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Turkey's Identity Crisis

Tradition of Secular Democracy Challenged

By John Pomfret
Washington Post Foreign Service

ISTANBUL—After years as a Western bulwark against Soviet Communism—years in which internal debate was stifled in the interests of the Cold War and forging a modern, secular state—Turkey and its 60 million people have begun questioning the nation's course.

In the streets, across the airwaves, in parliament and the bazaar, the Turkish people are engaged in a noisier argument over Islam, secularism, democracy and modernism. This discourse is changing the way Turks look at themselves and their nation, molded from the scraps of the Ottoman empire after World War I.

"People have come to a bursting point," said Naci Danaci, a 36-year-old former high school science teacher who quit his post a few years ago because his government salary was not enough to support his two boys. "Everybody in my town, hell in the whole country, is mad."

Danaci, who runs a tractor shop in a farming village in central Turkey, belongs to the Alawi minority of 20 million people who practice a liberal form of Islam—just one of several ethnic groups now clamoring for their rights from a state they say is dominated by Turkey's Sunni Muslim majority.

The direction Turkey takes is important to the United States. Despite its poor human rights record, Turkey's government is considered the only secular democracy in the Islamic world. Since its inclusion in NATO in 1952, Turkey manned the ramparts against the Soviet Union. Now it is assuming a more difficult role as a fortification against Islamic fundamentalism and a counterpoint to the Islamic world, theocracies and authoritarian Islamic states.

Like the United States, Turkey is in the throes of a long struggle between the sexes in what had been a patriarchal society. The gap widened six years after Ataturk died. Today, like Mao, Zedong gave everybody a last name. He created a state they say is a traditional Muslim society, he said, and Turkish intellectuals are other issues—Kurdish nationalism, the Alawi minority and battles within the fractious secular culture.

The Alawis rioted over the issue of police protection in March in Istanbul. At least 15 people died.

Last month Turkey's army launched the biggest operation in modern Turkish history against Kurdish separatists. That mission, aimed at rooting out Kurdish terrorists from northern Iraq, sparked international condemnation. So far at least 417 separatists and 40 soldiers are dead.

Perhaps, as many Western diplomats and Turkish intellectuals concede, Turkey is in the throes of a long battle between the sexes. It is the new voters who gave the Islamic fundamentalist Welfare Party control of Istanbul, Turkey's biggest city, and 26 municipalities in last year's vote.

Following the end of Soviet communism, Turkey sought a new role with a series of diplomatic initiatives—to the Black Sea states, to Islamic countries, to the Caucasus. But they did not lead to much.

Then in March, EU ministers approved Turkey's application to join a customs union. It seemed that Turkey had rediscovered its dream of joining the West. But the decision just heightened the debate.

Islamic forces have been growing slowly since 1980s but took off after the 1980 military coup. Late prime minister and then-President Turgut Ozal launched a campaign to build hundreds of Islamic schools and an average of 1,500 mosques a year in an effort to use religion as a bulwark against Turkey's strong leftist tradition.

Today, 450,000 students attend 512 such schools. In the 1995 budget, the directorate of religious affairs received more money than five ministries combined, including funds given to Turkey's top 35 state universities.

"In trying to stop communism the state fortified the forces of religion," said Ahmet Taner Kislali, a political science professor at Ankara University and a strong believer in a secular state. "Now we are paying the price."

May 17, 1995
A report in February by Amnesty International described "gross human rights" violations carried out by Turkey's security forces fighting Kurdish separatism in the southeast—including torture, extrajudicial executions and a scorched earth policy that reportedly has emptied 2,000 villages and forcibly resettled up to 2 million people since the crackdown began in 1984.

Currently, 159 politicians, scholars, writers, journalists and human rights activists are in jail for expressing their opinions, according to Akin Birdal, president of Turkey's Human Rights Commission.

Ciller, who meets with President Clinton this week, announced in March that she wanted to revise the constitution to liberalize political debate. But opposition within Turkey's state security apparatus reportedly is thwarting her efforts.

Asked if he thought the democracy proposals would be approved, Goksu's adviser, Ciller's advisor, summed up the quandary of officials facing an ambiguous future: "I'm confident, I hope."

Tevfik Goksu, 28, a graduate student in economics, is a product of the new Islamic system. He is president of the Islamic Students Union, which he says is Turkey's largest civic organization, boasting 1,200 offices and an "unknown" number of members.

Goksu and others like him say they are disgusted with the current government's equation of modernism and Westernization. Students of engineering, law and science, they do not reject development, but they believe that by eschewing Islam their government is renouncing time-tested Turkish values.

