REPUBLICAN PERCEPTIONS; *TIME* AND *GÜLCEMAL*

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ABSTRACT

Historically, American reaction to new republican or democratic governments has been favorable and even enthusiastic. Did this occur with the establishment of he Turkish Republic in 1923.

Two events seem, at first gance, to indicate this may have been the case. One was the choice of Mustafa Kemal for the cover of an issue of *Time Magazine* in 1923. The second was the visit of the Turkish-flag ship *S.S. Gülcemal* to New York in the early 1920s.

Examination of general American press coverage of the Turkish war for independence and the declaration of the Republic indicates otherwise. Negative attitudes toward the Turks abound. In the New York *Times* old stereotypes persist and enthusiasm for the new Repubic is almost completely absent.

Nevertheless, careful analysis of the *Time* magazine story and press coverage of the *Gülcemal*'s arrival reveals a basis for a more positive understanding of Turkey. Both the story and the coverage of the *Gülcemal* hint at the importance "modernity" would have in improving American perceptions of the Turkish Republic and also illustrate the critical role public symbols play in the field of diplomacy.

KEYWORDS

Turkish Image; Turkish War of Independence; the United States-Maritime Relations; *Time*; *Gülcemal*.

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Diplomacy is a profession filled with symbolism. Flags, seating protocols, titles, and standards of dress provide the easily grasped visual accompaniment to conventions of language that border on ritual, but which are ultimately pragmatic and utilitarian given the exigencies of international intercourse. This paper is about symbols and diplomacy, albeit not about the symbols that exist within the profession, but those that are read by the general public and from which they gain impressions of nations other than their own and which they then use through political means to effect their nation's diplomatic relations.

I have selected two events which occurred in the early 1920s and which today are popularly perceived as indicators of a positive American public attitude toward the newly proclaimed Turkish Republic. One is the fourth issue of the first volume of *Time Magazine*. Published on March 24, 1923, its cover has a picture of Mustafa Kemal Pasha under which a subheading reads "Where is a Turk his own master?" This may be the most famous issue of any magazine in contemporary, twenty-first century Turkey. Reproductions are offered for sale in many Turkish bookstores and souvenir shops. Its popularity grew during the intense but ultimately unsuccessful effort of Turks and their friends to nominate Mustafa Kemal Atatürk for person of the century.

The second event is far less well known. It is the visit of the ship *S.S. Gülcemal* to New York in the early 1920s. The event looms very large in the history of Turkish Americans. Frank Ahmed, in his popular history of Turkish immigration to the United States, mentions the ship no less than four times and credits it both for bringing new Turkish immigrants to America and for being the prime agent in the repatriation of Turks who returned to Anatolia after the Republic was declared.[1] Kemal Karpat in an article reviewing Turkish immigration to the United States also notes the *Gülcemal* story and suggests that it is an event worthy of further investigation.[2] Indeed, it is. The importance of the *Gülcemal* as a symbol is further testified to by the fact that Ahmed

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[1]Frank Ahmed, *Turks in America: The Ottoman Turk's Immigrant Experience*, Washington, Columbia International, 1986.

[2]Kemal Karpat, "The Turks in America," *Les Annales de l' Islam*, No. 3, 1995, p. 235.

claims that one of its masts eventually went on display at the Anıtkabir.[3]

If one interprets these symbols within the broader perspective of American history, they seem to fit a pattern, one in which Americans, as a legacy of their own revolution, have welcomed the establishment of new republican or democratic forms of government across the globe. Although the American Republic did not and supposedly does not actively export its revolution it has generally greeted the announcement of new democracies with enthusiasm. Indeed, today the fostering of democracy seems to be the major diplomatic initiative of the United States and may well be seen as the current form of what used to be termed manifest destiny. Given this one can initially be tempted to view the cover of *Time* and the visit of the *Gülcemal* as ringing national endorsements of a republican revolution that replaced the much misunderstood and, in the West, much hated Ottoman autocracy.

One would expect this given other reactions in the American past. The French Revolution was initially welcomed by the Americans with great joy. In the 1810s and 1820s, Americans looked favorably upon the revolutions in the former Spanish colonies to their South. The delight at seeing Spanish autocracy fall within the Western Hemisphere extended throughout the century and finally came to focus on Cuba, resulting ultimately in the Spanish-American War.

