

# How Europeans adopted Anatolia and created Turkey

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The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. In the first 20 years of its existence, the political leadership of the republic embarked on a process of nation building in Anatolia and at the same time changed the face of Turkish society, stamping on it a particular brand of secular modernity. This article tries to find out what were the common characteristics of the small band of men who made up the leadership of the republic and to what extent their shared background and experience can help explain the course they charted for Turkey after its creation. One of the conclusions is that Turkey, although located geographically for more than 90% in Asia, is in fact a creation of Europeans, who shaped the country after their own image.

## **Introduction: a country inherited and created**

The Republic of Turkey, founded in 1923, is in many ways a continuation of the 600-year old Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman ‘imperial legacy’ is of course shared by a great many states in Southeastern Europe and the Middle East that were under Ottoman Turkish rule for between three- and five hundred years,<sup>1</sup> but there can be little doubt that Turkey is the repository of the military and administrative traditions of the empire. If other countries inherited different limbs, Turkey inherited the head and the heart: i.e. the capital Istanbul, with the central bureaucracy of the state, which by the end of the nineteenth century counted tens of thousands of civil servants and the army that had played such a crucial role throughout Ottoman history and which, by the final decade of the empire, had become the dominant force in politics as well.

There is a paradox here. In spite of the existence of a large measure of continuity between the empire and the republic, and most of all between the late empire and the early republic, Turkey was also a conscious creation, the result of an act of will – in two different senses. First of all, the fact that the country survived

the post-World War I crisis as a united and sovereign state at all was due to the determination of a small band of nationalist officers, civil servants and intellectuals, who managed to galvanize a war-weary, decimated and exhausted population into a resistance movement that managed to win successive wars against the Armenians and the Greeks and make life so difficult for the victorious British and French that they had to scrap their plans to divide Anatolia amongst themselves and their clients.

Then, victory having been won and recognized at the peace negotiations of Lausanne (1922–23), the circle around Mustafa Kemal Pasha Atatürk, the leader of the national resistance movement, set about building a nation-state that would be able to hold its own in the modern world. The wave of reforms unleashed from 1924 onwards, collectively known (at least in Turkey) as the ‘Kemalist revolution’, had as its ultimate goal the creation of a modern nation-state, a secular republic modelled after European examples. This political edifice was to be supported by a well-educated, forward looking population, whose mentality was to be changed through what Atatürk termed the ‘social and cultural revolution.’

The questions this article wants to address are, first of all, who were these people who embarked on the ambitious project of building an entirely new Turkey on the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia? And, secondly, to what extent does knowledge of their background help us to understand their ideological stance and their political choices? Before we can try to answer these questions, we have to determine who actually were the leaders of the Republic of Turkey in the period of, let us say, the first twenty years, in which that country was shaped. Can we find them in parliament, or in the party apparatus?

### **Parliament, cabinet and party**

For most of the period between the proclamation of the republic (October 1923) and the end of World War II, Turkey was a one-party state. Opposition parties were active in 1924–1925 and in 1930, but they were suppressed within months when they appeared to be gathering grass-roots support. The mechanisms of parliamentary democracy were kept in place throughout the period, with two-stage elections at regular four-year intervals and parliamentary sessions. In reality, however, candidates for parliamentary seats were handpicked by the party leadership and ran unopposed in the elections. In many cases, the parliamentary seat was a sinecure, a reward for political loyalty or recognition of a person’s social status, talent or cultural role. That is how Atatürk’s oldest friend (and distant family member), Nuri Conker came to represent Kütahya in the National Assembly and how the journalist Yakup Kadri and the historian Fuat Köprülü became the unlikely representatives of far away Mardin and Kars respectively.

