
Dr. A. Altay Unaltay

Opening Up a Window To Turkish Patriotism

Dr. Unaltay is a journalist from the Turkish newspaper Yarin.

I'll start my words with Kemal Atatürk's letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

To: His Excellency
Franklin D. Roosevelt
President of the United States of America
Washington, D.C.

June 6, 1937

My dear Mr. President:

I received with genuine pleasure your kind letter of April 6, 1937, in which you tell me of your contentment with having seen the moving pictures recently taken in Turkey by Mr. Julian Bryan. You also express the hope that you and I will meet some day, as soon as circumstances will permit.

Believe me, dear Mr. President, that I am very thankful to you for your sincere feelings and your appreciative understanding of the progress realized in modern Turkey.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express once again my admiration for the United States of America, especially since our respective countries cherish the same ideal which is universal peace and welfare of humanity.

It is also my earnest desire to meet you soon, and so I am impatiently looking forward to the day when I shall have the great pleasure of welcoming in Turkey your charming and powerful personality which has accomplished so many great things. With best regards and good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
M. Kemal Atatürk

What was Kemal Atatürk's political legacy? This is highly controversial among Turks today.

Right now, there are two opposing principles in action, in Turkey:

- One is the patriotic view supporting national sovereignty and coordination among equal democratic nation-states on Earth, which *Yarin*, my journal, is part of.



Dr. Altay Unaltay: "It is time to come back to the 'patriotic' spirit of the Turkish nation-state, abandoning the 'nationalist' one. This means, grasp the entity which is called Turkey, from its aspect of the homeland . . . rather than from its aspect of ethnicity, which is not one, but many."

- The other one is Turkish globalism, which is ready to sacrifice everything sacred, like religion or national identity, at the altar of Western integration, be it with the EU or by joining the U.S. global club of "winners." I call it, sacrificing Muhammad and Kemal Atatürk at the altar of Jupiter, the Roman god. And as you see, this is not a unique Turkish phenomenon. Nowadays there are people in every country, who are ready to sacrifice the honorable memories of their national heroes for Jupiter. And, I fear, Jesus himself is no exception for them.

Coming back to Turkish politics, the rift line between the two principles goes through every niche of Turkish political life, like Kemalists, leftists, nationalists, conservatives, and Islamists.

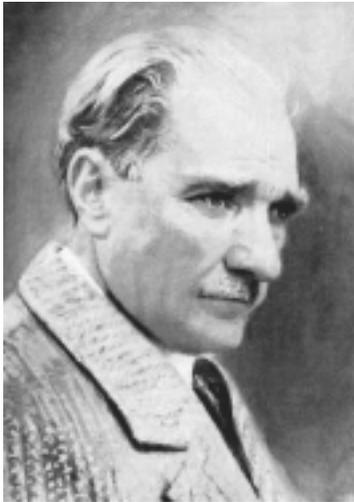
Because the Turkish media is largely under control of Turkish big money (as is the case in every country), which favors globalism, globalist political literature seems to be more voicy, or more noisy, if I may say it, in Turkey.

The patriotic movement favoring preservation of national independence and democratic sovereignty has many supporters among government circles, intellectuals, labor and petit bourgeoisie, as well as among associations of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Imperial Divide and Rule

After this introduction, how do we, the *Yarin* team, regard the events in the Middle East and Caucasia?

First of all, some words on the Greater Middle East Project: We don't believe that there is any Middle East Project offering solutions, right or wrong, to Middle Eastern ills. This term is a camouflage for the attempt to destabilize the Middle East and destroy nation-state entities, so as to take back history to the tribal age. The plan is to manipulate small ethnic and religious communities into endemic hostilities and



Mustapha Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, wrote to President Franklin D. Roosevelt that their two countries “cherish the same ideal which is universal peace and welfare of humanity.”

clashes against each other. Once this is established, the U.S. and its allies will go in as mediators and peacemakers. This is the “divide and rule” politics Britain once perpetrated in India via its East India Co. Britain, then, pushed the Raja princedoms into wars against each other. And siding with this or that party, she made herself the indispensable ally for every political entity in India. Finally, power fell into British hands like a “ripe fruit,” as we say in Turkish.

I think, the British, with all these experiences, will help the U.S. a lot in this neo-colonization process in the Middle East. Iraq was the first experiment for this, because Iraq was the most advanced nation of the Middle East proper, on the verge of becoming a modern nation-state. I remember with sorrow [in view of the destruction of Iraq today], that after a long struggle for education, Baghdadi people are now speaking *Arabi Faseeh* (the Arabic counterpart of Oxford English), a dialect of scholars, in which the Koran, the Holy Book of Muslims, was revealed. So, Iraq took a basic step, forming a national language, on its way to nation-statehood.

