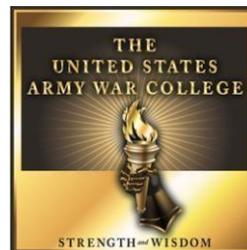


## Is Turkey Slipping Out of the West's Orbit?

by

Colonel Chris William Chronis  
United States Army



United States Army War College  
Class of 2015

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## Abstract

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## **Is Turkey Slipping Out of the West's Orbit?**

Is Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan slipping out of the West's orbit, and what are the impacts of the rise of political Islam on Turkey's relationship with the West? Further, how can the West maintain—and possibly improve—its influence and relations with the Turkish people, Turkish business community, and Turkish military in the era of Erdogan? Since coming to power in 2003, President Erdogan and his Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) have altered the political, judicial, military, and social landscapes within Turkey's traditionally secular Muslim majority society in ways unimaginable since the era of Ataturk and the founding of the republic in 1923. Erdogan's provocative statements, conspiracy theories, internal purges, and heavy-handed responses to protests and opposition forces have negatively affected Turkey's relationships with the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United States (US), and Israel in ways that have stunned and alarmed these traditional allies, and caused them to reevaluate their diplomatic, economic, and military relationships with Turkey.

The West must make every effort to keep Turkey—a longtime ally and emerging economic power—within the post-war economic and military framework that facilitates free trade, inter-dependence, open markets, collective security, civil liberties, democratic values, and the resultant stability and prosperity that ensures the survival and expansion of a secular, modernized, and pro-western Turkish society, economy, and military. To understand the dynamic at work today in Turkey, one must first understand the factors that forged the modern Turkey—the Ottomans, Ataturk, and the Cold War era. Because of these eras, Turkey is very much a nation with “multiple

personalities.” One personality is western, and it is apparent in the nation’s economy, legal system, military, and the cosmopolitan culture of its urban centers. The other personality is still very much eastern and linked to Islam, and this personality prevails in the rural areas and in the local lives of every day Turks—particularly the middle and lower classes. As the old saying goes, “all politics is local,” and Turkey’s local politics—informed by religious beliefs and centuries of traditions—are reshaping the political and social landscape of the nation. Therefore, an examination of Turkey’s unique past, with its Oriental and Occidental influences, provides both texture and insight for any modern examination of the dynamics at work in modern day Turkey.

#### The Horsemen Cometh

The Turkic horsemen who rode out of the arid steppes of Central Asia and onto the oak covered hills of eastern Anatolia between the sixth and eleventh centuries became the Ottomans of old, and later, the people of today’s modern Republic of Turkey. These stout and resilient nomadic horsemen, first known as Oguz, and later as Seljuks and Turkomen, forced their way through the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire and established the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum and a myriad of smaller Turkomen principalities.<sup>1</sup>

During this era, Islam also spread from Arabia north to the Levant and the Anatolian Peninsula. In the twelfth century the Mongols under Hulagu Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, swept into Anatolia and defeated the Seljuks and the Turkomen princes. The subjugation of the Turks by the Mongols was short lived, but the Mongols would come again in the fourteenth century under Tamerlane, and the ancestors of the Ottomans would become subservient states within the loosely controlled Mongol empire for a second time.<sup>2</sup> During these centuries, the ancestors of

the modern Turks continued to move across Anatolia, establishing the center of their culture in Northwestern Anatolia around the present day village of Sogut in the Marmara Region of modern day Turkey.<sup>3</sup> It was in this region where Osman I was born and where the great Ottoman Empire would spring forth onto the pages of history.<sup>4</sup>

### Ottoman Sunrise

As the dynasty of Osman I expanded between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, it nibbled at the edges of what remained of the Byzantine Empire and spread its influence all the way to the Balkans. In 1453, the Muslim Ottomans seized Constantinople—the Byzantine capital—and completed their conquest of what remained of the Christian Roman Empire of the east. The capital of eastern Christendom was now the capital of a new Muslim empire—the Ottoman. The empire expanded steadily through the seventeenth century, especially during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566), and it expanded across the Levant, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and deep into Central Europe—as far as the gates of Vienna. However, Vienna proved impossible to conquer on several occasions, and its gates were to be the Ottoman Empire's high water mark in Europe.

### Ottoman Sunset

The seventeenth century was the beginning of the long, slow, and agonizing decline of the Ottoman Empire. In the centuries that followed, the Ottomans consolidated their empire in the Balkans, the Levant, Arabia, and North Africa, but their financial debts to foreign powers grew, and their control and influence began to ebb. The eighteenth century saw competition from other empires for land and the nineteenth century saw the rise of nationalism and independence movements across the Balkans, which further reduced the size of the empire.<sup>5</sup>

## Death of an Empire

Allied with the ill-fated Axis Powers in the First World War, the Ottomans fought with bravery—and futility—in what would become the empire's final act and its death spasm. Militarily defeated, financially impoverished, and physically occupied by the victorious Allied Powers, the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist as the immediate post-war period brought dismemberment by the Allies and political chaos and instability across the Anatolia Peninsula. As the Allies decided the fate of the Ottomans and the extent of their territorial claims in Anatolia proper, a compliant and subservient Sultan sat in Istanbul powerless against them.<sup>6</sup>

