

CHAPTER III

KEMAL ATATURK AND HIS VISION

OF NATION-BUILDING

3.1 Introduction

The notion of nation-building may be conceived as the process whereby a people who, because of their belief in their common descent and their common mission in the world, by virtue of their common history, aspire to sovereignty over a territory, or seek to maintain and enlarge their political or cultural influence in the face of opposition or threat, either from within or from outside.⁸⁴ The transformation of a decaying Ottoman Empire into a modern nation state by Kemal Ataturk in the 1920's and 1930's after the Turkish War of Independence is often considered one of the great revolutions in history, notably for its impact on the country's Islamic heritage and for its implication for other Muslim countries.⁸⁵

Kemalism⁸⁶ or the Kemalist principles upon which Kemal Ataturk sought to build the fledgling Turkish nation into a Republican state have been described both

⁸⁴ G. E. Von Grunebaum, 'Problems of Muslim Nationalism' in Richard N. Frye (ed) *Islam and the West* (London: Mouton & Co., 1957) p. 7.

⁸⁵ Dankwart A. Rustow, 'Politics and Islam in Turkey 1920 – 1955' in Richard N Frye (ed) *Islam and the West*, p. 57.

⁸⁶ Also called Ataturkism or 'Ataturkculuk' in Turkish.

as a 'set of ideals and ideological principles'⁸⁷ and also as a 'fundamental religious reform'.⁸⁸ These six Kemalist principles⁸⁹: Republicanism,⁹⁰ Nationalism,⁹¹ Populism,⁹² Etatism,⁹³ Secularism⁹⁴ and Revolutionism⁹⁵ formed not only the political and social foundation of independent Turkey, but also represented the every spirit of modern Turkey.⁹⁶

Within a short span of just fifteen years⁹⁷ Kemal Ataturk was able to completely change the structure of Turkish society. He did this in a very unorthodox and revolutionary way, even visionary,⁹⁸ some would say, although in truth, he was actually building on changes that had begun more than a century ago.⁹⁹ This chapter will shed some light on Kemal Ataturk, giving some insight into his family and background, his experiences and the influences of the time and the period in which he lived which played a role in motivating him to rally a nation behind him to fight off imperialistic intentions and to save his country's

⁸⁷ Enver Ziya Karal, 'The Principles of Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk. Founder of a Modern State* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981) p.11.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.11.

⁸⁹ These principles also came to be called the 6 Arrows of Kemalism and became the symbol of the Kemalist Republican Peoples' Party's emblem. See Chapter V.

⁹⁰ This described the form of government that the new Turkish State would take. See Chapter V.

⁹¹ This was to advocate Turkish nationalism as opposed to Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism, Pan-Turkism and Pan-Turanism, among other options. See Chapter V.

⁹² It conveyed the concept of a Turkish democracy. See Chapter V.

⁹³ This allowed for the state's participation in economic affairs. See Chapter V.

⁹⁴ This principle legally separated religion from all matters of state following the declaration that religion is a matter of individual conscience. See Chapter V.

⁹⁵ This was the commitment of the new state to reforms and for this reason, moderate Kemalists prefer the term, 'Reformism' to 'Revolutionism'. See Chapter V.

⁹⁶ Enver Ziya Karal 'The Principles of Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun.(eds) *Ataturk. Founder of a Modern State*, p. 11.

⁹⁷ The period from 1923 – 1938 when he was President of the Turkish Republic.

⁹⁸ Mohammad Sadiq, "Mustafa Kemal Ataturk: Revolutionary Par Excellence", *International Studies*. Vol. 20, No.3 - 4, July - Dec. 1981, p. 505-508.

⁹⁹ Niyazi Berkes, "Historical Background of Turkish Secularism" in Richard N. Frye (ed) *Islam and the West*, p. 41.

sovereignty, to challenge the centuries-old status quo and subsequently, completely changed the destiny of a nation and its people. More importantly, how these factors and developments helped to shape his vision of a modern Turkish nation and civilization.

3.2 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

3.2.1 Family

Kemal Atatürk was born in 1881¹⁰⁰ in the Turkish quarter of Salonica, Macedonia, then a European province in the Ottoman Empire. His birth name was Mustafa.¹⁰¹ His second name, Kemal, meaning 'perfection' was given to him by his school teacher, also a Mustafa, to differentiate between teacher and student and apparently also because of his learning abilities.¹⁰² The name stuck permanently. 'Atatürk', meaning 'Father of the Turks' was an honorary surname bestowed on him by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in November 1934 when a law was enacted requiring all Turks to adopt surnames.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ There is no written record of Atatürk's birth date. Most writers accept the year of his birth as 1881. Andrew Mango in his biography, '*Atatürk*' detailed the possible dates of Atatürk's birth and concluded that it was most likely in the winter of 1880/1881. See Andrew Mango, *Atatürk* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1999) p. 11.

