

# Europe and Turkey: Does Religion Matter?

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## Introduction

Ever since Claude Lévi-Strauss, a social anthropologist, introduced the term “l’*égo* et l’*autre*” it has become very fashionable to apply the “Self” and the “Other” to international affairs as well as to history. Shortly thereafter, concepts such as “identity politics” or the “politics of identity” began to fill research agendas. Although there is nothing wrong with mapping identities, it has certain methodological drawbacks for scholarship. Many times overemphasizing identities, in an effort to neatly categorize them, results in defining peoples and events based solely on ethnic/racial, national, or religious straitjackets. This is not very different from applying the principles of classifying botanical fauna to the human fora, which does not necessarily contribute to our knowledge, especially in geographies where religious/linguistic/ethnic identities overlap. Cosimo de Medici (“The Great,” Duke of Florence, banker, 1519–1603), one of the great men of the Renaissance once said, “I am human, so nothing about humanity is alien to me” (quoted in Çaykara 2005: 373). His statement makes sense today only if we remember the connection between the word “other” and its Latin version “*alienus*.” Today, despite all the hype of globalization, humanistic and political cosmopolitanism is absent. The fast pace of our world also brings about simplistic and categorical sociopolitical descriptions that are often hostile and divisive. The current

stage of globalization is about finance, economics, and technology; it has little to do with human beings.

None of the above though negates the fact that today there are millions of alienated people who live on the peripheries of cities, nations, geographies, and dominant cultures. According to Amin Maalouf, these people carry inside them fault lines based on ethnicity, religion, or whatever else that exclusivity and deprivation brings to them (Maalouf 2000: 34). Maalouf argues that identities are in need of being defined by new and different criteria, otherwise they may and do become deadly. This is the view of a literary critic. However, the way identity, including national identity, is treated is problematic for scholarship as well as for politics. What matters here is whether we use identity for the purposes of exclusion or inclusion.

This study offers a venue for an inclusive reading of history by looking at change and continuity from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey to contribute to the debate on Turkey's place in Europe by focusing on two aspects. One is religion and its relation to the State, as well as Turkey's identities. The other is foreign policy conduct, which was not different from that of other states, if the history of foreign policy is *not* read as a clash between Christianity and Islam or between the East and West.

The first section of this chapter discusses the role of religion in the administrative structure of the empire. The role of the Ottomans in Europe, as a Muslim Roman Empire, and implications thereof are evaluated. The dichotomy between the State and Muslim institution, that is, the *ulama* (jurists of Islamic law) is presented. Finally, the meaning and role of the Sultan/Caliph, and the abolition of this echelon is tied to the Republican treatment of the Muslim institution. Today, this institution continues as the directorate of religious affairs, and the theologians who work under its auspices are civil servants. The Grand *Mufti* of Istanbul, whose title was changed to *Sheikh'ul Islam* (the leading jurist) in the eighteenth century, had also been a member of the Sultan's *Divan* (the cabinet), which formed part of the Ottoman bureaucracy. Although specialists on Islamic jurisprudence no longer hold the same kind of power they yielded in the empire (read, obstruction of worldly reform), the current state of the Muslim institution still reveals state control over religion. This section concludes that this institutional continuation from the empire to Republic may explain the peculiar secularism of Turkey largely. Moreover, it is argued that had the empire been a theocracy, and consequently, was governed through divine authority, neither laicism nor secularism could have been received without a fully fledged civil war during the early years of the Republic.

The following section discusses Turkey in Europe from a foreign policy perspective. The doyen of Ottoman History, Halil İnalcık wrote,

From the midst of the 15th century on, the Ottoman-Turkish Empire played a crucial role in shaping European history. This factor has not been weaved into Western historiography to its detriment, because explaining concepts such as *raison d'état*, *real politik*, balance of power or even European identity remain somewhat shortchanged without according the Ottoman-Turkish Empire a role in the evolution as well as functioning of these concepts. Mutual systemic influences are a foregone conclusion, however overlooked. (İnalcık 2006: 11)

It is understandable that many years of confrontation caused a perception of the “Turk” as the antithesis of Europe in historiography and collective memory (Soykut [ed.] 2003). However, there is much more to Turkey and Europe than wars and confrontation. Among these factors are: the evolution of foreign policies and diplomacy, Ottoman support given to the growth of European mercantilism through the extension of capitulatory rights, Ottoman support given to German Protestant princes, Transylvania, and Hungary (İnalcık 2006: 174–178, Finkel 2005: 283–284), alliances with (Catholic) France against the (Catholic) Habsburgs, hence *raison d'état*, its role in the European balance of power, and even reciprocity in cultural influences. Nonetheless, if the political/diplomatic history of Europe and Turkey is construed and solely read in terms of religious confrontation or conflict between the East and West, issues will remain static and peoples will remain alienated from each other. Given that there is much ado about Islam nowadays, it is timely to look into the last empire that symbolically represented Islam but was just as worldly and pragmatic in domestic as well as in international affairs similar to its European counterparts. Therefore, although religion matters in private lives, a secular reading of history is to eradicate anachronism and to disengage politics and religion in the context of Turkey's European Union (EU) accession.

