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4 West Wheelock Street  
Hanover, NH 03755

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*Whitney Mason is an Institute Fellow studying and writing about Turkey's role as nexus between East and West, and between traditional and secular Islam.*

## Homo Turkicus: Welcome to Europe

By Whitney Mason

ISTANBUL, Turkey  
January, 2000

Turks can hardly be blamed for not always feeling entirely comfortable in their own skin, not to mention their clothes and institutions. Most of them, after all, were imposed by fiat just after the country's founding in 1923.

Looking at the countries that had won the first world war, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the young war hero who raised the Turkish Republic from the ashes of the Ottoman empire, was convinced that Islam had destroyed the empire. The only way to recover, he reasoned, was to emulate the triumphant countries of the West. Since then, Turkey has pursued its westernizing mission with truly revolutionary zeal

— abolishing the caliphate, creating (at least on paper) a parliamentary democracy, adopting the Latin alphabet and metric system and even mandating the wearing of western-style hats. Turkey sent a storied brigade to fight in Korea and became a founding member of NATO in 1952. Turkey applied for membership in the European Economic Union in 1959 and four years later signed the Ankara Agreement on steps toward entering a customs union with the EEC. One article of the agreement anticipated Turkey eventually becoming a member of the EEC itself.

Yet for all that, and despite steadfast American support, the European Union (EU) remained aloof. Four years after entering the customs union, Turkey had received only a tiny portion of the grants and credits it was promised to help offset the costs of trade liberalization. Then, on what Turks called "Black Saturday," the EU's Luxembourg summit on enlargement in December 1997, the Union gave the green light for accession to the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and even Greek Cyprus. Turkey was left out in the cold without so much as an explanation. The Turkish government was furious and Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz broke political relations. While only 3 percent of Turkey is physically in Europe and its level of economic development is far from that of even the poorest EU members, the real obstacles to Turkish candidacy were Greek hostility and, many Turks came to believe, religion.

Two years later the EU finally extended its hand to Turkey. Amid a flurry of shuttle diplomacy, carefully worded communiques and relentless media scrutiny, on December 12, 1999 the 15-member European Union announced that Turkey

*"Turks are good at picking up foreign practices and imitating them, but sometimes they imitate without understanding the underlying idea."*

—Ambassador Karen Fogg,  
EU Representative to Turkey,  
February 2, 2000

*"Was it not far better to be a bad imitation of someone else than to be somebody who had lost his past, his memory and his dreams?"*

—Orhan Pamuk, *The Black Book*

was officially a candidate for membership in the heretofore all-Christian club. Turkish commentators from across the political spectrum hailed the announcement as a major foreign-policy triumph. "We're welcome!" crowed the front-page headline of one popular newspaper. "The first Muslim candidate!" exulted another.

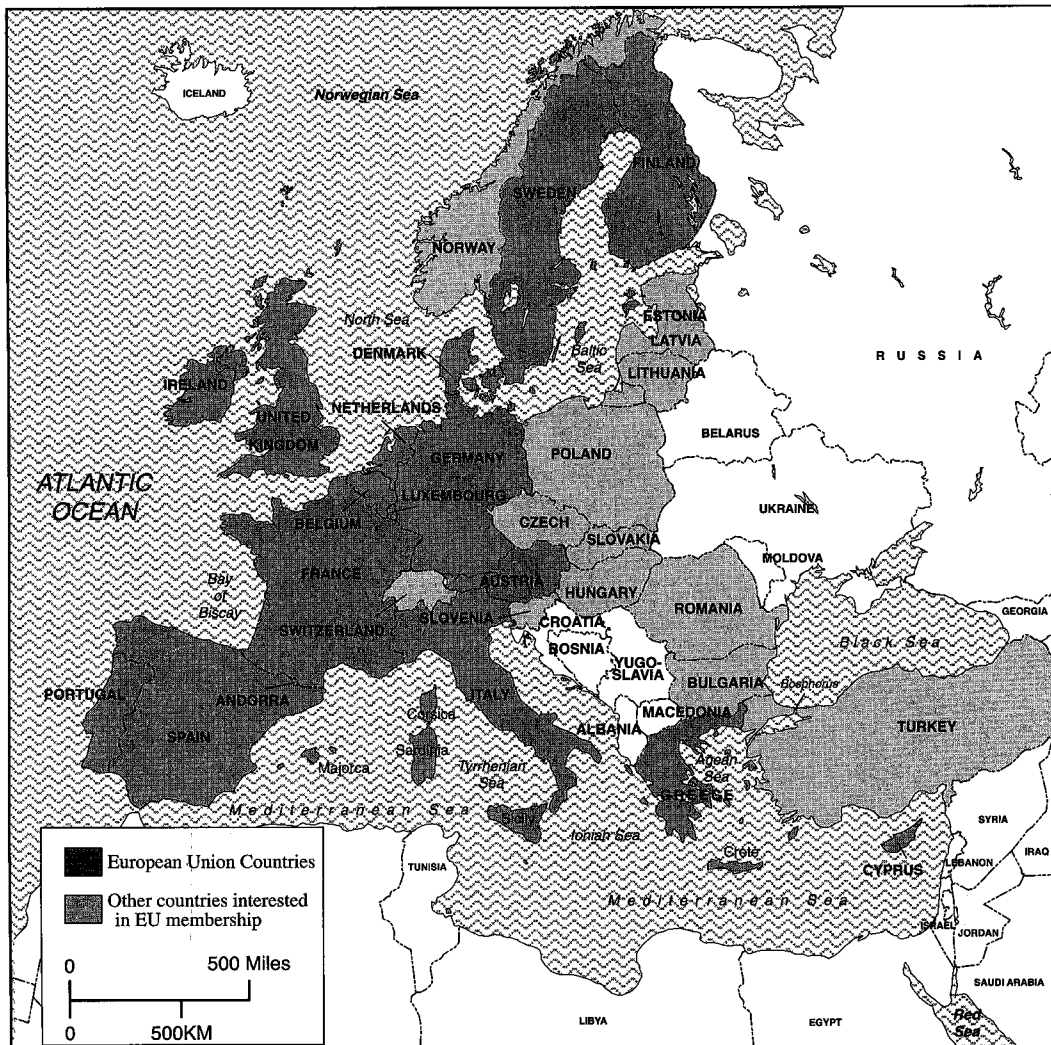
The EU decision followed last-minute phone calls by President Bill Clinton and French President Jacques Chirac to Turkish President Suleyman Demirel urging him to accept candidacy despite two unwelcome conditions related to disputes with Greece. Early Sunday morning Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit flew to Helsinki and with a few pen strokes Turkey vaulted far beyond Vienna, from which the Ottomans were repulsed in 1686, to the very gates of Brussels.

What had changed in the last two years? European support for Turkey began to build after a coalition led by the Social Democrats in Germany, home to some 2.5 million Turks, replaced Christian Democrats after 16 years in power. The war in Kosovo had brought home to Europe Turkey's geostrategic importance. And Turkish elections had produced a reformist government. "Tur-

key had largely given up on the EU and was determined to change anyway," says Ambassador Karen Fogg, the EU Commission's Representative to Turkey. "So you had an interlocutor. You can't make deals without an interlocutor."

