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Competing Identities and Turkey's Future

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One frequent observation about the contemporary world is that the pace of change appears to be accelerating. Turkey is a case in point, and the same is true of Turkey's relationships with the Middle East, the European Union, and the wider world. All have continued to evolve at such an astonishing rate that almost the only constant has been change itself. Early in the millennium Turkey appeared to have managed the difficult transition from a long era of military control to a relatively stable elected government and liberal democratic values. That expectation eroded in subsequent years under the rule of Prime Minister (now President) Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), with an unmistakable drift towards a decidedly illiberal democracy – if not outright authoritarianism – and increased violence at home and abroad. At the time of writing (late-July 2016), Turkey has recently experienced a major military coup, a formal state of emergency has been declared, and a sweeping crackdown is occurring that affects virtually every sector of society.

Turkish Politics: From Praetorianism to Illiberal Democracy

A modern historical survey of Turkey might begin with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War and the creation of the Turkish Republic by Mustfa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk's military government was determined to modernize, secularize, and industrialize Turkey, and it succeeded in those goals to a remarkable degree. Turkey joined the Allied cause late in the Second World War, received modest support from the Marshall Plan, joined the Council of Europe in 1949 and NATO in 1952, and remained a staunch ally of the West throughout the Cold War. The Turkish military continued to be a strong political force as the country only slowly transitioned to a more democratic system. Intervals of civilian rule involved an unstable multiparty system, and there were military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980.

A tectonic shift in Turkish politics seemed to occur when national elections in 2002 brought to power the moderately Islamist AKP, led by its broadly popular team, Prime Minister Erdogan and his close associate President Abdullah Gul. The Turkish constitution made it clear that the role of Prime Minister was the primary one and the President (appointed by Parliament) was to be a largely ceremonial figure. In sum,

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Erdogan subsequently won three successive terms as Prime Minister and in 2014 became Turkey's first directly elected President. A law elevating the presidency to an elected position was passed in 2007, just in time for Erdogan, who was facing an AKP internal rule that its leader could only serve three terms. Erdogan quickly announced his further plan to have the constitution changed to make the President (rather than the Prime Minister) the country's most important post, and indeed he has been acting ever since as though that change has already been made.

Erdogan's long tenure in public office began with considerable promise. He faced down a serious threat of a military coup in 2007 and a judicial threat to outlaw the AKP in 2008. Also in 2008 he forced a number of high military officers to retire under threat of prosecution (the Ergenekon affair) and again in 2010 (the alleged Sledgehammer plot).

Fears of a radical tilt towards Islam did not materialize, although Erdogan did reintroduce middle schools for training clerics, permitted children from the age of ten to attend religious schools, reintroduced optional classes in the Koran and Arabic, and allowed women to wear headscarves. Women were also granted equal legal standing in family matters including divorce, and were given pregnancy leave and the freedom to breastfeed children outside the home. The Kurds received access to broadcasting media, as well as the right to speak Kurdish in public, and there was discussion of teaching the Kurdish language in schools. However, surely most important for Erdogan's continuing popularity was the fact that he helped to inaugurate and then presided over a remarkable period of economic growth and foreign investment that weathered even the global financial crisis rather well. That economic boom helped to create many new jobs, fund a major expansion of the public welfare system, modernize the country's infrastructure, and build new schools and universities across the country.

However, a negative side of Erdogan's early years was widespread concerns about restrictions on political freedom and other violations of human rights. PKK militants – labelled 'terrorists', some with justification – were hunted down and killed. The separatist Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) suffered relentless persecution, and intermittent peace talks seemed to make little progress. Turkish law also provided justification for the prosecution of many non-Kurdish critics of the government under the rubric of 'insults' to the Turkish nation. Journalists lost their jobs, and many were jailed, to such an extent that in 2013 Turkey gained the dubious distinction of imprisoning more journalists than any other country (followed by Iran and China).

Also disturbing was Erdogan's initially close and shadowy connection with Turkish preacher and former imam Fethullah Gülen and his Hizmet movement. Gülen has established his organization in exile in the United States (Pennsylvania) and preaches a message of tolerance and interfaith dialogue, vehement hostility to Iran, and the desirability of maintaining cordial relations with the United States and Israel. Nevertheless, many observers have regarded his influence in Turkey as much more sinister, pervading the courts and police and intelligence services, and targeting government opponents. Gülenists were believed to have been instrumental in some of the government's early efforts to retire and prosecute high-ranking secularist

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military officers. In any event, what apparently began as a symbiotic relationship between two charismatic personalities, in due course, developed into a bitter power struggle that continues to the present day.