There was one other nineteenth century revolution, albeit a failed one, for which Americans expressed great popular enthusiasm. In retrospect it seems to match what happened successfully in Anatolia in the early 1920s as it challenged autocracy and was led by a very charismatic figure. Louis Kossuth's attempt to establish an independent Hungary in 1848-49 was watched closely in the United States and ultimately created a Kossuth mania throughout the nation. There are some interesting Turkish connections in this matter. As his revolt began to fail Kossuth fled, seeking and finding sanctuary in Turkey. Initially a guest of the sultan he had to be put under a very moderate form of

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[3]Ahmed, *Turks in America*, p. 86, notes that Turkish immigrants gave a mast (one of four on the ship) to the Turkish government in 1948. This, however, is two years before the ship was reportedly scrapped.

house arrest to satisfy the pressures put on the Ottoman empire by the European states. Eventually he left Turkey, carried out on an American ship, the *U.S.S. Mississippi*. After a sojourn in Great Britain he came to the United States where he made a triumphal tour in 1852 aimed at raising money and governmental support for revolution in Hungary. He was the darling of the American people: his image was everywhere; fashion-conscious Americans copied his hat; and those supporting the republican ideal filled his coffers with donations. The American government, however, firmly refused to actively support the revolution.[4]

With such precedents one could be hopeful that the visit of the *Gülcemal* and the selection of Mustafa Kemal for the cover of *Time Magazine* did, indeed, symbolize broad American enthusiasm for the new Turkey. In addition, the reforms in Republican Turkey, among them the departure of the Sultan and the demise of the caliphate, the creation of a secular state, the new emphasis on education, the empowerment of women (very shortly after the United States itself advanced the vote to women) very much fit the evolving modern mentality in the United States. Indeed, to modern thinkers in 1920s America these were major causes: secularism would be defended by Clarence Darrow at the Scopes trial; educational reforms were being instituted in major cities; and there was a new freedom for American women. Of course, there was opposition and there still is opposition to such changes. William Jennings Bryan, the lawyer opposing Darrow, won the Scopes trial; popular evangelical religion was on the rise as what is now termed fundamentalism grew; and the new, emancipated woman was certainly not universally countenanced in America.

One could therefore argue that the new Turkish Republic should at least have found strong favor among the well-educated portion of the American public, that portion which read the new *Time Magazine* or the *New York Times* which by then had become one of the nation's most respected newspapers. That was the presumption underpinning this brief investigation. Given the inability to conduct a retrospective Gallup poll, it seemed the best

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[4]Donald S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America: A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1977. Spencer's account is the fullest and most insightful review of the American fascination with Kossuth and the revolution in Hungary.

way to gauge more broadly the American reaction to the new Turkey was to review the *New York Times* during the early 1920s and see if its content concerning the changes in Turkey fit this thesis. Admittedly, this is not a methodological strategy that will provide a full survey of opinion nor is it the intention of this paper to categorically analyze American public opinion as expressed generally in the popular press or in other media at the time of the Turkish War of Independence. Rather what it attempts to fathom are trends and other "symbols."

Popular acceptance of the new Turkish Republic does not, however, seem to have been the case. Other symbols, ones that still plague Turkish-American relations, obscured and seemed to negate the usual American affinity for republicanism. The potency of these negative symbols is surprising, indeed, troubling if one considers the way the new Turkish Republic should have been perceived given the historical precedents. What one discovers is that the opinion about and coverage of the nationalist movement and Turkey in the pages of the *New York Times* in the early 1920s is decidedly anti-Turkish.

Initially, the paper seems to show a disinterest in Turkey in the months immediately after World War I, except for matters focused on the status and condition of Christian minorities in Anatolia. Such coverage as there is, however, is dwarfed by a primary focus on Germany and the situation in Europe. Only after the Greek invasion of central Turkey in 1920 and the subsequent struggle for control of Anatolia does the *New York Times* begin to devote substantial column space to the region and, increasingly in 1921 to the nationalist movement. Mustafa Kemal Pasha begins to attract specific coverage in 1921, but extensive coverage only in 1922.

What is striking about the paper's coverage is its rather detailed reportage from the Greek side of the battle. The Greek advance into central Anatolia and reports of Greek victory form the bulk of the news about the war. The successful Turkish counterattack, however, receives minor coverage in comparison. Indeed, extensive attention to military matters seems to end after reportage of the rumored fall of Angora to the Greeks. Reports of Greek successes are many, of successful Turkish counterattacks few. The retaking of Eskisehir by the Turks is noted, but afterwards

little in the way of battle news is reported. Then, the evacuation of the Greeks through Smyrna/İzmir and the burning of the city once again focus attention on the war, and increasingly on Mustafa Kemal. With the truce negotiated at Mudanya in October 1922, all battle coverage ends although retrospective atrocity stories linger in the pages of the *New York Times*.

