

The Challenges Facing an Emerging Turkey

By Mike Spear

My primary interests in Turkey, a country of nearly 69 million people are threefold: Will Turkey be admitted to the European Union, and if so, when? Will Turkey reach an acceptable resolution for all concerned involving the Kurdish people? And will the Turks and Greeks find a solution on Cyprus?

The answers to these questions are layered and involved. For example, a number of factors complicate Turkey's acceptance into the European Union. An emerging nation, Turkey rather quickly during recent times has grown with a vitality and potency that manifests itself in several ways. Its main cities of Istanbul (13 million), Ankara (3.5 Million), and Izmir (3 million) have jumped in population. And they appear, in some ways, as modern as New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Even camels and camel wrestling, which were not uncommon in the Izmir region in the 1970s, have vanished into the eastern regions of the country, except in high-volume tourist spots. Caravanserai's, the old camel driver "motels," have become tourists attractions.

Turkey, an amalgam of East and West cultures has leaned toward the West since the days of the Ottoman Empire. It was the Ottoman state that first felt the conflict between modernity and the Islamic world. That leaning strengthened with the arrival of Mustafa Kemal, known as Ataturk, and the formation of the republic in 1923. Istanbul exemplifies this. The French writer Jean Cocteau described the city as a beautiful lady who stretches her hands across two continents with jewels on each finger.

When the country was formed with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the large population of Kurds and Greeks in the country was ignored. The treaty singled out only Armenians, Greeks and Jews for protection. Then in 1925, the huge Greek population in Anatolia was sent to Greece under a somewhat humane population exchange. This came roughly 10 years after the expulsion of Armenians from the region. Labeled a genocide, more than 1 million Armenians were reported murdered. This issue hangs in the minds of Europeans when they consider Turkey as a member of the EU.

Turkey and the EU

Turkey's efforts to enter the EU span more than 40 years and the prospects for its entry are not bright. Its population, a mosaic of only about 50 percent Turks, has jumped exponentially. More than 60 percent of the population is aged 30 or under. Its population may soon surpass that of any country in the EU. This huge population would allow Turkey—a bit larger than Texas—to be the largest voting bloc in the EU, which, no doubt, would not sit well with Europeans. Turkey also has a large, well-trained army that may be unmatched in the EU. Yet, if it were admitted to the EU now, it would be the EU's poorest country. One of the reasons the Turkish economy remains significantly understated is its huge black economy, which is made up of unregistered employees who don't pay taxes or receive state benefits. This group makes up about 30 percent of the official Gross Domestic Product. Still, Turkey's GDP in 2004 was up more than 8 percent from 2003, a rate that no country in the EU could match.

Turkey's secular democracy is estimated to be 99 percent Islamic. Secular means that there is a distinct separation between the church and state. This is the legacy of Ataturk, and the Turkish military has been unrelenting in maintaining this status quo. Even the more highly religious Muslims have accepted this. Another factor that may be bothersome to EU members is that Turkey still does not seem to have, for want of a better term, a European way of life—not with such things as calls to prayer over loud speakers in its cities five times a day, or honor killings which still occur in the eastern regions of the country. It's still the East in a number of ways regardless of all the efforts to the contrary, intensified in the last 30 years, that started with Ataturk. Recently these changes have included such things as abolition of capital punishment, dropping many restrictions on the Kurds, allowing a somewhat freer press, abolition of random searches without a court order, and a ban on torture. Adherence to the latter has been problematic because change in habit is often difficult. In 2004, 337 people claimed to have been tortured compared with 340 the year before, according to the Turkish Human Rights Foundation.

Turkey, a country where prostitution is legal, is well aware also that the West looks unfavorably on its growing sex trade in which potentially meretricious women are imported from or abducted in Russia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Georgia and Iran and forced into prostitution in “general houses” in Turkish cities. Known as “Natashas,” these “ladies of the night” have involved more than 1,000 women annually in recent years.

Another problem for the EU, is that Turkey is becoming a staging area for illegal migration to other countries. Turkey has made some progress against this and the sex trade to appease both the EU and the United States, which pours financial aid into the country.

Another aspect of the country that causes Europeans pause is the way police mass by the hundreds in the large cities to deal with protests. Turkey has made progress in respecting the rights of its citizens, The New York Times reported in April, but that progress was marred by vicious beating of International Women's Day demonstrators by police in March, evidence that violent repression lingers. Also, there are disturbing signs that the government is flagging in its commitments to freedom of expression, the Times reported. The press is often intimidated and threatened when reporting government activities in a less than favorable light. And the Army is quick to suppress activities that may or may not be a threat to the government.