¹⁰¹ Turks then, like most Muslims, did not have surnames, except for some prominent families. They usually acquire a second name by which they are subsequently called. See Mango. p. 25.

¹⁰² *Atatürk* (Ankara: Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, 1963) p. 8.

¹⁰³ Lord Kinross, *Atatürk. A Biography of Mustafa Kemal* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965) p. 578.

His father, Ali Reza was a lowly junior clerk in the Pious Foundation and then in the Customs Office which he later left to become, unsuccessfully, a timber merchant. He had also served briefly as a volunteer in the Ottoman Army during the war with Russia in 1876-7.¹⁰⁴ His mother, Zubeyde Hanim, a devout Muslim of peasant stock, had six children, but only Kemal and his younger sister, Makbule grew into adulthood.¹⁰⁵ Like many Ottomans, he was of mixed heritage, partly of Slavic and Albanian ancestry. He inherited his fair complexion from his mother who was also fair and blue-eyed.¹⁰⁶ From his father he inherited, it has been written, the desire to become a soldier and a distaste for formal religion,¹⁰⁷ as opposed to his mother's piety.

His father died of consumption when he was seven years old and it is said that this probably had an influence in nurturing his domineering and independent qualities,¹⁰⁸ probably attributed to the 'male in the family' syndrome. The family went to stay with his mother's brother in the country but moved back to Salonica to stay with her sister to enable the young Kemal to receive some education. His mother later married a widower of some means, with four children of his own. It was an arrangement that apparently did not please the young man¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 8 - 10

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 30

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 27

¹⁰⁷ Arnold Blumberg, 'Ataturk' in *Great Leaders, Great Tyrants?* (London: Greenwood Press, 1995) p. 8

¹⁰⁸ Macfie, A. L. *Ataturk* (Longman Group UK Limited, 1994) p. 5

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 38

3.2.2 The Formative Years

For Kemal the pull of modernization away from tradition was perhaps already apparent when he first started school. His mother had wanted him to attend a religious school, hoping that he would one day become a religious teacher or something similar. His father, however, preferred a more modern and secular education for his son at the newly opened local school. This caused a dispute between his parents. After some clever manoeuvring where he was first sent to the religious school, young Kemal was then registered at his father's choice where he remained.¹¹⁰

At twelve, impressed with the smart western-style uniforms of military cadets,¹¹¹ he was already keen and decided on being a soldier,¹¹² against his mother's wishes.¹¹³ With the help of a neighbourhood friend's father and without his mother's knowledge, he sat for the examination, passed and was admitted to the Military Secondary School in Salonica. Here he discovered his affinity for mathematics which he excelled in, picked up his second name, along with a working knowledge of French. Even then, he realized that French would open the door to European civilization and under the instruction of French Christian brothers, he honed his skills in the language one summer.¹¹⁴ He was not wrong.

¹¹⁰ *Ataturk* (Ankara: Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, 1963) p. 7.

¹¹¹ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 33.

¹¹² The army gave poor and lower-class boys opportunities for education and upward social mobility. See 'Ataturk', Arnold Blumberg (ed) *Great Leaders. Great Tyrants?*, p.11.

¹¹³ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 34.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

French influence was very strong and prevalent throughout the Ottoman ruling class and for him the French model of culture, society and government would always remain paramount in his mind.¹¹⁵ At fourteen, he graduated to the Military Training School at Monastir.

As a boarder, living and interacting with other boys, he experienced for the first time, life beyond the strict confines of the home. Monastir was an important commercial, administrative and military centre and was a major town in a province covering Western Macedonia that extended south to the Greek frontier.¹¹⁶ It was linked by rail to Salonica, then an important intellectual center and also a hotbed of nationalistic resistance movements and political and student activism against the weak and corrupt government of the Ottoman Empire and the impinging colonialism of Western powers.¹¹⁷

Here, he was exposed to the poems and writings of Turkish poets and patriots such as Namik Kemal,¹¹⁸ and his intellectual horizons were extended by his introduction to the writings of western philosophers such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Auguste Comte, including John Stuart Mills.¹¹⁹ Like most of the world, Turkey had also been affected by the aftermath of the French Revolution. It was the time of the Greek War of Liberation with Turkey in Crete. The declaration of war against an

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

¹¹⁷ Mohammad Sadiq, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*, p. 505.