One can attribute part of this imbalance in coverage to a lack of correspondents on the Turkish side of the battlelines. That does, indeed, appear to have been the case, as only a few reporters managed to file stories from the Turkish lines. However, the additional question must be posed as to whether the situation was dictated by difficulty in reaching the Turkish lines or by choice, a choice dictated by existing preconceptions concerning the Turks. It is likely that the preconceptions, rather than difficulties in travel caused this imbalance. It is not difficult to note a bias based on "expectations" in much of what appears in the *New York Times*. Stories concerning refugees, Greek and Armenian, are prominent in its columns as are stories of atrocities -- atrocities committed by both sides. However, when reporting on those allegedly committed by the Turks, old images that had long been circulated in America are again brought to the fore.

The heading, "Turks will be Turks" to one *New York Times* editorial encapsulates what was happening.[5] As the perennial Muslim "other", it was going to be difficult for the Turks to change their image even while they engaged in a war for independence and, in 1923 and afterwards moved to create a secular, western-style state. The Turks were not the Spanish colonials of the 1810s nor the Hungarians of 1848 and Mustafa Kemal was not going to be seen as a new Bolivar or Kossuth. Two factors weighed heavily against them. One was the role of the American missionary clergy in interpreting Turkey to the American public, a primary, but biased source of information that had been in place for well over

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[5]*New York Times*, 16 September, 1922 p. 14. This editorial appeared during the evacuation of İzmir/Smyrna. It quotes Mustafa Kemal's remarks to an American journalist regarding his intention to maintain order in the city and then goes on to discuss the fires that subsequently broke out, the blame for which it ascribed to Turkish soldiers. Its implication is that the Turk is not to be trusted, not even Mustafa Kemal, a figure who had been the object of increasing focus in the American press.

half a century. The other was the large and increasingly vocal communities of Ottoman Christian ethnic groups in the United States, particularly the Armenians and Greeks. This certainly is not a situation unknown to scholars nor one that is of only past historical consequence. Yet, it is a situation that must be again brought to the fore when examining the American perception of a new Republican Turkey.

The period from April to June 1922 was one in which the *New York Times* reported a number of Turkish atrocities. Many of the stories, which included reports of Christian girls being sent to harems, of Turks starving Christians but "blaming Allah" for that starvation derive from Dr. Mark L. Ward, of the Near East Relief Committee.[6] Indeed, if one looks closely at the limited coverage of the Turkish counterattack it is not so much of military maneuvers and victories, but of Christian civilian populations displaced by the Turkish advance. Within the chaos of battle, the *Times*, for example, chose to give particular attention to the Turkish desecration of a grave of an American soldier, G. Gilbey (or Gilboy).[7] The choice of this minor incident, one certain to heighten negative opinions of the Turks, fits a pattern. The preponderance of coverage is anti-Turkish with the matter coming to a head with the burning of İzmir/Smyrna where Turkish culpability for the fire is not proven, but taken for granted. As American and European ships stood off shore, watched the flames, and ferried out the fleeing Europeans and Greeks, they became the lens through which the entire affair was viewed and thus ensured a bias. An editorial on September 30th entitled "Responsibility at Smyrna" did admit that the Turkish command wanted to control violence and damage, but the manner in which the editorial was written left little doubt as to the paper's attitude toward the Turks, "Not the prudent intentions of the commanders, but the ungovernable passion of the army was the decisive factor, the proof that the Turk is still the Turk".[8]

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[6]Ibid., 7 June 1922, p. 3. Ward's reports on the situation in Turkey appear several times in May and June, 1922.

[7]Ibid., The Gilboy story is covered in at least three issues of the paper between January and March 1923. Eventually the *Times* ran a story noting that the Turks had apologized for the incident.

[8]Ibid., 30 September 1922, p. 12.

There are, however, several significant breaks in what would appear to be one-sided coverage. On January 1, 1923 the *New York Times* ran an extensive, three-column story on the International Red Cross's investigation of atrocities committed against the Turks. Welcomed by officials of the "Turkish Red Cross," the international investigators went behind the battle line as it advanced toward İzmir. Much was said about the cordiality and friendship of the Turkish officials who hosted the investigation. The Red Cross staff found burnt villages, murders, and displaced Turkish citizens. The agency appealed for blankets, clothing and other necessities for the Turks. "Human interest" was heightened by focusing on the story of an old Turkish man who had lost his home and was purportedly contentedly living in a hollow tree trunk. This coverage can be interpreted as auguring a subtle change in attitude that will be discussed later, although some aspects of the story, such as that of the man in the tree trunk, have about them the flavor of orientalist expectation.[9]

This very pro-Turkish story was, however, reportage, not opinion. Opinion on the Red Cross story came swiftly in the form of an editorial run the following day. Its title "Greek Atrocities" raises expectations, but its content revives old symbols. It is worth quoting extensively here. It begins:

> No doubt the Turcophiles will revel in the report of the International Red Cross on the devastation by the Greek Army in Anatolia. But nobody has denied that on occasion the Greeks did a great deal of unwarranted injury to the Turkish population. It might be remembered that ever since 1914 the Turks had been doing this sort of thing to the Greeks in the same region. The war of 1912-1913 was eventually ended by a treaty but it never ended in Anatolia where the Turks had a Greek civilian population at their mercy; and it is not altogether surprising that when the Greeks got the upper hand they retaliated.