"Turkey has always tried to set our destiny in the West, but this is a mistake," he said in an interview in the organization's newly renovated town house in Istanbul's devout Fatih neighborhood.

The connection between Goksu's group and the Welfare Party helps explain the party's success. Students who receive scholarships from the organization or live in its dormitories work for the party, providing Welfare with a pool of foot soldiers in the battle for power. None of the other mainstream parties can rival Welfare's unity; the left is split into two main parties and the center right, led by Prime Minister Ciller, has fractured into three.

Goksu said he rejects the term "fundamentalist," preferring "a true Turkish nationalist." Asked what developmental model he favored, he replied, "Sudan," which has a Islamic fundamentalist government.

Goksu's vision for Turkey's future horrifies Hayati Bektas, a 43-year-old oil-rig worker who lost his job last year. In theory, Bektas is the type of man Goksu speaks to—mad at the government and a loser in Turkey's economic development that has seen per capita salaries jump from about $166 a year in 1950 to more than $2,000 today.

"These fundamentalists aren't real Turks," he said on a slow afternoon in an Istanbul teahouse, with the clack of dominoes and thud of dice on backgammon felt in the background. "They're only using the mosques to make propaganda."

One thing that unites many in Turkey—secular and religious, Alawi and Sunni, Kurd and Turk—is the belief in the necessity of more democracy.
Islam Party Threatens Turks' Secular Heritage

By ALAN COWELL
Special to The New York Times

ESSENHER, Turkey—Esref Cosan is a new arrival in this mud-and-mortar satellite of Istanbul, a man of the countryside more used to feeding his hogs on hay than hustling for work on construction sites that have no jobs to offer. In many ways, though, his uprooting from village to city is the story of modern Turkey.

When he and his family arrived here the other day, fleeing the civil war against Kurdish guerillas in the southeast, they became part of a wave of migration to the cities that has shifted the nation's center of gravity from village to metropolis. And, propelled from Anatolia's far southeast, they became part of a construction parade of workers that is challenging the core and Western leanings of the 71-year-old republic.

As Turkey's cities bulge beyond control and traditional political parties seem unable to confront the modern economic and social problems, the main beneficiary from this upheaval has been the militant Islamic Welfare Party, which now controls Ankara, Istanbul and a host of other cities.

The Islamic movement here is at an early stage, and there is no immediate prospect of the militants unseating the conservative government of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller. But there is no question that the movement is growing.

"Turkey's future identity is brewing in these places," said Rezkiur Guvenc, a sociologist at Hacettepe University in Ankara.

Islamic revival is familiar from Algeria to the Gaza Strip, from Egypt to Iran. In Turkey, it challenges the very secular core of the republic founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Its emergence in this Western-inclined land, with a population that is 99 percent Muslim, has caused some to wonder if, among secular Turks the nation's nonreligious principles, known as Kemalism, are at risk.

"Kemalism is at an end," said Fehmi Kuru, a columnist for the pro-Islamic newspaper Zaman. Only a few years ago, no one would have dared proclaim such heresy.

Before, people were afraid to say they were against Kemalism," said Ahmet Taner Kislali, a leftist writer and political scientist. "Now the fear has gone."

Turkey is a member of NATO, and is seeking a closer relationship with the European Union. But European diplomats acknowledge privately that, while Turkey is never likely to be fully accepted into the European Union, and the resultant sense of Western rejection among the Turks could further strengthen the Islamic revival.

The Turkish is budding in a land of 66 million people that straddles Europe and Asia, and borders the former Soviet Union and its satellite, the volatile Balkans and the equally unpredictable Middle East.

Barren, unpaved roads on the Asian flank of Istanbul's increasing sprawl across the Bosphorus, geopoliticians mean less than the price of bread. And, for some, the key to the future lies as much in the cost of a loaf as in anything else.

Urbanization

Tide of Migrants Overwhelms Cities

When Mr. Cosan arrived here, he said, he was broke. Relatives had come up with money for the $60-a-month rent for the two-room apartment his family now shares with relatives—13 people in all. Four women from the two families work as seamstresses in Turkey's expanding textile industry, albeit at salaries of some $10 a month.

Relief was found for work in construction and as a waiter, he said, "I found nothing. Right now, we are living on soup and tea."

His experience shows the underside of many Turks' dreams of riches in the city. Since the 1980's, Istanbul's population has doubled every 15 years, swollen by migrants abandoning the provinces for the big city. Of the 10 million people who live here today, two thirds are from eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea coast, said Mr. Guvenc.