### **The State, Religion, and Identity**

Regarding demography and identity, Cemal Kafadar stated, “The liquidity and fluidity of identities in those years [13th–16th centuries] is hard to imagine in the national age” (Kafadar 1995: 28). Christian and Jewish converts that are known about in the medieval age as well as during the national age as of the 1848 revolutions are numerous (*ibid*: 26, Ortaylı 2006: 148–149). There were also countless intermarriages. In addition, many Muslim/Turkic peoples from the Crimea, Caucasus, and

Balkans, found refuge in Anatolia when the borders of the empire began to recede as of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Both in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878 and the Balkan war of 1912, surviving Muslim/Turkish civilians sought asylum in Anatolia under dire circumstances (McCarthy 1995, 2001). The compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1925 of Greek/Turkish Muslims and Anatolian/Greek Christians also added another layer of human mosaic to the country (Karpas 1973). Consequently, the human profile of the empire was extremely eclectic, and the human geography of the Republic is not an exception.

The empire managed the state, religion(s), sect(s), and identities in a refined manner. Therefore, the “others” in the Ottoman Empire were not differentiated by absolute divides, and the concept of ghettos was nonexistent. Instead, there were neighborhoods, and neighbors were held in high esteem. The “others” were *millets* (communities defined by religion) such as the Jewish *millet* (mostly Sephardim), Gregorian Armenians, Armenian Catholics, Armenian Protestants, and the Orthodox *Rum*. Not only the Hellenes belonged to this last group, but also Christian Albanians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, and some Arabs were under the Orthodox *Rum*/Greek Patriarchate. Moreover, the Turkish *Rum* Orthodox, Christian Gagauz Turks of Romania and Moldova belonged to this *millet*. The Muslim *millet* comprised Turcoman, Bulgarian Pomak, Bosnians, Albanians, Arabs, Kurds, and Circassians of various tribes (Ortaylı 2006: 81–91).

Although the state adhered to the Hanafi branch of Sunni Islam, the state apparatus boasted high-ranking civil servants from all *millets*, which was especially apparent in the nineteenth century. Not a single one of the non-Muslim *millets* was considered a minority until this term came into usage with rising nationalisms. Then *millets*, a purely religious format, turned into nationalities and/or minorities, with all the trials and tribulations that came with it.

An interesting case in point in the saga of past worldviews and how they changed over time may be depicted around the term *Rum* or Roman. Pre-Ottoman Anatolia was gradually settled by the Seljuk tribes who referred to themselves as the Seljuks of *Rum* (Cahen 1968). This was an identity partly based on geography and partly on culture, because Asia Minor had been part of the Eastern Roman Empire. The cultural aspect of the *Rum/Rumi* identity was clearly one of urbanity as opposed to nomadic peoples such as the Turcomans. The Hellenes referred to themselves as *Rum/Romans* since the time they adopted Christianity. Hence, the title *Rum* was attached to the otherwise Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. Once upon a time, a multitude of Balkan peoples adhered to that Patriarchate. Simply because of the overwhelming numbers of its congregation, the

Patriarchate was *primus inter pares* in Ottoman protocol and administrative structure as far as the non-Muslim hierarchy was concerned. This status as well as the appointment of the Patriarch was officially granted by Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror of Constantinople (r. 1451–1481) (Lewis 1963). Moreover, approximately 120,000 to 130,000 Christian Turks of Ukraine are still called *Rum* or *Urum* (Altinkaynak 2004, Kasapoğlu Gençel 2004 quoted in Özbaran 2004).

Identification with the Eastern Roman Empire was also a major aspect for the Muslim Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed. Chief among his many exalted titles was *Kayser-i Rum* (Roman Caesar) by virtue of having conquered the Second Rome in 1453. From then on, an empire was established with the purpose of conquering the First Rome, thereby insurrecting the Third Roman Empire under the auspices of a Muslim Roman Caesar. That mission continued well into the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Conceptually, *Rum* was supranational as well as supra-religion. It denoted a melting pot. *Rum* was also a concept that differentiated the realm from the Persian and Arab peoples and lands even after the latter lands became part of the empire (Özbaran 2004: 99–101). To translate the Ottoman Empire and *Rum* as the Turkish Empire and Turks is a false depiction for several reasons. It is chronologically misleading because the timeframe is pre-nationalism. It is conceptually false because it does not reflect the imperial mission. Last, but not least, neither the Ottoman sultans nor their historians referred to Turks. Turk was a derogatory word referring to nomads of Anatolia. Turkish nationalism was born as a concept in the late nineteenth century and culminated in a nation-state in 1923 (Ibid: 65–77, İnalçık quoted in ibid: 77). Yet, the empire was dominated by Turkic elements; its official language, although written in the Arabic script, was Turkish, its system of government and institutions had been inherited from the older Turkic states, and the population at large comprised Turks, a hybrid people due to mobility.

In the sixteenth century, a new challenge appeared in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea against Ottoman trade routes, the merchant soldiers of Portugal. State attention was thus diverted to the south, namely to the Arab Muslim lands.

One of the basic ideologies of the empire was to provide just rule, and the ruling institution made the most of this principle during each and every conquest, including in the Arab Muslim lands. One of the ways justice was meted out was that everybody among the *reaya* (taxpayers), no matter how lowly in the social hierarchy, had access to the sultan by petitioning. These petitions were taken very seriously by the State and grievances were redressed. This method not only made the sultan accessible to the people, but it also protected them from abuse of the functionaries. Thus it ensured

just rule. The Ottomans did not change or disturb the ancient land tenure nor did they colonize the Arab provinces. These provinces were administered by governors assigned from the center. Thus the system ensured loyalty. Another neutralizer in the system was the military institution. The officer corps was open socially to people from all walks of life. It was not confined to the upper classes as was the case in Europe and Russia. The same principle continued in the Republic.

