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Editor's Note

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EDITOR'S NOTE

When we made the decision to convene Macalester's fifth biennial Faculty Development International Seminar in Turkey, and in the city of Istanbul in particular, there was an immediate sense that we were in for a rich and thrilling learning time. We were not disappointed! For both the country and the city are located in a strategic point of encounter between past and memorable civilizations and breathtakingly globalizing zones of the contemporary world. Both of these experiences mark the Turkish people with a degree of uncommon worldliness, typified by generosity to sojourners.

The Republic of Turkey is, comparatively, a big country in at least two registers: size and population. The area of Turkey is nearly 780,600 square kilometers, and it has a population of over sixty-eight million people. The physical terrain, so prone to earthquakes, is varied. It includes enchanting coastal regions; productive agricultural areas dotted by quaint villages and small towns; harsh outposts; and high altitude regions. Over fifty percent of the population resides in urban areas that are dominated by such cosmopolitan and vibrant cities as Istanbul (over nine million and perhaps the largest city in all of Europe!), Ankara (the capital in the hinterland), Izmir, and Bursa—the city of silk. These and other urban concentrations present a visitor a fascinating interdigitation of European and Islamic ways best illustrated by architectural styles, social habits, and commercial activities. Though the population is overwhelmingly Muslim, there are small but old Christian and Jewish communities. But even Islamic religious identity or Turkish national belonging doesn't mean homogeneity. On the contrary, within the faith, there are significant numbers who are Alevi Muslims, as well as nearly twelve million Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin. Moreover, in addition to the official Turkish language, Kurdish, Zaza, Arabic, Armenian, and Greek are spoken among segments of the citizenry.

Turkey, with a workforce of 23 million, has a gross national product estimated at around \$290 billion, with an annual real growth rate of five percent in 2004. Among the known natural resources are coal, chromium, copper, mercury, boron, oil, and gold. Agriculture (including the world's largest production of apricots) constitutes about twelve

percent of the economy but accounts for more than forty percent of employment. Industry contributes about twenty-five percent, and the rest, such as tourism with 14 million visitors registered in 2003, is primarily in the service and informal (or underground) sectors. Despite a notable economic capacity, the per capita income in the country is still a modest \$3,400. Moreover, the official average unemployment rate is nearly eleven percent, with the distribution of wealth lopsided in favor of the urban population.

There is little disagreement that Turkey is a country with a deep and impressive history. What is up for debate is the nature of the contemporary context and the shaping of the future. Both the commissioned essays in this volume and Macalester faculty reflections enter this fray in one form or another. Here, I would like to offer brief comments on two of the challenges that are already in view as the citizens of Turkey press for a speeded up evaluation of their society and its institutions.

Membership in the European Union

By far the most commanding of contemporary issues in Turkey, there was hardly any occasion in which the topic of joining the European Union (EU) did not come up instantly and condition the conversation. The vast majority of the Turkish public favors full membership in the European Union—though many also sound disheartened by the slow progress of the decision on the application for entry. On the theme of becoming part of the EU, there appears to be two broad and critical factors that bound the discussion: specific technical criteria and “Europeaness.”

The first, clearly adumbrated at Copenhagen in 1993 by the European Council Summit, stresses stability of institutions that sustain democracy, the existence of a market economy that can partake of the competitive environment of the EU, and an overall commitment and competence to carry out the responsibilities of membership, particularly with regard to the political, economic, and monetary expectations. Turkey continues to undertake reforms that are designed to meet these conditions. It is the second issue that seems both pivotal yet illusive to confront.

The assumption that to be eligible, a candidate country and its people must be European is axiomatic among the founding members, as well as those inducted by way of the continuing enlargement process. But what does it mean to be European? Is it a matter of geographical boundary? Some in the EU have emphasized such a characteristic and, consequently, have declared that the fact that the bulk of the landmass of Turkey is in Asia automatically nullifies the application. But, as Ignacio Ramonet has underscored, this stance is undermined by the other contradicting fact that far away French Guyana (South America) and Reunion (Indian Ocean) both already belong to the EU.¹ Then there is the negative sentiment that summons a particular reading of history. Here, many seem to concur with the plain statement by Fritz Bolkestein, a European Commissioner, who recently and boldly submitted that if Turkey was received into the Union, "the liberation of Vienna in 1683 will have been in vain."² This, too, appears disingenuously selective and cannot stand scrutiny. After all, key members (e.g., France, Spain, Germany), let alone lesser ones (e.g., Austria), had each in an earlier incarnation pursued ambitions of bloody conquest across the landscape. Curiously, such a record never entered into an examination of their claims as "authentic" Europeans.