Not long ago, the city was concentrated on the European coast of the Bosporus, where its image is built for many foreigners on its minarets and mosques, the Grand Bazaar and the Ottoman palaces.

From here, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, the Istanbul of tourist brochures is invisible, replaced by a sprawl of construction and apartment houses looking out onto bleak hills.

Even now, some 15,000 people like Mr. Cosan arrive in Istanbul every day. The new Welfare Party Mayor of the city, Tayyip Erdogan, has mused out loud about requiring residents to pay $60-a-month, $100-a-month, $150-a-month, and $200-a-month in property taxes.

The country's economic slowdown this year has wiped out at least 600,000 jobs. According to Government figures, 15 percent of the urban work force is unemployed.

The shift to the cities has created a far broader change in Turkey's demography. When the modern Turkish republic was founded in 1923, only 15 percent of its 11.5 million people lived in cities. Now, two-thirds of its 60 million people are urban. The capital, Ankara, has grown from 2.5 million to 2.5 million since 1960.

The Appeal

Providing Help To the Uprooted

Yahya Karakaya, the Welfare Party mayor of Sultantepe, a suburb 18 miles east of Istanbul, is himself an immigrant from the east.

"We build roads," he said, when asked what his party has to offer. "We sell bread from municipal bakeries for half the normal price. The meat in our butcheries is half-price, too. We have male and female doctors and the treatment is free. We talk to people to find out what their problems are," he said.

"They even help you bury your dead," said Nurhayat Buyukbas, a 20-year-old Welfare Party supporter. "They send someone to wash the body and someone to take the body to the cemetery."

Sultantepe is known as a particular stronghold of the Welfare Party, called the Refah Partisi in Turkish, but its policies are familiar in many of the rambling settlements of the eastern shore of the Bosporus, where the mosques fill to overflowing on Friday noon prayers and, increasingly, women wear head coverings.

People like Mr. Cosan, from the Alawite sect that orthodox Muslims regard as heretical, find themselves torn between the Welfare Party's offers of support and the Kurdish nationalism that nurtured them back home.

"Refah is the new challenge because it has been the new people say, 'We've tried all the others, let's try Refah,'" said Veli Haydar Gunes, a public relations officer in the Umraniye district who opposes the Islamic movement. "People support Refah because the party is in such dire straits that there is no alternative."

Refah is too new, too. While its adversaries accuse it of being financed by Saudi Arabia and other Islamic states, many believe the biggest source of its wealth lies among the 2 million Turks working in Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe, where they have more freedom to organize than in the home country.

In the municipal voting last March, the Welfare Party emerged nationally as the third largest in the country, with 18 percent of the vote — more than twice its share in local elections in 1989. Prime Minister Ciller put her center-right True Path Party got 22 percent and the conservative Motherland Party 21 percent.

Because Turkey looks to the right, the Welfare Party's 25 percent share of the Istanbul vote gave it the mayoralty, enabling it to seize the ground once held by leftists who made the same promises of social justice.

"We promise people a clean society, a clean government, an honest system," Mr. Karakaya said.

The Welfare Party, moreover, was credited with superior organization and was able to campaign on its relative freedom from the corruption and megalomania that has tainted the mainstream parties.

But some depicted its successes as part of a broader change in Turkish society. Some Westerners say the success was in part a reaction by newly urbanized Turks to what they found in cities, where privately owned television stations have brought soft-core pornography to their living rooms, and the gap between rich and poor has widened.

"It's a reaction to the glitz, the bright lights, the nudity of 1990's Turkish city life," said a Western diplomat in Ankara. A strong selling point for the Welfare Party — at least among many parents — has been its readiness to provide dormitories for women who as students are coming to the big cities for the first time. In return for political support, the party promises cheap housing and protection. The party's appeal to religious values, however, is largely implicit.

Mr. Kislali, the political scientist, said that the sharpened sense of an Islamic identity is a result of events outside Turkey. Many people, he said, "were not happy with the political leadership, like the Western attitude to Bosnia," where Turks see Muslims threatened by those of other faiths.