Long after the conquest of the Arab Muslim lands, in the nineteenth century a myth was created that Yavuz Sultan Selim (r. 1512–1520) had assumed the title caliph (political successor of the Prophet Mohammad) when he conquered Egypt. In essence, “the Arabic word *khalifah* (viceregent, deputy or successor) is one of the titles—others included *imam* (leader, particularly of prayer) and *amir al-mu'minin* (commander of the faithful)—given to those who succeeded the prophet Mohammad as real or nominal rulers of the Islamic world” (*The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (1998), vol. 1: 239–243, 239, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987), vol. 3: 21–24, *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (2001), vol. 5/1: 148–153). All sources are agreed that the Ottoman sultan never officially assumed/took over the title from the last Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil in 1517.

However, given the ambivalence surrounding its definition as well as its implication as the leader of the Islamic world, the title was used by the Ottomans as a foreign policy tool for the first time in the Küçük Kaynarca Agreement following the first Crimean War between Catherine the Great’s Russia and the Sublime Porte (the seat of Ottoman government). This marks the first time that the Ottoman Empire lost a territory, a protectorate mostly inhabited by Muslims (the Crimean Khanate) to a Christian power. Catherine II (r. 1762–1796) was a Lutheran convert to the Russian Orthodox Church and as Tsarina she was also the head of that church. The Ottomans took advantage of the conceptual confusion over the royal head of a church and leadership of the Islamic world. The latter, in fact, carried no spiritual meaning like the former did. The title caliph only signified temporal power. Ottoman diplomats inserted into the treaty a clause that said that the Ottoman sultan, as caliph of all Muslims, retained the right of spiritual influence over the Crimean Muslims (*The Oxford Encyclopedia*, *ibid*: 240, Davison 1976). This would provide a powerful argument to interfere in the affairs of the Crimea should the occasion arise. It never did. Nonetheless, the clause remained as a foreign policy tool and a potentially legitimate excuse for political exploitation, because the caliph’s power meant political power. However, the Russians assumed that the caliph was also the head of the Muslim establishment.

Shortly thereafter, the myth of the Ottoman sultan as caliph was perpetuated in a French publication in 1787 for reasons that are not clear. Strangely enough but rightfully so, the Ottoman sultans did not make

mention of the caliphate until Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876) because of appeals from outside Muslims, who were beginning to fall under Russian rule, compelled him to do so (*The Oxford Encyclopedia*, *ibid*: 241). This problem grew into Sultan Abdülhamid II's (r. 1876–1909) Pan-Islamic policy as yet another foreign policy tool to deter Russian and British imperialism. By the mid-nineteenth century, title and claim to the leadership of the Islamic world had become a tool for legitimacy as well as psychological/diplomatic deterrence (Karpas 2001).

What, then, was the identity of the Ottoman sultan as the leader of the most powerful and the only noncolonized Muslim realm? And how did the Muslim institution function under his administration? Is it possible to describe this empire as a theocracy given the existence of *örfi* laws (sultanic/customary laws), *siyasa* laws (political/administrative laws), and *ticaret* laws (commercial laws)? Where did this leave the Koranic law, *Shari'a* given the absence of a ruler or ruling class, which claimed to rule by divine authority?

To begin with, the Ottomans did not call their realm an empire. The realm was entitled *Memalik-i Mahrusa*, the Well Protected Domains (Deringil 1999). When the sultan used the title *Halifey-i Ruy-i Zemin*, it meant the protector of the Islamic world and defender of the roads to Haj. Another title that the sultans assumed after conquest of the Arab Muslim lands was *Hâdim-ül Haremeyn-iş Şerifeyn*, the servant/defender of the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. Sultans did not have a say over religious matters or over Islamic jurisprudence. That authority was left to the jurists and through them to the *kadı*, judge of Muslim courts. Just as every *millet* had their own court and administered justice by their own religious law, except for criminal law, Muslims had the same practice. Coupled with the liberal worldview of Hanafi/Sunni Islam compared to that of the Wahhabis of the southern Arabia, criminal cases where the defendants were non-Muslim could not possibly be subject to the strict laws of the *Shari'a*. The Muslims must have benefited from this system too, because there are no cases of punishment meted out to criminals in the Ottoman *Kadı Sicilleri* (court records) when compared with what we witness in today's Saudi Arabia.

Ottoman court records reveal more than criminal or administrative justice. They are also a source of Ottoman social history. Issues of inheritance, marriage and divorce, and commercial contracts were recorded there. Furthermore, the *kadı* disseminated government edicts to smaller administrative units, and saw to it that extraordinary taxes at war-time (*avarız*), in the form of food supplies were delivered (Çaykara 2005: 127–128). So the Islamic judge was a functionary of the administrative system at the local level as well. The *kadı* also had the authority to marry couples, which was totally a civic and contractual affair.

Theoretically, an Islamic state should not adhere to any other law but the *Shari'a*. However, even the pre-Ottoman Turkic-Muslim states had an alternative system of laws based on the rule of state, custom, and precedent. These laws represented the authority of the state above and beyond religious law mainly because Islamic law did not cover public law (Bozkurt 1996: 39–40, Ostorog 1972).<sup>2</sup> The duality of law between the State and Muslim institution resonated in the echelon entitled *kadıasker/kazasker*, jurists who dealt with crime or personal matters pertaining to members of the civil/military bureaucracy in Rumelia and Anatolia (İnalçık 1993: 323–324).<sup>3</sup> Codifying *sultani/örfi* (state) laws reached its apogee with Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), alias Süleyman the Lawgiver. Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh*, used in the Ottoman realm was a combination of legal norms derived from the Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali, and Shafi branches of Sunni Islam, based on consensus of the respective *ulama*. Previous schism generated by the Shia secession from the *umma* (congregation) should never be repeated.