The Turkish government also shows signs of failing to keep its pledge to help more than 300,000 Kurds who were expelled from their villages by security forces more than a decade ago, according to the Times. Most are scratching out a living in urban slums because they fear government-installed paramilitary guards, who have been attacking and sometimes killing returning refugees, the Human Right Watch reported in March.

Then too, over the years, there has been significant instability in the burgeoning secular democracy, with military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and the military intervention in 1997-98. Yet after each, the military, after a time, allowed the government to return to civilian hands. The military, nevertheless, continued to look over the civilian government's shoulder. The country may be past these military takeovers now. That is the opinion of Maj. Gen. Cenguiz Arslan, Chief of Strategy and Force Planning Department, Turkish General Staff. “Secularism in Turkey does not need the Army as a guard anymore,” he said in May.

As for the prospects of entering the EU, and the coming October talks, Arslan said that whether or not that occurs the fact is that “Turkey has already invaded Europe.” Turks have been emigrating to European cities for years. There are 2.5 million Turks in Germany alone.

“We will integrate, no matter what,” Arslan said. “They need us. We will integrate and we will all change.”

What this means, Arslan said, is that Turkey’s growth and development will mean that Europe will eventually need Turkey. He said, “We accept being the bride, because it is the groom that does all the changing.” A prerequisite to the October talks was supposed to be formalized relations with the EU’s new members, including the Cyprus Greek government.

In referring to the long quest to enter the EU, Arslan used the Turkish parable of Mecnun’s love for the beautiful Leyla in which Mecnun, after some years of unrequited love, discovers that she is not all he thought she was. That could be the case with Turkey and the EU, he says. “Look,” he said, “they’ve been organized for 40 years and they can’t even agree on a constitution.” A month later, as if to emphasize that point, France, then the Netherlands, voted down the EU constitution. The “No” vote in both countries was a clear message that European integration has gone awry. The “No” vote could set the continent’s plans back for years, the Associated Press reported.

The action in France brought political disarray to that country, and forced President Jacques Chirac, amid calls for his resignation, to replace his prime minister in order to save his government. And in the Netherlands, Dutch liberals worried that a more united EU would weaken liberal socialist policies and conservatives feared losing control of immigration, according to the Associated Press.

All 25 of the EU countries must ratify the constitution for it to take effect as planned on November 1, 2006. Nine countries already have done so. They include Austria, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. The EU constitution was designed to further unify the 25-nation bloc and give it more clout on the world stage. But the draft document must have the approval of all nations to take effect.

Not only were Turkey’s chances of getting into the EU damaged by the French and Dutch referendums but also by the expected return to power in Germany of the Christian Democrats who are opposed to Turkish membership, according to former Ambassador Morton Abramowitz, writing recently in the Wall Street Journal. Pessimism about Turkey’s EU entry is creeping into the public domain and raising questions about whether Turkey should take more politically painful domestic reforms if entry prospects are receding, he said.

The United States is a strong supporter of Turkey’s entry into the EU, but Gen. Arslan and Turkish leaders must wonder why the U.S did not consult Turkey about Democracy in Iraq, since Turkey has 80 years of experience with democracy.

“We need some explanation from the U.S. on the ideological war on terrorism,” he said. “We should find the ideological cause that will establish democracy in those countries. We need to improve the prerequisites. No one can know better than Turkey about democracy in this part of the world.”

Turkey long has had strong ties with Europe. It has been an economic, political and military member of the Western bloc for many years, having memberships in NATO, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and its

associate membership in the EU, which began in 1963. It formally applied for full EU membership in 1987. Its hopes were raised when it was officially recognized as a candidate in 1999. When it met most conditions in 2004 established by the EU in 2002, the October date for the talks was set. The election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan as prime minister in 2002 helped Turkey's chances. At the time, he was quoted as saying: "Our most urgent issue is the EU, and I will send colleagues to Europe. We have no time to lose."

The approval of Turkey as an equal, free, strong member of the Western world will send a strong message from Palestine to Indonesia that Moslems can interact with the West economically, politically and through other peaceful ways by following Turkey's example, according to a recent article in Turkish Weekly by Sedat Laciner, director of the International Strategic Research Organization in Ankara. So, while Turkey's EU membership will strengthen Turkish Islam and help it find more adherents around the world, the feeling of victimization that radicalizes Moslems and leads them to marginal groups, will be weakened, he said, and this can be taken as the first step to dry the terror swamps among the Moslems.

EU entry would allow Turkey to catch up with the modernity of Europe, and people of the Middle East would consider this a great success, former Turkish leader Suleyman Demirel said in a recent interview published in the Turkish Policy Weekly. Being refused would harm Turkey's image not only in the Middle East but also in the Caucasus, the Balkans and Central Asia, he said.