And, in some ways, it is a revival of older times that rejects Atatürk's legacy. "The Turks have always been religion-minded," said Mr. Kuru, the newspaper columnist in Ankara, "Secularism is really something that's not close to the hearts of the Turkish people."
The Legacy
Secular Heritage Under Attack

When Ataturk took power, one of his first acts was to dismantle the system of Islamic law that prevailed during the long centuries of Ottoman rule. He introduced new laws based on Swiss and Italian civil codes. He banned the fez as a symbol of backwardness as he sought to propel the nation to the West. He outlawed the use of Arabic in the muezzin’s call to prayer. He gave women the vote. Foundations of a secularism that has been increasingly depicted as anti-religious. Long after his death, some Turks, evident- ly, think the time has come to say no. The Islam of Erbakan is not the Islam of Algeria or Iran because we have a culture built on many different things and a lot of cultural differences with Iran and the Arabs," said Mr. Kislali, the political scientist. "But there is a counter-reaction by the supporters of Kemalism, a revival."

The Backlash
Ataturk’s Disciples Strike Back

For now, the Welfare Party controls 38 of the 450 seats in Parliament, but that does not reflect its growing power. In national elections in 1987, it secured just over 5 percent of the vote. By the next general election in 1991, that had grown to 15 percent. In the March local voting, the percentage rose to 19 percent. But does the party's rise mean Turkey is on the way to an Islamic state? Many secular Turks, evidently, want to implant everything we believe is right. But we would never impose anything."
As Turkish leaders wrestle with the severe economic problems facing their country, a USIA-commissioned survey shows that members of the Turkish public are not as pessimistic as they were last year about their economic future. Secular Turks tend to be more dissatisfied economically and politically than the small fundamentalist segment of Turkish society, which suggests it is unlikely, at least in the near future, that the Islamic Refah Party will be able to capitalize further on economic discontent.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Asked to consider their country's future economic development, Turks are somewhat more likely to look west than east for closer international relations.

- In line with the slight westward bent among the Turkish public, a majority (56%) think it is at least somewhat important that Turkey become a full member of the EU within the next few years. As in the past, however, considerably more Turks lack confidence in the EU (61%) than voice confidence (24%), probably because of the lukewarm reception they experience from EU member countries.

- Although eight in ten Turks continue, as they did last year, to view the country's economic situation as bad, personal financial expectations appear to be improving. Fewer now (27%) than last year (47%) expect things to get worse for their household over the coming year. Islamic fundamentalist sympathizers, the primary source of the Refah Party's (RP) vote, are actually less likely than secular Turks to voice pessimism about the economy and discontent with the government.

This report is based on a recent USIA-commissioned survey in Turkey. DAP in Istanbul interviewed 1363 adults 18 years of age and older in August 1994. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4 percentage points.
Turks Want Closer Economic Ties with West

Asked to consider their country’s future economic development, Turks are somewhat more likely to look west than east for closer international relations. More place priority on economic relations with the west (western Europe [29%] or the U.S. [21%]) than with the east (Central Asia [20%] or the Mideast [11%]). Considered separately rather than regionally, the U.S. and Central Asia run neck and neck in second place in Turkish public opinion, while a plurality look to Europe. When asked the same question regarding their country’s political development, Turks voice a similar pattern of opinion about their priorities for international relations.

Whether Turks look east or west for economic ties depends in part on more fundamental orientations. Turks are divided over whether to identify primarily with Europe (20%), the Muslim community of nations (25%), both (36%), or neither (11%). Those whose focus is primarily European are better-educated and more secular than the average Turk. Not surprisingly, those who identify with Europe are more likely to place priority on relations with the west, while those who feel more a part of the Muslim community gravitate towards Central Asia.

In line with the slight westward bent among the Turkish public, a majority (56%) think it is at least somewhat important that Turkey become a full member of the EU within the next few years. As in the past, however, considerably more Turks lack confidence in the EU (61%) than voice confidence (24%), probably because of the lukewarm reception they experience from EU member countries. Low confidence in the EU may also reflect Turkish disappointment with Europe’s failure to resolve the Bosnian conflict.

Economic Growth Top Priority for Turkish Public

Most Turks (91%) think their country "should undertake major reforms for economic growth." When asked which of several goals should be their country’s top priority, more Turks (30%) cite this than any other. Somewhat fewer name "good relations with the West" (24%), pursuit of democratic principles (23%), and "being guided by religious values and Islamic law" (18%). Few see the top priority as "pursuing solidarity with all other Muslims" (4%).

Economic Pessimism Down from Last Year

Public emphasis on economic issues probably reflects concern about the dismal state of the country’s economy. Eight in ten Turks continue, as they did last year, to view the country’s economic situation as bad. A majority (55%) fear that they or a family member could lose their job in the coming year. Personal financial expectations appear to be improving, though, since fewer now (27%) than last year (47%) expect things to get worse for their household over the coming year, and slightly more now (27%, compared to 22% last year) expect their household situation to improve over the next five years. Islamic
Fundamentalist sympathizers, the primary source of the Refah Party's (RP) vote, are actually less likely than secular Turks to voice pessimism about the economy and discontent with the government. This suggests it is unlikely that the RP will be able to capitalize any further on economic discontent.