Two events outside normal diplomacy also helped enormously in warming relations between Turkey and Greece, its EU nemesis. The capture of Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdish separatist terrorist organization, PKK, had led to the resignation of hard-line Greek Foreign Minister, Theodor Pangalos, who had helped Ocalan to avoid capture. He was replaced by George Papandreou, whom Ambassador Fogg describes as "that great visionary."

Then in August Turkey experienced a devastating earthquake and Greece was among the first countries to supply aid. The disaster also improved other Europeans' impressions of Turkey. "Suddenly Europeans saw a different image of Turks on their television screens, a sympathetic image of articulate people, including Ecevit," says Fogg. "Ecevit is very impressive in English, but he'd never been on European TV because before the earth-



quake, for Europe Turkey just meant the PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Organization] issue."

"In Greece there is a growing recognition that the policies of the older Papandreou were not very fruitful, because they never achieved anything," says Sinan Ulgen, a former Turkish diplomat now a partner (with Turkey's former Ambassador to the EU, Cem Duna) in AB Consultancy, which advises corporations on EU matters. "The Greeks are now trying to carve out a more flexible position for when real negotiations begin. Perhaps more importantly, they're trying to convince the Greek public of the possibility of a win-win resolution of Turkish-Greek disputes."

Despite the warm feeling, going into the summit Greece was the only EU member whose support for Turkey wasn't assured. The language of the agreement on Turkish-Greek disputes in the Aegean and Cyprus, says Fogg, was "the knife edge of Helsinki."

To secure Greek support Turkey had to agree to accept the admission to the EU of Greek Cyprus, while the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus that controls the northern third of the island remains diplomatically isolated. Turkey also had to pledge to resolve outstanding territorial disputes with Greece in the Aegean and to end the division of Cyprus, which Turkey invaded in 1974, by 2004 or submit the issue for arbitration by the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

On the day after the Helsinki decision, I walked around asking the views of my neighbors in Anadolu Hisari, "the Anatolian Fortress" where in 1394 Sultan Beyazit "Thunderbolt" built a castle on the Asian shore of the Bosphorous in preparation for besieging Constantinople. Based on what I'd read in the papers, I'd expected this "vox pop" exercise to yield rather naively optimistic quotes. What my neighbors actually had to say, I was delighted to find, was much more realistic and less sanguine than most of the press. The first person I talked to was Mustafa, the *hoja*, or prayer leader, of the small mosque next to our house who wakes the neighborhood every morning at 5:00am with a sonorous call to prayer that's echoed by dozens of howling dogs. Pausing briefly from making repairs on the mosque, Mustafa said EU candidacy was part of the process that started with westernizing reforms in the mid-nineteenth century. "The palace in Ottoman times and the state in the Turkish Republic are playing the same role in this process, pushing people to feel more European. So in a way this has been expected for 160 years. Everybody should agree that this is a natural and good development. On the other hand, we shouldn't exaggerate the importance of the Helsinki decision, which after all was only the acceptance of an application."

Merely the symbol of a possibility, Turkey's candidacy means nothing and it means everything. While mak-

ing the reforms necessary to qualify for actual membership may take a generation, and about a dozen eastern European countries remain ahead of Turkey in the admission queue, the decision simply to judge Turkey by the same criteria as these countries represents a revolutionary change. For Turkey, EU candidacy marks the highpoint of its effort to identify with Europe; for Europeans, it means a dramatic departure from centuries of regarding Turks as the preeminent threat to Western civilization.

In a speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in November — the first ever by a foreign head of state — President Clinton concluded with an impassioned call for this enlarged vision of Europe. "The future we want to build together will require foresight on the part of our other allies in Europe — the foresight to see that our vision of Europe that is undivided, democratic and at peace for the first time in all of history will never be complete unless and until it embraces Turkey. There are still those who see Europe in narrower terms. Their Europe might stop at this mountain range or that body of water or, worse, where people stopped to worship God in a different way. But there is growing and encouraging consensus that knows Europe is an idea as much as a place — the idea that people can find strength in diversity of opinions, cultures and faiths, as long as they are commonly committed to democracy and human rights; the idea that people can be united without being uniform, and that if the community we loosely refer to as the West is an idea, it has no fixed frontiers. It stretches as far as the frontiers of freedom can go."

To appreciate the enormity of the symbol, one must consider the history of relations between Europe and the Turks. The Helsinki decision has thrown a bridge across what is surely the oldest, deepest, and most turbulent chasm between civilizations that the world has known. (Readers interested in more on the fascinating history of relations between Turks and Europeans are referred to the historical note following the main text.)

To advance its candidacy Turkey will now have to undertake fundamental reforms of its political and economic institutions and culture to bring them into line with European standards. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who earned the moniker "Red Danny" when he led Paris students to the barricades in May 1968 and is now a Green Party member of the European Parliament, visited Turkey before Helsinki. He made no bones about the scale of changes that membership would require. "Adhesion to the EU means the end of Kemalism as a state ideology, and the end of a concept of the state that always has the army as a solution of last resort."

The government needs to ratify several Council of Europe and UN agreements, harmonize economic policies, legislate freedom of expression and adopt a host of other standards, known as "*acquis*," covering everything

from minority rights to industrial standards. [The strange word "*acquis*" is the noun form of the past participle of the word "acquired" in French, meaning those elements that have been acquired during the process of developing the Union and now constitute the building blocks of the EU. Besides referring to EU legislation, *acquis* now also refers to a country's capacity to enforce and implement legislation.] All these changes will be included in an "accession partnership agreement," which will include a schedule, to be completed this autumn. "In the review the EU has no intention of embarrassing Turkey," says Fogg. "On the contrary, we hope they give us things to single out for praise."

"There will be pain in certain areas where countries want to be different," Fogg continues. "Older countries, like the UK and Denmark, are negotiating opt-outs from certain provisions. New members won't be allowed to do that. They don't necessarily have to have the capacity to fulfill every requirement right away, but there's no opting out of a Euro-intention." Though the government says talks on full membership will begin in 2004, serious debate on the requirements of membership is just beginning. If there is no progress, Sinan Ulgen predicts a crisis in Turkish-EU relations will come in 15 to 20 years.

Yet whether Turks will be willing to surrender sovereignty to Brussels now that Europe has given them the choice remains very much an open question. As I've noted in past newsletters, many Turks I've talked to have equated national success with independence of action. Another resident of Anadolu Hisari, Alp, gave vivid expression to Turkish fears. "EU candidacy," said Alp as he was rushing home to break the fast for Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, "will be a Damocletian sword poised over Turkey. Europe needs Turkey more than we need them," he said, emphasizing Turkey's importance as a bridge between Asia and Europe and between the Christian and Muslim worlds. "Europe might eventually accept us," he said, "but they'll demand more concessions than we get in return."

