THE COMING BALKAN CALIPHATE

The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West

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Foreword by Loretta Napoleoni

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CHAPTER 5

The Ottoman Legacy and Turkey's Deep Shadow

In a formidable show of their unquestioned strength, Turkish security forces fanned out across the most historic quarter of Istanbul, creating a vast cordon around their famous guest, Pope Benedict XVI, who was concluding a four-day visit to the secular but deeply Muslim country that he had previously offended in comments that seemed to depict Islam as a violent, irrational religion. The German pope was visiting the greatest building in Christendom, the former Byzantine cathedral of St. Sophia, and the sublime Blue Mosque across the fountained park of Sultanahmet. A single fear—that the highest representative of Western Christendom could somehow fall victim to Islamic radicals—guided this police operation of November 30, 2006. Some 25 years before, a Turk linked with the criminal underworld and shadowy state security services, Mehmet Ali Agca, had tried to assassinate his predecessor, John Paul II.

In 2004, the charismatic John Paul officially apologized to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew for the Western sack of Constantinople exactly 800 years before. The Latin knights of the Fourth Crusade, ironically, did more damage to the Byzantine capital and its precious possessions than the Ottoman Turkish conquest would in 1453. They ruled for a total of 57 years, until 1261, when Constantinople was liberated by Michael VIII Palaeologos, founder of the last Byzantine imperial dynasty. His fourteenth century descendant, Emperor Manuel II, would unwittingly cause great grief for the pontiff in 2006, when his obscure 1391 conversation with a Persian interlocutor on Islam was referenced by Benedict XVI in a lecture at a German university. The Muslim world went wild; the erstwhile Cardinal Ratzinger, who had opposed Turkey's EU membership

bid in 2004, deeming Islam to be "in permanent contrast" to Europe's Christian heritage, apparently felt that Muslim innovations on Christianity included only things "evil and inhuman, such as [Mohammad's] command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." The worldwide protests and demands that the Pope cancel his upcoming trip to Turkey made the faux pas (by a pope who according to his adopted name should be well-spoken, no less) seem to be Byzantium's revenge for the Latin conquest of 1204.

Or was it? Some maintained that it could not have been accidental that Benedict XVI had quoted such an unusual source so soon before traveling to the only Muslim EU candidate, also a major economic power and Western partner in most spheres. By whipping up a frenzy of protest, the allegation (which the Pope insisted he did not support) would seem substantiated, ironically strengthening the Pope's—and the EU's—position by exacerbating latent internal Turkish divisions at a moment when Turkey's failure to open its ports to a member of that union, the island nation of Cyprus, was bringing its candidate negotiations to crisis point. The island had been divided ethnically between Greek Orthodox Christians and Turkish Muslims since 1974, when the Turkish Army invaded and occupied the northern third of the island, a bombastic move that had followed the attempt by a right-wing junta in Athens to annex the island to Greece. Two decades later, the Turkish troops were still there, by their mere presence creating a status quo that no Turkish government could end without bringing upon itself the fury of nationalists and the military, the same military that had always kept a wary eye on the power of religion in Turkey, and especially the Islamic political factions.

The Saadet (Happiness or Felicity) Party was one of those. A week before the Pope's arrival, on November 22, around 100 of its supporters briefly occupied St. Sophia; among them were ultranationalist supporters of the Grey Wolves, a violent group that had taken part in government-sanctioned assassinations, paramilitary atrocities, and heroin trafficking since the 1970s and of which Mehmet Ali Agca, the would-be assassin of Pope John Paul II in 1981, had been a member. During their takeover, the Grey Wolves ostentatiously prayed in the church-turned-mosque-turned-museum. When Pope John Paul II had merely made the sign of the cross upon entering in 1979, it sparked an uproar among Turks; his German successor wisely decided to avoid following suit. Although it promised to bring a million people into the streets of Istanbul to protest the Pope's arrival, Saadet managed only 25,000. The party had been created when the Fazilet (Virtue) Party was broken up under army pressure in 2001. Another, less extreme, breakaway faction, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, hereafter referred to as the AK Party), won a landslide victory in the November 2002 elections, led by a moderate Islamist reformer, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On November 26, 2006, the protesters turned out in force, watched over by circling police helicopters and 4,000 heavily armed officers backed by armored vehicles. Recai Kutan, Saadet's chairman railed that "for Western civilization

to develop it needs an enemy and the Pope openly says that this enemy is Islam." A protester's English-language depicted "the pontiff's face on the head of a pig, blood oozing from his mouth," and read, "Go home Pope."[1] Nevertheless, the papal visit went ahead and was deemed a success—especially when Turks were surprised to see the pope and Istanbul Mufti Mustafa Cagrici praying together in the Blue Mosque. Yet Turkey's relations with the EU were not significantly improved. Neither was the public standing of Patriarch Bartholomew, who had invited the pope in the first place; for Turkish nationalists long suspicious of the alleged dangers of the Greeks, the Pope's stated desire to reunite the Eastern and Western faiths after almost a millennium of schism only confirmed that the secret goal of the scheming prelates was an eventual resurrection of the Byzantine Empire.

These tortured complexities, all captured in one single event, reaffirmed the thesis that there is no country of greater importance to southeastern Europe, to the Balkans, and even to the West today than Turkey. To understand why this overwhelmingly Muslim nation of over 70 million, which has only 7 percent of its territory in Europe, may nevertheless play the leading role in shaping the future of all Europe, a brief foray into the country's history is required. Since sweeping down onto the Anatolian plain from Central Asia in the eleventh century, the Turks have played an integral shaping role in European history. The empire that began with the conquest of Byzantine Constantinople by Mehmet II in 1453 lasted, in various forms, right up until the First World War. At its peak in the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire extended from the Atlantic on the North Africa coast east to the Arabian Peninsula, from the Caucasus Mountains to the Balkans and the Hungarian plain. In 1683, the Ottomans reached the gates of Vienna for the second time, before being slowly driven back. Yet while Western Christendom was saved, much of the Balkans remained under the Ottoman yoke until the early twentieth centuries. Driven almost completely from Europe by the combined armies of Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria during the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars, Turkey almost lost the Anatolian coast as well, when the Great Powers partitioned the Turkish heartland into zones of control after World War I. Yet when a Greek invasion meant to liberate the Greek-inhabited coastal city of Smyrna in 1922 became too ambitious, a dashing young general named Mustafa Kemal drove the Greeks back, and the contours of modern Turkey were defined.