The real political influence of the large majority of the members of the assembly was very limited indeed. Debates were mostly limited to the closed sessions of the parliamentary party and ministers rarely had to defend their actions in the assembly. For those who wielded real power in the first 20 years of the Kemalist republic, we have to look elsewhere, to the members of the 13 cabinets that governed the country between 1923 and 1943. A further distinction can be made, however. Quite a few of the persons who figured in the cabinets of this era held office only once, or if more than once, for a short time only. To get a glimpse of the group that made up the hard core of the republican political system, I have therefore selected those persons, who held office in at least three of the thirteen cabinets between 1923 and 1943. There were 22 of these, but five more persons should be added to the list for different reasons. First of all, of course, there is the president himself, Mustafa Kemal Pasha Atatürk (1881–1938), who had been a member of the first National Assembly during the independence war, but as president obviously remained outside parliament after the proclamation of the republic in October 1923. He was, and remained, unquestionably the most powerful figure in the system, especially after the suppression of all political opposition in 1925–1926. İsmet Pasha İnönü headed seven out of ten cabinets in the first 15 years of the republic and thus would have been included in the list anyway, but his true significance was greater than that figure would suggest, as he succeeded Atatürk as president in 1938. More so than Atatürk in his later years, İnönü as president kept a firm grip on day-to-day policy making, relegating his prime ministers to a subordinate role. Fevzi Pasha Çakmak only figured in the first cabinet of 1923–1924, but thereafter he remained Chief of the General Staff throughout the period. As a loyal, essentially non-political, professional soldier he was trusted by Atatürk and İnönü. In exchange he was by and large given a free hand in the running of the armed forces. Given the key role of the army in the establishment of the republic, this made him one of the most powerful figures in the country. The same can be said for Kâzım Pasha Özalp, who was twice minister of defence, but for ten consecutive years (1925–1935) held the key post of President of the National Assembly. That all of these have to be included in any list of the most powerful men of the republic is obvious. This is perhaps less so with the final person to be added, Dr Reşit Galip. He was influential as a member of the mixed commission on the population exchange between Turkey and Greece and as a member of the Independence Tribunal in Eastern Anatolia, but his importance lay primarily in his role as architect of the reform of higher education in Turkey in 1932–1933. His early death in 1934 cut short his career.

The Republican People's Party, which was the only legal party in Turkey for 19 out of these 20 years, did not function as an independent entity even in the years before Turkey officially became a one-party state in 1936–1937. On every level there was a de facto congruence between state and party, but the Turkish situation

was very different from that in, for instance, the Soviet Union in that the party was clearly subservient to the state and functioned as its instrument for mobilization and propaganda. Searching for independent party leaders, with a power base distinct from that in the government, is therefore not a fruitful exercise.

### **The president's circle**

After 1928, during the last decade of his life, Atatürk left the day-to-day running of the country largely in İsmet's hands, but the fact that he remained the undisputed leader with dictatorial powers (in fact, if not on paper) meant that access to the president and close links with him, especially if these links were well-known and visible, remained an important instrument of power in the Turkey of the 1920s and 1930s. Atatürk gave plenty of opportunities to gain access to him, as he invited personal and political friends as well as people who had attracted his attention through their work regularly to his dinner table. Almost no evening passed without one of these dinner parties taking place. They lasted from late evening until dawn and during them both alcohol and conversation flowed freely. The fact that decisions reached during these informal gatherings were sometimes imposed on İsmet and his cabinet, is an indication of their importance, but this phenomenon also caused growing irritation in the cabinets in the 1930s. Thanks to the published register of visitors to the president over the years 1932–1938 and to the research of Walter Weiker based on it, we know who the most frequent visitors were and who could thus be regarded as the president's inner circle in his later years, irrespective of the official position held by them.<sup>2</sup> A group of ten people emerges, who were 'frequent' or even 'very frequent' visitors throughout this six year period. These should be added to the cabinet members mentioned above.

### **The core leadership**

We are then left with a group of 37 persons (see the Appendix), who can reasonably be described as the core leadership of the Turkish republic in its first 20 years (although there were, of course, shifts between different sub-periods and not all of the persons involved were as important in, say, 1940 as they had been in 1930). What can we say about the common characteristics of this group? I propose to look at five variables: age, geographical origin, religion, education and professional career, having established first what is obvious at a glance: every single one of them was a man.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Age*

The average age of the group of cabinet ministers and that of the president's circle was almost identical: members of both groups were 40 years old, on average, when

the republic was proclaimed and around 55 when Atatürk died. The uniformity of the age group is striking. Twenty-six of the 37 persons were born between 1878 and 1888, 18 of them between 1879 and 1884. We are definitely dealing with members of a recognizable generation here.