In the immediate post-war period, the Allies—particularly the Greeks and Italians—sought to carve out territories for themselves on the Anatolian mainland, and the Sultan and the defeated Ottoman Army were in no position to resist their demands or halt the subsequent Greek invasion of western Anatolia and their seizure of Izmir.<sup>7</sup> However, a rebel faction within the Army, led by the hero of Gallipoli, General Mustafa Kemal, organized a fierce resistance to the Greek Army, drove them back across the Aegean, and then marched on Istanbul. Once there, it would evict what remained of the British and French occupation forces and then deal with the Sultan and his government of defeatists and collaborators. The Turkish War of Independence ensued for the next two years and it resulted in the ouster of the last Sultan, the abolition of the Caliphate, and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.<sup>8</sup>

## The Grey Wolf

Having emerged from the First World War as a national hero, and having further distinguished himself at the head of what remained of the Turkish Army during the Allied occupation and the Turkish War of Independence; General Mustafa Kemal intimidated

the Allies into a favorable peace and then deposed Sultan Vahdettin and his government.<sup>9</sup> In October 1923, Mustafa Kemal—later Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the “Father Turk”—proclaimed the birth of the Turkish Republic with himself as President, head of the Grand National Assembly, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, leader of the sole political party—the Republican People’s Party—and as absolute dictator. Ataturk immediately set about implementing a series of radical western oriented reforms to Turkish society which were nothing short of a “cultural revolution” and which would wrench Turkey out of the Islamic world, with its seventh century Arabic influences, and plant it squarely in the modern and secular world of Twentieth Century Europe.<sup>10</sup> Ataturk had antipathy towards religion in general—and Islam in particular. In *The Grey Wolf*, a biography of Ataturk published in 1932, Ataturk is quoted as having said the following on Islam: “For 500 years these rules and theories of an Arab sheik and the interpretations of generations of lazy, good-for-nothing priests have decided the civil and criminal law of Turkey . . . [And] the form of the Constitution . . . this theology of an immoral Arab, is a dead thing.”<sup>11</sup> After consolidating his power, Ataturk had immense political capital to expend, and he set about remaking Turkish society with ruthless military precision. Again quoting from *The Grey Wolf*: “His own ideas were clear and revolutionary. As soon as the foreign enemies were gone the Sultanate, the Caliphate, all the lumber of the Ottoman Empire must go. . . He would proclaim a republic . . . he would be its absolute ruler. After that he would reform Turkey in every detail.”<sup>12</sup>

Many of Ataturk’s initial reforms were as symbolic as they were substantive, with the intention of removing Islam from the fabric of Turkish life and government. His reforms included abolishing the Caliphate, eliminating the political power of the Imams

and the Muslim Brotherhood, adoption of European legal codes vice Sharia law, banning the Islamic Fez and encouraging western style dress, legalizing the production and consumption of alcohol, lifting the Koranic ban on human representation, and sweeping educational reforms that secularized education and closed the Madrassas.<sup>13</sup>

Next came the empowerment of women as equal citizens of the republic, the lifting of requirements for women to wear headscarves and other religious garments, and legal reforms granting secular western style equality to women.<sup>14</sup> Additional reforms included the abolition of the Arabic alphabet, the Islamic calendar, and Friday as the holy day—all links to Islam. Almost overnight, a nation of mostly illiterate Muslim Turks learned to read a new Latin based alphabet, to worship on Sundays—like Europeans—and to embrace life in the year 1926.<sup>15</sup> All of these reforms (and many more) were enshrined in the Turkish Constitutions of 1921, 1923, and 1924, and then ruthlessly implemented across the nation.<sup>16</sup> The point of these profound changes, and the societal upheaval they caused, was simple—Ataturk's Turkey was to become a modern, forward looking, secular, progressive, westernized republic with a modern constitution, a European style legal system, and a fierce sense of Turkish identity not based on an Islamic, Arabic, or Ottoman legacy. Initially, this “cultural revolution” would occur under the watchful eye (and iron fist) of the “Father Turk,” and upon his death in 1938 by loyal “Kemalists” and his beloved Turkish Army for decades to come.

### The Firewall

By the late 1940s, it was apparent to the Truman Administration that the Soviet Union was on the advance, and the United States and her North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies determined that Turkey was to play an instrumental role in checking the spread of Communism in Europe and the Middle East. It was for this

reason that the US extended \$137 million in Marshall Plan Aid to Turkey from 1948-51, and why the US was Turkey's greatest advocate for NATO membership, which eventually came in 1951.<sup>17</sup> For Turkey to fulfill the role for itself that Ataturk and the western allies envisioned, it had to remain firmly in the western camp, firmly capitalist, "democratic" (albeit in the Turkish sense of the word), and secular along the western model. This was also the era of anti-colonialism, Pan-Arabism, and Communist inspired insurgencies across the Middle East and the world, and the US and NATO could not afford to let Turkey fall into the Soviet sphere of influence as had occurred with Egypt, Libya, and Iraq.

