Ingmar Karlsson

Istanbul Lectures
2003 – 2008

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Preface

In the historical premises of the Palais de Suède in Istanbul, owned by Sweden for its foreign service since 1757, the Swedish Research Institute and the Swedish Consulate General are working in close relationship and cooperation since the Institute was founded in 1962.

In 2003 the lecture series "Spring lectures" and "Autumn lectures" was introduced by the Institute to give a voice to Swedish scholars and researchers in Turkey.

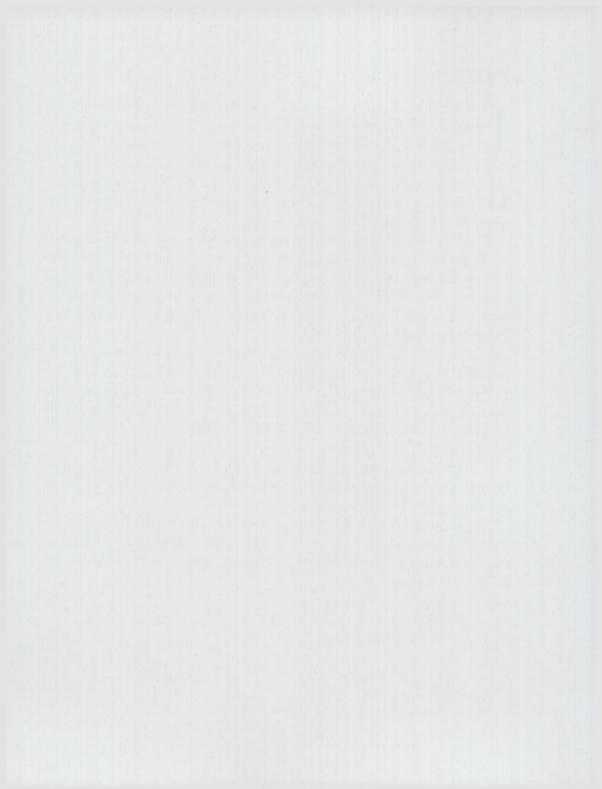This volume is dedicated to Ingmar Karlsson, who in 2001 arrived in Istanbul to take up the post as Swedish Consul General and Head of the Section for Swedish-Turkish cooperation. From 2003 to 2008 he participated regularly in the lecture series of the institute presenting papers on themes such as Europe and the Islamic world, and Turkey in relation to the European Union and to Sweden.

Ingmar Karlsson has a life-long career as a diplomat serving in the Middle East, in China and in Europe. He is also an eminent scholar and has published a great number of books on the Islamic world and Europe, on minority issues, and on Turkey and the EU. He is doctor honoris causa of Divinity at Lund University and of Philosophy at Växjö University in Sweden.

The cooperation between the Research Institute and the Consulate General during Ingmar Karlsson's time in Istanbul, has shown the great potential of synergy between the two institutions.

In publishing the present volume the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul wants to express its sincere gratitude to Ingmar Karlsson for a much appreciated cooperation and generous support of the Institute during his years in Istanbul.

Karin Ådahl
Istanbul, October 2008

Ingmar Karlsson

IS THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS INEVITABLE?*

In an article entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?" which attracted considerable attention when it appeared in the journal Foreign Affairs in 1993, Samuel Huntington claimed that the global political process is entering a new era. With the end of the Cold War, the Western phase in international politics came to an end and the focus shifted to the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations.

According to Huntington, a clash of civilizations is occuring on different levels. At the micro-level, various neighbouring groups are in a state of conflict, which is often violent, along cultural "fault lines", fighting to control territory and each other. At the macro-level, states with different cultural ties are struggling for relative military and political dominance, for control over international bodies and for power over third parties.

Huntington´s argumentation might seem to have gained credibility after September 11 and the retoric of Bin Laden and president Bush that followed the attacks but it contains a number of weaknesses.

Huntington draws straight lines across the world map showing the beginnings and ends of the various civilizations. He acknowledges that the Islamic cultural sphere has its Arab, Turkish and Malayan subdivions but for some reason he ignores the substantial Islamic contingent in Africa and he fails to give even a hint about the major differences that exist between an Islam that is strongly permeated by local culture and Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago, an Islam influenced by animism in West Africa and Islam in its Arab heartlands. Huntington also ignores the fact that the concept of Islamic unity hardly existed 40 years ago. In fact, the Islamic world has been split ever since the death of the Fourth Caliph in 661 and not merely between Sunnites and Shiites but along other lines as well.

* A Lecture Held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul October 21, 2003.

Thus, Islam is a magma – a reservoir containing quite distinct concepts and ideas, ranging from nostalgic-utopian doctrines of salvation to a secularised cultural identity like the one existing in Turkey.

Islam with a capital "I" thus simply does not exist in religious terms and most certainly not in any political context.

Nevertheless, Huntington conjures up a picture of a green "Islamic International" but all efforts to build up an organization that tries to exert control by applying a clear control strategy have failed. Instead, the interests of the individual states have always gained the upper hand. The Iranian revolution has been regarded as a threat from its very beginning not only in Iraq but also in the conservative Arab states. Therefore a Sunni International was to be established to stop the ideological bushfire spreading from Iran. But despite their oil resources, the Sunnite monarchies were not more successful than the ayatollahs in their attempts to establish a new political/ religious order.

Thus instead Islam has so to say become "nationalized" and, in the same way as the Arab front states built up their own Palestinian organizations in an attempt to control the Palestinian nationalism today we can see that in accordance with the national interests of the sponsor country the various Islamic organizations propagate a brand of Islam, be it Shiism, Wahabism or other. Thus, e.g. Saudi Arabia has financed all the Sunni organizations in Afghanistan on condition that they were hostile towards Iran. Similarly the FLN regime in Algeria supported the Tunisian fundamentalists in An-Nahda while at home they were trying to crush the local Islamic organization FIS.

Special Egyptian characteristics and an Egyptian identity much older than Islam were one of the the reasons why Sadat was able to break with the putative Arab-Islamic community and recognize Israel. Similarly, Turkey is not going to turn its back on secularism and align itself with Central Asia rather than Europe unless the West forces the Turks to make this choice by closing the door to the European Union. Ankara and Istanbul look to Brussels, Paris, London and Berlin, not to Ashkhabad , Almaty or Bishkek.

Hence, the frontiers for Islamic fundamentalism have already been drawn up right from the start. There is also no correlation between the

strategic decisions taken by states and the domestic cultural opposition. Attacks on Christianity are a particularly prominent feature in Saudi Arabia, the primary ally of the United States , which does not permit the existence of any Christian churches on its territory, whereas innumerable Christian communities can exercise their religious belief freely in Syria and Irak.

Huntington is even willing to meet Saddam Hussein halfway when he defines the Gulf War as a "war between civilizations". In fact, no other conflict has so clearly demonstrated how the interests of the state predominate over the religious sphere. Saddam did not at first justify his attack on Kuwait in religious terms – he did so only when he was forced to retreat by a coalition formed by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and Syria, together with American, French and British forces. The Saudi Royal family even managed to mobilize Islamic authorities who in a "fatwa" proclaimed that the fact that American infidel soldiers were defending Mecka was not in conflict with the teachings of Koran.

Iran was biding its time and despite all its anti-American rhetoric had nothing against "the Great Satan" working for the ayatollahs.

Huntington's thesis of a clash of civilizations at the macro level, then, is ill-founded. He may seem to be on firmer ground, though, when he claims that conflicts at the micro level will erupt along the fault lines between different cultural spheres. The conflicts in the Caucasus seem to support this proposition, and even more so the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, where the fronts largely coincided with the historical boundaries between the eastern and western Roman empires and the Habsburg and Ottoman empires.

Not even this proposition, however, stands up to closer scrutiny. Looking back at our own history, we can see how for almost three hundred years Protestant Denmark-Norway was at loggerheads with the equally Protestant Sweden and turned to Orthodox Russia for support, at the same time as Christian Sweden enlisted Muslim Turkey as an ally against Christian Russia. And during the Crimean War of 1853–56, Britain, France and Sardinia were Turkey's allies against Russia.

None of the conflicts of the twentieth century were provoked by a clash of civilizations, however we choose to define the latter. In 1914

Protestant Berlin joined forces with Catholic Vienna and Muslim Istanbul against Orthodox Moscow, Catholic Paris and Protestant London. Orthodox Serbia did admittedly fight Catholic Vienna, but was also at war with Orthodox Bulgaria.

The aggressors of the Second World War, Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union and Japan, were able to work together, despite belonging to different cultural spheres. When Hitler then attacked Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt did not stop to ask whether their new ally was Orthodox or Communist. Most wars since 1945 have been fought between rivals within the same civilization: Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Somalia, Iraq, Iran and Kuwait, between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, between Pashtuns and Tajiks in Afghanistan, and between Turks and Kurds. The longest and bloodiest war in the Middle East in the 1980s was not between Arabs and Jews, but between Muslims (Iraq and Iran). Poison gas has been deployed by Egyptians against Yemenis and by Arab Muslim Iraqis against Muslim Kurds, and not against 'infidels'.

What at first sight might be described as a struggle between civilizations turns out on closer analysis to be a matter of rivalry between states for resources and territory, strategic advantages and political prestige.

In the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Tehran has tried to act as mediator and has if anything sided with the Christian Armenians rather than the Muslim Azeris, fearing that Azeri successes could kindle separatist sentiment among the large Azeri minority in Iran. Moscow initially supported Muslim Azerbaijan, above all because the new leadership had a Communist Soviet background. When these leaders seemed to be losing their grip on power, Moscow transferred its support to Armenia, not out of sympathy for a Christian country, but in pursuit of its own national interests.

The two Bush wars against Saddam Hussein were no wars of civilizations – civilizations do not wage war – but primarily a struggle for oil and over the strategic balance in the Middle East, even if Bush junior sought to justify his attack on Iraq as part of the fight against international terrorism. Iran had no objection to Saddam Hussein being defeated by the very same Western states that had lent him material and financial support during the Iraq–Iran war. Nor does the constantly conflict-ridden relationship between

Iran and Saudi Arabia lend any credence to Huntington's theory. Despite the fact that the governing elite and the cultural values of the people in both states are deeply rooted in Islam, they have – not least since the end of the cold war – been in conflict with one another as a result of the completely different policies they have adopted towards the rest of the world. The religiously conservative Saudis pursue a pro-American foreign policy, whereas to Iran the United States is the 'Great Satan'. The former advocate high oil production to keep prices down, while the Iranians take the opposite line. The Saudis insist that pilgrims to Mecca must confine themselves to observing the religious rituals, whereas the Iranian leadership see the haj as an opportunity to discuss the socio-political problems facing the Islamic world. Despite their common religious and cultural heritage, these states – like any others – pursue policies which serve their national interests and security.

Tensions between Beijing and Washington over Taiwan, pirated CDs or arms exports are not a struggle between Confucius and Thomas Jefferson, but a conflict between great powers.

Huntington's hypotheses become particularly far-fetched when he talks of Bosnia. According to him, the intensification of religious identity arising from the war and the ethnic cleansing, the preferences of the religious leaders, and the support and pressure brought to bear by other Muslim states have slowly but surely transformed Bosnia from a Balkan Switzerland into a Balkan Iran.

Huntington claims that Bosnia's Muslims provoked the conflict, before subsequently donning the mantle of victim. This, if I may be forgiven for saying so, is nonsense.

He totally ignores the fact that they had no army of their own, that the former Communist leaders of Serbia and Croatia transmuted into nationalists who consistently and brutally sought to partition Bosnia, and that this led to systematic atrocities and ethnic cleansing that were qualitatively different from the atrocities which, later in the war, were also committed by the Muslim side.

Huntington asserts that massive civilizational rallying followed the outbreak of the Yugoslav war. Germany, Austria, the Vatican and other Eu-

ropean Catholic countries and groups lent their support to Croatia, while Russia, Greece and other Orthodox countries backed the Serbs; Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Libya, the international Islamic community and Islamic countries usually supported the Bosnian Muslims. The support which Bosnia received from the United States, the overwhelming majority of West Europeans and eventually NATO was a non-culturaly determined anomaly in an otherwise general pattern.

His reasoning is, to say the least, curious.

The wars in the former Yugoslavia, with their ethnic cleansing, were – as a later chapter in this book makes clear – no jihad as Huntington would have us believe, but a struggle for power and territory, characterized by shifting unholy alliances and waged between atheistic Orthodox, Catholics and Muslims. Religiously coloured nationalism was deliberately cultivated, as were social differences and tensions between town and countryside. The conflicts in this corner of Europe show how easily nationalism can be exploited for political purposes, but they offer as little proof of the clash of civilizations theory as does the long-standing conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. In the latter case, religion has served as a creator of identity in a national and economic conflict; in the former, as an instrument for opportunist and ruthless post-Communist elites.

In Bosnia, the Serbs claimed to be fighting for Christianity against Islam. True, the wars in the former Yugoslavia did follow cultural boundaries. But they were a result of Serbian nationalism and the firm resolve of former Communist potentates not to lose their grasp on power. The Serb offensive, designed to create a Greater Serbia, was first directed against the Serbs' Christian neighbours, Slovenia and Croatia. In Bosnia, it was the Muslims who represented a secular, civilized society, while the Orthodox Serbs displayed a fanaticism that was easily a match for the most extreme manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism. Both in Bosnia and in Kosovo, moreover, it was forces from 'Western civilization' that intervened on the side of the Muslims.

The cleavages that arise at what Huntington calls the micro level are not an automatic consequence of cultural differences, but have their roots

primarily in socio-economic problems, systematic discrimination and conflicts over the distribution of resources. Opportunities in terms of education, social mobility, political representation, income and status in society are more important than religious background and identity. Religion assumes significance and becomes a source of radicalism and desperation only when all other options seem to be exhausted. What appear to be conflicts of civilizations and identities are, at heart, distributional conflicts. This is true, for example, of the centuries-old antagonism between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

Huntington seems to be arguing the case for a world which consolidates traditional dividing lines and is founded on a kind of religious and cultural-political Yalta agreement.

According to Huntington, cultures will group around a 'core state'. In the Western world, the United States and an as yet ununited Europe will assume this role. As far as Europe is concerned, he proposes that the EU and NATO should include the Western Christian states of Central and eastern Europe while the West should recognize Russia´s prime responsibility for maintaining the security of the Orthodox states and the areas where Orthodoxy prevails; this is tantamount to advocating permanent Russian supremacy in the Balkans, including Greece, which Huntington evidently does not regard as part of the West.

China is assigned the role of core state in the Confucian world, an arrangement which Vietnam is clearly expected to go along with, despite the ancient tensions between the two countries. Huntington is unable to identify any potential core state in African civilization, nor is he able to do so in the Muslim world, although he would prefer to see Turkey in that role. In other words, all the European aspirations of Turkey are to be written off, and by the same token it should leave NATO.

How strong are the ties between the two cores of Western civilization, the United States and Europe? After September 11, 2001 and Bin Laden's attack on this civilization, the US and Europe appear if anything to be drifting apart, an ideological rift opening up between them. The Americans see themselves as the world's major exception, with an inherent

moral superiority or, to quote Ronald Reagan: "Our policy is rooted in our moral values. Our policy is designed to serve mankind. The United States therefore has not only a right, but a moral duty to eradicate terrorism and overthrow repugnant regimes. 'God is not neutral,' to cite President Bush.

While Europe prefers negotiation, preventive diplomacy and mediation to bring countries together and persuade them to accept international norms, the United States has more faith in the stick than in the carrot. Instead of compromise, it seeks to forcibly impose final solutions that will eliminate an alleged threat once and for all.

As the American neoconservative writer Robert Kagan has put it: 'Americans are from Mars, Europeans are from Venus.'

Throughout history, alliances and balance-of-power politics have always pitted states from the same civilization or cultural sphere against one another. If a core state is to be a vicarious representative of its civilization, it has to dominate it, at best through a benevolent hegemony as in the case of the United States in North America and, at times, in Europe. If this approach fails, the core state must have recourse to political pressure or blackmail or, as a last resort, force of arms. Before things reach that stage, though, coalitions will be formed within the cultural sphere in question to try to prevent the self-appointed big brother from becoming too powerful. And if they do not succeed, these states will seek allies outside their own civilization. The French–German–Russian alliance on the UN Security Council prior to the US and British attack on Iraq is a case in point. The tensions between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China are further evidence of the weakness of Huntington's reasoning, and another example of a state resisting the notion of a core state by looking for allies outside its own cultural sphere. What divides the Chinese on either side of the Formosa Strait is not culture, but ideology. Taiwan belongs to the democratic world.

Huntington nevertheless regards the different civilizations as political entities. But civilizations are not well-structured societies with governments that make decisions and start wars. They do not control states; rather, states control civilizations, and only intervene in their defence when it is in their own interests to do so. Cultures or civilizations are not political actors;

the political world has a physical dimension in the form of states with borders that exist as geographical facts, states that are embodied by certain individuals. Anyone who forgets the physical existence of a state will soon be reminded of it by the power exercised by its police and armed forces.

Huntington defines a civilization as the broadest level of identification with which a person intensely identifies. Yet very few people indeed identify intensely with such a broad concept as a civilization. Rather, we search for narrower identities, as nations or ethnic or religious groups. Despite the constant attempts these days to invoke a European identity, surveys by the European Commission show that 70 per cent or more of the populations of all the EU countries see themselves in purely national terms and only secondarily, if at all, as Europeans.

He underestimates the significance of ethnic, linguistic and other characteristics within each individual civilization and seems, for example, to regard all Muslims as a uniform ethnic group with innate values which, by a kind of inexorable natural law, compel them to persecute heretics, veil women and establish theocratic regimes. He apparently sees an almost total homogeneity of value and belief systems in every civilization. Each civilization is *sui generis*, and its character and values are unchanging. During the cold war, these civilizations were supposedly buried alive, as it were, but have now risen again, shaken off the dust and declared their loyalty to their forefathers.

The search for identity is important for today's generation. In that, Huntington is right. But this search proceeds along several different tracks. One leads to religious fundamentalism and sectarianism. In the Third World, many turn back to their own group and tribe, resulting in the break-up of states that were the creation of the colonial powers. In the former Eastern bloc, the fall of Communism was followed by a rediscovery of the nation. Sunni and Shia have come into conflict in the same way as Catholics and Protestants did in Europe several hundred years ago. The conflicts we are seeing, then, are not located at the level of civilizations, however we define a civilization.

The civilizations which Huntington talks about are not homogeneous, but syncretistic. Even Islamic fundamentalists use Western technol-

ogy, as was demonstrated on September 11, and by doing so they also adopt a way of thinking that is alien to their cultural sphere. In 1957, to take another example, there were 1.7 million Christians in South Korea. Now the figure is between 14 and 17 million, or 40 per cent of the population. The frequent strikes in that country are a protest at the supposedly Confucian values that were alleged to be behind the economic miracle that has now faded.

Modern Europe has more Islamic roots than we generally imagine. Islamic culture, therefore, is not at all as alien as our prejudices and clichés often suggest.

One of Huntington's most surprising claims is that people who do not have a Western background are incapable of changing and can therefore never adapt to a democratic social system. Almost in horror, he cites estimates which suggest that, by the year 2050, 23 per cent of the US population will be of Latin American origin, 16 per cent black and 10 per cent Asian. In the past, he asserts, immigrants were able to adjust to the prevailing European culture and enthusiastically embraced the principles of liberty, equality and democracy. This, for some reason which he does not go into, the new immigrants will be incapable of doing: if the United States becomes multicultural in the true sense of the word, and is pervaded by an internal 'clash of civilizations', will it survive as a liberal democracy? Will the de-Westernization of the United States, if it actually occurs, also result in its de-Americanization?

According to Huntington, then, non-Westerners are as it were genetically immune to Western concepts such as democracy and freedom and have a static identity. That this is not the case is shown by the fact that they have adapted to other Western concepts, such as fascism, Nazism and communism. The West, led by the United States, has waged war against countries in the Third World precisely because they had fallen for one such Western concept, communism.

In the 1920s, German right-wing intellectuals fought against the 'Westernization' of Germany and saw their country as having a culture of its own, between East and West. Not least, they turned their hatred on Britain, 'perfidious Albion'. This *Sonderweg* ideology also had echoes in the

neutralist Social Democratic policies of the 1950s, then in the national pacifism of the peace movement, and remnants of it survive to this day among the handful of people on the extreme right wing.

After the Second World War, there were powerful forces outside Germany, too, who considered it impossible to turn the Germans into democrats in the Western mould. They were regarded as not only culturally, but also genetically determined to remain outside Western civilization – 'the Huns', to use a term still beloved of the British tabloid press. The Morgenthau Plan, named after the then US Secretary of Agriculture, envisaged Germany being reduced for all time to a backward agrarian state. Today, Germany is perhaps the prime example of how a people's culture is not timeless.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a similar discussion took place concerning the southern flank of Europe. The Catholic dictatorships on the Iberian peninsula were regarded as beyond reform, and the frequent cabinet crises in Italy even caused many to doubt whether such thoroughly catholicized societies could ever become worthy members of a European community.

There is something Calvinistic about Huntington's reasoning. Back in the sixteenth century, the Swiss Reformer John Calvin claimed that an absolute and sovereign God had from the beginning appointed some to salvation and others to eternal damnation. However a person acted, he or she could not count on divine grace. The same doctrine of predestination seems, according to Huntington, to apply to his civilizations. His theory is simply a projection into the future of the interstate quarrels and economic and ideological conflicts of today. He is trying to move civilizations and cultures from the periphery of international politics to centre stage.

A more credible assumption to make is that future conflicts will revolve around the distribution of resources within and between states, rather than having cultural origins. The paradigm of a bipolar world has made way, not for Huntington's clash of civilizations, but for what Jürgen Habermas calls a 'new lack of visibility'. Despite this, one can venture the prediction that the future will bring neither the end of history nor a war between civilizations. If we are to use the latter concept at all, then the

struggle will not be over Jesus, Muhammad or Confucius, but between the civilization of the poor and powerless and that of the rich and powerful. It will be a conflict between those who have power and those who do not, between those who hold the destiny and future of the world in their hands and those who are the objects of control.

Huntington also disregards the fact that there is an ethical code that is common to every culture. Christ's words 'Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them' are paralleled in the teachings of Confucius, in the seven basic ethical precepts which a Buddhist is required to follow, and in the *Mahabharata*, the national epic of India.

Whether they are Turkish, Greek, southern Italian or Spanish, the traditional villages on the shores of the Mediterranean share the same Braudelian Mediterranean civilization, built around olive trees, fish, the sea, family honour and patriarchy. This civilization cuts right across the Muslim, Greek Orthodox or Catholic religious backgrounds of their inhabitants. At the same time, an Italian intellectual has values in common with a German intellectual which distinguish both from a German or Italian skinhead, who in turn has more in common with a Serb who 'cleanses' Muslim villages, a Muslim fanatic who issues a fatwa, a militant Hindu who burns down mosques or Muslim monuments, a white American who does not want black neighbours, or a French supporter of Le Pen whose watchword is 'France pour les Français'.

Only if the civilized majority in each of these civilizations allow the fundamentalists to gain the upper hand do we run the risk of a war of civilizations and a global cultural conflict. Huntington appears to see such an outcome as unavoidable.

The reason Huntington's theses have had such an impact is that they offer a plausible-sounding general explanation for much of what is happening in a rapidly changing world. They also mirror the anxiety which many people have felt and feel in the face of both Islamic fundamentalism and the economic power of China and the new 'tigers' – the latter attributed to 'Asian values' which are assumed to differ from those characteristic of Western democracies.

Another explanation for the notice which Huntington's theories have attracted is that they are not new. Notions of wars between civilizations, racial conflicts, invading hordes and a 'yellow peril' have existed ever since contact was established with cultures beyond Europe's horizon. A state of tension vis-à-vis the non-Western, non-Christian world has prevailed ever since the fifteenth century, when Europeans began to explore and chart the oceans and the earth's previously unknown continents. The Islamic world was for a long time culturally superior to us, and China was a considerably more sophisticated society than sixteenth-century Europe. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europe gained a scientific and technological advantage which engendered an increasingly strong conviction of moral superiority and a *mission civilisatrice*.

If we accept Huntington's proposition that future conflicts will be fundamentally cultural in nature, we must also draw the conclusion that they will be irresolvable. If a Muslim is a European's mortal enemy simply by virtue of being a Muslim, and a Japanese is by virtue of being Japanese, while an American is the enemy of both because he belongs to the Western world, then everyone has lost control of their future. Belonging to an Islamic or Japanese or Western culture is not negotiable – any more than being a Jew is. Membership of a civilization or culture, like membership of a race, is not a matter of choice, but an inescapable fact. Any attempt to trace all conflicts to a single causal model will lead to disastrous miscalculations. The conflicts of the twentieth century were not all ideological, any more than all the wars of the nineteenth century can be put down to the growth of nationalism. Not least today, in an increasingly complex world, such simplified explanatory models are absurd.