Old images abound further on in the piece as is indicated by this statement: "The Turk is unable to deal with a superior race except by massacre and deportation." Still later, in a genuine exercise of mental gymnastics, the editorial invokes German *kultur* only five years after the end of the war in which it was supposedly discredited:

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[9]Ibid., 1 January, 1923, p. 8.

> For the fundamental difference between the two is that the Greeks are what the Germans call a *Kulturvolk* and the Turks are not. The absurd implications which German pseudo science read into that distinction, and which our mythologists of the Nordic race would perpetuate, need not be accepted: but a mere reading of Greek history and Turkish history furnishes evidence enough of the distinction.

The close of the editorial is damning and revealing:

> What has Turkey contributed to civilization in the past century? Some clever diplomats, some good soldiers and a considerable number of extortionists and executioners. The high ideals of some members of the Angora Government are praiseworthy but figs are not successfully gathered from thistles.[10]

Such editorial responses to news favorable to the Turks formed a pattern during 1922-1923. At one point the paper reached beyond its own pages to negate what may have seemed positive. William McFee, a noted author of sea stories, had written to the *Herald Tribune* in defense of the Turks at Smyrna stating that the stories coming from the city were biased by the fact that they derived from Armenian and Greek sources. The *Times* took occasion to editorialize against McFee in its own pages, accusing him of treating the minorities "contemptuously".[11]

Coverage of events in Anatolia, however, quickly disappeared from the *Times* as it shifted its attention to the first set of negotiations in Lausanne. Reporting of the debates and issues, ranging from the Ottoman debt to the critical matter of capitulations, was extensive. The matters of minorities and refugees, particularly the Armenians, were also part of the reportage and in that coverage atrocity and deportation continue to loom large. It is, however, important to note that at this time Mustafa Kemal became a central figure in the *Times'* coverage. More and more attention centers on him as he emerges from the anonymity of being a soldier to being "the" leader. His personality and his "human side" appear as even his marriage to Latife Hanım received coverage in

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[10]Preceding three quotations are all from the *New York Times* editorial of 2 January 1923, p. 12.

[11]Ibid., 30 September 1922, p. 12.

the paper. One can presume that he fell into the category of the "high ideal" group in Angora.[12]

Yet, one cannot assume that increased attention to Mustafa Kemal and Kemalism signaled either full acceptance of him as a republican or a totally positive attitude toward his leadership. Only the year before in a major Sunday edition column, Senator William King of Utah wrote of the "Arrogant Kemalists" and ascribed to them all of the evils westerners associated with the Turks -- massacre, murder, and violation. King's column was part of a political movement to quash United States acceptance of Lausanne.[13] His aim was the validation of the Treaty of Sevres and, particularly, of its accommodations for the Armenians. Another Sunday "feature" column focused on Mustafa Kemal as part of a comparative examination of European dictators.[14]

Only small voices seemed, at this time, to be willing to treat the Turks and the Turkish leader in a totally positive light in the pages of the *Times*. One of the most interesting came in the form of a letter to the editor which took issue with the statement that Mustafa Kemal, in a newsreel film, had, according to reporters, taken a Napoleonic pose. The writer said that Kemal's attitude (both literal and figurative) was more akin to George Washington than Napoleon Bonaparte. At last, Kemal seemed in the company of a champion of freedom dear to the memories of Americans.

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[12]The *Times'* attitude toward Mustafa Kemal is not entirely negative nor is it ever fully positive. Mustafa Kemal's actions toward enfranchising Turkish women are presented in a particularly positive manner (this aspect of his reforms and its effect on American attitudes deserves fuller attention). Movements toward reform were appreciated in the *Times*. One editorial (22 February 1922) concerning him is entitled "A Reformer as well as a Conqueror." Generally, the paper's coverage can be characterized as portraying him as a capable leader of an incapable people, but always with lingering questions as to his commitment to western principles. See for example, footnote 5 above.

[13]*New York Times*, 19 March 1922, Section 8, p. 3.

[14]Ibid., 21 October, 1923, Section 9, p. 1. This, like the King article cited above was run in the Sunday edition of the *Times* and as such both can be considered as special features that would attract a broader audience than pieces run during the week.