There were fears that the most plausible way for this to occur in Turkey would be for an Islamic party to rise to power through democratic elections. Once in power, this party would stake out a new course for the nation (perhaps with Soviet backing) that would be overtly Islamic and potentially anti-western and nationalistic ala Nasser's Egypt and Gaddafi's Libya. It would also likely be hostile towards capitalism, democracy, western values, and Israel—as were many Middle Eastern nations during the Cold War. Accordingly, Cold War era Turkey became the West's firewall against this happening, and it was for this reason that Turkey in general, and the Turkish military in particular, were often labeled as "puppets" of the West by critics on both sides of the Iron Curtain. For decades, Turkey had elections and Turks voted for whomever they wanted—even religious parties and candidates—but the Turkish Army had veto authority over which politicians could take office and what laws they could pass or repeal. This was most certainly Ataturk's vision for the role of the military in the future of the republic. Turkey was to be a modern nation that looked to the West and modernity

that embraced science, technology, innovation, and European culture, values, and norms. Turkey would sever its ties to the Orient, to Islam, and to Arab culture, values, language, and customs that had dominated—and in Atatürk’s opinion subjugated—the Turkish people since the Middle Ages. Further, successive administrations in Washington DC, and in capitols across Western Europe, shared and sustained Atatürk’s vision of a secular, pro-western Turkey for over 50 years.

### The Deep State

The institution of a multi-party political system in 1945 liberalized Turkish politics to a degree—this was the first of several modifications to Turkish democracy and the only one that did not follow a coup.<sup>18</sup> The remaining modifications followed three coups and one quasi-coup between 1960 and 1997.<sup>19</sup> Two were the result of social unrest and rioting brought on by economic turmoil, and two were the result of what the Army deemed to be unacceptable religious policies and anti-secular activities made by victorious Islamic political parties in the wake of electoral victories.<sup>20</sup>

The last “coup” in 1997 was not a coup in the classic sense, as the military did not physically remove the Islamic Welfare Party from power by force. What occurred was a “postmodern coup” where the military made a series of “recommendations” to Prime Minister Erbakan, who subsequently agreed to their “proposals”—most of which focused on his party’s pro-Islamic and anti-secular policies.<sup>21</sup> Concessions made, Erbakan quickly resigned and the judiciary subsequently banned him from politics for 5 years.<sup>22</sup> The following year, the courts banned the Islamic Welfare Party.<sup>23</sup> This was the internal political dynamic in post-war Turkey during the era of the “Deep State”—the not-so-secret alliance between the Turkish military and the Turkish judiciary with the intent

of maintaining secular, pro-western, right-wing authoritarian control of Turkish government and society.<sup>24</sup>

### Islam Rising

From the ashes of the banned Islamic Welfare Party would emerge two Islamic political parties, the more traditional and conservative Felicity Party and the reform minded AKP led by a charismatic young politician from Istanbul named Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It was the AKP, and Erdogan, who would go on to dominate Turkish politics from 2002 to present.<sup>25</sup> Born to a devout Muslim family in Istanbul, Erdogan studied business administration and economics at Marmara University where he was active in student politics and in the youth branch of the Islamic National Salvation Party.<sup>26</sup> After the military coup of 1980, Erdogan moved to Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party, where he later became chair of the Istanbul branch.<sup>27</sup>

From 1994 to 1998, Erdogan served as Mayor of Istanbul and though his administration enacted many successful reforms regarding improvements to municipal services, the environment, and quality of life. His religious views were also on display and led to policies that raised the eyebrows of many in the secular Turkish government. Chief among these was a ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages at municipally run restaurants—clearly, a symbolic policy position rooted in his Islamic faith and out of coincidence with Turkey's secular western values.<sup>28</sup> This gave Turkish society, and the Turkish ruling classes, a window on Erdogan's soul and an indication of his religiously inspired political views. Later tried and convicted of "incitement to commit an offense" and "incitement to religious or racial hatred" after the 1997 coup, Erdogan served four months of a ten-month sentence.<sup>29</sup> The chief charge against him was his public recitation of an Islamic poem in December 1997, which contained the following

statement: “The Mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers.”<sup>30</sup>

Suffice it to say, pro-Islamic rhetoric such as this made the power brokers in Turkey’s “Deep State” extremely uncomfortable and their swift reaction—arrest, trial, conviction, and imprisonment—were warnings to Erdogan. His brief prison stint behind him, the new millennium found Erdogan busying himself with the establishment of a new Islamic political party—the AKP—a party that was to be his alone, just as the Republican People’s Party had been Ataturk’s—that he would ride into power. In 2002, the AKP received a mandate from the Turkish people in a landslide victory in national elections by taking almost two thirds of the seats in parliament. However, Erdogan, still technically banned from politics due to his previous conviction, could not be seated as the Prime Minister and that position went to his ally, the staunchly Islamic Abdullah Gul. However, Gul’s tenure as Prime Minister was brief due to charges of voting irregularities by the Supreme Election Board of Turkey and due to bi-partisan amendments to the law that reinstated Erdogan’s right to participate in political activities.<sup>31</sup>

