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The Kemalist Era, 1919–1938

ATATÜRK'S BACKGROUND AND RISE TO POWER

The Ottoman Empire lay prostrate at the end of the war, its old ruling class willing to accept the dictates of the victors as long as they allowed the sultan-caliph to reign. But the Young Turks era, despite its many failings, had created a Muslim counter-elite and a nascent bourgeoisie that was willing to fight for the gains it had made, and to create a new patriotic state. Such elites set up the Defence of Rights Association throughout Thrace and Anatolia, demanding 'justice' for the Muslims from the victors. They were local bodies articulating local demands, for there was as yet no conception of a nation or even the territory the 'nation' would embrace. The Greek landing at İzmir in western Anatolia on 14 May 1919, proved to be the catalyst that launched broader resistance that soon became 'national'. Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938), who assumed the name Atatürk or 'Father Turk' in 1934, came to play a crucial role in mobilizing the Muslims of Anatolia and organizing the resistance.

Mustafa Kemal was born in the cosmopolitan port city of Salonika (today Greece's second city) in 1881, into a family of modest means. Given the lack of opportunity for Muslim youths of the lower middle class, Kemal could either opt for a religious education and become a member of the clerical class, the *ülema*, or

could opt for a military education, perhaps the easiest way for a Muslim boy to acquire a modern education and upward mobility.

The Hamidian army was divided between the *mektepli* (schooled) and *alaylı* (commissioned) officers. The former were educated in the modern military schools and academies and were taught modern methods of warfare, often by foreign military advisers. They also acquired such secular values as patriotism and nationalism, liberty and fraternity, and the rule of law; in short, ideas that had emerged from the French revolutionary tradition. The *alaylı* were officers who were promoted from the ranks because of their loyalty to the sultan-caliph and the institutions he represented. They were tradition-bound and found ideas that flourished after the constitutional revolution to be repugnant to their upbringing. The *mektepli* officers were the 'enlightened' men who came to form the backbone of the army and who supported the reforms of the CUP. But many of them had died in the wars the empire had been forced to wage between 1908 and 1922, weakening the reformist element in the army and in the Unionist and Kemalist movements.

Kemal entered the military preparatory school in Salonika in 1893, from whence he went on to the military high school in Monastir in 1895, and the War College in Istanbul in 1899. He was commissioned second lieutenant in 1902 and sent to the Staff College. From there he passed out as staff captain in 1905 and was posted to the Fifth Army in Damascus. In Syria, Kemal became active in military politics and conspired against the regime. But the real opposition to the Hamidian regime was taking place in Macedonia under the auspices of the Committee of Union and Progress, so that when he was posted to the Third Army HQ in Salonika in October 1907, he was already on the fringes of the movement. That is where he found himself when the constitution was restored in July 1908 and the CUP suddenly found itself in a position of power.

Mustafa Kemal never became part of the inner circle of the CUP and was opposed to army officers engaging in politics. He came as a staff officer to Mahmud Şevket Pasha's Action Army that crushed the counter-revolution of April 1909. Thereafter, he concentrated on military matters, following foreign literature on the subject, and translated some training manuals into Ottoman

Turkish. In September 1910, he was sent to observe manoeuvres of the French army and the following year, he was promoted to the rank of major. When Italy invaded the Ottoman province of Tripoli (today's Libya) in September 1911, Kemal was sent to organize local Arab forces for guerrilla warfare. In the Balkan War of 1912–13, Mustafa Kemal became involved only after the Ottomans had been routed. The recapture of Edirne from the Bulgarians enhanced the prestige of Enver Bey, who had been groomed by the CUP to become one of its leading lights. Enver, who was married to an Ottoman princess, was appointed war minister in January 1914; he then rejuvenated the army, purging many of the Hamidian generals who were thought to be out of touch with modern warfare. Meanwhile in October 1913, Ali Fethi [Okyar], a prominent Unionist officer, Enver's rival in the CUP and Kemal's patron, was appointed ambassador to Sofia. He took Mustafa Kemal as his military attaché. These were important appointments because Bulgaria's position in any future war was of the utmost importance for Istanbul and the reports sent by the ambassador and his military attaché were of great importance to the Unionist government. In Sofia, Mustafa Kemal was also impressed by the modernization that was taking place, and that was to influence his own views when he became president of Turkey.