The Muslim institution functioned side by side with other sources of authority in jurisdiction. The Islamic law applied to personal matters such as marriage, divorce, death, and inheritance, but again, through judgment and opinion delivered by a state functionary, the *kadı*. This is where religious identity and state authority blended. It might be noted that initiating divorce was not necessarily a privilege that men enjoyed unilaterally. Eighteenth-century Bursa court records display a large number of divorce cases initiated by and awarded to women. Bursa was a commercial center and a rich province. Consequently, women of independent means did not suffer through miserable marriages. There were also special cases where the courts honored female requests for divorce, such as male impotency, illness, or sodomy. Contrary to the myth surrounding polygamy, this was rarely practiced in Anatolia and the Balkans.

The realm of madrasah education was where the Muslim institution exercised its power. Its teachers, preachers, and jurists carved out a livelihood in the sector and even tried to monopolize it by appointing their respective offspring to such posts. On fervent protests by other students, the State interfered and curtailed the number of *ulama* siblings who could be granted a job in that sphere. Initiated in the eighteenth century, State sponsored schools of engineering, medicine, law, military academy, secular lyceés, teacher training schools such as *Dar'ül Muallimin* and *Dar'ül Muallimat* (for men and women) encroached into yet another space that had belonged to the Muslim institution by the nineteenth century. The inevitable confrontation between power holders in the Muslim institution, the Palace, pragmatic reformers comprising both Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals, nationalists, and upholders of the empire came



to the fore at the age of modernity. Institutional dualisms in the empire's administrative structure, however, allowed instigation of the Reform era (1839–1876) (Davison 1963, Findley 1980). Legal, military, educational, and political reforms met with obstructionism mainly from the Muslim institution and actually widened the gap between the ruling institution and the former. By mid-nineteenth century

It was possible to argue that Islam was no barrier to modernization, westernization, equality, and representative government. Such arguments were advanced in the Tanzimat [Reform] period, both by Turks and by foreigners ...Within a few years the New Ottomans, and Midhat Paşa, were to argue the fundamental democracy of Islam, that the Muslim community was originally a sort of republic, and that the elective principle was basic in the faith. (Davison 1963: 67)

But the majority of the Muslims were conditioned by the *ulama* whose teachings only relied upon religion and who insisted that the status quo remain, because their livelihood depended on it. Although there were a number of enlightened people among the *ulama*, the majority was against any innovation/reform. At the same time, reform seemed the only way out for the survival of the empire, and it continued both under pressure from the European Great Powers as well as under the labor of genuine Ottoman reformists such as Âli, Fuad and Midhad Pashas, and some liberal members of the *ulama*.

The nineteenth century had its own peculiar dynamics and the Ottomans had to keep on par with them (Ortaylı 1983) as well as defend what was left of the empire in the aftermath of the Berlin Congress in 1878. Having lost almost all its major Balkan territories in 1878, except for Macedonia, the empire became more homogeneously Muslim. But even that was of no avail since ethnic/micro nationalisms were on the rise. With the advent of World War I (WWI), the end of continental empires represented by the Hohenzollern, Habsburg, Ottoman, and Romanov dynasties became a foregone conclusion. The Ottoman dynasty endured longer than the rest, until 1922 when the sultanate was abolished, and two years later abolition of the caliphate followed. In 1924, the caliph Abdülmedid and members of the Ottoman dynasty were sent to permanent exile.<sup>4</sup>

The Muslim institution was dismantled on the surface but in actuality, it was absorbed into the Republican bureaucratic structure. Education became entirely an affair of the state. The Directorate of Religious Affairs was established. The Friday sermons (*hutba*) are produced by this office and relayed to *imams* (leaders of prayer) of mosques, just as they had been produced by the *Sheikh ul'Islam's* office in the empire. Friday sermons have always been of particular significance for the state past and present. Friday

prayers are communal and if the name of the Sultan was dropped from the sermon, it signified that he had lost legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. This was also a sign of rebellion. It was for this reason that Süleyman the Lawgiver made the Grand Mufti's office part of the government apparatus in the sixteenth century. Popular *sheihks* and *imams* were also placed on government payroll. Although the name of the president or the chief executive is never mentioned in Friday sermons today, there is a consistent refrain about the continuity of the State and Republic. Friday sermons continue to serve as a tool of legitimization. Faculties of Theology were established to study the major religions. But somehow theologians ended up only studying Islamic texts, and this does not lend itself to a healthy understanding between the Peoples of the Book (*Ehl-i Kitap*, people who believe in revealed religion) (Kahveci 2007).

One other continuity from the empire to Republic is *waqf*. *Waqfs* were endowments established by wealthy individuals. Although some were purely pious endowments such as mosques, hospitals, insane asylums, schools, and libraries established for public good, other *waqf* properties such as agricultural properties or inns generated income. *Waqf* contracts ensured that the offspring could inherit and share the income. The practice continues today under a regulatory office, the general directorate of *Waqfs*. Descendants of founding families still receive nontaxable income, however modest.

In conclusion, the empire was pragmatic and used religion to serve the State and administer the realm at least with a semblance of justice. Its moral authority remained intact until the eve of WWI. Modernizing reforms and comparatively liberal Islamic worldviews (barring reactionaries and obstructionists) prepared the social and political milieu for secularization and laicism in the Republic. Had the empire been a theocracy ruled by divine right, this process could have been neither facilitated by reforming sultans, nor accepted by the population at large. An article that defined the nature of the State in the first republican constitution said that the religion of the state was Islam. In 1928, this was removed.