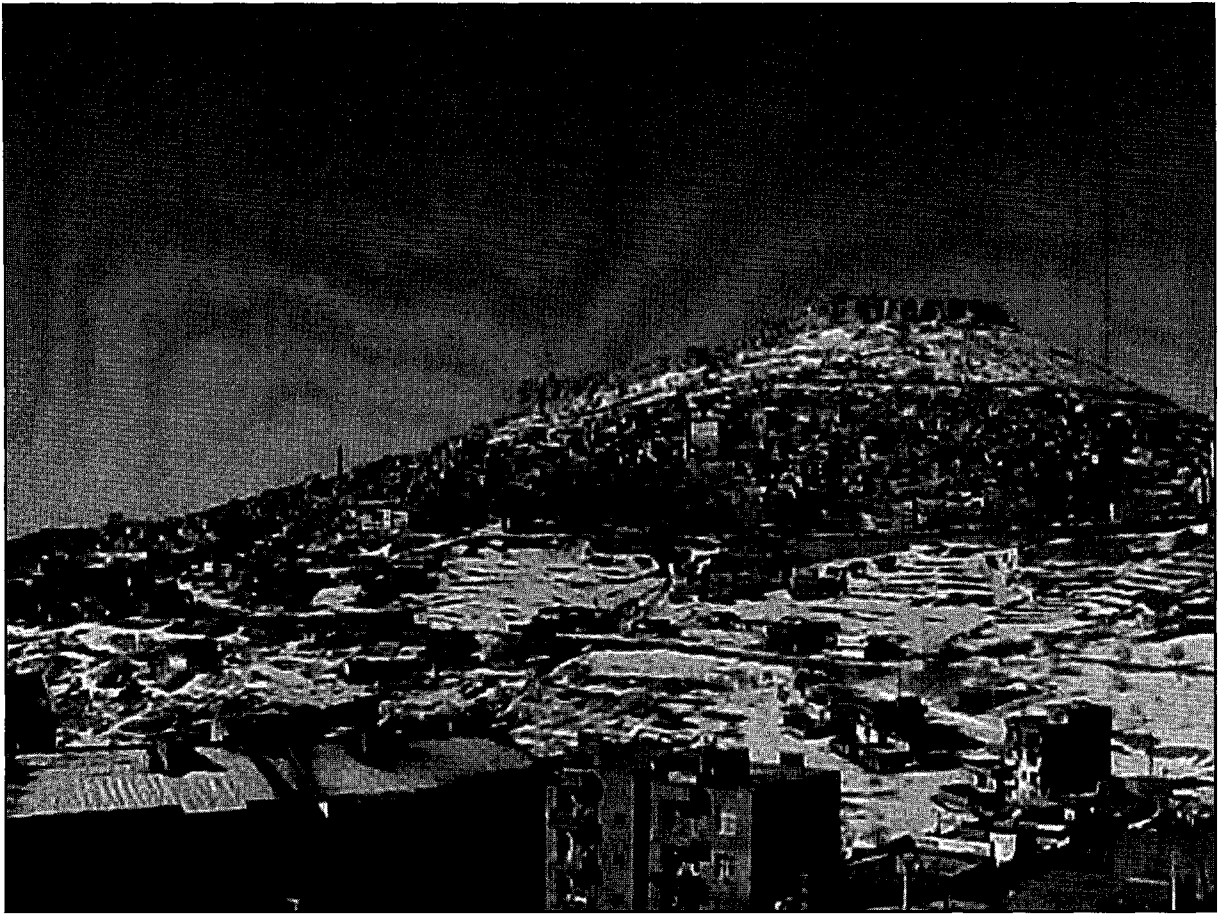
Sinan Ulgen says the EU has an image problem. "It's viewed as a hostage of Greece, constantly criticizing Turkey, and using a "stick and stick" approach instead of a carrot and stick. The EU has not been seen as a partner, but as a vestige of Western European imperialism." Ulgen says Turks are very prone to believing in conspiracy theories because of their history — particularly the European effort to dismember the country after World War I. This paranoia explains in part why Turkey has been slow to adapt to new conditions that have arisen since the collapse of communism. Ulgen puts it with characteristically diplomatic aplomb: "Turkey has found it difficult to reconcile the imperatives of contemporary democracy with actual governance."

Throughout Turkey's campaign to be made a candidate, Turkish leaders have emphasized Turkey's "right"

to membership rather than the benefits or responsibilities that actually belonging would carry. Not the least of the features adopted from post-World War I Europe was nationalism, which along with secularism became a central pillar of the ruling ideology of Kemalism. Europeans' faith in nationalism was badly shaken in the first world war and shattered in the second. The European recognition that rival sovereignties could be mutually fatal inspired the creation of a union that would supersede national interests and so destroy the basis for war. Turkey's experience of the wars, and the lessons it drew from them, was virtually opposite. While Europe's devastation taught it that sovereignty needs to be diluted, Turkey's relative triumphs have consecrated sovereignty as an effective cornerstone of its foreign policy. Though World War I was hugely destructive in the territory that became Turkey, Turkish officers saved Anatolia from being occupied by foreign armies by organizing defenders inspired by nationalist values. And while the rest of the world tore itself apart during World War II, Turkey remained neutral until joining the Allies at the last moment, again reaping the rewards of sovereignty. Turkey's version of nationalism — renouncing irredentism but emphasizing the inviolability of sovereignty within its borders — has always competed with Turkey's desire to be tied ever more tightly to the West.

"The sovereignty issue is not widely understood," says Fogg. "Sharing — or pooling — sovereignty gives one more power, more leverage in shaping your own environment. The quid pro quo is very positive. But posing the question [of whether Turks will be willing to surrender — or "pool" sovereignty] in the abstract is bound to cause anguish. My view is that by the time Turks are more or less ready, if Turkey has so much improved its economy and governance as to be ready, it would be a strong, self-confident country. At that point it may very well decide that it would prefer to be an important partner for the EU rather than a member." In the end military considerations may well determine this decision. "The Turks don't want to be left behind," says the Ambassador, "but the hardcore countries are more willing to pool sovereignty — especially in the area of defense. Turkey is modernizing while the EU is integrating. As *acquis* are adopted, the importance of the state will be much diminished and concerns about sovereignty won't loom so large. At that point sharing sovereignty will be much easier. Turkey may decide to join the outer rather than the inner circle. There are too many international variables to speculate on the eventual decision. The most important thing is that Turks feel the decision is theirs to make."

The first issue after Helsinki to feel the pinch of EU pressure could hardly have been more emotional — the death sentence of PKK leader and convicted terrorist Abdullah Ocalan. EU officials made it clear that executing Ocalan — and thus violating the EU-wide ban on capital punishment — would seriously undermine Turkey's prospects of accession. Last summer when the Union had



*The city of Mardin, a fertile recruiting center for Turkey's Hizbullah, looks over the plains of Syria.*

requested to be allowed to send observers to Ocalan's trial, the Turkish Foreign Ministry bristled: "Questioning the independence of courts in Turkey is unacceptable." PM Ecevit argued that Turkey was legally obligated to send the case to the European Court of Human Rights, where Europhiles hope it will languish until the rage at Ocalan cools. The coalition's junior partner, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), balked at the delay and after volatile negotiations Ecevit won its cooperation only by threatening to execute Ocalan immediately if any of his followers perpetrated violence. The main opposition Virtue Party played for nationalist votes by pushing for an immediate decision on whether to follow through with the execution, thus alienating its large Kurdish constituency and losing several members of parliament. Turkish Justice Minister Hikmet Sami Turk said that the death penalty would be abolished, while stressing that the change would not be made just for the sake of Ocalan.