Following the conflict, a mutual population exchange in 1923 uprooted millions of Greeks and Turks from lands they had inhabited for hundreds and, in the case of the Greeks, thousands of years. This codified ethnic cleansing essentially left Greece and Turkey religiously "clean" as well, the former becoming almost completely Orthodox Christian, and the latter almost totally Muslim. The only two areas excluded from the exchange were Greek Thrace and Constantinople (subsequently, Istanbul). The former was regarded by the Turks as a buffer zone for the latter, which was also for the Greeks a foundation of Greek culture and commerce, and the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However,

since the 1923 population exchange the Turkish minority in Thrace has remained, whereas the Greek one in Istanbul has been almost completely driven out, especially during the 1950s.[2]

In rebuilding a shattered country, Mustafa Kemal—soon to be known as "Ataturk," or Father of the Turks—took a hard look at the reasons for the once-great Ottoman Empire's collapse. The military veteran relocated his capital from Constantinople, famous for its decadence, intrigue, and earthly temptations, to the uninspiring central Anatolian town of Ankara. Previously a member of the Young Turk reform movement that had compelled Sultan Abdulhamid to reinstate constitutional law in 1908, Ataturk was obsessed with importing Western political, cultural, and scientific ideas. He regarded Islam as a detrimental and anachronistic force blocking national progress, and thus did the previously unthinkable by banishing it from governance. Ataturk boldly replaced Islamic rule with a secular republic; the army was to defend the new order from any would-be usurpers, both foreign and domestic. At the same time, to mold a population that had only ever known multiethnic syncretism, Ataturk standardized the Turkish language, put a new emphasis on Turkic culture, and nurtured the development of a robust nationalism.

For Mustafa Kemal, this was a point of pride. During Ottoman days, when the affairs of state and commerce were often in the hands of Greeks, Armenians, or other ethnic groups, to be "Turkish" was synonymous with provincialism and ignorance. Ataturk sought to change that. He replaced what had been for almost two millennia a multiethnic commonwealth ruled by a military theocracy (first Byzantine Christian, then Ottoman Muslim) with a nation-state ruled by a military democracy. It was one of the most audacious and sweeping overnight transformations of a country ever attempted. For over 80 years, the experiment has worked, though the constant pushing and pulling of contradictory forces continue to make Turkey one of the most fascinating, complex, and unpredictable countries in the world.

The most controversial and far-reaching of Ataturk's reforms was the decision to banish religion from public life. Today, as the position of Islam not only in Turkey but across the world continues to become increasingly acute, the chronic showdowns between the self-appointed guardians of Ataturk's secular republic, the military, and the civilian government with its tendencies to be sympathetic to the Islamic faith (and the voters who profess it) assume greater significance. Over the past 30 years, military coups and legal action have kept "pro-Islamic" politicians in their place. The Turkish balancing act between religion and the republic has had its ups and downs. The country has banked on the image of Turkey as the "bridge between civilizations," between the Islamic East and Christian West, highlighting the usefulness and moderating impact of such a position in its bids to win the support of the United States and Europe.

The appropriate role of Islam in politics has long been debated in Turkish society. At times, religion has taken on greater prominence, but going too far has also resulted in crackdowns from the protector of the republic, the military. The most

visible example of Islamist curtailed was that of Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the Refah (Welfare) Party government that lasted a little over a year, from 1996–1997; its attempts to reorient Turkey towards the Islamic world led to the party's forced dissolution in January 1998; it was accused of unconstitutional behavior. Despite this setback, Refah members formed a new pro-Islamic bloc, the Virtue Party. In June 2001, this too was banned by the state. From its ashes emerged the AK Party, led by a moderate reformer and former mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The AK Party won November 2002 elections, immediately sparking debate over creeping Islamism in the government. A constitutional amendment was required before Erdogan could become prime minister.

However, though many AK Party members, such as Erdogan and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, were former Refah officials, the government did not give critics much ground upon which to criticize it, sticking to a platform of economic and social reform in the interests of future EU accession. Turkey's economy had collapsed the year before and the public demanded change. According to Turkish scholar and political analyst Mehmet Kalyoncu, the AK Party's victory was "an outcome of the Turkish public's reaction to the previous political rot in Turkey."[3] A gradual recovery was accomplished under Erdogan's first three years in office, bolstering the nation's confidence. Nevertheless, certain forays onto less secular grounds—such as failed initiatives to criminalize adultery and ban the sale of alcohol in city centers—alarmed European officials previously assured that Turkey's liberal reform course would continue unimpeded by Islamic factors. For Turkey, the major challenge has been to convince the EU that membership for over 70 million Muslims—something that would give Turkey the second-largest, and eventually the largest, number of European Parliament seats—would not result in "Islamist" legislation for Europe.

Despite the frequently raised concerns over the place of Islam in Turkish government and society, Kalyoncu stresses the need to distinguish between Islamism, per se, and religiosity, between the politicization of Islam and the private expression of religious belief. Distinguishing between the reign of Erbakan a decade ago, when a pro-Arab foreign policy was deliberately put forth, and the relatively pro-Western government of the modern AK Party, the scholar cites a late 2006 survey conducted by the TESEV (Turkish Economic and Social Research Foundation), which found that most Turks believe that there is no current "Islamist threat" today. "They believe there is rather increased religiosity that manifests itself in an increased number of mosque attendants. Nevertheless, the public does not view piety as contradictory to their Western way of life and democratic values . . . [but] view the freedom of expression and practice of Islam as consolidation of democracy in Turkey in its true essence."[4]

While the Islamist protests that preceded the pope's visit in November 2006 were heavily publicized, the percentage of Turks openly supportive of Islamic parties is, indeed, relatively small (in 2002, Saadet took only 1 percent of the vote). Opposed to the more conservative Islamic factions, however, is one large and somewhat unusual Islamic movement, which has become politically

influential in modern Turkey—that of Fethullah Gülen, a charismatic and elderly ex-preacher who since 1998 has been living in comfortable exile in Pennsylvania. A reclusive but wealthy leader, Gülen preaches an idiosyncratic form of Islam, associated with the esoteric Turkish Nür movement, throwing in healthy portions of demagoguery.[5] He and his creed have inspired suspicion in Turkey. Following years of preaching, a scandal broke out in 1998 when it was claimed that Gülen was advising supporters to work slowly and patiently to create an Islamic state in Turkey. He then moved to America, citing health problems, and was tried in 2000 for conspiracy to overthrow the state. Despite its cult aspects, the "Gülen Movement" emphasizes education and liberalism, factors that have made it seem an appropriately sanitized version of Islam for the secular republic of Mustafa Kemal.

The Gülen movement has provided one solution in Turkey's search to find a suitably liberal form of Islam to show the West. And the pro-Islamist government of Erdogan's AK Party, which legally exonerated Gülen in 2006, indeed, backs it. The political clout of Gülen's faction in Turkey was revealed in June 2004, when one of its own, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, was elected to a four-year term as Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). It represented the first time a Turk had headed the organization, one of the most powerful positions in the Islamic world. The prime minister had lobbied for Ihsanoglu. According to the BBC, "The Turkish government presented Mr. Ihsanoglu as a reform candidate, both in terms of the organisation and the wider Islamic world."[6]

Despite its liberal appearance, the Gülen movement has aroused the suspicions of the powerful Turkish military. It fears that the religious group would like to weaken the Turkish military's grip on political life and even create some sort of an Islamic state. One of the group's alleged goals has been to infiltrate the Turkish military with its own sympathizers, in order to try and take it over from within; the army similarly inserts its own spies in Gülen-owned schools. For its part, the United States seems to be seeking to maintain the tension between the Turkish political/religious establishment and the military to ensure that neither group is allowed to dominate. The end result is an Islamic movement that, while undoubtedly eccentric and, to many Turks, ludicrous, is at least not anti-American and not linked to al Qaeda.