There is no question that the empire's and later Republic's role model for modernization has been Europe. Turkey's political culture and national identity formed with a fixation toward Europe, specifically toward France. Ironically, that country today depicts Turkey as the significant "other" of Europe par excellence. In the past, exclusion from Europe gained Turkey a national identity. Whether the current exclusivist trends in the EU will stir the nation to truly integrate with European values perhaps even without the prospect of full membership or whether Turkey will become mentally and politically alienated remain to be seen. A practical question to ask at

this point may be what foreign policy, and its extension, diplomacy, can tell us about Turkey's place in Europe.

### **Turkey's Foreign Policy Culture and Its Place in Europe**

Turkey's place in Europe is a very old debate, which began in the fifteenth century. It is remarkable that this debate lasted so long. During the Cold War, however, nobody including the Turks questioned their Western identity.

Historians are now beginning to understand that Ottoman Turkey played a significant role in European politics by writing total histories fashioned after the *Annales* School of historians. The impact of Ottoman Turkey on Europe was threefold. One was as an actor in the balance of power and the workings of *raison d'état*. For example, the Ottoman state was a balancing factor during the internecine wars between the Italian city states during the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century, it was an ally sought after by Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) of England against the Spanish Armada. In the seventeenth century, France made common cause with the Ottomans against the Habsburgs. Second, it was a contributor to the growth of mercantilism and capitalism by extending capitulations (trade privileges) to foreign countries and Levant companies. Lastly, it was both a subject and an object of European peace and balance even after it was admitted to the European Concert system in 1856.

It is argued here that the empire remained outside the European Congress system initiated in 1815 at the Vienna Congress not because of religious reasons, but because of structural/institutional reasons. Although it had clear-cut foreign policies, the Porte lacked a foreign policy establishment as well as permanent diplomatic representation abroad. When powerful the Ottomans did not feel the need for these mechanisms. They maintained an attitude of hubris toward foreign countries, a malady that always seems to inflict the powerful. This continued until the 1699 Treaties of Karlowitz after incessant wars lost to the Austrians and Russians. The Ottoman Empire had not been present at the Congress of Westphalia (1648), which not only ended the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), but also laid the foundations of a new European state system (Hershey 1912, Gross 1993, Krasner 1993, Osiander 1994, 2001). Constantinople did not grasp the importance of that upcoming Congress although it took eight years of preparation to bring about the conference. Constantinople was not directly a party to the Thirty Years' War, but by having supported the Protestant princes of Transylvania and Hungary, they had indirectly contributed to stop Catholic Habsburg encroachment toward east-central Europe.

In the seventeenth century, foreign policy was formulated in the Grand Vizier's Office through an undersecretary entitled, *Reis-ül Küttab*. Only by the nineteenth century did the office become a ministry as the *Umur-u Hariciye Nezareti* (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Ambassadorial appointments followed as of 1836 (Girgin 1994: 15–19, 137–142) when at long last diplomatic reciprocity began. However, the Ottomans were still not part of the European state system, and by the nineteenth century they began to perceive the threats that military, diplomatic, and systemic isolation could bring them. Once again, the Porte was absent from the Vienna Congress in 1815 while new rules of international relations were being formed, and European affairs were on the table once more, elaborating on the Westphalian system. The historian Cevdet Paşa (1823–1895), one of the liberal *ulama*, noted that during the Congress, the French Foreign Minister, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754–1838), “raised the issue of an agreement among the European Great Powers about a joint guarantee for the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire in the instructions sent to the French delegation” (quoted in İnalçık 2006: 114).

Talleyrand was not the only one. Other sources corroborate that Austrian and English governments also supported the idea that the Ottoman Empire should be included in the general treaty guaranteeing the status quo in Europe. Prince Clement von Metternich (1773–1859), the Austrian chancellor had suggested it at the Congress as early as 1814, “but nothing came of the idea because Tsar Alexander would not cooperate unless changes in the Ottoman boundaries were made in Russia’s favor” (Davison 1999: 335). The chances are that Talleyrand had agreed with the Big Two, England and Austria, at a time when he was trying to pull France back into the fold of European Great Powers after Napoleon Bonaparte’s upset of the continent. The Ottomans brought up the issue of guarantee during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829, but nothing came of this demarche either (*ibid*).

The European Congress system was dominated by Metternich until 1848. Greek and Serbian nationalistic rebellions against the Ottoman Empire convinced Metternich to extend support to the empire. His concern was threefold. He was against rebellions for fear that they would prove exemplary to the multinational Habsburg Empire. Second, he did not want to see Russian power extended to the Balkans. Consequently, he did not want the international system in Europe to be upset simply because Russia would take advantage of Ottoman weakness. It was for these reasons that he put pressure on Alexander I not to help the rebels and imprisoned Alexander Ypsilanti, the leader of the Greek rebellion of 1821 when Ypsilanti made the unfortunate choice of taking refuge in Austria when he was defeated by the Ottomans (Artz 1966 [1934]: 253).<sup>5</sup>

A very different leadership profile appeared in post-1848 Europe. The new leaders upheld national interest above and beyond the general interests of Europe. Not only that, but another ambitious Bonaparte, Louis Napoleon (r. 1848–1870) was determined to reverse the Congress system, which had been established to contain France. Accordingly, another Bonaparte was never to ascend as ruler of France. But Louis Napoleon did; in a very short time he was elected emperor by referendum. The Russian Tsar, Nicholas I (r. 1825–1856) did not consider Napoleon III as a legitimate monarch. Nicholas had fought with the first Napoleon during his invasion of Russia in 1812 and he never forgot that experience.