The Ottomans entered the war in November 1914, and Allied forces began their bombardment of the Gallipoli peninsula in January 1915. Mustafa Kemal, who was now a lieutenant-colonel, commanded the 19th Division in Gallipoli. This is where he made his reputation as a successful general and became known in the country as one of the saviours of Istanbul. He played a crucial role in checking the Allied advance at Arıburnu, and later as commander of the Anafartalar group. On 1 June 1915, he was promoted to colonel. When he left Gallipoli in December for the capital, he hoped that his contribution would be recognized and rewarded by the Unionist government. But that was not to be. The Unionists honoured only officers totally committed to the movement and Kemal was not one of them.

Nevertheless, he was promoted to brigadier-general in April 1916, and sent to the front in eastern Anatolia, which was occupied by the Russian army. In August, he recaptured the towns of Bitlis

and Muş from the Russians, though the recapture of Muş proved to be only temporary. But Kemal had established a reputation among his men as a charismatic officer, one who seemed to lead a charmed life and always won his battles. He continued to be given military commands – that of the Second and Seventh Armies in Syria – where he was successful even when he was forced to retreat. He resented Germany's exploitation of the Ottoman army for Berlin's ambitions, for that had been the case ever since the German military mission was placed in charge of the Ottoman army in 1913.

In October 1917, Mustafa Kemal resigned his command in Syria and returned to Istanbul. Known as a critic of Enver Pasha's pro-German policies, he was invited to accompany the anti-Unionist Vahdettin, the heir apparent, on his official visit to Germany. Kemal and Vahdettin became acquainted with each other and that proved useful later when Vahdettin came to the throne in July 1918 and chose Mustafa Kemal to supervise the demobilization of troops in Anatolia after the armistice. In August 1918, Kemal was appointed commander of the Seventh Army in Syria. He was not able to halt the British advance, but led an orderly retreat. By now, the war was irrevocably lost and the Ottomans were forced to sign an armistice with the Allies on 30 October, marking the end of the war. Kemal returned to Istanbul on 13 November.

The Allies – Britain and France – believed that they could impose whatever terms they wished on the defeated Ottomans and treat the empire like a colony. They had already signed secret agreements during the war, which partitioned the Ottoman Empire between them. Though these treaties no longer applied after the revolution in Russia, they were to be implemented under the new circumstances. For their part, the Ottomans were in an anomalous position, a defeated imperial people who had no 'homeland' to retreat to. The Spaniards had retreated to Spain, the British to Britain, etc. But where could the Ottomans go? They had come as Turkic tribes from Inner and Central Asia and had established a foothold in Asia Minor in 1071, just five years after the Norman invasion of Britain. They were regarded by Europe as conquerors who had come out of Asia and *occupied* lands in Europe, Asia Minor and the Arab world with no right to be there. They had been driven out of Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and from the Arab provinces during the First World

War. They held Asia Minor, or Anatolia, but that was land contested by other peoples – the Greeks, the Armenians, and the Kurds. The Ottomans believed that Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' applied to them, both as Muslims and Turks as well, and they therefore enjoyed the right of self-determination in territory where they were in a majority. But that was not the case. Judging by the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres, signed in August 1920 – terms that were to be imposed on the Ottomans – they were to be left only a part of Anatolia. When President Wilson was asked to fix the boundary between the sultan's Turkey and Armenia, he assigned some 40,000 square miles of Anatolia to Armenia, including the towns of Trabzon, Erzincan, Erzurum, Muş, and Van. The Armenian Republic claimed territory in south-eastern Anatolia that would link it to the Mediterranean; the territory allotted to Armenia would have amounted to one-third of Anatolia.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the flight of the most prominent Unionist leaders to Europe, the leadership was restored to the sultan and the palace. Initially, Mustafa Kemal hoped to pursue what may be described as a strategy based on Istanbul, salvaging the country's independence mainly by diplomatic means. The Sultan was expected to lead such a movement and Kemal Pasha expected to play a prominent role as minister of war in any Palace cabinet. Had such a strategy worked – and it was destined to fail, given the attitude of the Powers, especially that of Great Britain – it would have operated within the established framework of Ottoman institutions; it would have had a loyalist and politically conservative programme instead of a radical and secular one.

Despite his military and anti-Unionist credentials, Kemal was not given a cabinet post and soon became disillusioned with the Palace. The sultan seemed willing to do Britain's bidding simply to retain what little power was allowed him. Meanwhile, in Anatolia, local notables who had tasted political and economic power during the Young Turk era, began to organize local 'Defence of Rights Associations' to resist foreign and local non-Muslim aspirations. One of the first such bodies was founded in Trabzon on the Black Sea, to oppose the establishment of the Greek republic of the Pontus.

THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The Palace, with British approval, appointed Mustafa Kemal as inspector of the Ninth Army in Anatolia, with the task of demobilizing Ottoman forces left intact after the armistice. He left Istanbul by boat and arrived at the Black Sea port of Samsun on 19 May 1919, four days after the Greek occupation of İzmir, a traumatic event in the history of modern Turkey. Instead of disarming Ottoman troops, Kemal met the military commanders and issued a joint declaration of resistance from the town of Amasya. The Palace decided to cashier him; instead Kemal resigned his commission. Thereafter, the Defence of Rights Associations coalesced around him. Congresses of such associations were held in Erzurum (27 July–7 August) and Sivas (4–11 September 1919), electing Kemal Pasha as their leader each time. In December, Kemal moved to Ankara in the centre of Anatolia and made it the headquarters of the national liberation movement.

A word ought to be said about the Ottoman-Turkish terms *millet*, *milli*, and *milliyetçi*, terms that are rendered into English as ‘nation’, ‘national’, and ‘nationalist’. But during the war of liberation and after, the terms were intended to be more patriotic than nationalist, inclusive rather than exclusive. The terms embraced all the Islamic elements of Anatolia – Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Arabs, and Lazes – all of whom had identities of their own, and Kemal noted in October 1919 that the ‘National Pact’ border in Anatolia had been demarcated accordingly. ‘Gentlemen’, he lectured his audience, ‘this border is not a line which has been drawn according to military considerations. It is a national (*milli*) border. It has been established as a national border. Within this border there is only one nation which is representative of Islam. Within this border, there are Turks, Circassians, and other Islamic elements. Thus this border is a national boundary of all those who live together totally blended and are for all intents and purpose made up of fraternal communities (*milletler*).’ The National Pact defined the boundaries of the new state. The boundaries were agreed according to the peace treaties of 1913 and drawn up after the Balkan Wars, which gave the Ottoman Empire territories in Thrace, and the armistice lines of October 1918. The last Ottoman

parliament, which unanimously adopted the National Pact on 17 February 1920, discussed the terms *Türk* and *millet* two days later and arrived at the consensus that the term *Türk* included all the different Muslim elements; some deputies even included Ottoman Jews within the term *Türk*! Kemal repeated these ideas on 1 May 1920: 'What is intended here ... is not only Turks, not only Circassians, not only Kurds, not only Lazs, but the Islamic ethnic elements of all of these, a sincere community ... The nation, the preservation and defence of which we have undertaken, is not only composed of one ethnic element. It is composed of various Islamic elements.'

The Ottoman or Kemalist notion of citizenship had never been ethnic. The Ottoman identity was focused around the dynasty, regardless of ethnic origin or religion, and Muslims, Christians or Jews could be Ottomans so long as they were loyal to the dynasty and the culture that had developed over time. In the same way, Turkish citizenship depended on residence (not birth) within the borders of the emerging state defined by the National Pact. During the national struggle, religion played an important role, as the non-Muslims (Greeks and Armenians) were also fighting for their own states; only Ottoman Jews as a community joined the Nationalists. according to the principle of birth, Kemal's enemies in the assembly even wanted to deprive him of his civil right to be elected to the assembly, claiming that he had not resided for five years within the new borders of Turkey, for he had been born in Salonika, a part of the new Greece.

The British responded to the Nationalist challenge by occupying Istanbul. The Istanbul parliament met for the last time on 18 March 1920, and adjourned *sine die* after protesting Britain's action. The sultan dissolved the chamber on 11 April, adding to the legitimacy of the Nationalists in Ankara, who had long claimed that the sultan was the prisoner of the Allies. Nevertheless, the Nationalists had to wage civil war against the sultan's supporters, especially after the Palace issued a *fetva*, a religious edict, denouncing the Nationalists as infidels and stating that it was the duty of believers to kill them. They responded by having the mufti of Ankara issue a counter *fetva*, declaring that the caliph was a captive of infidels and stating that believers were duty-bound to fight to save him.

The spring of 1920 marked the beginning of the most dangerous period for the Nationalists. They were engaged in a life and death struggle with the Palace and the foreign powers. Greek forces had occupied western Anatolia in 1919; they began to advance in June, occupying the town of Bursa and Edirne in July and August. The following year, the Sultan signed the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920, and signed away much of Anatolia to future Greek, Armenian, and Kurdish states, as well as territory to Syria, mandated to France by the League of Nations. Even Istanbul was placed under an international organization that was to administer the straits.

The Nationalists were convinced that the very survival of a Turkish-Muslim state was threatened. This threat persisted into 1921, when the Greek army launched a new offensive in June and advanced to the towns of Eskişehir and Kütahya and threatened Ankara's communications. By August, the military situation became so serious that the assembly allowed Kemal Pasha, as commander-in-chief, to exercise his authority in military matters. The victory at the battle of Sakarya on 13 September 1921, strengthened his hand against his opponents in the nationalist movement. Scholars have rightly concluded that had Kemal lost the battle, the leadership of the liberation movement would have passed to Kazım Karabekir, one of Mustafa Kemal's rivals and a general with excellent military credentials.