### *Geographical origin*

When we look at where they hailed from, we see that more than a third (13 persons, or 35%) came from the Ottoman Balkans, or in Ottoman parlance: from *Rumeli*. Selanik (Thessaloniki), Atatürk's home town and the main urban centre of *Rumeli*, is especially well represented, but small provincial towns like Köprülü (Veles) and Yenişehir (Larissa) in Thessaly are represented as well. Almost a fifth (seven persons) of the political leaders came from the Aegean, both from the islands and from the Eastern littoral. It is important to remember that in terms of communications, culture and development the Aegean area was much more akin to the Southern Balkans than to inland Anatolia. A city like Izmir in many ways resembled Selanik far more than it did Konya or Ankara. In other words: those leaders who hailed from the Aegean and those from the Southern Balkans can be considered as inhabitants of one cultural sphere. To a large extent, the same is true of the next two groups: those born in Istanbul (7 persons or 19%) and in the Marmara basin, the area stretching from Çanakkale in the west to Adapazarı in the east (4 persons, 11%). Taken together, then, 84% of the leadership came from the areas that were most developed, and best integrated with Europe. In a strictly geographical sense, 62% of all Turkish republican leaders hailed from Europe. Contrast this with the number of persons from Central or Eastern Anatolia: only five persons (13.5%) came from these areas, from the Turkish heartland that was so fervently adopted as a national home and glorified by the Kemalists. The way these Kemalist leaders embraced Anatolia is perhaps more understandable when we consider that almost half of them (17 persons) came from areas that were lost to the Ottoman Empire in 1911–1913, during the Tripolitanian and Balkan Wars. They and their families lost the places they grew up in, when they were about 30 years old. They belonged to the broad category of the *muhacirs* (refugees) of whom there were millions in late Ottoman and republican Anatolia, who had to rebuild their lives in a new and unfamiliar country.

What is also striking about the geographical, or topographical origins of the Turkish leadership, is that with one exception (Mahmut Celâl Bayar, later the third president of Turkey) they came from an urban background, although the size of the settlement varied from small towns like Yenişehir or Ödemiş through provincial centres like Adapazarı or Çanakkale to cosmopolitan cities like Selanik or Istanbul.

### *Religion*

Every single person in the group was a Muslim, in the sense that he came from a Muslim family. From what we know, very few seem to have been devout Muslims, however. A man like Chief of Staff, Fevzi Pasha Çakmak, known for his strong religious convictions, was clearly an exception there.

### *Education*

A very clear picture also emerges where education is concerned. The large majority of the leaders were graduates of the Ottoman Empire's military academy (*mektebi harbiye*), military medical school (*mektebi tıbbiye askeriyeye*) and civil service academy (*mektebi mülkiye*). No fewer than 27 out of 37 were the product of these training establishments, that had been modelled on the French *grandes écoles*, 15 from the military academy, two from the military medical school and ten from the civil service academy. The education of two persons I have not as yet been able to find out, but the remaining eight came from an array of higher education establishments, ranging from the Arts Faculty of the *Darülfünun* (Istanbul University) to medical schools, an agricultural college and a school for postal officials. Interestingly, Mahmut Celâl Bayar, the only one to hail from a village, was also the only one to have no higher education. Instead, he was trained on the job as a banker.

In other words: the leaders of the republic had received a European-style education in modern secular schools. They all had at least one foreign language, most often French. People with a traditional religious education are lacking: there was not a single *medrese* graduate among them.

### *Professional career*

The reason that the 37 persons studied in this article have been selected in the first place is of course the importance of their political careers. Nearly all of them came into the politics of the republic with a professional career behind them. However, the education they received predisposed them for professional careers of a specific type, that of administrator, military officer, educator, doctor or engineer, in other words typical members of the modern professional class, as it had emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century.