Many Turks Could be Tempted by Authoritarian Solution to Economic Woes

Although half the Turkish public (51%) would object if a nondemocratic leader took power who could solve their country's economic problems but would take away many of their freedoms, a significant minority (41%) could be tempted by an authoritarian solution. Two in three Turks prefer that the state guarantee that people's basic needs be met rather than focus on providing opportunities for people to get ahead on their own. Turks want the state to solve their economic problems, but only a minority look to political Islam as a solution.

Prepared by: Martha Abele Mac Iver (619-5142)

1Our measure of "Islamic fundamentalist sympathizers" isolates 14 percent of the Turkish population who respond positively to all the following: Turkey must be administered according to Sheriat laws; Turkey should always be guided by religious values and Islamic Law; Islamic extremists are not a threat; favorable view of Muslim fundamentalists; schools should provide more religious instruction; Islamic values should have a higher place in society; one can find the solution for many of Turkey's problems in Islam. Seven in ten of those who say they intend to vote for the Refah Party (8 percent of the total population) are from this "Islamic fundamentalist sympathizers" group. It is possible that others who would vote for the RP (but not admit it in a survey) would not be considered Islamic fundamentalist sympathizers according to our criteria, but avowed RP supporters come primarily from this fundamentalist group in Turkish society.
How the Poll Was Conducted

This survey is based on personal interviews with a nationwide probability sample of 1363 residents of Turkey aged 18 and older. The data were weighted to make the sample representative of the Turkish population. Interviewing was conducted in August 1994. USIA commissioned DAP in Istanbul to conduct the survey. Survey questions were written by the USIA Office of Research. The questionnaire was translated by the contractor and reviewed by Office of Research staff.

In theory, 19 times out of 20, results from samples of this size will differ by no more than about 4 percentage points in either direction from what would be found if it were possible to interview every adult in Turkey. Sampling error is larger for subgroups within the population. In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting a survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the results.

For further information, please contact the analyst.
Turks Question Bilateral Security Relationship With U.S.

Prior to the current crisis in the Gulf, the Turkish government was signaling increasing reluctance to maintain the embargo against Iraq and to serve as a staging area for Operation Provide Comfort. A recent USIA survey indicates the Turkish public shares these views, with many also advocating an end to the U.S. military presence in Turkey.

Key Findings

- Though Turks consider the U.S. their most important security partner, many lack confidence in the U.S. commitment to Turkey's defense.

- Moreover, half support an end to the entire U.S. military presence in Turkey.

- At the same time, Turks tend to view NATO as important to their country's security.

U.S. Defense Commitment Questioned

When asked to identify their country's most important security partner, more Turks name the U.S. (19%) than any other country. However, 24 percent say no country plays this role. And 32 percent say they don't know or give no answer.

While the U.S. is singled out more than any other country as their primary ally, Turks do not have much faith in the U.S. commitment to their defense. Should Turkey be attacked, a solid majority say they have little (30%) or very little (39%) trust that the United States would help in their defense.

U.S. Military Presence Perceived Negatively

Moreover, Turks tend to oppose the U.S. military presence. Half (48%) believe the U.S. military presence in Turkey is "not a good thing" for their country and say that it should end. Substantially fewer (13%) think the U.S. military presence is bad for Turkey, but that it should continue. Just two in ten view the U.S. military presence as a good thing for their country. The remainder (20%) say they don't know or give no answer.

This report is based on a recent USIA-commissioned survey in Turkey. DAP in Istanbul interviewed 1363 adults 18 years of age and older August 18 - September 13, 1994. While some of the data reported here appeared in a recent European Opinion Alert, this paper presents a fuller analysis of those findings.
Those most likely to support an end to the U.S. military presence in Turkey include men, the young (18-24), members of the working class, individuals with poor incomes, supporters of the Welfare Party (RP) and those who are very concerned about U.S. pressure on and influence over Turkey.¹

Turks Tend to Oppose Base Agreement
Half of all Turks believe that, when it expires, the Turkish parliament should not renew the six-month lease allowing the international military coalition to use Turkish bases to protect Kurds in northern Iraq and to enforce the no-fly zone there. Just two in ten say parliament should continue to allow these foreign military forces to operate from Turkey.

