordance with Turkish laws. But this would achieve little more than invite retaliatory revenge attacks by the Kurdish militants and the almost certain deterioration of relations between Turkey and the European Union.

Even more troubling were the anticipated consequences of the role some private Greek citizens had played in trying to find a safe haven for Öcalan and the initial reluctance of the Greek government to disassociate itself from these individuals. This helped fuel anti-Greek sentiment in Turkey, while providing ample support for those who had always held that the Kurdish insurgency was rooted not in the discontent of an oppressed national minority but in the meddling of external enemies bent on destroying the Turkish state and nation.

Yet when the trial started, Öcalan, who had been the undisputed symbol of Kurdish nationalism, adopted a surprisingly conciliatory line and volunteered to help end the Kurdish War and work to build peace between Kurds and Turks. The government did not take him up on this offer, but it did not use the trial as an excuse for fanning the flames of Turkish nationalism either. As expected, Öcalan was convicted and sentenced to die, but his death sentence was postponed indefinitely while his lawyers launched a lengthy process of appeal.

The capture, trial and conviction of Öcalan are generally interpreted as the crowning achievement of the Turkish army in its fight against Kurdish nationalists. But the removal of this symbol of intransigency from the scene has also revealed that, against all odds, the Kurds have been successful in laying bare the fundamental weakness of the official ideology of ethnic homogeneity.[3] In fact, it is a testimony to the enduring diversity

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[3] One result of this slowly changing environment has been the several incarnations of HADEP, the political party that represents Kurdish interests. Even though its formal existence has always been tenuous, HADEP has succeeded in getting its candidates elected mayors in some of the major urban centers in southeastern Turkey. For background, see Nicole Watts, "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-94," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31, no. 4 (November 1999) pp. 631-56.

of Turkish society that, as soon as the specter of armed struggle dissipated in the late 1990s, the Turkish majority and the political establishment became more willing to accept cultural and ethnic plurality and has begun to relax the discourse and policies of the government.

The following three statements, from individuals at the highest levels of the government, constitute the best proof that discussions of Turkish identity have become much more nuanced than the old discourses of ethnic and national homogeneity. On 6 September 1999, Sami Selçuk, the President of the Supreme Court of Appeals, roundly condemned the current constitution as an anti-democratic document written and imposed by the military rulers in power from 1980 to 1983. He said, "at the threshold of the millennium, during the age of information, we seek not to have a Republic united around a cowardly philosophy…Turkey's Constitution should not make any differences in thought, culture, faith, identity and origin. It should be pluralist, and participatory and grant equal rights."[4] On 14 December 1999, Turkey's Foreign Minister Ismail Cem spoke in favor of lifting the ban on Kurdish language broadcasts. He said, "every citizen in Turkey, in every television broadcast, should be able to speak in his own mother tongue."[5] Two days later, Mesut Yilmaz, who is the leader of one of the three coalition partners in government, argued, in strong terms, that the Turkish state and its official organs would have to respect the basic human rights of the Kurds if Turkey was ever to join the European Union. He said, "we cannot transport Turkey into a new era with a nation offended by the state, with a system that views the society as a threat, with a bureaucracy that belittles the citizen, with a republic that ousts the individual, and with a political system that is impotent in the face of these adversities."[6] All three of these pronouncements could be prosecuted under the very constitution that Selçuk criticized, which proclaims that no

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[4] "Court of Appeal's Selçuk: No Regrets over 6 September Speech," Anatolian News Agency, 19 November 1999, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (*FBIS-WEU-1999-11-21*) at http://wnc.fedworld.gov.
[5] "Turkish Foreign Minister Speaks in Favor of Kurdish Language Broadcasts," *Associated Press*, 14 December 1999, Lexis-Nexis, Academic Universe at http://web.lexis-nexis.com.
[6] "Turkey's Yilmaz: Road to EU Passes Through Diyarbakir," Anatolian News Agency, 16 December 1999, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (*FBIS-WEU-1999-12-16*) at http://wnc.fedworld.gov.

protection will be given to thoughts or opinions that run counter to the fundamental indivisibility of the Turkish state and territory. Yet, nothing happened, save for a suit brought by an "aggrieved citizen" against the foreign minister. State security courts found no grounds to proceed in this case.

