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REGIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE CASE OF TURKEY

KYLE T. EVERED

ABSTRACT. Turkey is a republic that borders on, regularly interacts with, and actively seeks to define itself as a part of neighboring regions. As such, it provides a significant example of how Middle East nation-states are not only affected by globalization but also deeply involved in contributing to the related processes of regionalization and regional (re)definition. Far from a unique phenomenon, regionalism involving Turkey is flexible and multifaceted, profoundly dynamic, and inextricably linked to virtually all aspects of the nation's foreign and domestic affairs. Regionalism in Turkey demonstrates clearly how processes of globalization are not simply economic but also directly implicated in contemporary shifts in national identity and even in the very nature of the nation-state itself. This study surveys and analyzes the constructs and dynamics of regionalism that are shaping the Turkish nation and state, contributing to varieties of transnationalism, and reconstituting the scales at which Turkey is located, both in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world. *Keywords:* nation-states, regionalism, regions, transnationalism, Turkey.

In the 1920s the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish nation were established and defined, largely under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal "Atatürk" (Father of the Turks). Under his paternalistic guidance, Kemalist Turkey was redefined as a nation-state that was modern, secular, and Western. This pursuit of a European ideal created a number of stark contrasts for the new republic in terms of its identity, its history, and its geography. Turkey rejected the historic multiethnic, religious, and imperial geographies of the Ottoman Empire and instead sought to be a Turkish nation-state of Anatolia that would someday become an integral part of Europe. Embedded in the promise of these singular aspirations were the pitfalls—foreign and domestic—that today confront the Turkish nation-state as it is compelled to redefine its place within the world.¹

This study examines the ongoing shift from a once relatively insular nation-state model of the Kemalist Turkish republic that arose from the strife and wreckage of the Ottoman Empire's collapse to the Turkish nation-state of today, a state that is expressing itself in an ever-more-outward fashion. In so doing, it not only underscores the fluidity of place-based identity constructs but also demonstrates how such constructs are particularly dependent upon shared historical narratives and civilization- and/or region-based symbolisms. A constructivist approach is employed with respect to the discourse of identity and place for both the nation-state and regions amid globalization (note Murphy 1991; Paasi 1991). This approach also benefits from an awareness of scale. As we see emerging articulations of the Turkish nation-state, we also see shifts in scale, from the place of the territorial nation defined spatially by its fixed national boundaries to the wider cultural region, a place that evades applications of a definitive outline.

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Through the course of this discursive shift of territories, however, the place of the nation also becomes expanded in people's consciousness—and maybe eventually even in policymaking—from one scale to the next. Turkey was once proudly depicted simply as the Turkish state of Anatolia; today the Turkish nation-state is commonly rendered within its own borders as the leading state in a wider Turkic region that stretches from Europe to Asia—and sometimes even into the Middle East. This work situates these changes amid processes of globalization (and regionalization), post-cold war economics and geopolitics, and questions of legitimacy confronting the Turkish republic from within, in order to understand both this shift itself and its limitations in the post-9/11 era.

NATION-STATES, REGIONS, AND GLOBALIZATION

In the modern age, prevailing constructs of identity have been institutionalized politically and geographically in the form of the nation-state²—itself the prevailing regional construct of the modern age. The place, populace, and purpose of the nation-state were defined with far greater rigidity than were most other types of regions. Borders were fixed socially and psychologically, and they were institutionally legitimated when they were declared by politicians, charted in the field, and illustrated by cartographers. The entire nation-state era has carried with it the mission of identifying and delineating places on the basis of national majorities and/or historic national attachments (Murphy 1990, 2002). In practice, many boundaries arose that could be criticized as having gone beyond this mandate, based on imprecise knowledge of frontier areas, conflicting claims, or irredentist ambitions. In such instances the norm has not been to revise these territorial boundaries; instead, the imperative of the state has been nation building. Viewed critically, many perspectives on and experiences of nation building implied that the nation-state ideal both demanded and legitimated state policies designed to eradicate heterogeneity within its borders.