Those Turks who feel that enforcement of the economic embargo against Iraq places an unfair economic burden on Turkey (82%) are more likely to favor terminating than continuing the agreement. And while a positive or negative assessment of Iraq is not related to views about the agreement, the minority (three in ten) who express a positive opinion of the United States are more likely than others to support renewing the lease.

NATO Still Important, But Turks Less Likely Than Other NATO Publics To Think So
Although many Turks do not support continuing the U.S. military presence or the Provide Comfort base agreement, these feelings do not extend to views of NATO. Half say that, even though the Soviet threat has waned, the Alliance is needed to confront other potential security threats. Three in ten think that NATO is no longer needed. Compared to other NATO publics (with the possible exception of the Spaniards), Turks tends to be less supportive of the Alliance.

Those Turks with negative views of the Alliance also tend to have unfavorable views of the U.S. and the U.S. military presence in Turkey, and a lack of faith in the U.S. commitment to Turkey's defense. USIA studies in other countries have found that those who lack confidence in NATO also tend to have a negative view of the Alliance's handling of the crisis in Bosnia.

Support for Peacemaking in Bosnia Widespread
Notwithstanding their lack of confidence in the Alliance, Turks offer solid support for NATO peacemaking in Bosnia. Three in four support (63% strongly support) NATO sending ground troops to Bosnia to establish peace should the warring parties be unable to do so on their own. Likewise, equal numbers of Turks would support the inclusion of Turkish troops in a NATO-sponsored peacemaking operation. One likely reason Turks favor NATO peacemaking is a desire to prevent the defeat of the Bosnian Muslims. Another likely reason is the fear expressed by a majority of Turks (55%) that if left unchecked, the Bosnian conflict could spread to other countries in the region.

¹Solid majorities of Turks express concern that the U.S. would pressure Turkey into adopting policies counter to its interests and that the U.S. has too much influence over Turkey's affairs. Sizable minorities say they are very concerned about both of these types of influence (22% and 30%, respectively).
When it comes to efforts to end the fighting in Bosnia, relatively few Turks think either the U.S. (18%) or their own country (24%) should "take the lead." Rather, roughly half believe the U.S. (51%) and Turkey (46%) should "be equal partners" with the other Europeans in any such action. Fewer say each country should "take a minor role" (U.S. 11%, Turkey 8%) or "not be involved" (U.S. 12%, Turkey 11%).

Fear of Outside Attack Low...
In general, Turks do not appear overly worried about external threats to their security: two in three Turks say they are not very (25%) or not at all (39%) concerned that Turkey will be attacked by another country in the next few years. Of those who are concerned (24%), the majority name Greece as the primary threat to Turkey. Many fewer name other countries such as Russia or Iraq.

... But Many Express Concern About the Situation In Cyprus and Russian Troops In Region
Three in four Turks believe that the current situation in Cyprus affects Turkey's national interests either "a great deal" (42%) or "some" (30%). Further, the majority of Turks (57%) say the Cyprus question is an issue between Turkey and Greece which can only be resolved through negotiations between the two countries, rather than by the people of Cyprus alone (27%) or by an outside party (6%).

Though fear of a Russian attack is low in Turkey, the public is somewhat more likely (41%) than not (34%) to view the presence of Russian troops in the states of the former Soviet Union (especially Georgia and Armenia) as a threat to Turkey's security. RP supporters are more likely than others to voice uneasiness about Russian troops in the region.

Most Express Confidence In the Army
One reason for Turks' low level of fear about outside attack could be their widespread confidence in the country's army. More Turks express confidence in the army (83%) than in other societal institutions, including the national government (46%), parliament (40%) and mosques (63%). Turks' confidence in their army also far outpaces confidence in international institutions such as NATO (28%), the CSCE (22%) and the UN (24%).
How the Poll Was Conducted

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EU Ministers Agree
Deficits Must Be Cut Despite the Recovery

A Wall Street Journal News Roundup

European Union finance ministers agreed at a weekend meeting in Germany that their governments must aggressively slash early budget deficits despite clear signs that the severe recession is over.

The ministers, meeting in the southern German lakeside town of Lindau, said governments must not be lulled by positive economic signs into relaxing their efforts to reduce red ink in preparation for economic and monetary union. Under the Maastricht treaty's European Monetary Union guidelines, only tiny Luxembourg now meets the strict targets on budget deficits and government debt.

"There was agreement that, in reducing deficits, we cannot simply rely on economic recovery but must further reduce the structural component," German Finance Minister Theo Waigel told a news conference after the ministers' informal meeting. Deficits tend to shrink naturally during periods of economic growth as tax revenues are boosted, but the ministers said Europe's recovery is threatened because long-term interest rates are being driven up by governments' extra-giant borrowing.