Fethullah Gülen has, however, not limited his aspirations to Turkey, and his schools are found throughout the world, often in places of interest to Turkish foreign policy. A former student in one of Gülen's schools in Turkey, Emre Yilmaz, is a young Kurd originally from the southeastern city of Diyarbakir. He agrees with the conception that Gülen is trying to push a "new Ottoman Turkish style of Islam," to enhance Turkey's sphere of influence in the Central Asian republics and in its old Balkan colonies. And despite the movement's perceived opposition to the Turkish military, Yilmaz notes, "They never criticize the army when it bombs Kurds." Amidst the tortuous complexities of modern Turkey, this tacit complicity in the bombing of fellow Muslims may account for why Gülen is

relatively tolerated by the army: "as long as you hate the Kurds, you still have a place in Turkish society," avers Yilmaz. He recalls how, in the eternal give-and-take between the forces of religion and secular nationalism, the teaching he was given at the Turkish Gülen school was in essence a front for reinforcing insular Turkish nationalism—despite the movement's self-proclaimed image of an educated, liberal Muslim philosophy. He states:

> The Gülen teachers made a lot of problems for me. They didn't want me to be interested in foreign people or languages, but to be Turkish. Because I had loved studying English in school, they told my father, a very devout imam, that I was in danger of losing my religion and perhaps of even becoming a Christian! It was a lie, but my family believed them and became very angry.[7]

Reiterating what others have said—ironically, Turkish nationalists more than anyone—Yilmaz maintains that Gülen's entities serve the interests of the United States in Turkey. He believes that their sensitivity to public suspicion of being excessively Islamic or insufficiently Turkish is what led to negative experiences such as his. Further, while they are, indeed, Muslims strongly against al Qaeda, the former student attests that during his time in the school, the Gülen teachers, like more radical Islamists, frequently attacked Russia over its war against Muslims in Chechnya behind closed doors. "They sent people to teach in schools in the Caucasus," he adds. "Perhaps some of them ended up fighting there."

On the other end of the ideological spectrum from the Gülen movement was Turkey's major Islamic armed group, Turkish Hizbollah (not related to Hizbollah in Lebanon). It was reportedly created by the Turkish military and the MIT in the 1980s, to help divide rebelling Kurds in the southeast. In all, up to 20,000 Islamic fighters, most of them Kurds, were indoctrinated and organized surreptitiously into proxy terrorist and assassination squads. Composed of devout and often uneducated rural men from the southeast, Turkish Hizbollah was used as another weapon in the army's own scorched-earth campaign against the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, or Kurdistan Workers Party), a vaguely Marxist armed group fighting for an independent state for Turkey's 20 million Kurds. The PKK uprising began in 1984, and by the time it subsided with the Turkish government's capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan on February 15, 1999, the conflict had left some 30,000 dead with over 3,000 villages destroyed. Throughout the 1990s, however, Turkish Hizbollah murdered over 3,000 businessmen and ordinary civilians, pulling off assassinations and terror attacks that were sometimes too dangerous for official Turkish forces to be involved in directly. This monstrous creation was modeled on America's apparent success in Afghanistan, where it had created the mujahedin to fight the Soviets.

The participation of the state in supporting the holy warriors was confirmed in February 2000 when former Prime Minister Tansu Çiller admitted publicly that she had ordered Turkish Hizbollah to be armed by the military starting six years earlier.[8] Çiller justified the jihadis as a necessary part of Turkey's own war on

terror. The former *New York Times* bureau chief in Istanbul, Stephen Kinzer, recounts the scandalous admission:

> When newspapers reported that weapons found at Hizbullah hideouts had come from a military arsenal in the southeast, Tansu Çiller, who had been prime minister when most of the "mystery killings" were committed, proudly admitted her responsibility. "Yes, it was my signature on the order to deliver those weapons," she said. "We met and made a decision. We decided that terror was the main issue and that whatever was necessary to stop it would be done." To the suggestion that she might have exceeded her authority by hiring one terror gang to fight another, she replied simply and no doubt accurately: "The military chief of staff, the governors, the police—everyone worked together on it."[9]

As the war with the PKK raged throughout the 1990s and the infinitely more powerful Turkish Army eventually got the upper hand, the Turkish Hizbollah (supported partially by Iran as well) started diversifying its activities, bombing liquor stores, music clubs, and other "non-Islamic" structures. Despite its attested fervor and appalling methods of torture and killing, which included burying people alive, the rank-and-file of the radical group were largely average, rural Kurds —as were their victims. Indeed, as Emre Yilmaz recalls from former conversations with Turkish Hizbollah veterans in Diyarbakir, many fighters did not know that they were being used as puppets by the Turkish state. When they found out, they were mortified—and furious. One former Kurdish fighter told him how the realization set in:

> We had been instructed to kill the PKK and similar people because they were allegedly bad Muslims. But then we started seeing our friends getting killed. We said "hey, what's going on? We know them and they are not bad Muslims!" Eventually we learned that it was the Turkish government controlling us, and so two MIT spies inserted into Hizbollah were discovered and killed. Soon after that, they killed our leader in Istanbul, and the army bombed our camps. That was the end of Hizbollah.[10]

Indeed, in a four-hour gun battle on January 17, 2000, broadcast live on television, police succeeded in killing Turkish Hizbollah leader Huseyin Velioglu in an Istanbul safe house. The Turkish government undertook a yearlong series of counterterrorist operations against the radical Islamic group it had created, resulting in the detainment of 2,000 individuals and hundreds of arrests. Police also discovered the grisly remains of scores of people who had been tortured and killed by the jihadis. In the end, the Hizbollah movement had to be destroyed because it was on the verge of getting out of control, with its connections to Turkish state security coming out into the open. After the government crackdown scattered Hizbollah to the winds, the most devout and determined fighters escaped to Iran for shelter, religion, and sometimes military training. Today, some of these are still fighting for Islam—but now against the U.S. Army in Iraq. The Turkish experiment with Hizbollah just reinforces the argument that Islamic

radical groups can never be controlled by their creators—as the United States learned with the Afghan-Arabs and, later, the Bosnian mujahedin.

A covert program as cynical, deadly, and creative as the one that spawned the Turkish Hizbollah could only have been accomplished by a state possessing a powerful security apparatus, capable of operating according to a no-questions-asked, oversight-free code of independence. Frequently referred to today as Turkey's *Gizli Devlet* ("Deep State"), this security apparatus was created by the United States and NATO early on in the Cold War, when the potential threat of Soviet invasions inspired them to create covert paramilitary forces—quite often composed of right-wing radicals and, indeed, former Nazis and other Fascists, most famously with the Gladio movement in Italy, all across Europe.[11] The Turkish contribution to "NATO's secret armies," the Counter-Guerrillas, was a part of the Turkish Army's Special Warfare Department, housed in the U.S. Military Aid Mission building in Ankara. The Department "received funds and training from U.S. advisors to establish 'stay behind' squads of civilian irregulars who were set up to engage in acts of sabotage and resistance in the event of a Soviet invasion."[12] The secret army also operated closely with the MIT and was supplemented by a nationwide "youth group," the Grey Wolves, established in 1969 under the aegis of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) of Alparslan Türkeş, a Counter-Guerrilla member and ultranationalist politician who embraced fascism and dreamed of creating the *Turan,* a pan-Turkic state stretching as far as China.