Although aspects of their fixed borders and memberships were once among their greatest strengths, many nation-states of today are chafing at these social, spatial, and temporal constraints as their economies and citizens increasingly seek to conduct themselves in ways that defy the traditional limits of their borders. Amid these shifts in economics, identities, and politics, some popular writers have even speculated on the demise of the nation-state, an entity and ideal since the early 1990s.³ Such forecasts might be easily dismissed, but shifts away from the absolute dominance once enjoyed by the nation-state have occurred during the transition from modern to late-modern economic, political, and social relations. In such shifts, states themselves—and not just consumers or corporations—can be major sources for economic and sociopolitical change. In her study of transnationalism in Asia, the anthropologist Aihwa Ong noted that, “in the era of globalization, individuals as well as governments develop a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty as strategies to accumulate capital and power” (1999, 6). Particular world regions have been critical sites in the dynamics of globalization, as growth poles within nation-

states (as addressed for southeast England in Allen, Massey, and Cochrane 1998), transboundary areas (as examined in Europe in Murphy 1993), or global or world cities (Taylor 2000; Sassen 2001; A. J. Scott 2001). But these regions have also provided certain economic and political opportunities for those nation-states that they may sometimes appear to be replacing. Nation-states that are savvy about situating themselves regionally can significantly enhance their relative advantages, both in the global economy and in their own foreign and domestic policies.

Critical regional geographies today are thus increasingly concerned with spatial questions that involve the socioeconomic dimensions of globalization and transnationalism. In such contexts, fundamental geographical concepts like place, space, and region are frequently redefined, more so in terms of associated processes rather than any unique forms or functions. Not only has this evolved articulation of place as process heightened our sensitivities to—and our capacities to express—the conditions of a dynamic world, it has also reaffirmed the importance of the past in efforts to attain geographical understanding. Even amid rapid globalization, the historic cultural geographies of specific places continue to exert powerful influences on the ways in which globalization—and reactions to it—will evolve. This is particularly true when one examines contemporary manifestations of globalization that are more place specific (regionalization and regionalism), whether they appear within, partially overlap, or extend well beyond the territories of established nation-states.

Today, most studies of regionalism/regionalization reveal a decidedly materialist orientation. In commenting on the role of regions, Michael Storper noted that they were emerging as “a fundamental basis of economic and social life ‘after mass production’ ” (1997, 3). This economic focus is not surprising, given that most regional dynamics today (those processes that challenge existing regional orders and/or propose new ones) are driven by globalization—an essentially economic phenomenon with corresponding cultural and political effects that themselves vary markedly by place and through time (Massey 1995). Related phenomena that might collectively be labeled as “transnational”—and that also prompt the questioning of regional orders—are also generally depicted as resulting from globalization; that is, economic factors. Although many works on the historic construction of particular regions exist, few studies question contemporary regional dynamics that are not directly caused by the general process of globalization or some aspect of it. The sites most studied with respect to the emergence of new or altered regions are precisely those that are most associated with some processes of economic integration, rapid industrialization, indicators of growth, and/or regional institutionalization, as with Europe and the European Union, with Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or the regional/transnational roles of China or India, and with North America and the North American Free Trade Agreement. The consequent exclusion of other regions from discussions of changing regional patterns and regional identities is unfortunate. In many respects it replicates that mistake made by an earlier generation of scholars who largely excluded the nations of peripheral—that is, colo-

nized—regions and minority populations from much of the initial scholarship on nationalism and nation-states. Many examples of regionalism within the Middle East exist, however, and they can inform contemporary studies of globalization and transnationalism.

Experiences of regionalism in peripheral regions, like the Middle East, often reveal a basis not only in globalization but also in the apparent limitations of the nation-state system. In the modern age of nation-states, associations between individuals and regions that existed beyond the realm of the national became relatively obscured by the hegemonic discourse of belonging to particular nations. Even expressions of affiliations with regions that were within a state's boundaries were often rearticulated through state-sanctioned channels in order to diminish divisive local identities. Although long-term regional redefinition is under way in many places—and is often associated directly with aspects of globalization⁴—other locales reveal that globalization is simply facilitating such dynamics. Many regional (r)evolutions at present, and their effects on the nation-state system both as an ideal and as the one-time exclusive source of authority, were simply enabled by globalizing processes. In such instances the momentum for regional reorientation often stems from repressed and latent narratives of nation, ethnicity, culture, religion, history, and so forth. This is particularly true in the Middle East, and the Republic of Turkey provides a case in which both phenomena are apparent and can be linked to globalization and other factors endemic to the condition of the Turkish nation-state. Both sets of phenomena, however, have blended to great degrees in the varied regional discourse and in the regional politics of the Turkish nation-state.