¹¹⁸ A. Mango opines that young Mustafa himself chose his second name 'Kemal' as he was impressed and inspired by Namik Kemal, rather than that he was given the name by his teacher as is usually written. He was about 13 or 14 years old then. See Mango, p. 37.

¹¹⁹ Lord Kinross, *Atatürk*, p. 17.

expansionary Greece in 1897 generated an outburst of patriotism among Muslim Ottomans. He was especially affected by the observation that the European powers intervene when the Ottomans won but failed to intervene when the Ottomans were in defeat.¹²⁰ All these stirred in him a deep nationalistic sense and an interest in political developments, alongside a healthy zest for the pleasures of city life,¹²¹ then already very European and cosmopolitan - reflecting the ethnic and cultural diversity of the time but also breeding an antagonism that arose therefrom which the Western powers exploited.¹²²

3.2.3 Progress and the Impact of life in the Military

In 1899, he passed on to the infantry class of the Military Academy or War College in Istanbul, and then in 1902, entered the General Staff College as lieutenant, graduating in fifth place over a three year period in 1905 as Staff Captain. Meanwhile, his interest in political developments grew and he became more active. Together with some fiery fellow-students whose influence on his formative years he was later to acknowledge, he formed a secret society which produced an underground manuscript newspaper.¹²³ He was deeply influenced by Ziya Gokalp, a Turkish professor of philosophy and social science. He recalled that his political ideas were at first vague:

¹²⁰ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 43.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹²² Mohammad Sadiq, *Mustafa Kemal Ataturk*, p. 505.

¹²³ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 40.

“Political ideas came to be discussed during the years I spent in the War College. We did not at first have a clear perception of how things stood. It was the time of Sultan Abdulhamit. We used to read the books of Namik Kemal. We were closely followed. Generally, we could read only in the dormitories, after going to bed. The fact that readers of such patriotic works were persecuted, gave us the feeling that there was something rotten in the affairs of state. But we could not determine clearly what was wrong.”¹²⁴

The reading of clandestine political literature,¹²⁵ often of French origin, together with his progress in an eventful military career, no doubt helped in the shaping and maturing of his political ideas.¹²⁶ In 1906, after a short detention for his political activism, he was ‘half-posted, half-exiled’ to Damascus in Syria where he experienced first hand the general deterioration of the Turkish State and was moved to found the Fatherland and Freedom Society.¹²⁷ The society languished and later merged with the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) founded in 1889, and whose members came mainly from the military.¹²⁸ In 1907, he was promoted to Adjutant Major.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

¹²⁵ Paul Dumont, ‘The Origin of Kemalist Ideology’ in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974) p. 27.

¹²⁶ Mohammad Sadiq, *Mustafa Kemal Ataturk*, p. 507.

¹²⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) p. 239.

¹²⁸ Mohammad Sadiq, *Mustafa Kemal Ataturk*, p. 507.

In 1908, the CUP, in what came to be known as the Young Turk¹²⁹ Revolution, forced Sultan Abdulhamit II to restore the constitution that he had shelved in 1876. It was a time of disintegration for the Empire. He concentrated on his military career. Bulgaria declared its independence and Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. Meanwhile Crete voted for union with Greece. In 1909, the sultan was deposed, exiled and replaced by Mehmet V. When Kemal was promoted to major in 1911, Italy had already invaded Turkish territories in North Africa.¹³⁰ In 1912-1913, Turkey suffered great losses in the first Balkan Wars. In 1914 he was promoted to Lieutenant - colonel. He had returned as Military Attache' in Sofia, Bulgaria where he found living for the first time in a western society, a new and formative experience and in which he was exposed to and enjoyed the refinements of diplomatic social life in a European city.¹³¹ He was to recall his enthusiasm of his first impressions of life in Sofia:

"This was Western civilization. There was nothing like it in Turkey. One of these days his country must enjoy these amenities. His people must be introduced to the graces and refinements of European social life."¹³²

¹²⁹ The term is now used in popular language to refer to any progressive or insurgent member of a political party or organization. It originated from the French, 'La Jeune Turquie' which described the Turkish exiles who congregated in Paris and other European cities around that time. Not many are aware that the term has its origin here.

¹³⁰ In the 1960's, Hollywood made a film, '*Tobruk*', based on the famous battle of the same name in which Italian troops defeated the Turkish and German forces led by the German General E. Rommel in North Africa.

¹³¹ Lord Kinross, *Ataturk*, p. 71.

¹³² Ibid., p. 72.