Erdogan won re-election as Prime Minister in 2011, but thereafter he began to react to successive political challenges in an ever more stridently demagogic and autocratic manner. He was determined that the AKP would win municipal elections in March 2014 and that he himself would be elected President in August that same year. However, the outlook was by no means certain, partly because the Turkish economic boom was beginning to cool and Turkey's key foreign policy initiatives appeared to be failing (more on this to follow).

In fact, domestic political tensions worsened severely. In May 2013 there was a huge public demonstration in Istanbul's Taksim Square against the government's plan to build a modern shopping complex on Gezi Park. Erdogan refused to have any sort of dialogue with the protesters and ordered the use of water cannons and tear gas to clear the square. In what was to become his characteristic public response to criticism, he blamed all the unrest on a few malcontents and foreign trouble makers, in this case Israel and its allies.

On 17 December, a major corruption scandal rocked the Erdogan government. Police arrested some 50 persons under suspicion of bribery, rigging contracts, and making illegal gold transfers to Iran. Implicated in the scandal were the sons of three cabinet ministers (who resigned), an AKP mayor, and the manager of the second largest state lender Hallbank. Prosecutors also sought to detain Erdogan's son, who was accused of having been involved in shady property deals. Erdogan swiftly went on the offensive by dismissing or reassigning hundreds of police chiefs, firing a lead prosecutor in the investigation, and having existing law altered to forbid the government from probing internal corruption. All charges were thus quashed, and again Erdogan railed against alleged nefarious foreign influences from Israel and the United States.

Especially significant in light of circumstances surrounding the mid-2016 abortive military coup, was Erdogan's shift of political allies in the wake of the scandal. He stepped up what was already a quiet purge of Gülen sympathizers from state institutions and publicly accused them of a 'dirty plot' and of having created nothing less than a clandestine 'parallel state'. Erdogan also announced that he was prepared to support the retrial of hundreds of military officers who had earlier been convicted of plotting against the government, because he believed Gülenist-inspired police and judiciary might have treated them unjustly. This move was, at once, a strike against his former ally, Gülen and his movement, and the extension of an olive branch to his former foes, old guard secularists in the military. Not long thereafter, Gülen broke his long silence to call for a new Turkish constitution that would protect essential freedoms and institutions in the country. Erdogan replied that he was considering closing Gülenist schools in Turkey, recommending the same to Pakistan, and discussing with President Obama the possible extradition of Gülen himself from the United States. The demand for extradition has been repeated several times in subsequent years, the latest immediately after the 2016 coup attempt.

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Despite all the negative publicity, the AKP managed a strong showing in the 30 March 2014 municipal elections, capturing 45% of the overall vote and winning decisively not only across the conservative Anatolian heartlands but also in Istanbul, although only narrowly in Ankara. Erdogan resolved to move ahead with a no-holds-barred campaign for the presidency. In mid-April Turkey's parliament approved legislation to give the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) wider powers of surveillance and set prison terms of up to ten years for journalists who leak confidential information. On a single day in June, 2224 judges and prosecutors were moved to other posts.

Meanwhile, external developments gave a significant boost to Erdogan's and the AKP's electoral prospects. Turkey secured a 50-year agreement, vehemently opposed by Iraq's government in Baghdad, to transport oil from Iraq's Kurdestan region via pipeline directly to the world market. Some anti-Assad forces in Syria morphed into the extremist ISIS movement, which along its rapid advance, stormed the Turkish consulate in Mosul and took a number of diplomats and citizens hostage. Turkish forces eventually liberated the consulate in a daring commando raid. The Kurds were natural allies against ISIS, so it followed that the Turkish government's peace process with the PKK seemed to gain some momentum and parliament went so far as to hint it might eventually support carving out an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

On 10 August, Erdogan was elected President with 52% of the vote, albeit with a relatively low voter turnout, probably because the elderly diplomat supported by opposition parties never seemed to stand a chance. Notably, Erdogan did well not only in traditional Anatolia but also this time in Kurdish territories, over a Kurdish candidate, who won less than 10%. Now Erdogan turned to increasing the AKP's parliamentary majority in the 2015 election to a clear two-thirds, which would allow for immediate adoption of new legislation to make the president (rather than the prime minister) the country's main political figure and indeed create a sort of super-presidency. For a start, he forced his old friend Gul out and saw to the appointment of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu as Prime Minister. Although Gul had been silent at the time, rumours had it that he had privately expressed concerns to Erdogan about his handling of the 2013 demonstrations and corruption probe.[1] In advance of the campaign, new legislation tightened state control of the internet.

