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The year was 1919, and the Great War had at last ended. The Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire lay prostrate in defeat. Of these three once great empires, only the Ottoman still had a sovereign in place, but the Sultan had no real authority or influence. In fact, Turkey, which was all that was left of the once vast Ottoman Empire, was seemingly at the mercy of her enemies. The Entente Powers of France and England occupied the capital city of Istanbul, and thus they controlled the strategically important and historically resonant straits – The Bosphorus and The Dardanelles. The Turks' traditional enemies, the Greeks, had invaded the Turkish mainland at the port city of Smyrna, and they seemed poised to conquer the whole of Asia Minor. Furthermore, the Turkish army had been soundly defeated during the War, and, with one exception, had no military leader who had tasted victory during that epic conflict. Yet, only four years later, in 1923, Turkey had expelled all of her enemies from her territory, consolidated her borders, overthrown the Sultan, and established a new republic. With the formation of the Turkish Republic, there began a truly remarkable series of dramatic political and societal changes virtually unprecedented in scope and pace in the history of the world. This incredible turnaround was largely the result of the leadership of one man, a man whom I consider to be, along with Churchill and Roosevelt, one of the truly great leaders of the 20th century. This man is known to history as Kemal Ataturk, and I hope that by the end of this evening, you will agree with me.

Ironically, this Turkish hero was born, not in Turkey, but in what was then called Macedonia in what is now Greece. Mustafa, as he was then called, was born in 1881 in the port city of Salonika (now Thessalonika). The Macedonians were a microcosm of the entire Ottoman Empire and in a way they are reflected now in the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula – Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Then, as now, the people of the region turned against each other in periodic episodes of violent unrest, and at the time of Mustafa's birth, the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating and drifting inexorably toward its fall.

Mustafa's parents had conflicting influences on him, and in the end, it was his father's influence that was decisive in the development of his character and ideals. His mother was a pious Muslim who hoped that her only son would grow up to be a cleric. His father, on the other hand, was anti-clerical in bias and liberal in his outlook, and he had respect for the new ideas which were seeping in from the West. It was his father who finally took the boy out of a strict Muslim school and enrolled him in a secular private school – an action that had a profound influence on him. In addition, his hometown of Salonika was a melting pot where peoples of all cultures met and mingled. Unlike most Turks, Mustafa thus grew to manhood used to the ways of foreigners.

By the time he reached adolescence, Mustafa had decided that he wanted a military career. He had always been vain of his personal appearance, and he did not like the traditional Turkish schoolboy costume with its wide trousers and cummerbund – a uniform which he felt belonged to the past. On the other hand, the military uniform seemed modern and exciting, and Mustafa, who admired the panache of the military, longed to be one of them.

Thus, at age 12, Mustafa entered the Military Secondary School in Salonika. He had chosen well, for the officer class was the elite of the country. Its academies gave their pupils an education not only in military matters, but also in history, economics, and philosophy. Furthermore, unlike other Ottoman institutions, the military academies were democratic institutions, composed of all social classes. In this environment, it was possible to rise by ability and merit alone. In addition to all of these obvious advantages, military academy graduates had the opportunity to travel, see the world, and to learn the ways of the remoter peoples of the far-flung Ottoman Empire. All of these opportunities were not available to most Turkish people, but they became available to Mustafa, and his experiences were to have a profound effect not only on him but on Turkey as a whole.

Mustafa was an apt pupil, and he learned his lessons quickly and easily. His best subject was mathematics, and he soon outstripped his classmates. His teacher was also named Mustafa. Incidentally, I need to point out that at this time all Turkish people had just one name – a given name, but no surname – a system that seemed to work in a largely rural society in which people seldom strayed far from where they were born. In any event, the elder Mustafa bestowed a second name on his bright young pupil to distinguish between them, and he chose the name Kemal, a word which means perfection in both Turkish and Arabic. Henceforth he was known as Mustafa Kemal.