The *harbiye*, *tıbbiye* and *mülkiye* were the breeding grounds for the military and civil wings of the Ottoman state machinery and the training institutions for postal officials and agricultural engineers also had as their prime purpose the production of experts for the offices of the state. Those who graduated from the Arts Faculty of the university may have gone into education or journalism,

but they, too, were part and parcel of the state machinery. Falih Rıfıkı Atay was a leading newspaper journalist and editor, but he also earned his livelihood as one of the Porte's many thousands of clerks and rose to the rank of private secretary to the Navy Minister. The great educator Hasan-Ali Yücel made his career in *state* schools. Thirty-four out of 37 persons made their professional careers at least partly in the service of the state. One (Mahmut Esat Bozkurt), a lawyer, went into politics straight after university and therefore had no independent professional career, and another person's career is unknown (Hasan Cavit Belül). The one clear exception to the rule is again Celâl Bayar, who made his career as clerk and manager in the *Deutsche Orientbank*.

What this means is that, among the core leadership of the early republic, we find no traders, no landowners, no religious officials and no manufacturers at all. Nor do we find anyone with a peasant or working class background.

### **A group portrait**

What we are left with is a group of 37 persons with a very clear and coherent profile. A generation of men, born in the 1880s in Muslim families in an urban environment in Southeastern Europe and in the coastal areas of the Marmara and the Aegean; people, formed in the colleges, which the Ottoman Empire had established after European models in the nineteenth century, who knew at least one European language and who went on to professional careers in the service of the state.

These are the main characteristics of the generation that shaped the secular, nationalist Republic of Turkey and that carried through the eye-catching reforms of the 1920s, which made such an impression in the West, from the introduction of the Swiss civil code and the Western dress code to the adoption of the Latin alphabet and the ban on religious orders. They were also the ones who laid the groundwork for socio-economic developments in the 1930s and 1940s, extending and nationalizing the rail network, building sugar- and textile factories and eradicating malaria.

### **Continuities with the Young Turk period**

Interestingly, the profile of this group shows remarkable similarities to that of their predecessors, the leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress (the 'Young Turks') who brought about the constitutional revolution of 1908 and were the dominant political force in the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1918. Earlier research conducted on the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the members of its central committee and the politically active military officers, who ultimately gave the committee its power, gave the following

results. They were all men and, with the exception of one Sabbataic Jew, they were Muslims. Forty-four percent hailed from the Balkans (*Rumeli*), 21% from Istanbul and 12% from the Aegean. The vast Asiatic parts of the empire brought only 15% of the Young Turk leadership. Their background was almost exclusively urban, they were educated in the modern European-type colleges and they made their careers in the service of the state, like, in most cases, their fathers before them.<sup>4</sup>

There was little overlap between the Young Turk leadership of 1908–1918 and the Turkish republican leadership of 1923–1943. The overlap that can be seen is almost completely limited to the category of politically active military officers, the category to which Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, themselves belonged. The reasons why there is so little continuity between both groups at the top level are fairly obvious. Having lost the war, the CUP leaders were discredited after October 1918. The most prominent Unionists fled the country aboard a German submarine. Many of those who remained were arrested by the British and interned in Malta, awaiting trial for their role in the Armenian genocide of 1915–1916. Those Unionist leaders who had resurfaced after the Turkish victory in the war of Independence (1922) and had not unequivocally shown their loyalty to Atatürk's leadership, were eliminated in a series of political show trials in the summer of 1926.

Nevertheless, the biographical data make it clear that both groups of leaders came from an almost identical pool sociologically. They also had a shared political background as most of the republican leaders had been members of the Committee of Union and Progress. Some of them had held important military or administrative functions during the Young Turk era before 1918. Here we touch on a very sensitive issue in the historiography of modern Turkey. If the government of the republic was in the hands of people who had a political, administrative or military career in the years before 1918, that fact automatically raises the question of whom among them were involved in the Armenian genocide of 1915–1916 and to what extent. The direct involvement in some of the most gruesome aspects of the Armenian policies of the CUP has been demonstrated for some cabinet ministers of the republic (Abdülhalik Renda, Ali Cenani, Şükrü Kaya) but much more research needs to be done here.<sup>5</sup> The careers of some of the republican leaders are such that they give us a *prima facie* case to further investigate, even if we do not have any hard evidence at this point: Ali Çetinkaya was one of the *fedais* (armed volunteers) of the CUP and an important member of the *Teşiklati Mahsusa* (Special Organization), which was instrumental in the terror campaigns against the Ottoman Christians. Kılıç Ali was adjutant to Enver Pasha's brother Nuri Pasha during the latter's campaign in the Caucasus and Kazım Özalp was commanded the mobile gendarme force in Southeastern Anatolia in 1915–16. One would like to know more about these people's activities during World War I, if only to exonerate them.