Professor H. Pinar Bilgin, of the Department of International Relations at Bilkent University in Ankara, was no more optimistic than Arslan about Turkey's entry. Asked when Turkey might join the EU, she barely hesitated to answer, "In at least 15 years."

She points to France's Valery Giscard d'Estaing's remark that Turkey's capital was not in Europe and that 95 percent of its population was outside of Europe. Then there are the skeptics who say that the EU will never let Turkey in because it is Muslim, she says.

Among issues of concern to the EU are migration and security, Bilgin says. Whereas European countries used non-military agencies to enforce security, Turkey used its military. And the EU doesn't want Turkey's migration problems to become its problems, she says.

With Turkey's push to become a EU member, the Armenian issue continues to come to the fore. Even though European heads of state have repeatedly raised the subject, Turkey, despite its zeal to demonstrate its European credentials, continues to reject the claim that genocide occurred against the Armenians in Turkey in 1915.

Another hurdle that Turkey must jump to get full EU membership is Cyprus. And on this issue, Turkey has been willing to compromise.

Cyprus:

Pressured by the EU to change its stand on Cyprus, the 160,000 Turkish Cypriots agreed to a United Nations plan in 2004 to unite both sides of the Island. They did this with the expectation that EU countries and the United States would lean hard on Greek Cyprus to accept the deal and, at a minimum, end the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, according to Abramowitz's Wall Street Journal piece. But Greek Cyprus turned the deal down with little political cost and is now preventing the EU from helping

Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots are using their leverage as EU members to force more concessions from Turkish Cypriots. They continue to receive international economic and EU aid on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots, none of which finds its way to the north.

Unity on Cyprus seems a long way off. The island is divided by ethnicity, language and religion. About 80 percent of the population speaks Greek and are Greek Orthodox Christians and about 20 percent are Turkish-speaking Muslims.

The conflict between the two populations has its roots in a bloody struggle between religions that goes back to the Middle Ages with the gradual conquest of the Greek-speaking Byzantine empire by the Turks. The main goal of the Greek Cypriots is “enosis,” which is union with Greece.

This issue has had a negative effect not only on the relations between the two countries but the overall security in the eastern Mediterranean. Turkey is particularly aware of this since it is at the epicenter of one of the world’s most unstable regions—the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Balkans.

A partnership between Turkey and Greece on Cyprus was established in 1960 that lasted only three years before suspicion and distrust led to a civil war between them. In 1974 when the Greek Cypriots wanted to merge the island with Greece, Turkey intervened and occupied 36 percent of the island, then expelled about 180,000 Greeks from their homes in the north. The Greeks feared that Turkey, with its overwhelming military superiority, would take over the whole island. The result was the division of the island into Turkish rule in the north and Greek rule in the south. Both distrust and are afraid of each other. Turkey currently has 35,000 troops on the island.

One interesting aspect of this division was that the Greek Cypriots wanted to return to north Cyprus, but the Turkish Cypriots did not want to return to the south.

The media in both regions are enhancing this fear and mistrust. Schools are providing biased indoctrination for new generations in both communities, and the Greek church plays an important role in this indoctrination. On the Greek Cypriot side, even primary school children are taken to the border to be shown their enemy on the other side. A Turkish journalist who visited the Greek side saw children taken to the border by their teacher. The students stuck close to each other with fear in their faces, no doubt fearing the evil monsters, the Turks, on the other side, the journalist reported.

The Annan Plan for Cyprus proposed by U.N. President Kofi Annan in 2002, was heavily based on the Swiss model of government in which cantons preserve wide independence but form a common state at the federal level. Its intricacies and ambiguities did not satisfy the two sides. Annan and his team revised the plan twice but couldn’t get it approved.

Professor Zeliha Sezgin Khashman, head of the International Relations Department at Near East University in North Cyprus, writes, “It can be argued that one of the reasons for the failure of negotiations is that the large-group identity and the large-group rituals in both Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities have been encoded in the negotiation process for 40 years. The shared mental representations of past traumas are engraved in both Turkish and Greek identities.”

It is true that restrictions on the buffer zone between the two populations have eased a bit recently, but no real progress has been made toward unification of the island, even though newly elected Prime Minister Mahmet Ali Talat of the Turkish-controlled north

is a keen advocate of reunification, unlike the former Turkish Cyprus leader Raul Denktash.

Khashman thinks the “tree model,” developed at the University of Virginia, might best solve the problem of unity. It is an interdisciplinary approach to conflict reduction that is built on modern psychoanalytic ideas and carried out by a team that includes psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, diplomats, historians and other social scientists, she says.

“The most important difference between the tree model and other unofficial methods used in conflict resolution is the attention paid to the conscious and unconscious psychology of nations and groups in conflict,” she says. She thinks the conflict is ripe for resolution because the context and the time are right for activating the majority of the citizens, eager to join the EU to work for peace.