The battle of Sakarya was a turning-point in Kemal's career and the fortunes of the liberation struggle. He was promoted to the rank of marshal and given the title, Gazi – soldier in the holy war – a title he used until 1934, when he assumed the name Atatürk, or 'Father Turk'. His position vis-à-vis the Powers was also strengthened. He signed an agreement with Moscow and confirmed the Turkish-Russian frontier; the British released prisoners – Unionists and Nationalists – they were holding on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean. Eleven months later, in August 1922, Mustafa Kemal launched a general offensive against the Greek lines, forcing the Greek army to surrender on 2/3 September. Nationalist forces entered İzmir on the 9th and the Armistice of Mudanya was signed on the 11th. The war of national liberation had been won; now it was a question of reaching a consensus on the nature of the new state and the society the Nationalists would agree to.

Unwittingly, the British made the Nationalists' task easier by inviting delegations from both Istanbul and Ankara to discuss peace terms. Instead of dividing the Nationalists, the British forced them to unite and take decisive action. The Nationalists declared that the Ankara government was the new Turkey's only legitimate authority. In Istanbul, General Refet Bele, a conservative who favoured continuity under the sultan, tried to persuade the sultan to dismiss his government in Istanbul and to follow the Nationalists' lead. Had he done so, it is difficult to see how the Nationalists would have abolished the sultanate. But Vahdettin rejected Refet Bele's proposal and on 1 November, the Ankara assembly responded by abolishing the sultanate, arguing that the sultan's government had been a fiction since 16 November 1920, when the Allies had formally occupied the capital. Henceforth Istanbul was governed from Ankara, like any other province. Vahdettin fled the country on 17 November 1922, on a British battleship; the following day, the assembly elected Abdülmecit the country's new caliph.

The assembly had abolished the monarchy, but the caliphate continued to enjoy much popular support within the national movement and among the people. Kemal Pasha's position was far from secure. Some deputies wanted to disqualify him from being elected to the assembly by amending the electoral law so that only candidates who had resided in their constituencies for five years would be allowed to stand. This would disqualify Mustafa Kemal, who had been born outside the borders of the new Turkey and had never resided in any part of Turkey for a full five-year period. But the amendment was withdrawn in committee.

Kemal realized that he was isolated and had to broaden his base of support. Consequently, he formed his own political party, the People's Party, later renamed the Republican People's Party, which would represent all those who were opposed to the old order. The term *halk*, or people, included all those, regardless of their class, who were opposed to the old order; their principal task was to defeat the ancien régime and its supporters, and to establish the 'people's state'. The Kemalists had declared ideological war on his rivals and Mustafa Kemal then took his message to the country, making speeches and giving interviews to the press along the way.

Kemal's leadership was also threatened by his more conservative comrades-in-arms. They were officers he had known for many years, men such as Rauf Orbay, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Kazım Karabekir, and Refet Bele, all of whom had fought bravely in the national struggle, but who wanted to utilize the moderation and legitimacy that came with the old constitutional order. The monarchy had been abolished, largely because of the sultan's tactical error. But these men saw no reason why the caliph should not lead the new Turkey as its president. They, like the Unionists before them, believed that Turkey could be ruled by a symbolic figure, formerly the sultan-caliph, now the president-caliph, who would be unassailable from below, yet easy to manipulate from above. The Kemalists, on the other hand, wanted a total social, economic, and political transformation. They no longer wanted to rule a state and society by traditionalist social conventions and symbols; they wanted to create a new, secular ideology that would allow Turkey to progress rapidly into the twentieth century. The Kemalists wanted to adopt the materialism of the West, its technology and its modern weapons, along with its ideas, so that society would be transformed in the broadest sense. This meant creating a secular society in which religion would be controlled by the state rather than separated from it. For them, modernity implied a broad totality and included political and cultural, as well as economic, dimensions. They wanted to accomplish both modernization and modernity, by radically reforming their traditional, patriarchal society.

If we examine the Kemalist record after 1923, we find that the regime moved aggressively away from traditionalism towards modernity. Government may not have been democratic, but it was no longer a neo-patriarchal sultanate. The Kemalists introduced 'laicism' (*laiklik*), that is to say, a state-controlled Islam and not 'secularism', i.e. separating religion from politics. They intended to use Islam to further their programme of reform and revolution by having it legitimized, when necessary, by the Directorate of Religion. Knowledge or science came to be defined as 'the best guide to life'. Urban women also benefited from modernity in a way they would not have done under a regime of modernization.