Even at this early age, he displayed natural leadership abilities. He was more mature than his classmates, and he achieved the status of teacher-pupil. He was somewhat cold and aloof, and he developed few close personal relationships. When his fellow students tried to pierce his reserve and discover his life goals, he replied only, “I am going to be somebody.” His ambition, although still undirected, was already smoldering within him, and indeed he would someday become “somebody”. Not only his maturity, but his strikingly different physical appearance with his unusually fair complexion and penetrating steely blue eyes set him apart from his companions.

Upon graduation from military school at age 18, he continued his military education. He graduated from the staff college in 1905 at the age of 24. He was commissioned as a captain, and embarked on his military career. The details of his early years as an army officer are not really important as far as this paper is concerned, except to say that he developed into an excellent teacher and fine tactician. What is important is that it was during this time that he developed and honed his political philosophy. He also developed a love of some of the less idealistic “pleasures” of life. He was a notorious womanizer throughout most of his life, and he also began to drink heavily. His favorite alcoholic beverage was a Turkish drink called raki, a concoction that looks like milk and tastes like licorice. He was to consume prodigious amounts of raki, and he was often known to stay up all night drinking. Following many of these nights, he would amaze his fellows by going home to shower and dress, and then return to work immaculately groomed and able to perform flawlessly.

During these years as a young staff officer, Mustafa Kemal traveled widely, including to Western Europe, and he was a keen observer. It was then that he developed his ideals. He had become a fierce Turkish patriot. He could see that the Ottoman

Empire was corrupt and decrepit, and he was determined to lead Turkey in a new direction and thus to save it. He strongly believed that Turkey needed to become modern, and by that, he meant Westernized. He wanted to be “a man of tomorrow” rather than “a man of today”. He felt that the “men of today” stood for the incompetence and corruption of an empire in decay. It was less the moralist than the realist in Kemal that was shocked by their attitude. These people were not just morally wrong; worse than that, their policies no longer worked.

Kemal began to believe that the real enemy of his people was not simply the foreigner, from whom, after all, they could learn something. Rather the enemy lay within their own ranks. This enemy was Islam itself. Islam, he believed, oppressed and stunted the growth of its people, shutting them off from the more advanced and enlightened ways of the Christian peoples. He most emphatically believed that Islam’s repression of women was not only wrong, but stupid, and he resolved to open society and politics to women if he ever had the chance. He once famously remarked that the Ottoman Empire was a place where the joys of heaven were reserved for non-Muslims, while Muslims were condemned to endure the shades of hell.

His political philosophy continued to develop and mature as the years passed, and he was greatly influenced by his time spent in Western Europe. He developed great respect for Western ideas and policies, and at the same time, he became disdainful of what he called the Oriental mind. He believed that a man was not born to greatness, but that he achieved greatness through his actions. Let there be no doubt, Kemal was a man of action.

In his mind and manner, he became a Westerner. He realized that only in the West was there a constructive spirit capable of molding the society of the future. He detested the shifts and evasions of the oblique approach to Oriental politics. He preferred to speak his mind directly, and his outspokenness not only infuriated his enemies but, at times, embarrassed his friends.

His vision of change was in terms of politics rather than law and administration. He wanted to change the political structure of the country, to rouse the people to a new conception of popular sovereignty. He knew that these changes would take time, and he knew the reason why. It lay in Islam and the hold it had on his country. It was the forces of religion that would hold back democracy. Islam (the very word means “submission”) stood for authority, not discussion, for submission, not freedom of thought. Therefore, to Kemal, political reform meant, in the first place, religious reform. I don’t think that this point can be stressed enough. Kemal’s beliefs about Islam were fundamentally instrumental in the development of his political philosophy.

As the years passed, Kemal honed not only his political philosophy, but also his military skills in various wars in North Africa and the Balkans. He also became increasingly recognized for his leadership abilities, often in spite of his outspokenness and his willingness to question authority. There was also during this time before World War I the Young Turk Revolution, which was led by a man named Enver, and in which

Kemal played a relatively minor role. He definitely felt that dramatic changes were needed, but he believed equally strongly that he, not Enver, was the man to lead the movement for change.