The major conflicts of the future will, rather, occur within the different civilizations, in the form of an increasingly intense *Kulturkampf* between faith and secularization. This is not only true of the conflict-torn Muslim world; the same struggle between belief and secular values exists in all religions, between Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jews with a modern and progressive outlook on life and those with a medieval one. The fault lines, then, do not run between religions, but between fundamen-

talism and enlightenment, dogmatism and pragmatism, civilized and unciv-
ilized behaviour in each of the different cultures. The assassination of Prime
Minister Rabin in November 1995 demonstrated the depth and the width of
this chasm within Israeli society. Following the attack on the World Trade
Center and the Pentagon, to take another example, Jerry Falwell explained to
his Christian television audience that America had brought this punishment
upon itself. According to him, abortionists, gay activists and federal courts
that outlawed prayer in schools had stirred up the fury of God.

The real conflicts of today's world have to do with national interests.
They can be resolved, in many cases perhaps only after a war, but if so a war
with definite aims, a war that has an end. A war between civilizations, on
the other hand, would have no end, and no limits.

Ingmar Karlsson

A PEACE TO END ALL PEACE[*]

The Historical Setting For Today's Conflicts in the Middle East

They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.
Hosea 8:7

The current problems in the Middle East have their origins in the decisions to divide this region taken by the victorious powers during and after the First World War.

The promises of independence given to the Arabs for their participation in the war against Turkish-Ottoman supremacy were not kept. To accommodate the national interests of France and Britain, new states were constructed with borders that did not correspond to the historical, geographical and religious realities. The Middle East became what it is today because France and Britain made no effort to create dynasties, states and political systems that would survive in the long term while, at the same time, they irreparably damaged the old political order. They totally ignored the fact that the borders were being drawn in a region with an ancient and proud civilization and they appear to have assumed that national identities which took centuries to develop in Europe would take root within a decade.

The European Middle East problem, that is to say the matter of French, British, German and Russian influence in *the great game* was solved, but at the same time it gave rise to a Middle East problem in the region. The agreements concluded after the First World War over the heads of the Arab population are the core of all of today's conflicts in the Middle East and they are an explanation for the bloody civil wars in Lebanon, the daily attacks and acts of violence in Israel and in the occupied territories and the present fighting in Iraq.

In February 1916 the Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed which, contrary to the promises to Sharif Hussain about an independent Arab

[*] A lecture held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul November 9 2004

state, divided the Middle East into French and British zones of control and interest. Palestine was to be administered by an international condominium consisting of Britain, France and Russia while Transjordan was to become a British zone of control.

In November 1917, in the Balfour Declaration the British government proclaimed, "His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Following the Sykes-Picot Agreement the strategic importance of Palestine had increased and in London the Zionist movement was now seen as a tool for securing British interests in this strategically so important area. Through the Balfour Declaration London wanted both to make sure of a continued basis for its control of the Suez Canal and at the same time secure the overland route to the Indian and East African parts of its empire.

European arrogance towards the Arabs is perhaps most clearly illustrated in this Declaration in which a British minister promises a country that was not his to a people who were not resident there against the will of the local inhabitants and without their having been consulted. Although the Jews, the majority of whom were recent immigrants, made up less than ten per cent of the population of Palestine in 1917, it seemed perfectly natural to Balfour to depict the Arab inhabitants as a negligible non-Jewish population.

For his part, the American President Wilson set up a commission – the King-Crane Commission – to investigate how the mandate under the auspices of the League of Nations should be divided. The commission reported strong Arab opposition to the Balfour Declaration among Palestine's Arab population and advised against an unlimited Jewish immigration and the creation of a Jewish state. However, the Commission's report was not discussed during the peace conference and was not made public until 1922.

Britain was given a mandate for Palestine and the Mesopotamian areas which were given the name Iraq – "the well-rooted country" – while

France was given Syria and Lebanon. The Balfour Declaration was confirmed in the mandate for Palestine and the mandate powers were urged to "secure the establishment of the Jewish national home" and the Zionist Organisation was recognised as a partner in the endeavours to achieve this objective. Hussain and his sons opposed this with reference to the fact that Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant adopted at Versailles had endorsed President Wilson's principle of the right of self-determination of peoples and thereby supported the demand of Palestine's Arab majority for an Arab state. Thus the foundation for today's Israel-Palestine conflict was laid.

The British now set a boundary for the Transjordan mandate which also included the most northerly part of what had previously been the Ottoman vilayat of Hijaz, including the strategically important port Aqaba. The Iraq mandate had already previously included the desert areas west of the Euphrates up to the Syrian border which the house of Saud had claimed as well as the Sheikdom of Kuwait which in practice had been independent for almost 200 years under the as-Sabah family. A British official now set the borders between Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Sheikdom was forced to cede areas to a neutral zone to Saudi Arabia. Later on, in 1937, Iraq claimed an incorporation of Kuwait on the grounds that it had been part of the vilayat of Basra which had now become part of independent Iraq. Saddam Hussein used the same argumentation for his invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

For the British it was not least important to secure the overland route to India, establish military bases and airfields and secure the Suez Canal. Egypt, which had been occupied by the British in 1882, became formally independent through the Allenby Declaration in December 1922. Fuad I was placed on the throne in Cairo but the real power stayed in London which still had full control over the Canal zone.

For France and Britain the mandates were primarily an authorization to safeguard their imperialist interests and endeavours without having to take on the role of colonial power. Instead of attempting to build robust states on a sound historical, economic and geographical basis, France chose a rule-and-divide policy and played off the various Christian communions

and Muslim sects against each other which is the basic reason for the problems that still plague the former French mandates Lebanon and Syria.

Lebanon

When Mount Lebanon became a French mandate in 1920, a political-administrative decision was taken in Paris that was to have far-reaching consequences and which is the main cause of the problems that still afflict Lebanon today. To the relatively homogeneous mountain region with its Druse and francophile Maronite Christian population, the French now added both the areas to the south as well as the Bekaa valley between the Lebanon and Antilebanon mountain ranges, two areas with a large Shiite population, and the coastal plains with the Sunni dominated cities Tripoli, Beirut, Saida and Tyr. There were also several Christian minorities in these areas, chiefly Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic who did not have the Maronites' European focus but saw themselves as an integral part of their Arab environment. Like the Sunnis who had been linked to the mandate without being consulted, they had no Lebanese identity whatsoever. The population in the towns along the coast and in the Bekaa valley traditionally considered themselves part of Greater Syria and had their natural link to Damascus and other cities in the Syrian interior. This Syrian identification was strongest among the lower social strata but also the Sunni leadership requested on several occasions, for example in 1928 and 1936, that these areas should be regarded as a part of Syria. They refused as long as possible to have anything to do with the French mandate power or its Lebanese agencies. For the inhabitants of the southern area that had been incorporated into the mandate, Galilee in Palestine was for historical and geographical reasons the area they felt a link to, ties which were definitely cut when Israel became an independent state.

The starting-point for this unnatural geographic union was that France would always be present in the region as a uniting factor and as a guarantor of a dominant role for their protégés, the Maronite Christians, in the artificial polity, *le Grand Liban*. To secure the position of their protégés, the French established already in the first constitution in 1926 the confes-

sional political system that was to become Lebanon's overriding problem. All appointments to high posts were based on religious affiliation according to a proportional system. Naturally, a Lebanese identity and Lebanese political life could not develop in this environment. The function of the Lebanese government and national assembly was mainly to divide the few government functions among the different communions. The political bodies therefore became a means of defending groups' own interests but not those of the state of Lebanon.

This is reflected in the political structure which Lebanon received on its independence in 1943. The unwritten "national pact" which the *zuáma* (plural of *za'im* – local leader of a religioius communion) agreed on meant that power was divided among the leading families. Representation of the different denominational groups in state organs was based on an arbitrary French census from 1932. The result was that to every six Christian posts there were five Muslim posts. Furthermore, the President was always to be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of the National Assembly a Shiite Muslim, etc.

Hence, right from the start this pact had several built-in weaknesses which in themselves were the seeds of Lebanon's later misfortunes.. The Christians, particularly the Maronites, were over-represented in the political bodies, a situation which became successively more pronounced due to the considerably higher Muslim birth rate. Major religious groups such as the Shiites, Druses and Armenians were under-represented in all political bodies and in the army from the very beginning. The demographic balance was further upset by the inflow of about 100 000 – mainly Sunni – Palestinian refugees to southern Lebanon after the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War.

The open Lebanese society with its weak central power was a natural centre for Palestinian political and military activities. Southern Lebanon became a base for operations against Israel and, conscious that the Lebanese central authority could not offer them any protection, the Palestinian groups came to ignore the host country's authorities.

At the same time as these antagonisms were ongoing, the Arab states utilised the open Lebanese system with its freedom of speech to carry

on their own disputes. Lebanon became a platform for ideological controversies which often took military expression. Right and left, revolutionaries and contra revolutionaries and radicals from the Arab so-called brother states fought each other there. They accused Lebanon of being a threat to their respective social systems in that Beirut was allowed to be a refuge for political opponents. In this way the already weak confidence in Lebanese central power was further undermined. It received its death blow, however, through the Israeli attacks on Lebanese areas which followed in answer to Palestinian action against Israel. The Israeli retaliation attacks became increasingly violent and directed not just at Palestinian refugee camps but also at Lebanese villages and towns, whose civilian populations had to pay the price for Palestinian actions.

Characteristic of the complexity of the Lebanese crisis, however, was that Palestinians were not involved in its outbreak in 1975. Instead, the unleashing factor was a socio-economic conflict between poor fishermen and Maronite capitalists. It developed into a conflict between a local leader and the symbol of the feeble central power, the army. The war subsequently developed not only into a sectarian struggle between Muslims and Maronites and a national conflict between Lebanese of different religious backgrounds and the Palestinians and the Maronites but also occasional wars between rival Maronite militias, conflicts which still lie under the surface in today's relatively calm Lebanon.

Syria

When the French took control of Syria they had the experience of the resistance to French colonialism in Tunisia and Algeria in mind. To counteract growing Arab nationalism which was further fuelled by the failed promises of independence, Paris gave autonomy to the Alawi minority in the mountains east of the port of Latakia and to the Druses in Jabal Druse south-east of Damascus, making them independent in relation to the Sunni Arabs in Damascus and only accountable to the French. The Druse, Alawis and other minorities received tax benefits and subsidies from the French government. They were above all recruited to the army. The Damascus

region was regarded as occupied territory and was patrolled by Senegalese troops with the aid of Alawis, Druses and Kurds. The Arab population felt more humiliated and exposed than during the Ottoman Empire.

To the national forces known under the name *Troupes Spéciales du Levant* and which became the Syrian army after independence, the French mandatory power consistently recruited men from religious and ethnic minorities: Alawis, Druses, Ismailites, Christian Arabs, Armenians, Kurds and Circassians. The obvious aim of this policy was that the Sunni majority, whose men were not encouraged to join the army, could more easily be kept under control. None of the other groups could gain a strong enough position to be a threat or even an annoyance to the colonial power.

For gifted but poor Alawi country boys the army was the only way to get ahead in life. For the few who could continue their education after elementary school, the military academy in Homs was the natural, possibly the only, entrance to higher education and climbing up the social ladder.

The Arab Baath Socialist Party, founded in the 1940s by a Greek Orthodox Christian, Michel Aflaq, appealed particularly to the religious minorities. The Baath ideology was explicitly pan-Arab certainly but its secular and socialist message appealed to the young Alawis and the party carried on a conscious and effective campaign in the educational establishments in the minority areas. The Baath Party became the natural choice for politically interested Alawis. Hence, on independence the Alawis played a role substantially greater than their share of the population they represented in what was later to be Syria's political central nervous system – namely in the army and the Baath Party.

Hafez al-Assad seized power in Damascus in November 1970 in the twenty second military coup since 1949 and he became Syria's first non-Sunni President in February 1971. The journey of the Alawis from an economically disadvantaged and exploited existence in a remote Syrian rural spot to absolute power was thus completed 25 years after independence. When al-Assad, before his death in the summer of 2000, handed over the Alawi throne to his 34 year old son Bashar the main threat to the succession had come from the young president's uncle, Hafez al-Assad's younger brother Rifa´at.

While France broke down the existing political and social structures to safeguard their national interests in Syria, Britain tried to create a new nation state in Mesopotamia to accommodate theirs.

The Basra and Baghdad vilayats in Mesopotamia had for a long time been neglected provinces on the fringes of the Ottoman Empire. In the 19th century, however, the British became more and more interested in the area as part of the overland route to India. In the early 20th century the importance of Mesopotamia grew when production from the newly found Persian oil wells controlled by British companies began to be shipped out from the Persian Gulf. British interest was further heightened in 1899 when Germany was granted a concession by Istanbul to build a railway from Konya in the Anatolian highlands to Baghdad, to be subsequently extended to Basra. A German presence in Mesopotamia would threaten both the oil interests and the British interests in India.

In addition to this, the Arab campaign for national liberation started to make itself heard in these regions. Primarily in order to safeguard the oil pipelines, British troops from India landed in Shatt al Arab in the initial stages of the First World War and took Basra. An expeditionary force sent north to take Baghdad was forced to surrender in 1916 to Turkish troops at Kut al-Amara. Baghdad was taken the following year, however, and in 1918 British troops had pressed on as far as Mosul.

After having invaded Baghdad, Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude, the Tommy Franks of his time, issued a declaration with the following message:

> "Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies but as liberators. People of Baghdad remember for 26 generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have ever endeavoured to set one Arab house against another in order that they might profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to Great Britain and her allies for there can be neither peace nor prosperity where there is enmity or misgovernment."

When the British received a mandate to rule Iraq in 1919, there was no Iraqi people as such. Basra in the Shiite south of Mesopotamia had always turned to the Gulf and India, Baghdad had strong contacts with Iran while Mosul in the north which was not yet formally included in the mandate and where the Kurds were in the majority, had its network of contacts in Turkey and Syria. Lieutenant General Maude was soon forced to establish that Mesopotamia was an area where 75 per cent of the population was tribal "with no previous tradition of obedience to any government".

In 1920 the population of southern Iraq staged a revolt, protesting against the fact that the British had not kept their promise to leave the area after the defeat of the Turks. In this uprising which was called the Great Iraqi Rebellion, Sunnis and Shiites were united for the first time, albeit for a short period, in a common struggle. A British officer admitted with a sigh of resignation that the only way to put an end to the uprising was "wholesome slaughter". The British succeeded in restoring order after, among other things, bomb attacks against the civilian population with some use of war gases.

In an article in the Sunday Times dated 22 August 1920, T.E. Lawrence wrote:

"The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honour. They have been tricked into it by a steady withholding of information. The Baghdad communiqués are belated, insincere, incomplete. Things have been far worse than we have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than the public knows. It is a disgrace to our imperial record and may soon be too inflamed for any ordinary cure. We are to-day not far from a disaster ....We said we went to Mesopotamia to defeat Turkey. We said we stayed to deliver the Arabs from the oppression of the Turkish government and to make available for the world its resources of corn and oil....We say we are in Mesopotamia to develop it for the benefit of the world. All experts say that the labour supply is the ruling factor

in its development. How far will the killing of ten thousand villagers and townspeople this summer hinder the production of wheat, cotton and oil? How long will we permit millions of pounds, thousands of imperial troops and tens of thousands of Arabs to be sacrificed on behalf of colonial administration which can benefit nobody but its administrators?"

Churchill who was Minister of War at that time toyed with the idea of abandoning the entire project but the Prime Minister Lloyd George refused. According to the Prime Minister, if the British left it would mean that within a couple of years they had "handed over to the French and Americans some of the richest oil fields in the world".

The solution was to install a monarchy. The British choice was Faisal who was now compensated for having previously been driven out of Syria by the French as thanks for taking part in the war against the Turks. With his background as a direct descendant of the prophet he was seen as a person who would have sufficient nationalist and religious credentials to gain legitimacy but at the same time he would always be dependent on British support. The British therefore supported local sheiks and tribal leaders that opposed Faisal's attempts to create national awareness and strengthen national institutions. One of the main British objectives was to see to it that the king was stronger than each individual tribe but weak enough to oppose coalitions between several of them.

Another problem for Faisal was that he was not an Iraqi and that monarchy was a foreign form of government to Mesopotamia and was therefore regarded as a British invention. In a well organised referendum, he won 96 per cent of the votes. However, the real chief was the British High Commissioner supported by different Sunni tribal and clan leaders. There was therefore instability built into the new state from the beginning which meant that it could only be ruled by strong leaders. Furthermore, the Sunni minority held the leading posts in the new Iraqi army that was formed.

Stability was not improved by the fact that the issue of independence or autonomy for the Kurds promised in the 1921 Sèvres Agreement

was removed from the agenda since oil had been discovered in the regions around Kirkuk in the Mosul vilayat which the new Turkish state under Atatürk regarded as part of its territory. The matter of the final status of the area was solved by the League of Nations in 1925 when it was incorporated into the British mandate in Iraq and the foundation was laid for Iraq's Kurdish problems.

Antagonisms about the future of the mandate arose at an early stage. For Iraq's part the desire was to have it replaced as soon as possible by an alliance with Great Britain that would lead to early independence and through treaties in 1921, 1922, 1926, 1927 and 1930 the new polity received its independence in October 1932 when, at the proposal of Great Britain, Iraq became a member of the League of Nations and the mandate was revoked. In the 1930 treaty, however, London secured far-reaching rights. The two countries entered into a 25-year alliance entailing consultation on foreign policy issues and mutual assistance in the event of war. The British were given preference for posts that required foreign expertise and they were accorded full freedom to use Iraqi rivers, ports and airports, and air bases were leased to the British army.

When the British left, they had installed a weak monarchy supported by a small Sunni elite. Rivalry between the different ethnic and religious groups made it impossible to establish a strong central government. The problem was exacerbated not least by the fact that the British hesitated for a long time as to whether the Kurds in the north should be incorporated into the new state or be given independence. Originally, France was to have sovereignty over the Mosul vilayat with its Kurdish population but the French abandoned their demand in exchange for a larger share of the Turkish Petroleum Company which was transformed into the Iraq Petroleum Company.

After a short time on the throne Faisal is said to have sighed that there was no Iraqi people just crowds that were impossible to govern and which turn against every government no matter what it looks like. He died in 1933 and was succeeded by his son Ghazi who, when he died in a car accident in 1939, had had increasing problems in handling antagonisms

not only between but also within Iraq's different religious and ethnic groups; Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, Turkmens, Yezidies, Jews and the numerous Christian churches.

A military coup was staged in 1958 and the young King Faisal II was lynched by a mob. The first Iraqi republic also became an unstable creation with a history characterised not least by continually recurring Kurdish uprisings. The Baath Party came to power in 1968 in a coup in which Saddam Hussein played a role and he went on to seize power in 1979.

Developments now followed the same pattern as in Syria. As described above, a minority within the religious Alawi minority had used the secular and putative Baath Party as an instrument for reaching absolute power. In Iraq, political power was gradually gathered by the same means by a minority among the Sunni Arab minority which represents about 20 per cent of the population – officers originating from the provincial town Tikrit.

Ibn Khaldoun and the future of Iraq

Both in Syria and Iraq, political developments after independence may be explained by the historian Ibn Khaldun's 600-year-old theory of *asabija*. The word is difficult to translate and denotes a fanatic clan solidarity characterised by a never-say-die spirit. According to Ibn Khaldun the basis for political power was group solidarity, and groups with a common tribal origin – particularly from inaccessible poor areas – tended to have more *asabija* than people who lived protected lives in the towns. These group loyalties were often further strengthened by affiliation to the same religious sect. In the political power struggle, the group that demonstrated the greatest *asabija* finally triumphed.

When the British drew the borders for their mandate to rule Iraq after the First World War an American missionary warned them: "You are flying in the face of four millenniums of history". If the now tumbled Iraqi minority government after free elections is replaced by a new government with a broader political base that better reflects the ethnic and religious diversity of the country, there is a great risk that the same development will

be repeated. Strong political power is needed if present ties of loyalty with religious, regional or ethnic bases are to be broken. Every new regime aiming for such a position of power will, however, sooner rather than later not just for their political but also for their physical survival, be forced to depend on the loyalty in their own group, which will make it impossible to fulfil their original political intentions however good these may have been.

Of the parties that have stepped forward in Iraq after Saddam Hussein's fall, the Communist Party is the only one with an ideological background and the only that is trans-regional. As the Shiites are clearly in the majority, parties with this religious background will also win a majority in free elections. Should they choose to follow an Iranian path, which is quite probable, this would surely not be accepted by Washington with subsequent consequences for Iraqi faith in western democracy. Furthermore, a democratic Iraq as envisaged by the Americans would mean that the Kurds in the north would be forced to give up the independence they have now since over ten years been enjoying for the first time in their long history.

To solve this dilemma, the American occupying power will perhaps soon be forced to try to apply a Lebanese solution, that is to say to give the different religious and ethnic minorities parliamentary representation based on their share of population. The Lebanese example is, however, not particularly encouraging. Ibn Khaldun's 600-year-old *asabiya* thesis is still of such relevance that democratic regimes also in the foreseeable future probably will be utopian in countries such as Syria and Iraq. An Iraqi identity might possibly be developed as a consequence of a common resistance to a continued American presence in the same way as Sunnis and Shiites were united in 1920 for a time in their resistance to British occupation.

If, against these odds, George W Bush were to succeed in his intention to introduce democracy to the Muslim world from outside, the result of free elections will not be what he expects. As a historical irony it will prove that due to the occupation of Iraq, the support for Israel's expansionist policies and the annexation of east Jerusalem, Bush has laid a solid foundation for democratically elected anti-American governments in all Muslim states from Indonesia to Senegal.

The longer the American military presence in Iraq continues, the greater credibility will be given to Bin Laden's arguments that the Muslim world in its entirety was the main target from the beginning. Iraq was attacked and not North Korea which was a greater threat. Saddam Hussein's claimed possession of weapons of mass destruction proved to be a pretext for the war and the occupation of Baghdad is for many Muslims the most humiliating event since East Jerusalem was lost in 1967. As the capital of the caliphate over a six-hundred-year period the city has enormous symbolic value.

Furthermore, the rapid and total collapse of the Iraqi regime strengthened Bin Laden's argument that neither secular Islamism nor Arab nationalism can liberate the Muslim world but that salvation rather lies in Islam and a permanent violent military jihad. If just one per thousand of the population of the Muslim world believe in this argument, it means a recruitment base of over a million people. Blind terror directed against American and other western targets will therefore probably continue to be a phenomenon we are forced to live with in the foreseeable future. In a worst-case scenario the Cold War of the 20th century will be replaced by a very hot one without clear frontlines and waged with weapons we do not know how to combat or defend ourselves against.

Thus, the chances of the American invasion creating a western style prosperous democracy that spreads its light over the Muslim world are small. Instead, through the invasion of Iraq, both the prospects of such a development and of winning the war against terrorism have probably been ground to zero.

Ingmar Karlsson

THE SYRIAN-ORTHODOX COMMUNITIES IN TURKEY AND SWEDEN

A Bridge Between Two Countries

After the deaths of the apostles, the organisation of the church was loose and its liturgy indefinite. In the beginning, each local church was largely a unit on its own. In time, particularly influential bishops came to exercise jurisdiction over others, especially those they themselves had appointed. This was the start of the archbishop or metropolitan institution and a territorial division of the church.

At the same time, several disputes arose about the interpretation of the biblical message. How was the united Trinity to be understood? Should Christ be regarded and worshiped as one with God the Father? A number of different fundamental christological truths were formulated. It proved difficult, however, to find solutions acceptable to at least a majority of christianity. In the late third century, Rome, Alexandria and Antiochia, which had gained jurisdiction over large areas, represented different and incompatible positions. At the same time gnosticism exercised a centrifugal influence on the young church. In his writing against heresy, Saint Epiphanios gives an impressive list of the various gnostic sects threatening the unity of the church. The list includes, to give just a few examples, names such as the Simonites, Menanites, Satornilians, Basilidans, Nicolaitans, Phibionites, Nazarees, Ptolomees, Cerdonites, and Adamites. Their rites were often remarkable. For example, the Adamites took hot steam baths in order more easily to understand the religious mysteries.

The unity of the church was also threatened by internal disputes about dogma. Arius, a priest in Alexandria, won more and more supporters for his theses that the Son must be of a different nature to the Father and that Christ was a created being, albeit superior to ordinary mortals. Arius

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*   A lecture held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul on June 7, 2005

therefore arranged the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, hierarchically in different degrees of holiness.