Under the tree model, a multi-year process, three components come into play. 1. psychopolitical diagnosis (roots of the tree.) 2. psychopolitical dialogues (the trunk of the tree.) 3. institution building (branches of the tree).

In referring to the lack of agreement on the 1960 effort, Khashman sees an urgent need for a multimodal and multilevel effort in order to create in Cyprus a foundation that will sustain any agreement that might take place.

One thing that may help bring about eventual unification on the island is the lure of passports provided by Greek Cypriots for Turkish Cypriots that enable the Turks to find work outside their northern enclave, including anywhere in the EU. About 30,000 Turks have obtained the passports and about 50,000 are awaiting them from the south. Some Greek Cypriot leaders think this might lead to unification under Greek domination rather than a U.N. plan. But Talat and many Turkish Cypriots want the U.N. process revived.

Claims by Greeks Cypriots in EU courts for recovery of the land taken by the Turks in the north when the country was divided are another problem that arose recently. Talat calls this an effort by the Greeks to frighten Turks by blocking efforts to improve the northern Turkish Cypriot economy with pointless property trials in the European Court of Human Rights. It will be difficult to find a solution to the trials unless the Cyprus problem is solved first, he said.

Foreigners aren't investing in northern Cyprus property now because of the ambiguous circumstances surrounding ownership of land there, according to Dervis Eroglu, leader of the main opposition National Unity Party,

If Cyprus appears to be a more immediate problem for Turkey, the Kurds represent a long-term problem.

The Kurds

The Kurds, whose ancestors came from areas of Mesopotamia and eastern Anatolia long before the Turks arrived, disliked being called Turks from the beginning of the republic, and were quick to demand autonomy. Holders of extreme religious beliefs and combative, they still live in a number of countries, including Iraq, Iran, Syria, Germany, Russia and Turkey where the largest group, estimated at 12 million, lives. They are concentrated in a heartland called Kurdistan, an entity without legal borders, that spans southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, Iran and parts of Syria. Their numbers may be as high as 35 million. One historian calls those in Turkey co-owners of the country.

The Kurds have their own culture, history and language, which is Indo-European and related to Persian and has two main dialects -- Zaza and Kirmanci. They are a non-Arab,

mostly Sunni Muslim people, and they are the largest ethnic group lacking a state in the world today.

They came close to having an independent state shortly after WWI for a short time. The victors of that war, including the United States, agreed to give them their own independent state in the Treaty of Sevres (1920), which carved up the Ottoman Empire after its defeat. The Kurds were hopeful until the new leader of the country, Ataturk, forced the re-negotiation of the treaty. This came about under the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), which made no allowances for an independent Kurdish state.

The Kurds did not give up and succeeded in establishing the Republic of Mahabad, with Soviet backing in 1946. But a year later the shah of Iran crushed it. Then in 1979, the turmoil of Iran's revolution allowed the Kurds to establish, for a short time, an unofficial border area free of Iranian government control.

In 1991, following the first Gulf War, the Kurds again got a taste of autonomy, but this was in Iraq. This came three years after Saddam used gas to kill thousands of Kurds in the north of Iraq after the Iraq-Iran war. In this "al Anfal" (spoils of war) or ethnic cleansing in 1988 and 1989, he sought to clear hundreds of Kurds from villages near the border. All told, he forced more than a million to flee from their homes. Many of these were given refuge by Turkey as were refugees earlier fleeing Afghanistan during its war with the Soviet Union.

Three years later, the Kurds faced continued difficulty in Iraq. Saddam's regime was left intact in Baghdad, and when a Kurdish rebellion against Baghdad failed, the United States and its allies created a de facto Kurdish autonomous zone in the "no-fly zone" in northern Iraq. This gave the Kurds their first real experience with autonomy. The two Kurdish regional governments are run by Jalal Talabani (now president of Iraq) and Masoud Barzani. These rival groups signed a peace agreement in 1995, ending a four-year war. Talabani and Barzani were appointed to the Iraq Governing Council in 2003. The police and the military in the region are populated and managed by Kurds. Many observers believe that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to get the Kurds in northern Iraq to give this up.

It was easy for the Turkish government to look askance at the Kurdish situation there. The Turkish government sees this as a potential model for Kurdish autonomy that Kurds in Turkey might adopt. Turkish leaders have stated more than once that if the Kurd carved out an independent state in northern Iraq, Turkey would invade. And Turkish forces have made incursions into the north of Iraq in recent years.

The Turkish government, from the beginning, placed restrictions on the Kurds, banning use of its language in public, and its military fought factions of Kurdish feudal overlords and their followers over the years since the republic was formed. Nevertheless, a number of Kurds have not been militant and have assimilated well in the country.