The last phase in the decline and fall of the Ottoman Empire began with its entry into World War I on the side of the Central Powers. This decision was largely based on Russia's entry into the war on the other side, as the Turks had a long history of distrust of the Russians and their traditional desire to have unfettered access to the Straits, if not outright control.

Kemal himself had opposed Turkey's entrance into the war, but now that it had happened, he threw himself into it with his characteristic energy and in a patriotic spirit. By far his most distinguished service was in England's ill-fated Gallipoli campaign. Winston Churchill had conceived of the idea of invading the Gallipoli peninsula and, following its capture, marching up the peninsula to conquer Istanbul. It was a bold and innovative plan, but it was thwarted largely because of the inspired leadership of Kemal. Kemal was ostensibly under the command of the German general Liman von Sanders, but in fact, it was Kemal who directed the defense and was responsible for the British defeat there.

The leadership that Kemal displayed at Gallipoli was a harbinger of the future. Although, as already pointed out, he had great distrust of Islam, he felt no compunction in invoking the name of Allah to inspire his troops. He himself displayed great physical courage, and he directed the campaign from the front lines, not a rear headquarters. He gained further stature when he was struck in the chest by shrapnel during battle, only to have the shrapnel shatter the watch that was in his breast pocket, but leave him unharmed. He also issued the following order, which became famous and part of the lore surrounding his name: "I don't order you to attack, I order you to die. In the time it takes us to die, other troops and commanders can come and take our places." His own evident readiness to die made others ready to die at his order, and this became part of his legend. Finally, after several months of bloody stalemate, the Allied forces withdrew, and the Turks had won a great victory. For the first time in living memory, they had won a victory against a European power, and Kemal became a national hero.

Unfortunately, however, the war dragged on, and the Germans, for the sake of their own interests in the West, were dragging Turkey to ruin in a war they could not win.

Kemal wished for an early Turkish exit from the war, but the government pressed on. Kemal realized that the Turkish people were profoundly tired of the war and that they had made great sacrifices on Germany's behalf. As the Allied army continued to advance in the East and conquer larger and larger chunks of Ottoman territory, Kemal and his army fought a series of determined rear guard actions in which they were repeatedly attacked but never defeated. But, as Kemal realized, the end was near. The Ottoman Empire was no longer an empire. The war had deprived it of its European territory, as well as all of its Arab provinces. Although Kemal did not suffer defeat gladly, he did not really regret this outcome. In some ways, he had foreseen it, and he realized that defeat

actually brought nearer his vision of a new Turkish nation, surgically freed from the canker of its outlying limbs to regenerate itself as a compact healthy body rooted in the good earth of its forebears. What had survived in Turkish hands was the Anatolian heartland in Asia Minor. Kemal realized that this land must remain under Turkish control, for it was there that both the past and the future of his country lay.

At the end of the war, however, the danger to Turkey was acute and imminent. Kemal understood the political implications of her situation. Had Turkey made peace independently of Germany a year earlier, as Kemal had repeatedly urged, she would have been in a better position to negotiate with the allies for an honorable national survival. Now, however, the very existence of Turkey was threatened. Kemal strongly urged the Sultan to make peace, and finally on October 30, 1918, an armistice was signed with the Allies. The terms were harsh from a Turkish point of view – the Bosphorus and Dardanelles were opened to Allied shipping, the Allies occupied all important strategic points, and the Turkish army was to be demobilized, although not specifically disarmed. Although the terms were unfavorable to the Turks, Kemal was not discouraged. For him the armistice was not an end, but a beginning. He had not been defeated in battle, and he was more than ever undefeated in spirit. In a farewell address to his army, he concluded: “The war may be over for our allies. But the war which concerns us, for our own independence, begins from this moment.” These were prophetic words indeed.

The Allies, and particularly the British, saw the armistice as an opportunity to take what they wanted from Turkey, and Kemal was determined to stop them. Even worse was the fact that the Turks traditional enemies, the Greeks, swaggered through the streets of Istanbul, openly showing their contempt for the Turks. Although the Sultan was still theoretically the head of state and in charge of the Government, in fact the Allies were in control.