In his enthusiasm to make a nice gesture to the Catholic Church, Napoleon III requested from the Ottomans that the care and responsibility of the two most sacred churches in Jerusalem and Bethlehem (the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Church of Nativity) be turned over to French priests. He had also heard that the Orthodox Church enjoyed primacy in Ottoman protocol and did not like it. The Sublime Porte did not mind either way; Christians were Christians as far as the Porte was concerned. Reading this matter only from the reference point of religious homogeneity was going to be costly for the Ottomans. As a result, the Crimean War (1853–1856) began over this seemingly simplistic issue, but was actually caused by power politics. The British, French, and Sardinians allied with the Ottoman Empire against Russia (Saab 1977). In the end, the Treaty of Paris in 1856 admitted the Ottoman Empire to the European Concert, but the treaty punished Russia with its Black Sea clauses. The Russians were not allowed to build or operate a navy in the Black Sea. This was actually against the tenets of the balance of power principle where no party was to be severely punished such that a semblance of satisfaction was provided for the victorious and defeated alike.

The general guarantee by the contracting powers of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire contained in the Treaty of Paris is a subject of great importance. The aim was to internationalize the guarantee and substitute European for Russian influence in Turkey. (Temperley 1932: 523)

According to Article VIII, no armed intervention was to be made upon Turkey without consulting with the other powers, which made intervention a matter of general European interest. “It is also of considerable importance that the guarantee of Article VII is not only a collective one.” Each power also guarantees Turkey’s integrity individually, “de son côté” (ibid: 524). Within two decades, however, British statesmen were to interpret away this collective guarantee as meaningless. It was apparently nonexistent as a legal term in the English language (ibid: 527 fn. 68). In

1930, an authority on British Foreign Office tradition argued that Article VII of the Paris Treaty meant that:

There is no guarantee to maintain the territorial integrity of the Turkish Empire, but only an obligation not to allow any one of the Signatory States to alter the conditions established by the Treaty without the assent of all the others. In fact, the more we investigate the phrase, the more justified we seem in concluding that it has no definite meaning at all. (quoted in Temperley *ibid*: 524)

Nevertheless, the treaty acknowledged that the empire was now a party to European international law. Ottoman reformers rejoiced that they were now a member of the European state system (Versan 1999). However, in less than twenty years Europe would watch the Russian armies decimate the Ottomans in the 1877–1878 War. In what would turn out to be one of the last congresses in Europe before WWI, the Berlin Congress of 1878 curtailed Russian ambitions in the Balkans, and it also sealed the independence of Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro including the autonomy of Bulgaria.

Sultan Abdülhamid II seriously began to consider alliance with one or more of the Great Powers, but neither the conjuncture nor strategic considerations proved amenable for alliance. Bismarck's system of alliances was moving Europe fast into polarization. Strategically speaking, an alliance with Britain would not protect the empire, if there was a Russian attack by land from the Caucasus (even though the British took over the administration of Cyprus in 1878 before the Berlin Congress with the promise of protecting the empire against Russia). An alliance with Russia would not prevent a British attack from the Mediterranean. France was a republic, therefore deemed radical by the autocratic sultan. Under the circumstances, Kaiser Wilhelm II (r. 1881–1918) looked more promising with his policy of peaceful penetration into, instead of colonization of Ottoman lands. By 1909, the German and Austro-Hungarian trading block had increased its share in Ottoman foreign trade to 42 percent against France's 11 percent and England's 35 percent (Özyüksel 1994).

Against this background came the constitutional revolution of 1908. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) compelled the sultan to reinstitute the 1876 Constitution that he had shelved because of the Russo-Turkish War. The CUP deposed the absolutist sultan in 1909 and replaced him with the elderly, pliant Sultan Mehmed Reşad V (r. 1909–1918). The new sultan was a figurehead and as of 1913, the CUP single-handedly ruled the empire.<sup>6</sup>

The Unionists remained in power from 1913 to 1918. It was too short a time and a tumultuous one at that to devise new foreign policies

toward the Great Powers. The first case in point was the Italian-Turkish War of 1911–1912 (Irace 1912, Childs 1990, Akarlı 1990). Italy had been making inroads to claim Libya in its economic sphere. The Ottomans knew that Italy coveted Tripolitania and Cyrenaica because Libya was the only noncolonized North African province remaining. When Germany requested an early renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1911 (between Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Italy), Italy's price was allied consent to colonize Libya. The Italian attack began after a twenty-four hour ultimatum to the empire. The Italians met with serious resistance from the Sanussi rulers of Libya and seasoned Ottoman officers. The Italian navy then occupied the Dodecanese islands to force the Ottomans into an armistice. Meanwhile Germany could not afford to alienate Italy, and the Ottomans were aware of that. Subsequently, "The Ottoman Empire emerged from the experience of war with Italy determined to end its diplomatic isolation when the opportunity presented itself" (Childs, *ibid*: 232). The CUP had already been making diplomatic overtures for alliance both to the Entente and to the Central Powers. The CUP ran out of time to construct any alliance. The Ottoman defeat in the Libyan war had whetted the appetite of Balkan nations. While negotiations were under way between Italy and the empire over Libya, a coalition of Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Montenegrins launched war against the Ottomans (Andonyan 1999 [1913], Hall 2002).

According to a report by an international commission sent by the Carnegie Endowment for Peace to the Balkans, carnage crossed ethnic, religious, and sectarian lines (Kennan 1996: 26–27). Meanwhile, typhus and an offensive strategy broke down the Ottoman troops who were fighting in five different fronts while one Ottoman army was in the Caucasian border and another in the Yemen (Erickson 2003). As a point of bitter luck for the Turks, the Bulgarian army was also as exhausted by typhus and was unable to pursue its victory to Istanbul. Instead, miserable refugees along with the retreating troops crowded Istanbul.