BIRTH OF THE REPUBLIC

The Lausanne Treaty of 24 July 1923, recognized the new Turkey and its borders and added to Kemal Pasha's prestige. Turkey acquired international recognition of its independence. At the time, there were only a handful of states in Asia and Africa that had the semblance of independence; the rest were colonies or dependencies of the imperialist powers. In Africa, there was Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Iran and Afghanistan in West and South Asia, Thailand and China in South-East and East Asia. Abyssinia became an Italian colony in 1935; Iran was invaded by Britain and Russia in 1941 and enjoyed only nominal independence thereafter; Afghanistan served as a buffer between British India and Soviet Central Asia, as did Thailand between British India and French Indo-China; China was invaded by Japan. Only Kemalist Turkey retained its full independence after 1923.

Kemal was re-elected president of the assembly in August 1923 and in October, the assembly approved the resolution to make Ankara the capital of the new state, while retaining Istanbul as the seat of the caliphate. That was a significant blow to the conservatives, for it isolated Istanbul, their stronghold, from politics and shifted the centre of gravity of political life to Anatolia. In this favourable political climate, and with what amounted to a legislative coup d'état against his rivals, on 29 October 1923, the assembly proclaimed Turkey a republic and elected Mustafa Kemal as its president. By establishing a republic, the Kemalists were proclaiming their commitment to modernity and equality, rather than the modernization and hierarchy of the old order. They were rejecting hierarchy and tradition, the foundations on which the old order had rested and which many nationalists, who went on to form the Progressive Republican Party in 1924, wished to maintain with the caliph as the president of the republic. Istanbul was also the bastion of the rising bourgeoisie, many of whose members would have preferred an American mandate instead of total independence – for they claimed that Washington would 'civilize' Turkey rapidly, as it had the Philippines! The Nationalists disagreed and in November, the assembly dispatched an Independence Tribunal to Istanbul, reoccupied by Nationalist forces in October, to crush any opposition.

The opposition in Istanbul urged the government to maintain the caliphate as an institution treasured by the entire Islamic world, a kind of Muslim pope, who would project Turkey's influence far and wide. Ankara responded by arresting the dissidents and abolishing the caliphate on 3 March 1924, and sending members of the Ottoman dynasty into exile. This event marked the beginning of the campaign to introduce modernity and secularism into the country, a campaign that continued virtually until Atatürk's death.

Mustafa Kemal's leadership remained insecure while he had doubts about the loyalty of the army. The army had won the war of liberation and enjoyed great prestige among the people. Kemal, now a marshal, had the support of many officers. But so did such generals as Kazım Karabekir and Ali Fuat Cebesoy, for they too had held successful commands during the First World War and the national struggle. Moreover they supported some traditional symbols of the Ottoman past, and were therefore supported by the traditional elements, especially by the old elite and the bourgeoisie in Istanbul. Kemal Pasha undermined their influence in the army by having the assembly pass a law forbidding officers on active service from being deputies. After the law came into force, the conservative opposition came out into the open and formed the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) in November 1924, as a rival to Mustafa Kemal's People's Party, which responded by adding 'republican' to its own name and becoming the Republican People's Party, the RPP.

Had the Kurdish tribes not rebelled in eastern Anatolia under Sheikh Said in February 1925, it is not clear how the Kemalists would have dealt with the challenge from the PRP. Would they have been able to dissolve the party and force its leaders out of politics? It is doubtful whether Mustafa Kemal would have taken such a risk, as the Progressive Republican leadership had strong support in the army. The Kurdish rebellion provided the pretext to dissolve the PRP and crush all opposition; it also allowed the regime to introduce radical reforms – the Hat Law, the closure of the Dervish orders, the introduction of a new civil and criminal code – reforms which brought modernity to Turkey, but were opposed by the conservatives. But the Kurdish rebellion also culminated in the establishment of an autocracy and marked the end of the first attempt at multi-party politics.

Mustafa Kemal, fearing a reaction from the army, was therefore lenient with the Progressive Party generals, neither executing nor imprisoning them. He was not so lenient with former Unionists. When a plot to assassinate him in Izmir was uncovered in June 1926, there were arrests and a trial that led to the hanging of four leading former Unionists. That marked the end of any open opposition to Mustafa Kemal's rule.