MAPPING A REGIONAL TURKISH NATION-STATE

In a recent country-survey insert to *The Economist* that was devoted to Turkey and its European aspirations, the title to one article reads, "Which Turkey? Not Everyone Sees the Country with the Same Eyes" (Economist 2005, 4). This simple fact of perceptions that are competing, both within Turkey and abroad, to identify and locate Turkey should compel us to think about what representations are being produced for consumption/perception. From a geographical perspective, how Turkey is discursively situated in the world is a matter of extreme importance.

What does a global(ized) Turkey look like? How might we envision it on a map? What kinds of worldviews and global policies are being pursued within Turkey? These questions of regionalism all have a direct bearing on the status of the construct of Turkish nationalism and of the Turkish nation-state. They are issues that have forced a significant shift within the Turkish state and society and are continuing to force citizens to view their country beyond the borders of just the nation-state. At a most rudimentary level, an interesting consequence of such changes in Turkey is observable in the increasing cartographic depiction of the Turkish nation-state in a regional or global context, rather than images of it as the sole object of focus. This shift can be seen most evidently in the many Turkish-language geography and history textbooks and study texts employed in both regular classrooms

and tutorial schools at elementary through university levels. After reviewing a large number of primers and texts used throughout the republican era at all educational levels, the standard and only map contained in almost all of them was simply an administrative map of the republic itself showing administrative boundaries and capitals. Some textbooks contained maps of subordinate, generally physical, regions within the republic, but few of them included images of Turkey within any wider-world context (for example, an image of Turkey in a world map of nation-states, in a regional map of Europe, within a Middle East region, or even situated among key world trading partners). Since the 1990s, however, almost all geography and history textbooks have begun to incorporate an additional map. If one were to speculate, guessing that this additional map might be one of Turkey within a European world region or institutionally within an imagined map of a future European Union would seem reasonable.

In an era of a politically diminished North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the global and regional imperatives for the Turkish nation-state have been to reenter the West. Even though the Turkish economy is quite integrated with the West in many ways, much can be done to improve its condition. Geopolitically, Turkey is still a member of NATO and a part of the West's wider security and military apparatus in very significant ways, as Turkey's recent involvement in Afghanistan demonstrated. But questions about an E.U. army or European defense force may threaten even this status. Symbolically, therefore, the continuing rise of the European Union in the postsocialist/post-Soviet world order and Turkey's exclusion from it make the promises of Kemalist nationalism seem quite illusory.⁵ As symbolized most profoundly by its apparent exclusion from the European Union, Turkey's seemingly regional and global marginalization since 1991 demonstrates urgencies beyond just the economic. The new map that entered into Turkish textbooks in the 1990s was not, however, an image of Turkey in the West. Rather, it was an image of Turkey reconnecting with a region that seemed of little consequence for the republic—and for the West, in general—throughout much of the cold war.

In response to the dilemmas of Turkey's apparent estrangement from the rest of Europe, its regionalism has involved an engagement not only with the West but also with the East. Turkey and its alternative regional discourse, as seen in its promotion of images of a Turkey-led "Turkic World," provide critical examples of how regional dynamics function not just amid the structural challenges of globalization but also amid the humanistic currents that we might discern. Both economics and vital symbolisms are critical for a state's legitimacy to remain intact, and both have been under extreme stress in late-Kemalist Turkey.

The new Turkic World map became an image that has been ubiquitous in the textbooks and elsewhere in the public sphere within the Turkish republic since the 1990s.⁶ To geographers, this map is reminiscent of earlier images of a Eurasian heartland as articulated by Halford Mackinder (note the reprinting of his classic article and its analysis in a recent special issue of the *Geographical Journal* [Dodds and Sidaway 2004]). As the map of the Turkic world and its many variations that appear