A separatist movement began in the early 1980s, led by Abdullah Ocalan (pronounced OH-Ja-lan), who heads the outlawed Kurdistan Worker's Party, known as the PKK. This group unleashed a reign of terror in southeastern Turkey with widespread violence and death in clashes with the Turkish military. These clashes have occurred in many areas of southeastern Turkey. These separatist elements within the Kurdish population have been a problem for Turkish leaders for most of the 20th century and into the 21st. No one is sure how much support the separatists have in the Kurdish populations as a whole.

From the beginning, Ataturk's secular "civilizing" project flew in the face of

religious groups, particularly the Kurds. His plan to use the education system to transmit a sense of identity and a new secular-value system was in conflict with the deeply internalized religious beliefs found within the family and traditional neighborhoods. In effect, this caused the different cultural patterns to compete with one another. This helped turn peripheral groups, such as the Kurds, into centers of resistance. Turkish leaders saw no end of this.

One of those leaders, Turgut Ozal, elected president in the fall of 1989, sought a solution. He had stated that he himself was part Kurdish and sought a non-military resolution, advocating greater cultural liberty for the Kurds. Although Turkish military campaigns against Kurdish separatists had been under way since the 1980s when separatists started their reign of terror to win independence, Ozal wanted it stopped. He directed that the cabinet repeal the 1983 law forbidding the use of languages other than Turkish. Then in October of 1991, Ozal died of a heart attack. This brought Suleyman Demirel to power as head of a coalition, and in March of 1992, Demirel publicly stated that he recognized the reality of Kurdish ethnicity in Turkey. Still the Kurds have only a low representation in parliament.

In a move that surprised Demirel and the generals, Ocalan announced in March of 1993 a unilateral cease-fire at a press conference attended by Kurdish former members of parliament. Ocalan had done this by negotiating with Ozal through Talabani. But within a month, the cease-fire broke down and military operations against the PKK continued. The generals thought Ocalan had called for the cease-fire because the PKK had been weakened by campaigns of the previous summer. The PKK's guerrillas wasted no time showing that it hadn't been weakened by ambushing a bus near Bingol and murdering 34 people, 33 of whom were off-duty soldiers. Heavy new fighting again broke out in a number of areas.

Turkey's politicians never gained control of the military after the 1980 military coup, and efforts to deal with the Kurdish problem continued to be thwarted. The generals repeatedly intimidated the politicians. In March of 1992, their security forces killed more than 90 demonstrators celebrating Nevruz, the Kurdish New Year. At the same time, the number of "unsolved" murders in Kurdish areas climbed. These killings were done by clandestine paramilitary groups who were almost certainly funded by the Turkish state.

Turkish generals escalated the conflict in 1992 and 1993, sending nearly 250,000 troops into the Kurdish region. They carried out scorched-earth tactics that wiped out nearly 2,000 villages, displaced an estimated 2 million people and resulted in more than 20,000 Turkish casualties. Kurdish refugees flooded into major Turkish cities, especially Duzaybakir, Adana, Mersin, Izmir, and Istanbul, which has the largest Kurdish population of any city in the world.

The Turkish army also crossed into Iraq many times in minor probes, then staged major incursions from 1992 to 1995 in attempts to destroy Kurdish separatist bases there that were being used against Turkey. While these occurred, European support for the Kurds continued to grow.

The "Susurluk Incident" in 1996 brought widespread scrutiny to Demirel's female prime minister, Tansu Ciller, an American-educated former economics professor. It also exposed the long-known government connection with criminals. In this incident, a speeding Mercedes with four passengers crashed into a tractor-trailer, killing three of the

occupants. Killed were a criminal right-wing hit man, named Abdullah Cati, a beauty queen and mistress of gangsters, named Gonca Us, and the deputy police chief of Istanbul, Huseyin Kocadag. The survivor was Sedat Bucak, a Kurdish tribal chief and a member of parliament with close ties to Ciller and the village guard movement against the PKK. The collusion between state officials, neo-fascists and criminals had begun in the 1970s when the military entered into an alliance to crush the left. The incident caused anger throughout the country, but there were no serious reverberations because too many politicians and military officers had been involved through the years.

Turkish newspapers reflected this anger, reporting that the government had been hiring death squads to murder Kurdish rebels and other enemies of the state since the mid-1980s. An aging leader of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party publicly acknowledged that the hit man had been employed by the government. Then former Interior Minister Mehmet Saglam admitted that the Turkish National Security Council had approved the use of illegal means to dispose of the rebels.