However, in June 2015, most observers of Turkish politics believed that the country had stepped back from the brink of authoritarianism, when Erdogan's AKP received only 41% of the vote in national legislative elections, far short of the large majority that would have allowed them to change the constitution. A major factor accounting for the result was the strong showing of the Kurdish People's Democratic Party (the HDP), winning 13% of the vote and passing the 10% threshold for holding any seats in parliament. Erdogan's efforts to woo significant support from the Kurds had obviously failed, with dire consequences for them, as subsequent events proved.

At this crucial juncture, the several small parties opposed to the AKP missed a golden opportunity and failed to agree on a coalition government. Erdogan simply

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waited while they dithered and squabbled, and then, as was the President's legal right, boldly scheduled a new legislative election for 1 November. That election returned a 58% majority for the AKP, thus allowing the AKP almost free rein, although still not quite enough to change the constitution. Erdogan quickly made it clear that he nevertheless intended to act as though he had already been elevated to supreme authority and packed the AKP's council with his closest supporters. The November election also saw a reduction in support for the Kurdish HDP, which barely cleared the 10% required to remain in parliament. All of these developments can best be explained by an acute sense of crises at home and abroad that Erdogan himself had at least partially engineered.

Turkey at the Nexus of Two Regions and the Wider World

In mid-2012, Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* journalist with special expertise in the Middle East, was able to comment:

> For many years, strategists have debated whether Turkey would be a 'bridge' or a 'gully' between predominately Christian Europe and the Arab/Muslim Middle East … It turns out that Turkey these days is neither … It's … an island of relative stability between two great geopolitical systems that are cracking apart: the euro zone … and the Arab state system.[2]

Friedman's assessment about Turkey's 'relative stability' was accurate enough at the time, but unfortunately is no longer correct. In addition to rising domestic tensions exacerbated by the Erdogan government's autocratic course, Turkey's external relationships have nearly all come to grief. The country's location at the nexus of two regions and the wider world has proved to be less of an advantage than a liability, as neighbouring turmoil has literally spilled across Turkey's porous borders, and incidents of terrorist violence from different sources are ever more frequent in major cities as well as elsewhere in the country.

The general outlook seemed much more promising at the beginning of Erdogan's AKP rule. The government pledged to westernize in appropriate ways while maintaining Turkey's distinctive Islamic heritage, to move ahead determinedly towards membership in the EU, and to honour the country's longstanding obligations to NATO (the size of Turkey's military is second only to that of the US in the alliance). President Barack Obama visited Turkey in 2009 and praised the Erdogan government as a brilliant example of moderate Islam and democratic progress. Turkey sent troops to join the NATO campaign in Afghanistan and allowed an American-designed radar system and missile interceptor to be positioned on Turkish territory. Ankara insisted, rather unconvincingly, that the missile shield was not aimed at Iran and that information the system gathered would not find its way back to Israel.

However, Turkey's Western allies were irritated by the government's early diplomatic stances towards Iran and Israel. Turkey opposed sanctions against Iran, arguing that the threat of that country's nuclear programme was overrated, and the Erdogan government hatched with Brazil an abortive plan for a complicated swap of

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nuclear materials as a 'solution' to the Iranian impasse. As for Israel, Turkey proclaimed that it would not attend any NATO meeting where Israel was even an observer. The Erdogan government actively supported the Palestinian cause and attempted in vain to bring competing Palestinian factions together. In 2010, relations with Israel went into crisis when several Turkish activists were killed by Israeli forces that boarded a ship sent from Turkey to break Israel's blockade of Gaza.