Why is it so important to set the Middle East again in turmoil? It is also widely claimed, that many regimes here are more supported by Anglo-U.S. imperialism than by their own people. For this, we have to go in the imbedded ills of global capitalism, as Lyndon LaRouche pointed out many times before.

In the year 2000, all hopes faded, concerning the so-called high-tech economy in the West. Companies, mainly operating on Internet, software, and related areas, massively went bankrupt. The American motto, “Don’t look at Dow-Jones, look at Nasdaq,” was abandoned, because Nasdaq was worse than Dow-Jones. Before that, the spectacular Bill Gates proclaimed the era of “friction-free capitalism,” which means modern high-tech communication systems would feed the supplier and the consumer with fast and adequate information, so the best options in sales and purchases get realized, as it was once claimed by the theoretical fathers of free-market

capitalism. But then, it turned out that the modern market, though having the means of speed-of-light communication, was not “friction-free.” Claims that the modern, high-tech, virtual economy will override capitalism’s periodic crises, were all trashed. It was again realized, that classical economy prevails, and, that classical industry as the basis for classical economy is indispensable. Now the economies will turn away from the “post-industrial society” myth, and will have to stop industrial deconstruction.

On the other hand, under conditions of a “global market competition” or “global dog-eat-dog system,” leading economies will need cheap energy to compete, so it is not surprising, that the Bush Administration turns back to “direct colonization-direct confiscation” methods of the 19th Century. At times this colonization was done under the banner of a “*mission civilisatrice*” [civilizing mission]; now it’s done as “*mission democratrice*,” or “democratic imperialism.” Not surprisingly, as people who go from physician to physician to find a cure for their lethal illness, and at the end turn to quacks and magicians for a final hope, modern capitalist economies abandoning all hope in “post-industrial” and “high-tech” society schemes, in the end turn to 19th-Century-style colonization. But the illness of this system is incurable; quacks and magicians are no answer, as 19th-Century colonization also isn’t.

Can Anglo-U.S. imperialism succeed in perpetrating this turmoil, or in other words, in perpetrating this Dark Age? Regarding the “post-modern mental confusion,” the whole world suffers, and it is not easy to say, it cannot.

Even in my country, many Muslim scholars are recruited for the so-called “Greater Middle East Project,” to carry out research on how to modernize Islam. I think, despite many deficiencies, the Turkish Republic was and is the right answer for modern Islam. I don’t say everything is fine in my country, as this is not the case in any country throughout the world today.

There are claims in Turkey, on the one extreme, that Turkish-Islamic civilization ended with the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. What follows is total Western barbarism; so we have to work to bring back the empire and the caliphate.

Turkey’s Discussion About Its Future

There are also other claims in Turkey, which are on the opposite extreme, that civilization began in my country with the advent of the Republic. According to this view, what came before, was a pre-civilization era of backwardness.

We say, neither this nor that. The Republic is a normal and logical consequence of what happened in the Ottoman era. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated, because it had to. And the new Republic is in many aspects, a continuation of Ottoman civilization adapted to the Modern Age’s standards.

The Ottoman Empire was based on Islam, though there were many non-Muslims among her subjects. The Ottoman Sultan was also the caliph of all Muslims. Since Sultan

Mehmed the Conqueror, Ottoman Sultans also adorned themselves with the title, Emperor of the Orthodox, thereby granting the Orthodox Patriarch equal status with the *Sheikh-ulislam*, head of the Muslim *Ulama*, or scholars, in official protocols. But, because the majority of subjects and the Ottoman ruling elite were Muslims, Islam was the foundation of Ottoman power.

But despite this fact, and contrary to theocratic practices in contemporary Europe of those times, power was in the hands of a secular ruler, and not in the hands of a certain theocracy.

Contrary to the practices initiated by the theory of “The Two Swords” of *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, so that medieval European history was torn in quarrels between state power and church power, the Ottomans were unaware of this sort of conflict. The church or the mosque was part of the state apparatus, and the clergy was subordinate to a supreme ruler of state and religion. Adopted from the Byzantines, this practice is called “Caesaro-papism.” And it also was the practice in Orthodox Tsarist Russia. And it had its long-lasting effects in both countries.

Neither in Tsarist Russian, nor in Ottoman Turkish history, is there any independent field of social action, which is outside state power. Everything is supposed to be controlled centrally (though things may sometimes differ in practice), and this political tradition over centuries created a different socio-political atmosphere, which was difficult for Westerners to grasp, so they preferred to brand it as “Oriental Despotism.”