Military coups in 1971 and 1980, bookended by chronic massacres of civilian demonstrators throughout the 1970s, were all led by Counter-Guerrilla/Grey Wolves elements. Immediately after the 1980 military coup that brought the Counter-Guerrillas leader, General Kenan Evren to power, American CIA Ankara station chief Paul Henze reportedly cabled Washington exulting, "our boys have done it." At that time, the Grey Wolves had 200,000 registered members and 1 million sympathizers nationwide. While Colonel Türkeş and other Grey Wolves were arrested, those who volunteered to fight against Kurdish and Armenian groups were released. As the war against the PKK heated up in the 1980s, the secret armies turned to "black ops" such as torturing and killing Kurds while disguised in PKK uniforms. They also began to turn increasingly to heroin and weapons smuggling, with Grey Wolves leaders given permission to traffic narcotics by the intelligence services in exchange for their cooperation on other issues. A 1998 Turkish parliamentary report revealed that "security forces were responsible for many of Turkey's 14,000 unsolved murders and disappearances in recent years."[13]

Indeed, modern Turkey is situated not just on the crossroads of civilizations, but on the world's most important drug crossroads. Most of the Afghan heroin imported into Europe passes through this vast country. The role of the state, though deliberately obscured, is all pervasive. According to Sibel Edmonds, a former FBI translator and whistle-blower on governmental corruption who is also of Turkish origin, "these [heroin trafficking] operations are run by mafia groups

closely controlled by the MIT (Turkish Intelligence Agency) and the military. According to statistics compiled in 1998, Turkey's heroin trafficking brought in $25 billion in 1995 and $37.5 billion in 1996. That amount makes up nearly a quarter of Turkey's GDP." By 1998, at least 15 MIT officers had been killed in the vicious internal battle between the police and the intelligence service over control of the lucrative business. "Only criminal networks working in close cooperation with the police and the army could possibly organize trafficking on such a scale," concluded *Le Monde Diplomatique.*[14] Edmonds attests that "the Turkish government, MIT and the Turkish military, not only sanctions, but also actively participates in and oversees the narcotics activities and networks."[15]

Edmonds points to the 1998 incident in which Turkish police were discovered using Turkish embassies in Europe to facilitate drug smuggling and the saga of Huseyin Baybasin, once known as "Europe's Pablo Escobar." This Kurdish drug baron jailed in Holland was at one point responsible for 90 percent of the heroin smuggled into Britain—a business that had been enabled by cooperation with Turkish officials. According to immigration tribunal records and a newspaper investigation, Baybasin was granted asylum in England in 1995, in exchange for informing the British Customs & Excise service about Turkish officials involved in heroin trafficking. After being arrested in Holland soon thereafter, Baybasin attested that he had enjoyed "the assistance of Turkish embassies and consulates while moving huge consignments of drugs around Europe, and that Turkish army officers serving with NATO in Belgium were also involved. 'The government kept all doors open for us,' he said. 'We could do as we pleased.'"[16] According to a senior UK Customs officer, the government could not arrest the Turkish kingpins "because they are 'protected' at a high level." Baybasin claimed, "I handled the drugs which came through the channel of the Turkish Consulate in England."[17]

A shocking car crash on November 3, 1996, near the town of Susurluk, on the Izmir-Istanbul road, revealed in one sudden flash the tight connections within the *Gizli Devlet.* Pulled from the mangled wreck of a Mercedes were a Kurdish parliamentarian linked with terrorist militias, the head of Turkey's counterterrorist police, a beauty queen, and her lover, the former Grey Wolves leader and drug smuggler Abdullah Catli. Pistols with silencers and machine guns, plus false diplomatic passports, were found in the trunk of the car. The only survivor, Kurdish MP Sedat Bucak, was a tribal chief who had been awarded a huge tract of southeastern land by the government. Bucak's task was to guard it with his private army, and he "thus acquired the power of life and death over the area's inhabitants."[18] Catli, it turned out, "was a heroin trafficker on Interpol's wanted list [and] was carrying a diplomatic passport signed by none other than the Turkish Interior Minister himself." Further, Catli had been involved in the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in 1981, personally giving would-be assassin Mehmet Ali Agca the gun.[19] Two months after the crash, "a court in Germany found that Tansu Çiller, former prime minister of Turkey, had been protecting heroin traffickers, an accusation that prompted official protests from Ankara."[20]

Catli had also led a special team of hired killers who allegedly worked from a "list" kept by Prime Minister Çiller. After his fatal crash, she hailed him as a "great patriot." Catli took certain liberties with his work, racketeering people by warning them that they were on "Çiller's list," but promised that in return for payment he could get their names removed. "Having pocketed the money, he then went on to have them kidnapped and killed, and sometimes tortured beforehand." Another covert assassin, Ayhan Çarkin, implicated in 91 murders committed in the Kurdish southeast, presented his MIT interrogators as having said:

> We know about that, and nobody is holding that against you. But why did you kidnap Omer Luftu Topal [the casino king]? On your own account? Do you know that you are serving a political master? Namely Prime Minister Tansu Çiller and Mehmet Agar, director-general of the national police.[21]

The key factor that had led to such a sordid state of affairs was the Deep State's transformation after the fall of the Soviet Union. It became a much wealthier and more sophisticated entity, a true multinational corporation with an enormous geographic and economic remit. East of Turkey's Anatolian heartland stretched a series of former Soviet republics, all united by a common Turkic culture. For nationalist politicians and aging fascists like Alparslan Türkeş, Central Asia thus represented a sort of manifest destiny for the greater Turkish nation, the long-awaited chance to fulfill Turkey's historic mission promulgated since the MHP's nationalist rhetoric of the late 1960s. Further, the new republics contained vast quantities of untapped wealth—oil, natural gas, and mineral deposits—and bordered on Afghanistan, the major producer of the world's opium. The combination of such natural resources and strategic positioning (between Russia, China, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey) made the Central Asian states, as well as the Caspian Sea and Caucasus, key to what was soon being referred to as the "New Great Game."[22]

The Turkish Deep State and Islamic groups, especially the Gülen movement, had mutual interests in opening up Central Asia to Turkish influence. Economic interest went hand-in-hand with political, cultural, and religious influence. Saudi Arabia, for example, was making determined efforts to bring Central Asian Muslims, who had been deactivated from their faith during the Soviet period into the fold, and it was in the U.S. interest to see that "moderate" Turkish Islam as represented by Gülen would prevail. Besides, every major world power, as well as regional ones had strong interests in developing the energy corridors of Central Asia. Throughout the 1990s, the Clinton administration based its foreign policy to a great degree on "pipeline politics" in the Caspian and Central Asian regions. In 1998, then-U.S. Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson summarized American policy and Caspian oil, stating, "We're trying to move these newly independent countries toward the west. We would like to see them reliant on western commercial and political interests rather than going another way. We've made

a substantial political investment in the Caspian, and it's very important to us that both the pipeline map and the politics come out right."[23]

The Turks' fascination with the former Soviet republics (in which Russia, too, was determined to retain influence) was colored by their ethnic kinship affiliations with the Azeri, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz peoples, all cousins in the great Turkic family extending from Mongolia to the Balkans. Some imagined that by strengthening alliances with its ex-Soviet cousins, Turkey could become a superpower in the emerging world order. Particularly fond of the idea was Turgut Özal, Turkey's prime minister from 1983–1989, and then president until his death in 1993. Özal waxed enthusiastically of a new Turkish sphere of influence stretching "from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China," promising billions of dollars in training, loans, and investments for the Central Asian republics. In 1992, the former Counter-Guerrilla and Grey Wolves leader Alparslan Türkeş visited Azerbaijan, where he was treated as a hero and supported the successful presidential bid of Azeri Grey Wolves sympathizer Abülfaz Elçibay.