in books indicate, Turkey rediscovered its Asiatic connections in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. Situated as the oldest and most-experienced free nation-state in the Turkic World, the Turkish republic seems to enjoy a position of leadership among “Independent Turkic States,” “Autonomous Republics, Regions, and Provinces,” and “Non-Autonomous Turkic Regions” (as reflected in the most common of such maps and their legends; see, for example, Atalay 1994). Indeed, the image of the nation-state is still one of extreme significance. Most such maps show clear distinctions between those territories in a wider Turkic World that are independent nation-states—or that some parties would prefer to declare as such (for example, Northern Cyprus)—those that are autonomous or semiautonomous within states (for example, the official lands of the Kazan Tatars and the Bashkirs in Russia), and those that are simply regions declared to be homelands of Turkic peoples—both historic (for example, regions within states such as Bulgaria, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan) and contemporary (for example, in Germany, France, and Austria). In a Turkish nation-state that rigidly defined its own history, even marginalizing and sometimes omitting the pasts of the Ottoman Turks, its language—through numerous and often convoluted linguistic reforms that sought to particularize an ideal/invented Anatolian Turkish (as critiqued in G. Lewis 1999 and examined in its early stages in Heyd 1954)—its membership (through the assimilation and suppression of its Kurdish, Laz, and other ethnolinguistic and religious minorities), and its Anatolian borders, this Turkish-to-Turkic shift is a radical reinvention of the Kemalist national narrative and its associated geographies.

Once viewed as liberated from its colonial legacies, religious strife, and conflict with ethnonational minorities through the creation and application of a modern, secular nation-state model, the Turkish republic has been revisited by these problems because the construct of Turkish nationalism has long clung too tightly to this paradigm. In the era of globalization, the Turkish nation-state is grappling with both domestic and foreign dilemmas through a discursive, and sometimes actual, territorialization of a wider region made available to it in the form of the post-cold war geopolitical landscapes of Eurasia. Existing as it does on the peripheries and/or frontiers of numerous regional constructs—Europe and Asia, North and South, East and West, Middle East and Europe and/or Asia, Islamic and non-Islamic, and so forth—Turkey has selected a middle ground that relies on its own ethnohistoric centrality while still asserting its legitimacy in the realms of surrounding/overlapping regions. Turkey created/rediscovered for itself a new/old region. From this constructed vantage, Turkey is standing at the center of its own region, the *Türk Dünyası* (Turkic World), while functioning as both a member of and a bridge between many others regions.

Even though the contemporary Turkish territorial excursions are largely limited to the discursive, as opposed to any actual, irredentist agenda, this adjustment in identity politics is far more significant than merely an expedient act of redirecting one's course amid shifting socioeconomic currents. It represents a marked departure for any state, given the prevailing nation-state ideal of expressing and

proclaiming sovereignty—whether institutional or simply discursive—over territories beyond its borders. In the specific context of the Turkish state, this territorial expression of an affiliation to places and peoples beyond Anatolia constitutes one of the most profound redirections in Turkey since the inception of the Kemalist, nation-state era in the early 1920s.

FROM ANATOLIAN TO EURASIAN

Although the images of Turkey's Easternist discourse may seem to contradict its Western aspirations, the agendas behind both are highly complementary even in the eyes of the Turkish state, an institution once associated with an exclusively Western orientation and an extreme denial of any Eastern affiliations, past or present. As examples such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and Turkey's recent involvements in Afghanistan as a participant in the postinvasion International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) demonstrate,⁷ Turkey's considered case for acceptance by the West (the European Union, the United States, and others) is based heavily on its economic and geopolitical utility as a means of gaining access to the East. Reconnection with the Turkic World allows a nationalism that is increasingly criticized within its own territories and abroad because of its ethnolinguistic, religious, socioeconomic, and historic exclusivity to safely expand without appearing to lose face in the eyes of some of its harshest critics. This Turkic World regionalism may thus be said to have far more to do with situations internal to Turkey and associated with its Western regional aspirations than with any of the peoples, places, or pasts to the East of Mustafa Kemal's Anatolia.

As promoted by the Turkish state through institutions like the Turkish International Cooperation Agency, this sort of Turkish Eurasianism (not to be confused with Russian and even Central Asian notions of Eurasianism, as examined in Riasanovsky 1967; Bassin 1991; Paradowski 1999; and Vinkovetsky 2000) should be viewed today as more of a strategy aimed at bridging the Turkey-Europe divide than any quest to actually institutionalize a Turkic World.