By 2003, Erdogan was Turkey’s 25<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister and the nation’s most openly devout Muslim leader since the last Sultan and era of the Caliphate some eighty years prior. The first years of Erdogan’s administration had many positive aspects, which both Turks and western observers alike could rightly call progressive, responsible, and modernistic. Under Erdogan and the AKP, there were much needed upgrades to infrastructure in the forms of airports, high-speed rail, and road networks. Improvements to education came through upgrades to infrastructure, the addition of new facilities, and the acquisition of computers and internet access for teachers and students across the

nation at unprecedented levels. There were also positive reforms to the health care system, greater attention paid to environmental issues, much greater recognition of Kurdish and Armenian grievances—to include recognition of historical injustices and massacres—something no other Turkish leader had dared to do. There were also tremendous improvements to the Turkish economy in the form of debt reduction, increase in GDP, growth of cash reserves, foreign investment, and decreases in inflation that brought praise from none other than the World Bank.<sup>32</sup>

Turkey in the first decade of the new millennium became an economic powerhouse—“the Anatolian Tiger”—and its partnership and preferential trade status with the EU under the Customs Union Agreement and European Free Trade Agreements has flourished as trade has increased in both directions across the Bosphorus and Turkey’s economy has exploded. In 2013, Turkish foreign trade with the EU reached \$146 billion dollars and trade with the US reached \$19 billion dollars.<sup>33</sup> In the last decade, under the leadership of Erdogan and his economic policies, Turkey’s GDP reached \$1.4 trillion dollars and ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the world.<sup>34</sup> Turkey’s place in the Group of 20 nations (G20) seemed solidified with her future as a regional and potential global economic power announced to the world, but membership in the EU— pending since 1999—still eluded her.

### The Purge

The nation’s economic vitality, unprecedented growth, and pending EU membership kept Erdogan and the AKP in office and expanded their power and influence to unprecedented levels during the first decade of the century. The power and political capital that prosperity brings gave Erdogan the latitude and flexibility to settle old scores with the military, judiciary, police, political rivals, to chart a more independent

course for Turkey on the world stage, and to reshape the social and cultural landscapes in ways never imagined in the post-war “Deep State” era. His actions would challenge and eventually neuter the traditionally secular pro-western powers in Turkish society, shock and alienate traditional allies, re-introduce Islam to Turkish politics, suppress opposition, curtail civil liberties, and roll back the secular and westernized conduct of Turkish society. Asserting that the military and the courts were politicized, dictatorial, and a de-facto parallel government—the “Deep State”—Erdogan and the AKP set to dealing with Turkey’s guardians of secularism in a ruthless and efficient manner. They cited the existence of a secret network of military, judicial, academic and media personalities known as the “Ergenekon,” and claimed that this group were plotting everything from assassinations to bombings to starting wars in order to undermine and eventually unseat Erdogan and the AKP.<sup>35</sup>

By 2013, fifteen percent of the Turkish military’s senior military officers were on trial for conspiracy—including several former members of the Army Chiefs of Staff and the National Security Council.<sup>36</sup> This resulted in the convictions of over 300 officers for alleged participation in previous coups dating back to 1980, or for allegedly plotting a future coup against Erdogan and the AKP.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the arrests and conspiracy trials of hundreds of senior active duty and retired officers sparked a wave of mass resignations and retirements across the Turkish armed forces, that resulted in hundreds of officers leaving the service in fear.<sup>38</sup> Concurrently, the police and the judiciary faced similar allegations, arrests, and curbs on their power. By 2014, Erdogan had sacked more than two thousand police officers and had replaced them with officers whose loyalty to himself and the AKP was beyond question.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, Erdogan fired more

than ninety judges—many for alleged involvement in plotting a future coup or for involvement in a corruption probe of Erdogan and his political supporters.<sup>40</sup> Erdogan then offered legislation that would facilitate the appointment of party loyalists to the judiciary—the Turkish version of “court packing.” Once granted, Erdogan and the AKP had an iron grip on both the executive and legislative branches of the government.<sup>41</sup>

The existential threats to the AKP neutralized, Erdogan set to consolidation of his power within the party itself, and this meant the elimination of his former ally and party rival—Fethullah Gulen. A conservative Islamic cleric, chief benefactor of hundreds of Islamic schools around Turkey (and the world), and head of one of the largest Islamist movements in Turkey, Gulen, who now lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania, was instrumental in the AKP’s rise to power and its subsequent dismantling of the “Deep State.” After the military purges, an ideological power struggle began between Gulen and Erdogan, as Erdogan began to suspect the loyalties of Gulen’s more fundamentalist followers—followers embedded throughout the fabric of the AKP, the judiciary, and the police.<sup>42</sup> After ordering the closure of many of Gulen’s pre-university level religious schools, Erdogan, his son, and many of his closest allies became the subject of a government corruption probe. Erdogan contended Gulen’s supporters in the judiciary initiated the probe for political reasons, and another judicial purge ensued.<sup>43</sup> Factions within all branches and levels of the government began to draw battle lines based on their loyalties to either Erdogan or Gulen. Professor Soly Ozel, a political scientist at Istanbul’s Kadir Has University, described this fractious situation as follows: “What is happening in this process is the erosion of Turkey as a state. It is a meltdown. We see institutions are no longer dealing with one another as is written in the constitution.”<sup>44</sup>

## Head East Young Turk

Domestic military and political foes neutralized, Erdogan began to chart a new course for Turkey on the world stage—a course that raised concerns among allies. Far from acting like the Cold War era “puppet” of the West, Turkey became more independent, defiant, and often uncooperative. The first sign of the political winds changing in the AKP’s Turkey came in 2003 when the AKP majority Turkish Parliament refused to allow the U.S. Army to disembark in Turkish ports and transit the country in order to invade northern Iraq via the Habur Gate. The fact that a NATO ally and US client state with deep military ties extending back decades would obstruct the US invasion of Iraq seemed unimaginable and resulted in an immediate cooling of relations.