The Turkish security apparatus soon proved indispensable for American efforts to counter Russian influence in the region. In fact, one of the original purposes of harnessing the MHP/Grey Wolves pan-Turkic ideology in the 1960s had been precisely to weaken the Soviet Empire through appealing to pan-Turkic identity and unity. Of more immediate usefulness, gathering intelligence by proxy, by "outsourcing" it to the Turks, was much easier than for the Americans to do it themselves. Using its ethnic and linguistic kinship with the Central Asian peoples, the Turkish MIT would become the CIA's eyes and ears on the ground, in the process carrying out shadowy and very lucrative operations for the Americans, spying on the Russians and Islamists and moving guns and drugs. "The CIA could not have operated there like the Turks, who had the cultural and linguistic knowledge," states Sibel Edmonds. "Further, unlike the CIA, the MIT is not reined in by legislation. They are willing to cross more lines . . . Imagine the scandal if something like Susurluk happened in the US with US officials—they may be corrupt, but they couldn't get away with something of that magnitude. But that is the difference: the CIA wants to keep their hands clean, while Turkey uses military planes to transport drugs on a daily basis."[24] This enhanced role offered both profit and prestige to the Turks, now finding success on a much larger stage. According to Edmonds, dozens of Turkish and Kurdish businessmen became "overnight millionaires" because of the heroin trade, operating through innocuous-sounding front companies in Central Asia.

Simultaneously with the civil war between the government and the PKK—and the use of Turkish Hizbollah by the MIT—the closely related Grey Wolves were sponsoring another mujahedin cause, this one for external use: the jihad in Chechnya against the Russians. The war there elicited the sympathy of Turks on religious grounds, and the Grey Wolves raised funds, ran training camps, and channeled fighters to Chechnya from Turkey. Yet by the end of the 1990s Istanbul itself was the scene of multinational jihadi intrigue, as Iran and Saudi Arabia vied for control of Turkey's pro-Chechen nationalist groups. Some

3,000–5,000 mujahedin were passing through the country; CNN correctly noted that "their movements across Turkey certainly could not take place without at least the tacit consent of the Turkish government. Indeed, it is no longer a secret that the main training camp for the Chechen fighters is at Duzce, a town between Istanbul and the Turkish capital of Ankara."[25]

Led by the Grey Wolves, Turkish fighters had also volunteered to help their ethnic kin in neighboring Azerbaijan, when war erupted there in 1992, in the mountainous border territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, nominally an Azerbaijani province but having an Armenian majority. At first, Russian armaments helped the Armenians establish de facto control and expel tens of thousands of Azeris. Turkey responded by arming the Azeris and by sealing the border with Armenia. There had never been much love between the two; the Armenians accuse Turkey, in its previous Ottoman incarnation, of genocide against 1.5 million Armenians during and after the First World War. Turkey fiercely contests the accusation, which has become a potent political issue, especially in the diaspora. The U.S. Congress nearly passed an "Armenian Genocide" bill in 2000, but squashed it after being threatened with losing Turkish government military contracts; the French Parliament showed no such misgivings on October 12, 2006, when it antagonized Turkey by making it a crime to deny the "Armenian Genocide." On January 30, 2007, Congressional lawmakers introduced a bill, House Resolution 160, that if ratified would symbolically recognize an Armenian Genocide. Turkish officials again intoned darkly about the adverse effects such legislation would have on bilateral relations, at a time when Turkey was becoming an increasingly key player in American security policy in the Middle East.

In 2004, Turkey's war resumed against the Kurdish PKK after the latter called an end to its 1999 cease-fire. The American invasion of Iraq the year before had given the Kurds a safe haven from which to operate, and increased the fears of the Turkish military. The American invasion was hugely unpopular among Turks, who rightly understood that toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein would provoke a civil war and, most dangerously, renewed troubles with Kurdish separatists, who had quieted as Ankara began to offer more rights, in line with its EU obligations. Since the war in Iraq, however, the conflict has returned. Through 2006, over 200,000 Turkish troops remained locked down in the southeast, engaged in sporadic battles with the Kurds, and frequently chased them across the Iraqi border. In addition, the MIT continued to exploit its connections with the ethnic Turkoman population of northern Iraq, fueling Kurdish suspicions of Turkey's alleged interest in controlling the region.

The Turkish military, accused since it utilized Turkish Hizbollah two decades ago of stage-managing domestic terrorism for its own ends, endured further criticism when it turned out that a November 2005 bombing of a Kurdish bookstore in Semdinli, near Diyarbakir, had been conducted by plainclothes MIT agents hoping to blame it on the PKK. In a May 2006 report, *The Economist* voiced concern over Turkey's future in pointing to this incident, the alleged torture and threatened imprisonment of 80 Kurdish children involved in protests after a

PKK funeral in March, and a tough new antiterrorism law that "could spell a return to abuses at the height of the PKK insurgency in the 1990s, when hundreds of writers were imprisoned, thousands of detainees were tortured and many were slain in extra-judicial killings by security forces."[26]

Further, the Turkish-Kurdish conflict may be developing in more complex and dangerous ways. In southeastern Turkey, "many unemployed Kurds, disillusioned by the government, the EU and the PKK alike," the magazine reports, "are turning to Islam. Turkish Hizbullah . . . is re-organising throughout the south-east under new labels. Its influence is palpable in the shanty towns round Diyarbakir, where unemployed youths say that 'Islam should rule the world.'" With a military returning to the black ops of the 1990s, a demonstrable threat of spillover from Iraq's civil war, and Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program continuing to provoke fears through 2006, the last thing Turkey needed was a new Islamist insurrection.

In the Balkans, on the other hand, Turkey's role is less volatile. A mixture of factors, including its Ottoman cultural and religious legacy and political and geostrategic concerns, have inspired its interest in the Balkan states since the end of the Cold War. Even long before, as was mentioned in Chapter 2, the prototype of the ethnic Albanian militant movement was created, in 1982 in Izmir. A decade later, the Turkish leadership would grant Tirana's defense officials access to top-secret NATO information at its bases long before the latter deserved authorization, in 1992, and it also housed the fugitive Albanian Islamist and former spy chief, Bashkim Gazidede, after the first Sali Berisha government crashed in 1997. From his safe haven in Turkey, Gazidede proved invaluable in helping the MIT with Turkish-Albanian espionage and sabotage operations against Greece.[27] He was allowed to remain in Turkey until pressure (reportedly, American) caused the Turks to expel him in December 2005. Turkey was one of the most active participants of all NATO members in the Kosovo intervention of 1999, hosting KLA training camps and flying many bombing sorties, seeing the war as symbolic revenge against Serbia, the Christian power that had all but driven it from the Balkans 87 years earlier.