After such military disaster, no Great Power would want to ally with the Ottomans. Even Kaiser Wilhelm II was not interested in a military alliance with the Turks on the eve of WWI (Fromkin 1989: 49).

Throughout July 1914, the Unionist Minister of War Enver Paşa (1881–1922) and Minister of the Interior Talât Paşa (1874–1921) tried hard to convince Berlin to sign an alliance but they were refused. The general staff in Berlin asked what meaningful contribution could the Turks make to the German war effort. Then on August 1, the German Ambassador to Turkey, Hans von Wangenheim agreed to sign an alliance. Why? Many years later German diplomatic records revealed that Enver and Talât Paşa tricked the Germans into the alliance. The British had earlier built two state of the art dreadnaughts for Turkey, *Sultan Osman I* and *Reşadiye* that

had been paid for largely with money donated by the people. However, in the summer of 1914 the British Admiralty seized the ships just as they were ready for delivery. The Germans did not know about this episode. The CUP leaders offered to turn over the dreadnaught *Sultan Osman* to the Germans as a “meaningful contribution.” This incentive was plausibly the reason that changed Germans’ mind (ibid: 60–61). But why did the CUP leaders resort to deception? Were they so suicidal to bring a preindustrial country to fight with the industrial giants of the time? In the first place, CUP leaders thought that this would be a short war just like everyone else. The “boys” were expected to return home for Christmas 1914 in England as well.

However, a major reason for wanting to join the war was because the capitulations, extraterritorial commercial, and judiciary rights, once granted from a point of strength, had become a heavy burden (Lewis 1988: 83–84).<sup>7</sup> War presented the opportunity to abrogate them. In 1740, in return for French mediation during a two front war with Austria and Russia, the Ottomans had to assent to a rule that no changes in capitulatory rights could be made without French consent. This rule carried over to capitulation treaties with other Powers (Arım 2001: 11–12). In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans were diplomatically rebuffed every time they tried to change the capitulations.

The German alliance technically should not have brought the empire physically into war, except that “the price of Turkish assistance on the side of the Central Powers was their consent to the abrogation of the capitulations” (Thayer 1923). Consequently, however late in coming, Germany honored its commitment on January 11, 1917, followed by Austria on March 12, 1918. Bolshevik Russia was to repudiate the Ottoman capitulations in the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality signed with the Ankara government in 1921 (ibid: 228). There is more evidence coming into light that capitulations were the major reason for the CUP to join the war (Aksakal 2003, Elmacı 2005). In October 1914, an American missionary observed, “Meanwhile the Turks are asking one another if the present clash in Europe is not the very opportunity they have been waiting for to free themselves from the domination of foreign powers” (Herrick 1914).

This major war aim was ironically fulfilled at the Lausanne Peace Conference (1922–1923) between the Allies and Ankara government. Ankara was obliged to transform the entire legal system to match that of Europe so that capitulatory rights could be erased. Consequently, secularization of the legal system had to do with the capitulations, not with the Muslim institution per se.

In conclusion, WWI lasted for four years or less for the belligerents, but the Ottomans had been incessantly at war from 1912 to 1922. Allied



occupations that followed 1918 were lifted by 1923 (Criss 1999) and the invading Greek armies were defeated. The last homeland left to the population was preserved. Now was the time to build a nation-state and a national identity. A significant lesson was inherited from the empire as far as Republican foreign policy is concerned: diplomatic, military, and political isolation was and is dangerous. Therefore, one of the priorities of Turkey's foreign policy has been to become a member of international organizations and formations because exclusion is costly.

### Conclusion

Atatürk's Turkey (1923–1938) did not enjoy peace and prosperity because of certain factors. In the first place were Kurdish insurrections of 1924, 1930, and 1937–1938 (*Genelkurmay Belgelerinde Kürt İsyanları*, 1972), which revealed proto Kurdish nationalism combined with resentment toward laicism and secularization. Second, Mussolini was making no secret of his desire to colonize Asia Minor (Barlas 2004). Third, the 1929 World Economic Crisis affected the young republic that sought refuge in etatism. And last, but not least was the rise of Nazi Germany signaling hostilities, the dimensions of which could not yet be foreseen but only felt (Barlas 1998). Isolation continued along with domestic and foreign challenges.

Foreign ambassadors, excepting the Russian and Polish, did not take up residence in the capital of Turkey, Ankara until 1931. The western states were not confident that the regime would last. They conducted business with the government on visits from the officially former embassies in Istanbul. The US Ambassador, John Van A. MacMurray was the last one to take up full time residence in Ankara by 1937. It is not clear why Washington at long last made the decision and why in 1937. However, that year also marks a switch in the content of American diplomatic correspondence from reports on Turkey's domestic affairs and trade between the two countries, to a feverish reporting on Nazi activities in Turkey. Nonetheless, despite the treaties, full diplomatic recognition was not accorded to the Republic of Turkey until foreign ambassadors took up full residence in Ankara as far as diplomatic history is concerned.

Meanwhile, the Anatolian revolution toward modernity took place. Reforms undertaken by Ankara in changing the Ottoman script to the Latin alphabet, standardizing weights and measures, adopting the Gregorian calendar, granting suffrage to women, and introducing coeducation, infused into the urban people idealism toward the public good as well as modernization. In a country where only a fraction of the population was literate, the nation-state had to be created by the voluntary participation of the

late Ottoman military and civilian bureaucracy who was the elite by the standards of their time. And those cadres built up a national identity based on values inherited from the empire.