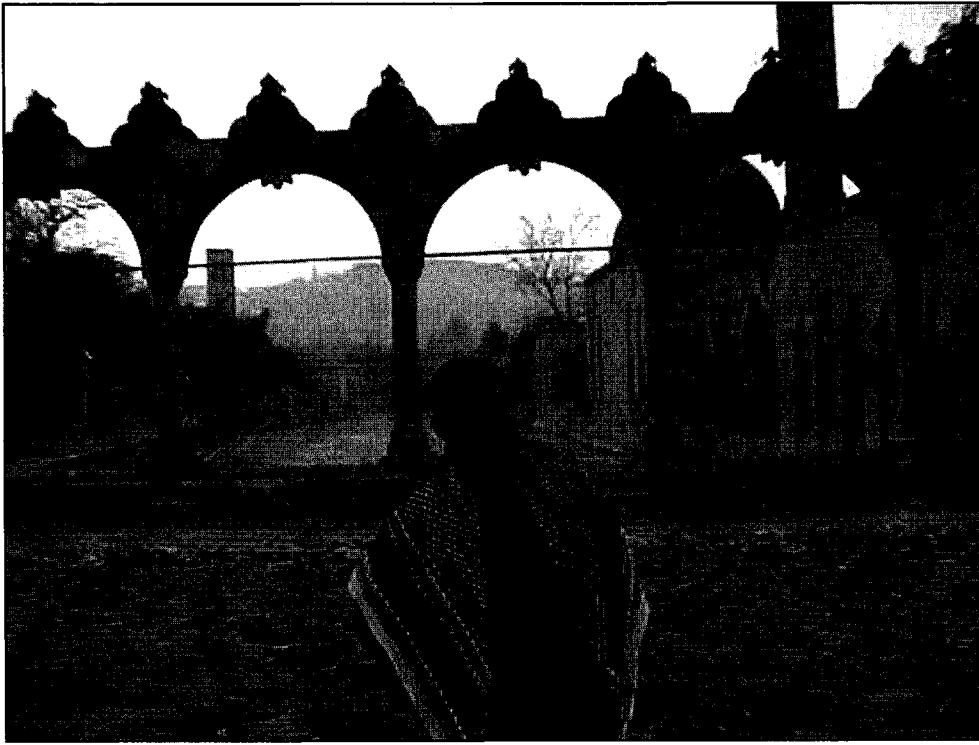
The death penalty is just the tip of the iceberg. Turkey is the only candidate that hasn't fulfilled the political criteria agreed to by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993. The EU Commission's 1999 report on Turkey's progress toward accession notes "persistent human-rights violations and major shortcomings in the treatment of minorities", "lack of civilian control of the military" and the "major role played by the army in po-

litical life through the National Security Council." Experts agree that reforming or dissolving the National Security Council, which demonstrated its power by forcing the dissolution of an Islamist-led coalition government in February 1997, is such a potential deal-breaker that it will be dealt with only after all other elements are in place.

Mehmet, a neighborhood grocer who often invites me to drink a whiskey when I come by on a late-night food run, is from the Southeast, a traditional region devastated by 15 years of low-intensity war between the government and the PKK. Asking me not to write his last name for fear of police harassment, Mehmet told me he believes the Turkish political system is unprepared for integration with Europe. "Granting clemency to [PKK leader Abdullah] Ocalan, as Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit has pledged to do, is just a gesture. What Turkey really needs is a thorough overhaul of its entire legal and political system."

The Turkish government has already made some changes. The Grand National Assembly has passed two changes in the judiciary designed to fulfill EU requirements. The first was removing the military judge from the panel of three magistrates presiding over State Security Courts, which hear political cases. The second is lifting immunity from prosecution for civil servants —





*Our young guide  
Mustapha in front of the  
pools of sacred carp in  
Urfa.*

including the police. Sinan Ulgen predicts that after the issue of Ocalan's execution has been dealt with, Ecevit will push for an end of emergency rule in the Southeast and establishment of the right to broadcast in Kurdish, an idea already aired by Foreign Minister Ismail Cem. "The government is now trying to capitalize on a wave of public support to push through political reforms required by Copenhagen and economic reforms required by the IMF. What still needs to be done, of course," he says echoing my grocer friend Mehmet, "is an overhaul of all these issues."

It seems inevitable that the prospect of EU accession, however remote, will reshape Turkish politics. The state's erstwhile opponents — who not surprisingly include the separatist PKK headed by Mr. Ocalan — are now the biggest supporters of Turkey's candidacy, arguing that the prospect of joining the EU would offer the strongest possible incentive for reform. On the other side of the political spectrum the effect seems likely to be the opposite. Though the ruling coalition remains intact for now, future changes required for EU accession will pose a constant challenge to the legitimacy of the Nationalist Movement Party, which defines itself in terms of its uncompromising defense of national sovereignty. Islamists, on the other hand, can and have argued that the EU would benefit their constituents by protecting freedom of religion and expression.

The most daunting obstacle to Turkey's accession is, well, the entire eastern half of the country, which, both geographically and culturally, is buried deep in Central Asia. Mehmet says that making Turkey a member would

be a disaster for the EU. While Istanbul and Ankara may look European, Mehmet says, these cities are islands of westernized culture surrounded by a sea of people whose values are very far from Europeans'. "In Istanbul a man can greet a woman on the street, but in eastern Turkey, that would never happen." According to Mehmet, the values of the traditional majority outside the biggest cities, especially in the east, have been corrupted by decades of underdevelopment. "People in the east are uneducated, hungry and frustrated," said Mehmet. "Once Europe opens its doors to Turkey, people from my village will attack Europe for jobs, women, everything."

The EU is aware of the problem. In its 1999 progress report on Turkey, it said: "Regional disparities between urban and rural areas and East and West are very large, leading to considerable internal migration flows. Despite government attempts, like the Southeastern Anatolian Project, to promote economic development in underdeveloped areas, the present disparities pose a potential threat to social and economic stability."

Having visited the Southeast only once, in January I decided to take a trip to the area to consider it in light of the recent EU decision. Along with my fiancée Amanda Wilson and Jeremy, a friend from Sydney, we duly made our way to Urfa, an intensely religious one-time caravan hub that was the birthplace of the monotheists' common patriarch, Abraham. As we looked for the government guesthouse we'd read about in a guidebook, heavy flakes of snow began falling on the darkened road. When we arrived at the inn, looking for all the world like an ancient caravanserai, only two tables in the restaurant were

occupied by customers while enough tough-looking young men to make up a football team were loitering by the reception. We asked for one room for our friend and one for Amanda, whom I described as my wife, and me. The guy who took our passports asked whether we had proof of the marriage but when told that we weren't in the habit of carrying such papers, waved his hand and said it didn't matter.