When the First World War broke out, Turkey allied itself with Germany, despite Kemal's caution against it.¹³³ In 1915, he successfully led the victory against the Allied attack on the Dardanelles and was promoted to General and given the title, 'pasha', an honour reserved for high ranking government officials. His leadership in the victory gave him public prominence for the first time. It was a hero's status which would later help him in garnering mass support for his nationalist movement. But Turkey continued to lose its territories – now in the Middle-East where Mecca and Baghdad were lost to the Arabs,¹³⁴ and in 1917, the British captured Jerusalem.

In 1918, the British occupied Istanbul and, disgusted by the spineless and acquiescent Mehmet VI, he resigned from the army and with his supporters, set up his headquarters in Ankara in 1919. In 1920, the sultan condemned him to death after he convened the First Grand National Assembly where he proclaimed that 'sovereignty belonged to the people',¹³⁵ effectively denying the right of the sultan to rule. By then the invading Greeks had already advanced into Anatolia. In 1921, he was given full powers as Commander-in-chief and was bestowed the title of Ghazi and promoted as Marshal for stopping the advance of the Greek army.¹³⁶ The following years saw the defeat of the Greeks by his Nationalist forces, the abolition of the sultanate and finally, his elevation to President of the Turkish

¹³³ Ibid., p. 78.

¹³⁴ The Arabs were led by the British Captain T.E. Lawrence of '*Lawrence of Arabia*' fame.

¹³⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 251.

¹³⁶ *Ataturk* (Ankara: Turkish National Commission for UNESCO) p. 102.

Republic in 1923. Thereon he embarked in earnest to realize his vision of a modern Turkish nation.

3.3 Vision of Nation-building

The endeavours of Mustafa Kemal and his supporters to rebuild the Turkish nation after the collapse of the empire were aimed at transforming Turkey into a modern nation state.¹³⁷ This was to realize his vision of a Turkish nation that would 'live as an advanced and civilized nation in the midst of contemporary civilization'.¹³⁸ To attain such a status, the Turkish nation would have to emphasize science, technology and modern education in order to create a modern industrial economy. In other words, it would have to adopt a secular and rational approach of nation - building.¹³⁹

The six Kemalist principles which formed the political and social foundation of the new nation were generally accepted by the populace, although there were some initial concerns about etatism, i.e. the extent to which the state would intervene in economic affairs.¹⁴⁰ It was however, secularism that would and till today still provoke the most controversy, mainly as mentioned earlier, because of its impact on Turkey's Islamic heritage and for its significance for other Islamic countries. To Kemal Ataturk, secularism was a prerequisite for Turkey to

¹³⁷ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 53.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 53.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

modernize. He wanted to transform Turkey into a developed and advanced country which would be on par with other developed European nations.¹⁴¹ And to secularize was to westernize¹⁴² – his interpretation of modernization and the ultimate aim of his sweeping reforms. These two reforms are closely tied to each other¹⁴³ and are the two key characteristics that distinguish his nation-building programme.

3.3.1 Secularism

Turkey represents a nation deeply steeped in religious values and traditions, a tradition which for centuries has been moulded by Islamic culture. It is within this culture that Kemal Ataturk's secularist programme of nation-building has impact and significance. 'Secularism' in English, from the Latin word, 'saeculum' meaning 'of the temporal world', is also often expressed as 'laicism'¹⁴⁴ from the French, 'laicisme', derived from the Greek 'laos' (the people) and 'laikos' (the lay).¹⁴⁵ Hence, 'secularism' conveys the idea of worldliness while 'laicism' distinguishes the laity from the clergy. Basically, both terms describe two aspects of the same concept and are used in reference to 'the problems of duality, opposition or separation of church and state.'¹⁴⁶ The term, 'church' being derived

¹⁴¹ Paul Dumont, *The Origins of Kemalist Ideology* in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 34.

¹⁴² Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981) p. 38.

¹⁴³ Niyazi Berkes, 'Historical Background of Turkish Secularism' in Richard N. Frye (ed) *Islam and the West*, p. 41.

¹⁴⁴ In some publications, laicism is used instead of secularism.

¹⁴⁵ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964) p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

from the western Christian tradition to mean 'religion' or spiritual authority or the religious establishment.¹⁴⁷

Secularism as a doctrine therefore, involves 'individual ideas, attitudes, beliefs or interests'¹⁴⁸ and thoughts regarding the principle of the liberation of the state from church as opposed to 'secularization', meaning the sociological process of being 'secularized', often resulting from factors that are generally beyond the control of individuals,¹⁴⁹ and a term that will be used often henceforth to describe the process of reforms which Kemal Ataturk undertook to modernize Turkey.