In Versailles, under the influence of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, the Entente Powers were planning to carve up Turkey in Asia, and they were very supportive of Greek claims to a large part of Asia Minor. Unbelievably to Kemal and his associates, the Sultan was prepared to facilitate these terms, apparently in a desperate attempt to retain the throne. Kemal, on the other hand, was prepared to fight for Turkish sovereignty. He realized that the fight had to be led from the Anatolian heartland. The question was: how was he to get there?

At this point, the Allies themselves, concerned about anarchy developing there, came to Kemal’s aid and arranged for him to be sent to Anatolia in charge of a force which was to restore order. It was the opening that Kemal needed. He moved to the remote town of Angora in north central Anatolia, and there he set up headquarters. At that time, Angora was a sleepy rural village, but it has since developed into the modern city of Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. Incidentally, until I really started looking into the subject, I had no idea just how remote Angora was at that time. There was no railway and there were very few roads that went there, and such roads as there were, were very primitive, to say the least. The fact that Kemal ultimately chose to make that place his

capital is yet another example, not only of his leadership, but also of the force of his personality.

In May of 1919, the Greeks invaded the port city of Smyrna (now Izmir), in preparation for an incursion further inland. This invasion was an indignation no patriotic Turk could endure, and it was just the spark that was needed to inflame the fighting spirit of the Turks once again. Amazingly, the Sultan seemingly acquiesced in this invasion, in a last effort to preserve himself on the throne in Istanbul, and he asked Kemal to help him preserve what remained of Turkey. Instead, Kemal remained in the Anatolian heartland to set up his standard of liberation near the shores of the Black Sea. The battle for Anatolia was about to begin, and in the words of Ataturk's biographer, Lord Kinroos, "A new chapter had been opened in the history of the Turkish people." Kemal's opportunity had arrived, and he unhesitatingly seized it.

In Ankara, Kemal organized his army, and in a series of brilliant military maneuvers over the next few years, he drove the Greeks out of Asia Minor and persuaded the Allies to withdraw almost all of their forces and territorial claims. He set up an assembly which was supposed to be a popular representative assembly, but which was actually his personal rubber stamp. It did, however, give his rule the aura of legitimacy, and after a period of civil war between his supporters and those of the sultan, the sultanate was abolished in 1922. He did however allow there to continue to be a Caliph, who was supposedly the spiritual leader of Turkish Muslims.

In 1923, Kemal's military victory was complete, and he announced the formation of the Turkish Republic. It was a moment of supreme personal triumph for Kemal. He had saved and revived Turkey. A realist in an unrealistic age, he had seen what was possible and had pursued it, with singleness of purpose against friends who doubted him and enemies who opposed him. He now had immense personal power, and he was determined to use it. There was opposition to the concept of a republic, which was wholly at odds with that of the traditional Muslim state. But with the force of his leadership combined with a ruthless determination, he pushed through the Turkish Republic. As we will see, however, true representative democracy would come much later. For the time being, and for the rest of his life, Kemal had paramount power over the country. He was a President in triplicate – head of state, head of the cabinet and of parliament, and head of the only political party. He was in effect the dictator of Turkey, but a very different kind of dictator from his 20th century counterparts – Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini.

One of his first proclamations was to announce that henceforth the capital city would be Ankara, much to the dismay of foreign diplomats, who had enjoyed the many pleasures and delights of Istanbul. To those who complained, he replied that while foreign nations were free to keep their embassies in Istanbul, it would behoove them to move their embassies to Ankara if they wished to do business with the government of Turkey.