More recently, Erdogan has opposed U.S. led sanctions against Iran and its nuclear program, ordered a massive police crackdown on political activists during the Taksim Square protests in 2013, and then ordered subsequent restrictions to civil liberties and internet social media sites.<sup>45</sup> Additional causes for concern are Turkish-Israeli relations in the era of Erdogan. One of Israel’s original allies and the first majority Muslim nation to recognize the State of Israel in 1949, Turkey and Israel have deep social, economic and military ties extending back to the 1950s.

However, relations began to sour during the Gaza War of 2008-09—resulting in Turkey barring Israeli Air Force participation in an annual multi-lateral military exercise known as “Anatolian Eagle.”<sup>46</sup> That same year at a World Economic Forum conference in Davos, Switzerland, Erdogan so roundly criticized Israeli actions in Gaza that a heated exchange ensued between himself and Israeli President Shimon Peres—resulting in Erdogan storming off the stage and out of the conference.<sup>47</sup> In the aftermath of the 2010 Gaza Flotilla incident where Israeli special forces killed ten Turkish citizens,

Turkey withdrew its ambassador to Israel, downgraded diplomatic relations, and demanded that Israel publically apologize and compensate the families—something Israel refused to do until 2013.<sup>48</sup> Later that year in Vienna, while speaking at a UN event, Erdogan called Zionism “a crime against humanity” and equated it with anti-Semitism, fascism, and Islamophobia.<sup>49</sup> Further friction occurred after Turkey refused to support U.S. led sanctions against the Iranian government and its nuclear program—which Israel supported—and after allegations surfaced of Turkish involvement in exposing Israeli intelligence operatives in Iran in 2013.<sup>50</sup>

Because of this troubling set of circumstances, the U.S. suspended arms sales to the Turks and President Obama stated that future arms sales would depend upon changes in Turkish policies and behaviors.<sup>51</sup> In 2014, an Istanbul criminal court handed down another impediment to warming relations with Israel—arrest warrants for four now retired Israeli officers who planned and approved the Gaza Flotilla raid—including the former Israeli Army Chief of Staff and former head of Israeli Military Intelligence.<sup>52</sup>

Lastly, concurrent with the downturn in Turkish relations with the U.S. and Israel, there has been improvements in Turkish relations with Russia, China, and Iran. Putin and Erdogan met in December of 2014 and appear to have moved beyond—or set aside—their previous differences over Syria and Ukraine as they focus on future economic cooperation, particularly in the area of natural gas.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, Erdogan is actively seeking membership in China’s Shanghai Cooperation Organization—an economic body that seeks to circumvent the post-war western economic structure.<sup>54</sup>

With regard to Iran, Erdogan visited Tehran in early 2014 to discuss cooperation on Syria and to expand trade in spite of global sanctions against the regime and U.S.

warnings not to do so. To make matters worse, while in Tehran, Erdogan said that Iran “feels like a second home.”<sup>55</sup> A troubling statement when the democratically elected head of a NATO member nation, and EU aspirant, calls the capitol of an authoritarian Islamic theocracy “home.” Turkish leaders before Erdogan—all staunch allies of the U.S., Europe, and Israel—would never have uttered such provocative and alarming statements or charted such a defiant and independent course for Turkey.

### Doing the Lord’s Work

Domestically, Erdogan began to reintroduce Islam to government, culture, and society in ways not seen since the Ottomans. A devote Muslim, Erdogan took every opportunity to profess his faith and his example encourages others to do the same—especially government employees and party officials who were even encouraged to exchange emails with Koranic references.<sup>56</sup> In the last ten years, the number of Sunni religious schools has doubled the 90-year-old ban on headscarves at universities and in government buildings lifted, and alcohol sales face new restrictions and taxes.<sup>57</sup>

Further, Turkish women now wonder about the future of their equality in Turkish society after Erdogan publically stated in November 2014 that women were not equal to men, and that a woman’s primary role was as a mother.<sup>58</sup> Political scientists, academics, and media pundits often contend that Islam and Sharia are inherently political, intolerant of dissent, hostile towards opposing viewpoints, incapable of the democratic transition of power, and cannot coexist within a democracy.<sup>59</sup> Whether or not Islam and democratic government can coexist in Turkey—or anywhere else in the world remains—the subject of debate. Nevertheless, Erdogan’s intent to roll back the secular reforms of the Kemalists era and reintroduce Islam to the Turkish body politic is ongoing. As for his own views on the coexistence of Islam and democracy, Erdogan, while Mayor of