The writer was probably an immigrant. His name was Saim Salim.[15]

That letter appeared on October 21, slightly more than a week before the declaration of the Republic. That central event in the definition of modern Turkey, an event that seemed so well tailored to the American political view of the world, did receive page 1, albeit minor coverage in the *New York Times*.[16] With the war of independence over and with the conclusion of the second phase of the Lausanne talks, the Republic of Turkey began to disappear from the pages of the paper. When it did appear again in the years that immediately followed, coverage usually reverted to the issue of minorities and non-Muslims. In April 1924 the *Times* reported on the closing of French and Italian schools in "Constantinople" because of their failure to remove religious emblems. Later it reported on the hampering of relief work. In August it reported on the expulsion of an American, Dr. Edgar J. Fisher, because he allegedly spread anti-Turkish propaganda. In October, slightly less than one year after the declaration of the Republic, the Greeks again became the focus of Turkish news as a report discussed additional expulsions from Turkey.[17]

Other coverage would, in the years 1924-1927, relate to the matter of US ratification of the treaty of Lausanne. That story, detailed by Roger Trask in his book the *United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform*, is about American political and diplomatic actions which were affected by the same perceptions that colored the *Times'* coverage of the war years and which both reflected and influenced public opinion. In the case of the non-ratification of the treaty, Trask points out that the already powerful Armenian lobby in the United States, led by Vahan Cardashian, played a role in the treaty's rejection. Cardashian, a prodigious letter writer, made his views known everywhere in Washington as well in major east coast newspapers. Senator King's stand on the

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[15]Ibid., 21 February 1923, p. 14.

[16]Ibid, 30 October, 1923, p. 1. The story of the declaration of the Turkish Republic describes basic details of the structure of the government and contains no subjective commentary. It took up 41 lines in two columns. The paper did not run any separate editorial comment on the event.

[17]Ibid, 8 April, 1924, p. 2; 2 April 1924, p. 30; 7 August 1924, p. 17; 20 October 1924, p. 1.

nationalist movement was affected by lobbying efforts such as these. Cardashian's efforts reinforced and were themselves aided by the strongly imbedded cultural image of the "Terrible Turk," one that was, in part, nurtured in America by the missionary movement. Excellent anecdotes that reveal its potency can be found in Ahmed Yalman's autobiography. As a young student at Columbia in the years before World War I, Yalman traveled around the United States. His advisor, Talcott Williams, took him to a missionary conference in Kansas. There overtures to conversion were made. Yalman was struck by the fact that the map in the conference room showed the unconverted Muslim parts of the globe as black. Later, he and his friend, Ahmet Esmer went to Maine for a holiday. Word had preceded them that the Turks were coming and the townspeople accordingly bought new locks for their houses and even one for the jail. When, however, the inhabitants found the visitors seated on the beach, dressed normally and acting normally, the community opened up to them.[18]

This image of the other, of the Terrible Turk, was so powerful that it was used by both those who disliked Turkey and those who favored a more open policy to the new republic. Opponents used the image to stifle support, while proponents used it as an argument for support. Trask notes two incidents that deserve special mention. The Foreign Policy Association, which advocated ratification noted "To treat the Turks as pariahs is to invite them to conduct themselves as such." Undersecretary Joseph Grew noted to a treaty opponent that the best way to protect the rights of minorities in Turkey was for America to have diplomatic relations normalized. In both cases the basis of the argument was to assume the worst from the Turks. Ironically, even the missionary board, which was strongly anti-Turkish, advocated for a treaty in that it would normalize the condition of its workers within Turkey. More pragmatic reasons for formal relations were proposed only by a few groups, such as the American Chamber of Commerce and other trade organizations which advocated for normalization on the basis of economic concerns. Given the small volume of trade their voice was not terribly strong. No one according to what Trask

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[18]Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in My Time*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1956, pp. 28-31.

presents in his study seems to have advocated relations based on what might be called republican brotherhood.[19]

That the diplomatic struggles Trask details in his study essentially derived from symbols and stereotypes popular among the American electorate is not surprising given that prominent Americans, including some in the diplomatic corps (very notably former ambassador Morgenthau) subscribed to them and helped perpetuate them. Even Ahmed Yalman's mentor at Columbia, Talcott Williams, purveyed information that kept alive old images of the Turks and, indeed, of the Middle East in general.[20] The Turks were expected to be beyond the pale and even a radical turn toward a republic and the eventual adoption of Western forms of dress could not, overnight, make them totally sympathetic in the minds of many Americans. Years of myths and misinformation spread by missionaries were buttressed and exacerbated by the presence in the United States of large numbers of Christian immigrants from the former Ottoman empire and the lobbying groups those immigrants formed.[21] That the voices of these immigrants were given such credence in the years after World War I is somewhat ironic. This was the era when the United States created a racially-based immigration restriction policy that discriminated against groups from southern and eastern Europe which Americans viewed as inferior and incapable of ascribing to American values. Yet, it gave sympathy to two of those groups,

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[19]Roger R. Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914-1939*, Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press. See pp. 40-44 for a full discussion of the arguments used by treaty ratification proponents.