RELIGION

Of the pillars that defined the new Turkish Republic in 1923, it is secularism, or *laïcism* as it was described by the Kemalist elite of the time, that has come under the longest and most sustained pressure in the last 50 years.[7] The complete separation of religion from the day-to-day administration of the state and the subordination of religious affairs to the priorities of the secular government represented a radical departure from the organization of public and private life under the Ottoman Empire. The Republican leaders introduced these principles by fiat and in the process alienated the bulk of the society, which had a significantly more conservative and traditionalist outlook on life. Hence, it is not surprising that as soon as the political system in Turkey was liberalized in 1946, the role of religion in politics became one of the most central and contentious questions in Turkish politics. It is also not surprising that, in every free election since the late 1940s, the winners have been those parties that court the religious vote openly and deliberately. As a result, a religious outlook became firmly embedded in the ideology and program of the mainstream conservative parties in Turkey. Then, starting in the late 1960s, the Islamists split off from the center-right parties and organized on their own—first in the National Order Party, and then in the National Salvation, Welfare and Virtue parties. Today, only the last of these is active; it is the third largest party in Parliament, with 111 out of 550 seats.

The strengthening of this open and assertive brand of Islamist politics coincided with the integration of the Turkish economy through the construction of transportation and communication networks and with the country's fast industrialization and

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[7] See Richard Tapper, ed., *Islam in Modern Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991); Hakan Yavuz, "Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey," *Comparative Politics*, 30, no. 1 (October 1997) pp. 63-82; Ümit Cizre Sakallioğlu, "Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 28, no. 2 (May 1996) pp. 231-51.

urbanization in the second half of the 20th century. These processes changed the character of Turkey's population completely. To give but one example, in 1927, 12.5 percent of the population lived in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants, whereas today, 71 percent of Turkey's population is classified as urban.[8] Large numbers of people coming from a more conservative and rural milieu became active participants in various aspects of Turkey's industrializing and modernizing society. It is precisely from this group that the Islamist parties have found their greatest support. Hence, far from being a monolithically "anti-modern" force in Turkish society, the mainstream Islamist politics gained strength from the modernization and urbanization of Turkey.[9]

By the 1990s, most of those who were in the forefront of Islamist politics in Turkey were engineers, doctors, lawyers and other professionals, and they articulated an ideology that blended social conservatism with remarkable flexibility and openness regarding Turkey's economic and technological integration with the outside world. As an increasingly diverse population congregated in big cities, this blend of Islam and modernity created a cultural outlook that is relatively open, flexible and more sure-footed than that of the older elite. Today, the segment of Turkish society that identifies itself with such an outlook is becoming increasingly well represented in the most prestigious schools as well as in the newly expanding fields of communications, finance, international commerce and investment. In particular, so-called "Islamic capital," which is composed in part of the savings of Turkish workers in Germany, is playing a particularly important role in revitalizing some of the mid-size cities in central Turkey sometimes referred to as the Anatolian Tigers.[10]

Despite their electoral successes and the growing visibility and assertiveness of their followers, Islamist parties have also suffered reverses in the 1980s and the 1990s.[11] Two Islamist parties that

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[8] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) p. 311; William Spencer, ed., *The Global Studies: The Middle East* (Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw Hill, 2000) p. 145.

[9] Jenny White, "Islam and Democracy: The Turkish Experience," *Current History* (January 1995) pp. 7-12.

[10] Alpay Filiztekin and Insan Tunali, "Anatolian Tigers: Are They for Real?" *New Perspectives on Turkey* (Spring 1999) pp. 77-106.