In 312, however, an event is said to have occurred that changed the course of church and world history. During a campaign – according to some in France, according to others outside Rome – there appeared on the heavens to the Emperor Constantine a cross with the inscription "In hoc signo vinces", that is to say, "In this sign you shall conquer", usually abbreviated IHS. Constantine's conversion after this vision was followed by the Edict of Milan in 313. Through the latter, the Christian religion, whose followers at that time are estimated to have amounted to about ten per cent of the population of the Roman Empire, was officially tolerated.

In 324 Constantine decided to move the capital of the empire from Rome to the Greek town Byzantion, where a new capital, Constantinople, was built. His reasons were both political and religious. The old Rome was too closely associated with heathendom and the persecution of Christians to be the capital of the empire founded on Christianity that Constantine had in mind.

A new factor – power politics – came thereby to be introduced into what had previously largely been theological matters. Constantine tried to tie together church and state, among other things by enforcing the greatest possible doctrinaire unity in the church. A first main task was therefore to deal with Arianism. During a synod in Alexandria, Arius and his supporters had indeed been excluded from the church community but support for them was rapidly growing in the eastern half of the Empire.

In order to restore unity to the church, Constantine convened a council in Nicea in 325. Some 220 bishops participated. Due to this high attendance the meeting has come to be regarded as the first ecumenical council. It was led by Constantine himself "as a heavenly messenger of God" to quote one of the bishops present. Thus, Constantine's goal was to unite the Roman Empire around one single faith. It became the task of the council to define that faith, which above all led to a settlement of the controversy over the teachings Arius had spread.

At Nicea, assertions of a hierarchy in the Trinity were branded as heresy. Instead, the thesis of homoousios was established, that is to say that

God the Father and God the Son are of the same substance, "the one true God". The council also devoted itself to the outer organisation of the church. In the sixth canon, Rome, Alexandria and Antiochia were established as the centres of the church in that said order.

However, the church was soon visited by new christological disputes. The question now concerned how the combination of the human and the divine in Christ's person was to be defined. Jesus was clearly born of a woman and had been a human being. The division of the human and divine elements in him therefore became the subject of a great deal of theological argumentation. In 428, a priest in Antiochia, Nestorius, was elected to be new Patriarch of Constantinople. Following his promotion he asserted that Christ has two different, independent though closely united natures: a divine one and a human one, which must not be mixed up. Nestorius refused therefore to call Maria "theotòkos" (mother of God) which had been established by the Nicea council. The reasoning was that God cannot have a mother and that a created being cannot give birth to the creator. Maria had given birth to a human and God had taken up his abode in that human. God lives in the human Jesus as in a temple, Nestorius claimed. Maria could therefore at most be called "christotòkos" (mother of Christ).

This was contrary to Alexandrian theology. Diophysitism (the belief that Christ has two natures) was the main theme of the council of Ephesos. Nestorius came out the loser and was deposed as Patriarch for his heretical theories. Instead, it was established that Christ was a "divine person" having two natures, one divine and one human.

The first church schism was thereby a fact but this was not the end of christological disputes. Many bishops and priests asserted that Jesus' human nature was so completely merged in his divine nature that you could only speak of his divine nature. It was said that God had been incarnated in Jesus. It is therefore God who is born, dies and appears through the life of Jesus and Maria is consequently the mother of God. The divine nature of Christ totally took over his human nature. This doctrine came to be designated monophysite (doctrine of one nature).

During a council in Ephesos in 449, which went down in history as the Robber Council, the monophysite supporters succeeded by means of bribes and physical violence in gaining acceptance for their thesis, supported by Emperor Theodosius II.

However, it was a short-lived triumph. Just the following year, Theodosius fell off his horse and died. His successor, Marcianus, saw political dangers in the victory of the Egyptian Patriarch and in 451 convened a new council in Chalcedon on the Asian side of the Bosporus, opposite Constantinople.

The course of the meeting could be kept under the control of the temporal power. The following formulation concerning Christ was adopted:

"He is one and the same Son, perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being."

The 451 Chalcedon Council with its definition of the nature of Christ sanctioned by the emperor again divided the imperial church that the Emperor Constantine originally wanted to create. However, the differences of opinion between the monophysites and the "Chalcedons" were more of a political and national than a theological nature. Like the Hamite population in Egypt, the Aramaic-speaking Semites of Syria had long tired of Constantinople's political supremacy. They did not want a Byzantine theology forced on them adding to the burden. Almost to a man the Syrian bishops and priests refused to accept the Chalcedon doctrine. Emperor Justinianus' counter-move was to imprison all bishops suspected of monophysite heresy.

The Aramaic national secessionist church which could now be discerned would probably have been rapidly crushed if it had not had the backing of the Empress Theodora. Through her, two monks were consecrated bishops by the Patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria who also lived in exile.

One of them, Theodor, was given jurisdiction over Arabia and Palestine but was of no consequence for church history. However, the other, Jacob Zanzalus (500-578), who was appointed bishop of Syria, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, came to play a totally decisive role for the continuance of the monophysite doctrine and the emergence of the Syrian Orthodox Church. Disguised as a beggar – which earned him the name Baradaeus (the ragamuffin) – he travelled untiringly across this area for 35 years and organised the church. During his travels he is said to have consecrated 27 bishops and ordained over 2 000 priests.

Jacob Baradaeus also laid the foundation for energetic missionary activities among the Arabian Beduin tribes. Travelling bishops, priests and monks followed the nomadic Arabs and the monophysite theses were spread far into the desert oases on the Arabian peninsula.

When Islam rapidly expanded from the Arabian peninsula, Syria was under monophysite control. The Chalcedon doctrine only ruled in the coastal towns with their mainly Greek populations and in the Byzantine garrisons. These Christians were dubbed Melkites (king's men) after the Aramaic word for king (melk). The Syrian Orthodox Church had also rapidly pushed into Nestorian domains in Mesopotamia. The reasons for this were the same as those underlying the spread of this church in the region. Due to their resistance to Byzantium, the monophysites were regarded by the Persians as politically harmless. Furthermore, missionary activities were facilitated by the Aramaic community of language.

The Arab invasion was greeted with satisfaction by the Christians in Syria and Mesopotamia who would rather live under the supremacy of those who were their cousins in terms of language and ethnicity than under continued Greek-Roman-Byzantine or Arian-Persian rule. The Syrian Orthodox Christians therefore actively assisted the invading Arabian armies on many occasions.

With few exceptions, they lived a protected life, regarded as people of the book (*ahl al-kitab*). Their scholars – like the Nestorians – played a prominent role at the courts of the caliphs. Both theological and profane scholarship flourished at the Syrian Orthodox monasteries which through

translation work saw to it that the Hellenic cultural heritage was passed on. The church's heyday coincided with the period of greatness of the Arabian caliphate. A permanent residence was established for the Patriarch in 1034 in Amid outside Diyarbakir in south-east Turkey. 100 years later it moved to nearby Mardin, the main town in the area from which Syrian Orthodox Christians emigrated to Sweden about 850 years later. Under the Patriarch, 20 metropolitans and 103 bishops served in Syria, Asia Minor and on Cyprus. At this time the church's centres were Jerusalem, Damascus and Aleppo. In addition, there were 18 bishoprics under the maphrian of Mosul in Mesopotamia. Of the Syrian Orthodox theologians of this time, who were also distinguished philosophers and scholars, mention may be made of the Bishop of Diyarbakir, Dionysios bar Salibi (died in 1171) and Bishop Severus bar Sakku (died in 1241).

One of the most famous of the great scholarly figures of medieval church history was, however, the maphrian Gregorius Abu-I-Faraj (1226-1286). He was also called Bar Hebraeus since his father was a Jew converted to christianity. During this scholar's period as Patriarch, "the Syrian renaissance", the prestige of the church was at its height.

Like other Christian churches, the Syrian Orthodox Church was also hard hit by the ravaging campaigns of the Mongols towards the end of the 13th century. Many converted to Islam while others fled to the mountain regions around the Mardin Patriarchy. This region, which was given the name Tur Abdin (mountain of the servants of God), became a centre for the church. However, there were still Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Orontes valley and around Homs in central Syria, where to this day there are small towns and villages that have continually remained Syrian Orthodox since the church was founded.

But, only fragments of the formerly so mighty church remained. It was further weakened by internal antagonisms and a lack of powerful leading figures. Simoni, that is to say trade and bargaining for church offices, was common. At one point in the 15th century there were no less than four Patriarchs. In the new geographical centre of the church, Tur Abdin, Christians and Kurds coexisted for a long time without any difficulty. In

1484, the Patriarchate was transferred to the Deyrulzafaran Monastery outside Mardin. However, the superior education of the Christians gradually led to dominance over and exploitation of the Kurds, who time and time again retaliated by massacring Christians. This took place, for example, in 1843, 1846 and 1860.

During the 1830s and 1840s, the English explorer Layard spread information in Europe about the existence of the Nestorians after his journeys to Nineveh, Nimrud and Ashur. In the Chaldean and Assyrian Christians, he believed he had found the descendants of the Assyrian people. According to Layard's theories, the Assyrian people had not been totally exterminated by the Babylonians and Persians. Groups had been able to survive in the mountains and had 900 years later kept their identity and distinctive character by converting to Christianity. A series of massacres of Nestorians perpetrated by Kurds in the 1830s and 1840s also became known in Western Europe and the United States. The missionaries from the Anglican Church and the American Presbyterian Church operating in the Orient adopted Layard's ideas about the Christian Assyrian people. Missionary activities among Muslims had encountered difficulties and many of the proselytes they had succeeded in recruiting had been executed. Instead therefore, the missionaries began to concentrate on the old Christians churches who were considered to have yielded to various heresies. They established several missionary stations in particular in the Kurdish mountain regions between Iraq, Turkey and Iran, and their activities laid the foundation for the so-called Assyrian Protestant Churches. The Anglicans were most successful. In 1886 *The Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians* had definitely become established.

In order to unite the warring churches, these missionaries propagated the thesis that the Christians were a surviving part of the Assyrian people. A further motivation was to strengthen solidarity among the Christians, above all to offset growing Kurdish nationalism. A consequence of these activities was that both the Old and the New Testament and various religious tracts were translated into the Aramaic dialect that was spoken in the regions around Lake Urmia in north-west Iran. This dialect was

thereby raised to a kind of Aramaic written language which, however, has no linguistic links whatsoever with the dead Assyrian language. Furthermore, the Nestorians began to call themselves Assyrians. A contributory factor in this context was that the missionaries made it clear that Nestorius was regarded as a heretic by Christianity and that the word Nestorians had a disparaging ring.

The missionaries did not succeed in creating a feeling of nationality embracing all Christians. The Syrian Orthodox rejected all talk of an Assyrian identity on both grounds of church policy and purely political grounds, since they feared the reaction of the Islamic majority. Missionary activities triggered attacks on the Christians, above all by Kurdish Muslims. In the 1890s, missionaries from the Russian Orthodox Church appeared in Urmia in Persia. A bishop and a considerable number of priests and laymen declared themselves united with that church. When Layard so to speak discovered the Nestorian Christians they must have amounted to at most 100 000 people, divided into 25 tribes and living in four different areas. Five tribes, *ashirat*, who were semi-nomadic and considered themselves independent, lived in the Hakkari mountains in south-east Turkey where the Patriarchate was situated. In 1845 they were given the status *millet*, that is to say a religious nation, within the Ottoman Empire. They recognised no other worldly supremacy than their own tribal chieftains who held – and still hold – the title *malik* (king). The Patriarch had the formal right to appoint these kings but their position, like his own, became hereditary within the same family.

Following intervention by the British Ambassador in Constantinople, the Syrian Orthodox people received the status *millet*, that is to say a religious nation, in 1880. This laid the foundation for a recovery of the church which, however, came to an abrupt end when the first world war broke out. The pogroms against Christians in Turkey during and after that war were a new heavy blow to the Syrian Orthodox Church, as to other Christian churches in Turkey. In connection with this disaster – *seyfo* (year of the sword) in Aramaic – many fled across the border to the Jezira area, which was practically uninhabited, between the Euphrates and the Tigris in northeast Syria. The cities Hassaka and Qamishly are largely Syrian Orthodox

creations and the Christians played a prominent role in the cultivation of this fertile region. As a result of the exodus, the Patriarchate moved in 1933 from Deyrulzafaran to Homs in central Syria. In connection with a change of patriarch in 1960 it moved to Damascus.

The first Syrian Orthodox immigrants came to Sweden as early as 1967, following a request from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Council of Churches to the Swedish government to receive a group of "Assyrian" refugees residing in Beirut. However, of the some 200 people who took up residence in Sweden the majority belonged to the Syrian Orthodox Church while only a small group were Nestorians.

Immigration increased in the early 1970s when the Federal Republic of Germany tightened its provisions relating to guest workers. Christian migrants from south-east Turkey then instead applied to Sweden for asylum instead of going back to Turkey. Pressure was increasingly mounting from the surrounding Muslims, above all from landless Kurds who often arbitrarily took over the farms which decimated Christian families could no longer maintain because their young and strong members had left. Christian schools were forced to close due to a lack of pupils. Most of the once 68 churches in Tur Abdin met the same fate. During the 1980s and 1990s the remaining Christians became increasingly caught between two fronts in battles between the Turkish army and the PKK guerilla, which was fighting for a Kurdish state and many Christians were murdered by Kurds who wanted to bring about a definite Christian exodus from the area.

The early 1980s saw the beginning of emigration from the Syrian side of the Turkish-Syrian border. As mentioned above this was where the Christians had fled in connection with the dramatic events of the "year of the sword". Those who left already had most of their relatives in Sweden and they left in the hope of a better life and because they were concerned about future political developments in the Middle East.

After the first wave of immigration in 1967 the foundation was already laid for the name controversy that had long divided the church. On their arrival in Sweden, many Syrian Orthodox immigrants complained about being called Assyrians and the controversy intensified when a Syrian

Orthodox priest who came to Sweden in the early 1970s proved to be a supporter of the nationalist Assyrian movements in the United States which claim both a religious and ethnic identity and advocate the establishment of an Assyrian state in Mesopotamia. This dispute ended when the Patriarch of Damascus removed this priest from office and the church openly dissociated itself from Assyrianism.

There were three explanations for this dissociation. According to the church, Syrian Orthodox identity is based on church affinity and not ethnicity. Furthermore, the concept Assyrians was linked to the Nestorian Church which was considered heretical. Thirdly, the church for its part had no doubt well-grounded fears that nationalist aspirations with the objective of establishing a Christian state would cause the regimes in Syria and Iraq to view the Christian minorities as a fifth column with the consequences this would have for their chances of freely practising their religion.

The situation was further exacerbated in the late 1980s when a Syrian Orthodox archbishop took office in Södertälje. He tried to treat members of his diocese equally irrespective of their views on the group's identity. When he ordained some members of the Assyrian group, it caused a conflict that culminated in May 1990 when his residence was set on fire. He was then excluded from the congregations that did not accept his open attitude to the Assyrian group. The Patriarch of Damascus was forced to intervene personally and mediate with the result that the Syrian Orthodox Church in Sweden was divided in 1994 into two administrations, the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese and the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchal Vicarate in Sweden each with its own bishop. At the same time, the Patriarch stressed that these parallel church administrations together constitute the Syrian Orthodox Church in Sweden.

As a result of the identity conflict, the Syrian Orthodox group had already been divided into two organisations. The Assyrian Federation was founded in 1977 and the following year The Syrian Federation was established in Sweden. Today, both Federations carry on extensive activities with women's and youth associations, music, theatre and student associations and sports associations. The Assyrian club in Södertälje is this season for

the first time playing in the Premier Division of the Swedish Football League. Since 1978 the Assyrian Federation has published a monthly magazine, *Hujâdâ* (union), in five languages. The following year, the Syrian Federation also began to publish a monthly magazine, *Bahro Suryoyo* (the Syrian Light). The approximately 60 000 Syrian Orthodox adherents in Sweden today are evenly divided between the two Federations.

In recent years, relations between the two fractions have improved considerably and a "slash identity" now seems to be used more and more, designating the community Assyrian/Syrian. With the appointment of Ibrahim Baylan as Minister for Schools in October 2004, a non-European immigrant became a member of the Swedish government for the first time and the chairman of the Assyrian Federation, Yilmaz Kerimo, is a Member of Parliament for the Social Democratic Party.

In Turkey, from where the immigration of Assyrians/Syrians began, there are only about 15 000 left today. They mainly live in Istanbul where they have their own bishop. In the church's earlier heartland, Tur Abdin, there are around 2 500 today of the original around50 000 Syrian Orthodox Christians. However, after fighting between the Turkish army and PKK more or less ceased, their situation gradually improved. In the Mor Gabriel monastery near Midyat, where a bishop resides, there is now a school for some 40 pupils, which is also a kind of preparatory seminar for future priests and monks and similar activities on a smaller scale have also started in the old seat of the Patriarchate, Deyrulzafaran outside Mardin.

Contacts between the Assyrians/Syrians living in Sweden and Tur Abdin have intensified in recent years and the improved security situation has also led to plans for a return home, albeit on a small scale. In the village Kafro, for example, new two- and three-storey houses are being erected by 19 families from Switzerland, Germany and Sweden who plan to return to their home districts where they hope to be able to make a living from wine-growing and from the tourism that is slowly beginning to take off since even the local authorities are becoming aware of the power of attraction of the Christian heritage.

In Turkey's coming membership negotiations with the EU, the situation of the Christian minorities will be in focus and there is therefore reason for optimism regarding the chances of the Syrian Orthodox Church to survive in its ancient home areas.

Ingmar Karlsson

THE TURK AS A THREAT AND
THE EUROPE'S *OTHER*

For most Europeans the words Turk and Turkey have negative associations. A fear of Turks was impressed on western minds during the long period when the Turks governed a large part of Europe and seemed to threaten the existence of Christianity. The comment made in the autumn of 2004 by the then EU Commissioner, Bolkestein, in the discussion about whether or not Turkey should be given a negotiation date shows the persistence of this threat scenario. In case of a yes, he warned, the victory over the Turks outside the gates of Vienna in 1683 would have been in vain. Instead, we would see the Turks rioting inside the gates of Brussels.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 aroused a fear of Turks that was later augmented and was symbolised by names of battlefields and conquered and besieged cities such as Mohács, Peterwardein, Vienna and Belgrade.

The Archbishop of Prague, for example, ordered that the city's church bells should toll at nine o'clock every Friday to remind people of the Turks' painful victory over the Christians. After the Turks had been driven away from Vienna in 1683, the bells were instead tolled as a mark of thanksgiving that the danger from the Turks was over and, in this way, the threat was kept permanently alive in people's consciousness.

As early as the mid-1400s special "missa contra turcas" were celebrated with the message that victory over the Turks was only possible with the help of God. A Christian community was therefore necessary to withstand the cruelty of the Turks: "There are no crueller and more audacious villains under the heavens than the Turks who spare no age or sex and mercilessly cut down young and old alike and pluck unripe fruit from the wombs of mothers" claimed Bishop Fabri of Vienna (1536-41).

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* A lecture held at the Swedish Research Institute 15 December 2005.

In the 16th century about 2 500 publications about Turks, over a thousand of which were in German, were spread around Europe and in these too the image of the bloodthirsty Turk was imprinted. In the period 1480 to 1610, twice as many books were published about the Turkish threat as about the discovery of the continent of America. Claims were spread that the Turks were the descendants of the son, Ismael, whom Abraham had with his Egyptian slave Hagar. In the first book of Moses 16:12 it says: "He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him. And he will live to the east of all his brothers."

Just about all the vices in the world were associated with the Turks. In Italy phrases such as "bestemmia come un Turco" (he swears like a Turk) and "puzza come un Turco" (he stinks like a Turk) were used. The French called rude behaviour, cruelty and greed "turquerie" and when the Spanish wanted to make disparaging remarks about a person, he/she was called "turco". The English expression "to talk turkey to somebody" means to give a frank opinion to the opposite party.

The German repertory ranged from "Türkenhund" (Turkish dog) to "Türkenknecht" (Turkish farm-hand), "Kümmeltürke" (caraway Turk. In the Austrian countryside you can still hear today how children are called in from play: " Es ist schon dunkel. Türken kommen. Türken kommen" (It's already dark, The Turks are coming. The Turks are coming).

In Luther's view, the Turks' invasion was God's punishment of Christianity because it had allowed the corruption of both the Holy See and the Church. In 1518 when he defended his 95 theses, Luther claimed that God had sent the Turks to punish the Christians in the same way as he had sent war, plagues and earthquakes. The reply of Pope Leo X was the famous papal bull in which he threatened Luther with excommunication and attempted to portray Luther as a troublemaker who advocated capitulation to the Turks.

However, in time Luther developed his own grounds for war against the Turks. The Christians could make war against the Turks but must first do penance and reform their lives and their church. Since the Turks were God's punishment, the Christians must first eradicate the grounds for this punishment. When that had been done, they could start a war of defence

which would then be justified: "This struggle must begin with penance and we must change our lives or we will fight in vain."

After the defeat of the Turks outside Vienna in 1683, the image of the dog-Turk began to change. He was no longer as dangerous but changed into a ridiculous figure. In carnival processions and masquerades from Bohemia to the Tyrol from Vienna to the Rhineland, the dog-Turk appeared alongside witches, clowns and other popular comic figures. The Turks were generally ridiculed and the noble European character emphasised. This did not change the image of the brutal Turk but fear of this barbarian lessened and a feeling of superiority emerged that has lasted to the present day.

When the Turkish threat appeared to be over, a veritable Turkish fashion broke out in Europe's theatres and operas. The contents of play were drawn from fantasy and historical half-truths, and the picture of the Turk was often ambivalent and served to cement the image of both the dangerous and the ridiculous Turk. In the plays of Racine and Moliere you could see a funny figure with a turban and fat belly and it was good form to say a few words in Turkish too. In Mozart's Abduction from the Seraglio, Osmin expresses his views on how Christians should be treated:

"Erst geköpft, dann gehangen, dann gespiesst von heissen Stangen, dann verbrannt, dann gebunden, dann getaucht, zuletzt geschunden". (First beheaded, then hanged, then impaled on red-hot spikes, then burned, then bound and drowned, finally flayed)."

In the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire began to establish permanent diplomatic missions in London, Paris, Vienna and Berlin. As a result of these contacts all things Turkish became exotic, not least the dress fashion, "turquoisie". Sultans and pashas were often portrayed as noble and enlightened people in contrast to European rulers. At the Prussian and Saxon courts, feasts, processions and weddings were held á la Turc and Turkish manners became a way for the upper classes to distance themselves from common people. Turkish kiosks were erected in Swedish manorial parks too and Gustav III built a Turkish pavilion at Haga Park.

Turkish Janissary music inspired among others Mozart and Schubert to compose music à la turca. And with the age of enlightenment

and Romanticism there was increased interest in the exotic and greater tolerance of and curiosity about other religions and cultures, which was reflected in the image of the Turk who now came to be regarded in many quarters as the "noble savage".

Voltaire, however, did not hide his hatred of the Turks whom he characterised as "tyrants of the women and enemies of arts". These "barbarian usurpers" must be chased out of Europe. He accused them of having destroyed our ancient heritage from "the Orient's Christian realm" and wrote:

> "I wish fervently that the Turkish barbarians be chased away immediately out of the country of Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Sophocles and Euripides. If we wanted, it could be done soon but seven crusades of superstition have been undertaken and a crusade of honour will never take place. We know almost no city built by them; they let decay the most beautiful establishments of Antiquity, they reign over ruins."

There are countless similar quotations from publications from other 18th century writers. The Turks were perceived as usurpers of the classical heritage that Europe's identity was said to be built on while they themselves were not considered to have a culture worth the name.

The image of Turkish women was also negative. They were described as uneducated, blindly submissive to the will of their parents and husbands. They had to hide their faces and were forced into arranged marriages, subjected to domestic violence and had no control over their own fate whatsoever.

However, there is one exception in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters from Turkey*. In 1716 she accompanied her husband after his appointment as British Ambassador in Istanbul.

She describes how Turkish women expressed their pity at the corset she was wearing when she visited the baths. It must be a male invention: "They thought I had been locked into this machine and was not capable of opening it myself, something which they attributed to my husband."

Never before had she met such beautiful, gifted and satisfied women as there. It was a completely wrong idea that Turkish women lived their days in imprisonment. Turkish women were undoubtedly Europe's most liberated. The veil was not a means of suppressing women. Quite the reverse. They could move freely on the streets without needing to fear harassment thanks to the veil and even evade their husbands' control. Turkish women could move freely and go wherever they wanted on the street. If they were bored in their harem they could meet their women friends at the baths.