It is most likely that the resistance to Turkish admission is predicated on two other factors: religious difference and uneven development. There is enough evidence to show that among both the political elite and the population at large in the EU, an old as well as a new streak of the anti-Islamic type is present. These feelings of "othering" seem to have been compounded by the presence of large Muslim communities in many member countries, aggravated by the rise of militant Islamic consciousness. Most of the conceivable differences, nonetheless, are not impossible to mollify. For one, there are numerous moments in history in which communities, including those inside Europe, of varying religious affiliations have profitably shared a space, if not thrived together. But even if such positive experiences are not fully retrievable, there are no *naturalistic* barriers (except in the minds and intentions of dogmatic essentializers) that deem cosmopolitan coexistence in a capacious defined new Europeanness impossible. "Them" is, banally, a social construction and could be equally redesigned into its antithesis, "us."

Uneven development is more concrete and immediately daunting. In this case, both the large population (when admitted, Turkey will become the second largest member, second only to Germany) and

the relative level of economic deprivation among Turkish citizens are undeniable. This worry enters the imagination through the reasonable suspicion that, first, large financial subsidies will have to be incurred by the EU to upgrade the physical infrastructure and human capital of Turkey. Second, there is the fear that millions of Turks will immediately immigrate into other countries (particularly the Western/Northern) in the Union. Both of these concerns are not new in the enlargement of the EU. Poorer members like Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain have had and still receive “development investments” to address their conditions of uneven modernization. Moreover, the movement of many of their natives into other parts of the Union has not resulted in a discernable negative impact on their new communities.

Modern Turkey has already made headway in synchronizing its broad identity with that of the rest of Europe. Mustafa Kemal’s (Ataturk) whole project—singularly driven by the transformation of Turkey, after the demise of the Ottoman period, into a strong and prosperous society—was contingent upon the degree of success of the country in adopting the modes of associational, economic, and cultural life prevalent in Western Europe. As a result, a secularist republic was affirmed by a law passed in 1905. In the 1950s, Turkey joined NATO and the Council of Europe. These acts were later followed, among others, by a customs treaty, capped by the most recent invitation to begin the final process of negotiation for accession to the Union—a process that is being estimated to take at least a decade. In the end, the decision to become a member raises at least two questions: (a) What is in it for Turkey?; and (b) what are the benefits for the EU that will come with the entrance of Turkey? Briefly, the advantages for Turkey are multiple: capital, potentially more than the current \$16.4 billion in direct foreign investment, technology, and a bigger and more competitive market; deepening of democratic culture and practices; and the expansion and protection of human rights and the rule of law. That much is frequently listed. The second question is hardly addressed.

Yet, Turkey’s potential long-term contributions to the well-being of the EU are notable: a significant market, one which betrays numerous needs waiting to be transformed into effective demands; a relatively young population that could fill the widening gap, particularly in Western Europe, between a shrinking workforce and an increasingly longer-living and large number of retirees who expect to maintain their accustomed level of welfare; a cultured and confident Muslim people who are also, akin to many European Christians and Jews, at

home in a secular political order and, thus, will be in a position to play a catalyzing role in a full embrace of a multi-religious and pluralist continent and world; and a vital bridge between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The economic, intellectual, political, and security value of the last point cannot be overemphasized. The parts of Asia and the Middle East that are adjacent to Turkey are, at once, geographies rich in energy resources (e.g., oil) and confront monumental developmental imperatives. Here, too, Turkey's role will become even more pivotal as to the direction the future might take.

But an accession to the European Union is not immune to liabilities for Turkey. Two aspects worthy of a quick mention are the danger of the downside effects of European globalization predicated on neoliberal socioeconomic assumptions, and an *orientalization* of Turkish people. The first could bring material impoverishment to many by compelling cuts in social investments and creating greater distances between citizen and locations/processes of important decision-making. Moreover, such policies, so fixated on private accumulation, could exaggerate, as it were, the already structural vulnerabilities of the new peripheries of the Union. The second relates to the old but still active racist bigotry that accompanied the project of modernity in Europe. Nowadays, though the extreme or raw guise is worryingly on the rise, a more respectable iteration takes the form of an arrogant paternalism. In any case, to assuage both threats will require a European Turkey that is alert, competent, and committed to collective reasoning associated with, among others, the civic heritage of Europe.

The Cyprus Question

The situation in Cyprus is also an enduring and difficult problem, one complicated by ethno-religious antagonisms, minority versus majority political fears, economic inequality, and the machinations of external powers—particularly Greece and Turkey.