[11] Reşat Kasaba, "Cohabitation? Islamist and Secular Groups in Modern Turkey," in Robert Hefner, ed., *Democratic Civility: The History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Ideal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1998) pp. 265-84.

followed the original National Order Party, which was closed down in 1971, have also been closed down at the urging of the military; prominent Islamist leaders, including the movement's long-serving leader and standard bearer Necmettin Erbakan and Istanbul's highly popular and successful mayor Tayyip Erdogan, have been banned from politics. The brief stint of the Welfare Party in government in 1998 was full of embarrassing mishaps and demonstrated how unprepared the Islamists were to run the country. In the end, this Welfare government was forced out by the National Security Council, a supra-parliamentary body constituted by the military regime after the 1980 coup and left intact after the return to civilian rule in 1983.

However, this more open and "modern" Islam constitutes only one part of the Islamist spectrum in Turkish politics and society. There is an equally vocal, even if numerically small, group which makes a point of taking a very strong position against modernity and the Enlightenment. The intellectuals in this group borrow freely from Western critiques of modernity and highlight the alienating effects of technology and the anti-democratic consequences of modern bureaucracies.[12] Another group that takes an even more vocal stand against modernity are those youth who see the promises of life slipping away from them and who, with no hope or future to cling to, become militants.

In the early days of 2000, moderate Islamist politics in Turkey received a sharp blow from one of these militant groups. Starting in January, Turkish police and army discovered a series of mass graves across the country containing the tortured and mutilated bodies of more than 40 (mostly Kurdish) businessmen and moderate Islamic intellectuals who had been missing for several years. The radical Islamist organization Hizbullah, used by the government in the early 1990s as a pawn against Kurdish nationalists and supplied with weapons and ammunition from the state, was responsible for these gruesome murders.[13] Even though no link has ever been established between these radical groups and the Islamist parties, the sensational nature of these murders and discoveries cannot but discredit the more tolerant and open brand of political Islam that the Virtue Party has been

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[12] For example, see Ali Bulaç, *Din ve Modernizm* (Istanbul: Beyan, 1992).
[13] "Devlet Hizbullah'a Göz mü Yumdu?" *Sabah Online,* 21 January 2000 at http://www.sabah.com.tr.

trying to cultivate. Partly in response to these discoveries, important signs of dissent have developed within Virtue, with a younger group of moderate Islamists criticizing the old guard of the party for politicizing religion and antagonizing the military. They argue that for Turkey, the most appropriate model would be American-style secularism where religion is not only separate from the state but also completely free from its control.[14] It is hard to predict how the socially conservative outlook that dominates the ideological makeup of the country will ultimately be incorporated into Turkey's political system in an enduring and stable way. But it is clear that it is no longer possible to envisage a political system in Turkey where Islamist politics is excluded and criminalized, as was the case in the early years of the Republic.

GLOBALIZATION

The disappearance of communism and the growing integration of the world economy have had significant effects on Turkey. One effect is the liberalization of the economy and the diminution of the role state agencies play in directing production, trade and finance. The changes in this area actually first began in January 1980, during one of the most severe economic crises Turkey has ever suffered. They gained steam under the military regime that ruled from 1980 to 1983 and then reached a particularly fast pace during Turgut Özal's premiership and presidency during the rest of the 1980s.[15] During those 10 years, the Turkish economy moved from a highly restricted and closed system to one in which the private sector plays a much more prominent and active role. The accumulation of wealth and expertise that has resulted over the last 20 years has created a major constituency that has not only pushed the state toward even further economic liberalization but also made the country an attractive trading and investment partner for its neighbors and for the Turkic republics of Central Asia. In the late spring and early summer of 1999, the government signed a series of agreements with international agencies that, among other things, established substantial guarantees for foreign investments in the country and a commitment to carry out long

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[14] "Siyasi Islam Yol Ayriminda," *Hürriyetim Online*, 8 February 2000 at http://www.hurriyet.com.tr.