[20]Talcott Williams, *Turkey, A World Problem of Today*, Garden City, Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1921. This book consists of a series of lectures that Williams gave on Turkey at the Lowell Institute in Boston. The son of a missionary, Williams had lived in Turkey for sixteen years and was very well-versed in the history of the region. Yet, his lectures portray the Turks in a negative anti-modern light. While he is sympathetic to the concept of self-rule in Turkey and other Muslim countries, he seems doubtful of Muslims' ability to construct successful governments. His purpose in the lectures was to raise support for American mandates in the former Ottoman lands.

[21]Trask, *The U.S. Response*, p. 12. Trask estimates that 60,000 Armenians resided in the United States at the beginning of World War I.

Greeks and Armenians, because they had been "oppressed" Christians in the land of the Muslim other.

Despite the overwhelming negativity found in this overview of the pages of the *New York Times*, one can argue there is another side of the American perception of Turkey during this period, one that is hard to discern amidst the general anti-Turkish rhetoric in the press, but one that nevertheless augured the potential of a more favorable viewpoint then, as well as now. The *Time Magazine* cover and article, and the visit of the *S.S. Gülcemal* hold clues to this evolving undercurrent in the perception of Turkey.

At the same time that the *Times* was becoming widely accepted as the standard for American newspaper journalism, new trends were developing in the media. *Time*, as the first weekly news magazine exemplifies those trends. As an illustrated synopsis of the national and international news, *Time* was modern. It, along with the *Readers Digest* and the later appearing *Life* and *Look* magazines was in the vanguard of what can be considered yet another, albeit earlier information revolution in America.[22] It fit the mold and tenor of 1920s America, an era when optimism and a desire for things modern were widespread. *Time* catered to both the sophisticated reader and to the growing numbers of Americans who sought knowledge, advice, and entertainment in a quickly digestible, modern format. So, when *Time* chose Mustafa Kemal Pasha for the cover of its fourth issue it can be argued that it was making a bold statement. It was taking one of the "other" and saying that he was not only newsworthy, but that he and his actions fit into the evolving modern world from which the magazine itself sprang. The coverage of Kemal and Turkey within the magazine is admittedly minimal and at first glance would lead one to dismiss the piece and the cover as of no consequence, particularly because of the article's brevity and the fact that it and the cover sketch were part of a new, experimental magazine. But that newness and the magazine's policy in selecting only the most important stories and then presenting them in a very abridged manner is critical to understanding *Time's* position in modern journalism and

[22]See John Tebbel, Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741-1990*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1991, as well as the works by Frank Luther Mott for a perspective on the evolution and role of magazines such as *Time*.

consequently the importance of its choice of Mustafa Kemal. Also, the story, short but to the point, is built around a statement by one of the ranking historical authorities of that and any time, Professor Arnold J. Toynbee, who had covered the war front for the *Manchester Guardian* and the year before had authored *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*. Toynbee's pronouncement, "Without doubt Mustafa Kemal Pasha is one of the great figures in contemporary history. He proved by a personal demonstration that a Turk can be his own master in Anatolia...and under his inspiration the national movement sprang to life" can be read as a significant endorsement of what was then happening in Turkey.[23] Those who read the magazine knew about Toynbee and those who simply saw the magazine on the newsstands could not fail to miss the picture of the military man in the kalpak and Toynbee's name and the excerpt of his quotation under the picture on the cover. Modernism and leadership, two factors implicit in the coverage of Turkey in this issue of *Time* would play an increasingly important role in transforming the American vision of Turkey.[24]

As the Kemalist reforms unfolded during the coming years and as seemingly marginal international news events, such as the selection of Keriman Halis, a Turkish woman, as an international beauty queen in 1932 came to the attention of America, perceptions slowly began to change. In 1930, a major support organization, the American Friends of Turkey was founded.[25] When Atatürk died, he was, in some circles, again compared to

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[23]*Time*, Vol 1 (4). The article accompanying the cover sketch is only one page in length.

[24]See Trask, *The U.S. Response*, for information on how the interest in modernization in Turkey assisted its perception in the United States during the 1930s. Much of this took the form of a willingness on the part of the Turks to use American contacts to improve health care, agriculture, and industry. It is interesting to note that one of the favorable commentaries on Turkey immediately after the independence war took the form of an editorial on "Modernism in Turkey", *Times*, 28 February 1923, p. 16.