Please note that in explaining this, I don’t say it is something good or something bad, but I say it is something different.

The Russian and Turkish nations and states are shaped by this historical tradition, and in this sense they are both different from their Western counterparts.

Comparison to Iran

A logical outcome of this tradition is, that our social life is monolithic. There are no separate and independent spheres in our social life, so every social affair becomes political from its very beginning. In my country, businessmen search for ways to solve the Kurdish problem, whereas the military has a say in religious affairs; politicians from left and right alike visit shrines of religious saints, with different shrines of saints preserved for different political orientations; leftist Sufi saints and rightist Sufi saints, if I may say so.

All this is in contrast with Shi’ite Iran. Though religion also has been in the social center in Iran, the rift between the *Ulama* or mullahs, and secular powers, has always been apparent.

For a long time, the Iranian *Ulama* kept themselves outside the state apparatus, because there was also some sort of “Two Swords” policy. Shi’ite theory says, all earthly powers are categorically illegal until the advent of the *Mahdi*, or the

Muslim Messiah. But any power, as long as it serves the Muslims with justice and preserves security, may be tolerated. And the *Ulama* should keep watch over it, which means up and down, they interfere in political affairs. Iranian history is branded by quarrels and tensions between *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, Muslim-style. So it was very normal to expect the Iranian *Ulama* to seize power from the secular state one day, and form some sort of theocracy, as was the case in the medieval West. But, this also means that Iran one day will turn into a Western-style society, much earlier than Russia or Turkey. If this analysis is amazing to you, I should recall, that theocracy is a Western innovation, never seen in the East before. This analysis also reveals why there was an Islamic revolution in Iran, and why there can’t be in Turkey, though I can’t say my country is “less Islamic” or “less religious.”

The Nation and Islam

In 1924, Turkey became a secular Republic, and Islam as the foundation of power was replaced by the nation as the foundation of power. “Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation,” is what is written on the front wall of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. We have a secular nation-state now.

But if we look carefully at it, we see some features which are more in common with the Ottoman past, than with any ideal model of secular state. As I said before, the Ottoman mosque and *madrassa*, or Islamic temples and higher education system, were part of the state apparatus. And the *Sheikh-ulislam* was head of it. If we look at the appointment procedure of the *Sheikhulislam*, we see that he was appointed by the Sultan’s edict, on the proposal of the Grand Vizier, or the *Sadrizam*. Now we have a certain official body of the Religious Affairs Office in the Turkish state apparatus. This body controls all the mosques and religious education. The Head of Religious Affairs is appointed by Presidential decree on the proposal of the Prime Minister. This is just to name one similarity.

Religion in Turkey is too much state-controlled, and we think it is time now to really separate state affairs and religious affairs, thereby granting religious institutions an independent status in the form of foundations. This for the “secular” aspect of our secular nation-state.

Now coming to the “national” aspect of the Turkish nation-state, first we see Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic, say, “Happy is the one who says, I’m a Turk.” “The people of Turkey, who founded the Republic, are called the Turkish nation” is also quoted from him. Both statements testify, that what is called the Turkish nation, is not an ethnically homogenous entity, and that the founders of the Republic were aware of it.

After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the last Ottoman Parliament summit passed a resolution, known as “*Misak-i Milli*,” or “the National Oath.” The National Oath meant, that after Ottoman disintegration, all the

people who wished to stay together to share a common destiny and commit themselves to a common self-determination, form the “nation,” and the lands these people were living on, formed the “homeland.”

This “patriotism,” based on a social contract, or “the National Oath,” to stand united, and face in unity the difficulties of forming the Republican Phoenix from Ottoman ashes, was the very foundation of the new Republic. Turkish patriotism was based on a Turkish homeland, suggesting equal rights among countries and everlasting peace on the basis of acknowledgement of mutual sovereignties. “Peace at home, and peace abroad” said Kemal Atatürk.

But later, after Atatürk’s death, this Turkish patriotism gradually degenerated into Turkish nationalism, exalting only one ethnic background, as the legal basis of the Turkish nation. The existence of other ethnicities was denied for a long time.

Now we say, it is time to come back to the “patriotic” spirit of the Turkish nation-state, abandoning the “nationalist” one. This means, grasp the entity which is called Turkey, from its aspect of the homeland—“motherland” is what we say in Turkish—rather than from its aspect of ethnicity, which is not one, but many.

Ladies and gentleman, I tried to open you up a window to Turkey, my homeland, from a different perspective, the *Yarin* journal’s perspective. I thank you for your attention.