[15] Sübidey Togan and V.N. Balasubramanyam, eds., *The Economy of Turkey Since Liberalization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Ziya Öniş, "Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era: In Search of Identity," *Middle East Journal*, 48, no. 1 (Winter 1995) pp. 48-68.

neglected economic structural reforms. It must be mentioned that in addition to unleashing the productive potential of the Turkish economy, these reforms have also accentuated the inequalities in income distribution among social classes and regions of Turkey. If this is ignored, these disparities could become the most important fault line threatening social peace in Turkey in the coming years.

Turkey is displaying a high degree of self-assuredness and activism in its foreign relations. In the 1930s and the 1940s, in order to repair the damage of the Balkan Wars, the First World War and the Greco-Turkish War and not to repeat the mistakes of the early decades of the 20th century, the new Republic adopted a very strict policy of neutrality. So reluctant were the new leaders to get re-entangled in European affairs, that even during the Second World War they tried to keep their options open, even though it seemed all but certain that the war would eventually spread to Turkey. During the Cold War, Turkey became a NATO member and a US ally but appeared comfortable with a passive role in the Atlantic Alliance. Except for several entanglements with Greece over Cyprus, and the invasion of Cyprus, which led to a military embargo of Turkey and economic difficulties, one would be hard-pressed to find Turkish foreign policy figuring prominently in the region's diplomacy between the 1940s and the 1980s.

Since the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey has been much better at utilizing the multiple options that have become available to it. The relative ease with which Öcalan was forced out of Syria, increasingly close and warm relations with Israel and, above all, an active presence in the Caucasus all point to the new assertiveness of Turkey's foreign policy. But the most significant change in this area is the improvement in relations between Turkey and Greece. The turning point came with the cabinet shuffle in Greece in 1999. The revelations of Greek complicity in Öcalan's flight after he left Syria led to the resignation of some of the hard-line ministers in Greece. These were replaced by more liberal politicians, including Foreign Minister George Papandreou, who played an important role in lifting Greece's objection to Turkey's becoming a member of the European Union. In the first months of 2000, the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers visited each other's respective countries for the first time in 40 years, signing a series of economic and cultural agreements and leaving open the door for further negotiations that might

even make it possible for the navies of the two countries to hold joint exercises in the Aegean. President Clinton's lengthy visit to Turkey in late November and early December signaled the US's appreciation of these developments and especially the expanded role Turkey is likely to play in the coming decades, not only in the Middle East but also in the Caucasus, a region that is becoming increasingly central to US interests.[16]

The Earthquake: Much More than a Tremor

The changes in the three areas discussed above had been going on for some time. Ironically, however, what gave them a sense of irreversibility was the earthquake that hit Turkey on 17 August 1999. It measured 7.4 on the Richter scale and lasted 45 seconds. This was one of the strongest earthquakes to hit Europe in recent memory and for Turkey it fulfilled a worst-case scenario. The epicenter of the earthquake was located in the country's industrial heartland, about 60 km southeast of Istanbul. It left at least 17,000 persons dead, 30,000 injured and 500,000 homeless. In the early days, it was estimated that it would take US$10 to US$20 billion, the equivalent of 5 to 10 percent of the country's GNP, to repair the damage.[17] In addition to the material losses, the earthquake left deep scars on many Turks, who watched the damage and the rescue operations live on television. The tremor put the whole country on edge as it anxiously anticipated the next big earthquake, which, experts predicted, would hit Istanbul directly.

The only bright light in the foreboding landscape of post-earthquake Turkey was the material aid and moral support that came from the international community and most significantly from Greece. This spontaneous outpouring of popular goodwill and help, which Turks reciprocated when Athens was hit by an earthquake in September, opened the way for "seismic diplomacy" and provided the foundation for the improvement of ties between the two countries.

At the same time, domestically, the difficulty and delays with which the Turkish state agencies and the Turkish military responded to the earthquake demonstrated how, without the

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[16] Graham Fuller, *Turkey's New Geopolitics* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993).
[17] For the economic impact of the earthquake, see *TÜSIAD Quarterly Economic Survey*, *Earthquake Supplement*, no. 21 (September 1999).

support of intermediate associations and civil society, even a formally strong state like Turkey could find itself helpless in times of disaster. Turkey's slow response was particularly marked by contrast with the efficiency and professionalism of the foreign aid teams that came from countries traditionally considered enemies of Turkey. In the long term, this may well be the most significant legacy of the earthquake.