There are at least three areas in which the shared background described above arguably influenced the mentality and the policies of the Kemalist leadership in a decisive way: nationalism and nation building, secularism/positivism and the search for modernity. Taking into account the background of the Kemalist leaders undoubtedly helps us to understand better their aims and choice of policies.

### **Nation building in Anatolia**

With half of the leaders hailing from areas lost to the Empire in 1911–1913 and thus technically having become *muhacirs* (refugees), although that term is not usually applied to these members of the elite in Turkey, the loss of the Balkan provinces and the Aegean islands of course constituted a trauma of the first order. To the Ottoman elite, the Balkans (*Rumeli*) was their home, their ancestral land. It is perhaps useful here to reacquaint a European readership with just how long some of the main towns and cities of the Balkans had been in Ottoman hands: places like Sofia, Nish, Üsküp (Skopje), Monastir (Bitola) and Selanik (Thessaloniki) had all been conquered between 1385 and 1390 and so had an Ottoman past stretching back more than 500 years. There was a strong consciousness of this fact and a feeling that the legacy of the glorious forefathers had now been lost. This is visible, for instance, in the lines of one of the best known poems of the famous poet Yahya Kemal Beyatli, himself a native of Skopje:

When I passed my youth in Balkan towns  
I felt a yearning with every breath I took.  
Byron's sad melancholy ruled my heart then.  
In youth's daydreams I roamed the mountains;  
Breathed the free air of Rakofça's fields.  
I felt the passion of my raiding ancestors:  
Every summer, for centuries, a run to the North  
That has left a thundering echo in my breast.

This is a fragment from *Açık Deniz* (High Seas), which the poet wrote in 1925 when he had long since settled in Istanbul. It would not have been surprising had a strong irredenta movement, aiming to re-conquer the lost territories, developed among the Ottoman elite after 1913. This, however, was not the case. Reversing the losses of 1913 was part of the war aims formulated by the Ottoman government when it joined Germany in World War I, but this had no practical effect, as drawing Bulgaria into the orbit of the Central Powers (and thereby opening up the vital supply route between Germany and the Ottoman Empire) took precedence over rearranging the borders in the Southern Balkans. After World War I and the Turkish victory in the independence struggle (1919–1922), when the conference on the Near East was convened in Lausanne, the Turkish delegation went there with a brief to demand a plebiscite in Western Thrace (the area west of the Maritza

river populated by a Muslim majority) and to reclaim the Aegean islands adjacent to the Anatolian coast, but when Greece, Britain and France refused to grant these demands, the delegation acquiesced. The National Assembly in Ankara then ratified this decision. After 1923, during the Kemalist republic, relations between Turkey and its Balkan neighbours actually became quite good. A distinct *Rumeli* identity can be discerned in literary products such as Yahya Kemal's poem, in the naming of shops and restaurants (and, after the introduction of family names in 1934, also of families) or in the performance of Macedonian music at President Atatürk's dinner table, but by and large the reaction of the 'generation of 1880' to the loss of the homeland of so many of its members was not focused on the lost provinces. Instead the republican elite invested its emotional capital in the discovery and adoption of Anatolia as its new fatherland.

A new interest in Anatolia can already be discerned after the constitutional, or Young Turk, revolution of 1908. It is visible in the publication of the historian Ahmet Şerif's reports from Anatolia in the Young Turk daily *Tanin* (Echo) in 1909, which opened the eyes of many city dwellers to the harsh realities of life in Anatolia. After 1912, the interest increased. Mehmet Ziya Gökalp, the leading ideologue of the Young Turk era, propagated the idea that the peasants of Anatolia represent 'true' Turkish culture and values as opposed to the 'Byzantine' and 'Arab' high culture of the Ottomans. In 1916, the 'Towards the People' (*Halka Doğru*) movement, inspired by the same sort of idea, started in Izmir. In the republic this was to develop into the idealization of the Anatolian peasant (*köycülük*) that made up one of the strands of the Kemalist ideology and which is symbolized by Atatürk's dictum 'the true master of this country is the peasant.'