Istanbul, stated: "Democracy is like a train. We shall get out when we arrive at the station we want."<sup>60</sup>

### Analyze This

Given all this, what can the West make of Turkey under Erdogan and what does it bode for the future of Turkey's relations with the EU/NATO, the U.S., and Israel? Since becoming a republic in the 1920s, Turks have looked to the West and to modernity as the model for how to conduct themselves on the world stage and in domestic affairs. A secular pro-western nation with European customs, habits, and culture was Ataturk's vision, and he commanded his people to follow him. After the Second World War, and with the start of the Cold War, Turkey moved closer to the West and it raced to join western political, military, and economic organizations. Turkey played key and essential roles in the UN response in Korea, the formation and growth of NATO, the containment of Soviet Communism, and the stability of the Middle East—especially with regard to Israel. Further, Turkey began its formal integration into the economy of Europe in the late 1950s and since then has patiently waited in Europe's anteroom for full membership into the EU.

However, despite its robust economy, explosive growth, burgeoning GDP, and ascension to the G20 family of nations over the last thirty years, the EU continues to reject Turkey. Initially EU members had concerns over human rights and the oppression of the Kurds, political instability associated with the various coups, and Turkey's retention of the death penalty among other issues. Later came objections—primarily from Greece and the majority Greek Republic of Cyprus—over Turkey's invasion after the Cypriot coup of 1974 and the subsequent partitioning of the island into Greek and Turkish zones of influence. More recently, various EU members have objected to

Turkey's heavy-handed crackdown on protests and infringements to civil liberties during the Taksim Square incidents of 2013.<sup>61</sup>

Many European citizens have varying degrees of concern and discomfort with Islam—concerns that Erdogan himself often refers to as “Islamophobia”—and there are concerns about unchecked Muslim immigration and the economic and social impacts of this immigration. Perhaps there is also trepidation over the increasingly bizarre conspiracy theories and anti-semitic rhetoric from Erdogan himself. On November 27, 2014 at the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul, Erdogan stated that “foreigners cannot solve the problems of the Middle East,” that they “only want our money . . . they don't like us . . . they look like friends, but they want us dead, they like seeing our children die. How long will we stand that fact?”<sup>62</sup> As if he could not make relations worse, immediately after the January 2015 terror attacks in Paris, Erdogan stated, “The duplicity of the west is obvious . . . the culprits are clear: French citizens undertook this massacre and Muslims were blamed for it.”<sup>63</sup> He then condemned Prime Minister Netanyahu for attending the Paris solidarity march on January 12, 2015, stating, “How can a man who has killed 2,500 people in Gaza with state terrorism wave his hand in Paris. . .”<sup>64</sup>

Despite the hostile words and alarming deeds of the last decade, Erdogan states that he expects full EU membership by 2023—the one hundredth anniversary of the republic—or he says Turkey may end membership negotiations.<sup>65</sup> Threats and delusions aside, it seems almost certain that the EU will continue to reject Turkey's bids for membership, and this will only seek to alienate the Turks further. One wonders if in

the minds of every Turk there is an understanding of the damage done to their position with the EU by their leader. Perhaps not—perhaps there is only the ironic juxtaposition of the EU's continuous rejections of Turkey—an economic dynamo—alongside the EU's seemingly unending coddling of two economic basket cases—Greece and Cyprus—both traditional enemies of Turkey and the same two countries that have thwarted Turkey's membership for decades? Ironic to be sure, but one cannot deny the plausible Turkish perception that the EU's rejections hinge on something that Europe's secular progressive elites will never discuss aloud.

With regard to the future of U.S.-Turkish relations, frankly one cannot say what the future of those will be, as U.S. foreign policy seems to lurch from supporting friendly authoritarian or quasi-democratic regimes to one of criticizing and embargoing them—Egypt par exam—depending upon which U.S. political party is in power at the time. However, it is safe to say that the U.S. government, and certainly the US military, wants a relationship akin to the one it had with the Kemalist Turkey of the Cold War era—that unconditionally pro-western ally with nested geo-political interests undergirded by economic and technological dependence.

Though the times and conditions may have changed profoundly on the ground in Turkey, US interests and values have not. The U.S. will continue to condemn Erdogan's treatment of his political opposition, of protestors, and his infringements on civil liberties and internet access. It will condemn his actions and rhetoric regarding Israel, his anti-Semitic statements, his conspiracy theories, and his overtures to Iran while seeking to circumvent US led sanctions. The U.S. will remain cautious of Turkey's diplomatic and economic relationships with Russia and China as well. Further, the U.S. senses a lack

of commitment on Turkey's part to dealing with the Islamic State and its bloody rampage through Syria and northern Iraq. Lastly, there is the issue of the Islamification of Turkish politics—the rise of political Islam. This is one area where the U.S. position will likely remain unclear, as there is no appetite within the U.S. government (or media) to question, comment, or ponder aloud the coexistence of Islam and Sharia in the executive, legislative, judicial, and administrative functions of a representative democracy. The topic is too profoundly politically incorrect for any but those on the very fringes of the US political landscape to address.