The erosion of the myth of ethnic unity, the rising profile of Islam in society, the liberalization of the economy and a more open and active foreign policy suggest nothing less than a historical departure from the three major pillars of the Republic—nationalism, secularism and statism. The extent to which these changes (and challenges) are reflected in everyday life in Turkey and in contemporary Turkish culture testifies to their pervasiveness and irreversibility. As many celebrate and some, especially in the Kemalist elite, despair, the signs of change are filling the media, fashion, art, architecture, music, literature and cinema.

Among the wide range of cultural preferences, artistic expressions and lifestyle choices that can be observed in Turkey, it is no longer possible to detect a consensus regarding modern Turkish identity. However, three sets of references that correspond loosely to the "turning-points" outlined above have become increasingly prominent in the debates and discussions concerning the nature and transformation of Turkish culture and identity. These are the Ottoman heritage, the role of Islam and Turkey's place in the post-Cold War globalized world.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Most of the current discussions about Turkey's culture and identity revolve around the country's Ottoman heritage. Over the last 20 years, there has been a dramatic shift from the old view of the Ottoman past as the backward and anachronistic "other" to the current more tolerant, curious and even proud assessment of this past. The reclaiming of this heritage is by no means confined to Islamists. In 1999, official Ankara, headed by President Süleyman Demirel, celebrated the 700th anniversary of the founding of the Ottoman Empire, thereby contributing to this new sense of reconciliation with the country's Ottoman past. In popular culture, media and public discourse, one encounters numerous manifestations of "Ottomania." Ottoman art,

calligraphy, miniatures and museum objects have become highly popular. Public and private funds have been used to put together special exhibitions of Ottoman art for European and US museums, in order to showcase the richness of the Ottoman heritage. An example of this is the display of the Sabanci Family's Calligraphy Collection at Harvard University's Sackler Museum. Similarly in 1999 some of the most valuable jewelry and other items from the Topkapi Palace were brought to the United States and exhibited under the title "Treasures of Topkapi" in Washington DC and in several other cities in the first half of 2000. There is equally active traffic moving in the opposite direction bringing to Turkey items in European museums from the long Ottoman rule in Eastern Europe. Not only does Ottomania serve as a means for asserting the distinct and superior identity of Turkey's cultural heritage, it also becomes a way of showing how open and "European" the Ottomans really were. It was in this connection that Gentile Bellini's portrait of Sultan Mehmed II was brought to Istanbul on loan from the National Gallery in London in the fall of 1999. Even though the Islamists hold Mehmed II in the highest regard for his successful conquest of Constantinople from the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the subtext of this exhibit was very different. Here, the liberalism and openness of this sultan and the cultural affinities between the Ottomans of the 15th century and Renaissance Europe were highlighted, and the very existence of the portrait (an art form shunned by most in the Islamic world) was used to make these very points.[18]

As further examples of the growing popularity of things Ottoman, one can cite the proliferation of expensive gourmet restaurants such as Tugra, Armada, Asithane, Eski Osmanli and Mutfagi, all of which serve Ottoman cuisine, and the growing interest in and consumer demand for Ottoman classical music. Finally, as was the case with the Islamic revival, architecture serves as a powerful indicator of the interest in things Ottoman. The style and composition of some of the most exclusive suburban villas, such as Kemer Country outside Istanbul, make explicit references to traditional Ottoman neighborhoods, streets and houses. In addition to the restoration for tourism that has been going on since the 1980s of Ottoman palaces and *konaks*, the

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[18] Stephen Kinzer, "Istanbul Journal: 500-Year Old Painting Helps Turks To Look Ahead," *New York Times*, 25 December 1999, p. 6.