A central objective of Erdogan's early foreign policy was to revive 'neo-Ottoman' influence in the Near and Middle East. To this end, Turkey greatly increased its diplomatic representation in the region, but (as we have noted) there has been more influence of the region on Turkey than the other way around. At one point, then-Foreign Minister Davutoglu had to downscale Turkey's ambitions to having 'zero problems with neighbours', which in that particular regional neighbourhood has also proved to be an impossible goal.

Turkish problems multiplied with the Arab Spring, which the Erdogan government welcomed with some (possibly insufficient) caution. Turkey established a supportive relationship with the Morsi/Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt and was sharply critical of its overthrow by the military under General Abdel Farrah el-Sisi. El-Sisi's reply was to expel the Turkish ambassador. Relations with the Shia-backed al-Maliki government in Iraq were bedevilled by the Kurdish oil issue. Regarding Syria, Turkey – as it had initially done in Libya – opposed any form of Western intervention, and in the Syrian case attempted to broker some sort of settlement that would allow the fighting to stop and Assad to step down. Perhaps the West should have listened to Turkey with regard to Libya. In any event, the US and its European allies commended Ankara's constructive (albeit unsuccessful) efforts in Syrian negotiations and its willingness to shelter what would soon become a flood of Syrian refugees.

In fact, Assad clung to power, the civil war only intensified, some of the rebel forces radicalized and joined ISIS, and Syrian refugees just kept coming and coming. An estimated 130,000 crossed the border during the single weekend of 21–22 September 2014. Over the following months, Syrian and Iraqi refugees from escalating violence and fearsome ISIS advances joined other migrants from Afghanistan and elsewhere seeking a better economic life and presented the EU with a full-blown migration crisis (discussed further below). Not only Turkey, but also Greece, Macedonia, and target destination countries were all finding it extremely difficult to cope.

Until Turkey belatedly made more serious efforts to secure the border, Kurdish fighters and Islamic extremists also regularly crossed over to join their kindred in Syria and Iraq. The Islamic extremists also laid the foundations for a new ISIS terror underground in Turkey. We earlier mentioned that the seizure by ISIS of the Turkish consulate in Mosul and its later liberation by Turkish forces helped boost Erdogan's popularity during his presidential campaign. However, when ISIS forces closed in on the town of Kobani on the Turkish border, the conflict entered a new stage that began to poison Erdogan's recently improved relationship with the Kurds, which had boosted his support in the August presidential elections. Kobani is a predominately Kurdish town then defended by Syrian Kurdish militias that Erdogan regards as

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extensions of PKK terrorists. He closed the border to Kurdish volunteers and refused to allow Turkish troops to cross to help defend the city. In the end, Kobani was only rescued by a US airdrop of supplies and weapons, which Erdogan strongly criticized. Kurds regarded his stance as a betrayal, and violent Kurdish protests broke out in several Turkish cities. The United States too was more than disappointed by Ankara's initial unwillingness to allow US and NATO forces to use the Turkish military base at Incirlik and also to help train and equip moderate Syrian forces. Erdogan unsuccessfully conditioned any such assistance on the establishment of a no-fly buffer zone along Turkey's border with Syria.

In July 2015, Ankara finally allowed US planes to operate against ISIS from the Incirlik base. That same month Erdogan renewed his active 'war' against PKK 'terrorism', almost certainly, in part, as payback for the drop in Kurdish support for the AKP in the June elections. Meanwhile, the Kurdish forces in Syria (some of whom the Turkish air force was bombarding) and in Iraq had proved themselves to be indispensable fighters against the radical Islamicists. At the same time, rivalry and sometimes violent infighting among Kurdish factions undermined their effectiveness and forestalled any immediate advance towards an independent Kurdistan. One observer put it: 'The alphabet barely has enough letters to cover the acronyms of all their quarrelsome factions.'[3] Still lacking was any agreed strategy by Assad's opponents to unseat him – if indeed any alternative was likely to be better – when Russia's direct military intervention in Syria in September strengthened Assad and upset all calculations. Turkish forces shot down a Russian fighter accused of violating Turkish airspace on 24 November, Putin and Erdogan exchanged angry words, and Russia imposed economic sanctions.