The initial enthusiasm felt in Turkey early in the post-Soviet era soon faded. Among the main reasons for Turkey's inability to establish itself as a Western-style regional leader among the Turkic states have been factors associated with the powerful degrees to which Russia continued to command influence within the region and the simple fact that, after having just lost one "big brother," many of the states in the region were not entirely enthusiastic about acquiring a new one. On more tangible levels, the volume of economic assistance and investment Turkey could provide to the new nation-states of Eurasia was seriously limited. The Turkish republic was also viewed as effectively impotent in fulfilling Eurasian states' expectations that Turkey would aid Baku in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict over Nakhichevan and Nagorno-Karabakh (note the discussion of the early shortcomings in these highly anticipated relationships in Blank 1998). Despite this initial rebuff of Turkey's attempts to function as a regional leader—and the West's desires that Turkey function both as a model for these emergent states and as a point of entry

for the West into the region—many of the republics have enjoyed amicable relations with Turkey, and Turkey is still clearly interested in maintaining and enhancing its position among them in terms of economic and sociocultural ties.

Turkic Eurasia is still a vital symbol of what Turkey can bring to the table if it is accepted more fully by the West and especially if it is allowed to enter the European Union. Thus, although Turkey's initial optimism in the early 1990s that it could conduct itself independently and even be a leader in all directions (in Europe, the Middle East, and post-Soviet Eurasia) was quickly diminished by the state's own economic and geopolitical limitations, the image of Eurasia is still crucial in how Turkey presents itself, both at home and to the West. As an indication of this profound aspiration for acceptance by Europe, we may look simply at some of the writings and remarks of leaders in Turkish foreign policy from the 1980s to the present day.

In his almost 400-page history of Turkey, a passionate plea for European acceptance entitled *Turkey in Europe and Europe in Turkey*, former Prime Minister and President Turgut Özal established this priority in his dedication: "To the peoples of Europe—and to the Turkish people who belong among them" (1991, vii). Written and originally published in 1988 in French, prior to the rise of independent Turkic nation-states in Eurasia, the book cited the Eurasian origins of the Turkish peoples of the modern republic, but it clearly resituated the modern nation-state and its populace within an idealized European civilization. Özal attempted to compel Europe to recognize this assertion, if only for its own moral salvation:

Turkey is not alien to Europe, as is the popular belief, but is her alter ego, her "complimentary identity." If Europe can embrace Turkey, she will be at peace with herself; she will see herself honestly at last. Her ethnocentricity will have come to an end; her conception of history, her foreign policy, and her outlook on life will effectively have become secular. She will enjoy a truly global and humanist perspective, in which the pejorative distinction between Christians and others will have disappeared. She will understand the precariousness of our civilization in the present circumstances, and will be able to exercise the vigilance necessary to prevent the re-emergence of the primitive sentiments latent within herself and each of us.

Without doubt this is the greatest contribution that Turkey could bring to the peace and grandeur of Europe, and it would happen simply by her presence within the Community. (Özal 1991, 304)

In an article published in the Turkish daily newspaper *Zaman Gazetesi* on the fifth anniversary of Özal's death, the optimism of the Turkish statesman regarding his country's place in the world was recalled. Özal's overriding goal, the article noted, was to "make Turkey part of the First World." Given the now-independent Turkic Eurasia just beyond Turkey's borders, it continued, "the next ten years will open a new future to Turkey. From the Balkans to Central Asia, all the Muslim states and some of them Turkic, we can make our strength more evident" (Zaman Gazetesi 2001; my translation). Özal was quoted as stating, "If we don't make real mistakes, the twenty-first century will be a century of the Turks and of Turkey" (Zaman

Gazetesi 2001; my translation). This optimistic view that Turkey would take its place among Western states was further bolstered by the immediate potential perceived as deriving from an assumed leadership position in Turkic Eurasia.