traditional large houses of the Ottoman period, there is also the construction of entirely new buildings in postmodern Ottoman imagery. The five-star "Topkapi Palace Hotel" in Antalya on the shores of the Mediterranean, a replica of the real Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, epitomizes this trend.[19]

Given that both secular Turks and Islamists look to the Ottoman past, the re-appropriation of Turkey's Ottoman heritage does not, by itself, mark a particular ideological direction. "Ottoman heritage" is reconstructed by many different groups for various ends, often with different consequences. Islamists celebrate the "Islamic" glories of the Ottoman Empire and see Islam as the defining element of Ottoman culture, while nationalists take pride in the Turkic origins of the Ottomans. As we saw in the example of Bellini's portrait of Mehmed II above, even the Europeanists are able to find support in the Ottoman heritage for their preferred trajectory for Turkey. And of course, there are others who turn to Ottomania with no deeper motivation than to profit from it by cultivating and catering to this fashion.

There is another area where this renewed interest in the country's Ottoman heritage has had clear political implications. This is the growing attention that researchers and writers have begun to pay to the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the Ottoman Empire and how it compares with the ethnic nationalism of the modern Turkish state and the intolerance of other contemporary modern nationalisms.[20] The Balkan wars of the 1990s have created a particularly immediate context for this reassessment and led many people to regard the ethnic and religious mix of the Ottoman Empire with considerable pride. Today in Turkey there is a broader awareness of and interest in the country's multi-ethnic and multi-religious past. Non-Muslim artists, architects and musicians of the Ottoman Empire are commemorated in books and CDs. Bosnians, Albanians, Greeks, Jews and Armenians and the Levantine culture of the late Empire are the subjects of numerous theses, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, photograph collections and publications. Of the two most painful episodes of the last years of the Empire, the exchange

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[19] This hotel is promoted as "A Magical Vacation Inside History." See "Tarih Içinde Büyülü Bir Tatil," *Istanbul Life*, 39 (August 1999) pp. 48-49.
[20] This reassessment of Ottoman history is not confined to Turkish historians. For example, see Jason Goodwin, *Lords of the Horizons* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998).

of populations between Greece and Turkey is now examined more freely by researchers on both sides of the Aegean divide, sometimes even in collaboration with each other. Rather than dwelling on the high politics of the period's international diplomacy, these new studies focus on the human tragedy that was involved in the uprooting of communities from their ancestral homes in Anatolia and Thrace. The other tragic episode, the murder and deportation of the Empire's Armenian population, continues to be taboo for most historians in Turkey. But even on this topic we are seeing some movement. Turkish and Armenian historians met in two public forums at the University of Chicago in 2000, and discussed the various aspects of these painful events and agreed to hold similar conferences in the future.[21] Together with Turkey's painful coming to terms with the Kurdish reality, these developments give reason to hope that Turkey today is more accepting of heterogeneity and ethnic and cultural diversity than at any previous point.

ISLAM

Signs of the large and growing significance of Islam in Turkish society are hard to miss in today's Turkey. More covered young women and bearded men are visible in the streets of major cities than at any time in Republican history. Religious orders, Muslim charities and businesses and grassroots organizations of the Islamist party are active and effective everywhere. Furthermore, today any public event, symbol or activity can easily become part of the contested terrain between Islamists and secularists. For example, one of the most controversial gestures by the Islamist mayor of Ankara in 1994 was to change the logo of the city from one using Hittite symbols to an "Islamic" logo of crescents and domes. Islamists have also demanded that the Western classical music at official state functions be replaced with the music of classical Ottoman composers. As an undisguised challenge to the lavish Republic Day celebrations so dear to the country's secularists, the Islamist city government of Istanbul has been celebrating with extravagant public ceremonies the anniversary

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[21] See Vincent Lima, "Another Crack in the Wall of Silence: Armenian Genocide Subject of Chicago Workshop," in H-TURK, 24 March 2000, archived at H-Net.msu.edu and Hakan Özoğlu, "Conference Report: Evolving Identities in the Middle East," in H-TURK, 12 May 2000, archived at H-Net.msu.edu.

of the conquest of the city by the Ottomans in 1453.[22] In another well-publicized case, the appearance of female students with head scarves in public schools has led to demonstrations, hunger-strikes and sit-ins in university buildings. In short, even though the formal *laïcism* of the Turkish state continues to be regarded as inviolable by most, it is no longer the case that this translates necessarily and automatically in a culture and identity that is substantively secular.