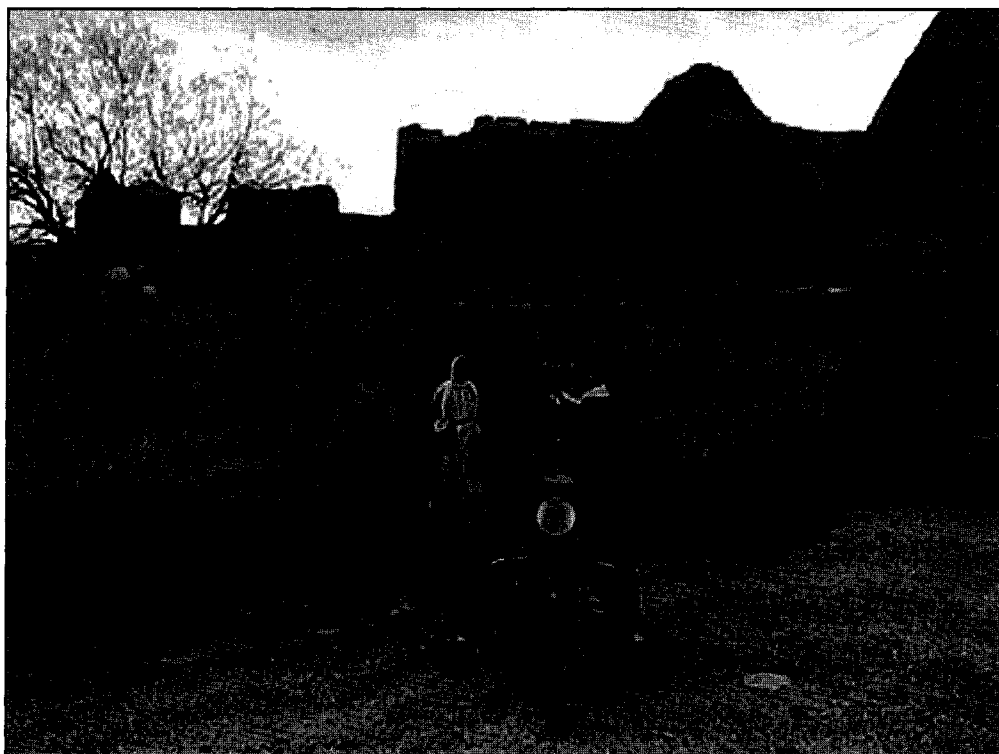
The snow, the first Urfa had seen for 15 years, was still coming down the next morning and streets were already too slick to drive on when we walked downhill to the complex of mosques, *medreses* [Muslim seminaries], pools and gardens that make up the heart of old Urfa. In the pools live hundreds of carp that locals regard as sacred. The story goes that Abraham was smashing pagan idols one day when King Nimrod had him arrested and burned alive on a pyre. God then intervened and turned the fire into the water that became the pools and the hot coals that became the carp. Only a few people were around at that hour, and when we ducked into a gift shop near the pools a young pup named Mustafa immediately attached himself to us a guide.

By mid-morning the snow had knocked out electricity all over the city. Within minutes the snow turned a deep amber from the smoke of thousands of wood fires. After walking around for a few hours, Mustafa led us through a bazaar full of tinkers and carpet sellers to a traditional Urfa coffee shop that served tiny thimbles full of a Turkish brew so thick it would make even a Brazilian wince. Amanda was the only woman in the coffee-house and one of only two we saw that day whose heads were uncovered. The men squatting on low wooden

stools around games of dominos couldn't help but stare — and that was when Amanda was bundled up against the cold. How would the good folk of Urfa react to dozens of miniskirted Scandinavian girls who decided to pass a few months in the southeastern-most part of their Union? After downing several of the acerbic little firecrackers, we ventured out into the blizzard again and proceeded to introduce the young men of this usually sweltering oasis to the temperate-zone institution of the snowball fight. For a couple of hours we walked and ran around the ancient monuments, pelting and being pelted by lightly-clad, quick-footed boys with the Kurds' red-and-white-checkered scarves wrapped around their heads.

We stopped for lunch in a restaurant built of stone. Our waiter, Hasan, had just returned to Urfa after working for seven years in a Mediterranean resort town that caters to European tourists. He had to come home, as he explained, because he'd just gotten married and couldn't conceive of taking his bride, who like virtually all women in Urfa wears a headscarf, to the libertine resort town. Europe is fun to visit — for a man, he implied — but he wouldn't want to live there.

After two and half days of being snow-bound and without electricity, we were cold and dirty and Jeremy and I decided to go to a nearby *haman* or bath house. We walked through slushy streets to a rickety concrete building near the Ulu Mosque, disrobed and sat down in a marble-lined room to wait for the masseurs who would come to wash and knead us. The dozen or so local men introduced themselves and we chitchatted for a while. I dutifully asked what they thought about Turkey's candi-



*A young man in the ancient village of Harran ready to hit the road.*

dacy for the EU. But they weren't interested in talking about Europe: they wanted to know what I thought about Islam. They beamed when told I respected their faith and felt it had created a magnificent civilization. One man who looks especially pleased was a used-car salesman named Mehmet who had named his son after a Muslim mystic he credited with allowing him and his wife to conceive after they'd been trying for seven years. After a few minutes he worked up to the key question: Would I consider converting? When told that nothing could be ruled out, Mehmet fairly glowed with pleasure. "Ah yes, you'll do all your research, really learn about it, then decide. Wonderful." Faruk, 32, a low-level government clerk who like many religious Turks adores Cat Stevens for having converted to Islam, finally obliged me with a comment on joining the EU. It wouldn't change anything, he said: "Now we go to Germany to work for European bosses and after we join the EU the Europeans will come to Turkey so we can work for them in our own country."

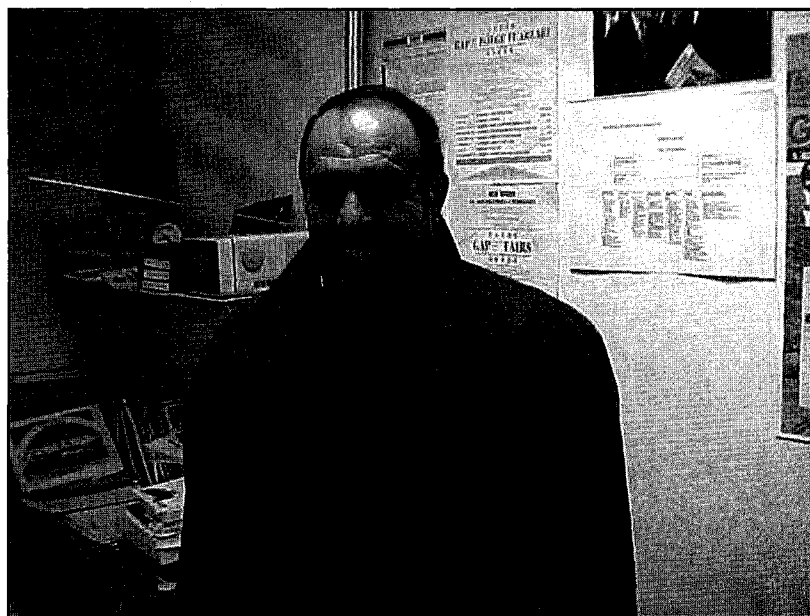
Two days later, delayed by the snow, we arrived in the regional capital of Diyarbakir just a few hours before our plane was scheduled to leave for Istanbul. Improbably, we saw a Burger King where we stopped for a quick snack. After buying warm clothes for an 8-year-old wearing gum boots with no socks who had sold Amanda packets of facial tissue, the Burger King manager offered to lead us to the building a few miles away where I had an appointment with a man who was supposed to be the EU's information officer for the region. He turned out to be a sad-faced sort of honorary consul, who spoke no European language and had scant contact with or information about the Union. Fortunately for both of us, a former commercial attaché at the Turkish embassy in Paris, Sevkett Akalin, came to our rescue. Despite speaking French and English and having lived in Europe, Akalin, now General Coordinator of the Diyarbakir Exhibition and Congress Center, likewise showed little interest in the prospect of EU membership. His hopes were pinned to the US, especially since US ambassador Mark Parris had brought a large trade delegation to the Southeast last autumn. A handful of European ambassadors followed — but without potential investors or the political clout to really help the region. The economic problems of the Southeast, according to Akalin, are the result of external factors that only the US can ameliorate — underinvestment and political oppression by Ankara and the severe constraints on trade with nearby markets — Iraq, Iran and Syria.