"Real long-term interest rates are very high for this early phase of recovery, underlining the continued need for action in consolidating public-sector budgets," said Mr. Waigel, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency.

Such consolidation is sure to be difficult, because cuts in government spending must often target sensitive sectors such as social services and pensions.

Turning Eastward

Islamic Party's Gains
In Istanbul Stir Fears Of a Radical Turkey

Refah Tends to City's Ills
Won't Reveal Its Agenda
If It Wins National Vote

Can Business Ties Help West?

By BARRY NEWMAN

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

ISTANBUL, Turkey — "Look at me," says Melissa, and it’s hard not to. "I’m half naked," she adds, accurately. "If they saw me this way, they’d beat me up. Soon, I’ll have to cover my head working here."

The bar girl's boss at the Hissar Club doesn’t laugh. "Beyoglu is an area where anything goes," Fadil Gunesoglu says as dots of light from a revolving globe trail over his Hawaiian shirt. "But don’t be fooled by the nightclubs. I think we might be turning into another Iran."

Outside, cellphone neon signs lead from bar to bar along Beyoglu's back streets, from the brothel district to the transvestite quarter. On the main drag, Istiklal Cadesi, a banner is draped over an iron fence. It says: "Children! We're having a circumcision festival! Circumcision and festival free! For application, apply at Beyoglu municipality public-relations office."

A Surprising Victory

Municipal sponsorship of religious rituals in this kind of neighborhood may seem as unlikely as the Christian Right taking over Times Square, but in Beyoglu it is happening. A devoutly Islamic political party runs the most decadent district of the most cosmopolitan city in Turkey, this most secular of Muslim nations. The Refah Party — Refah means "welfare" — won mayoral elections last March in Beyoglu by 15 percentage points, and a Refah man, Tayyip Erdogan, looks after 11 million citizens from Istanbul's City Hall.

Mayor Erdogan promises to close the brothels and burn a mosque in Beyoglu's heart. He is painting curbs in no-parking zones of Islamic green and white. After all, Istanbul is still one of Islam's holiest sites. But the mayor doesn't overplay it. He is just as busy picking up trash, paving streets, piping water, punishing corruption and peddling half-price bread.

On a Friday morning, supplicants gathered in his office, and Mr. Erdogan greets them amid potted shrubs and trays of linden tea. He is 40, a former food company executive in a sharp black blazer.

Two Views of Religion

"Our view of religion is different from yours," he says to a Western visitor as the crowds file in and out. "According to your rules, religion only counts in the place where you pray. Our religion is a way of life. I have no time at all, not one minute, without Islam."

An aide suggests that Refah is a party of people "whose religion is not as important in their lives," but the mayor scoffs: "Refah isn't a religious party," he says. "Refah represents a mission. We want a just order. We're for happiness."

While the mayor draws no line between religion and politics, his party draws no distinction between city politics and geopolitics. It openly opposes joining the European Union, questions membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It wants Turkey to turn its back on the West and lead the Muslim world. If the party is out to transform the country into a full-blown Islamic state, it keeps that to itself, but the West is on guard. Collecting the garbage is hardly Refah's sole ambition.

The municipal elections tested the world for national tastes, due in 18 months at most. Having won 80 of 99 city races with 19% of the total vote, including not only Istanbul but Ankara, Refah could well COURT TIES that usually vie to govern the country. In self-defense, those parties might also shift into higher Islamic gear.

Given Turkey's pipe toward the West, Islam is a vote-getter.

Early this year, the economy boilded over. Prime Minister Tansu Ciller imposed austerity and begged the International Monetary Fund to prop up her program. Turks don't like austerity, and they don't like to beg. They don't like the stalling in Europe and the U.S. over aid to Muslims in Bosnia or Western apartheid through Russian meddling in the Caucasus. And they don't like ex-Communist East Europeans cruising into the European Union while Turkey stands and waits.

The West has a gripe, too: Turkey's war against its rebellious Kurds and the human-rights abuses that goes with it. Turkey could get drummed out of the Council of Europe for that— a hateful fate to stalwarts of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk: In 1923, the founder of modern Turkey made emulating the West the national creed. Many others might rejoice. For them, belonging to Western clubs is the last thing any Turk should want.

"Whenever the West needs us, we're needed by the West," says Ersin Kalaycioglu of Bosphorus University. "As soon as the threat recedes, we go back to being a cultural eyesore."