[25]Ibid., p. 87. Interestingly, John H. Finley, an associate editor of the *New York Times* was among the founders of the organization. Finley, however, had been to Turkey in 1923 where he met Mustafa Kemal. Upon his return to the United States he began speaking about the situation in Turkey. He also brought with him a gift from Mustafa Kemal to the Boy Scouts of America. *Times*, 29 August, 1923, p. 7.

Washington, and this time not by letter writers but by editorialists.[26]

The story of the *Gülcemal* adds a bit to this idea that modernity was of consequence in building positive American perceptions of the new Turkey. The saga of this ship is one of those delightful instances in history where ordinary events become extraordinary and by doing so say much both about how the past is understood and how contemporaries chose to view a particular incident.

If one strips the myth away, the story of the ship is very basic. Through port records, it appears that the *Gülcemal* made only four visits to New York, one in October 1920 and three more in 1921.[27] The records show no arrival in 1923, the year of the founding of the Republic and the year in which the ship is reputed to have first docked in America. As noted at the beginning of this paper, the ship has deep symbolic meaning for Turks and especially for Turkish immigrants in America. It was, according to popular belief, the ship that brought their families here and or which took immigrant Turks back to help build the Republic. It is therefore linked both to the mystique of the immigrant experience as well as to national pride. Its arrival in New York was an occasion of celebration for Turkish immigrants along the east coast (then as now the largest Turkish immigrant colony was in New York and large groups also resided in Massachusetts).[28]

At present I have no evidence that this ship played the principal role in taking Turkish immigrants back to Turkey although a majority of the Turks who had come to the United States between the 1890s and the start of World War I did return,

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[26]Ibid., p. 92.

[27]*Morton Allan Directory of European Passenger Steamship Arrivals for the Years 1890 to 1930 at the Port of New York and for the Years 1904-1926 at the Ports of New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore,* New York, Immigration Information Bureau, Inc., 1931. The directory has the *Gül Djemal* sailing under the ownership of the Mount Royal Steamship Company of Spain in 1920 and under the Ottoman America Line in 1921. The ship is not listed as arriving in New York in the years 1922-1930.

[28]Karpat, "The Turks in America"; Ahmed, *Turks in America*, p. 235

many in the years following the creation of the Republic.[29] It is probable therefore that some Turks returned on the *Gülcemal*. The ship's visits also were too early to be seen as a herald of the new government in Turkey. So what potency remains in the *Gülcemal* story and how should it be interpreted? We do know that Sabiha Sertel, who was studying sociology at Columbia University and working with Turkish immigrants in the United States notes the importance of the ship's arrival in New York. We can also infer through Sertel and through reports in the *Times* that the ship possibly played a role in taking funds and supplies back to the nationalists.[30] If not a republican symbol it was a nationalist one. On one of its three trips in 1921, the ship was boarded and searched by the Greeks in the Sea of Marmara. They sought military contraband but found none. That is not to say that nothing was on board or that the two other trips that year were not clandestine supply runs.

While the ship looms large in the memory of Turkish-American immigration and in the memories that surround the creation of the Turkish Republic, one wonders what its arrival meant to Americans who were reading about the conflict in Anatolia. The story of the *Gülcemal*, as reported in the *Times* mirrors, in terms of bias, the stories relating directly to the conflict. Reports of the first arrival in 1920 have a tinge of orientalism, a strong dose of the "Terrible Turk", but, importantly, also a bit of grudging admiration. When the ship arrived pilots in New York noted that it was the first time in their memory that they had seen the star and crescent flag in the city's harbor.[31] Here was the old becoming new. And though the ship itself was old (it had been built in 1874), the *Times* noted that as the *S.S. Germanic*, it once held the trans-Atlantic crossing record. So, here the "others," had acquired what had been a great ship, crossed the Atlantic, and entered the great harbor of New York. Though certainly not equal

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[29]Karpat, "The Turks in America", pp. 234-236, notes a traditionally high return rate among Turkish immigrants in America with some staying only a few months and some a number of years. The degree to which the creation of the Republic influenced the return of immigrants has yet to be fully examined.

[30]Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi: Demokrasi Mücadelesinde bir Kadın*, İstanbul, Belge Yayınları, 1987, pp. 35-60.

[31]*New York Times*, 1 November 1920, p. 28.

to Europeans in the eyes of the *Times*, the Turks were now engaged in the same activity as the British with Cunard and White Star, and the French with the Compagnie General Transatlantique. This is one of the points that undoubtedly generated so much pride regarding the voyage among the Turkish immigrants in the United States. To use the clichê, their ship had come in.