In mid-February, gendarmes ar-

rested the Kurdish mayors of three southeastern cities — including Diyarbakir — on charges of supporting the separatist PKK. Comments from Nationalist Movement Party leader Devlet Bahçeli suggested the mayors' real offense had been to attract the sympathetic attention of visiting Europeans, including the Swedish foreign minister. On February 29, 2000, as suddenly as they were arrested, the mayors were released.

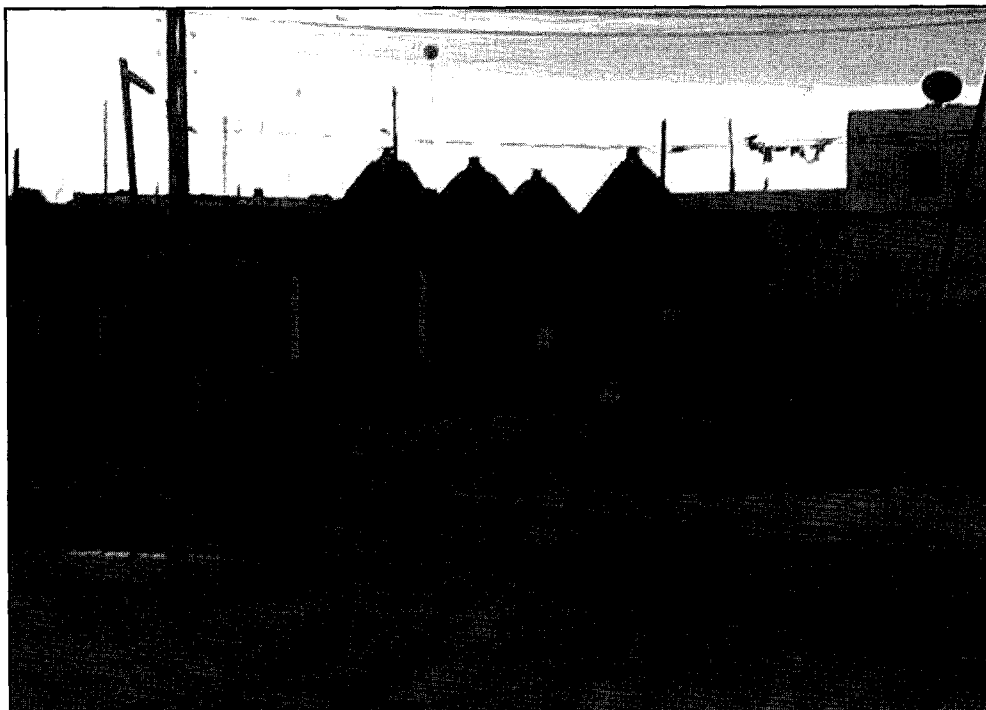
"Most Turks have never had anything to do with the EU and the US is actually more important," confirms Fogg. "I've been surprised by how little contact there is between Turks and EU countries. There's very little to-ing and fro-ing of students, researchers, or business people." Most Turks want only to study in Britain, Ambassador Fogg says, rolling her eyes. "They're great snobs. Most Turks don't even know that there's another anglophone country in the EU — Ireland — where the education is just as good and much cheaper." For integration to work, says Fogg, Interaction between Turkish institutions and their EU counterparts — mayors, Chambers of commerce, utilities — will have to increase.

To qualify for EU accession, Turkey will have to change its economy as much as its political system, and these changes will be harder than many Turks imagine. A young taxi driver back in Anadolu Hisari said that because of the recent economic slump, he earned only enough money to "feed my throat." He hoped that Turkey might join the EU soon so he'd be able to go abroad to find a better-paying job. Joining the EU would be good for ordinary people like himself, he said, but bad for the country's huge conglomerates since it would expose them to competition from more efficient foreign manufactur-



*Sevkett Akalin, former Turkish trade representative in Paris, now organizes international trade fairs in Diyarbakir, unofficial capital of the Southeast. His money is on the US, not Europe, to help the region out of its poverty.*





*Can we imagine housing regulations conceived in Brussels being applied to Harran's beehive-shaped wattle houses?*

ers. "European competition would mean Koc (the country's biggest conglomerate) wouldn't be able to sell crummy cars like this," he said, pointing at his taxi, a Tofas, which as Turkey's main domestically produced car is protected by high tariffs on imports.

The taxi driver is right about the EU forcing Turkish industry to be more competitive, but his idea of finding a job in Europe anytime soon is a pipe dream. Turks won't be granted full access to Europe for 20 to 25 years and the Turkish government knows it. Says Fogg: "Turks know that if they raise this issue, [it's] good-bye to all their chances." On the other hand, if reforms progress as hoped, fewer Turks should want to work abroad. "Spain had to wait seven years after accession to qualify for freedom of movement," says Fogg. "But with accession of Spain and Portugal, workers flowed back into the countries."

Emre Gonem, executive director of the Foundation for Economic Development, a private foundation devoted to EU integration, says regulation of industry is improving quickly in line with requirements of the European Customs Union. He points to a fax from the EU Commission asking whether factory ceilings are at least three meters high, as required by European regulations. "Some Turkish industries are saying such requirements are insane, saying we'll never do it," says Gonem. "Others that are just being established find it easy to adhere to EU norms from the beginning."

The greatest hurdle will be liberalizing Turkey's tightly regulated, étatist economy. Turkey's annual per-capita GDP is just 32 percent of the EU average. The state is still a major player in the economy, especially in banking and basic industries. About a third of goods are still

subject to administrative pricing. Because of Turkey's history of economic volatility, most Turks value job security and generous social welfare benefits over opportunities for big gains: While many of the brightest 20-somethings in the U.S. are launching internet startups and wondering how a 25-year-old should spend her first million, their Turkish counterparts dream of lifetime employment as mid-level managers, in a bank.

"Lebanon used to be the financial center of the Middle East," Gonem says. "Then in the '70s' Istanbul took over the role. But it never achieved it completely because Turkey never liberalized enough." As an example of the suffocating rigidity of Turkish regulations Gonem describes the plight of his alma mater, the French-language St Joseph College. Under the Lausanne Treaty foreign "colleges" [private high schools] are not allowed to establish grade schools. New legislation last year increased the required years of education in a state school from five to eight. The result is that students can't enter St. Joseph until age 16 — which doesn't give them enough time to learn French and prepare for the Baccalaureate exam. "Lebanon didn't have this sort of silliness. The Turkish economy has been transformed but the mentality takes longer to change."