Her conclusion was that Turkish men and women were not at all as described in the travel books she had read. The Turks were no more cruel than other people. According to Lady Montagu, the Hungarian prince at Györ treated his subjects far worse than the Turkish Sultan after conquering these areas. The Turks were a cultivated people who attached great importance to literature and architecture. They were far in advance of Europe in medicine too. Smallpox which sorely plagued the English had been eradicated in Turkey through vaccination.

In the 1850s Czar Alexander of Russia talked of Turkey as the sick man of Europe, an expression that stuck in public consciousness and gave the impression that the Ottoman Empire had always suffered under the reign of hopeless, cruel, dissolute and incompetent sultans. A negative image of the Turks and the Ottoman Empire now evolved in Europe, an image that was largely based on prejudice, contempt and fear. In a geography book (*Elements of Geography*) published in London in 1833 the following, for example, may be read:

"The Turks are generally tall, strong and robust. They are an idle, cruel and ignorant people. They like to smoke."

Another geography book (*Géographie Universelle*) published in Paris in 1860 gives this picture:

"The indolent Turk does not know about the excitement of our societies, he rests softly on the pillows of his sofa, smokes tobacco from

Syria, warms up with Mocha coffee, watches dancing slaves; some grains of opium transport him to heavens accompanied by immortal beauties."

The image of the brutal Turks was further impressed by the fight for independence waged by the Christian peoples in the Balkans during the 19th century and which gave rise to the so-called "Eastern question". Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian nationalists attacked Muslim villages in the hope that this would trigger counter-measures on such a scale and of such brutality that the western powers would be induced to intervene on the side of the Christians. Lord Byron's death in Greece in fever in 1823 shortly after he had joined the Greek forces set off a wave of anti-Turkish feeling all over Europe. In spite of the fact that outrages were committed on both sides – the Greeks started their war of independence in 1821 by massacring thousands of Turkish men, women and children at Morea – western public opinion only reacted to Muslim outrages. The Muslims on the Balkans were regarded by their neighbours as *turci* and hence as traitors who had chosen to throw in their lot with the conquerors. Ethnic cleansing of predominantly Muslim areas was carried out by the Serbs as early as the first decades of the 19th century when the Turks were pushed back. On old copperplate from Belgrade, you can see countless minarets. The mosques were levelled to the ground when the Turkish troops left the country.

When, in 1876, Ottoman troops put down a Bulgarian revolt with great brutality and massacred 15 000 men, women and children, the event was used in British domestic politics. William Gladstone wrote a lampoon directed against his rival Benjamin Disraeli – *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* – 200 000 copies of which were sold in two months and cemented the image of the brutal Turk.

The Turks were portrayed as a foreign body that must be driven out of Europe. The American writer, William Milligan Sloane, wrote, for example, after a journey through the European parts of the Ottoman Empire in 1908:

"From Asia they came, to Asia they return with little regret and being a totally unhistoric people it is doubtful whether centuries of European abode would in their future tradition be much more than a tale of Scheherazade. In order to understand and do justice to the Turk we need a fourth dimension. He is our antipode."

The rhetoric increased during the first world war. The British prime minister Lloyd George instructed those responsible for British war propaganda on the aim and direction of anti-Turkish propaganda: "The Turks' inability to govern, their misrule and above all massacres of the hardworking population must be emphasised. I hardly need to point out that this should be done gradually and the articles spread over a long period so that our purpose is not too obvious. Sir Mark Sykes' article in the Times is exactly what we want to see."

In this article, which was later spread throughout the United States, expressions such as merciless tyrant, unprincipled bully, unadulterated barbarians, a degenerate race that has littered the earth with ruins, were used. Sykes even fabricated quotations by different members of the Ottoman government. One of the most sensational claims was that it was the Turks who had invaded and destroyed Baghdad, a conscious attempt to interfuse the history of the Turks and the Mongols.

Not just the English were engaged in this propaganda war. Henry Morgenthau who was the American Ambassador in Istanbul 1913-1916 wrote for example:

"Such graces of civilisation as the Turk has acquired in five centuries have practically all been taken from the subject peoples whom he so greatly despises. His religion comes from the Arabs; his language has acquired a certain literary value by borrowing certain Arabic and Persian elements and his writing is Arabic. Constantinople's finest architectural monument, the mosque of St Sophia was originally a Christian church and all so-called Turkish architecture is derived from the Byzantine. The mechanism of busi-

ness and trade has always rested in the hands of the subject peoples, Greeks, Jews, Armenians and Arabs. The Turks have learned little of European art and science, they have established very few educational institutions and illiteracy is the prevailing rule."

Another American writer and former Ambassador in Berlin, James Gerard, proposed that the Turks should be treated in the same way as America's Indians and placed in reserves and the French historian, André Mandelstam, added that throughout history the Turks had not "done anything to justify their existence from a civilisatory point of view. They are a fruitless people. Their historical role was to destroy and destruction needs no soul."

In spite of the change of direction that took place after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and, following Kemal Atatürk's secular revolution, the expressed will to integrate Turkey into the western world, the image of the Turks in Europe remained negative. Not least the fact that the new republic inherited the blame for the fate of the Armenian population during and after the First World War was a contributory factor and continues to be so.

Membership of the Council of Europe and NATO after the Second World War did not lead to any fundamental change in the image of the Turk which acquired a further dimension when in the early 1950s the Turks began to emigrate to Europe, primarily to Germany, which at that time was in great need of labour. Simple farmers left Anatolia in the hope of returning when they had earned sufficient money. They could not speak the languages of their new home countries and never integrated. They lived in the same areas and were not open to their surroundings. They were unaware of the negative image the Turks already had to deal with in Europe and they did not know enough about their own culture and history to be able to defend themselves against prejudice. Gradually a new image of the Turk emerged – pleasant, rather boring, not afraid to undertake work but a person at whom you turned up your nose. The word Turk now had the same pejorative meaning in Europe as it had had among the elite of the Ottoman Empire.

Prejudices were reinforced elsewhere too. The film Midnight Express, which was a box-office success all over the world after its première in 1978, has contributed perhaps more than anything else to the negative image of the Turks and Turkey.

The film is about a young American who has been given a long prison sentence after being arrested for possession of hash. All the Turks in the film are portrayed as bloodthirsty and sadistic torturers with homosexual inclinations, unshaven and swarthy with unkempt moustaches. All through the film, the imprisoned Billy Hayes and his family talk of the Turks as "pigs".

A reviewer in Le Monde wrote that the action arouses such feelings of hatred in the audience that when they leave the cinema they wish that such a nation did not exist. There is simply no justification for it.

Oliver Stone received an Oscar in 1979 for his film script. When, during a visit to Turkey in December 2004 immediately after Turkey had been given the go ahead for EU membership negotiations, he admitted he had overdramatised what Billy Hayes had told him in interviews which were the basis for the film, this received much publicity and was regarded as a kind of belated national redress.

However, the prejudices still lie deep which may be illustrated, for example, by the definitions of the word Turk in some of our most frequently used dictionaries:

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary: One who is cruel or tyrannical
Concise Oxford Dictionary: Ferocious, wild or unmanageable person
Random House Dictionary: A cruel, brutal or domineering man

The negative image has also been self-inflicted through the economic and political crises and recurring military coups. You have to have lived in Turkey for some time to realise how deeply rooted is the so-called Sèvres complex. The 1920 Peace Treaty of Sèvres would have reduced the Turkish Republic to the areas around Ankara on the Anatolian Plateau and part of the Black Sea coast. With his war of liberation Kemal Atatürk tore

this up and by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 the Republic of Turkey was established. However, many Turks still have a deeply rooted conviction that underlying the world's interest in human rights and the situation of minorities in Turkey there is a hidden agenda characterised by Sèvres, which has led to an often aggressive and contra-productive attitude of self-defence which in its turn has been reinforced by continuous Greek, Armenian and Kurdish anti-Turkish propaganda.

This mentality which is reflected in the phrase "Türkün Türkten baska dostu yoktur" (The Turk is the Turk's only friend) is now in process of changing. Turkey's popularity as a tourist country and the hospitality, openness and friendliness with which all visitors are received has also contributed to a gradual dismantling of the negative image of the Turk which was impressed on Europe for centuries.

More and more Europeans will realise that Istanbul is not a Cairo which happens to partly lie on the continent of Europe but an international metropolis comparable with New York, ("the coolest city in Europe, to quote a cover story in Newsweek from August 2005) all it will emerge that the Turkey that exists today in European ghettos such as Kreuzberg in Berlin belongs to the past and has not taken part in the development which the Republic of Turkey is undergoing today.

The EU membership negotiations will result in increasing and ever broader areas of contact and as a result of this process prejudices on both sides will decline. Europeans will return from Turkey with the same experience as a French traveller in 1652:

> "There are many in Christendom who believe that the Turks are great devils, barbarians and people without faith but those who have known them and talked to them have a quite different opinion. It is certain that the Turks are good people who follow very well the commandment given to us by nature, only to do to others what we would have done to us.

Ingmar Karlsson

THE KARAIMS AND THE GAGAUZ, THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TURKS*

In Trakai in Lithuania opposite the island in Lake Galve where the city's medieval castle stands, there is a street with very special houses. They are all wooden and painted green and yellow and each of them has three windows facing the street.

Here, since more than 600 years, one of Europe's most remarkable and distinctive minorities, the Karaim, have been living on "Karaimu Gatve", i.e. on Karaimu street.

Their history in Lithuania began when, after the war against the Mongolian Golden Horde in Crimea in 1397, the Polish-Lithuanian King Vytautas Magnus brought 380 Karaim families with him to his capital city Trakai.

They were given the task of guarding the royal castle, as the only access to it was across a bridge from the part of the city the Karaim were allotted . Initially they worked as castle guards. In 1441 they were granted the same rights as the citizens of Magdeburg – known as the Right of Magdeburg by the Polish – Lithuanian king Kasimir IV. This could be seen as a model of self-government at that time , and the purpose was to ensure that they would become permanent residents. The Karaims increasingly engaged in agriculture and horticulture, horse breeding, and different handicrafts and gradually came to constitute a middle class between the aristocracy and the farmers who tilled the soil.

The head of the Karaim was the elected "vaitas" and he was their official representative in contacts with the Polish-Lithuanian kings. Their houses had three windows facing the street because this demonstrated wealth while to have four windows was considered to be showy and conspicuous.

*   A lecture given at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul on February 22 2006.

On Karaimu Gatve one also finds the only "kenesa" in Europe, the shrine where the Karaim practise the distinctive religion that has given them their identity.

The religion of the Karaim was founded in the 8th century in Baghdad by a man named Anan Ben David. He based his teachings on the written Torah and rejected the oral tradition reflected in Talmud literature.

Thus, according to him God's pure and true words were only to be found in the Old Testament. He considered this interpretation to be a continuation of the old Jewish tradition and himself to be a successor to the Essenes of Qumran.

Everyone should closely study the Old Testament on his own and interpret the text according to his own ideas. "Thoroughly research the Torah and do not rely on my view" is a motto attributed to Anan Ben David. No believer was to follow rules the meaning of which he did not understand even after having read them carefully. Thus, the Old Testament should be interpreted individually and independently, without reference to authorities and with the Ten Commandments as the moral norms. According to some this central message explains the name of the sect and the word karaim is believed to be derived from the Hebrew word " karaa", to read, which may thus refer to the fact that they only accept the written word.

Both Christ and Mohammed are regarded as Karaim prophets and the religion is also influenced by Muslim schools such as the Mutazilit school of philosophy and the Hanafi school of law.

The emphasis on the written word "sola scriptura", which Martin Luther was to assert 800 years later in relation to Rome, made German Protestants regard the Karaim as forerunners of the Reformation.

When the Karaim centre was moved from Baghdad to Jerusalem, the religion began spreading through missionary activities to the Turkic-speaking peoples on the Crimean peninsula and the steppes of the lower Volga region. The Khazars, the Kipchak-Kumans and the Polovts were converted to the new religion during the 9th century, the ulterior political motive perhaps being that they would then constitute a buffer zone

between the Russian Orthodox Church advancing from the north and the Muslim expansion from the south and therefore left in peace.

There is another point of similarity between the Karaim and Protestantism which has contributed to preserving their identity, namely, they worship in their own language, Karaim.

This language belongs to the Kipchak group in the Turkic-Altaic family and it is closely related to the language of the Crimean Tatars.

Since Karaim was an isolated linguistic island surrounded by the Slavic languages Russian and Polish, and Lithuanian, it contains many old Turkic words which do not exist in the Turkic languages spoken today. Hence, Karaim is of special interest for comparative Turkic linguistics – a Polish linguistic researcher has compared it to a fly encapsulated in a piece of amber.

After a visit to Lithuania in 1691, Professor Gustav Peringer from Uppsala University was the first to establish that Karaim belonged to the Turkic language group. One of the foremost experts on the Karaim language today is Eva Csato Johansson at Uppsala University.

The Karaim enjoyed their autonomy according to the Right of Magdeburg until the Third Division of Poland in the late 18th century when they ended up in the Russian Empire. Half of the inhabitants of Trakai were Karaim. Their legal status changed. At first, they were lumped together with the Muslim Crimean Tatars, in 1863 however, they received the status of a religious minority of their own with a special high priest, "hakhan", for the western provinces of the Russian Empire.

During the First World War the Karaim were evacuated to Russian towns, mainly to the Crimea. They were able to return in 1920 but found themselves divided between two nations, Lithuania and Poland, where Trakai was now situated. Families got split up and communications between the two communities became more difficult. However, the national feeling got strengthened by the growing nationalism in the resurrected Lithuanian and Polish nation states.

There were therefore extensive cultural activities going on during the inter-war period. A journal "Karai Avazy" (Voice of the Karaim) was published as well as a historical and literary magazine "Mysl Karaimska"

(Karaim Thought), which contained texts in the Karaim language. Also a society of the friends of Karaim literature and history was founded.

When the German Wehrmacht ran into the Karaim in their thrust eastward, the latter denied any connection to Judaism. They had always repudiated any connection between Judaism and their religion, claiming instead that they were a distinctive religious community.

They were supported in this by Meir Balaban, a learned Jew from the Warsaw ghetto. He was forced by the Nazis to make an evaluation of the Karaim from the religious and racial point of view. Despite the fact that in his earlier publications he had always characterised the Karaim as a branch of Judaism, he now claimed the opposite to save them from the holocaust.

German National Socialist race researchers declared that the Karaim indeed belonged to a Jewish sect but at the same time established that they had no Jewish blood in their veins but were in fact Turkic Tatars. There was probably a political background to this ethnic determination. Hitler saw in the Crimean Tatars an ally against the Soviet Union and since they regarded the Karaim as Tatars, persecution or annihilation of them would have jeopardised their alliance plans.

After the Second World War the borders were again redrawn and Trakai ended up in the Soviet Republic of Lithuania. The Karaim school building was converted into apartment building and the "kenesa" built in Vilnius during the period of Lithuanian independence became a warehouse.

The Karaim took an active part in the strive for Lithuania's independence. In May 1988 the Lithuanian Karaim Cultural Society was founded and an anthology of poetry and a prayer book were published in the Karaim language. In April 1992 the Karaim ethnic group was given special legal status as a religious minority having existed in Lithuania since the 14th century.

Trakai has now again become the centre for the spiritual life of the Karaim. They come here to see the place to which the King Vytautas Magnus, whose portrait is to be found in most Karaim homes, brought their ancestors, and to visit their "kenesa". This is a square building with a copper roof. There are oriental rugs on the floor and the men sit in the main nave

while the women follow the divine service from a gallery separated from the nave by a wall from which only narrow slits provide a view of the altar.

In this "kenesa", representatives of the small Karaim communities dispersed over Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and the Crimea had a meeting in 1989. Contacts have also been established with the small Karaim (Karait) communities in Israel, Istanbul, and the United States . There exists though a fundamental dividing-line among them. While the East European Karaim emphasise the independent nature of their communion, the others consider themselves to be Karaim Jews. They regard their religion as being based on Judaism in the same way as Christianity is a religion based on Judaism.

In addition to the religion, various old customs and traditions of the Turkic peoples in Caucasus and Central Asia have played a major role in preserving the Karaim identity. These include e.g. the wedding traditions with the bride's melodious and mournful farewell song "Muzhul Kielin" (The Sad Bride) and choosing the "ataman" (matrimonial agent) for the wedding, as well as the moral advice the community´s elders , "aksakals", give about future married life and the song sung when the couple enter the shrine.

In 1997 the six hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Karaim in Trakai was celebrated. A detailed census of the Karaim in Lithuania was carried out in this connection. At that time there were 257 Karaims in Lithuania, 132 men and 125 women. 32 of these were under 16. 139 lived in Vilnius, 65 in Trakai and 31 in the town Panevezys. Furthermore, there were 133 Karaim in Poland, living in Warsaw, Gdansk and Wroclaw, respectively.

82 per cent gave Karaim as their mother tongue but only 31 per cent could speak the language and only 13 per cent said they used it in both speech and writing. Over 60 per cent spoke Lithuanian, Russian, and Polish. Among young people under 16 only three spoke Karaim, a figure that must be seen in the light of the fact that the number of Karaim in Lithuania was 423 in 1959 and 352 in 1979.

The future may therefore seem gloomy but bearing in mind the high level of education and strong awareness of their distinctive identity, the Karaim have better chances of surviving than some of other remnants of peoples.

While 11 per cent of the Lithuanian population had undergone higher education, the figure for the Karaim was no less than 44 per cent. 66 per cent were in leading posts in the administration, 6 had PhDs and were employed in the new independent Lithuania's foreign service. Two of the most important posts, Ambassadors in Moscow and in Tallinn were both held by Karaim.

The latter, Halina Kobeckaité subsequently became the Lithuanian Ambassador to Turkey, a post which she left last year.

THE GAGAUZ – A CHRISTIAN TURKIC PEOPLE

Following the disintegration of the Soviet empire on 19 August 1990 a hitherto unknown Christian people suddenly emerged on the map of Europe. Wedged in between Romania and Ukraine in the south-western corner of the to 65% Romanian-speaking Moldavian Soviet Republic, the independent Republic of Gagauzia was namely proclaimed.

The foundation was thereby laid for yet another conflict in what was once the Soviet Union. Shortly after the proclamation of the Republic of Gagauzia, the Russians and Ukrainians in the area east of the Dnjestr proclaimed their own Soviet Republic led by former Communists, "the Socialist Soviet Moldavian Republic of Djnestr". This "Transnistria" confirmed its ambition to become independent in a referendum held on 1 December 1991.

Who were these Gagauz who were now demanding their place on the map of Europe?

Their origin is unclear. There are no less than 19 different theories about their origin. According to a Romanian theory they are an ancient Romanian tribe – the "Uzi" – who originally lived north of the Danube. According to other explanations they are Christian Turks, Turkic Slavic Bulgarians, Turkic Greeks, descendents of the Turkic Bulgarians, or a combination of these peoples.

The most accepted theory claims that the Gagauz are descendents of the Turkic Oğuz tribes who in the 7th century, together with the Huns, the Khazars, the Avars, the Petchenegs, and the Kumans left the Altai mountains, today the borderland between the former Soviet Union and Mongolia.

Across the steppes of central Asia and the areas around the Caspian Sea they finally reached the plains south of the outflow of the river Danube where they settled. According to this theory when the Bulgarians under Boris I converted to Christianity in 864, the Gagauz followed their example.

Fleeing from the Mongols, they are said to have received from the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologous in Constantinople in 1261 an area of land along the Black Sea coast in the borderland between what is now Bulgaria and Romania. Under their sultan Izz al-Din Kay-Kaus they established an independent state there with the present day city of Kavarna as it's capital. The new state, the population of which is believed to have got its name through a derivation from this Kay Kaus, built up its own army and navy. It lasted until 1398 when the last Gagauz ruler was forced to recognise the supremacy of the Ottoman sultan in worldly matters. The Gagauz retained their religion however and only adopted the language of their conquerors. The Greek Orthodox patriarch in Constantinople remained the head of the church and Church Slavonic and Greek were kept as liturgical languages.

In the mid-18th century, a Gagauz emigration across the Danube into Russia began and when the Russians withdrew, after having occupied large parts of present day Bulgaria in their war with the Turks, practically all of the remaining Gagauz population followed along and settled in the areas of present day Moldova which now constitutes their centre.

A Russian observer described them as "Turkic-Bulgarian bastards". In a Russian census from 1897 they are not included as a particular group but are lumped together with Moldovans, Vlachs, Ruthenians, Romany, and other minority peoples in this area. They are included among the approximately 55 000 "Ottoman Turks" and 100 000 Bulgarians who were then registered.

At the beginning of the 20th century, close to 90 per cent of Gagauz men and practically all the women were illiterate.

During the inter-war period, when the Gagauz areas in what was known as Bessarabia belonged to Romania, no efforts were made to improve the living conditions of this small minority. A kind of Gagauz mini renaissance occurred, however, in the 1920s and 1930s thanks to the efforts of a

priest. He compiled a first Gagauz dictionary and wrote a grammar of the Gagauz language. He translated various religious documents and wrote also a short Gagauz history but he did not discuss any theories about the origin of this people.

As a result of the so-called Hitler-Stalin Pact signed before the Second World War, Bessarabia was allotted to the Soviet Union. The situation did not improve after the Second World War as "Gagauzia" became part of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. The language had traditionally been written using Greek letters. A Cyrillic Gagauz alphabet was construed in 1957. The following year, under Chruschev's "thaw", schools were opened with teaching in Gagauz and text books were written for this purpose in the language but these schools were short-lived. They were closed in the early 1960s and Gagauz subsequently disappeared entirely from the educational system and cultural life in general and it was not even a subject of academic linguistic studies any more.

An anthology of Gagauz poetry was though published in 1964 but very few other works. A magazine in Gagauz was issued twice a month in Chisinau as a supplement to the party organ Moldova Socialista. Beside several ethnographic studies were published, a grammar was published in 1990 but it was in Russian with very few translations into Gagauz. During the entire post-war period between 1945-1990 only some thirty books, including translations, were published in the language.

The Gagauz were traditionally engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry and wine-growing. During the Soviet period, the Gagauz population lived mainly in kolchoses in rural areas and became russified to a high degree. In connection with the independence of Moldova, 75 per cent gave Russian as their second language while only four per cent claimed to be fluent in Moldovan, the official language of the new state, closely related to Romanian. 91 per cent gave Gagauz as their mother tongue.

Towards the end of the perestroika, a Gagauz cultural club was established in the main town of Komrat and it gained gradually importance and finally became an umbrella organisation Gagauz Halki (the Gagauz people). A representative of this organisation later took part in establishing

the Moldovan "Popular Front" in the capital Chisinau in May 1989. The general underdevelopment in the Gagauz areas made the small Gagauz intellectual elite set their hopes to the Popular Front's reform programme.

A Gagauz university, half private, half state-financed, was opened in the main town of Komrat in 1991 with about thousand students divided among three faculties of agriculture, economics and "national culture". The major Moldovan daily newspaper began to issue a weekly supplement in Gagauz, Ana Sözü (mother tongue), and a writer's union was founded. The Moldovan TV and radio began sending monthly broadcasts in Gagauz, and a local TV station was established in Komrat as well as a small film academy.

However, conflicts within the Gagauz group were a major obstacle to the efforts to revitalise the language and the national culture. Some of the leading personalities tried to link up with the Turkish background while others stressed the Russian roots of the Gagauz culture and tried to strengthen the ties between the Gagauz community and the Russian Federation. For obvious political reasons the Popular Front in the capital Chisinau supported the first wing and, in 1993, a Latin alphabet for the language was adopted which had been drawn up in collaboration with Turkish language maintenance authorities.

When the Popular Front acquired an increasingly pronounced Romania-friendly focus in its activities, the Gagauz lost interest in it. From the Gagauz viewpoint it had primarily been seen as an instrument for obtaining economic and political concessions from the central government in the capital. Most Gagauz had no desire to leave the Soviet Union and therefore strongly opposed the Popular Front's pan-Romanian tendencies.

In reaction to these, an autonomous Gagauz Republic was proclaimed in September 1989. Tension increased between the Gagauz and the central government which culminated in August 1990 when, as mentioned above, the "Gagauz Soviet Socialist Republic" was proclaimed.

The organisation Gagauz Halki was outlawed. Troops made up of Moldovan "volunteers" and strengthened by vodka set off for the Gagauz areas using stolen public transport buses. The Gagauz for their part organised a self-defence force and at the same time "worker brigades" were assem-

bled from Transnistria, the other separatist republic in Moldova, to assist the Gagauz. In late October 1990, some 40 000 Moldovans stood against as many Gagauz and Russian and Ukrainian-speaking Transnistrians. The small Moldovan militia could not keep the situation under control and clashes led to fatalities. A state of emergency was declared and peace and order could only be restored by the intervention of Soviet special forces stationed in Ukraine.