Nowhere does the strong presence of Islam in society and public life manifest itself more visibly and literally than in the recent boom in mosque construction in Turkey. New mosques, ranging from small, cheaply built neighborhood sites to larger and more elaborate buildings, have been built in the thousands since 1980.[23] To some, the prominence of this new building type that was conspicuously absent in early Republican architectural culture represents nothing less than the rise of the previously marginalized groups and reflects their newly acquired political power and cultural self-confidence. Indeed, with their awkwardly proportioned but imposing domes and minarets, the significance of these cheaply constructed new mosques lies as much in their ideological and political symbolism as in the praying space they provide to believers.

In Ankara and Istanbul, where Islamist parties have scored their most spectacular municipal victories, grand mosque projects have attracted heated public attention and debate. In Ankara, the monumental Kocatepe Mosque crowning a hill across from Atatürk's mausoleum (arguably the holiest shrine of secular Turkish nationalism) is the perfect physical expression of the complexity of Turkish cultural politics today. It is a building consciously modeled on the great imperial mosques of the Ottoman tradition.[24] This has been the primary source of the controversy it has stirred within the architectural establishment. By contrast, the abstract and modernist design of the award-

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[22] Alev Inan Çinar, "Refah Party and the City Administration of Istanbul: Liberal Islam, Localism and Hybridity," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 16 (Spring 1997) pp. 23-40.

[23] Although official numbers are hard to come by given the illegal construction of many smaller mosques in the urban fringes, architectural historian Doğan Kuban suggests that about 1,500 new mosques were built per year during the 1990s. Doğan Kuban, "Türkiye'de Çagdas Cami Tasarimi," *Arredemento Dekorasyon* (October 1994) pp. 80-83

[24] Michael Meeker, "Once There Was, Once There Wasn't: National Monuments and Interpersonal Exchange," in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, eds*., Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997) pp. 157-91.

winning Parliament Mosque, which does not challenge Republican notions of modern Turkish identity, did not arouse the same controversy. At the same time, the "neo-Ottoman" structure of the Kocatepe Mosque sits above a large supermarket-department store and an underground parking garage and reflects the "modernity" (or, according to some, the "post-modernity") of Turkey's Islam in the age of globalization and consumer culture. In Istanbul, the Islamist city government has tried to use symbols to win the hearts and minds of the public. For example, when it first captured the city's government in 1995, the Welfare Party proposed building a large mosque in Taksim Square at the center of the city and across from the Atatürk Cultural Center, another icon of the secular modernism of the Republic. Although this project was shelved after fierce opposition from civic and political groups, it continues to be a symbolic promise (like the promise of reconverting Hagia Sophia into a mosque), the fulfillment of which would signal the end of Kemalist predominance in discussions of Turkey's national identity, national culture and urbanscape.

GLOBALIZATION

Finally, as is true elsewhere, the dynamics of globalization have engulfed and begun to remold Turkish culture and urban life in very tangible ways. A plethora of new services in commerce, telecommunications and finance are now available and link Turkey with the rest of the world, bringing Turkey into the 21st century and the 21st century to Turkey. For example, in Istanbul, the great metropolis at the heart of these transformations, one finds a global city energetically projecting the image of a "European Turkey"—an effort that is bound to receive further impetus from the recent acceptance of Turkey's application to be a candidate for EU membership.[25] With its mosques, urban crowds, poorer fringe populations, arabesque music and squatter houses, Istanbul still appears very much like the "oriental city" of people's imaginations. Yet next to this oriental city, another Istanbul of five-star hotels, glazed office towers, convention centers, glittering shopping malls, multiplex cinemas, international fashion stores, expensive restaurants and fast food chains is in the making. These