Years before the NATO intervention, Turkey had courted Balkan pro-Islamist political leaders from Serbia, for example in 1997, when the Refah Party government was secretly funding two Bosnian Muslim parties in the western region of Sandzak. In Bosnia itself, Turkish interests—economic, religious, and, during the 1992–1995 war, military—have long been vital. Commercial and religious cooperation is extensive and, interestingly enough, Bosnia has become a favorite destination for hundreds of Turkish female students desiring to study while veiled. In this Balkan beachhead of Islam, they can enjoy more overt displays of their Islamic faith than at home.

Indeed, Turkey's fundamental legacy in the Balkans lies in its gift, starting from the fourteenth century and its incarnation as the mighty Ottoman Empire, of Islam to the region. In the absence of such a historical process, the question of the future course of Islam in the Balkans would, of course, not exist today.

For better or for worse, the Turkish heritage is intimately bound up with Europe's course today in light of the religious cleavages and scattered Muslim populations left behind after the Ottomans were expelled from Macedonia during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. Today, the Balkan map is a patchwork of religious communities, with Islam in some places concentrated, in others small and diffused. In the modern age of global travel and communications, the oft-cited alleged Islamist goal of a "Green Corridor," in which a contiguous strip of "green" (Muslim inhabited) land stretches from Turkey through Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, and Bosnia, is neither believable nor relevant. Nevertheless, it is, of course, the case that foreign Islamic groups, terrorists included, look first to partially or fully Muslim-dominated areas of the Balkans for their radical operations and social colonization projects.

In this light, one of the most interesting and overlooked pockets of Islam in the region lies in Bulgaria, a primarily Orthodox country of 7.4 million on the Black Sea, which has two Muslim minorities, both dating from Ottoman times. Some 1 million Turks, descendants of the Ottomans, live in Bulgaria, primarily near Turkey in the south. A somewhat smaller minority of Pomaks—Slavic Bulgarians converted to Islam during Ottoman times—is settled also in the south, along the Rhodope Mountain region bordering on Greece. While there has long been friction between Turks and Bulgarians due to the notable political clout of the former, the Turks are generally peaceful and "traditional" in their Islamic observance. However, Turkey's request in 2006 to "export" 110 observant female students to a medical university in Plovdiv, on condition that they could study veiled, caused concern. Some 80 percent of the national academic council was opposed to the request, and university head Georgi Paskalev expressed his confusion in stating, "I never had a case like this before and don't know how to proceed."[28]

At about the same time, three young women lost in a court battle to study while veiled. They had been backed by the Association for Islamic Development and Culture, "an NGO founded by Muslims educated in Jordan." Indeed, foreign Islamists have established a strong though still subtle presence in this largely Christian former Communist country, building 700 new mosques. Arab foundations and charities have created new Koranic schools and offered scholarships to young Bulgarian Muslims to study Islam abroad, while Saudi organizations are funding increasing numbers of Hajj pilgrimages. The Sultan of Oman personally invested $400,000 to renovate an Ottoman mosque.[29] In this regard, local and Western intelligence services are most concerned by Bulgaria's other Muslim minority, the Pomaks. Like their Macedonian Muslim Torbeshi kin, the Pomaks have been historically alienated from the majority Bulgarian Orthodox Christian population and are thus more susceptible to outside influence. Because religion constitutes the chief factor in their identity, these poor, pastoralist Slavic Muslims have become prime targets for Arab proselytizers seeking to make inroads in Bulgaria, the European Union country with the largest indigenous Muslim population.

Other shadowy NGOs have recently been exposed as fronts for radical Islam. On February 20, 2007, four persons in Sofia and the southwestern town of Blagoevgrad, and connected with the Union of Bulgarian Muslims, an extremist group founded in 2006, were arrested "for propagating radical Islam and inciting religious hatred." Two of the group's Web sites, which published Chechen jihad propaganda and called for the replacement of Bulgaria's secular state with one ruled by Sharia law, were also shut down. According to Yavor Kolev, the head of a special unit for fighting organized crime, the group was led by a 51-year-old former Sofia mufti, Ali Kheiriddine, who had been collaborating with a Jordanian, Ahmad Mohammad Moussa. The latter had been expelled from Bulgaria in 2000 "for establishing a local branch of the Muslim Brothers, a radical Islam organization."[30] Commenting on the arrests, Bulgarian Islamic scholar Simeon Evstatiev warned that "[radical] Bulgarian Muslims will become part of a global, trans-national network...not only with the Muslims from the Middle East, but also with the European Muslims."[31]

The Union of Bulgarian Muslims was neither the first nor the most dangerous extremist group to have been uncovered in the country, however. In early 2005, Bulgarian investigative journalist Yana Buhrer Tavanier published lengthy reports indicating that a terrorist-linked Wahhabi charity, Al Waqf-Al Islami, had built several new mosques in the country's northeast. The Dutch branch of the charity, which once organized a seminar attended by six of the 9/11 hijackers, had also sent Bulgaria's leading Muslim cleric, Fikri Sali, to Saudi Arabia in July 2004, where he received funds "from dubious Middle Eastern sources" to build "mosques and schools that promote the radical teachings of Wahhabi Islam." Although in 1999 Al Waqf-Al Islami representative Abdulrahim Taha was expelled from Bulgaria, the investigation discovered that "Al Waqf never pulled out of Bulgaria" but actually that "its activities seem to be expanding." The charity was reregistered in 2002, "without any reference to its Islamic character or religious activities," and was said to be led by a 41-year-old Syrian, Muafak al Asaad, who co-owned a Bulgarian firm along with the expelled Taha.[32]

According to the investigation, the Wahhabi mosque-building in Bulgaria has been overseen by a Saudi citizen, Sheikh Abdullah Abdul Aziz Soreya, who started making annual visits to the country in 1993—allegedly to treat "knee problems" in a health spa, but actually to build mosques and pay off imams. His local collaborator, Muafak al Asaad, represented Al Waqf-Al Islami, through its building and renovating mosques in villages and towns such as Razgrad, Bisertsi, Todorovo, Brenitsa, and Stefan Karadzha. A former student told the journalists that "if a lesson lasted 45 minutes, 30 minutes of it would be devoted exclusively to jihad [or holy war], in particular the jihad against infidels and against Turkey...For these people, anyone who is not one of them—a Wahhabi—is an infidel."[33] As elsewhere in the Balkans, the incursions of the Wahhabis have led to intimidation and an internecine struggle for control of religion and Islamic Community-owned property.