The feeling that Anatolia was the 'Turk's last stand', the homeland that had to be secured at all cost, directly led to the attempts of the Young Turks and their Kemalist successors to homogenize the population of Anatolia and to turn it into a land for Turks only. This process started in 1914, with the expulsion of over 150,000 Greek orthodox from the Aegean seaboard in retaliation for the expulsion of hundreds of thousand of Muslims from the Balkans and culminated in the Armenian genocide of 1915–1916. It is no coincidence that refugees both from the Balkans and from the Caucasus played a very important role in the persecution of the Armenians. The nervousness about the future of Anatolia on the part of the Young Turks, as well as their essential ignorance of the true state of affairs there is demonstrated by the fact that very shortly after the end of the major Armenian persecutions, at the end of 1916, the Turkish nationalist 'Turkish Hearths' (*Türk Ocakları*) organization, which was closely linked to the Committee of Union and Progress, sent an emissary to Anatolia to investigate whether the heterodox Muslims living there, such as Alevites and Tahtacı, were in fact converted Christians and thus of doubtful loyalty.<sup>6</sup>

Those Armenians who remained or returned after the end of World War I, were largely hunted out of the country by a campaign of intimidation during the war of independence. The Turkish victory over the invading Greek army in 1922 led to a mass panic among the Greek Orthodox of Western Anatolia in September 1922. As a result, three quarters of a million people crossed the Aegean aboard almost anything that could float. The agreement concluded between Turkey and Greece in Lausanne in 1923 not only saw to it that the remaining Greek Orthodox of Anatolia were forcibly exchanged with the Muslims of Greece (with the exception of the community in Eastern Thrace), it also legitimized and made permanent all population movements that had taken place since October 1912 (the start of the Balkan War).

The independence struggle after World War I was waged in order to 'safeguard the national rights of Anatolia and *Rumeli*' and the leaders of the resistance, including Mustafa Kemal Pasha, made a conscious effort to identify Anatolia as the historic home of the Turks, whose earth had been coloured red by the blood of the 'martyrs' since the first Turkish conquest in 1071.<sup>7</sup> Emotional appeals were made to the population to defend the fatherland. After the proclamation of the republic, the cult of Anatolia persisted and, particularly in the 1930s, the old Anatolian civilizations, such as that of the Hittites, were claimed as Turkish, thus staking out a historical claim to the territory older than that of the Greeks, Armenians, Arabs or Kurds. The adoption of Anatolia as the true homeland of the Turks went deep and it was a feeling shared even by many who were not Kemalists. Turkey's most famous modern poet, Nazım Hikmet Ran, a communist and an internationalist who many times fell foul of the Kemalist authorities, spent years in Turkish prisons and died in Moscow, in one of his best-known and loved poems, *Vasiyet* (Testament), expresses his wish to be buried in an Anatolian village thus:

Comrades, if I am not granted to see that day;  
If I should die before freedom comes:  
Lift me up and carry me  
Bury me in an Anatolian village cemetery.

The poet who wrote these lines in 1953 was a native of Salonica, was born there in 1902 and first set foot in Anatolia when he was 18 years old!

### **Secularism, science and education**

The leaders of the republic, like the Young Turks before them only more so, had a strong belief in science as the panacea for Turkey's ills. Atatürk constantly harped on the necessity to imbue the people with a scientific spirit and his dictum 'The only true spiritual guide in life is science', coined in 1933, is still among

the most widely quoted today. The belief in science brought with it an equally strong belief in education as the gateway to development and modernization. The republican leadership and its supporters saw themselves as the ‘enlightened’ (*münevver*, later *aydın*) who brought the light of science and progress to the ignorant masses. The iconography of the republic symbolized this through the frequent depiction of Atatürk in the role of a teacher, with a blackboard, in pictures and statues.