REPUBLICANISM TAKES ROOT

The new regime was finally secure: the old regime had been defeated, along with the nationalist conservatives and former Unionists. By 1926, Kemal felt confident enough to have his statue unveiled in Istanbul, an iconoclastic gesture in a predominantly Islamic society where the representation of the human form was looked upon as sinful. The following year (15–20 October 1927), he addressed his party's congress and gave his 'great speech', which provided his interpretation of the war of liberation and against what great odds it was fought and won. As the regime became more confident, further measures were taken to secularize and modernize Turkey. The article in the constitution that described Islam as the religion of the state was removed in 1928. The Roman alphabet replaced the Arabo-Persian script, marking a major rupture with the Ottoman past. Those who had been educated in the old script became illiterate overnight and were forced to learn the Roman letters so as to keep their jobs. Literacy in urban society increased and a new generation schooled in the new script grew up with the new ideology.

By 1930, Kemal Pasha felt sufficiently confident to experiment with a multi-party system once again. The first attempt, in 1924, had not been of his making but had been launched by rivals to challenge his leadership. This time he asked his friend Fethi Bey [Okyar], to form the Free Republican Party and act as loyal opposition to the RPP. The party was formed in August. But Kemal had misjudged the mood of the country and had not bargained for the new party's popularity, and the unpopularity of his own party. There were clashes between Free Party supporters and the gendarmerie at party rallies, and charges of electoral fraud. Therefore in November, Fethi Bey, who was a close friend of

Mustafa Kemal and not a political rival, decided to dissolve his party rather than be forced to challenge Mustafa Kemal directly.

The 'Menemen incident' in western Anatolia in December 1930, proved to be even more traumatic than the popularity of the Free Party. In the provincial town of Menemen, a Dervish sheikh called for the restoration of the Sharia and the caliphate. To make matters worse, he won the support of the crowd, even when he beheaded a reserve officer who had been sent to investigate. The incident exposed the shallow rootless character of the reforms and suggested that the reforms would not take root in society on their own. They would take root only to the extent that they were explained to the people and enjoyed public approval and support. But the Kemalists, confident that their reforms were good for the country, had made no attempt to explain their programme to the masses in the provinces. The masses, who had as yet gained nothing from the reforms and were suffering the consequences of the worldwide depression of the 1930s, found solace in the traditions and symbols of the past to which they were still attached. The Free Party under Fethi Bey had offered a modern leader and modern ideas. But in Menemen, the crowd had opted for traditional, obscurantist religious ideas that the Kemalists believed were totally unsuited to republican Turkey. They were shaken by the incident, and after a soul-searching debate concluded that the revolution required an ideology that would guide the people towards modernity and win their allegiance so that they would be able to substitute patriotism for religion.

The ideology that came to be known as Kemalism/Atatürkism was the result of the debate. It was launched in May 1931, at the third party congress, and consisted of six 'fundamental and unchanging principles', namely Republicanism (*Cumhuriyetçilik*), Nationalism/Patriotism (*Milliyetçilik*), Populism (*Halkçılık*), Statism (*Devletçilik*), Laicism/Secularism (*Laiklik*) and Revolutionism/Reformism (*İnkılapçılık*). These 'principles' became the RPP's six arrows, the symbol of its emblem, and were incorporated into the constitution in 1937. But their interpretation remained fluid and pragmatic, changing according to the needs of the growing bourgeoisie.

There was no room for compromise on 'republicanism', for that could mean the restoration of the Ottoman house and the sultan-

caliph. But nationalism/patriotism remained inclusive – territorial rather than ethnic. Kemal's aphorism of 1933 ('Happy is he who calls himself a Turk') opposed the idea of birth, blood, or ethnicity, an idea that was popular among the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy. Anyone who lived within the borders of the new Turkey could call himself a 'Turk'. That is how patriots interpreted *milliyetçilik* (patriotism/nationalism). The pan-Turkists on the other hand, possibly influenced by the fascist regimes in Europe, tended to adopt the dogmatic, ethnic, and linguistic interpretation of nationalism. The struggle between the two interpretations has continued to the present day. Atatürk was a patriot rather than a nationalist. Secularism or *laiklik* – the state's control of religion rather than its separation from the state – was equally open to interpretation and some took a liberal position, while others were militantly secular and shunned Islamic practice. *The Times* (London) of 14 May 1938 noted that the Turkish ambassador had chaired a meeting at the Ritz Hotel to celebrate the Prophet's birthday, hardly a sign of Kemalist militancy or dogmatism.