With the establishment of the Republic, and with himself firmly in control, Kemal proceeded swiftly toward his next planned objective – the abolition of the Caliphate. This was nothing less than the complete disestablishment of Islam, the final separation between spiritual and temporal power. As has been noted previously, he strongly believed that fanatical, fundamental Islam was an immense obstacle to his goal of modernization, and he was determined that Islam would not be a factor in establishing law or policy. He still professed himself to be a believer, but a rational believer for whom Islam was a “natural religion,” in harmony with reason, science, knowledge, and logic. In fact, he was not only agnostic, he regarded Islam as an impediment to progress. He was strongly opposed to fanaticism, which he called “a poisonous dagger which is directed at the heart of my people.” He took great issue with those who felt that a modern outlook was against the tenets of Islam. He further decreed that henceforth, the Friday sermons in the mosques would be in Turkish, rather than Arabic, so that the people could understand them.

He acted quickly, giving the caliph a mere 12 hours to pack up and leave Istanbul or face arrest. The caliph meekly complied, and thus in just a few hours, Kemal had swept away an epoch of history. As one of his supporters so eloquently put it, “the bridges attaching Turkey to the Middle Ages were blown up.” The last vestiges of Islam as the official state religion of Turkey were swept away, and religious schools were replaced by secular schools, with a scientific positivist curriculum. This was to have a profound effect on the spiritual and intellectual development of future Turkish generations. Of course, fundamentalist Islam did not simply disappear, and even today there is a segment of Turkey’s population which has resisted and will continue to resist secularism in Turkey’s society.

Having driven out the Greek invaders, abolished the monarchy, and broken the official power of Islam, Kemal now set to work in earnest. In his view, Turkey either had to emulate Western Europe or be dominated by it. He wanted to create a liberal democracy in Turkey, and he wanted to make it “modern”, a word he used often. When asked by an exasperated Muslim cleric exactly what that word meant, he replied: “It means being a human being.”

Although some reforms had been tried in the past, most notably by the Young Turks, none had been driven by the tenacity, ruthlessness, and enormous prestige that Kemal brought to implementing them.

After the declaration of the republic, Kemal gave Turkey a republican constitution. People, including women, now voted, and laws were debated and passed by the national assembly. But although Kemal briefly dabbled in two party democracy by encouraging one of his associates to form a rival political party, there was really only one party – the People’s Republican Party, which was to dominate Turkish politics until long after his death. Despite the somewhat ominous sounding name, this party and its platform bore no resemblance to Communist parties, many of which were also called “People’s Parties”.

Of all of Kemal's reforms, none was more far reaching or farsighted than the emancipation of women. Women's position in Turkey had changed relatively little since the days of the Prophet. They still lived subject to the letter of the laws of Islam, in a seclusion which amounted at its worst to personal slavery and at its best to conventional segregation from a predatory world. The average male Ottoman Turk viewed woman as an inferior species, a female animal deficient in morality and self-respect, who required protection by the male against her own weaker instincts. No woman could be seen walking in the street or driving in a carriage with a man, even if he were her husband. If husband and wife went out together, he was obliged to walk ahead, ignoring her.

In effect, there was no mixed Muslim society. In girl's schools, when female education was finally permitted, the only male teachers were eunuchs. In the theater, female parts were played by men or Christian women.

There had been some minor progress during the war, as women replaced men in certain jobs to free up more men for military service, but Kemal was determined to tear down completely the barriers that separated men from women. In his speeches he referred frequently to the topic of women. He repeatedly spoke of the need for women to have the same education as men. He felt that the discrimination against women was not only wrong, but wasteful. He felt strongly that no society could afford to ignore the talents of half of its citizens, and that no society could advance without the contributions of both men and women.

As part of his program, he called for the abolition of the wearing of the veil and the totally covering garment, the burqua. This notorious womanizer, who had never really had a close relationship with a woman other than his mother, even went so far as to get married to a woman named Latife. He then traveled around the country with her, pointing out that he was the President of Turkey and that as his own wife was not covered, neither should other Turkish women be.

He and Latife were actually quite close, but their marriage was doomed for many reasons, not the least of which was that Latife actually tried to exert some influence on him. She recognized that his drinking too much was a significant problem, and she tried unsuccessfully to curb this dangerous habit of his. Furthermore, she believed Kemal's rhetoric about equality for women, and as a Western wife, she would not submit to her husband as a master. Two such strong personalities could not coexist, and ironically, this modern man who rejected Islam divorced his wife according to the letter of Islamic law, which allowed a man to simply declare divorce and repudiate his wife without question.