For the Kemalists, the need to base progress and development on the adoption of a scientific worldview, made it imperative to secularize the state, but also society. They were strongly influenced by a mixture of late Nineteenth Century French positivism and German materialism and they were passionately anti-clerical, holding the preachers, religious teachers and mystical sheikhs responsible for the ignorant state of the people. Most Young Turks and Kemalists paid lip-service to an idealized form of ‘true’ Islam, which was supposed to be rational and open to science, but this was coupled to a firm rejection of Islam as it was practised in Turkey as well as to the demand that Islam’s role be restricted to that of a personal conviction, not that of a dominant force in society. The almost caricature-like depiction of religious figures as forces of darkness can be traced in many literary works of the Kemalist era, starting with Yakup Kadri’s *Nur Baba* (‘Father Light’) published in 1922.

There can be little doubt, indeed the memoirs of leading Kemalists tell us as much, that this generation first became acquainted with these ideas during their years in the civilian and military colleges, in which all of them (with a single exception) were educated. The educational programme of these colleges, modelled as they were after contemporary European schools, in and of itself inculcated a secular, science-oriented worldview, whether in agriculture, engineering, medicine or the arts of war. The students also learned European languages, mostly French, and avidly read French novels as well as French and German philosophy. Apart from the content of the curriculum, the fact that it was the European-type college education that had given them access to successful careers, must have been instrumental in shaping their ideas on the key role that education could play in development. In this they were typical modern professionals, attached to qualifications and diplomas.

### **Bourgeois modernity**

The third area, where we can safely say that the shared background of the Kemalists has been of decisive influence, is their cultural interpretation of modernity.

Kemalist modernity was expressed in many ways. The universal emblems of modernity – smokestacks, railways, dams, tractors – were used by the Kemalists

as they were elsewhere in the 1920s and 1930s, but there are two areas where the Kemalist modernization ideal was particularly visible. The first is that of dress. As president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk dressed first as an Ottoman gentleman in frock coat, with the Fez or Nationalist *Kalpak* as headgear. After the promulgation of the dress code in 1926, when traditional clothing was banned and European dress and headgear were made compulsory for men, he appeared as a European gentleman, wearing a suit, *tenue de ville* or, in the country, plus-fours. His entourage followed suit. Pictures of the republican leadership in the 1920s and 1930s show groups of bourgeois gentlemen in trilbies and panama hats, only their upright bearing betraying the military background of most of them. The ladies who appear in the pictures often wear high heels and fur coats. Children of course wear school uniforms in school but quite a few boys seem to have been dressed as sailors when at home.

The second area where we can clearly see the expression of a distinct lifestyle, is in architecture and the rearrangement of the public space. While the Kemalists did relatively little to restore the old Ottoman town centres (many of which were in ruinous condition after ten years of warfare), they did lay out new towns where they created the features that were an integral part of the bourgeois lifestyle: parks with benches, cafes and tearooms, clubs and theatres. Under İnönü, who was himself an enthusiast, the races became the principal venue for Ankara's society. It was not unusual for the members of the republican elite, the president himself among them, to keep dogs as pets, something that was definitely frowned upon in more traditional Muslim circles.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that what the Kemalists aspired to in terms of cultural modernity was in fact the European bourgeois way of life. Obviously, the Young Turk and Republican leaders did not constitute a bourgeoisie in Marxist, or socio-economic terms. They were state-employed civil servants, teachers and officers. Therefore it should come as no surprise that ideologically and politically they positioned themselves differently from what one might expect from members of a European bourgeoisie. Liberalism never developed into a strong current in Kemalist Turkey. However, in a broader sense, they did belong, or aspired to belong to the culture of European nineteenth century 'Bürgertum'<sup>8</sup> and they found the examples after which they modelled themselves not only in far away Berlin or Paris, but much closer to home as well. In the towns and cities of the Southern Balkans and the Aegean, as well as in the capital Istanbul, the explosive growth of a Greek (and to a lesser extent Bulgarian, Armenian and Jewish) bourgeoisie was one of the most remarkable developments in the socio-economic history of the Ottoman Empire between 1860 and 1912.<sup>9</sup> The cultural codes of the Kemalist leadership seem to have echoed those of the Non-Muslim urban middle class that they had enviously observed during their youth in *fin de siècle* Salonica, Sofia or Smyrna.