Statism had emerged as a principle of Kemalist ideology when the bourgeoisie had failed to support the Nationalists' economic programme, by failing to invest in the country's infrastructure; businessmen had bought foreign consumer goods while the Turkish government was forced to keep the tariffs low until 1929, as required by the Lausanne Treaty. The Nationalists were in the process of carrying out what was in effect a 'bourgeois revolution' – separating 'church and state'; introducing universal suffrage, including votes for women; a cabinet responsible to the assembly; and a secular educational system. Mustafa Kemal married into a prominent business family of İzmir, invested his own money in the newly founded Business Bank of Turkey, and encouraged local enterprise by passing laws to that effect. But all these measures were inadequate for the business community, which preferred quick, short-term profits to the long-term development the country required urgently. Statism, or state control, advocated a mixed economy, in which the state undertook to build the infrastructure (railways, mines, dams, industry, etc.) which private capital was too poor to invest in or did not find sufficiently profitable in the short term. By developing the infrastructure, the state subsidized the private sector and contributed to its growth. The

Kemalist regime that ruled Turkey was divided between statist bureaucrats and liberal free entrepreneurs; the latter viewed the regime as transitional and expected reforms that would hasten the progress of liberal capitalism rather than state capitalism in the country. Celal Bayar (1884–1986), a prominent liberal and the leader of the future Democrat Party (DP), was appointed minister of national economy in 1932. He recognized the importance of statism and was happy to see it included in the RPP's programme. But at the same time he was expected to discipline and control the statist element within the party. In November 1937, Atatürk replaced İsmet İnönü (1884–1973), his long-standing prime minister and a confirmed statist, with Celal Bayar. Throughout the thirties, Atatürk mediated between these two factions, but he tended to favour the liberals. Only after his death in November 1938, did the statist, led by İsmet İnönü, become dominant, until they were forced to liberalize after the Second World War.

ATATÜRK'S INFLUENCE ON THE NEW REPUBLIC

Kemalist reforms transformed, even revolutionized, the country. Atatürk also left his distinctive mark on Turkey's foreign relations. But here too he was a pragmatist, as his close relationship with the Soviet Union shows. Given the hostility of the West to both movements, the Kemalists and the Bolsheviks were natural allies. The Kemalists had no sympathy for communism at home and therefore crushed it ruthlessly, despite Kemal's good relations with Moscow, marked by the 1925 Treaty of Friendship. But Mustafa Kemal maintained Turkey's total independence, even if that meant angering Stalin by giving asylum to Trotsky, Stalin's arch-enemy, in 1929. His main concern was not to allow the West to treat Turkey as a semi-colony, as the West had treated the Ottoman Empire, or let the Soviet Union patronize Ankara and act as 'big brother'. Consequently, until Atatürk's death, Moscow dealt with Ankara on equal terms and the relationship remained cordial.

After Lausanne and the loss of Mosul in 1926 to British-mandated Iraq, Turkey's perception of geo-politics changed. Ankara turned away from the Arab Middle East, not because Turkey was hostile to the Arabs or to Islam, as conventional wisdom would have us believe, but because the Arab world had

lost its independence to Britain and France and was incapable of acting independently. However, Turkey's relations with Iran – a Muslim and Middle Eastern state – remained cordial, as the shah's visit to Turkey in June 1934 demonstrated. Ankara even established friendly relations with distant Afghanistan, another Muslim country which tried to emulate the Kemalists. However, Turkey's primary concern was with the Balkans, because of what was described as the 'Mediterranean Question', namely, Mussolini's ambition to expand Italy's sphere of influence in the region. Atatürk took Mussolini's pretensions seriously. That is why he had signed the treaty with Greece in October 1930, during the Greek prime minister, Eleutherios Venizelos' visit, and entered into an entente with the Balkan states in 1934.

Turkey joined the League of Nations in July 1932 and lent its support to the principle of 'collective security' against aggression. Earlier, in 1929, the Franco-American Briand–Kellogg Pact that renounced war as an instrument of national policy was ratified by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. An agreement with Rome on neutrality signed in 1928 and the June 1930 accord with Greece confirmed the desire for 'peace abroad'. But Atatürk's support for collective security went beyond words. When the League applied sanctions against Italian aggression in Ethiopia, Ankara agreed not to trade with Rome even although Rome, was an important trading partner during the depressed 1930s.

The Kemalists were critical of the West's policy of appeasing the dictators, Hitler and Mussolini. Atatürk used the threat of aggression to win support for the remilitarization of the straits. The Montreux Convention, signed in July 1936, was important because Turkey was treated as an equal for the first time by the Western powers, and freed from another restraint imposed by the Treaty of Lausanne. The Convention coincided with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and once again Atatürk supported collective security. In September 1937, the Mediterranean states convened the Nyon Conference and denounced 'Italian piracy'. The Turkish delegation, acting on Atatürk's personal instructions and not those of the İnönü government, permitted British and French ships to use Turkish naval bases to prevent Italian aggression in the Mediterranean; the İnönü cabinet was opposed to this measure on the grounds that Rome would find it provocative.