In essence then, the secular doctrine embraced by Kemal Ataturk and his followers after the collapse of the empire appears incompatible with Islam, the religion of the state and the *raison d'être* of Ottomanism¹⁵⁰. This is because Islam as a religion, is both a belief system and a total way of life.¹⁵¹ To Muslims, Islam is a faith not just for the conscience or for personal salvation, but the foundation of an entire social system.¹⁵² As such, in Islam, religion permeates almost every aspect of society. There are no boundaries between religious and social systems.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ This refers to the Ottoman dynastic ideology by which all Ottoman citizens, irrespective of nationality or faith would be expected to identify with, i.e. the Ottoman Empire. See Macfie, p. 19.

¹⁵¹ Philip H. Stoddard, David C. Cuthell and Margaret W. Sullivan (eds) *Change and the Muslim World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981) p. 2.

¹⁵² Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 4.

¹⁵³ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p. 23.

In this respect, as a social religion, while it professes faith and prescribes rituals, it has its own set code of ethics. It lays out rules and obligations for individuals and society in areas of family relationships, business, etiquette, dress, food, personal hygiene, etc.¹⁵⁴ In law, it has its own legalistic framework, i.e. the shari'ah. It is also a political philosophy that has both united and governed the community of believers or the 'ummah'. This can be seen from the emphasis it places on establishing a political community and has its roots in the very origin of Islam itself, that is, it began as a revolt against the oppressive ruling classes in Meccan society during the Prophet's time.¹⁵⁵

This socio-political worldview is perhaps best encapsulated in the concept presented by the Arabic word, 'din', meaning religion.¹⁵⁶ Inherent in the concept of 'din' is the idea of a kingdom, a 'cosmopolis'.¹⁵⁷ In a way, this is not unlike the Christian vision of 'God's kingdom on earth'. The cornerstone of this all encompassing notion is the very essence and foundation of Islam: Tawhid, the belief in the oneness of God and man's unity with Him in all aspects of his life.¹⁵⁸ Hence, the merging of the sacred and the secular in Islam. In Ottoman Turkey, this was best expressed in the concept of 'din u devlet', meaning the unity of religion and state.¹⁵⁹ In fact, the Ottoman Empire was a religious state, a theocracy.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Philip H. Stoddard, David C. Cuthell and Margaret W. Sullivan (eds) *Change and the Muslim World*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p.22-23

¹⁵⁶ Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas, 'Islam: The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality' in *The Challenge of Islam* (Islamic Council of Europe, 1978) p. 35.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Al Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982) p. 17.

¹⁵⁹ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p. 26.

It is in this context therefore, that Kemal Ataturk's nation-building programme is significant because one of the first measures he took to 'modernize' Turkish civilization was the formal separation of religion and state. At the heart of his modernization programme was his perception that religion had played a conservative role in the socio-political structure of the Ottoman Empire¹⁶¹ and had retarded the Turkish nation from keeping pace with the developments of a modernizing world. Hence, he advocated a policy of strict adherence to secularism – the separation of religion from the affairs of state. To modernize, it was also imperative for the new state to break away from an encumbered past, and the path he chose was to westernize.¹⁶²

3.3.2 Westernization and Departure From Ottoman Past

The basis of unity of the Ottoman Empire had been Ottomanism and Islam – the loyalty to a common Ottoman citizenship and a common religion.¹⁶³ To Kemal Ataturk, the Ottoman Empire was dead.¹⁶⁴ To him, the notion of an Islamic state was only a way to maintain the status quo and to perpetuate the backwardness of the country.¹⁶⁵ His aim now was to destroy all remnants of Islamic and Ottoman feelings of loyalty and to evoke a new sentiment of loyalty to a group - as 'Turks', not to an individual, i.e. the sultan, a dynasty or a religion. His objective was to

¹⁶⁰ Enver Ziya Karal, 'The Principles of Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk. Founder of a Modern State*, p. 22.

¹⁶¹ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p. 38.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹⁶³ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p.320.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

¹⁶⁵ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 53.

encourage Turkish pride and self-respect after two centuries of defeats, loss of territories and the sordid deterioration of the state under the Ottoman rulers.¹⁶⁶ Ottoman society then had no notion of a Turkish identity. It had promoted a dynastic ideology for as long as it could and people identified themselves by their religious affiliation.¹⁶⁷ An Albanian, Greek or Armenian could call himself an Ottoman if he possessed the appropriate 'cultural and linguistic attributes'.¹⁶⁸

First, he chose to locate the capital of the new republic in Ankara, instead of, and away from Istanbul, for centuries the centre of the Ottoman Empire. Not only was this a physical distancing, but a practical solution to escape the hold and intrigues of the Islamists, conservatives and Ottoman loyalists based in that city. More importantly, it was to teach the Turks that Anatolia, the heartland of Turkey was the true homeland and the centre of their nationhood, not the European city of Istanbul. He wanted them to develop a sense of pride in their new separate national identity as 'Turks', hitherto a derogatory term used in the West that conjured an image of an uncouth person, 'a coarse peasant, tribesman, or a small town-dweller', in place of the preferred identity as 'Ottomans'.¹⁶⁹ This Pan-Turkish idea would later be supported and promoted through the study of the 'history, language, literature, ethnography and ethnology, and social conditions' of Turkish

¹⁶⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 354.