When on 1 December 1991 the Republic of Moldova held its first presidential election following independence, the Gagauz again expressed their wish for sovereignty – this time through a clear majority in a referendum. A constitution was adopted and a presidency established with Stepan Topal, a constructional engineer, as first head of state. The capital city became the largest town in the Gagauz area, Komrat.

This decision was not accepted by the Moldovan government in the capital Chisinau. The Moldovan declaration of independence in 1991 further widened the rift since the Gagauz leaders welcomed the coup in Moscow as an attempt to stop the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Like many other small peoples in the former Soviet empire, the Gagauz considered reawakened nationalism a greater threat to their future than Soviet "internationalism". It gradually became clear that the main purpose of the declaration of this republic had not been real independence, this action had primarily aimed at obtaining a greater freedom from the central government.

After the parliamentary elections in Moldova in 1994 these demands received a better hearing and both the new Prime Minister, Sangheli, and the President of the Republic, Snegur, stated that they were in favour of Gagauz independence.

In December 1994, the Moldovan parliament adopted a law concerning Gagauz autonomy. In the preamble, the Gagauz are designated a people ("popor") and the need to preserve and develop their national identity is underscored. By this law an "autonomous territorial unit with a special legal position in the form of self-determination for the Gagauz which is a constituent part of the Republic of Moldova" was created. As a special concession to the Gagauz, the agreement also contains a clause to counter their

fears of a future Moldovan union with Romania according to which should the status of Moldova as an independent state be changed, the people of Gagauzia have a somewhat obscure right to "external self-determination".

Under the agreement on autonomy a Popular Assembly, Halk Toplusu, shall be elected directly for a period of four years with the authority to legislate in matters concerning culture and education, the local economy, building construction, health care, environmental issues, local budget and social security. Foreign and defence policy are entirely in the hands of the central government and it is further stated in the agreement that all laws that may contravene with Moldova's Constitution are invalid. Furthermore, one of the two deputy speakers in the Assembly must come from an ethnic group other than the Gagauz.

The highest person in authority is the governor, "bashkan", who must be at least 35 years of age, speak Gagauz and may not be elected for more than two four-year periods. The governor is also an ex officio member of the Moldovan government and may be removed from office by a two third's majority in the Popular Assembly. To his assistance the governor has a local government in the form of an executive committee (Bakannik Komitesi).

In contrast to the situation in the separatist republic Transnistria, the problem of irregular military forces got solved by integrating the Gagauz free troops with the Moldovan domestic troops which even received remuneration for their solidarity with the central government.

All three languages, Gagauz, Russian, and Moldovan were made official in the area.

On 5 March 1995, referendums were held in 36 municipalities in southern Moldova, 30 of which joined the autonomous area. In the five districts which today make up the Gagauz area, Gagauz Yeri, the Gagauz constitute the majority of the population in only two. In both cases, including the main town Komrat, they are not more than about 65 per cent of the population and in all there is a Gagauz majority in only 28 villages and small towns in the entire area.

Gagauzia now covers 1 800 square kilometres or slightly more than five per cent of Moldova's surface area and has approximately 170 000

inhabitants. However, there are no official maps of Gagauzia, probably mainly in order to avoid overtly demonstrating the geographic split-up. The autonomous area may be described as an archipelago with four large and a number of lesser islands in the landscape of southern Moldova.

In the Gagauz case, no news may be said to be good news and since autonomy was introduced in 1995, the Gagauz issue has not been a troubling element leading to headlines in the international media. What originally appeared to be a regional conflict that might threaten the unity of the state of Moldova has been reduced to a question of local self-government.

It has, however, entailed one problem. When the conflict was most acute, the number of visitors from the OSCE, Council of Europe, EU, and other international institutions and organisations was so extensive that a restaurant of relatively high quality could be run in Komrat. It became the first victim of the peaceful settlement.

Gagauzia has again become a forgotten area on the fringes of Europe's poorest country with the difference that the region now has its own flag, pale blue with three white stars in the left corner and red and white stripes at the bottom.

As mentioned above, the Gagauz language is closely related to Turkish. Approximately 80% of the vocabulary is about the same but the language has been affected by the fact that the Gagauz are Christians. Via church language, Slavic elements have been introduced and Gagauz has also been influenced by its Romanian-speaking environment. One problem is that Gagauz has stagnated as a language and, so to speak, remained at an everyday level without words and expressions for modern phenomena. However, through its close relationship with Turkish, this problem can be remedied and Turkey has recently made teachers available for Gagauz schools.

Furthermore, Gagauz students are welcome at Turkish universities and, through a special exchange programme, Turkish teachers and students play an active role at the university of Komrat. A Gagauz library has been financed with Turkish money as well as the shift from the Russian Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin alphabet. Also, the Turkish Ministry of Culture has published a series of books on Gagauz history and culture.

There are also Gagauz settlements in the regions around Odessa in Ukraine and Rostov in Russia. Furthermore, small groups live in the vicinity of Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan and in the areas around the capitals of Kyrgyzistan and Uzbekistan, Bishkek and Tashkent.

In connection with the last ethnic census in Bulgaria in 1905, 6 983 people stated they were Gagauz. The number is probably no greater today. They continue to live in the regions around their original centre, the town Kavarna on the Black Sea coast. However, contacts between them and the Moldovan Gagauz were broken long ago. During the Communist period the Bulgarian authorities usually refused to grant them travel visas and if such a visa was obtained, a new struggle had to be faced with the Romanian bureaucracy for a transit visa.

In Bulgaria the language is spoken only by elderly people and Gagauz culture is dying out. All that remains are folk songs and folk costumes, some special dishes and distinctly Gagauz superstitions. A black cat that washes itself means bad luck, horses are said to bear devils within them, and before the wedding a bridegroom must climb to the top of a tree and there drink wine if he is to be happy in his married life.

There are also smaller groups of Gagauz around Alexandroupolis in north-eastern Greece.

The former Gagauz ethnic group in Romania appears to be completely Romanized now. The Gagauz have been well aware of this danger and this has certainly been a strong additional factor for their strive for autonomy and distrust of all schemes of a Moldovan association with Romania.

There are probably also many Gagauz living in Turkey today. However, unlike the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, the Turkic minorities on the Balkans, and the Muslims in Bosnia, the Gagauz cannot count on Turkish citizenship should they move to Turkey. The Act on Turkish Citizenship, based on jus sanguinis, clearly has a religious component. Blood ties are not enough and the religious factor thus plays a part even though Turkey is a secular state.

Ingmar Karlsson

ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY: TWO IRRECONCILABLE CONCEPTS?*

When our eyes were opened in Sweden to Islam as a political phenomenon just before the fall of the Shah in 1979, Ayatolla Khomeini was described in Dagens Nyheter as an Iranian Per Albin Hansson and the chador, the veil, as a symbol of women's liberation. Readers received the message that the Koran was basically an Arabic version of the Social Democratic Party manifesto. In the Swedish Riksdag, one of the foreign policy experts of the Left Party Communists declared the party's contacts with the clergy in Iran had made it clear that Khomeini was really a true Hermanssonite.

Thus, the debate was typical of the revolutionary romanticism prevalent in Sweden at that time. Like all other previous revolutions, the Islamic revolution was expected to automatically lead to an ideal society.

It proved not to be quite that simple, *inter alia* because there is no political theory in Islam. The Koran's political messages may largely be said to be formulated in such general terms as to be compatible with ideologies across the entire political left-right spectrum. This is, of course, also true of the Bible which is cited as an ideological basis by politicians across a broad political spectrum from General Augusto Pinochet in Chile to dual-faith Christian Marxists, a species probably now dying out. In Sweden too we can see examples of Christians with irreconcilable political views. And there is no dearth of Islamic theologians and political theorists willing to justify different groups' claims of representing the true belief. Nothing is easier for them than to proclaim an opponent to be *adou Allah* (the enemy of Allah) with the aid of selected quotations from the Koran, *sunnah* (the way of the prophet) or *hadith* (traditions).

Only 200 of the Koran's 6 000 verses are normative and from these only three clear conclusions can be drawn:

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* Lecture at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul October 12 2006.

- the state must be led by one person (caliph or emir) and not by a committee or politburo. This person shall act as the prophet's successor but not, in contrast to the Pope, play the role of God's representative.
- Islam is a state religion, which means the head of state must be a Muslim and all legislation must follow the Koran which is thereby given constitutional status.
- the executive and legislative function shall be exercised on the basis of consultation, *shura*, which is the title of the forty-second sura in the Koran.

Sometimes a statement by the prophet himself is also cited: God and his prophet are not in need of "shura" but for my communion God has made consultation a mercy, for he who consults shall not be without guidance on the Right Way, he who neglects to consult will be rich in mistakes.

While both Muslim fundamentalists and radical secularists reject every form of parliamentary democracy as being incompatible with religious traditions, at the same time many Muslim intellectuals and Islamic activists have tried to reconcile the Koran's message with democracy. In this debate, an attempt is made to show that Islamic methods of politically organising society are superior to western methods, in both moral and practical terms, and that Islam in fact served as a source of inspiration to European thinkers during the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment.

The majority of those taking part in the discussion since then have agreed that Islam is *din wa dawla*, that is to say religion and state, and that these concepts are one and cannot be separated. Even though a secular social model has been rejected, a difference is still made between the religious sphere and more worldly concerns, between the holy and the profane, and between the eternal and the temporal. In this discussion, great importance has been attached to the principle of *shura*. Many writers proposed that the different political functions be divided between a regent and a legislative assembly in the form of a *shura* or a parliament so that political balance can be maintained. The importance of an independent judiciary has

also been underscored and proposals presented for a higher constitutional court to guarantee lawful forms of rule.

However, several issues have been controversial. Is this consultation a duty of the regent and in that case is he bound by its decisions? Should he himself appoint the members of a consultative assembly or should they be elected members from the Muslim community or belong to formal institutions such as parties? Should they be religious experts or should their expertise lie in other areas? Should they take majority decisions and should all important issues be subject to consultation?

Even those who considered that a consultative procedure is necessary, that the result must be binding and who would also like a *shura* to be made up of elected members with special expertise in different areas, have at the same time asserted that decisions should be taken on the basis of an objective truth, that is to say the Koran. A *shura* should not therefore take the form of a political assembly where different basic political views are debated and adopted or rejected.

The ideal aimed for is consequently rule by experts with a just regent at the top more than a genuine political process with representation of interests and competitive views. Thus, the Iranian constitution asserts the right of experts. Above parliament there is the Guardian Council which has a right of veto over all decisions taken by the popularly elected assembly.

It is a question of a moral and not a political principle. In the debate on pluralism, it is indeed recognised that God created people differently and that differences of opinion are therefore natural occurrences and may even be beneficial to Muslim society, however this is on condition that they stay within the limits of the faith and general decency.

Unrestricted and organised freedom of expression is viewed with distaste even in today's Muslim reformist discussion. The limit is sharp and clear. The enemies of Islam cannot be tolerated, nor the hypocrite, atheist or sceptic. For many Islamists, not least those who belong to the Muslim Brotherhood active in large parts of the Arab world, Islam and democracy is and will by definition remain an impossibility. The idea that all citizens are equal is said to contravene the foundations of Islam since there are insur-

mountable and eternal differences between believers and non-believers, between rich and poor, between husband and wife(wives) and between jurists and the congregation. Nor is there any need for a legislative assembly since Islam does not have any deficiencies that need to be remedied.

The leading theorist of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Sayid Qutb, strongly opposed any idea of the sovereignty of the people. This would be tantamount to setting aside God's sovereignty and a kind of tyranny since the will of the individual would be subjected to the will of other individuals. Instead, the only solution to the problem of democracy, according to Qutb, was to restore the supremacy of divine rule:

Every form of aggression against God's rule on earth – democracy was an example of this – Qutb equated with *jahiliyya*, the period of deepest ignorance that preceded Mohammed. Certainly, Qutb considered that an Islamic state must be based on the principle of *shura* but at the same time he was of the view that Muslim law was so perfect as a legal and moral system that further legislation was both unnecessary and impossible. New laws would therefore only be harmful.

So the odds appear to be against democratic systems in the foreseeable future in Europe's neighbouring areas in the Middle East and North Africa. During the 1980s and 1990s the strongest opposition came from fundamentalist groups and not from parties or organisations that appealed for a western type of democratic system.

Has the opportunity already been lost? Did we perhaps already stand at a decisive cross-roads a couple of decades ago? Islamists and fundamentalists were marginal in politics at that time and the political debate was largely secular. Internal élites had a western upbringing and education and governments still had societies under reasonable control. The population bomb had not yet exploded. Urbanisation problems were manageable and the secular, west-oriented and putative socialist parties not yet totally discredited. However, the regimes were too authoritarian and based on special interests to understand the necessity of democratisation and the western world's interest in democracy and human rights outside Europe was not as pronounced as it is now. Furthermore, in the 1950s and 1960s many

accepted that democratic rights be suppressed on the grounds that it was necessary both for the survival of individual nations and for the sake of Arab unity and the fight against Israel. An Arab socialism based on a one-party system was also claimed and considered in many quarters, including Europe, to be a precondition for economic development. This applied not least to the now so discredited NLF version of Algerian socialism.

Awareness is now growing that none of these goals could defend the suppression of democratic rights. Nowadays, the Islamic world is also inundated with information and just as in Africa, Latin America or Asia, the despots cannot isolate their citizens from CNN and continuous information about political events and trends in the rest of the world. Hundreds of guest workers take their experience home from Europe. Like Coca Cola, the word democracy does not need to be translated

Many of the regimes in the Arab world have realised this and liberalisation has been their answer. This is far from being tantamount to democracy, however freedom of speech has improved in some places, limits have been set for overly arbitrary exercise of power and political parties and associations have been accepted. In Egypt, Jordan, Yemen and Kuwait, Islamic parties with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood have chosen to follow a parliamentary path and have been allowed to take part in political life and openly express their criticism of the government's policy. Furthermore, in Egypt and Lebanon, Islamic parties have formed coalitions with non-Islamic parties, something which was previously inconceivable. Islamic organisations have also started their own newspapers, financial institutions and schools and their influence is noticeable at universities and in trade union organisations and women's organisations.

Free thought cannot be fettered was the message on banderoles during student demonstrations in Teheran in the summer of 1999. The most far-reaching and interesting reform thinking is now taking place in Iran. The actual central idea of the Islamic state is rejected there by Islamic theologians who claim that the greatest threat to Islam in Iran is the experience the Iranians have of 25 years of Islamic rule.

For many reasons people are increasingly turning away from the reli-

gious leadership and politico-religious oppression, and the corruption, both moral and financial, which characterises many of the religious leaders and their inability to manage the economy. The election of the former revolutionary guard Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president was above all a protest election in spite of his religious image and he received most of his votes from the growing proletariat in the slums of the big cities while the groups who are striving for a democratic development boycotted the election. Gradually, ordinary people have got used to living double lives as during the Shah period but now in reverse. Before the revolution, prayers were often said at home before going out to celebrate. Now prayers are said in public mosques while celebrations take place within people's own four walls.

Prominent theologians such as Mohammed Mojtahed Shabestari and Abdul-Karim Soroosh constitute the most dangerous opposition to the "Guardian Council" which has the real power in the country, since this opposition is presented from Islamic points of departure.

The basic idea is that Islamic values should certainly play a fundamental role in the state but that the citizens are its sovereign irrespective of religious attitude. The idealisation of Islam was a consequence of the Shah's enforced modernisation policy. Now instead, it is a matter of finding a way back to a depoliticised piety. Since Islam is identified with the state, the religion is also responsible for all the bad conditions. The consequence will be not just religious hypocrisy and loss of religious values but also secularisation and in continuation atheism.

Mohammed Mojtahed Shabestari asserts that democracy and human rights are the highest norms that shall be respected in a polity. These norms are, above all, religious boundaries. Political freedom, civil rights and freedoms are linked to relations between people and their relationship to society and the state and therefore have nothing to do with religion. A democratic form of government without the Islamic prefix is compatible with Islam since Islam does not prescribe any special form of government. Mohammed complied with the polity that prevailed during his life and throughout the history of Islam we have seen many forms of government adapted to the conditions of their time.

Abdul-Karim Soroosh chiefly attacks the idealisation Islam was subject to in the last century. He calls politicised Islam a line of thought that has engaged in people's political, social and moral lives in a tyrannical way and given a simplified picture of the world as an arena for combat with religion as a weapon. When the opportunity for and necessity of a new interpretation is denied as has been the case and continues to be so, not only the diversity but also the depth and complexity of the religion disappears.

Soroosh's thoughts are based on a minimalist definition of the role of religion. He stresses ethics and draws a decisive dividing line between a religious state based on Islamic values and an Islamic ideological state. His objective is to "reduce religion's public influence in order in this way to lay the foundation for a pluralist society". Soroosh views the democracy discussion as part of a larger project to reform Islam. Islam must become reconciled with scientific progress:

"Let us differentiate between religion on the one hand and our interpretations of religion on the other. I mean by religion not the faith that is the subjective side of religion but the objective side which consists of the disclosed text. The Koran does not change but our understanding of it is subject to change. Advances are made in science, new areas of knowledge are won and this will inevitably have consequences for religious knowledge."

Thus, the basic idea is that while religion implies freedom, perfection and holiness, theology is always in process of change and under the influence of and dependent on other areas of knowledge. If there is a decisive breakthrough in an area "this wave will be propagated and set the whole sea of science in motion. If scientific knowledge of the cosmos increases this will also produce truer theological knowledge."

Throughout history Islamic scholars have interpreted the text of the Koran in different ways. According to Soroosh, the historic contexts must be brought to the fore and given decisive importance:

"The texts never stand alone and are not necessarily bearers of their own meaning. They must be put in their context, they are loaded

with theory. We cannot make an exception for religious texts. The interpretation of them is in a state of constant change."

This has consequences for Islamic law also. Soroosh considers this to be a historic product. While traditional legal thinking is elaborated according to methods from a distant past, what may be called dynamic legal thinking can open paths to new answers. He takes as an example the question of equal rights for Muslims and non-Muslims in a Muslim society. Traditional legal thinking makes a distinction which Soroosh cannot accept. Religious affinity cannot be sufficient as a basis for rights, it is rather as human beings we have these rights. The goal must always be to promote a religious perception that focuses on individual religious experience and God's love.

The growing number of intellectuals in the Muslim world who now advocate a modern interpretation of Islam do not constitute a pressure group with a common agenda. They receive support neither from governments nor traditionalist nor radical groups. The traditionalists consider them westernised, the radicals consider them compromised and the authoritarian regimes consider them dangerous.

A process of democratisation must come from within and the preconditions for this differ from country to country. An absolute precondition is that there is a feeling of common history, national affinity and national identity. Bush could therefore not have chosen a worse guinea-pig than Iraq for his ambitions to introduce democracy from outside, which is then to spread its light over the Muslim world. When the British and French mandatory powers redrew the political map of the Middle East after the First World War, state boundaries in the Middle East were drawn to suit the aims of the colonial powers and precisely to undermine national unity and stability which are necessary for a well functioning democracy.

The longer the occupation of Iraq lasts, the greater will be the credibility of Bin Laden's argumentation that the Muslim world as a whole was the main target from the very beginning. Iraq was attacked and not North Korea which was a greater threat. Saddam Hussein's claimed possession of

weapons of mass destruction proved to be a pretext and for many Muslims the occupation of Baghdad is the most humiliating occurrence since the loss of eastern Jerusalem in 1967. As the capital city of the Islamic caliphate during a six-hundred-year period of glory, the city has great symbolic value. Moreover, the Iraqi regime's rapid and total collapse further strengthened Bin Laden's argument that neither secular Islamism nor Arab nationalism can free the Muslim world but rather salvation lies in Islam and a permanent violent military jihad. If just one per thousand of the population in the Muslim world believes in these arguments, it means a recruitment base of over a million people. Blind terror directed against American and other western targets as recently in London will therefore probably remain a phenomenon we are forced to live with in the foreseeable future. In a worst case scenario the Cold War of the 20th century will be replaced by a very hot one without clear fronts and with new weapons we do not know how to combat or protect ourselves against. To wage a military war against an abstract substantive such as terrorism is an impossibility and with the invasion of Iraq the possibilities of winning it have been, pardon the play on words, ground to zero.

The chances of the American invasion creating a prosperous democracy of western type that rapidly spreads its light over the Muslim world are therefore small. Instead, the prospects for a democratic development have darkened and American style democracy has come to be regarded as an enforced westernisation without regard for domestic culture and local traditions. As a consequence of the invasion of Iraq, it is highly probable that anti-western parties influenced by Islamism would win free elections all over the Muslim world.

The western world has two alternatives for action. One is to influence and encourage Muslim states to take the path to political pluralism and to accept the results of free and democratic elections whoever wins.

The regimes in many Muslim states are now facing problems of the same kind as several west European governments had to manage during the post-war period. The Communists made up 20-30 per cent of the electorate in some places at that time. Their desire to conform to fundamental demo-

cratic principles such as respect for election results and voluntary return of power was in many cases disputable. In France and Italy, they were allowed not just to participate in parliamentary life and play an often prominent role at the local level but also were included on some occasions in governments until they began to disappear from the political scene in the 1980s.

If the fundamentalist groups were treated in a similar manner in the Muslim world and were not only allowed to take part in elections but also to rule in regions and municipalities where they gain a majority, their inability to manage modern societies would be exposed and their power of attraction lessen. The slogan that Islam is the solution would once and for all lose its credibility.

The other alternative is to pursue a policy of obstruction and try to stop Islamic movements by supporting the regimes that oppress them. A policy of this nature will surely prove considerably more difficult than the fight against communism. To challenge an ideology based on an unsuccessful economic system is one thing, to demonise and fight a faith and culture over a thousand years old is quite another. Moreover, the regimes one would need to turn to for support are not exactly models of democracy. What those who have shown the greatest determination in the fight against fundamentalist voices have in common is quite the reverse, they have been callous dictatorships such as Hafez-al-Assad's Syria, Quadaffi's Libya and Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

If the regimes in power are encouraged to withstand all fundamentalist tendencies on the grounds that under all circumstances they harm western interests, the western world is in addition in danger of becoming insensitive to or of disregarding tendencies and trends that may be genuinely democratic and hence further their own long-term interests. A policy of this type also leads, quite rightly, to accusations of a hypocritical attitude and view of democratic ideals.

In Algeria, both this alternative and the question of Islam's compatibility with democracy could have been tested. When President Chadli Ben Djedid ended the one-party rule of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in 1988 following growing dissatisfaction with its misgovernment, Islam

immediately began to assert itself as a political force. In the local and regional elections in June 1990, the FIS (Islamic Salvation Army) gained 65 per cent of all votes and a majority in Alger, and 32 of the 48 provinces and more than 60 per cent of local assemblies. Successes continued in the first round of the parliamentary elections in December 1991. NLF won only 15 seats. For the first time in the Arab world, a government party had been beaten by an Islamic party in free elections and FIS appeared to be set to win a safe majority in the elections on 15 January 1992 which were to decide the 199 seats that could not be decided in the first round of the elections. This did not happen, however. Five days before the second round, President Ben Djedid was deposed in a military coup and the elections were called off. The leaders of the FIS were imprisoned and the party prohibited.

Military rule led to increasingly escalated violence with strong anti-western elements. It would perhaps have been politically more astute to let FIS defend its policies in an open political system than to force the party underground and make it a martyr. In government, FIS would have been forced to adapt its policies to grim reality and attempts to carry through drastic Islamisation of Algerian society would have led to an anti-funda-mentalist backlash.

If the west makes it absolutely clear from the outset that the results of democratic elections will be accepted irrespective of who wins, it will be easier to later adopt a firm position if democratically elected Islamic governments abuse their power. Criticism cannot then be dismissed as an expression of anti-Islamism.

For the Muslim world, the Algerian elections instead became something of a test of the west's view of Islam and democracy. The western world's reaction to the coup could be characterised as passive not to mention silent approval. Representatives of the Algerian military were given a friendly reception on their tours to explain the aims of the coup. The State Department in Washington did indeed regret that the democratic process in Algeria had been suspended but otherwise remained silent. The sigh of relief drawn after the military seizure of power did not tally with the sanctions imposed against Haiti's military junta, Burma's dictatorship or the

international criticism Peru's President Fujimori faced when earlier that year in April he dissolved parliament and abolished the constitution. The lame reaction was seen as proof that the inherent anti-Islamic frame of mind in western democracies is so strong that even an Islam that wants to act within the framework of the democratic process is repudiated. This frame of mind played into the hands of the fundamentalists and had consequences far beyond Algeria.