Therefore, rejected by Europe and receiving mixed message from a United States that is shrinking from the world stage, Turkey will no doubt look to the east—and not the west—as it becomes a regional military and economic hegemon with deeper ties to the Muslim world, to Russia, and to China. This nationalistic and independent twenty-first century Turkey is not going to wait for the EU and it is not going to be encumbered by the alliances and allegiances of the past. It will do what is in the best interests of Turkey, and this may from time to time put it at odds with the EU, NATO, the U.S., and Israel. There is a nationalistic spirit sweeping the country in the era of Erdogan—fueled by his populist rhetoric, open defiance of the West, and economic pride—and there too is a rediscovered pride in the Ottoman era, the Caliphate, and in Islam.<sup>66</sup> The prognosis could not be clearer—there are metamorphoses under way in Turkey—an economic metamorphosis, a cultural metamorphosis, a political metamorphosis, and a religious metamorphosis. What remains opaque is whether these metamorphoses will be Kafkaesque.

## What to Do

Keeping Turkey in the West's orbit will require a concerted effort by the EU/NATO and the U.S. that utilizes the appropriate elements of their national power—Diplomatic, Economic, Military, and Informational. The West must keep Turkey within the western political, military, and economic order that encourages and facilitates free trade, inter-dependence, open markets, collective security, civil liberties, and the resultant prosperity that ensures the survival and expansion of Turkey's educated and westernized middle-class and its officer corps. If not, we may find Turkey aligning itself more closely with nations and ideologies (Russia, China, and Iran) that seek an alternate economic and social order not based upon these principles.

Erdogan studied business administration and economics at Marmara University and his tremendously successful economic reforms while Prime Minister provides the West insight as to his priorities and a lever to increased cooperation, inter-dependence, and greater Turkish exposure to western media, influences, culture, and values. Turkey has become a "trading state" in the last thirty years with foreign trade now accounting for 50% of her GDP; accordingly, her foreign policy and domestic prosperity are dependent on economic factors.<sup>67</sup> Militarily, Turkey's position in NATO—with its second largest army and Muslim majority population—gives NATO tremendous capability, essential geography, and a degree of legitimacy in the fight against Islamic extremism that is indispensable.<sup>68</sup> As Turkey continues to develop economic and political relationships in its own national interests and moves closer to regional hegemon status, the West cannot allow Turkey to do as France did in the 1960s and opt out of NATO's military and/or political structure, as this would be catastrophic for NATO and the West.

## Diplomatic/Information

On the diplomatic and information fronts, the U.S. must aggressively advocate for expansion of the European Customs Union between Turkey and the EU in the near term, and an immediate restart of EU membership talks in the long-term, with a stated (and highly symbolic) US desire of full membership by 2023—the centennial of the Turkish Republic. Additionally, the U.S. should publically state that it believes that opposition to Turkish membership may be based on historical ethnic, cultural, and religious grievances harbored by some EU members (who will remain unnamed), and that these grievances are anachronistic and inconsistent with the values of twenty-first century secular, progressive, western democracies.

While such statements are naked pandering and certainly provocative, the U.S. can risk the temporary irritation of our western allies in order to achieve a greater good—that being the optics of U.S. support for Turkey—for Muslim Turkey. While the U.S. is not a member of the EU, the opinion and desires of the world’s largest economy would not go unnoticed and the optics of such a pro-Turkish position by the U.S. would certainly improve Turkish public opinion of the U.S., which currently sits at a dismal 10%.<sup>69</sup>

## Economic

On the multilateral economic front, the U.S. and EU should expand Turkey’s role in several western post-war economic institutions: the International Monetary Fund, General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, the World Bank, and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development to name a few. Additionally, the Group of Seven (G7), should be expanded to the “G7 + 1” to afford Turkey the same status once offered to Russia (prior to its suspension from the body in 2014) in recognition of its

economic and political importance to the global community in general, and to the western economic structure in particular.<sup>70</sup>

On the bilateral economic front, the U.S. should endeavor to make our economic relations with Turkey on par with our traditionally strong military relations. Trade between the U.S. and Turkey has yet to reach its true potential, and it lags far behind Turkish trade expansion with the EU, Israel, and China. While U.S.-Turkish trade has expanded six-fold since the 1990s to approximately \$20 billion in 2012, Turkish trade with China expanded 76-fold to approximately \$24 billion that same year.<sup>71</sup> In 2009, President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan announced a Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation (FSECC) that sought to address the unrealized potential of the US-Turkey trade relationship through alliances between private enterprises, cooperation on innovation—particularly in the fields of science, technology, and health care—and the promotion and exploitation of clean energy sources.<sup>72</sup>

President Obama’s overall goal for the FSECC was as a mutually beneficial “model partnership.”<sup>73</sup> In conjunction with the FSECC, the U.S. should offer Turkey Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status in recognition of our special and long-standing strategic relationship. MFN status has arguably served to stabilize, enhance, and expand U.S. influence with China since the 1990s, while simultaneously contributing to positive social and political changes within China that have improved Chinese public opinion of the U.S., facilitated the growth of a Chinese middle-class, and reduced the opportunity for conflicts through economic inter-dependence, exposure to the West, and economic prosperity.