The months in Turkey preceding the July 2016 coup attempt witnessed a marked increase in terrorist violence and political manoeuvring by the Erdogan government at home and abroad. There were serious terrorist attacks in Ankara and Istanbul and several smaller cities as well. In Ankara, the government alleged that ISIS was behind an October attack on a Kurdish peace march that killed 102 persons and injured 250, and the PKK claimed responsibility for attacks in February and March. Istanbul had not only an ISIS-inspired suicide bombing in January, in a tourist area near the Blue Mosque, but also 42 killed and 239 wounded at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport on 28 June. In early May, Erdogan replaced Prime Minister Davutoglu with another close associate Binali Yildirim, reportedly because Davutoglu had favoured resuming dialogue with the Kurds and expressed private concerns about Erdogan's drive for a super-presidency.[4] Then, in remarkable diplomatic reversals on a single day (27 June), Erdogan normalized diplomatic relations with Israel and apologized to Putin for Turkey's earlier downing of the Russian military jet. Russia quickly responded by restoring tourism ties, and both countries agreed to coordinate their policies with regard to Syria. This apparently gave the Assad regime further cause to hope for its survival, although some reports had it that Russia was reconsidering its unwavering support for Assad.[5]

On 15 June, Turkey was suddenly confronted by what was to prove to be an abortive and fairly inept coup attempt by a large faction of the Turkish military.

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It was put down – or perhaps more accurately, collapsed – in less than a single day. Some 230 persons died, including 145 civilians who had flooded into the streets in protest, in response to President Erdogan's videoed appeal for popular support. All opposition parties, Turkish media (including a few remaining somewhat independent voices), and a wide range of world leaders (President Obama among them), quickly and unequivocally condemned the coup. The plotters missed capturing Erdogan at his holiday retreat; seized the chief of the general staff General Hulusi Akar, who refused to declare martial law; unsuccessfully bombed the police and intelligence services and satellite broadcasting service in Ankara; and indeed almost seemed to invite resistance by commencing the coup at ten in the evening when the streets were already crowded.[6]

At this writing, the full extent of the plot, the precise actors and motives behind it, and reason for the timing are still not entirely clear. Erdogan himself lost no time in blaming it directly on the Gülenist 'parallel state' and the United States, a verdict that subsequently seems to be accepted by most Turkish citizens regardless of their attitude towards their President or other political issues.[7] Erdogan repeated his earlier demand that the US allow Gülen's extradition and implied that the Obama administration's insistence upon hard evidence was itself evidence of US complicity. Be that as it may, Erdogan declared that 'This uprising is a gift from God to us because it will be a reason to cleanse our army.'[8] It was soon apparent that his government had been diligently preparing extensive lists of its presumed opponents within the military and well beyond, into virtually every sector of Turkish society, which were immediately utilized in the crackdown after the failed coup. Indeed, one plausible explanation for the hasty nature and timing for the coup is that it was to pre-empt a wave of arrests that many expected to happen later in the summer.[9]

Erdogan's post-coup crackdown has been swift and sweeping, targeting more than 60,000 persons, and it should be stressed that all this comes on top of previous moves against the police, prosecutors, judges, media, and journalists. The government arrested some 100 generals and admirals and about 10,000 military in all; fired 9000 police officers; suspended 21,000 private school teachers; suspended 2745 judges; fired 21,710 ministry of education officials; fired 1500 (that is, all) university deans; added 100 broadcast media, newspapers, and magazines to the many banned earlier; rounded up an unspecified number of journalists beyond the unprecedented number jailed earlier; and suspended 1500 ministry of finance officials.[10] What had evolved into an illiberal democracy in Turkey has now further evolved – ironically in the name of protecting democracy – into an unapologetically authoritarian regime reflecting Erdogan's cult of personality.

Turkey and the European Union

Although Turkey first applied for full EEC (later EU) membership in 1987, formal negotiations about Turkish accession did not begin until 2005 and almost immediately encountered serious roadblocks. For instance, France's then-President Nicolas Sarkozy expressed his opposition to Turkish membership, and Germany's Chancellor

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Angela Merkel declared that Turkey should be content with some form of 'privileged partnership' rather than full membership. France and Austria also both took the position that they would have to hold a national referendum on any decision to admit Turkey. In 1995, however, the EU did agree to enter into a customs union with Turkey.