Reflecting on the sudden transition that came about for Turkish policymakers and intellectuals, the writer Mehmet Binay observed that the Soviet collapse caught them off guard. Turkey's redefined geopolitical situation, he noted, could afford new opportunities to more constructively engage with the wider world if it forged closer relationships with its fellow Turkic states along economic and cultural lines, essentially building on linguistic relationships (1996a). In another essay Binay noted that this opportunity was Turkey's "new Silk Road" (Binay 1996b). This metaphor of a new Silk Road for Turkey has been employed consistently in the media and by policymakers since the rise of independent nation-states in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

This new "Silk Road" of commerce, however, was not to be based on silk or any other luxury goods. Rather, in the post-Soviet era the petroleum and natural-gas reserves of the wider Caspian Basin region—with Turkey as the optimal site for gaining access to these resources—would make Turkey the West's most expedient and reliable link to the other Turkic states of Eurasia. Although the Turkic World campaign failed to resonate with Turkic kinsmen, the imagery of it was deemed vital for the long-elusive prize of Western acceptance. As former Foreign Minister İsmail Cem indicated in a June 1999 interview, this connection was crucial for assuring Turkey's place within the West and for fostering regional development and Western geopolitical interests: "What is essential for us is the strategic link Baku-Ceyhan provides for Turkey, and, for the West through Turkey. This strategic choice will bring together all the Caucasus and Central Asia around the same project. It will facilitate the development of democratic institutions in a huge geography. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan provides as well the secure East-West corridor for the valuable energy resources" (2001, 97).

And in a May 2000 interview with the Paris-based periodical *L'Express*, Cem noted: "As to her history, culture and geography, Turkey is both European and Asian. This does not constitute for us a dichotomy, but rather a most valuable asset. . . . Istanbul, which shelters several musty-cultural and national-national institutions is on her way to become the 'Capital' of Eurasia" (2001, 60–61).

Cem's political career came to an end a few years later in the domestic political shifts within Turkey, but his sentiments continue to provide a powerful geographical imagery of how Turkey began to be viewed by its own citizens in the post-cold war era. What emerged from the singular map of the Turkish nation-state was a highly articulated vision of Turkey's place within the world, both as a part of and vis-à-vis Europe, and within Turkic Eurasia, the Middle East, and the Islamic world. Despite new leadership in the Turkish state, the ambitions, projections, and policy directions established previously have remained essentially unchanged.

This image of the Turkic World has been shared by many otherwise adversarial constituencies within the republic. Most Kemalists—or "neo-Kemalists," as a num-

ber of writers and scholars have described redefined supporters of the state—have been quite supportive of this image because it helps bring Turkey closer to the energy-dependent West. Islamists in Turkey, such as those associated with the Fethullah Gülen movement—a modernist Islamic movement that is Turkey’s largest and most visible—have often found this imagery attractive, for it aids their efforts to open schools, conduct exchanges, and otherwise forge relations with other Turkic Muslims to the East. The image has long been popular among Turkey’s numerically small yet vocal ultranationalists, although their aspirations may idealize a more profound institutionalization and/or territorialization of the vision.

FROM TURKISH TO TURKIC

Just as this reimagined geography of Turkey might be viewed as furthering particular foreign policy objectives of the republic, so too has it presented policymakers with a number of options in dealing with domestic challenges. Although the Kemalist vision of Turkey—as a unique Turkish nation-state in the world—was rather isolationist, despite its pursuit of Western ideals, Turkey was presented with an alternative geography in the post-Soviet era. This alternative situation in the world enabled the otherwise restrictive nation-state to begin to “celebrate” those histories, languages, traditions, and symbols that it had previously denied to itself and its people. In this manner, the republic could promote a new vision of what it meant to be Turkic without retreating from previously rigid definitions of Turkish identity, as defined under Kemalism. This represented not only an opportunity to relax norms within the state and entertain more inclusive policies within its borders vis-à-vis the state’s ethnoreligious minorities but also to symbolically and discursively engage with some of the state’s most resolute adversaries.

Some of the most profound examples of this engagement derive from ways in which the Turkish nation-state employed Turkic folk cultures to deal with divisive issues with the republic. By celebrating the inclusion of the region in what was once an exclusively Anatolian national folk culture, such incorporations of regional folk symbolisms can reveal the politics of the state to co-opt symbols of its critics. On national holidays, for example, the secular Anatolian ideal of Turkey was heavily emphasized. As a consequence, the holidays of other interest groups—those based on religion or on membership in other ethnicities—could be viewed as not only holidays but also as days of resistance. For many years, simply celebrating the holiday of a non-Turkish ethnic group was an act of resistance against the Kemalist state (note the similarity of such acts with the images of resistance presented in James Scott’s classic 1985 study, *Weapons of the Weak*).