Interestingly enough, a few months later his action would not have been legally possible, for among his many reforms was the institution of a new Civil Code, which was among his most fundamental and major changes. This code was framed along the lines of the Swiss legal code and replaced the earlier code base on Islamic law. Repudiation of a wife by a husband was abolished along with polygamy. Civil marriage and divorce, with equal rights for both parties, was introduced. Henceforth, at least in the eyes of the law, women enjoyed a new freedom and dignity.

Among the most significant of Kemal's achievements was the passage of this legal code, and with it, the introduction for the first time in Turkey's history, an independent judiciary. As we will see, Kemal himself didn't always adhere to the code, but he did establish the framework, and the legal system he established is still in effect today.

Although he was a national hero, he was not without his domestic enemies, and as early as 1925, there was a botched attempt to assassinate him. The plot involved only a handful of conspirators, but Kemal, seeing a chance to be rid of his critics, cast it as a major national conspiracy. He saw this as an opportunity to rid himself of his political opponents, and he created a special court which was dubbed the "Independence Tribunal". There occurred a series of show trials in which defendants had benefit of neither defense counsel nor the right of appeal. Multiple executions were performed in a process which one of Kemal's otherwise admiring biographers called "judicial murder". This tribunal existed for a period of two years, but finally even Kemal realized that it was being misused for political purposes, and he summarily disbanded it. Fortunately, such a tribunal never appeared again in Turkey.

Among Kemal's many aims was the modernization of Turkish dress, and in that regard, he attacked most vigorously the wearing of the fez. The fez had been worn in Turkey for about a century, and in that time Turks had come to think of it and Islam as synonymous. Thus his attack on the fez was part of his attack on Islam. "If we will be a civilized people," he said, "we must wear civilized international clothes. The fez is the sign of ignorance."

In 1925, he decreed that Turkish men would be required to discard the fez and wear Western hats instead, a feat that was easier ordered than achieved. For one thing, the Western hat with its brim was an object of fear and derision as a symbol of infidels. In order to soften the blow, Kemal devised ways of making the hat less an object of fear. He had the national press run stories extolling the hat's virtues, and follow up stories dealt with matters of hat etiquette. Of course, *he* always wore a Western hat in his public appearances. Once the ban on the fez became law, any man found wearing a fez rather than a hat risked a penalty or even jail. Civil servants were ordered to wear hats to work, and many resigned rather than comply. Kemal retaliated by stopping their pensions.

Although the hat law was far from the most important of Kemal's reforms, it stirred the most publicity and passion. There were riots in eastern Turkey, and officials who tried to enforce the law were stoned. Order was finally restored and compliance enforced when Kemal sent in special tribunals and troops.

Another of Kemal's far-sighted and far reaching reforms involved the alphabet. In keeping with his opposition to Islam, he set his sights on the Arabic alphabet which had been in use in Ottoman Turkey for centuries. Even though Turkish and Arabic are different languages, the Arabic script, with its 482 letter combinations, had been used for the Turkish language, largely because of religious reasons. With its complexity of

characters and accents, its paucity of vowels, and its ambiguity of sounds in differing contexts, the Arabic alphabet was extremely difficult for the ordinary person to read. Few could read it, and even the educated Ottoman Turk frequently made mistakes in its spelling. The end result was the growth of two separate languages, that of the Ottoman upper class, which was written but largely unspoken, and that of the people, which was unwritten but spoken. The consequence was the exclusion of the bulk of the population from most written literature. It is estimated that in 1925, 80% of the Turkish population was illiterate. Kemal rightly wondered how popular sovereignty could thrive without an alphabet which all people could learn and read. Thus Kemal appointed a commission in 1928 to oversee the switching of the Turkish alphabet from Arabic to Latin characters. "The Turkish language has been a prisoner for centuries," he wrote. It was now time "to cast off its chains." He charged his commission with two tasks: draw up a new alphabet and devise a way to phase it in.