Today, Turkish full membership in most respects still seems a distant, if not impossible, goal. That it may now become even more impossible can be illustrated by the shifting British position. As late as 2014, then-Prime Minister David Cameron proclaimed that allowing Turkey to join was 'vital for our economy, vital for our security and vital for our diplomacy.' But when the Brexit campaign revealed deep-seated fears about increased immigration, Cameron stated: 'There is no prospect of Turkey joining the EU in decades.' 'You cannot find an expert on the subject who thinks it is going to happen, because it's not going to happen.'[11] All EU member states must agree on admitting new members, and 35 so-called chapters or policy areas must be satisfied, of which only one has so far been resolved. Of course, in the almost 30 years since Turkey initially applied for membership, Europe's international organization has itself changed drastically: its substantial transformation from the EEC to the EU; its enlargement to 28 member states; the adoption of a single Euro currency (by most members); the Greek debt crisis (and threatened Grexit) that precipitated what has proved to be a persistent concern about the viability of the euro; a flood of refugees/migrants from the Middle East and elsewhere that has caused a partial collapse of the EU security regime; and most recently Brexit.

There have been three traditional issues impeding Turkish membership: first, whether Turkey's history, politics and predominately Muslim culture are sufficiently 'European', including for those Turks already in – or likely to come – to Europe. The second issue has been Cyprus; and the third, the status of Turkey's politics (degree of democracy) and human rights, including treatment of the Kurds. Let us quickly review the first two of these three issues and return to the third in the context of the new migrant crisis, ongoing turmoil in the Middle East, and the Turkish coup.

The issue of Turkish immigration (NB. distinct from immigration *via* Turkey) has seemed to be less and less significant until perhaps very recently. Most of the one million or so Turks in Europe came years ago and are now relatively well-established in their host communities. Later migrants from North Africa and the Middle East are more of an economic burden – tempered, in any event, by Europe's urgent need for labour, to support an aging native population. Moreover, non-Turks (frankly) present more of a security threat. Moreover, the overall bettering of Turkey's economy versus nagging economic problems in Europe have resulted in more Turks returning home than leaving, so that net immigration has essentially been zero. That said, the situation could change should Turkey's economy continue to slow and with increased political instability in the country.

Turkey occupied a third of Cyprus after supporters of union with Greece staged an abortive coup in 1974. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus declared its independence in 1983, and Cyprus became a full EU member in 1984. Turkey refused to attend any EU meeting chaired by Cyprus and kept commercial traffic from

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Cyprus from entering Turkish ports or airspace, a blatant violation of the 1995 customs union with Europe. Turkey–Cyprus peace talks have been off and on for many years, but seemed to gain traction early in 2014. One reason for optimism was the discovery of enormous oil and natural gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean and the possibility of routing Cyprus oil and gas via an underground pipeline to Turkey, which would be beneficial to Turkey, not least because of uncertainties surrounding supplies from Russia. To date Erdogan has personally supported UN-brokered talks between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders that started in 2015, and they were just beginning to address the hardest problems of territorial exchanges and Turkish military withdrawals when the military coup in Turkey occurred.[12]

The coup also put into additional peril an already shaky agreement between the EU and the Erdogan government with regard to immigration and refugees. When the EU Commissioner for Enlargement visited Turkey in 2012 with a mission of restarting accession talks, he came bearing the possibility of easing or even eliminating visa restrictions on Turkish citizens. In late 2013, the EU and Turkey did, in fact, sign an agreement relating to illegal migration and visa-free travel that was ratified by the European Parliament in June 2014. Under the agreement, EU governments would be able to send back illegal immigrants who arrive from Turkey, with the expectation that they would be readmitted there. In return, the EU pledged to consider the matter of visa-free entry for Turks expeditiously.

So matters stood, when in autumn 2015 Europe suddenly experienced an enormous flow of refugees and migrants from the Middle East and beyond (e.g. Afghanistan), many of them coming via Turkey to Greece. The crisis resulted in a further emergency agreement under which the EU made several key promises: refugees arriving in Greece would be returned to Turkey to have their papers reviewed, Turkey would receive upwards of €3 billion to help support the proper accommodation of refugees in Turkey, the EU would push ahead with a genuine resolve to abolish short-term visas for Turkish citizens, and the EU would (yet again) revive substantive negotiations about Turkey's full EU membership. The agreement was highly controversial, partly because it came on top of Merkel's call (which fell on many an unreceptive ear) for EU countries to accept vastly increased numbers of refugees. Also of concern was the huge cost of the programme and the fact that implementing it would require the EU formally to declare Turkey to be a 'safe' country for refugees. Although only a small proportion of the funds promised have as yet been dispatched, the agreement has in some respects been reasonably successful. At least the Balkan route from Turkey to Greece now appears to be largely closed. Not only have many refugees been allowed to remain in Turkey, but Greece has been reluctant to deport any more than absolutely necessary and especially since the unsettled conditions that have persisted after the coup. Greek refugee camps are now themselves gravely overcrowded.