Another Islamic boarding school, built in 1997 in the village of Delchevo, is run by a secretive Turkish order, the *Suleymanci,* named after Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan, a religious figure born there in 1888—ten years after the Russian Army defeated the Ottomans in Bulgaria. In Turkey, the Suleymanci possess 1,700 student halls, with almost 100,000 residents, and "today operates at least one Koran course in every Turkish town."[34] In Germany, where a large Turkish diaspora lives, the order has 20,000 adult members, associated with 320 cultural centers, at which 60,000 children study. Religious fervor being somewhat less in Bulgaria, the order there attracts primarily widows with children and poor families drawn to the idea of free housing and tuition for students. According to a Bulgarian imam associated with the school, the method is simple: "We travel from village to village to enroll them. Most of them are poor kids—children of divorced parents, or orphans, or their mother's in Holland and their father in Turkey." The best of the students were sent to Turkey for further training. A girl who did not enjoy her experience at the Delchevo Suleymanci school depicted a setting very similar to what could be expected from the Wahhabis. "They wouldn't let us out to have coffee, or watch television, or talk to boys," she said. "We were reading and studying [the Koran] all the time. We wore headscarves, long skirts and long sleeves in the hot weather."[35]

Bulgaria's experience shows that not only Arab Islamic groups are interested in the struggle for former Ottoman lands. Turkey-based Islamic movements, more so than indigenous Balkan Turks, also seek to control the development of Balkan Islam. Along with the Turkish government's many cultural and architectural projects, designed to refurbish and renovate signs of the Ottoman past, movements like the Suleymanci also keep up Turkish Islamism. So to does Fethullah Gülen, who has established a network of posh private colleges in the former Ottoman Balkan states, enticing high-school and university level Muslim students (and not only Muslims) with state-of-the-art, well marketed private schools that offer access to the modern world, while very subtly reinforcing its trademark "moderate Turkish Islam"—a tactic that has enhanced the value of the Gülen movement in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy planners who see, as was the case in Central Asia, the schools of the eccentric old spiritual leader as a means for the covert spreading of "Turkishness" against competing Islamic forces such as the Saudi Wahhabis and non-Muslim schools established by Western countries.

However, similar to the testimony of the Kurdish former student at a Gülen school in Turkey cited above, it seems that in the Balkans some are being used to spread more radical doctrines behind the scenes. A former student of a Gülen school in Struga, Macedonia, claims that on several occasions "the brightest and most interest students" were given extracurricular lessons in radical Islam. The witness, an ethnic Turk who did not want to be named, claimed that in the Gülen schools of Struga and Gostivar this practice is going on "after hours, in small and specially selected groups of teenage boys. . .the teacher would introduce them like secret initiates into a cult, praise fundamentalism and so on."[36]

Whether or not this practice represented institutional policy or, more likely, a local deviation is unclear; however, the story offers a revealing glimpse into how even the most benign "moderate Islam" can sometimes be used to mask more radical activities.

Even conceptually, Turkey's historical legacy is still deeply affecting Balkan political and social realities. The Ottoman past is praised and vilified, sometimes in the same sentence, by the region's varied peoples, an ambivalent situation that reflects the ever-shifting relationship of individuals and societies with history itself. While previous generations of Western historiographers accused the Ottomans of having had a corrosive and retarding influence on the Balkans, essentially truncating its development and isolating it from the non-Islamicized West, modern scholars tend to be more forgiving. Whether it stems from political correctness or careful revisionism, historians today have tended to stress the cultural and technological contributions of the Ottomans, and to invoke evidence in defense of the idea that life under the Ottoman millet system, in which Christians were essentially second-class citizens, was really not so bad.

In the Balkans itself, the debate today remains fierce. The notion of triumphant liberation from odious Turkish oppression and occupation is central to the national narratives of almost each country in the region. Only some Bosniak Muslims, and certain other Slavic Muslims and Albanians, argue that the Ottoman Empire represented a sort of golden age that should be resurrected. While for Balkan Muslims Ottoman civilization represents legitimacy and normality, for the far more numerous Christians, the long centuries of Ottoman occupation are portrayed as an unfortunate, twisted, and violent disruption of their preexisting societies, whether Byzantine Orthodox or Roman Catholic. There are very few still alive who remember daily life under the Ottomans, but the wildly differing—and equally true—stories of both happiness and misery under their rule continue to resonate in tales passed down among families, popular legends, and even school textbooks.

Indeed, the Turkish state today remains very sensitive regarding how its Balkan past is remembered. A senior Turkish diplomat in Skopje once lamented the fact that Macedonian schoolchildren were still being taught that their ancestors had been brutalized and humiliated by their Ottoman overlords, something that was, at least during the turbulent revolutionary period from the 1890s to 1912, a perfectly accurate description. "Why can't Turkey and the Balkan countries all just agree on a common school curriculum that is fair to everyone's history?" he said. "It would help minimize destructive nationalism."[37] While such a policy is neither feasible nor desirable, what with its implications for the limitations of free thought, it does indicate the Turkish government's concern to shape the way in which the West perceives its Ottoman European legacy, as such perceptions may have subtle influence over Turkey's "European-ness," and thus its suitability for EU membership.

Although the Turks have been accused of historical crimes against Balkan Christians, the modern reality is much different. By and large, non-Turkish

Muslim populations created during the Ottoman occupation were more involved in the most turbulent Balkan events of modern times than were the Turks, whose reputation for peacefulness and tolerance has been acquired due to their distaste for the wars that gripped the region from 1991 to 2001. Indeed, in Kosovo Turks have on occasion even been expelled by their own Albanian co-religionists. Here and in Macedonia, they have been victims of an aggressive and chauvinistic assimilation program; by virtue of the fact that they are Muslims, the Turks are supposedly "really" Albanian. For Turks, who find their culture's contribution to history somewhat more impressive than that of the Albanian mountain tribes, the affront is irritating. Hakan, a young student in the Macedonian village of Vrapciste, a stronghold of 3,000 Turks who nevertheless lost municipal control to Albanians due to high politics, colorfully retorted to one Albanian's argument: "I told him, 'we have more gay people in Turkey than you [Albanians] have people in the whole world!'" While an exaggeration, it is yet one that illustrates the self-confidence that Balkan Turks, unlike other Balkan Muslims, possess today. This self-confidence has had a mellowing effect and kept them from engaging in the madness of ethnic war that has gripped so many of their neighbors since 1990. However, the fact remains that in Kosovo and Macedonia, the Albanians hold the balance of power, and have used it against the Turks, as local Turkish leaders bitterly note.[38]

Despite their marginalization and continuing obsolescence, the Balkan Turks are still relevant as a stabilizing force, ethnically and religiously, upholding the Sufi school of Islam, which is often regarded as the most peaceful and spiritual of Muslim sects in the region. The Ottoman Turkish legacy holds the key to the future of Islam in the Balkans, and its relation to non-Muslim societies in another way as well. It is inextricably linked with the crucial, preliminary question of what the Balkans was, is, and should be. Was the arrival of the Ottomans and a new religion, Islam, just an unfortunate disruption of Christian life, or did it represent the high point of Balkan culture? Is it something that should be reembraced or banished from memory—or perhaps superseded altogether by securalism or by alien forms of life, such as soulless Western consumerism, or Wahhabi Islam?

The answer to these questions will have very tangible ramifications for the future shape of the region. Every Balkan state except Greece and Turkey endured four decades of Communist rule, in one form or another, from the end of the Second World War until about 1990. During this time, the authorities seized private property from individuals and institutions alike; some, such as the Orthodox churches and Islamic communities, had owned vast tracts of land and numerous urban structures. With the end of Communism and the region's disintegration into small, weak nation-states, the contentious issue of denationalization has sparked controversy everywhere. And this is where the Ottoman legacy becomes so important. Individuals and institutions seeking restitution base their claims to rightful ownership on documents created by various pre-Communist governments. However, their arguments for legitimacy are inevitably colored by their

perspective on Balkan history. The only thing everyone can agree on was that the Communist property seizures were wrong. But what previous status quo, then, is the "authentic" one? To which historical precedents can today's claimants argue for their "rightful" ownership of Communist state-seized property?