Realizing the tendency of commissions to endlessly debate arcane issues, and determined to see the alphabet changed, Kemal personally attended the commission's meeting and forcefully expressed his views. The commission adopted a new alphabet of 29 characters from the Latin alphabet, not surprisingly quite similar to those of Western alphabets. The commission then informed the President that the transition to the new alphabet would require a period of five years. Kemal's response was characteristic: "The change will happen in three months, or it will not happen at all." Nobody doubted that he would not allow the transition to fail.

In November, 1928, after the national assembly made the new alphabet law, Kemal set to work, and in the words of the January, 1929, edition of *National Geographic*, Turkey went to school. Unlike some of his reforms, the Turkish people enthusiastically embraced this one. Copies of the new alphabet appeared every where, and Kemal himself toured the country with chalk and a blackboard to demonstrate the changes. He also used powerful incentives. For example, he issued an ultimatum to civil servants: learn the new alphabet, or look for another job. Everyone under the age of 40 was required to enroll in literacy classes, and prison inmates who were able to show they could write in the new alphabet got their sentences reduced.

Remarkably, the transition occurred on Kemal's timetable, although inevitably the children and illiterates, their minds unencumbered with knowledge of the old alphabet, learned more quickly than others. Soon they were giving lessons to their parents and grandparents. Only two months after the law had been passed, the new alphabet was in general use, and in less than a year, one million people had been taught to read and write it. By 1931, the Arabic script had disappeared from official use. Today, greater than 90 percent of Turkey's population is literate – a truly remarkable turnaround.

In 1935, Kemal introduced his last major reforms. The first of these was the introduction of the Gregorian calendar used uniformly in the Western world, and in fact, in most of the rest of the world. He further decreed that Sunday, rather than Muslim Friday, would be the official day of rest. Thus the Western weekend, regardless of its infidel implications, became an integral feature of the life of the ordinary Turk.

Finally, it was decreed that every Turk select and adopt a surname to go along with their given names. Until then, a Turk had only one name – the one he was given at birth. In a country full of Selims, Mustafas, and other common names, this system created great confusion, and Kemal's solution was simple and characteristic – adopt the Western system and select a surname. He himself chose the name Ataturk, which means “Father of the Turks.” Henceforth, he would be known as Kemal Ataturk. Not surprisingly, no other Turk selected that name.

Some mention should be made of Ataturk's foreign policy. He was determined that Turkey be accepted in the community of nations as a free and responsible sovereign power. Although a one party dictatorship, Ataturk's was unlike those of Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini in that it was essentially pacific. Turkey had no territorial or political ambitions at any other nation's expense. This was and is a significant distinction. As far back as 1921, Kemal had been saying, “Let us recognize our own limits.” By keeping Turkey small, he would make her great. The Turkish republic desired only its territorial integrity and freedom. As long as the West respected this, Turkey would offer them a zone of peace in an explosive part of the world, and would act as a sort of buffer between East and West – a role which at least to some extent she fills today.

Under Kemal's leadership, Turkey signed a pact of friendship with her ancient enemy Greece, and the magnificent Byzantine cathedral of Santa Sophia, which had been a mosque for 500 years, was reopened as a museum and a symbol of cultural affinity between Turkey and Europe. He rightly viewed Mussolini as an irresponsible adventurer and tyrant. Of Hitler, Kemal believed that whereas his own dictatorship had freed an enslaved people, Hitler's had enslaved a free people.

Of Stalin, Kemal mistakenly judged him as an international statesman of high caliber who would rank high on history's list of great leaders. Nevertheless, he never totally trusted Stalin, and he maintained polite, but not close relations with him. It is interesting to note that Stalin never made any real or implied threats to Turkey.

Kemal was a nationalist, but there was nothing parochial in his nationalism. He saw that the day of empires was done and that the day of nations had arrived. He was determined that Turkey would have her rightful place in the family of nations, and as such, his government was an active participant in the League of Nations.