The most prominent example of this use of alternative holidays as a time of resistance had been the case of the Nevruz (New Year’s) holiday of the Kurds. What had emerged as a day associated customarily with protest, demonstrations, and resistance against their cultural and linguistic repression by the state recently became a day of state-sponsored lectures—to “remind” and “educate” people of their traditional holiday—and rather mechanical, state-sponsored celebrations. Because

many of the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia celebrate Nevruz—largely because Turkic and Persian cultural traditions are mixed in those regions—the state felt confident about declaring this holiday as essentially Turkic, and thus Turkish.

In Turkey, the only individuals of the many who shared with me any recollection of Nevruz celebrations as being anything other than events associated with the Kurds were people from eastern Anatolia. They either had had neighbors who were, or were themselves, Azeri Turks. The Azeris are mostly Shiites and, like the other Turkic peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia, they have long-standing histories of cultural connections with the Iranic peoples to the southeast. Despite this lack of authenticity as a true holiday, numerous books have been published in recent years attempting to fix the date in the minds of the Turkish people as a traditional holiday.

National leaders have also supported this (re)invented holiday of the Turkish nation. In March 2000, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit offered a message on this holiday: “Nevruz is a historical friendship and fraternity festival where people embrace each other in peace and harmony. Nevruz, which symbolizes fraternity and consolidate[s] national unity, has been celebrated for centuries in an atmosphere of feast. We consider the Nevruz Festival, which includes meaningful motives and messages, as a cultural affluence within the pluralist structure of society. We believe that the Nevruz would contribute to development of affection, solidarity, tolerance, and peace among Turkish people” (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Western Europe, doc. no. 2000–0321).

In some of the more far-fetched examples of the state’s reinvented histories, alternative derivations for the holiday’s name are even proposed. Since as early as 1999, owing largely to this co-optation of a powerful symbol—and to increased vigilance on the part of the state—Kurdish protests were less than enthusiastic about Nevruz—at least until a return of Kurdish-state clashes in March and April 2006. As a consequence, dates of protest have been less fixed or even shifted to anniversaries associated with Kurdish history.

GEOGRAPHIES OF THE TURKIC WORLD IN THE POST-9/11 ERA

As with most states throughout the world, Turkey was quite supportive of the United States in dealing with the tragedy of 9/11. Although it clearly set its own timeline and limits, Turkey agreed to aid the West in its postinvasion occupation of Afghanistan. Despite this assistance, strains with particular interests in the West (the United States) over the conduct of the subsequent invasion of Iraq began to emerge. Now, three years after the invasion and occupation of Iraq, Turkey continues to pay a price for having hesitated to support the U.S.- and British-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In March 2005, for example, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld identified Turkey—and its refusal to allow the United States to use its borders with Iraq to open a “northern front”—as a party most responsible for the resistance U.S. troops continue to face in their occupation of Iraq (quoted in Shankar 2005). These com-

ments were made despite U.S. logistical reliance on Turkey for its Incirlik airbase, and they echo similar sentiments expressed by former Under Secretary of Defense, and now World Bank President, Paul Wolfowitz, among others.

Shortly after the events of 9/11, the former U.S. statesman Strobe Talbot forecast an improved standing of Turkey in the world due to the West's need for a reliable ally in the Middle East and Eurasian regions. He noted, "In my opinion Turkey's chances of becoming an EU member improved after September 11" (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Near East and South Asia, doc. no. 2001-1007). In many respects Turkey's hesitancy to aid the United States unconditionally created challenges to the perception of itself that Turkey seeks to foster in the West, that it is a necessary bridge to Eurasia and the Middle East. The United States established its own bases in post-Soviet Eurasia amid the "war on terror," and the U.S.- and British-led invasion of Iraq was conducted despite Turkey's hesitancy to engage in and support the conflict.

In this post-9/11 (and post-Iraq invasion) context, it might be argued that the Turkic World imagery produced by the Turkish republic seems to aid mostly parties that seek support from the Turkish state. In producing a discourse of greater relations with and leadership among not only other Turkic nation-states but also Turkic minorities throughout Eurasia and the Middle East, Turkey is morally obligating itself to aid—if only in word—those people identified as its ethnic kinsmen. A major case of this involves the numerically small yet highly vocal Turkmen minority in northern Iraq. Although Western media discussions of Turkey in the Iraq war focus largely on Turkey's concerns about a possible Kurdish state or autonomous area in northern Iraq, this topic is rarely discussed in the Turkish media in the absence of serious considerations regarding the Iraqi Turkmen, many of whom had leaders and/or spokespersons based in Ankara or Istanbul. In such instances, the Turkic World imagery can also create particular political imperatives for foreign and domestic policy, if only in terms of appeasing Turkey's own electorate.