Still, Fogg believes Turks may weather the changes better than some other applicants. "In Turkey a lot of people have already been hurt by modernization. Turks, unlike East Europeans, are used to brutal dislocations caused by quick changes." She says the EU can help ease the pain of reforms that are needed anyway, and are being required by the IMF and the World Bank. "The EU has lots of experience with, for instance, privatization. In Turkey, the population is always so deferential, non-re-

bellious," says Fogg, noting that the vast majority have had no say in the revolutionary changes in the republic's first 75 years. "Turks can use EU countries' experience with consensus-based work models in which workers have input in organizational change," she says.

Signing on to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy will cut even tougher than liberalizing industry and services — and its effects in Turkey will be much deeper than in any of the countries that devised the policy: about 45 percent of the labor force — most of them women — work in agriculture, compared to the EU average of 6 percent and 2-3 percent in France and Britain. Turkey grows produce that's as succulent and flavorful as it is inexpensive: in Urfa five kilos of the world's most delicious mandarins cost 50 cents. Agriculture now accounts for about 50 percent of the EU's budget, down from 70 percent 10 years ago. The "Crazy Ag Policy," as many diplomats refer to it, entails paying all state revenues from agriculture to the EU and getting them back in the form of subsidies designed in Brussels. Says Gonem: "The rural population will be more integrated into the declared economy but they won't really fit into the schemes foreseen by the EU. It's up to us to find a solution for them."

"The goal of the accession process is for Turkey to have a more focused, organized development effort," says Fogg, who expects Turkey to finish a lot of domestic economic and legislative reforms quickly. The more difficult problem will be developing a culture based on the rule of law both in the economy and human rights. "Turkey is so volatile and energetic it's hard to predict," says Fogg. No one can anticipate the future of cleavages between traditional people in the east of the country and the Western dogmatic elite culture or how the influence of the coming generation will come to be felt. "Turks and their neighbors understand that candidature has promoted Turkey to the top class of countries," says Fogg. "Its role in the region has been enhanced by its candidature. This is all very good... and yet we'll see how the process of modernization will play itself out."

Gonem is optimistic. "People who think Turkey is a country belonging to the Middle East will be hurt, because convergence will produce conditions that are not the sort of society they want to live in. Individuals — both as consumers and citizens — will become more demanding and eventually a new kind of person, *Homo Turkicus*, will appear." What a delicious irony it will be if, after the centuries of bloody competition, Europe allows Turks to realize their identity apart from being the banner carriers of Islam and Turks reveal to Europeans their common bond beyond Christianity.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

Christian antipathy toward Islam is almost as old as Islam itself. By the eighth century, just 200 years after the founding of Islam, Christian luminaries were already con-

demning Muhammad as a false prophet. The negative image of the Turks grew with the Selcuk emperor Alparslan's defeat of the Byzantines at Manzikert in eastern Anatolia in 1071. Pressed from the east by the Mongols, the Turks moved west and, in 1354, Ghazi Orhan, son of the dynasty's founder, Osman, crossed into the Balkans to help his Byzantine father-in-law regain the throne in Constantinople. Less than a century later the capital, known throughout the Greek world simply as "the City," had fallen to the nomadic horsemen who had so recently ridden out of the Central Asian steppe.

After taking Constantinople, Mehmet the Conqueror proclaimed himself emperor of the Roman empire. As they moved west, the nomads mixed with local populations, including Greeks, Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Caucasians, Albanians, Balkan Slavs and Romanians. Today Turks range in appearance from dark people with brown, almond-shaped eyes to fair and blue-eyed, like Atatürk himself. Most Turks, especially in the west of the country, are physically indistinguishable from other Mediterranean Europeans. What defined the conquerors as different from and opposed to Europe was their profession of Islam. After the conquest of Constantinople, the seat of Orthodox Christianity moved north to the other great Eurasian power, Russia. In 1472 Ivan married a Byzantine princess, Zoe Paleologue, daughter of the last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI, who had died defending the city. Ivan added the Byzantine double eagle to his traditional crest of St. George and adopted the title "Czar," Russian for "caesar" and proclaimed that Moscow, not the Ottoman Empire, was the new Rome. In 1480 Ivan III finally threw off the Tatar (Mongol) yoke that had bridled Russia for near two and half centuries. In this struggle over the mantle of Rome — one claim based on the physical continuity of geography and population, the other on religion — lay the roots of the enmity between Ottoman and Orthodox civilization that continues to shape Eurasia to this day.

The vigor and discipline demanded by the nomadic life continued to yield impressive results on the battlefield. The Ottomans quickly conquered the Balkans and the traditionally Catholic lands of Hungary, where an Ottoman pasha ruled in Buda for 150 years. Martin Luther condemned the Church for even trying to resist the Turks, since they obviously represented the wrath of God. Their depredations in southeastern Europe and their siege of Vienna brought the Turks into direct conflict with the Habsburgs. By a fateful twist of history the Christian empire at the time was ruled by its greatest sovereign, Charles V, while the Ottomans had reached their apogee in the person of Suleyman the Magnificent. The two multinational empires began a contest for world domination, which the Austrians peddled as a struggle for souls, again reinforcing European antipathy toward the Turks.

Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq, Ambassador of the Holy

Roman Empire to the court of Suleyman the Magnificent, recorded his view of the Ottomans as fearful antagonists:

"After remaining about a fortnight at Constantinople in order to regain my strength, I started on my journey to Vienna, the beginning of which may be said to have been ill omened. Just as we were leaving the city, we were met by wagon-loads of boys and girls who were being brought from Hungary to be sold in Constantinople. There is no commoner kind of merchandise than this in Turkey; and, just as on the roads out of Antwerp one meets loads of various kinds of goods, so from time to time we were met by gangs of wretched Christian slaves of every kind who were being led to horrible servitude. Youths and men of advanced years were driven along in herds or else were tied together with chains, as horses with us are taken to market, and trailed along in a long line. At the sight I could scarcely restrain my tears in pity for the wretched plight of the Christian population."<sup>1</sup>

In 1683 the Ottomans besieged Vienna for a second time and, for a variety of reasons outside the scope of this paper, were soundly defeated by a Christian alliance. This defeat marked the beginning of a long and slow decline in which the once-indomitable Ottomans were repeatedly bested by their Christian rivals. The Ottomans' most devastating defeat came in 1774 at the hands of the Russians, whose army had been westernized by Peter the Great. The Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarca compelled the Porte to give up suzerainty over the Crimean Tatars and sovereignty over several ports on the north coast of the Black Sea, and to grant free passage through the Bosphorous for Russian ships and special privileges for Russians resident in Ottoman territory.

In their 1926 book, *Turkey*, Arnold Toynbee and Kenneth Kirkwood wrote: "It had been bitter for the Osmanlis to be beaten by the peoples of the West... It was far more humiliating to be beaten by an Oriental Christian people and to be compelled to grant to that people privileges which would place it in the same rank as the Western Powers and would bring its representatives — with all the prestige of their newly-won position — into dangerous contact with the Osmanlis' own Oriental Christian subjects. The shock produced by the Treaty of Kucuk Kainarja was so great that it inspired Ottoman statesmen to attempt reforms on Western lines; but these first Ottoman reformers started from the military end like Peter the Great, and not from the commercial end as their own Oriental Christian subjects had started in Peter's generation, now a century past."<sup>2</sup> Inevitably, with Russian, British and French support, Greeks

established an independent state in 1830.