When the election victory had been stolen from FIS, the fundamentalists got the upper hand and liberal activists who opposed terror attacks were murdered. The inability or unwillingness of the west to imagine that liberal Islam might be a possibility became a self-fulfilling prophecy. In spite of all the rhetoric about the necessity of pluralism, political reform, democratic systems and free elections, the combination of Islam and democracy appears therefore to spread as much anxiety among western governments as among despots and authoritarian rulers in the Muslim world.

Although Islamic culture may now be an obstacle to democracy we must not forget that cultures, and also the current prevailing religious ideas, are subject to constant change. Many cultural elements remain constant, others change in the course of one or two generations. Economic development is a major factor in this process of change. Spanish culture in the 1950s was described as traditional, authoritarian, hierarchic and religion-oriented. Spain is no longer described in such terms.

It is as yet too early to say where the Islamic discussion of democracy will lead. However, it is clear that Muslim political traditions and institutions are in process of development in the same way as social conditions and class structures are changing. Both these trends are important for the future development of democracy. Changes will occur in the Muslim world but their expression will take several different forms. In some cases, a democratisation will only mean that the people are led round in a circle and arrive back where they started. In other cases, what the Arabs themselves refer to as a facade democracy will be introduced, where a democratic vocabulary is used to pass on the old authoritarian system. In other places, demands for development towards a civil society will increase.

This does not mean, however, that the whole *Dar al-Salam* will be an isolated anti-democratic pocket for ever. Rapid technological developments will affect all cultures, including Muslim culture. Muslims will influence one another and be influenced by other cultures to an extent never seen before. The debate will therefore inevitably go from chewing the rag about theological theses and the literal interpretation of the holy texts to attempts to adapt these to an increasingly complicated world. Islam will be a source of personal identity and group identity but more and more people will critically review their heritage from previous generations and try to adapt it to today's reality.

Therefore, the fact that Islam has not been compatible with democracy in the past does not mean that a pluralist political system will never be possible. However, it is clear that the road to such a system is secular and based on economic and social development and the changes must come from within. To put it incisively, the Muslim world may be said to face a choice between Mekka or mechanisation.

INGMAR KARLSSON

TERROR IN THE NAME OF GOD –
WHAT DIFFERS RELIGIOUS TERRORISM
FROM POLITICAL TERRORISM?*

Terror in the name of God and religion is an old phenomenon, a fact illustrated in that many of the words used to denote terrorists can be traced to religious groups active many years ago.

The etymology of the English word for a fanatic – *zealot* – goes back to the Zealots, a Jewish liberation movement that, seven years after Christ, began a national uprising with strong religious overtones against the Romans, which ended in the destruction of both the temple and of Jerusalem in the year 70. The defeated Zealots then retreated to the rock cliff fortress of Masada, where, in the year 73, they committed collective suicide when the Roman troops attacked after an extended siege.

The word *assassin*, used in both English and French, has a Muslim background and comes from an extremist breakaway sect from the mainstream Shiite belief. The Assassins acquired a number of permanent strongholds in both Persia and central Syria. Under the influence of hashish – hence the name – they carried out their suicide assignments during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries aimed at murdering leaders of the armies that approached their strongholds.

Even the English word *thug* has its background in a religiously motivated terrorism. It originates from the name of an Indian religious society of professional murderers and thieves who, for more than one thousand years – from the end of the seventh century until the middle of the nineteenth century – systematically murdered travellers in rural areas of India as a sacrifice to Kali, the Hindu goddess of terror and destruction. Throughout

* A lecture held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul 13 March 2007

the centuries up to one million people lost their lives through strangulation at their hands.

Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, when nationalism, anarchism and communism became the inspiration, religion was the driving force behind terror attacks. Of the 13 terrorist groups identified in 1968, the year in which politically motivated terrorism reached its climax, none could be labelled as religious. Even though many of the Palestinian groups, the Tamil Tigers, the Provisional IRA and the Armenian terrorist groups had ideological elements with religious overtones, the political aspects still dominated.

It can be said that religious terrorism first made a comeback on a broad scale after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. During the 1980s, the new Islamic regime sponsored groups in many countries that wanted to establish the same theocratic system, and this activity was facilitated by the fact that the Iranian revolution coincided with an ideological collapse, in which both capitalism and communism were seen as outdated ideologies in the Muslim world. Religious demagogues made skilful use of this ideological vacuum.

The U.S. Department of State's list of terrorist organisations in 1980 did not contain any religious groups. In 1994, 16 of the 49 listed terrorist groups were identified as being religious. The year after, the number was 26 of 56, and when 30 of the world's most dangerous terrorist organisations were listed in 1998, half of them were religion-oriented with an ideological base not only in all of the major world religions but also in a number of more or less mystical religious movements.

While secular terrorists view arbitrary terror that affects people indiscriminately as counter-productive and perhaps outright immoral, it appears that religious terrorists are more inclined to view this kind of violence as morally justifiable and necessary for them to achieve their purpose. Terrorism motivated by religion therefore risks being much more violent and much more extensive than its secular counterpart with its distinct political goals, however confused they may seem to be. The religious terrorist's host of enemies are often much more extensive and he or she therefore does not hesitate to make use of mass murder and indiscriminate violence

on a large scale. Accordingly, this terrorism acquires a sort of spiritual dimension that its secular counterpart lacks, and its perpetrators consequently see themselves as absolved from the political, moral and practical considerations that a secular terrorist still often feels should be taken.

Both in New York on 11 September 2001 and in the attacks against the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, Muslims killed innocent Muslims just as indiscriminately as they killed other innocent victims, while secular terrorists are less inclined to injure people not considered as belonging to the enemy forces. The IRA issues warnings in advance of their bomb attacks in order to minimize the loss of human life. The attack against the World Trade Center, however, took place when everyone was on their way to work so that the loss of life would be as great as possible, the Christian fundamentalist Timothy McVeigh's bomb attack against the federal office building in Oklahoma City was, for the same reasons, carried out during office hours and Egyptian Islamic fundamentalists attacked tourists in Luxor in November 1997 at a time when the number of visitors at the site reached its peak.

Another difference between religious and political terrorists is that their actions are aimed at influencing completely different target groups. Secular terrorists try to gain the support and sympathy of the groups they claim to be fighting for and they imagine that their actions will act both as eye openers for the "oppressed" and increase their support. Religious terrorists, on the other hand, are engaged in what they view as "the total war" and their acts of terror are often carried out only for their own sake or a very small group of supporters. They consequently do not feel that they should or need take any consideration to the impact their actions can have on sympathy to their cause in the rest of the world but rather carry out their deeds for their own sense of well-being. Violence can therefore be aimed without hesitation at anyone who does not sympathise with the sect in question. Terror is holy and aimed at "unbelievers" or "children of the devil."

Often, the deed is said to be carried out directly on divine command. Such was the case in the murder of Yitzhak Rabin. It was preceded by a religiously oriented campaign against him that had been going on for over

two years and during which he and everyone who supported the Oslo Agreement and a territorial compromise with the Palestinians were characterised as murders, enemies and traitors. It therefore became a religious duty for Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, to kill his own Prime Minister since according to him, the peace process would involve giving up the Holy Land. The same psychological atmosphere was created in Egypt after the Camp David Accords in 1978. Sadat was condemned from the pulpits of the mosques and was considered an apostate from the true belief. Khaled Ahmed al-Islambouli listened to this message and came to the conclusion that it was a religious duty to kill this "new Pharaoh". In a letter to his sister he wrote: "I haven't committed a crime. What I did, I did for the sake of God, the Merciful, the Almighty."

The American police archives are said to contain information on 100 000 persons who in one way or another have been involved with religiously motivated violence. At present, there are hundreds of organisations and so-called churches with close to 50 000 members throughout the USA, with ideologies ranging from anti-federalist beliefs to race oriented religious hatred. The various groups are united by resistance to any form of government beyond the municipal level, by regarding Jews and non-whites as the children of Satan, by belief in a Jewish conspiracy that can only be surmounted by overthrowing ZOG (The Zionist Occupation Government) in Washington. All of this racism, anti-Semitism and hatred towards governmental institutions is cloaked in religious terms and given a theological basis. Members of these extremist groups see themselves as the last bastion against the assault by the powers of evil against "the faithful remnant".

The bomb attack in Oklahoma City in April 1995 was, to date, the culmination of religiously based violence in the USA. The attack cost the lives of 168 people. The perpetrator, Timothy McVeigh, a Gulf War veteran, belonged to the Michigan Militia, a paramilitary organisation of approximately 12 000 persons who seriously believe that the American government already has a political program whose purpose is to totally control the lives of every American. According to Timothy McVeigh, Oklahoma City was a centre for this conspiracy – "one of the epicentres of an unspeakably

evil plot". All patriots west of the Mississippi were to be deported there, and he claimed there were already five crematoriums set up with the capacity to cremate 3000 patriots per day.

What all religious terrorist organisations have in common, regardless of their religious affiliation, is a Manichaean perspective of life, with the irreconcilable division of the world into good and evil, the rejection of all pluralistic social models and an eschatology contending that the end of the world is approaching and that true believers will be rewarded on the last day. In this paranoid view of the world, all outsiders are demonised. This results in extreme rigorism and moralism, a fixation with apocalyptic end of the world and final battle scenarios, and a self-chosen isolation from the contemporary sinful culture and the sense of contamination it produces. Preparations for the final battle include stockpiling weapons, which can also contain poisons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The first large-scale terrorist attack using chemical means, in this case sarin gas, was carried out in March 1995 on the subway system in Tokyo by an apocalyptic Japanese religious sect, *Aum Shinrikyo*. Twelve people were killed and over 5000 were injured in this attack. The group proved to have an extensive arsenal of biochemical, biological and conventional weapons, including mustard gas, anthrax and TNT, which would have been enough to kill up to ten million people. In 1984, a group of militant Jews from the settlement movement Gush Emunim planned to blow up the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem in order to initiate a holy war between Jews and Muslims of such dimensions that the Jewish Messiah would feel compelled to return and intervene.

The goal of religious terrorists is to re-establish an idealised, harmonic, uncorrupted society – in the case of Muslims, *umma*, the believers' ancient community; in the case of America, the pilgrim fathers' sectarian community, seen as the actual origin of the true American culture. Religion is their only means of salvation and an absolute, effective remedy against all evil and all personal and social problems.

In order to prepare the way for an ideal Christian, Jewish, Sikh or Muslim society, these groups view violence and oppression against those

who think differently as something entirely legitimate, a violence that with due right can also afflict those who are weak or indifferent in their faith. They see violence as a form of sacrament and a divine duty. Religiously inspired terrorists feel they have a monopoly on the absolute truth, which is also manifested in the names they have adopted: *Hizbollah* (God's Party), *Jund al-Haq* (Soldiers of Right), Gush Emunim (*The Block of the Faithful*) and *Aum Shinrykuo* (The Supreme Truth).

All opponents of the faith are to be exterminated on the way to the true divine state and these groups see themselves as an extension of God's hand through acts of violence. Also characteristic for a religiously motivated act of terrorism, regardless of whether it is committed by a Christian, Muslim, Sikh or a Jew, is that it is seldom followed by a letter claiming responsibility that justifies the act or conveys an ideological message expected to attract other target groups or which contains demands that must be met in order for the terrorism to cease. The message from 11 September was conveyed through pictures alone, there was no text. One result of this is that acts of violence can be given a number of different interpretations and this may very well be the actual intention. Was 11 September a result of the unresolved Palestinian issue or was the attack a protest against the presence of American soldiers in what to Muslims is the holy ground of Saudi Arabia; was the triggering factor a conflict of values between the secularised western world and the Islamic concept of a righteous society, or was the purpose to trigger Huntington's so celebrated "clash of civilisations"?

This question is still unanswered. One message was, however, clear to both friend and foe, namely the will to pursue a totally uncompromising battle in the name of religion.

INGMAR KARLSSON

TURKISH ISLAM AND EUROPEAN VALUES[*]

More than ninety-nine per cent of the Turkish population is Muslim. These are the opening words in many descriptions of Turkey. At the same time, the country is also consistently described, not least in official Turkish publications, as a secular state where religion and state are separated in the same way as in France. Behind these two assertions is a complex religious panorama.

The religious landscape of the Ottoman empire was characterised by its diversity. Through the *millet* system, the monotheistic minorities had extensive autonomy in matters that concerned their own affairs. During the 1850s and 1860s the judicial system was further secularised in that new legislation inspired by Europe was introduced, both penal law and commercial law, and new courts, councils and ministries were created according to a European model.

Growing nationalism among the Christian population groups during the 19th century also led to an ambition to give Ottoman rule a legitimacy with both a national and a democratic dimension. The empire's subjects were to become Ottoman citizens who identified with their state. As 40 per cent of the Ottoman empire at that time was made up of non-Muslims, it also meant that a process of secularisation was necessary.

The Ottoman state was therefore in practice a secular administrative apparatus, whose policies were legitimised in religious terms. Islam came to serve as a cultural and political bridge between the elite and the masses, the majority of whom were Sunni Muslims. Without this religious superstructure the empire would not have been able to retain the loyalty of the Muslim majority and survive for six hundred years.

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[*] Lecture held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul on September 25 2007.

However, for Kemal Atatürk who wanted to create a modern nation out of the remainder of this multicultural empire, Islam appeared to be a reactionary force and a main cause of the decline and fall of the empire. He was therefore deeply convinced that belief in religion must be replaced by a belief in modernity and progress.

The state Atatürk created is certainly expressly secular in its constitution but state and religion were not really separated. Since the founding of the republic all religious matters have been subject to strict control exercised by *Diyanet*, the Directorate for Religious Affairs. It supervises and administers the some 75 000 mosques in Turkey and not only employs and pays the salaries of about 60 000 Imams out of tax revenue, which consequently makes them public servants, but also controls and issues instructions on the contents of Friday sermons all over the country. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has a monopoly on all religious instruction and educates all prayer leaders and preachers.

THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

Regarding Turkey, three religious cultures within the same belief may be mentioned; a "state Islam" characterised by Kemalism and its secular basic principles, the heterodox Islam of the Alevis and a popular Islam with a Sunni-Hanafitic focus and its base in different Sufi Orders.

The Alevis are the largest religious minority in Turkey today. They account for between 15 and 20 per cent of the population and are spread all over the country. There is no exact information about their numbers since the Turkish Republic only recognises the religious minorities specified in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. The Alevis are therefore registered as Muslims in population censuses.

Their history goes back to the Turkic peoples' invasion of Anatolia. During their westward migration, they had not only converted to Islam but many of them had also taken up elements from other beliefs encountered on their journey and they also brought with them their ancient central Asian shamanic ideas. The result was a synchretic and undogmatic religion which is completely different from orthodox Sunni Islam. In Atatürk's

endeavours to create a new secular Turkish identity, the Alevis had a clear place and were now described as a people who, in spite of centuries-long influence from Arab and Persian culture, had stuck to the Turkish language and retained their Turkish individuality.

One of the measures that Atatürk took in his endeavour to modernise and Europeanise the new Turkish Republic was to prohibit the numerous Islamic brotherhoods or Orders and to transfer their property and meeting places *(tekke)* to the state.

The origins of these Orders are to be found in Islam's early history when religious mystics began to seek a more personal and direct religious experience than that offered by a way of life in accordance with the rules of the Koran. They aspired to a personal experience of God. Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, every third male subject belonged to a *tarika* and their influence was as great as that of the national Sunni religion. These brotherhoods also offered an important social community and many were renowned for their social commitment.

The most influential, dynamic and successful to-day is *fethullacilar*, named after its *hoca* (teacher) Fethullah Gülen. He has built up a network which today consists of more than 200 colleges and 20 universities not just in Turkey but also in the Balkans and Central Asia and in Europe too through the Islamic University of Rotterdam which he founded. These devote particular attention to scientific subjects. Teaching is partly in English. Gülen points out that 95 per cent of the Islamic rules apply to private and family life and only five per cent to state affairs. These must be regulated in a democratic manner. Turkey's history and social conditions make an Islamic state impossible and the democratisation of Turkey is an irrevocable process.

In what is known as the Abant Declaration proclaimed in July 1988, Gülen pleads for a new form of modernity that is compatible with Islam's fundamental principles, democracy and respect for individual human rights. The central message of the Declaration is that revelation and reason are not in conflict with each other, that individuals should use their common sense to organise their lives and that the state should be neutral in matters con-

cerning faith and outlook on life and not base their rule on a predominant religious tradition. The aim of secularism must be to strengthen freedom and individual rights and it must not serve the purpose of excluding any group from the public arena.

Supporters of the movement in Turkey are now estimated to number between five and six million and they meet regularly in special premises, *dershanes,* to analyse and interpret Nurcu's texts.

Gülen's movement has acquired many supporters above all from the emerging class of religious small entrepreneurs who have formed their own business associations with active local associations in all major Turkish cities. Through a combination of modern science and technology, hard work, thrift and social commitment based on Islam, a religiously coloured bourgeoisie known as the Anatolian tigers, has emerged.

In recent years, above all the regions around the city Kayseri in central Anatolia have undergone rapid economic development, as a result of which several rapidly expanding industrial centres have been created by Islamic Calvinists as they have come to be called. In Kayseri alone the number of *dershane* grew from 2 in 1970 to 60 in 2000 and they also function as networks for entrepreneurs where they can discuss business opportunities, cooperation projects and financing matters. The small town Hacilar outside Kayseri with its 20 000 inhabitants has developed into a Turkish Gnosjö and harbours nine of Turkey's 500 most successful companies.

According to a study carried out by the European Stability Initiative published in September 2005, the main factor underlying this development is the individualistic and initiative-promoting elements in Turkish Sufi Islam. The sociologist of religion, Hakan Yavuz, claims that in recent decades Turkey has undergone a silent Muslim reformation with clear parallels with the protestant reformation, a process which has, however, been neglected due to more dramatic events elsewhere in the Muslim world. In Turkey this development – *protestanlasma,* to become protestant – is discussed with increasing interest. Does Max Weber's theses on a connection between the growth of capitalism and the Calvinist message that economic success is a sign of belonging to the chosen ones also apply to Islamic

Calvinists or has increasing prosperity led to an interpretation of Islam that is compatible with modernity?

Irrespective of the answer to this question, economic and social developments here have created an environment in which Islam and modernity co-exist without problems, a process that undermines the basic Kemalist thesis that economic development and modernisation are only possible if religion is kept at a distance.

THE RETURN OF ISLAM AS A POLITICAL FACTOR

When Turkey acquired a multi-party system in 1946, religion gradually became an ever stronger political factor. The move from rural areas into the cities accelerated and was on a greater scale than the emerging industries and municipal institutions could absorb. Unregulated settlements, known as *gecekondu* (built in a night) emerged on the edges of big cities and these immigrants brought with them into the cities their traditional way of life marked by Islam. This development created a sociological base for Islamic parties.

The first Islamic party, the National Order Party, was founded by Necmettin Erbakan in 1970. Accused of anti-secular activities, the Party was prohibited as early as March 1971 when the Turkish army took power behind the scenes. In 1973, Erbakan became leader of a new party, or rather the same party with a new name – The National Salvation Party – which proved attractive to a large proportion of the traditionally oriented electorate. In the 1973 elections the Party received 12 per cent of the votes and 48 seats.

Erbakan now held a central position on the political stage and surprisingly formed a coalition government with Bülent Ecevit. The latter was chairman of the Republican People's Party whose prime goal was to uphold Atatürk's legacy. Thus, in this alliance two opposite poles of Turkish politics were to cooperate, on the one hand Atatürk's secular party and, on the other, the new self-assured Islamic movement. The only thing that really united them was strong Turkish nationalism which led them to order the invasion of Cyprus in 1974 to protect the Turkish-Cypriot minority in the face of an impending *enosis* with Greece.

Erbakan wanted to go further than Ecevit and occupy the entire island and this and many other political differences of opinion resulted in the fall of the government. Erbakan and his party later returned in two right-wing coalitions during the remainder of the 1970s and when the decade reached an end he had been deputy Prime Minister for over three years, and for almost a further year, Demirel's Justice Party was dependent on his support. During this period, Erbakan had held posts at ministries that were important to his electorate of loyal supporters – above all entrepreneurs with small and medium-sized enterprises.

When the military intervened in 1980, Erbakan's National Salvation Party was banned as well as all other political organisations but the party was reorganised and in 1983 the Welfare Party – *Refah* – was born. Under his leadership, *Refah* became the best organised party in Turkey. It created a network of local branches and carried on much more efficient and active campaigns among supporters than other parties. And demographic developments gave the party a new broad recruitment base. Migration to all of Turkey's major cities exploded during the 1980s and 1990s. The number of inhabitants in Istanbul doubled. With 19 per cent of total votes in the 1994 municipal election, the Welfare Party won mayoral posts in 30 cities, including Istanbul and Ankara and in 327 small municipalities. Erbakan then struck terror into secular Turkey by assembling thousands of supporters at the Sultan Eyüp mosque in Istanbul and proclaiming:

> This is a gift from God. Refah will soon be in power. There is no other solution to the crisis we are experiencing than the just order. Our victory does not end here. Our next goal is Islamic unity all over the world. Istanbul is the political capital of the Muslim world.

Prophecies of woe like this and other statements evoked among the secularists were not fulfilled. Both in Ankara and Istanbul, citizens saw how the financial scandals that had been typical of previous administrations decreased although corruption was not eradicated. In Istanbul, trees

were planted under the direction of the new, young, dynamic mayor Tayyip Erdoğan, water supplies began to function as well as refuse collection and the city's air improved and it soon became clear that this man had more far-reaching political ambitions.

The established parties continued their intrigues against each other which contributed towards *Refah's* becoming the largest party with 21.3 per cent of the votes in the 1995 parliamentary elections. This breakthrough for the Welfare Party caused panic in the Turkish secular establishment which was further intensified when Tansu Ciller, leader of the True Path Party, fell for Erbakan's offer to stop the parliamentary investigations that were to be initiated against her on grounds of numerous accusations of corruption and economic irregularities. The price for this was a political pact in which Erbakan would assume the post of Prime Minister for the first two years in a coalition government to be subsequently succeeded by Ciller and, after many complicated turnabouts, Erbakan formed a government with Tansu Ciller on 28 June 1996.

Erbakan now quickly forgot all previous talk of Turkey leaving NATO and ending military cooperation with Israel and annulling the customs union with the EU nor did he make any attempts to fulfil his earlier promises of increased cultural rights for the Kurdish minority. None of this rhetoric had been heard in the 1995 election campaign when the Turkish electorate had become more nationalist as the civil war in the south east escalated.

In spite of this restraint, confrontations with the secular establishment soon occurred. Suspicion of a hidden religious agenda were aroused by statements from different party functionaries. The drop that made the secular cup run over was an invitation from a mayor from the Welfare Party in a town near Ankara to the Iranian Ambassador to speak at a "Jerusalem evening".

In February 1997 the Turkish military forces started a campaign in which Islamic fundamentalism was depicted as the greatest threat to Turkey's national security. Through the national security council where the military were in the majority, a catalogue of 18 points was presented which in practice were conditions the Erbakan government must fulfil. When

Erbakan attempted to play for time, a campaign was set in motion in which the media, the state bureaucracy, the judiciary and also parliamentarians belonging to the coalition partner the True Path Party were mobilised. As a result of this pressure, the Erbakan government fell on 18 June 1997 in what has come to be called the first post-modern coup d'état.

In January 1998 the Constitutional Court banned the Welfare Party for a period of five years, a ruling that was subsequently approved by the European Court of Human Rights.

As so many times previously, the answer to the ban was the formation of a new party, *Fazilet Partisi* (Virtue Party) and it became the largest faction in parliament with 140 seats. However, the Virtue Party only received a little over 15 per cent of votes in the 1999 parliamentary elections and thereby lost a quarter of its supporters and became only the third largest party.

AKP TAKES THE EUROPEAN PATH

The party's younger generation headed by Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül now realised that their party had reached an impasse. Votes could no longer be won in Turkey with a policy of Islamisation à la Erbakan. Only a small minority of Turks wanted an Islamic state. A party characterised by Erbakan's policies would therefore never gain more than the fifteen per cent of votes received in the most recent parliamentary elections. According to electoral analyses, about five per cent of the electorate made up what could be called a hard core, that is to say voters who wanted a religious state that implemented *shari'a* law in all areas and who were totally against a secular state. Another group, around ten per cent, wanted to see a greater role for Islam in society. Religion was important to them for giving them an identity and as a bearer of identity for the Turkish nation while the issue as to whether or not *shari'a* should be applied was considered unimportant.

The AK Party now became the parliamentary counterforce to the ruling three-party coalition under Bülent Ecevit. He had plunged the country into a deep economic crisis. The political reforms that were a condition

for negotiations on EU membership had been delayed due to tensions in the coalition whose reputation had reached rock bottom.