**Appendix. Thirty-seven Leaders of the Turkish Republic 1923–43***Cabinet*

<b>Ismet İnönü</b>	Izmir/Smyrna 1884–1973 military officer
<b>Fevzi Çakmak</b>	Istanbul 1876–1950 military officer
<b>Kazım Özalp</b>	Köprülü/Vele 1880–196 military officer
<b>Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda</b>	Yanya/Janina 1881–1957 civil servant
<b>Refik Saydam</b>	Istanbul 1882–1942 military doctor
<b>Şükrü Kaya</b>	Istanköy/Kos 1883–195 civil servant (law)
<b>Şükrü Saraçoğlu</b>	Ödemiş 1887–195 civil servant (law, education)
<b>Recep Peker</b>	Istanbul 1888–1950 military officer
<b>Ali Çetinkaya</b>	Afyon/Karahisar 1878–194 military officer
<b>Mahmut Celâl Bayar</b>	Gemlik 1884–1983 banker
<b>Fuat Ağralı</b>	Midilli/Lesbos 1878–1957 civil servant (law, finance)
<b>Tevfik Rüştü Aras</b>	Çanakkale 1883–1972 medical doctor
<b>Ali Rana Tarhan</b>	Istanbul 1883–? PTT official
<b>Muhlis Erkmén</b>	Bursa 1891–? agricultural engineer
<b>Hulusi Alataş</b>	Beyşehir 1882–1964 military doctor
<b>Saffet Arıkan</b>	Erzincan 1887–1947 military officer
<b>Şakir Kesebir</b>	Köprülü/Veles 1889–1965 civil servant
<b>Süleyman Sirri</b>	Selanik/Thessaloniki 1874–1925 engineer
<b>Hasan-Ali Yücel</b>	Istanbul 1897–1961 arts faculty, educator
<b>Reşit Galip</b>	Rodos 1893–1934 medical doctor
<b>Hasan Hüsnü Saka</b>	Trabzon 1885–1960 civil servant
<b>Zekai Apaydın</b>	Bosna/Bosnia 1877–? civil servant
<b>Mahmut Esat Bozkurt</b>	Kuşadası 1892–1943 lawyer
<b>Esat Sağay</b>	Selanik/Thessaloniki 1874–1938 military officer
<b>Hilmi Uran</b>	Bodrum 1884–? ?
<b>Naci Tınaz</b>	Serfice/Servia 1882–1964 military officer

*President's circle*

<b>Mustafa Kemal Atatürk</b>	Selanik/Thessaloniki 1881–1938 military officer
<b>Kılıç Ali (Emrullahzade Asaf)</b>	Istanbul 1889–1971 military officer
<b>Nuri Conker</b>	Selanik/Thessaloniki 1881–1937 military officer

<b>Salih Bozok</b>	Selanik/Thessaloniki 1881–1941 military officer
<b>İsmail Müştak Mayakon</b>	Yenişehir/Larissa 1882–1938 civil servant
<b>Müfit Özdeş</b>	Kırşehir 1874–1940 military officer
<b>Falih Rıfki Atay</b>	Istanbul 1893–1971 journalist
<b>Hasan Cavit Betül</b>	
<b>Cevat Abbas Gürer</b>	Niş/Nish 1887–1943 military officer
<b>Tahsin Uzer</b>	Selanik/Thessaloniki 1879–? civil servant
<b>Edip Servet Tör</b>	Adapazarı 1880–1960 military officer

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## About the Author

**Erik-Jan Zürcher** studied Turkish (with Arabic, Persian and Modern History) at the University of Leiden, where his thesis, 'The Unionist Factor', concerned the role of the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish independence struggle after World War I. From 1977 to 1997 he worked in the University of Nijmegen, and from 1989 to 1999 he headed the Turkish Department of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. From 1993 to 1997

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