When one attempts a distillation of the numerous factors at work, perhaps a most salient fact is this: the failure on the part of the post-colonial generation and the leaders of the island to create a cohesive yet pluralistic Cypriot national identity that is robust enough to resist the tugs of old ethnic claims and loyalties. This major weakness seems to open the door for foreign powers in the region to manipulate communal disharmonies. The fallout of this situation includes a dual anxiety: a heightened concern over security on the part of the Greek Cypriots

in the shadow of a giant neighbor and a deep apprehension by Turkish Cypriots of socioeconomic marginalization, if not pogroms, by a dominant majority. It is likely that a successful accession of the *whole* island into the EU, to be followed by Turkey (a position that Greece seems to support), would usher in a new and positive terrain of engagement for all.

The volume begins with the commissioned essays. We start with **Fatma Muge Gocek** who presented her thoughts at Macalester College during the preparatory period. She delves into the past to interrogate the forces that lie in the background and then brings us to an examination of “Turkey’s contested location” in the current epoch of world order. **Binnaz Toprak** treats the relationship between an Islamic identity and the project of secularism in the affairs of the state. Toprak rightly informs us that Turkey’s position is different than the rest of the Muslim societies—that is, the country had embraced secular political practice over eighty years ago. Nonetheless, the debate is still alive among many citizens of the Republic. The third piece is by **Kemal Kirisci**. This essay focuses on the charged issue of ultimate entrance into the European Union. Kirisci takes us through the byways of internal politics with regard to the negotiations on pre-accession. Though he reminds us of the seriousness of the difficulties, he is cautiously optimistic. **Yiannis Papadakis’s** essay addresses the intractable Cypriot question—that is, the division of the island along ethnic identities. Here, concerns over space, rights, belonging, and the last attempt to bring the question to resolution are all reflected upon. The last commissioned essay addresses a deadly geological phenomenon, earthquakes, and the early warning and response systems. **Mustafa Erdik** reminds us that the forces of nature have their own logic and, therefore, understanding the motions of the earth’s plates as well as wakeful preparation for earthquakes, so familiar in the region, must be figured into any technical and social policy.

Part two offers Macalester College faculty reflections. **Franklin Adler** ruminates on the history and current state of Turkish Jews. His find-

ings and commentary are instructive in both how to understand the past and the trends/possibilities of the future.

Mohammed Bamyeh picks up the salient and enduring topic of the encounter between Islam and secular thought/life. He emphasizes the formulation that in Islamic societies, as in other communities, human life has always been conducted through an interdigitation of faith and reason.

Adrienne Christiansen reports on her observations from the divided island of Cyprus. Her sense of multiculturalism, minority/majority relations, and the presence of Turkish troops in one part of the island come together in a sharp relief.

Paula Coeey returns our attention to the interplay between secularism and religion. She signals that the intense debate among Turkish citizens is perhaps best symbolized by the ongoing contest over the Muslim headscarf and the ubiquitous presence of the image of Kemal Pasha (Ataturk). Coeey stresses the changes that both Islam and Kemalism have undergone, including a degree of interlacing that has "global implications."

Gitta Hammarberg tells us about the non-Muslim religious presence, particularly Orthodoxy, with politics, art, and tourism in the mix. Her reflections include a visit to Cappadocia, where she observed an acute manifestation of "religious hybridity."

Hilary Jones's curiosity adopts a comparative mode. She examines the ways in which Turkey and Senegal have dealt with the challenges of modernization.

Kiarina Kordela explores the coexistence of religion (Islam), reason, and the order of commodity. For her, Islam is not the "other" of a "secular and capitalist world." Rather, Islam constitutes a part of this complex contemporary context.

David Martyn's attention is on Turkish-German literature. His project is to interrogate Orhan Pamuk's novel, *My Name is Red*, to discern lessons for "multicultural Germanists."

Rogelio Miñana links together architecture, art, and cultural politics. A fine item in his thinking is the struggle over the fate of one historic enclave, Arnavutköy.

Nadya Nedelsky's piece mulls over the contest over the "veil" in Turkish academic institutions. Among other sources, she reports on the opposing views of six Turks on an issue that seems to represent deeper debates on identity and politics.

Khalidoun Samman touches upon assimilation, modernization, and some attributes of the “World-System.” The lens is “Kemalism” and its impact on Turkish society.

Linda Schulte-Sasse turns our attention to the work of a renowned filmmaker. Here, the focus is on the contradiction associated with the continuing experiences of Turkish society and state as both encounter political and cultural changes.

Wendy Weber cogitates upon the evolving relations between Turkish civil society and the fulcrum of public power—the state—in a time of determinative regional developments. Her insights are built on conversations with members of an important nongovernmental organization.

Notes

1. Ignacio Ramonet, “Turkey: Welcome to Europe,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (November 2004): 1.
2. Ibid.

The sites for the sixth biennial Macalester Faculty Development International Seminar are Nanjing, Shanghai, and Taipei. We will convene in the early summer of 2006.