Lastly, the U.S. should move forward with the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) initiative with the EU and make the addition of Turkish membership a prerequisite. The TTIP would give Turkey unprecedented access to not only U.S. and EU markets, but also expand her access to global markets—as the TTIP would stretch from the west coast of the U.S. across Europe and to the shores of the Black Sea and the Levant. Inclusion of Turkey in the TTIP would also advantage Turkey in future EU membership negotiations, while simultaneously evidencing further U.S. support for both Turkish prosperity and for her continued membership in the post-war western financial order.<sup>74</sup>

### Military

The one area where U.S.-Turkish relations have come closest to realizing their strategic potential is in the area of military cooperation both within the framework of NATO and bilaterally. Though U.S. and NATO influence within the Turkish armed forces has diminished with the rise of Erdogan and his subsequent removal of hundreds of pro-western Turkish officers, ties remain and the framework for continued positive relations still exists. With this in mind, the U.S. should advocate for a greater leadership role for Turkey within NATO—one that is both symbolic and commensurate with the size of its armed forces.

Further, the U.S. should advocate for increased NATO training exercises in Turkey, and for a larger NATO presence within Turkey—to include the addition of a second NATO Rapid Deployable Corps HQ in Turkey. On the bilateral front, the U.S. should strengthen our traditionally strong defense cooperation with Turkey in the following areas: Missile Defense, access to Turkish bases and transportation corridors, expanded Foreign Military Sales (FMS), and greater military-to-military contact through

the International Military Education and Training program (IMET). With the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range delivery systems in the Middle East, Turkey's geographic location makes it both a potential target and a suitable location for elements of the NATO Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) shield. Turkey agreed to the NATO approach to BMD at the Lisbon summit in 2010 with a guarantee that the European Phased Adaptive Approach to BMD would cover all of Turkey.<sup>75</sup> However, as of 2014, no headway had occurred on NATO BMD and the U.S. should immediately seek bilateral talks with a focus on stationing Early Warning Radars and Aegis Interceptor Missiles in Turkey—for “purely defensive purposes”—and to solidify our mutual defense commitments.<sup>76</sup>

Nested with positioning of BMD assets would come requests for increased U.S. troop presence at both of the NATO training centers in Turkey and at NATO's Allied Air Component Command in Izmir. Next come requests for enhanced access to Turkish Sea Ports of Debarkation / Aerial Ports of Debarkation, and the transportation corridors that would facilitate US operations in the region—be they in support of operations against the Islamic State or for humanitarian assistance missions in Syria, northern Iraq, or Jordan.

Further goodwill and cooperation could be engendered by the maintenance and expansion of FMS between the U.S. and Turkey. Turkey no longer receives annual Foreign Military Financing (FMF) aid from the U.S. for the purchase of U.S. equipment, but they do remain an important consumer of U.S. defense products—including the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the F-16C, several helicopter variants, and various missile systems including Patriot.<sup>77</sup> However, as the political and military dynamic has changed

within Turkey, it has moved away from dependence on U.S. military technology, training, and the support that accompanies U.S. weapons systems. This has resulted in a loss of both economic revenue and influence for the U.S. To reverse this trend, the U.S. should resume annual FMF aid, approve Turkey's long-standing request to purchase Unmanned Aerial Systems, and increased defense cooperation and collaboration on projects such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Lastly, the U.S. should increase funding for the IMET program from approximately \$5 million annually to a figure that more accurately illustrates our commitment to the strategic importance of the relationship and our desire—in the wake of Erdogan's military purges—to renew and cultivate relationships with Turkey's military leadership at all levels.<sup>78</sup> Annual funding for Turkish attendance at every level of the U.S. military education system, from Non-Commissioned Officer through War College level, should exceed those for all other allies. Increased IMET would cultivate relationships, improve understanding, promote U.S. interests, and ultimately expand U.S. influence with an officer corps that may one day re-assert itself domestically as a secular, educated, pro-western bulwark against anti-western sentiment and the rise of political Islam—just as Ataturk envisioned.<sup>79</sup>

### Turkey at the Crossroads

Today's Turkey sits at a crossroads both literally and figuratively. Long the bridge between Europe and Asia literally by virtue of its geography, Turkey remains a thriving center of trade and a melting pot of western and Oriental cultures, ideals, values, and interests in a vital and troubled region. Figuratively, Turkey sits at a crossroads with regard to which global system it will be a part of in the coming century. Will Turkey continue to look to the West and remain a member of the western political, economic,

social, and military institutions that have brought her prosperity and security—or will she strike a new course for herself and seek new alliances that will bring her into conflict with the West? Lastly, Turkey sits at the crossroads of religion, politics, and modernity. Can Islam coexist with a westernized twenty-first century representative democracy, or is Islam, as Atatürk believed, an anachronistic and malignant force that will only keep Turkey from realizing its true potential and its rightful place in the community of nations? There is no debating that Atatürk's secular, pro-western, democratic Turkey has prospered immensely since the nation's transformation in the 1920s—but there is debate—and great concern over how much longer Turkey's interests and values will remain intertwined with the West's in the era of Erdoğan and with the rise of political Islam.

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