While Ataturk was establishing his reforms and his public prestige and power were unchallenged, his personal life was a shambles. He battled insomnia, became depressed, and grew unbearably cantankerous. His mood swings were mercurial and capricious. By the mid 1930s he was carousing all night – drinking, dancing, singing, and boasting of his sexual conquests, although in fact he had lost most of his sexual potency as a result of his life of dissipation. Furthermore, he had no wife or family to exert any sort of restraining influence on him.

Today, Ataturk is criticized, with the benefit of hindsight, on three main grounds – that he did not establish democratic government, that his policy of secularism divided Turkish society and severed the link between the rulers and the ruled, and that he suppressed ethnic diversity, particularly suppressing the Kurds.

Let us address these issues one by one. Parliamentary democracy requires broad agreement on essential principles – on the nature of the state and society, whose rulers are chosen by free elections. Although there is no doubt that Ataturk would have won any free election in his day, Turkey did not really have these essentials at this time. Another point to remember is that between the wars, democracy could not be sustained in more advanced societies, such as Germany and Italy. Furthermore, there was in Turkey, which had existed for 500 years under Ottoman absolutism, no tradition of freedom, democracy, or human rights. All the institutions and trappings of a republic had to be created from scratch. On the other hand, Ataturk's enlightened authoritarianism left space for free private lives, and his establishment of the Turkish Republic set the foundation for the later development of genuine democracy in Turkey. Only seven years after his death, in 1945, opposition political parties were legalized, and five years after that, the government changed parties peacefully in free elections. More than he actually accomplished could not have been expected in his lifetime.

Critics of Ataturk's aggressive secularism feel that he should have allowed some room for Islam in the governance of the republic. However, recent experience suggests that political Islam is exclusive in its aims and that radical, fundamentalist Islam is in fact inimical to freedom and democracy. At the very least, there seem to be no Islamic schools in Turkey that foment terrorism. It is also worth pointing out that the current Turkish prime minister is a devout Muslim who had once advocated militant Islam but who is now much more moderate in his views.

The criticism of Ataturk's treatment of the Kurds is, in my view, much more valid than the other two, and Turkey's current continued problems with its Kurdish minority stem directly from his treatment of them. One can only hope that this problem can be peacefully resolved.

Ultimately, Ataturk's legacy lives in Turkey today. Alone among Muslim countries in the Middle East, Turkey has a thriving, multiparty democracy, in which government changes hands in free and fair elections. It is true that the Turkish army, which regards itself as the guardian of Kemalist principles, exerts a strong influence domestically. It is also true that on at least two occasions in the twentieth century, most recently in 1980, the army has been instrumental in overthrowing a government. But there has never been a military dictatorship in Turkey since Ataturk, and even the Turkish military recognizes civilian supremacy. Furthermore, the fact that it is taking Turkey a long time to settle down after Ataturk's cultural revolution does not invalidate his principles.

His greatness lies not in that he achieved power, but in the use that he made of it. It was not easy to create a free nation-state from the rubble of a defeated empire,

particularly being surrounded by suspicious former enemies and resentful former subjects. It was no mean diplomatic feat to establish peaceful and even friendly relations with both. That he accomplished these things while at the same time introducing radical social reforms domestically is all the more amazing. Under his leadership there emerged new social groups – professional, technical, and commercial – that were creative, independent, and self reliant. These were indispensable components of the new society, the ultimate basis on which Turkish democracy rests.

Kemal Ataturk was a truly visionary leader, and unlike most revolutionaries in history, his was not a destructive revolution. Rather, his revolution laid the groundwork for the development of modern Turkey, a vibrant, free, democratic nation. It is indeed a significant accomplishment. When presented with the opportunity to act, he seized the opportunity with a passion and single mindedness equaled by very few other leaders in history. For that, he deserves enormous credit. I cannot help but feel that if there had arisen more Ataturks in the Middle East after World War I and less phony monarchies propped up by British and French imperialists, our world today would be a better and more peaceful place than it is. Unfortunately, we will never know.