These values found their way into Mustafa Kemal's political parlance in the 1920s and 1930s. Accordingly, *mefkûre/ülkü*, the "ideal" meant to secure the Muslim population within the borders of the country; *millî* meant "national" without the trace of any ethnocentrism; *muasır* meant "contemporary" and *medenî* meant "civilized" (Zürcher 2002). When put together, these concepts symbolized the sovereign ideal of a nation-state that had to catch up with the contemporary civilization. Although religious identities were confined to the personal sphere, state control of all institutions became paramount under the single party system of the Republican People's Party. Although Turkey's political system transformed into multiparty democracy in 1950, the Democratic Party was either intellectually unable or did not have the means to liberalize the political or economic systems, which had been a campaign promise.

Turkey's search for a better democracy and economy and the upheavals it went through on its way between the 1960s and 1990s are well documented (Yalman 1956, Karpat 1959, Harris 1972, Zürcher 1993). Since then, as Soli Özel stated,

In the past decade and a half, the country has progressed in modernizing its economy, liberalizing its political system, and deepening its democratic order. Trade, financial flows, and investments increasingly integrate Turkey into world markets. Office towers are rising over Istanbul, which has recovered the cosmopolitan reputation it enjoyed in Ottoman times. (Özel 2007: 21)

The productive and entrepreneurial dynamism that was instrumental in the latest socioeconomic changes emanated from the Anatolian heartland. This constituency bid for political power and carried the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) to power in 2002. It is the case that with their advent and displays of both piousness and bigotry, Turkey today has become more pluralistic but more conflict ridden (Criss 2006). The country is also going through perhaps a third wave of modernizing effort since the nineteenth century in the midst of polarization.

Since the 1960s, the government in Turkey provided a forum for politicians to learn on the job (or not). The quest to become part of Europe remains a policy of state no matter what the volatile opinion surveys may suggest. Perhaps the most valuable asset of the EU is that it is a peace project. And, becoming a full EU member someday would surely balance Turkey's Atlantic relations. However, financial and economic cosmopolitanism is

one thing, and worldviews in both Turkey and Europe is another. A social and economic historian of the Ottoman Empire, Suraiya Faroqhi, wrote,

Arguably, before the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Ottomans and their European neighbors still inhabited a common world. Certainly this was not the way in which people of the period would have seen themselves: in the thinking of Muslim Ottoman subjects, and also the inhabitants of Christian states or empires, religious denomination was a central criterion by which people defined themselves, and were defined by others. (Faroqhi 2004: 211)

In the twenty-first century, Turkey and Europe inhabit even a more common world, but when their respective cosmopolitanisms remain confined to economics and finance, exclusivist attitudes based on religious differences come to the fore. Cultural and religious differences are among the elements that constitute national identity. Common humanistic values should serve to remedy alienation with the caveat that religion and politics are kept in their separate spheres. This is an idealistic view. In reality, exclusivist trends usually disappear when there is a common and imminent threat on the horizon like a Bonaparte, Hitler, or Stalin. Yet, solidarity against a common threat has proven to be palliative and temporary for third parties from outside the system. Once international affairs seem to normalize, they are excluded again. The Cold War period was an anomaly in history, but the world has become chaotically dangerous and nihilistic in its aftermath. A new cosmopolitanism in worldviews may be in order, because a society that defines itself by what it excludes may be prone to violence. Working on a different worldview may be more urgent than we think, in the face of the rising far-right parties in Europe (Castle 2007), schismatic civil wars in the Middle East (Abdullah Gül 2007),<sup>8</sup> as well as budding racism. It is quite disturbing to think that our world may face a new wave of fascism. Adherents of fascism used the politics of identity for legitimization in the past, and there is every reason to believe that they are practicing the same exclusiveness now. In sum, religion, politics of identity, and the use of history may become a double-edged sword, and it should be treated with utmost delicacy. Religion, after all, is a sacred sphere and does not deserve being reduced to political banality.

### Notes

1. The term Byzantine Empire was introduced to depict the Eastern Roman Empire in the sixteenth century by a German humanist, Hieronymus Wolff. The peoples of Byzantium never used this term to identify themselves, they were simply Romans (Ortaylı 2006: 43–45).

2. Léon Ostrorog (1867–1932) served as legal consultant to the Ottoman Department of Justice and taught Islamic Public Law at the University of London.
3. For a comprehensive discussion on Islamic onomastics, see Lewis 1988.
4. In 1924, 1926, 1931, and 1935 several Muslim Congresses met in search of a new caliph and/or how to provide for the defense of Islamic Holy places. The Congresses never agreed on a caliph, and the defense of the Holy places was entrusted to respective nation states, except that Jerusalem remains as a controversial issue to this day (Kramer 1986).
5. For a concise history of the Eastern Question, see Anderson 2001.
6. For one of the best studies on the Young Turks and civil-military relations in Turkey, see Turfan 2000.
7. “The modern connotation of this term is capitulation in the sense of ‘surrender,’ and the capitulations are seen as an example of the unequal treaties imposed by stronger on weaker powers during the imperial expansion of Europe. The origin of the Middle Eastern capitulations is, however, quite different. The term had nothing to do with surrender, but derives from the Latin *capitula*, referring to the *chapter headings* (emphasis added) into which the texts of these agreements were divided. They date from the time, not of European, but of Muslim predominance” (Lewis 1988: 83–84). The Ottomans referred to these edicts as *imtiyazat-ı ecnebiyye* (privileges extended to foreigners).
8. Abdullah Gül, Turkey’s minister of foreign affairs at the time of the article.

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