Investigations of Ciller's abuse of the prime ministry slush fund suggested that she had used the account to pay hit men and death squads against suspected Kurdish terrorists in Turkey and abroad. These scandals were not anything new in Turkish politics. Perhaps the worst aspect of it was that gangs of hit men and criminal terrorists operated with the apparent acquiescence of the Turkish military, which found them useful against Kurdish separatists and other political dissidents.

In the area of human rights, the Kurds, as one of a number of ethnic groups in Turkey, have not enjoyed the same language rights as others. But the Turkish military government did lift a ban on the use of the Kurdish language in unofficial settings in 1991. In 2003, it lifted the ban on the use of Kurdish and other non-Kurdish names, so long as the names used letters of the Turkish alphabet and "did not offend public opinion or undermine public morals." Kurdish names containing the letters, x, w and q, could not be used because they were not part of the Turkish alphabet. That year the government also allowed Kurdish-language television and radio programs to be aired on state-owned and private television and radio channels.

A year earlier, the government lifted the ban on Kurdish-language education. Such courses have since been allowed in the towns of Adan, Batman, Sanliurfa and Van. In 2003, Diyarbakir was the site of a week-long literary conference in the Kurdish language. It was the first time in years that the Turkish government had permitted such a conference. In another sign that things were changing, last July, an appellate court upheld a lower-court decision against a doctor for citing hatred on the grounds of ethnic differences. Following a clash between the Turkish army and the PKK in which the dead were taken to a nearby clinic, the doctor is reported to have shouted, "You filthy Kurds, you should all be killed. ..."

The Turkish government has been saying for some time that Kurds are fully integrated into society on an equal basis with Turks, citing as evidence the Kurdish origins of such mainstream politicians as Ozal.

The Kurds themselves are far from unified. Turkey's Kurdish political groupings are perennially in conflict. The Kurdish people over the years have had authoritarian, incompetent and shortsighted, feudal-type leaders. These leaders have led them to internal divisions and civil wars rather than strategically minded opposition against their oppressors in the countries in which they live. These conflicts are reinforced by a history

of betrayal and exploitation of Kurdish movements by leaders in the regions in which they live.

The Turkish government's attempts to crush the PKK in southeastern Turkey were often heavy-handed and accompanied by human rights abuses mentioned above. The PKK, led by Ocalan, waged a long, bloody battle against Turkey for Kurdish independence, starting in the 1970. His goal was a socialist revolution in Turkey. At a 1977 meeting in Diyarbakir a group of his followers adopted a document called "The Path of the Kurdish Revolution." The document laid out a plan for violent liberation of Kurdistan from rule by Turkey and collaborators within the Kurdish feudal classes. It became the PKK's official program when the PKK was founded in 1978 after years of recruiting and indoctrinating followers. The terrorist group grew to a strength of thousands by 1992. It became one of the main organizers of terrorist incidents in Europe for much of the 1990s.

Ocalan fled Turkey before the 1980 military coup, then directed the PKK operations from a base in Syria and Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Known by his nom de guerre as "Apo," he conducted a ruthless campaign, ostensibly for Kurdish independence but, as widely available PKK internal documents suggest, his goal early on was the creation of a Maoist state in areas of Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Ocalan's ambitions were clearly defined in 1995 at the Fifth Congress of the PKK, where the "Resolution on Internationalism" stated that "by effectively arguing in favor of socialism and by spreading socialist ideas to the people of the region, the PKK is the vanguard for the global socialist movement."

In 1984, the PKK was a founding member of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, a sort of loosely structured Maoist version of Lenin's Comintern. Ocalan had global leadership ambitions and used tactics that are particularly bloody, even by terrorist standards. His main victims have been civilians who refuse to submit to the PKK. Frequent targets include teachers, members of village self-defense groups, and elected local officials.

Whole Kurdish villages that were involved in joint self-protection schemes sponsored by the Turkish government were sometimes massacred. Members of rival groups and Kurdish landlords were dealt with ruthlessly. In addition, the PKK has a history of planting bombs in crowded streets and markets in Turkey, and in the 1990s added suicide bombings to its repertoire of terrorist activities. The PKK is responsible for the murder of a number of Turks in Germany, where half a million Kurds live. In recent years, the PKK become known as Kongra-Gel, which stands for the People's Congress of Kurdistan (KGK). More recently the name apparently has changed back to PKK.

In 1998, Syria ended its longtime support of Ocalan as a diplomatic gesture to improve relations with Turkey. Ocalan, 50, labeled a terrorist by the Turkish and the United States governments, was forced to flee. He was captured in early 1999 in Nairobi, Kenya.

By the time he was arrested, an estimated 30,000 people had been killed in Turkey since the PKK launched its guerrilla campaign in 1984. Some put the death toll as high as 35,000.