Though cordial relations with Moscow remained the cornerstone of Turkey's foreign policy, Ankara understood the value of a friendly Britain, the foremost naval power in the world. In September 1936, the unofficial visit of King Edward VIII was treated as a state visit, and Atatürk was photographed frequently with the king. The king's visit to Turkey suggested that the country was regarded in London as an important factor in international politics and worthy of being treated as an equal. Atatürk's desire to come closer to foreign democracies had an impact on domestic politics as well. It led to the dismissal of Recep Peker, the autocratic and statist secretary-general of the RPP, who is said to have given the regime a 'fascist colouring'.

Atatürk continued to oppose the aggressive policies of the fascist dictators. The press was critical of the Munich agreement of September 1938, by which Britain and France agreed to abandon Czechoslovakia to Hitler. Remembering their own national struggle, journalists lamented that the Czechs could have maintained their dignity, if not their independence, had they fought against German aggression. Atatürk's policy of opposition to appeasement was so rare in the 1930s that the British author, George Orwell, wrote: 'In the years 1935-9, when almost any ally against Fascism seemed acceptable, left-wingers found themselves praising Mustafa Kemal'.

By October 1938, official bulletins based on his doctors' reports noted that Atatürk was very ill. He was too ill to participate in the celebrations of the fifteenth anniversary of the republic on 29 October. When the new session of the Grand National Assembly was opened on 1 November, the president's speech was read by the prime minister, Celal Bayar. Nine days later, on 10 November, the country learned that Atatürk had died.

In his fifteen years as president of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk had succeeded in creating a nation that had acquired a new identity and was virtually self-sufficient and independent. He had begun the process of converting a country from its semi-feudal, agrarian base into a modern industrial economy. All the nation's energies had been directed to progress at home, while the goal of Turkey's foreign policy was to maintain the status quo. When the republic was founded in 1923, Turkey had been incapable of producing something as simple as safety matches. But by

the mid-thirties, factories were producing textiles, sugar, paper, and cement, while a British company was in the process of setting up an iron and steel industry. Such foreign-owned enterprises as the railways were purchased by the state and nationalized, although the term adopted was not 'nationalization' but 'statification'. More railway lines were constructed and fused into a national system, whose aim was to create a national market. Turkey was now able to feed itself and export some of its produce to Europe. She was also self-sufficient in such raw materials as wool and cotton, for use by its nascent textile industry, as well as coal from the mines on the Black Sea.

In the mid-twenties, after the transfer of population between Greece and Turkey, people complained that Turks were incapable of doing the most modest technical tasks of plumbing or cobbling, because such work had been monopolized by the non-Muslims. But within a few years, the 'new Turk' had learned to take on all the professions required by a modern society, from railwayman to bank clerk, while women now worked in the textile mills and as secretaries, as well as in the professions.

Atatürk was not like the dictators of the thirties. He made speeches, but never in front of large crowds at organized rallies as Hitler and Mussolini had done. He wanted to mould his people rather than mobilize or energize them in order to manipulate them. He wanted to convince them to accept his reform programme, for he had no plan of irredentism or conquest. Unlike contemporary leaders, his charisma was not based on the promise of territorial expansion. His programme was principally domestic, and the only territorial gain the republic made was to obtain Iskenderun or Alexandretta in 1938 from Syria, which was then under the French mandate. But in 1926, he was forced to cede Mosul, with its oil, to British-controlled Iraq. He did not rule the society he came to lead by means of traditionalist social convictions and symbols as, for example, General Franco did in Spain after 1936. He preferred to create a new ideology and symbology which were in keeping with the needs of the twentieth century. Not being a conservative, he feared neither secular modernism nor liberal democracy, though he saw the latter as a brake on his own radicalism. Only Marxism, with its analysis of society based on classes and class conflict, provided an alternative to Kemalism and he refused to confront it.

Though he did not practise them fully in his own lifetime, Atatürk accepted the rationale of such liberal institutions as political parties, trade unions, a free press, and freedom of speech. The assumption of the regime was that these institutions would be introduced as soon as Turkish society had achieved the requisite stage of development. When Atatürk died in November 1938, the new generation that had grown up in the republic thought that everything they had known had died with him. It was difficult for many to imagine a Turkey without Atatürk, for he had become synonymous with the republic and the new Turkey. His successors were therefore faced with the difficult task of establishing their authority in order to rule a country that was still in the process of maturing.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (The Overlook Press, New York, 1999).

Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Özbudun, *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State* (Hurst, London, 1981).