Unlike in the West, where most Muslims are immigrants or the offspring of immigrants, the long centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans allowed Muslim migrants and converts alike to stake out their own claims to legitimacy and ownership on all-important historical terms. Their descendants today thus are not demanding their due based, as in Europe, on "universal" principles of human rights, but rather on claims of historical ownership equivalent to or greater than those of their Christian neighbors, whose restitution arguments rest on the same vexed grounds. This complex issue has been afflicted by acrimonious disputes not only between but within religions, such as the ongoing drama in Macedonia's Islamic Community regarding what faction will control, and so profit from, Community-owned properties.

Some examples of modern property restitution, such as the return of Balkan Jewish shops, synagogues, and whole neighborhoods destroyed by occupying Nazi collaborators in World War II, reflect in clear and irrefutable terms the rectification of unprovoked injustices. The most notable such success to date has been the restitution of property belonging to Macedonia's Jewish community, which lost 98 percent of its population during the Bulgarian fascist occupation.[39] However, few cases are as clear-cut. A Muslim community, and even a Christian one, might point to old Ottoman records to justify a property claim, or perhaps to documents from, say, prewar royalist Yugoslavia. For Serbs, Albanian-dominated western Kosovo (more exactly, "Metohia," a Greek term denoting church-owned lands) had previously been a major possession of the Serbian Orthodox Church during Byzantine times. If the Muslims can cite claims of historic ownership when turning to Ottoman records, why can Christians not do the same when holding up even older Byzantine documents?

Of course, in the modern world right rarely influences might. The final results of denationalization are inevitably decided by eminent domain, "squatter's rights," political control, and corruption. Few have respect for justice. Even the Jewish community in Macedonia, with its undeniable moral right to its Nazi-destroyed properties, had to act fast to keep Skopje's rampant construction mafia—with which high politicians and banks have since been linked—from building on its recovered property sites.[40] In a region with such deep history and so many successive civilizations, the recourse to historical precedence quickly disintegrates into relativism and thus, partisan politicking. Yet even aside from the political process of denationalization, the current war for religious influence seen with the creation and destruction of churches and mosques has profound implications for the future.

Unfortunately for non-Muslims, and for the many Muslims who resent fundamentalist Wahhabi mores, the aggressive campaign to build garish, Saudi-style mosques and disseminate Wahhabi propaganda continues unchecked. Cleverly,

Islamists have even tried to use the thesis of historicity to their advantage when it comes to religious facilities. Some local Muslims seem to have been enlisted for this too. A September 2006 conference in Pristina, dedicated to presenting the facts on five centuries of Albanian Islam, emphasized alleged "pre-Ottoman Islam" in Kosovo. One participant, the Kosovar professor Qemajl Morina, had already been broadcasting this Saudi propaganda for years; in a January 2003 UNMIK radio show, for example, Morina claimed that Islam was originally brought to Kosovo by Arab Saracens, from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries.[41] This audacious attempt to undermine the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans shows that the Saudis are ready to use all means, methods, and local propagandists to fight the surreptitious war with Turkey for the soul of Balkan Islam.

The second relevant issue here is the controversial one of population growth and demographic trends—notoriously difficult to predict because of the myriad factors that go into them, including the effects of urbanization, modernization, emigration, and a changing EU policy on immigration. Nevertheless, it can still be said that Muslim populations are, generally speaking, growing more rapidly than Christian ones throughout the region. In Kosovo, for example, the Serbian Christian population has drastically declined since World War II, with some 150,000 Serbs leaving from 1945–1990 and another 250,000 forced to flee since the NATO intervention of 1999. As has been attested in previous chapters, experts believe that the complete ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Kosovo, now less than 10 percent of the population, is all but inevitable. At the same time, however, Kosovo's Albanian Catholic community is showing slight gains, though Albanian Muslims will continue to make up the majority.

In Macedonia, demographic statistics show that Muslim Albanians account for 89 out of every 100 births in the country.[42] And in Bulgaria, the government fears that Christian Bulgarians will make up less than 60 percent of the population by 2050, as Muslim Turk and Roma populations continue to increase; a recent study revealed that "60–70 percent of all newborns in 2003 and 2004 came from the country's non-Slavic minorities."[43] Muslims tend to marry much younger than Christians and to have a much lower rate of divorce. While Wahhabism and other forms of foreign Islam are not widespread, they are encouraging polygamy, more appealing given the extended periods of time that many young Muslim men spend working away from their families in Western Europe. Everything from poverty, alcoholism, and other health problems to the exigencies of modern employment (women in some foreign-owned Macedonian firms have been hired on the condition that they do not have children for up to four years) have helped to keep the Christian birthrate down. As in Russia, the Serbian Orthodox Church has urged Serbian women to have more babies, and various church leaders have suggested paying Christian families to do so.

In short, it seems that Muslims, already outright majorities in some countries and political "kingmaker" minorities in others, are still expanding and will thus continue to enjoy all of the political, social, and economic benefits that this position entails. While it was once better to be from the majority population, the

imported arrival of Western "human rights" and minority concerns has made minority status an economically and politically valuable position in certain countries. Some argue that other factors that tend to reduce the birth count will eventually have a leveling effect, such as urbanization, improved educational opportunities, and economic migration. However, these processes take considerable time and may take effect only after it is "too late" for the Christian populations to avoid returning to their Ottoman status—that is, second-class citizens in their own countries.

At the same time, many individuals of whatever ethnicity or religion seek to leave for the West at their first opportunity, in the hopes of a brighter economic future. The desire to get out has provoked Balkan peoples to use whatever means are available to them, from the legal to the illegal. At times, this has meant shamelessly contradicting national sentiment. Macedonians resent the chauvinistic denial of their national identity by neighboring Bulgaria, which considers them Bulgarians "in denial"; however, when the imminent EU member Bulgaria came out with an offer of passports for anyone who could prove their Bulgarian ancestry, well over 10,000 of them applied.[44] In Kosovo, Albanians seeking to escape from their underdeveloped backwater through 2006 showed no qualms about purchasing passports from a country—Serbia—which they allegedly hated and which they were trying to break off from, for the simple reason that Serbian documents allowed them greater freedom of movement abroad than did UN-Kosovo identity papers.[45]

However, Europe's hardening stance against immigration, already manifested in restrictive laws in countries like Switzerland, has brought an unpredictable factor into play. The Balkan states, including Turkey itself, all seek to join the European Union; to date, only Romania and Bulgaria have. One of the major roadblocks lies not with them but with Western Europeans and their hardening stance on immigration, which is seen, rightly and wrongly, as the source of all evils—from rises in crime to unemployment to Islamic fundamentalism. European Union "enlargement fatigue" seems to have taken hold in many countries. Should Western countries begin mass deportations of mostly Muslim refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants back to the Balkans, as has been threatened on several occasions, the results could be catastrophic for Balkan economies, especially in rural areas that have long relied on the remittances of their kinsmen working abroad. The economic collapse that would certainly occur, augmented by the sudden arrival of angry young Muslim men feeling themselves betrayed by Western civilization, and with opulently funded foreign Islamic organizations suddenly the only game in town—this not improbable vision augurs ill for peace, stability, and for the suppression of foreign-funded radical Islamist movements in the former Ottoman lands of the Balkans.