Back in Turkey, Ocalan was thrown in prison on the island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara. He offered to work for peace between the rebels and the government in exchange for leniency, but promised a "blood bath" if he was executed. Reminding the public that his mother was Turkish, he called for an end to the separatist war, saying that

the Turks and Kurds were in the end indivisible. He was convicted of treason and separatism on June 29, 1999, and was sentenced to death. He shocked many during his trial when he acknowledged that his group had killed thousands.

In the wake of his death sentence, Kurdish guerrillas unleashed a wave of attacks on police and civilians throughout Turkey. In November 1999 the sentencing was upheld on appeal. Then on Jan. 12, 2000, the Turkish government, seeking to make itself more acceptable to the EU, announced that Ocalan's sentence would be suspended until the case was reviewed by a European Court of Appeals in Strasbourg, France. In May of this year, the European Court ruled that Ocalan had not received a fair trial in Turkish courts. At this writing, the Turkish government has not indicated what course of action it will take in the case.

Another Kurdish leader, 44-year-old Leyla Zana, has made headlines in recent years as a result of her treatment by the Turkish government. Were it not for Turkey's efforts to make itself more acceptable to the European Union, she might still be in jail.

In 1991, Zana was the first Kurdish female to be elected to the Turkish parliament. Three years later her career got sidetracked when she and three other Kurdish lawmakers—Hatip Dicle, Orhan Dogan, and Selim Sadak—were sentenced to 15 years in jail for speaking Kurdish in parliament and for membership in the PKK.

When she became involved in the plight of women whose husbands were imprisoned by the military regime, and in the course of defending the rights of her husband and other detainees, she was detained during a protest in front of Diyarbakir prison in 1988. For seven days following, she was interrogated and severely tortured.

Eventually, she assumed an unsolicited leadership role, and her personal development was seen as synonymous with the realization of fundamental rights for the Kurdish population. This culminated in her candidacy for parliament in the 1991 Turkish elections. From her district, she received 84 percent of the votes, representing the Social Democratic Party (SHP) coalition.

In 1994, under pressure from the Turkish government because she and her party addressed Kurdish-rights issues, she and three deputies were forced out of the SHP and joined the newly formed Democracy Party. When the Turkish Parliament accepted the charge that the Democracy Party was affiliated with the PKK, her parliamentary immunity was lifted. Then based on her speeches and writings in defense of Kurdish rights, she was thrown into prison in Ankara. A Turkish court began trying her for treason in September of 1994. The charges were later reduced to membership in the PKK, and she and her co-defendants were sentenced to 15 years in prison. When the government offered to release her in 1997 for health reasons, she refused to leave, preferring to win her freedom based on the justice of her cause.

Zana underwent retrials on appeal in 2003 and 2004 and lost again. Then in June of 2004, Turkey's Appeals Court decided to release her and her three co-defendants from jail. The ruling followed a request by Turkey's chief prosecutor to overturn their 15-year sentences. There is little doubt that this was done as part of Turkey's quest to join the EU.

In January of 2004, Zana reached a "friendly settlement" with the Turkish state at the European Court of Human Rights. Under the settlement, Zana, along with two other Turkish nationals, received financial compensation from the Turkish state for its violation of their right to free expression. Zana received 9,000 euros for damages and for costs and expenses. She immediately announced plans for a political comeback in a new

party. “We former MPs, once under a political ban and once seen as the boogeymen, sincerely want to serve democracy and peace,” she told reporters. “For this reason, we are launching the popular democratic movement.”

In her *Writings from Prison*, a political polemic, she relates that when she had taken the oath of office in parliament, she had added her own words in Turkish and Kurdish. Those words were: “I will work for the fraternal existence of the Turkish and Kurdish people within the context of democracy.” As mentioned above, this was the first time anyone had spoken Kurdish in the Turkish parliament.

Before being elected to parliament, Zana also had worked as a correspondent to a leftist Kurdish newspaper. In her writings, she calls for the “right type” of Western involvement in the Middle East, and in particular Turkey. She praised the emancipatory qualities of Western democracies, but criticized Western military and economic interests in Turkey. Her book was published with the help of Amnesty International and the Kurdish Institutes of Washington and Paris.

A feminist, her feminist causes disappear into the Kurdish cause. She sees the Kurdish liberation struggle as an opportunity for women to become political, but she stresses the importance of alliance with men. She criticizes two-faced European and American politics and their world-policing order that sells weapons with one hand and gives humanitarian aid with the other.

The fundamental principle of her new party would be to support Turkey’s bid to join the EU and to achieve a peaceful democratic solution to Kurdish demands for more cultural and political rights within Turkey’s territorial integrity, she said.