¹⁶⁷ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern*, p.77.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 78.

civilization.¹⁷⁰ The Turkish Historical Society was formed to pursue this purpose, including re-writing history, when the need arose.

In November 1922, in keeping with the new structure of an impending Republic, he boldly abolished the Sultanate. In March 1924, the Caliphate was abolished, triggered off by the support of the Muslims in British India for the Turkish conservatives' emphasis on the importance of the Caliphate to the Islamic world. It was exactly the kind of impetus he needed – the exploitation of Islamic symbols for vested interests and the violation of the new nation's renunciation of foreign involvement – to cut off final links to the Ottoman dynasty.¹⁷¹ To him, the Caliphate was a link to the past which he described as a 'tumour of the Middle Ages' and had to be cut off.¹⁷² The caliph and the royal family were exiled, never to return.

To further dislodge the hold of the deeply entrenched orthodox Islamic hierarchy, he proceeded to abolish the office of the Seyhul-Islam¹⁷³ and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Pious Foundations and the shari'ah courts, followed by the ban on the tarikats,¹⁷⁴ the many religious orders of Sufi movements that were ever so popular with the Turkish masses. Next, he closed all religious schools, the Sufi monasteries and forbade pilgrimages to and worship at shrines and

¹⁷⁰ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 343.

¹⁷¹ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 54.

¹⁷² Lord Kinross, *Ataturk*, p. 438.

¹⁷³ The Chief Mufti or the Head of the Islamic Administrative structure.

¹⁷⁴ Religious brotherhoods, e.g. Sufi orders such as the Mevlevis, Bektasis and Naksbendis which are considered outside of orthodox or mainstream Islam.

graves of saints and holy men, a popular Turkish practice. Notwithstanding the fact that in the early days of his nationalist campaigns, he had sought and depended upon the ulama and religious orders for their support in reaching the masses, especially the peasants. He envisioned modern Turkey as a 'society entirely modern and completely civilized in spirit and form', declaring:

"To seek help from the dead is a disgrace to a civilized community, ... I flatly refuse to believe that today, in the luminous presence of science, knowledge, and civilization in all its aspects, there exist, in the civilized community of Turkey, men so primitive as to seek their material and moral well-being from the guidance of one or another sheik"¹⁷⁵

A unified court system was set up under the new Ministry of Justice and the Swiss Civil Code was adopted. Distinct secular laws patterned after the Italian Penal Code and German Code were introduced soon after. With the implementation of secular laws, polygamy was made illegal although this was difficult to implement, especially in rural areas and the law was circumvented, for example, by registering off-springs from secondary wives under the name of the principal wife. Civil marriages became the legal marriage and divorce was equally accessible to both men and women. Adults also had the legal right to change their religion.¹⁷⁶ Turkish women were given the right to vote and run for Parliament in 1934 and primary education was made compulsory for both boys and girls.

¹⁷⁵ Lord Kinross, *Ataturk*, p. 468.

¹⁷⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 267.

Education and the emancipation of women are regarded as two of the greatest achievements of Kemal Ataturk.

The most controversial reform made at cutting Islam's hold on the people, at least symbolically, was the 1925 ban on the fez, the Islamic headgear that had been for centuries the visible and outward expression of the community's faith.¹⁷⁷ In its place the men were compelled to wear a hat with a brim, in the western fashion. The ban aroused intense emotional outbursts in and from outside the country. A declaration on behalf of the 'Islamic Religious Presidency of the Kingdom of Egypt' pronounced the following:

"It is clear that a Muslim who needs to resemble a non-Muslim by adopting the latter's distinctive form of dress, will also come to take the same way as he in his beliefs and actions. That is why he who wears the hat because of an inclination to the religion of another and a contempt for his own is an infidel, according to the unanimous opinion of the Muslims. He who wears the hat in order to resemble non-Muslims, if he also adopts some of the practices of their religion, such as entering a church, is an infidel; if he does not do this, he is still a sinner ... Is it not folly to abandon one's own national way of dressing in order to adopt that of other people, when this desire for imitation can lead to the disappearance of our