After the French invaded Egypt and Napoleon was defeated, the British became the main proponents of westernizing reforms in the Ottoman Empire. In the early 1840s, seeking to counter Russian influence and protect trade routes to the Middle East and India, Great Britain guaranteed the empire's security. In a 1994 essay, historian Kemal Karpat wrote: "The negative verdict of England about the success and sincerity of the Ottoman reforms would be accepted by the rest of Europe, often at face value, and was significant in conditioning attitudes and policies toward the Turks. Soon the historical image of the enemy of Christendom was revived and supplemented with a new view of the Turks as unwilling and unable to understand and absorb European civilization."<sup>3</sup> Europe embraced the classic description of the Ottoman Empire in decline, which the Russian Czar Nicholas I uttered to the British ambassador in 1853: "We have on our hands a sick man — a very sick man... He may suddenly die upon our hands."

"From that day to this, the imminent decease of the supposed invalid has perpetually been awaited by its neighbors — by some of them with pleasurable expectancy, by others with anxiety, but by all with a dogmatic faith which seems capable of surviving any number of disillusionments. It was awaited in 1876 and in 1912 and, most confidently of all, in 1914; and now, when the Turk has given incontrovertible evidence of outward health and vigor by imposing the peace settlement of Lausanne upon the victorious Allied Powers, his imminent dissolution through some hidden internal disease is prophesied with all the old assurance. We are told that the ravages of syphilis will extinguish the population of Turkey in three generations, or that the Turk cannot mend his own boots or work his own locomotives and will therefore perish through sheer economic incapacity now that the alien minorities have been driven out. This persistence of the 'Sick Man' theory indicates how powerfully the Western attitude toward Turkey is governed by *a priori* notions and how little it is based upon objective facts; for, as it has turned out, 'the man recovered from the bite, the dog it was that died.' At the time of writing [1926] seventy-three years after Czar Nicholas I pronounced his celebrated verdict, the Czardom has vanished not only from St. Petersburg but from the face of Russia, whereas the Turkish 'Sick Man' has taken up his bed and walked from Constantinople to Angora, where, to all appearances, he is benefiting from the change of air."<sup>4</sup>

The Ottomans attempted to reverse this terminal de-

<sup>1</sup> *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554-1562*, Translated from the Latin of the Elzevir edition of 1633 by Edward Seymour Forster, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *Turkey*, Arnold Toynbee and Kenneth Kirkwood, 1926.

<sup>3</sup> "The Ottoman Rule in Europe from the Perspective of 1994", Kemal Karpat, in *Turkey Between East and West*, eds Mastny and Nation, 1996

<sup>4</sup> *Turkey*: op.cit.

cline by adopting western-inspired reforms starting with the Tanzimat Edict of 1839, which offered guarantees of life, liberty and property on an equal basis regardless of religion. In 1853 the Ottomans for the first time entered into an alliance with Europe and inflicted a crushing defeat on Russia in the Crimean War. "The Turks' part in this defeat — the memory of which continues to hurt Russian pride — has never been forgotten or forgiven. Nor did the Russians forget the spectacle of Christian Europe — Catholics and Protestants alike — allied with the "infidel" Turks against Orthodox Christian Russia."<sup>5</sup>

Following the allied victory the Ottoman state signed the Paris peace treaty as well as the Reform Edict of 1856, which sought to deprive the Russians of a pretext for interfering by giving the European powers the right to defend the interests of Christians in the Empire. "In return for accepting it, the Ottoman empire, after 500 years of existence as a political and religious outcast despite its physical presence in Europe, was finally accepted — unwillingly and simply to prevent its fall to the Russians — as a partner by the "civilized" nations of Europe, made subject to international law, and expected to live up to European standards."<sup>6</sup>

In the next 20 years the Christian bourgeoisie grew wealthier and more politically demanding while the Muslim population became increasingly indignant over the Christians' privileged position. "The common person in the traditional Ottoman community had a deeply imbedded respect for tradition, precedent, and social ranking and a pragmatic, practical outlook similar to the British. The ruling elites, on the other hand, were deeply committed to the maintenance of collectivity and faith under state supervision and thus resembled the French... The Ottoman modernizers deprived the state of its traditional legitimacy but retained and exercised absolute authority in the name of some haphazardly conceived idea of modernization which became in practice a form of vulgar materialism. The Turkish 'modernists' did not understand that Europe continued to dislike them primarily because under their glittering costumes made in Paris and their accentless mastery of European languages they continued to be the same despots as the traditional predecessors whom they had dethroned."<sup>7</sup>

A revolt in Bulgaria in 1876, whose leaders had been trained in Russia, led to Turkish irregulars slaughtering some 2,100 Christians in the village of Batak. William Gladstone, of Britain's Liberal Party, produced an emotive pamphlet entitled "Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East" in which he accused Turks of killing

60,000 Bulgarians. The pamphlet reportedly sold 50,000 copies in a single day.<sup>8</sup>

To find a solution to the Balkan crisis favorable to its Christian population, the European powers met in Istanbul for what they pointedly called the Constantinople Conference. To obviate what they accurately saw as an attempt to break up the empire, Turkish nationalists produced a liberal constitution that granted Christians representation in the governance of the state. "The constitution and the two parliaments which convened subsequently, in 1877 and 1878, provided the new middle classes with direct access to power and the opportunity to criticize the bureaucracy (and, indirectly, the sultan) and politically mobilized the population. It was probably the first and most important act of democratization and political westernization in the history of the Muslim world; yet the conference participants and the western press treated the constitution as a trick which was intended to derail the conference and deceive Europe."<sup>9</sup>

For the next 40 years the Europeans' only interest in the empire was how to divide it after its eagerly anticipated fall. After the defeat of Germany and its Ottoman ally in the first world war, the allies set about carving up what remained of the empire, including the Anatolian heartland, a large part of which they allocated to Greece. A Turkish general, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, organized a national army to eject the invaders from Anatolia and, in 1923, founded a republic based on western European models.

The European Union's affirmation of Turkey's western vocation may well have serious ramifications for the geopolitical alignments of Eurasia. The Turkish revolution shared much in common with its Russian and Chinese counterparts, which began in the same period. Like them it constituted a response by a society that hadn't experienced the Enlightenment to the industrial revolution that had transformed Europe into an irresistible military and commercial force. But unlike the communist transformations, the Turkish revolutionaries embraced, at least officially, the prevailing western norms of liberal democracy. The Turkish revolution, superficial though in some ways it may have been, is the only one still moving forward more or less along its original trajectory. And because of its congenial orientation, the Turkish revolution is also the only one that the West has consistently supported. Now, after centuries of competing with Russia to be the West's favored Eurasian power, Turkey is on the verge of being crowned victor in the most profound and lasting way. □

<sup>5</sup> "The Ottoman Rule in Europe from the Perspective of 1994"

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*. "The subsequent British national election of 1880 was fought mainly on the issues of British foreign policy towards the Ottoman empire and Gladstone won easily on an anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim platform."

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

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Executive Director: Peter Bird Martin  
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