The majority of Turkish society seems ready for a rapid, meaningful and radical change, Zana said. “The world is changing and Turkey cannot be kept away from this change.” She recently praised the Turkish government for its “revolutionary changes” aimed at meeting EU membership criteria.

She and her three colleagues were adopted by the pan-European bloc as prisoners of conscience and the European parliament awarded Zana its prestigious Sakharov Human Rights Prize in 1995.

Before a gathering of about 100,000 in Sanliurfa in March celebrating Nevruz, Zana urged Prime Minister Erdogan “not to raise tension if you love this country and do not cause the societies to come up against each other. Consider the peace and democratic functioning of this country as essential,” she said.

Turning to violence against women, she said: “The Turkish premier says there is no torture; whereas our women are tortured in the street. We will never allow our honor to be transgressed.”

In April of this year, she asked the government to grant amnesty to thousands of armed Kurdish rebels as a key step toward ending the Kurdish conflict. “Disarming the youths in the mountains and ridding them of violence will create great synergy on the way to democracy,” she said.

She currently is awaiting another trial, again charging that she did not receive a fair trial in Turkish courts.

In recent years, Turkey has been at work in the Kurdish region. It has been developing the massive GAP, or Southern Anatoli Project, that is harnessing the significant rivers in that area to produce electricity and then economic development. Factories have been, and will be, developed in the area to bring more jobs and some prosperity to the region. This

region is the land of oil, water and the crossroads of drug smuggling.

Kurdish faction leaders, in addition to the Turkish government and the deposed Saddam, have been guilty of brutalizing and oppressing -- often economically more than militarily -- their own people. For example, in 1996, a group of Kurds invited the Iraqi army into the north in order to harm another group of Kurds. U.S. troops also have clashed with the PKK in Iraq.

In 2003, the BBC reported that the United States and Turkey had agreed on a plan to eradicate the PKK from northern Iraq. The PKK is thought to have about 5,000 members there. The agreement was important for Turkey at the time, the BBC reported, because it marked a new stage in its long fight with the PKK and was a sign that relations with the United States were improving. Turkey had said it might intervene and evict the Kurdish guerrillas from their mountain strongholds in northern Iraq if the United States failed to do so.

Nevertheless, Pentagon officials and Paul Bremer, U.S. administrator in Iraq at the time, reportedly blocked action against the PKK because it would require thousands of troops that the United States could ill afford to spare while attacks on U.S. forces were escalating.

Leaders of the two Iraqi Kurdish factions on northern Iraq, Talabani and Barzani, have accused Turkey of undermining gains made by their regional administrations.

Meanwhile, on a visit to Diyarbakir last fall, EU's Guenter Verheugen, on a fact-finding mission, said Turkey must do more to improve the rights of its Kurds and women.

Although Ataturk's vision of one nation, one language and one culture may be too idealistic, Turkey surely has made huge progress in that direction in its efforts to modernize and to become more acceptable to the EU.

The Faculty Seminar: It's value

I have been lucky enough to have participated in more than one faculty seminar and I cannot emphasize enough its value to the university, to the faculty members who participate and to me. Scholars, statesmen and others abroad often ask something that goes like this: "You mean your university sponsors and pays for you to go abroad to different countries and to learn in-depth about them through first-hand meetings with all sorts of people? The University of Richmond does that?" When they hear the affirmative, they comment on what a unique and valuable idea it is and what a wonderful school Richmond must be.

As for faculty participants, it is a chance to further knowledge and get a close look at an area that involves scholarship within individual disciplines. The chance to get away from books and meet source people in another country is both invigorating and enlightening. Just as important, it gives faculty members, who are often too busy on campus to get to know each other a chance to get acquainted and swap ideas about a number of things from scholarship, teaching and students to common everyday things.

For me, it always affords a chance to do research that involves my discipline, no matter what the topic. Because journalism by its very nature covers a wide range of topics, the study-abroad seminars provide me the chance to stretch, to pursue an area of interest that allows a better understanding of the issues of a particular country. In this case, my interest initially involved the Kurds in Turkey and their situation in that country.

But once in Turkey that interest spread to Cyprus and Turkey's bid to enter the European Union. It is information that is always important in journalism and can be woven into the discipline in a number of ways.

For those faculty who have never participated, I urge them to do so. International Studies Director Uliana Gabara always provides full daily schedules of meetings with all kinds of important and interesting people in the countries visited. These range from scholars and politicians to entertainers, artists and regular folks. This provides the luxury of a variety of new-gained information, which gives a participant much to think about during the seminar and when it is completed.

In my case, for example, I'm still doing research from the Vietnam seminar of two years ago and teaching in another discipline as a result. I certainly plan to continue to research the areas involved in this report for some time to come and see where it takes me. I have no doubt that it will be fascinating and fun.

These sources were used for this report:

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