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 261.

nationality, the annihilation of our own identity in theirs, which is the fate of the weak ... ”¹⁷⁸

Kemal Atatürk defended his action:

“Gentlemen, it was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on the heads of our nation as an emblem of ignorance, negligence, fanaticism, and hatred of progress and civilization, to accept in its place the hat, the headgear used by the whole civilized world, and in this way to demonstrate that the Turkish nation, in its mentality as in other respects, in no way diverges from civilized social life”.¹⁷⁹

It was a declaration that tantamount to equating civilization with costume.¹⁸⁰ He was later to admit that if it had not been for the emergency Law for the Maintenance of Order, he would not have been able to implement the ban which he did with characteristic speed. A ban on the lady's veil was proposed much later but never enacted, probably due to the unexpected reaction to the ban on the fez, and also because women were already beginning to unveil themselves, at least in the major cities.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁸⁰ Lord Kinross, *Atatürk*, p. 471.

¹⁸¹ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 266.

The process of modernization along western lines continued fast and furious. The western Gregorian calendar was made effective on 1 January 1926. Prior to this, the Turks had used three different methods to date time – the Islamic lunar system beginning with the year the Prophet made his exodus to Medina, a modified Julian calendar and the Gregorian calendar for official purposes. The international clock replaced the Islamic way of keeping time which began with the evening prayers. Sunday replaced Friday as the weekly holiday, facilitating business and communication, and bringing the new nation in line with the rest of the western world.¹⁸² The European metric system of measurement was also adopted. By any account, such measures would appear as very practical solutions to daily incongruities and are probably why his reforms are described as Ataturk's 'pragmatic approach to problem-solving'.¹⁸³

Another Islamic icon that he attacked was the language of worship, namely Arabic and its script. He 'Turkified' the 'azan' or the daily call to prayer that is traditionally delivered in Arabic, by dictating that the call be translated into Turkish. The Koran was translated into Turkish from Arabic to make it more widely available instead of being confined to a small group of people only, hence preserving their elite 'learned' stature.¹⁸⁴ The European numerals were adopted in place of the Arabic figures. At the same time, to completely cut Turkey from its Islamic identity, a law was passed to replace the Arabic script with the Latin

¹⁸² Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 80.

¹⁸³ Mohd. Noor bin Haji Manutty, 'A Critical Analysis on Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's Reformism', *Islamiyat* Vol. 4, 1982, p. 21.

¹⁸⁴ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 421.

alphabet. Since the Tanzimat era, many attempts at reforming the Arabic script to make it simpler and more suitable to the Turkish language had failed. It was not wrongly blamed for the low literacy rate in Turkey. It was both difficult to teach and to print. Thus, inhibiting educational and cultural expansion.

The result of his revolutionary reform was that the process of education and the literacy rate of the new nation was tremendously accelerated.¹⁸⁵ He declared:

“With its own script and its native intelligence, our nation will take its place by the side of the civilized world.”

He was not without his critics. Halide Edib, a prominent educationist and feminist cautioned:

“We can conceive of modern civilization as an entity. That is to say, we cannot put on Western civilization as whole the label English, French, or Italian. Therefore, even a nation that is a late-comer to this civilization is not simply their follower, but is also part of Western civilization. Total and slavish imitation of a model is the very opposite of the spirit of Western civilization. This point needs special attention from late-comers to this civilization.”¹⁸⁶

He abolished and banned all titles and allowed only ‘bey’ and ‘bayan’, the Turkish equivalent of ‘Mr’ and ‘Mrs’ or ‘Miss’. In 1934, he enacted a law that

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁸⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 273

required all Turks to adopt surnames. Kemal Ataturk's vision of a modern and secular nation, albeit in western garb, was legally institutionalized when in April 1928, a law was passed deleting the second article of the 1924 constitution that read, "The religion of the Turkish state is Islam."¹⁸⁷ With this 'disestablishment' of Islam, Turkey became legally and constitutionally, a lay, secular and modern state.¹⁸⁸ However, what was Kemal Ataturk's vision of a 'modern' state?

3.4 A 'Modern' Civilization

The terms, 'modernization' and 'modernity' have been a subject of much sociological study and definition, especially in the last half century when the world's many nations became independent of their colonial masters and embarked on the road to 'development and modernization'. A dictionary defines 'modern' as 'pertaining to or is characteristic of recent times or the present. Or one who has such ideas, standards or beliefs'.¹⁸⁹ It is clear that it is certainly not in reference to anything related to the past.