REGIONAL DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL DIMENSION IN SITUATING NATION-TERRITORY CONSTRUCTS

We can thus see new narratives of place and identity being introduced into the consciousness of a nation from the imagery and symbolisms of a newly discovered/invented region. Through this examination we are able to understand that the many issues of identity and territoriality that are at stake with regard to both contemporary politics and long-term conditions in the Middle East are not simply found in the texts of government documents, in the pamphlets of ultranationalists, or in the calls for global action issued by certain spiritual leaders. Rather, they depend upon many aspects that are incorporated into the everyday lives of the citizens of a country, a nationality, or some other community. In Turkey, many of these are readily observable. They can be seen in maps, reconnections with extended families or places of origin, evolving aspects in the natural and built landscapes, notions of common ties—be they historic, linguistic, folkloric, or other—and elsewhere.

The contemporary manifestations of awareness of Turkic brethren who are situated mostly to the east of the Turkish republic have led to expanded notions of Turkey's regional positioning and to a heightened popular sense of regional obligations. The recent tensions within the Turkish nation-state's debates over the country's conduct—actual, anticipated, or expected—in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and South Asia underscore the degrees to which this region is increasingly playing a role in the minds of Turkish citizens at home. Attendant to these concerns, the expectations the West has for Turkey to facilitate its geopolitical and economic policies in both the Turkic world and the wider Middle East, and the goals Turkey has that involve the West, the foreign policy of Turkey has been greatly colored by imagery of the Turkic world in recent years—even if actual policies have not yet progressed particularly far.

NOTES

1. Numerous historians and other social scientists have published general studies of the Turkish republic, and most of those that can be considered solid, critical scholarship attempt to deal with both this vision of modernity and the question of rigidity in defining Turkish nationalism. Among the more noteworthy of these studies are: Shaw and Shaw 1977; Ahmad 1993; Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997; B. Lewis 2002; and Zürcher 2004. Additional sources concerning Turkey's place in the world—ones that deal largely with the conduct of its foreign policies—include: Abramowitz 2000, 2003; Martin and Keridis 2002; Larabee and Lesser 2003; Nachmani 2003; and Robins 2003.

2. A few key sources informing this study from the vast literature on nations, nationalism, and the nation-state include: Smith 1987; Hobsbawm 1990; Anderson 1991; Winichakul 1994; and Duara 1995.

3. In his article on the global economy and the nation-state, Peter Drucker (1997) surveyed a number of such predictions, both in the wider scope of history and through the 1990s.

4. Within the Middle East, examples of economics-led globalization may be most visible in the development of globalized sites of trade, particularly in the Gulf region.

5. Although Turkey was permitted to move closer toward joining the European Union in late 2004, contingent upon ongoing reforms and negotiations, many critics of the process—and of various European attitudes toward Turkey and its populace—note that actual entrance may still be up to a decade away, if it ever takes place.

6. While living in Turkey for a year in the late 1990s and on many other occasions of shorter duration over the past fifteen years, I observed innumerable variations of this map, not only in government offices and associated publications but also in many public places. Such maps adorned calendars, appeared in nonacademic and nonstate publications, and were sold in markets and from street-corner and intersection vendors, commonly along with images of flags and other symbols of Turkic nation-states, political ideas, places, and minority ethnonationalisms.

7. As part of the transitional occupation of Afghanistan, Great Britain was the initial leader of the ISAF. Responding to requests from the West, Turkey then led from June 2002 through January 2003, when control was transferred to a joint German-Netherlands authority from February until August 2003. Since that time, NATO has overseen the ISAF (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Western Europe, doc. no. 2004-0628). Although it is significant that this role in leading the occupation of Afghanistan following the invasion was delegated to Turkey—often rationalized in the West by Turkey's longstanding role in NATO and the fact that northern Afghanistan is home to Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and other Turkic groups—it is also significant that Turkey declined subsequent invitations from the United States and Great Britain for a more sustained commitment to lead the ISAF.

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