The fate of all aspects of the agreement, including continued funding for Turkey, after the coup, remains uncertain at the time of writing. Although most European governments joined the United States in condemning the threat that the coup posed

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to democratic processes, they were equally quick to urge restraint in its aftermath and were particularly concerned about the sweeping nature of Erdogan's purge and declaration of a three-month state of emergency. Merkel warned specifically about Erdogan's threat to reinstate the death penalty, something that Turkey had pointedly abolished in 2004 to enhance its bid for EU membership.[13] The European Commission had previously emphasized that Turkey had failed to complete the 72 conditions legally required before visa-free travel could be granted and highlighted the harshness of Turkey's new anti-terror laws. At the end of July, Erdogan expressed his outrage that the German government did not allow him to address a pro-democracy rally in Cologne by video-link. The Turkish Foreign Minister stated that his country might 'renounce' the new agreement about refugees if Europe did not promptly fulfil its pledge regarding visa-free travel. In his words: 'It can be at the beginning of or the middle of October – but we expect a fixed date.' Merkel's spokesman replied that Germany would not be 'blackmailed' and it was up to Turkey to meet the EU legal requirements.[14] Another consideration lurking in the background is a recent comment by Erdogan that Turkey intended to provide a pathway for Syrian refugees to become Turkish citizens.

Conclusion: Competing Identities and Turkey's Future

At the outset of this conclusions section, I should stress several central points that are absolutely essential for understanding identities. Identities are anything but static – rather they are continually evolving. Moreover, and perhaps this is most important, identities are typically constructed to a substantial extent and multiple in nature – thus, every person and social institution has several or even many identities. Few of those identities are mutually exclusive, although some of them may compete. Which identity or identities will prevail (at least for a time) depends on contexts that are also continually shifting. Let us keep the evolving, constructed, sometimes competing, and contextual nature of identities in mind as we proceed.

Roger Cohen, another journalist with long familiarity with the Middle East, commented (ironically) before the July 15 military coup:

> Pity the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in his labyrinth. It's a large labyrinth. As he drifts from room to room – and there are about a 1000 of them in his new Ankara palace – Erdogan no doubt has time to reflect on Turkey's travails and perhaps ponder how events can escape the control of even the most megalomanical ruler. Here's a sobering thought: Erdogan, the would-be leader of the Sunni world, after 13 years in power, alone in his vast palace with his neo-Ottoman dream in shreds and Turkish society polarized to the point of violence.[15]

Consider the identities surfacing in Cohen's perceptive remarks: Erdogan as a cult personality with leadership aspirations beyond his own country, the Sunni world (itself badly fragmented), and neo-Ottoman (empire). There are many other identities in modern Turkey that overlap, blend and/or conflict.

In my view, the gold standard in the analysis of Turkish identities is the work of anthropologist Jenny White, particularly (to date) in the 2014 edition of her book on

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Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks and her early-2015 article on 'The Turkish complex'.[16] In her book, White analysed what she saw as a 'polarization' in Turkish society that she attributed fundamentally to a 'weakening of Kemalist state project … and the increasing inability of the state … to control the definition of Turkishness and thereby shape the identity of Turkish youth.'[17] In the absence of an official state definition of Turkishness, there are any number of identities that come to the fore in various contexts.

One of the identities is Muslim, which has been of central interest to analysts but has often been misunderstood. White believes the key factor here has been the growing prosperity of small and medium-sized businesses in the provinces, which have helped initiate 'a Muslim cultural renaissance in fashion, lifestyle, leisure activities, novels, media, and music.' The new wealth also 'supported overtly Islamic politicians and their programs' in the 1980s and 1990s and created an opening for the AKP. It is important, in her view, that: 'Although led by openly pious Muslim politicians, AKP claims not to be Islamic but, rather, a center-right conservative party that serves a broad and varied constituency across Turkey.'[18] As we previously observed, a radical tilt towards Islam has not yet come to pass, which indeed is one of the reasons the ISIS increasing presence has not (as yet) found fertile ground.