In the country's global drama, Turkey Please Turn to Page A10, Column 1
Turning Eastward: Islamic Party Gains in Istanbul And Is Arousing Concerns About a Radical Turkey

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had a supporting role as an outpost on NATO’s southern flank, amid another stage of today’s passion plays in the Caucasus, Balkans and Mideast, Turkey’s part is pivotal. "It would be disastrous to have it in a destructive power opposed to Western policy," says Philip Robbins of Britain’s Royal Institute for International Affairs. A Turkey left out in “Europe’s hallway,” says William Hale at the University of London, could become “nationalist, militantly isolationist and Islamic.”

Refah’s rise is an index of Turkey’s injured pride, and it makes thoroughly Westernized Turks like Prof. Kalaycioglu tremble. He lists the party’s “core values” as “ xenophobia, chauvinism and anti-Semitism.” If it wins power before Turkey mends its Western fences and heals its economy, Refah “could slide into fascism,” he says, and “convert this country into something like Lebanon.”

An American banker: here believe that even a fundamentally secularist government would be bound by the “commercial reality” of Turkey’s business ties to the West. He calls Prime Minister Ciller “nuts” for using the Refah threat to plead for an IMF lifeline. But nobody outside Refah really knows what the party has up its sleeve.

A Legal Obstacle

It’s a crime in Turkey for a political party to advocate an Islamic state. So if Refah does aspire to apply the Koran as the law of the land, it has reason not to shout about it. Just as well. White secular Turks keep guessing at its heavenly agenda, Refah gets on with a very earthly pursuit of votes. Its workers are Turkey’s stickiest ward bosses.

A trip to the municipal slums is enough to show anyone why the district of Umranli on Istanbul’s Asian shore is in Refah’s grip. Through a cloud of flies, party worker Birol Hayal stroils past the “Dangerous and Illegal” sign to the edge of a gully. On hills all around sit the half-built houses of Umranli’s slums. But the dirt tracks that once led down to more houses in the gully now disappear under a heap of trash. A gas pocket exploded in the dump last winter. The avalanche that followed buried the houses and killed 23 people.

“It’s one reason we won,” Mr. Hayal says. "Irmizing others: polluted tap water or no water at all, streets unpaved and filthy, bribe-happy police—700,000 people, in brief, living on services meant for 200,000. With Ankara’s politicians choking army coup in 1980, the tactic became official. What better way to tame a rebellious generation, the generals asked, than to teach traditional values?" By creating a feeling of Muslim brotherhood, "says Ihsan University Professor Ibrahim Utku, "you could contain the malcontents."

A Switch of Problems

Leftist books were banned in the 1980s; Islamic books are shot. A state expanded religious education, built thousands of mosques and trained thousands of imams to preach in them. It worked, kind of. The leftist menace in Turkey went the way of the Cold War, but in its place, the old secular-religious rift has reopened.

Furqat Ozal, the president who died last year, tried to attract into his own center-right party the young, educated and ambitious who also take Islam seriously. Refah, born in 1983, went after the underclass. Its public message has the ring of a populist manifesto, and it resounds all the way to Beyoglu.

One 32-year-old above the Golden Horn were born to Armenians, Jews, diplomats and exiles; Islam hardly had a foothold. Now, the bar girls commute in, and among Beyoglu’s 280,000 residents, thousands are migrants living in dusty slums. Yet Refah goes gently. It never rails against alcohol and vice. It looks for bugs in strip-club kitchens, coaxes drinkers indoors: And when one Refah man does talk about his deepest beliefs, it happens by accident.

Refah’s Ceylan is alone in Refah’s Beyoglu branch on a Saturday morning, watching a cowboy movie. When a visitor comes in, he phones the press office and is called back. A Turkey bearded 32-year-old former sailor and, for two years, a Refah worker full-time.

"Beyoglu is a great place for atheists and Communists," he says, making conversation. "They go hand in hand. They want to frighten the West by discrediting us. There’s no such thing as extremism in Islam. People simply live their religious beliefs."

On television, Alan Ladd is riding through the badlands. "I used to be a leftist," Mr. Ceylan says. "I saw that politicians always made their own families rich. They make laws, and if they don’t like them, they make other laws. I realized it’s better to have laws made by a higher power." Alan Ladd ducks behind a rock, and Mr. Ceylan goes on: "The Koran is a perfect law that people must obey. We believe in that. We want people to come to power in this country who trust, people who are good Muslims."

He turns back to the screen. "All my life," he says, "I’ve loved to watch cowboys and Indians." Mr. Ceylan keeps his thumbs in his pockets and watches Alan Ladd walk into a saloon.

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