Toprak points out that although the term 'modern' or 'modernization' cannot be precisely pinned, the debate over the definition has, however, made the term 'traditional' clearer, thereby paradoxically, enhancing our understanding of

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 271

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 271

¹⁸⁹ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976) p. 806

the term 'modern'.¹⁹⁰ S.N. Eisenstadt's description of the concepts are more helpful. He perceives traditional societies as very restrictive and limited. Modern societies, on the other hand, are seen as 'more expansive and adaptable to a wide range of internal and external environments and problems'.¹⁹¹ The emphasis is on the ability to cope with change in general, and more specifically, with economic and industrial development.¹⁹² The characteristics of modern life would include among others, rationality, liberty and material progress, at least in the process by which man is able to control his environment through the use of his increased knowledge of science and technology.¹⁹³

Historically, the phenomenon of modernization had begun in Western and Central Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries, during the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and during the Industrial Revolution. Europe experienced modernization as a process of discovery and invention rather than of response and adaptation, or out of a necessity arising from relative weakness. It gave the Europeans a competitive edge and a sense of superiority. Thereafter, the process of modernization spread by virtue of superior technology and as European influence expanded in the wake of colonial rule in countries like Africa, Asia and Central America; and by settlement overseas such as in North America and Australia.¹⁹⁴ Turkey like Iran, Thailand and Japan had initially resisted modern influences,

¹⁹⁰ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p. 6.

¹⁹¹ S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Kemalist Regime and Modernization* in Jacob M. Landau (ed), *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 4.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁹³ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁴ Dankwart A. Rustow, 'The Modernization of Turkey' in Kemal H. Karpat (ed) *Social Change and Politics in Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) p. 94.

viewing them as products of Christian infidels and barbarians but accepted modernization as necessary when under threat of invasion. Unlike the Christian monks and religious orders who were at the forefront of science and discovery, the Turkish clergy had 'closed the door' to reason and science.

To Kemal Ataturk, 'modern man' or 'modern society' is one which exercises rationality and a scientific approach to life and in problem-solving; and who is able to use available resources to contribute to the material and spiritual progress of society. Only in this way could a society become a 'civilized' one.¹⁹⁵ To him, a 'civilized' society was also a 'western' society. In this, he echoed the words of the writer, Abdullah Cevdet: 'There is no second civilization; civilization means European civilization, and it must be imported with both its roses and its thorns'.¹⁹⁶ This he did when he began to 'westernize' Turkey through his secularizing reforms.

3.5 Conclusion

Most writers assert that Mustafa Kemal did not really present a system of ideas by which he hoped to place the new nation among the more advanced European nations although the vision of a modern state was already apparent in his mind.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 404.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁹⁷ Paul Dumont, The Origins of Kemalist Ideology in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 25.

His reforms were pragmatic approaches and spontaneous responses to the existing necessities or problems that needed to be solved at the time.¹⁹⁸

Mustafa Kemal was a product of his time, a time which Andrew Mango described as the 'belle epoque' of European civilization.¹⁹⁹ His formative and adult years were spent in the military, at that time the only Turkish institution that was truly lay, secular, progressive, modern and westernized. Throughout the 19th century the early reformers had attempted to westernize the military, educational, legal and political institutions in the hope that such reforms would enable them to halt the empire's decline. The problem was how to introduce such secular reforms in a Muslim country where Islam had penetrated all sub-systems of the Ottoman socio-political system? Hence, new institutions were created alongside the existing old, traditional ones. Thus, Mustafa Kemal lived in a society in which a duality of systems had historically evolved from more than a century ago.²⁰⁰

He and his fellow officers were a product of the dualistic nature of Ottoman education. They were 'half-westernized' in the early decades of the 20th century. They knew European languages, especially French, had contacts with westerners and were strongly influenced by western ideas and attracted to western science. At the same time they also knew Arabic, Persian and their own Ottoman language. They were familiar with Ottoman literature and Islamic theology, Turkish music

¹⁹⁸ Mohd. Nor bin Haji Manutty, 'A Critical Analysis on Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's Reformism', *Islamiyat*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁹ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 1.

²⁰⁰ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p. 32.

and folklore. In a sense, they were living in two cultures and two civilizations; probably at ease with the old Ottoman Islamic world but simultaneously drawn towards the modern European world which they were discovering.

The dilemma was one of conflict between two different forces: On one hand the reformers believed that to survive, the acceptance of western technology, ideas and some form of western institutions was necessary. On the other hand, they did not know how to adopt western technology and ideas without accepting the other manifestations of western civilization at the same time. The inherent conflict was finally resolved by Mustafa Kemal and his regime's break with the past and total acceptance of western civilization as the nation's path to modernization.