The other, more negative side of the story, however, relates to the people on the ship and not to the machine, the technology, or the accomplishment. The passengers were not Turks, but rich white Russians fleeing the Bolsheviks, along with Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. The crew, however, was Turkish, and according to the *Times* paid a price for being so:

> Captain Hussein Lufti, the commander and the Turkish officers of the *Gul Djemal* have had a hard time with the steerage passengers, who were mostly Greeks, Armenians, Romanians, and Bulgarians, and all joined in their hatred of the Turks.[32]

So, the perceptions and expectations of the other entered into the news accounts again. Yet, there is still more of consequence in the *Gülcemal* story. In August 1921 the ship was preparing to sail out of New York and the press noted rumors of arms aboard and of a potential Greek interception. The newspaper focused on the captain's skills: "Captain Hassan Lufti...has the reputation of knowing every sandy cove between Port Sudan in the Red Sea and Constantinople." It then noted that American shipmasters said the Greeks would have a hard time if Lufti tried to elude them because the Turks had already successfully smuggled arms past them from Alexandria to Smyrna.[33]

Here we have two interesting perspectives. One can be read as the traditional, orientalist view of the wily Turk. The other can be seen as one of admiration on the part of Lufti's peers, common skilled seamen, for his abilities: An admiration that is tinged with, one could argue, a sympathy for the Turkish cause or at the very least sympathy for the "underdog." So, perhaps, amidst the

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[32] Ibid., 3 November 1920, p. 17. Note that the ship's name was originally spelled in two words, *Gül Djemal*.

[33] Ibid., 6 August 1921, p. 5. Lufti's first name is given variously as Hussein and Hassan in the *Times*.

continued abundance of negative stereotypes one can see the possibilities for a different perception of the new Turkey, one that derived both from technology and modernism and, more importantly, from a very common level of social intercourse.

The *S. S. Gülcemal* would sail for another twenty-eight years. When it finally went to the breakers yard in 1950 it had achieved a record of sorts: It was the second longest serving passenger ship in history. It had sailed for seventy-six years.[34] Symbolically, its demise coincided with a growing positive perception in America of the Turks. Taking the "right" side in the new Cold War after World War II, the Turks were on "our" side. In 1950 the Korean conflict began and the Turks' valor in that war would win them additional recognition in the United States. In that same year the first multi-party elections in Turkey also garnered notice and praise in the United States. Two years later, Turkish entry into NATO would further enhance connections between the two countries and by virtue of those connections, particularly in the exchange and posting of service personnel, create more realistic and human perceptions of the Turks among common Americans. The growth of these positive perceptions would be aided by additional person-to-person contacts coming from increased tourism, immigration, and student exchanges during the remainder of the century. However, that process would, unfortunately, continue to be challenged by the old symbols and images kept alive to meet the needs of various agendas within the United States.

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[34]N. R. P. Bonsor, *North Atlantic Seaway: An Illustrated History of the Passenger Services Linking the Old World with the New, Jersey* (Channel Islands), Brookside Publications, 1975, Vol. 2, pp. 757-758. *The Gülcemal* has an extraordinary history. She was built in 1874 as the *Germanic* for the White Star Line of Britain and sailed on routes between New York and Great Britain. She made record passages between New York and Queenstown in 1875, 1876, and 1877. In 1899 she capsized at a dock in New York but was salvaged and again sailed the New York to Queenstown route. In 1905 she was sold to the Dominion Line and renamed *Ottawa*, sailing from Liverpool to Montreal. In 1911 the ship passed into Turkish ownership and was renamed the *Gül Djemal*. Early in World War I on 3 May 1915 she was sunk by a British submarine. She was subsequently salvaged and made the trips to the United States discussed in this paper. The ship survived until 1950 when it was scrapped at Messina.

In closing, it should be noted that approaching an understanding of the past through the review and interpretation of symbols and popular perceptions is an evolving and still somewhat controversial aspect of the historical discipline and represents a methodology that is somewhat antithetical to the traditions of diplomatic history.[35] That field is one of the most rigorous areas of historical investigation in that it is based on the hard evidence of dispatches, treaties, and personal letters. Yet, in the United States as in other democracies, diplomatic realities are often strongly influenced by popular opinion, and that opinion derives from public perceptions of other peoples and systems and particularly of the symbols or major events that appear to relate to those peoples and systems. The *Time Magazine* cover and the arrival of the *S.S. Gülcemal*, were but two of the many incidents and symbols attendant to the rise of Republican Turkey. The common American perception of such symbols arguably affected relations between the United States and Turkey. There have been many other symbols and events, the perceptions of which have played small and large roles in determining how our two nations and our people have chosen to understand and thus deal with one another during the past two hundred years. Examining and understanding them is vital in that it will do much to insure future concordance between the United States and Turkey.

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[35]See Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1989 for examples of how symbols, public demonstrations, and other non-traditional sources are being used by cultural historians.