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[25] For a collection of essays assessing the "globalization" of Istanbul, see Ç. Keyder, ed., *Istanbul Between the Global and the Local* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

are the paradigmatic building types of post-Kemalist Turkey, much as government buildings, schools, post offices and railway stations were symbols of Kemalist Turkey in the 1930s.[26] Today, the private sector in Turkey has grown rich and experienced enough to take over the primary patronage of architecture from the state. It is the private business and finance sector that is on the cutting-edge of technology, design and expertise today, proving their competence not only in Turkey but also in many construction projects abroad, especially in the Turkic former Soviet republics.

Like in many other countries, in Turkey too there are those who are fearful that globalization will harm the well-being of Turkish citizens, undermine the sovereignty of the state and hand a powerful weapon to foreigners who can use it to impose their priorities on the country. For example, even though anti-Islamists support open relations with the West as a way of undermining the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, they also chafe at the excessive power of international organizations and agencies, especially when these become the means of monitoring human right violations. At the other extreme, in the past, the Islamists were the sharpest critics of the West and the European Union, calling them Christian conspirators bent on destroying Islam. Recently however, some Islamists have come to regard open relations with the West as the best guarantee of their right to free speech and unhindered political activity. Even though no such poll has ever been taken in Turkey, we believe that a majority of the population would support a pro-European path for the country's future. While some would be motivated by the economic, political and ideological factors we have mentioned, many see in globalization and membership in the European Union a guarantee for uninterrupted access to Western markets, consumption, lifestyles and "civilization" more generally. There is a remarkably widespread willingness on the part of the people of Turkey to keep the country open to the outside world and to join Europe.

CONCLUSION

Starting as early as the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire and its Republican successor faced a number of junctures similar to

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[26] See Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architecture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, Forthcoming 2001).

those that confront Turkey today. Studying such turning points reveals that, then as now, there was a multitude of conflicting and competing ideas, theses and proposals argued, suggested and tried before a particular path was taken. Even the Kemalist ideology, which is sometimes described as if it is a unified whole, was a lot more ambivalent about the various choices the new state made in the 1920s and 1930s. Such uncertainty and diversity is at the heart of any project and process of modernization. There is, however, one consistent pattern in how these conflicts were resolved—the growing rigidity of state institutions and their expansion to cover all aspects of life in the late Ottoman and then the early Republican periods.

As the country faces a new century, the ideological, cultural, political and economic debates that are flourishing in all sections of society directly question the centrality of state institutions and practices and promise to take Turkey in a different direction. This trend derives its strength from the forces of globalization. As a consequence, a large part of public life is moving outside the purview of the Turkish state. How state institutions will respond to this challenge remains a key question. So far, the signs are overwhelmingly positive in that the government has shown a strong willingness to further the social and economic liberalization in the country. For all practical purposes, the Kurdish War in the Southeast has ended. For the first time in a very long while, the country has a stable government that has managed to pass a series of tough economic reforms. The same government has also engineered the election of a civilian president by orchestrating an agreement among all the political parties in parliament. After centuries of clinging tenuously to Europe's periphery, Turkey is now a candidate for membership in the European Union. And finally, in spite of the destruction caused by the 1999 earthquake, Turkey's economy is predicted to grow 4.3 percent in 2000.[27] There is also a reinvigorated sense of openness in the country, where each day the media probes into what is euphemistically referred to as the "deep state" and seeks to expose the vast network of corruption that linked death squads, crime syndicates and the highest levels of the government. It is possible that the institutions that prospered under the seeming omnipotence of the state can

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[27] *TÜSIAD Quarterly Economic Survey*, *Earthquake Supplement*, no. 21 (September 1999).

stage a comeback to protect their status and privileges, forcing Turkey to retreat from this propitious juncture. It must be pointed out, however, that in the rapidly globalizing world, the cost of such a retreat would be immeasurably higher than in previous periods. ⚓