Other 'minority' identities are Kurds and Alevis. Kurds constitute about 20% of Turkey's population and live mainly in the poor east and southeast regions of the country near Iran, Iraq and Syria, in which countries there are many other Kurds. Hence the great fear of all four countries that an independent Kurdistan might sooner or later materialize, despite internecine conflicts among countless Kurdish factions. Alevis probably are about 15–25% of the population of Turkey, although some of these are also Kurds. The Alevi combine some Shi'a religious practices with some Islamic features, and overall the result is a more secular and liberal lifestyle than Sunni Muslims. There were communal massacres of Alevis in Turkey in the late 1930s and late 1970s. Part of the problem has been a tendency of some Alevis to be associated with socialist or left-wing politics. Interesting and possibly significant given the anarchic situation in Syria, the Alevi are ideologically close to the Alawhite minority in Syria, to which group the ruling Assad family is also related. There are also about 100,000 Christians in Turkey, albeit a relatively small group identity in a country of 80 million.

Another important, yet still rather amorphous identity has formed as a result of the profound modernization that Turkey has undergone in the early 21st century and its exposure to currents in the region, like the abortive Arab spring, and to an increasingly globalized world. This new identity is a sort of cosmopolitanism that directly confronts Erdogan's illiberal democracy. White captures all this so well in her comments about the Gezi Park protests. She writes:

> [A] sizable new constituency has emerged as yet with no name, no platform, no leader… [Gezi was] the first time in Turkish history that such masses of people – many with contradictory or competing interests – [came] together without any ideological or party organization. They cross class boundaries and bridge left/right, conservative/liberal, pious/secular. The protests are an urban movement, but since almost 80% of

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> Turkey is now urban, with Istanbul … alone making up 20% of the country's population, the protests are arguably a national phenomenon. … [C]entral is their demand that an elected government must also protect the rights of the people who did *not* vote for them, the rights of minorities … or people whose ideas or lifestyle the winners might not agree with.

However, White also observes that 'many people – particularly women and youth – who came out into the streets … have little say in Turkey's formal political life.'[19]

The existence of such a complex range of identities that are, at once, to some extent separate, overlapping, and conflicting – and also poorly anchored in national political parties and institutions – helps us understand why Turkish politics is as shifting and explosive as it is. White stresses in her article that all of this goes far beyond the 'Islam-secularism dichotomy', which she believes 'is no longer a useful diagnostic (if it ever was).'

> We are seeing instead a recurrent cycle of conceptual patterns and associated roles – those of 'bigman,' selfless hero, and traitor – that have long characterized and destabilized Turkish political culture. These roles and their interactions are driven not simply by competing ideologies, but by on-the-ground rivalry between network hierarchies and a general fear of social chaos.[20]

At the end of the day, Erdogan's remarkable survival in his ever-larger 'bigman' role and the continued primacy of the AKP can best be attributed to the threat of rising 'social chaos' in the country and Turkey's acutely anarchic regional neighbourhood. The crowds that came out in defence of 'democracy' during the attempted coup were really defending Erdogan and his autocratic ways. Votes have been counted with reasonable honesty in successive elections, but the narrow majorities returned for Erdogan and the AKP have produced anything but a real democracy. Contrary views have been excoriated as 'traitorous' and those who have dared to express them have been jailed or forced into silence or exile. Erdogan has directed his wrath and repressive measures against large numbers of military, police, Gülenists, judges, prosecutors, teachers/professors/university administrations, journalists and the media – in short significant numbers of Turkish citizens in most walks of life, not to mention his persistent frictions with the EU, the US, NATO and several neighbouring states. Are diplomatic photo opportunities with the likes of Putin and (less likely) Netanyahu adding all that much external support? Erdogan's is truly a cult of personality that has pulled together a diverse movement that one senses is as fragile as it is amorphous. What once looked like such a bright future for Turkey and the AKP is now a much gloomier prospect.

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doi 10.1017/S106279871300032X; and 'Turkey and the EU: The Context Changes Again', *European Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 365–380. doi: 10.1017/S1062798716000107. Readers are asked to consult the previous articles for full documentation/references, especially pertaining to events in Turkey prior to 2016.

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