When internal conflicts in the government coalition forced new elections to be held in November 2002, the AK Party was able to offer a new credible political alternative. The party had abandoned Erbakan's Islamic line, no one could blame it for the economic crisis, in parliament it had voted for political reforms and hence shown that it was ready to continue along the path to the EU and indeed faster than the Ecevit government.

This election was a political landslide. The AK Party received over 34 per cent of votes and its own stable majority. Due to the ten per cent barrier introduced after the military coup in 1980 – ironically enough precisely in order to prevent religiously oriented parties from getting any seats – only the Republican People's Party (CHP) got back into parliament after previously having been outside. None of the other parties passed the barrier, including the three that had made up the government coalition. They were now punished for their misrule and for the financial crisis they had plunged the country into. Party disloyalty had never previously been so great and the electorate showed itself more inclined than ever before to vote for a party that seemed to offer hope of something new.

The AK Party won massive support not because voters thought it aspired to an Islamic state. The electorate gave this party its votes because they hoped and believed that the party would put an end to *yoksulluk* (poverty) and *yolsuzluk* (corruption). Since its establishment, the AK Party has moved from being a religiously coloured conservative party to becoming a party more like the Christian Democrats, or Allah Democrats if the expression is permitted.

Prime Minister Erdoğan has defined AKP's political philosophy as democratic conservatism.

A large part of Turkish society wants to embrace a concept of modernity that does not reject tradition, a belief in universalism that accepts local patriotism, a sympathy with rationalism that does not ignore the spiritual meaning of life and an alternative to change that is not funda-

mentalist. The concept of conservative democracy is in fact an answer to the Turkish people's hopes.

In the party manifesto it says: "Our party sees differences in faith and culture as enriching for the country and believes that people with different languages, religions, race and social status must be able to express themselves freely and take part in politics by being able to rely on the same protection under law ..... the AK Party considers political parties to be essential elements in the democratic system and opposes the prohibition of parties who work within the framework of the constitutional state."

Regarding the EU, the party programme says: "Our party considers full membership of the EU to be a natural consequence of the process of modernisation."

Thus, the Copenhagen criteria are presented not as dictates coming from without but as objective criteria that are necessary for Turkey's process of modernisation and international position.

Turkey – a model for the Muslim world?

In the debate on Islam and democracy and the causes of the Muslim world's general crisis it is often said that the modern Turkish Republic could play a role as a model. As is evident from the above, the situation in Turkey cannot be compared with conditions in Iran and the Arab world for several reasons.

Firstly, both the Kemalists and the political Islamists in Turkey have been deeply influenced by modern European thought and European policies.

Secondly, Turkey has never been a colony. Unlike other countries in the Muslim world, Islam in Turkey has therefore never become an ideological superstructure for opposing colonialism, occupation or western oppression. Certainly, the attempts to colonise and divide up the country after the First World War still play a role through what is known as the Sèvres syndrome but those attempts were repelled by the country's own efforts in the struggle for independence 1920-22. The Turkish Republic has therefore never lost its legitimacy among the population even if many are critical of phenomena in the country.

Thus, the influence the western world exercised on Turkey was a result of the choices of Turkish politicians and not of coercion. When such influence was exercised in the process of modernisation, it came from within and above but not from outside. The west is therefore portrayed as an enemy of Islam to a far lesser extent than in other Muslim countries. Instead, the non-Islamic enemy was first Russia and later the Soviet Union. This led to Turkey's membership of NATO which in its turn meant a common Turkish-European-Atlantic military alliance in the fight against communism which was also the major enemy for a political Islam.

Thirdly, despite recurring economic crises, Turkey has not been afflicted by the socio-economic destitution and frustration that has been a hot-bed for religious extremism elsewhere in the Muslim world.

Fourthly, unlike the situation in other Muslim countries, existing dissatisfaction could be expressed by political means and it has been possible to remove parties in power by means of elections. This is a further explanation why political Islam in Turkey does not have the extremist strain found in so many quarters in the Muslim world. When Erbakan' s Islamic Welfare Party was banned in 1997, for example, he did not mobilise his supporters in mass demonstrations but applied to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. When its verdict went against him, he accepted it.

Fifthly, the different Sufi Orders, although formally banned, have had an essential influence and contributed to the pluralism and moderation that characterises Islam in Turkey.

Sixthly, the rapidly emerging middle class in the cities has contributed to moderation. Many are religious and want to have their religiosity accepted but they themselves are marked by 80 years of secular rule.

As part of the run-up to the parliamentary elections to be held in July 2007, more and more warnings are now heard from the secular and military establishment that, by means of a salami tactic, AKP aims to Islamise Turkey step by step. However, a major study published in November 2006 carried out by the distinguished think tank TESEV reaches a completely different conclusion.

Compared with 1999, the proportion of the population that identify themselves as Muslims first has indeed increased from 36 per cent to 45 per cent while those who consider themselves to be Turks first have decreased from 21 to 19 per cent. The proportion that consider themselves to be Kurds first remains unchanged at just one per cent. An overwhelming majority of Kurds see themselves as Muslims first.

This strengthened Muslim identity, however, has not led to increased support for a politicised Islam. Instead, the proportion that answers "yes" to the question "Should there be political parties based on religion?" has decreased from 41 to 25 per cent in the last seven years and support for a religious state based on *shari'a* law has dropped dramatically from 21 to 9 per cent. It should be noted in particular that only 14 per cent of AKP sympathisers want to see a political system of that kind.

Only eight per cent consider suicide attacks against a foreign occupant are justified while 85 per cent definitely dismiss such actions. Support proved to be greatest – 14 per cent – among supporters of the nationalist MH Party and even the Kemalist and putative social democratic CHP have more advocates of these violent methods than AKP – 11 and 9 per cent respectively.

70 per cent of those who described themselves as secular or left oriented considered that use of the headscarf – *türban* – had increased and saw this as a threat to the secular state. However, TESEV's study shows that the the opposite applies in reality. Between 1999 and 2006 the proportion of women who do not cover their head had increased from 27.3 % to 36,5 %.

On the other hand, the number of women wearing headscarves in public environments has gone up but this is not a result of an islamisation of Turkish society but of its modernisation which has resulted in an increase in the participation of these women in professional life and the fact that they no longer hesitate to drive a car or go to cafés.

To sum up, there is no Turkish model that can simply be copied in other parts of the Muslim world. Turkish Islam has its special character shaped by different historical factors and political realities. Nor is Turkey a

country the Arab world is setting its sights on. Instead, Ankara is seen as a representative of the former Ottoman colonial power and as an ally of the imperialist western world, a view that is strengthened by Turkey's good relations with Israel which also include military cooperation. After independence the Arab world has traditionally had better relations with European states such as Spain, Italy and Greece.

Ingmar Karlsson

NORTHERN IRAQ:
A KURDISH PIEMONTE?

After the first Gulf War in 1990-91 both a safe haven and a non-fly-zone for the Iraqi airforce were established in Northern Iraq north of the 36th parallel. The Iraqi army was forced to evacuate an area as big as Switzerland. Thus for the first time in history a Kurdish area had attained an internationally recognized autonomy.

In May 1992 elections were held in the autonomous region. The contenders were Barzani´s Kurdish Democratic Party and Talabani´s Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The election campaign was completely focused on the personalities of the two party leaders and the political programs and ideologies played no role whatsoever. Barzani´s slogan was "Autonomy for Kurdistan, democracy for Iraq" whereas Talabani´s slogan was "Autonomy for the Kurds within a federative Iraq".

Foreign observers considered the elections as *free and fair*. KDP received 45 % and PUK 43,6%. The 100 mandates were divided equally between the two parties while five seats were reserved for the Christian minority (four for the Assyrian Democratic Movement and one for the Christian Unity Party of Kurdistan).

A Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, was established and both parties divided the various posts among themselves equally. If one ministerial post was filled with a representative from one party the vice-minister had to come from the other and this system was applied throughout the whole administrative apparatus. This had negative affects on the efficiency of the administration which was further aggravated by the fact that the leading members of the respective parties were not prepared to hand over their power to the elected representatives. The executive power therefore came to rest with the two party leaderships which

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* A lecture held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul on June 10 2008

provided an environment for incompetence, arbitrariness, negligence, and corruption.

The old rivalries and suspicions between Barzani and Talabani contributed to the failure of all efforts to create a general loyalty with this fragile Kurdish entity. The opposition had its roots not only in cultural differencies and hundreds of years old antagonism between the kurmanji-speaking *naqshbandiya* of the KDP and the sorani-speaking *qadiriya* of the PUK.

Another acute source of conflict arose from the uneven economical conditions caused by the geographical situation. The tax on goods coming into the country through the Iranian and Turkish border crossings, in addition to the international assistance, became important income sources, together with smuggled goods, and these incomes usually stayed in the party cash-box or in the pockets of the local leaders in the border areas. As it was Barzani who controlled the areas bordering with Turkey where the commerce was most lively it was he and his Kurdish Democratic Party who made most out of it even though Talabani did not come short.

In May 1994 an open conflict erupted between the two rivals concerning the distribution of the scarce resources and disputes about land which resulted in armed incidents and skirmishes. This showed all too clearly that the actual political power did not rest with the parliament but with the two party headquarters. As a result of these conflicts 70 000 Kurds had to flee from their homes and more than 1 000 were killed.

In April 1995 the USA managed to bring both parties to declare a cessation of hostilities which however only lasted a very short period. Soon the fighting resumed and the KDP contacted the regime in Bagdad from where Barzani received new arm deliveries. Towards the end of August KDP, with the help of Iraqi tanks and artillery, took over the town of Erbil and one week later they could even capture Talabani´s stronghold Sulaymaniya, and this without any fierce fighting. Around Erbil the Iraqi forces used the opportunity to capture and execute Saddam Hussein´s opponents which made 80 000 Kurds flee from Sulaymaniya before the KDP captured the city.

PUK managed to regroup its forces surprisingly swiftly and managed with support from Iran to recapture the major part of the sorani-

speaking areas inclusive the main town of Sulaymaniya. Erbil remained however under the control of Barzani. Saddam suspended the economic blockade of the areas controlled by Barzani who on his part demonstrated the new good relations with the Bagdad regime by receiving in his headquarters no one lesser than Ali Hasan al-Majid, alias chemical Ali, the man behind the brutal so called Anfal-campaign and the gas attack against the Kurdish town Halabja.

At the same time Barzani also became Turkey's ally in her fight against the PKK which due to its pan-Kurdish ideology had many sympathizers among the Iraqi Kurds who were against Barzani's plan to federalize Iraq. In May 1997 the Turkish troops invaded northern Iraq and fought there against the PKK together with the KDP. When later the same year PUK started a new offensive against the KDP and managed to recapture positions along the Iranian border the Turkish air force intervened on the side of the KDP and forced Talabani's forces to retreat.

Following an American mediation both Talabani and Barzani declared in Washington in September 1998 their readiness for reconciliation and solving all their internal conflicts in a peaceful way. In addition to this they also declared their commitment to "the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq". In reality however also the Kurdish region was divided both politically and economically into a Barzanistan and a Talabanistan with two separate capitals and two administrations, in Erbil and in Sulaymaniya respectively.

In spite of the agreement in Washington the situation remained unstable due to a number of different but concurrent factors:

- the difficult economical situation caused by the UN-embargo against Iraq and Saddam Hussein's embargo against the autonomous Kurdish region
- the American resolve to use the region as a basis and spring-board to overthrow and destabilize not only the regime in Bagdad but also in Teheran
- the use of the Kurdish territories by the PKK in their fight against Turkey and Turkey's efforts to eliminate the PKK and to counter-

act any form of an independent Kurdish state even within the framework of a federalized Iraq
- Bagdad's efforts to counteract a federalization and to recapture the lost territories
- efforts made by Iran and Syria to prevent the establishment of bases for American influence in the Kurdish parts of Iraq. They both had vested interests in further weakening of the regime in Bagdad through Kurdish revolts but did not want this to result in an independent Kurdish state. Their policy was therefore to give the Kurds sufficient support so that they could be a permanent problem for Iraq but not to contribute to their autonomy and independence which could become a model for their own Kurds. Thus in July 1996 for example the Iranian revolutionary guards attacked the Iranian Kurdish party KDPI's bases on the Iraqi territory.

In spite of this the economical situation gradually improved and in the autumn of 2000 visitors to the Kurdish towns could see internet cafés and modern shopping malls filled with imported goods. Out of the approximately 4000 destroyed villages more than 2600 had been rebuilt. The revenues that made this possible came from various sources. Commerce and smuggling to and from Iran and Turkey were the main components. Hundreds of lorries were daily passing through the only border crossing from Turkey fully loaded with consumer goods and on their way back they were transporting cheap Iraqi petrol and other oil products. Other incomes came from taxing the inhabitants, investments of Kurds living abroad and money they spent during their recurring visits, and goods and money that was distributed within the framework of the oil-for-food-program. Also local industries kept growing, financed not only by the Kurds but also by Turkish and Iranian capital. The region became also attractive for the Kurdish diaspora in Europe and many Kurds wanted to contribute to building a Kurdish state.

After the Washington agreement PUK and KDP gradually managed to establish a modus vivendi that slowly developed into a closer cooperation. The activities of both governments became coordinated and a number of

measures promoting normalization and strengthening of the mutual trust were taken. A further impetus for this cooperation came after 2001 when it became clear that the American aim was to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Because of the popular support the two Kurdish parties enjoyed they became an important factor even for the Arab opposition and especially for the USA as they controlled a region which was playing a central role in the strategy of the invasion even though the Turkish Parliament came to force them to change their original plans as they did not allow the use of the Turkish territory for an invasion.

When then Saddam Hussein was overthrown in 2003 a new chapter in the Iraqi Kurds´ history was opened. While the rest of Iraq has found itself in a civil war and chaos the autonomous Kurdish region has stayed relatively calm.

Turkey considers the existence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq as a direct threat against Turkey´s integrity and is concerned that it might play a role of a Kurdish Piemonte, the region in Italy where the process of Italian unification started.

This threatening picture is based on a number of unsubstantiated suppositions. One is that there exists a monolithic Kurdish identity embracing both southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq and that the Kurds in Turkey would therefore more or less automatically identify themselves with a Kurdish state situated to the south of the Turkish border and ignore the regional differences as far as religion, language, and history itself are concerned. Another one is that the Iraqi Kurds would be in favour of "re-unification" with the Kurds from Turkey and would prefer this unification with their ethnic brothers over good neighbourly relations with Turkey, a country on which they would be strongly dependent both economically, strategically and geopolitically.

In such a state the Iraqi Kurds would become a minority. Here one can make a parallel with Moldova. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the general expectation was that this Romanian-speaking Soviet republic would, not least due to economical considerations – join Romania, but independence proved to be a more attractive option than a continued existence as a minority in a province on the outskirts of Romania.

In the Iraqi case not least the economical reasons speak against creation of a state reaching over the existing borders. There is really no reason to suppose that the 4-5 million Kurds in Iraq would be interested in uniting with and sharing their oil resources with 15 million Turkish Kurds. This is as as unlikely as a scenario in which the Norwegians would suddenly declare that they would like to share their gas- and oil resources with their Swedish brothers on the Scandinavian peninsula.

If Turkey solves its Kurdish problem and grants the Kurds full political and cultural rights, it will diminish the attraction of an de facto independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. To convert this scenario into reality it is however necessary that the EU-process acquires new momentum and that EU membership does not seem unattainable for the Kurds in Turkey. A Turkey in the EU would guarantee Turkey´s territorial integrity. The influence of the military over politics would dramatically decrease and a Turkish government without the military pressure would not be so scared of a Kurdish state in it´s immediate neighbourhood.

Whom does Turkey favour as her neighbour? A new Libanon in the form of a collapsed Iraqi state filled with anarchy or an in reality independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq that could even serve as a buffer state against an Arabic Iraq with brutal conflicts between Shiites and Sunnis? Turkey as the militarily stronger and bigger nation could instead be a sort of protector for an independent Iraqi Kurdistan.

The fear of a Kurdish mini state in northern Iraq is therefore anachronistic and in reality unfounded. Ankara must stop to look at the Kurds in Iraq as enemies and instead see them as their natural allies in their efforts to develop and stabilize the south-eastern Turkey.

Turkey should therefore recognize the Kurdish autonomy in Iraq as a political fact and develop relations with the two autonomous regions which in practice constitute the KRG. The Turkish government must accept the fact that federalism as a political system has come to Iraq and is going to stay there and that this fact is giving Turkey more possibilities than was the case a few decades ago.

In northern Iraq a Kurdish state in some form is unavoidable and this development is also in Turkey's interests. A stable Kurdish state there would be favourable for Turkey both from economical, national and strategic points of view, and it would also lead to an economic development of the Kurdish parts of Turkey and contribute to a growing wellfare which would subdue the conflicts there. Even if the oil resources in Kirkuk would belong to a Kurdish state it would be dependent on Turkey as the safest transport road leads through the Turkish territory. The city of Diyarbakir in southeastern Turkey could develop from an economically underdeveloped provincial city situated close to militarized and closed borders into a dynamic economic center.

Already today Turkey is the most important commercial partner for the autonomous Kurdish region. Almost 70% of all business contracts , both private and state, have during the recent years gone to Turkish companies, and shops in cities such as Erbil are filled with Turkish goods. Turkey's export to northern Iraq in 2007 was estimated at 5 billion dollars. According to the International Crisis Group about 1200 Turkish companies were established in northern Iraq in April 2007 and this resulted in a sort of "economical reconciliation". Almost 20 000 workers from Turkey, predominantly Kurds, are now working in Northern Iraq.

Turkey could be the ideal partner for the Kurds in Iraq. It is not a paria-state as the other neighbours but a NATO-member and a candidate-country for membership in the EU. Thus it would give the Iraqi Kurdistan a direct border with Europe and be an opening out of the geostrategical isolation the region is now suffering from.

If the Kurds in Iraq patiently work on creating an administration and economy of their own , look after the security of their borders, and keep out of the chaos in the Middle East it will in the long run be impossible to ignore their demand to be given the right to take care of their own affaires.

A sensible Kurdish policy would therefore be not to insist on independence. Being geographically closed off and having hostile neighbours are not the best pre-requisites for building up a state and a new society. The states the Kurds are most dependent on, the US and Turkey, would not

allow such a development. Having to choose between Turkey and an independent Kurdistan Washington would always choose Turkey. Within the framework of a formally independent Iraq on the other hand the Kurdish parts would be a sort of American aircraft carrier in the region with a military presence that would support the security of the Kurdish region.

A Kurdish state in the northern Iraq could become a state that also Kurds in other countries could identify with but without necessarily radicalizing Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iran. The knowledge that there is a Kurdish state and that one could move there would dilute the separatist ambitions. A survey carried out in Turkey in November 2007 among the citizens of Kurdish origin showed that 95% of them would not leave Turkey in case a Kurdish state were created in northern Iraq.

If the Iraqi Kurds are patient and continue building their society within the framework of an Iraqi federation or confederation and keep away from political games and the chaos in the rest of Iraq and the neighbouring countries, it will at the long last be impossible even for their closest neighbours to be against their right to self-determination and independence.

One of the pre-requisites is that they fully realize the truth hidden in the following Kurdish proverbs:

Patience is bitter but it brings sweet fruits.

It is better to have a calf of one's own than to be a co-owner of a cow.

Between Iceland's achievement of freedom from Denmark in 1944 and the collapse of communism in 1991 only three national secession movements have been successful. Singapore peacefully divorced Malaysia in 1965, Eastern Pakistan became free from Pakistan as a result of a bloody war in 1971 and became Bangladesh and after a long civil war Eritrea managed to break away from Ethiopia in 1991. The independence of East Timor from Indonesia can be considered as a belated consequence of the Portuguese process of decolonization. The collapse of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia has resulted in the establishment of nation states that earlier enjoyed a formal autonomy of varying degrees into independent states.

This applies even to the at the moment so topical case of Kosovo. When in 1989 Milosevic revoke Kosovo´s autonomy the area had in its main features the same position as the federal republics. The division of Czechoslovakia was a result of political negotiations.

None of these cases can be considered a parallel to the Kurdish question. The situation of the Kurds today can rather be compared to the situation of Poles between the last Polish division in 1795 and the First World War after which Poland was able to re-emerge from the ruins of the German, Austrian-Hungarian and Russian empires. A "Greater Kurdish state" can only be envisioned if the whole region with Kurdish populations would suffer the same total collapse as these empires did in the First World War.

The Kurds of today are furthermore not as united in their nationalist quest as once the Poles were in 1918. In many respects they are more divided than the Germans were when the German Empire was created in 1871, and the Italians before their unification in 1861. One of their nationalist leaders, Massimo d'Azeglio then said: " We have created Italy now, thus we have to create the Italians ". This task has not been fully completed even 150 years later.

In addition to this the Kurds do not have any unifying national personality like Garibaldi or Bismarck. No Kurdish leader has shouldered the role of an "Atakurd", a Kurdish leader and representative of a pan-Kurdish national idea. Instead, the leadership has been effected by clan-thinking and even as far as the de facto independent Kurdish state in Iraq (KRG) is concerned it is still too early to see if politicians like Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani have been able to leave their role of clan-leaders and warlords behind them and become Kurdish statesmen. Both of them have been fighting as much against each other as against the Iraqi regime that denied the Iraqi Kurds their right of self determination. Still today the KRG in reality consists of two separate states, Barzanistan and Talabanistan.

A united "Greater Kurdistan" would bring together groups that have been living separated from each other in four different states for more than

90 years. Their cultures, national awareness and strategies for political mobilization have developed in different directions and thus the risks for internal power struggles in such a state would be numerous. The questions of contention would include even such elementary things as which one or which of the languages would have official status and which alphabet would be used but the latent antagonisms are of more serious nature. The attacks of the PKK against other Kurdish groups in Turkey should not be forgotten, neither the recurring civil wars between PUK and KDP in Iraq and KDPI and Komala in Iran.

Neighbouring states and other forces that are against a greater Kurdish state would make use of these historical facts. Turkey has been able to make use of the various Kurdish groups and their conflicting interests and play them off against each other. The long and bloody war in the southern and southeastern Turkey was not only a war between the PKK and the Turkish army but also a Kurdish civil war between the PKK and the so-called village guards. This split and internal division has also through history made the Kurds a useful instrument for their neighbours' divide and rule policies. During the long and bloody war between Iraq and Iran in the years 1980 – 1988 Kurds were used by either side as the fifths column.

The Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria have two things in common, however. They feel a common Kurdish identity even though it may be of differing intensity, and that they are all depending on the majority population in the states in which they live. The ethnical Kurdish nationalism has been strengthened by kemalism and its rigid and restricting definition of the Turkish nation, by the socialist Arab nationalism of the Baath-party in Iraq and Syria, and by first the Shah-regime and then the authoritarian system of the Islamic fundamentalists in Iran.

The possibilities to mobilize support for their struggle for their civic and human rights from outside have been limited as all Kurdish regions have been surrounded by states with Kurdish populations of their own and thus distrustful of the real intentions of their Kurdish populations. The only common political position that has been uniting Turkey, Syria, Iraq and

Iran since the 1920-ies has been their opposition to any Kurdish state. The foreign ministers of these states have been holding regular meetings to discuss "the Kurdish question" and have pledged to prevent the creation of any Kurdish state..

A "Greater Kurdistan" would pose a threat against the territorial integrity of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. None of these states would accept an independence claim of the Kurds, as the pre-requisite of this would be the division of their own territories. The main problem for the Kurds today is therefore to achieve the basic human and civic rights in the states they are living in at present. It is only in Iraq that they are recognized as an ethnic minority. In Syria 250 000 Kurds are stateless and in all states except Iraq they face a number of restrictions as far as their cultural rights, free access to media, and schooling in their own mother tongue is concerned.

The future development of the Kurdish nationalism depends not least on the political development in those countries where they constitute a minority. Repressive methods will only make it more aggressive and increase the membership in the radical groups.

A continuing emigration and brain-drain from the Kurdish regions to Europe and to the economical centers in the countries in which they live may further worsen the economical and social position and lead to a situation where an extreme political islamism inclined to violence could become stronger than the ethnic nationalism.

If, on the other hand, the development will be heading towards pluralism and democracy the aggressive Kurdish nationalism will decrease and the socioeconomic development will go in a positive direction. Then perhaps the next generation will not see ethnicity as the only and determining factor for their identity. In Europe the idea of the national state has started to give way for both the regional and supra-state nationalities. Also in Turkey and in the Middle East one can notice that the ethnic nationalism, once imported from Europe, is receding and that people are reverting to those sub-identities that once were typical for the Ottoman society and its tolerance of people with different cultural and religious backgrounds.

The Kurdish diaspora can play an important role. Can they contribute to furthering the ideas of democracy in their old home countries or will their views be strongly influenced by romanticized and retrospective pictures which do not correspond to the present-day situation? In an ideal world also the Kurds, the world's biggest people without a state of their own, would be living in independence since long ago, but the world we are living in is not and never will be ideal. To try to create a greater Kurdish national state by taking to arms is an illusion that would bring about more misfortunes over an already suffering people.

In the Iraqi Kurdistan a basis is now being built for higher education to be provided in the two biggest Kurdish languages. The universities there can develop into a proper alma mater for all Kurdish students irrespective of which country they live in as a minority. Kurdish culture and literature are flowering and the Iraqi region in Kurdistan is about to become a center for Kurdish culture and Kurdish political awareness. Kurdish experts and specialists in different fields are coming from neighbouring countries and from Europe to participate in building up the Kurdish society there. If this development is allowed to continue and the Kurdish diaspora is not considered to be a threat against the already established power structures then the demand for more democracy and decentralisation will also increase in the neighbouring countries.

The Kurds can now enjoy the positive aspects of the globalization. During the lifespan of one generation they have gone from a tribal society governed by sheikhs and agas to having five different satellite channels with TV shows in both sorani and kurmanji. By means of internet and mobile phones they are in permanent contact with the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. Nobody can nowadays forbid the use of the Kurdish language as a means of communication. Whatever happens in a region inhabited by the Kurds becomes immediately known throughout the Kurdish communities. The globalization and the establishment of large Kurdish communities in the diaspora make it impossible to try to stop the legitimate Kurdish demands for political and cultural rights by using military means or by oppression.

A "Greater Kurdistan" will nevertheless remain a utopia. Those who dream such dreams had better think of another Kurdish proverb:

When Allah closes one door he opens a thousand others.

Ingmar Karlsson

WHAT IS A NATION?*

The heart of ethnic nationalism is völkisch, a German concept which is difficult to translate. It is based on German romanticism and the German cultural and spiritual reactions to the Enlightenment and the idea of universality derived from the French revolution. *The Blut und Boden (blood and soil)* concept, and the idea that some races were historically bound up with certain definite areas, contrasted with this.

The nation is thus seen as a birthmark. People are born as Germans, Swedes, Frenchmen or Turks. People with foreign origins are considered a threat to national unity and purity and to a national culture which defines itself vis-a-vis "the other". The common ancestry is the end of history and has to be protected against everything foreign.

Every people is not only entitled to its own sovereign state but it also owns a historical predetermined area for all time for its own exclusive use. Areas once inhabited by a national group should rightfully be returned to them, by force if necessary, and with the expulsion of the present inhabitants as the outcome. Anyone leaving this mythical fellowship is stamped forever with the mark of Cain. To this kind of nationalist, it is inconceivable that several kinds of people could live together. Minorities are tolerated at best, but they are and remain second class citizens.

Myths about Race, National Unity and Purity

With few exceptions – Iceland for example – governments and peoples can not demonstrate a long, unbroken, historical continuity and ethnic homogeneity. The cradle of people and nations does not lie in a mythological obscurity, on the historical battlefields of Troy or Kosovo Polje but between the covers of history books. In many cases, nations were created by national romantic historians. They began looking for common denomina-

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* A lecture held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul October 7 2008

tors for a nation of the future. Thus, history, language, national soul, "Volkgeist", culture and race came to play their part. The written language played an important role in creating a nation, as did a language constructed from the predominant dialects of the time. Language did not therefore precede the nation but instead came later. The emerging national state created its national language in order to legitimize itself. According to a classic definition, the difference between a language and a dialect is that a language has a government and an army.

National conscription, compulsory education and the development of mass media with supra-regional distribution were the channels used by the architects of developing nations in the 19th century in order to create contact between the centre and the periphery, and borders that appeared natural on the basis of geography, language, ethnicity or religion. In particular, the emergence of national education systems and the mass media contributed to communicating a sense of affinity to a national collective, to extending the cultural horizons and getting away from provincial narrow-mindedness. The creation of national symbols and myths and rewriting of history were also part of the process of nation-building.

Originally therefore, a nation can be described as an idea searching for a reality which a minority often violently forced upon a majority. This has since been maintained, with standardization as a goal and with an iron glove as an instrument in order to eradicate previous diversity. Nations were thus constructed and invented. People felt that they primarily belonged to a province, a town or an empire rather than a national state, and they barely protested when they were transferred from one kingdom to another. Eric Hobsbawn spoke of the mass production of nations in the 19th century, when cultural hallmarks were created for later presentation as authentic and ancient.

The "real" aspects needed the "fake" and "foreign" in order to define themselves. The very weakness and lack of credibility of the national identities which were proclaimed, meant that they needed polarization in order to take root.

The ranking order of the factors that characterise a nation has always been subject to discussion – ranging from mutual traditions and collective

political awareness, common antecedents, affiliation to a tribe or people, joint territory, customs and language, culture and religion. Objections can be made to all these factors. The inhabitants of the USA are a nation notwithstanding their widely differing origins. The Swiss are undoubtedly a nation despite their different languages, religions and cultures, while not all those who speak the German language are members of the German nation.

Any attempt to provide some content to the concept of the nation must therefore automatically imply subjecting reality to rape. Karl Popper, the philosopher, stated at the end of the Second Wold War that:

> "It has been said that a race is a collection of people who are united, not by their origin but by a common misconception about their antecedents. Similary, we can say that a nation is a collection of people united by a common misconception about their history".

The shaping of a nation can be both a progressive and regressive process. It can come to a definite end, pause but return with renewed strength, as we have seen in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet empire after its collapse. In the early 14th century, Dante wrote about "Slavs, Hungarians, Germans, Saxons, the English and other nations", describing his own nationality as "Florentine". Now, only the Hungarian, German and English nations remain. The Saxons were absorbed by the last two, for various historical reasons. However, the German nation did not come to include the equally Germanic Friesian, Dutch, Flemish and Luxembourg nations and Dante's Slavs divided into some ten different peoples each of which now considers itself a special nation.

The supposedly original population of France, the Franks, were only a small proportion of the mixed bag of Romans, Gauls, Celts, Bretons, Normans, Burgundians, etc.,who gradually spread outwards from the Ile de France to become present-day France. In the Seine basin alone they probably comprised some ten per cent of the population in the 6th and 7th centuries.

France does not therefore consist of ethnic Franks. Instead, a number of ruling families with a Frankish element, succeeded in forming other

immigrant groups into a unit, a group that, until the Revolution, only comprised the upper echelons of society. Even after the Revolution, the simpler strata of population remained as they were, farmers, peasants, soldiers and craftsmen from Normandy, Provence, Aquitaine, Gascony or Brittany, speaking many languages. During the French Revolution, the people of Marseilles did not understand the language in which the Marseillaise was sung. The state came first and the national collective was established later within its territorial framework as a result of a gradual and cultural standardization. Peasants in France could not be described as Frenchmen until the Third Republic at the end of the 19-th century, but the Basque, Breton, Corsican and Catalonian areas of France still do not feel fully integrated into the French state and nation.

In present-day France, the third of the country lying in the north east is ethnically more Germanic than southern Germany. The north of Bavaria is still described today as Franconia, and Charles the Great, or Charlemagne, represents a central chapter in the history of France and Germany. Frenchmen thus become Germans and Germans French. If we continue even further back in time, the picture changes again.

The French religious historian, Ernest Renan, wrote just over a hundred years ago that:

> "There is no doubt that Lorraine once belonged to the German nation, but almost everywhere that inflamed German patriots invoke ancient German rights we can substantiate the existence of even older Celts, and before them the Allophylian people, the Finns and the Laplanders lived there, and before that there were cave people and orangutans before them. There is only one right in such a historical philosophy, and that is that of the orangutans who were unjustly driven out by an evil civilisation."

Under ecclesiastical law, the German nation originally included the peoples of Scandinavia, Poland and Bohemia. Frederick the Great of Prussia normally conversed in French, and spoke only broken German.

The King of Prussia's appeal to his people during the Napoleonic War of 1812 was also made in Sorbian and Polish.

When Prussia became the nucleus of a united Germany in 1871, it had more Polish than German inhabitants after Poland had been divided up into three parts.

The British are not a homogenous nation, either. The Celtic Britons who were not driven into the western fringes of the country in the 5th century by the Germanic Angles and Saxons were later absorbed by the invaders. A further ethnic mix occured after the Danish invasion in the 9th century and the Norman Conquest in the 11th century.

The mother tongue of Cavour, the founder of Italian nation, was French. He had primarily thought in terms of an Italy based on a Turin-Milan axis. One of the leaders of the Italian "Risorgimento", Massimo d'Azeglio, said in 1860: "Having created Italy, we must now create Italians." 150 years later, there is still reason to question how deeply rooted the Italian identity is. Throughout history, and as a result of migration and invasion,. Many Italians regard present-day Italy as a foreign invention and consider themselves to be primarily Florentines, Venetians, Neapolitans, Bolognese etc. The antagonism between north and south is expressed in the Lega Nord phenomenon which would like to free the industrial and modern north from what it considers to be the poor "African" south.

The Polish and Hungarian nations in the 17th century consisted of nobles who, together with the king, lived off the labour of the peasants and craftsmen. Even in the 19th century, the peasant population living to the north-east of Warsaw spoke a language called Mazowiane, and described themselves as Mazovians. At the beginning of the 19th century, only 40 per cent of the population in Hungary were Hungarians. Their numbers doubled during the next 125 years, while other ethnic groups increased by only 70 per cent. This was not due to their higher nativity but to the fact that the Slovaks, Serbs, Germans and Jews who moved into the cities from countryside were transformed into a Hungarian middle class and proletariat. The meaning of two of the most common Hungarian family names Horvat and Toth is Croat and Slovak.

The wars in former Yugoslavia did not have their foundations in a nationalism with medieval roots but originated from the nationalist ideas that arrived in South-Eastern Europe from the West in the 19th century and which were then translated into reality in the territories of the conquered Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires by the peace treaty after the First World War. Both real and alleged political events from the 14th century onward were cited as justification for cruelty. The conflict between the Serbs and Croats had its origins in the 20th century and began, in military terms, with the establishment of the Croatian Ustashi state in 1941.

The Serbian minority in the Habsburg Empire cooperated politically with the Croats until the breakdown of the double monarchy. The idea of a southern Slav state was first put forward by a Croat, the Catholic Bishop Strossmayer, who, as his name reveals, had Germanic forbears.

An artificially constructed ethnic definition of citizenship allowed the individual no choice. The Serbian war for the creation of a Greater Serbia was an extension of this principle. As long as all Serbs were not gathered in one state, the existence of the Serbian nation was considered to be under threat, and in the same way all Croatians had to be incorporated into a new Greater Croatia, according to the Croatian nationalists.

The Serbian and Croatian argument against the Muslims was that "we have always been here while you have only been here since the 15th century". This is not only incorrect but always elicits the next question as to why the 15th century should be selected as the point of departure for territorial claims. Following this method of reasoning, we might ask why the Slavs who arrived in the Balkans in the 6th and 7th centuries should not be sent back to the parts of north-eastern Europe where they came from, and why all Orthodox Christians should not be returned to Byzantine/Istanbul? According to Serbian and Croatian logic, the former Yugoslavia should be emptied of all people except the Albanians, whose presence can be proved farthest back in time.

Tension in the Balkans rose further with the Greek claimed the sole rights to the name Macedonia. The conflict between Athens and Skopje is

another example of how preposterous a nationalism based on historical myths becomes when subject to close inspection. On the Greek side, a straight line is drawn from 2,300 years ago, from Alexander the Great to the present. In the early years of the 6th century Greece was exposed to such a massive Slav immigration in the Middle Ages that the area was often called "Slavinia". In the early 19th century, for example, 24 per cent of the Athenian population were Albanians, 32 per cent Turks and only 44 per cent Greeks. Nor was the Greek war of liberation from the Turks in the 1820's an out-and-out Greek war. The Suliote heroes about which Lord Byron wrote were Albanians. Eric Hobsbawm writes about the Greeks who took part in the Greek war of freedom: "The real Greeks who fought for what would be the founding of a new independent national state did not speak classical Greek any more than Italians speak Latin. The glories of Pericles, Aeschylos, Euripedes, Sparta and Athens meant nothing to them, and to the extent that they were aware of the history they found it irrelevant. Paradoxically, they were closer to Rome than to Greece (Romaica), i.e., they saw themselves as the heirs of Byzantine. They fought as Christians against the unbelieving Muslims, as Romans against the Turkish dogs."

Macedonia, whose name is the reason for the current dispute, was a divided area at the turn of the century, with different languages, religions, ethnic groups and identities. Hobsbawn gives the following description of the area in about 1870:

> "The inhabitants of Macedonia had been distinguished by their religion, or else claims to this or that part of it had been based on history ranging from the medieval to the ancient, or else an ethnographic arguments about common customs and ritual practices. Macedonia did not become a battlefield for Slav philologists until the twentieth century, when the Greeks, who could not compete on this terrain, compensated by stressing an imaginary ethnicity... The Greeks later described the inhabitants in the parts of Macedonia that they annexed as "slavophone Greeks". In other words, a linguistic monopoly masked as a non-linguistic definition of the nation".

Thessaloniki, where the surge of Greek nationalism was at its peak with the slogan "Macedonia is forever Greek", had a population in the early part of the 20th century which was almost 60 per cent Jewish, while the Greek and Turkish populations each amounted to 18 per cent. Among these Turks was the young man who would become Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Modern Turkey. Northern Egypt with its quarter of a million Greeks concentrated at Alexandria and large parts of Turkish Asia Minor were substantially more Greek than the part of Macedonia which now belongs to Greece. It was only after the exchange of population with Turkey, agreed by treaty and carried out by force, after the First World War, that there was a Greek majority in the area.

The Bulgarians are a mirror image of the Greek case. The Bulgarians were originally an Asiatic people who migrated to Eastern Europe in the 7th century, encountering and conquering Slav tribes who had come into the area in the previous century. But while Slavs who entered Greece were assimilated, the Bulgarians became Slavs to such an extent that only their name recalled their origins. There is not a single word in modern Bulgarian which can be traced to the people who gave the language its name.

The Romanian identity provides yet another demonstration that myths are stronger than facts. According to the national Romanian myth, the Romanians are the result of a merging of the Dacians, a Thracian people, and the Latin Romans. The Dacian-Romans disappeared from history when the Roman legions departed in the 3rd century AD, but according to Romanian accounts, they settled in inaccessible mountain regions where they survived invasions by the Teutons, the Slavs, the Magyars and the Tartars, reappearing in the 11th century as the Vlachs, a Latin-speaking nation. It has been historically proved that these Vlachs, small numbers of whom are now spread all over the Balkans in the form of splinter groups, were assimilated by the Slavs and the Tartars. This Slavic element was particularly emphasized in the early years of the communist era in Romania, and the history books even went so far as to claim that the Dacians were a Slav people. Subsequently, when Ceaucescu began to develop policies which were independent of Moscow, the Slav connection was denied, and

the Dacian-Roman theory was emphasized, to the detriment of the substantial Hungarian and German minorities.

The Nation – a Daily Referendum

Thus, nations are not eternally defined entities, but are in fact created. They are "imagined communities", in the words of the American anthropologist, Benedict Anderson. Nationalism is a two-faced, Janus-like creature. It is synonymous with self-determination for those who have the good fortune to live in a society which has its own history, language, culture and religion, but its can also be xenophobic, intolerant, aggressive, hegemonic and authoritarian, lacking the will and ability to allow others what the nation claims for itself.

The kind of nationalism which we see today, promising a brilliant future on the basis of an illustrious past (often artificially constructed and mysterious) is not a disease which can be cured with quick, radical cures or wished away on common-sense grounds. We must be able to find an antidote to the fear, hatred and insistence on homogeneity on which xenophobia and racism thrive, making it clear that these feelings have nothing to do with nationalism or nationality. If we want to ensure that the nationalists do not monopolize discussion about the "nation", we must apply and employ an open definition of the concept of the nation.

Adherence to a nation must be an act of choice, and not a birthmark. Instead of "ethnos", in which a sense of affinity is based on mystical racial ties of blood, our perception of the national must be a question of "demos" – an open, universalist concept of the nation which focuses on the individual level, in which the nation is based on acceptance by citizens and their belief in a political order which protects their freedoms and rights. The individual can choose to join, but he can also leave the nation. The nation may be ethnically homogenous, but it can also consist of several different peoples, as in the case of Switzerland. National culture is not static or laid down by history, instead it is a dynamic creation based on free and independent citizens.

As a result, the starting point in the fight against racism and xenophobia must be the concept of nationality which was defined by Ernest

Renan, the French religious historian whom I have already mentioned, in his classic address at the Sorbonne on 11 March 1882, entitled "What is a nation?"

As far as Renan was concerned, national affinity was not a question of race, religion or place of birth, but was instead a matter of "an everyday referendum".

"A nation's being is based on all individuals having something in common, but also an ability to forget many things. No Frenchman knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alani or a Visigoth. There are hardly ten families in France who can prove their Frankish origins, and even if they could, evidence of this kind would be incomplete due to the many unknown instances of crossbreeding which put all genealogical systems into such disorder... A nation is a spiritual principle, with its origins in the deep complexity of history, an intellectual family, but not a specific group shaped by the earth... A nation is a grand solidarity constituted by the sentiment of sacrifices which one has made and those that one is disposed to make again. It supposes a past, it renews itself especially in the present by a tangible deed: the approval, the desire, clearly expressed, to continue the communal life. The existence of a nation is an everyday referendum...

However, nations are not something eternal. They have begun, they will end. They will be replaced, in all probability, by a European confederation. But such is not the law of the century in which we live. At the present time the existence of nations happens to be good, even necessary. Their existence is a guarantee of liberty, which would be lost if the world had only one law and only one master."

Renan's words are still relevant 126 years later. National identities and their daily confirmation in the form of national frontiers and national symbols still set clear limits to a sense of European community. The national state is still democracy's principal arena and platform for a political debate in which everyone has common points of reference, plays by the same rules, accepts opponents and is able to achieve compromises, and live with them.

Towards a European nation?

At the same time, Europe is moving towards the confederation which Renan referred to. The classic national state was born in the 19th century, in a world which was characterized by self-sufficiency and a high degree of economic independence, very little spatial and social mobility and limited communications with other human beings. As a result, the state and its territory constituted an entity which was self-sufficient and finitely defined, not just in its national ideology, but also in reality. As a result of economic integration, mass tourism, refugee movements, satellite TV, etc, this epoch has long since passed.

National frontiers have not only become more open; they are being steadily eaten away and diversity within them is increasing. As was the case in the process in which European national states developed, the European Union will continue to be an elite phenomenon. The lack of interest which can still be seen in elections to the European Parliament shows that there is a long way to go. There is lukewarm media interest, the candidates are often unknown and the poll figures are low. What drives people to the ballot box is more dissatisfaction with domestic politics than a sense of participation in a European political process.

Hence Europe is neither a "communication-community" nor an "experience-community", if we try to anglicize two German concepts. Both these factors are essential for the development of a collective political identity. An identity of this nature is built up on the basis of shared experience, myths and memories – often in opposition to similar elements in other collective identities.

Furthermore, this effect is reinforced when faced with something which is markedly different. Joseph Stalin should also be counted amongst the fathers of European integration, along with Schumann, de Gasperi, Monnet and Adenauer. In the Cold War, a sense of West European unity could be mobilized, but what counterforce is there today which can give Europeans a common identity?

Unfortunately many leading European politicians with the French president Nicola Sarkozy in the forefront now seem tempted to choose to

define Europe vis-a-vis its Muslim neighbourhood with Turkey and the Mediterranean as moat to protect the European fort. There is an obvious risk that the construction of a pan-European identity will go hand in hand with a mechanism of cultural exclusion – a policy which could lead Europe into a cul-de-sac, at the same time as the ethnic diversity of Europe is increasing. A European identity must therefore be both distinct and inclusive, differentiating and assimilating at the same time.

National states have been built up over a long time, often as the result of protracted conflict. They are ideological constructions and, as Renan maintained, national identity is ultimately a political decision. One prerequisite for a strong national identity is that citizens feel a strong solidarity with the state because it allocates resources in society and takes care of education, the infrastructure, law and order, etc. Therefore the principal assignment for the "makers of Europe" cannot be to try to give Europeans a common identity based on a distant past in antiquity or the Middle Ages, but instead to develop political self-confidence and an ability to take action which corresponds to Europe's role in the next century. Hence, a European identity will not be established by central directives from Brussels or from the capital cities of member states, or conjured up at seminars or conferences. Instead, it will arise because citizens of the individual European states feel that they, personally, have something to gain from integration and that, as a result, they say yes to the EU in their daily referendum.

Supranationality will not be accepted until there is a situation in which national, regional and supraregional identities are no longer established in a hierarchical order. Everyone must feel that all these identities are self-evident and part of their daily lives. As a result, a policy based on preserving diversity will be a prerequisite for creating European identity which neither should nor can replace a national identity, but which is able to support and strengthen political institutions which are neither national nor the framework for a European superstate.

Questions which involve cultural policy, education and historically based social welfare systems and values must therefore continue to be the concern of the national state. This involves rendering unto the national

state what is the national state's, and to the EU what is the EU's, that is to say a security and foreign policy structure, the Single Market, and a common refugee and immigration policy. The relationship between a European identity and national identities might then take the form of a foreign and security policy, in a broad sense, which lays the foundations for a common European political identity. This means a "nation" in Renan's sense, in which the individual can feel a political affinity irrespective of his ethnic or geographical origins, without therefore needing to feel part of a European "Volk" or of a European "national civilization".

This will loosen up the historical links between the state and the nation. In this perspective, European integration does not mean the emergence of a new European superstate, but instead a dispersion of power. Cultural identity will continue to be based on the national level, but it will also be disseminated downwards to increasingly clearly defined regional identities. We will neither have a new European superstate nor sovereign national states. Nations will not disappear. Instead, we will have nations with fewer state features, and national cultures with softer shells.

At the national level, the German national concept would be retained, but in its original Herdian gestalt, in which a nation does not necessarily have to be expressed in the form of a state. Johan Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) was both a nationalist and an internationalist, who stressed the concept of cultural patriotism. No people was superior to any other. Resting on secure and solid cultural foundations, each nation could contribute its special characteristics and cultural achievements to an international community of nations.

If we are to achieve this, a narrow nationalism must be replaced by a healthy patriotism characterized by five patriotic commandments which Michael Mertes, Chancellor Kohl's close assistant formulated in an article in Frankfurter Allgemeine almost 20 years ago:

- You shall respect the patriotism of other nations as much as you wish your own patriotism to be respected by them.
- You shall be a loyal citizen of the country to which you belong by birth or by free choice.

- You shall accept and respect your neighbour as a compatriot irrespective of his ethnic, cultural and religious background, if he is prepared to be a loyal citizen of the country to which both of you belong.
- Your love for your country must never be divided from your love for liberty. You shall therefore defend your freedom of religion and freedom of thought, and that of your neighbours, and resist all attempts to force you or your neighbour into a conflict of loyalties between your civic and human duties.
- You shall not make an idol of your own country, for there are universal values above all nations, including yours.

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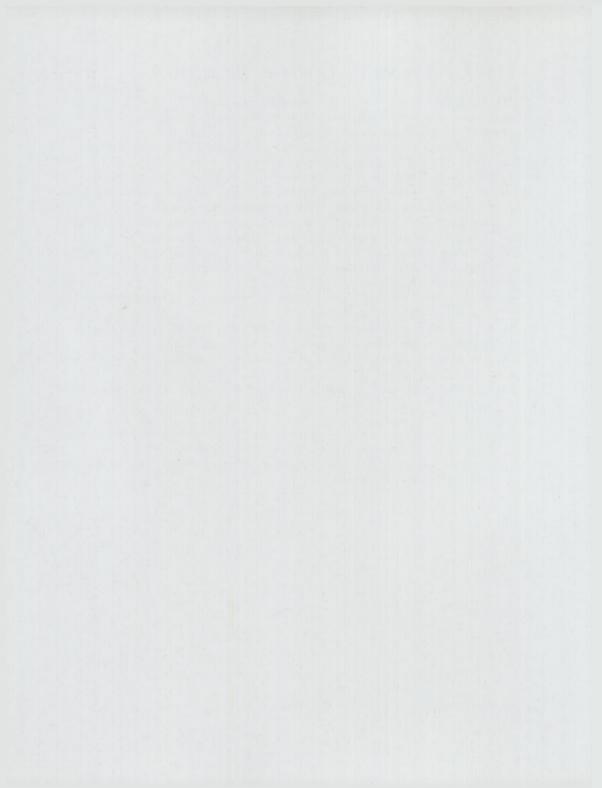
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