

1-1-2010

# Introduction

Henri Barkey  
*Lehigh University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/perspectives-v28>

---

## Recommended Citation

Barkey, Henri, "Introduction" (2010). *Turkey: bridging two worlds*. Paper 1.  
<http://preserve.lehigh.edu/perspectives-v28/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Perspectives on Business and Economics at Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Turkey: bridging two worlds* by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact [preserve@lehigh.edu](mailto:preserve@lehigh.edu).

## INTRODUCTION

The annual research trip of the Martindale Center for the Study of Private Enterprise took students to Turkey, one of the rising countries in the international system. Turkey, much like some other countries such as the United States, has a political capital and a commercial and cultural one. Separated by an hour's flight, Ankara and Istanbul cannot be more different than night and day. Istanbul, the old capital of the Ottoman Empire with its glistening mosques and imperial palaces, proudly struts both sides of the Bosphorus, a deep blue waterway, which at its narrowest point is about a kilometer wide, separating Europe from Asia.

Ankara, by contrast, is a modern city with few if any of Istanbul's charms; it is the political workhorse of the nation. It is the seat of the government, parliament, and numerous bureaucratic agencies where everyday multitudes of Ankara's inhabitants go to work. Ankara is the creation of the modern Turkish republic; it was nothing but a backwater when it was chosen as Turkey's capital by the new rulers who deliberately wanted to draw a psychological line, a distance delineated by time, place, and architecture with the old Ottoman imperial capital, Istanbul. As a result, Ankara reflects both the confidence of the new nation and the unimaginative city planning of twentieth century industrial modernity.

It is this divide that Lehigh students had to conquer as they labored with their individual projects. These ranged from press freedom to Turkey's automotive industry, gas pipelines, and of course Professor Richard Aronson's favorite topic, public pensions. Each of the papers captures an essential part of Turkey's challenges.

Having rid itself of an inward-looking and almost autarkic economic system that privileged domestic manufacturing and resource mobilization in the early 1980s, Turkey slowly began a long and arduous road that has made it today the world's 16th largest economy. It is a member of the G-20, and its clout is felt just

about everywhere in the regions that abut it as well as in the United Nations' Security Council, where for the first time since 1960, Turkey was elected as a non-permanent member for a 2-year rotation. Turkey today is not just a NATO member, but also a candidate country for membership in the European Union and a country to reckon with.

Along the way, Turkish politics have changed dramatically as well. The end of the Cold War and the emergence of nationalist politics gave a boost to the Kurdish minority's struggle, both violent and non-violent, for equal rights. Islam-based politics, long repressed by the state, also gained prominence. All of these developments took place amidst an effort to democratize the country. This has by no means been a straightforward and smooth process. Advances in press freedom and individual rights were also sometimes met by new restrictions on these same rights. Economic progress itself also required painful adjustments.

In all, it is these challenges that have made Turkey such a fascinating country for scholars, students, and just about everyone else. One can safely predict that Turkey will remain an interesting and challenging country. Maybe in the not so distant future, the conveners of the Martindale program will decide that another trip there will be of great interest to faculty and students.

In addition to Ankara and Istanbul, the group took a side trip to Cappadocia, a magical place where for tens or maybe hundreds of thousands of years natural forces shaping the environment have created a series of structures in the form of underground caves and above-ground pointed lime formations that served as a refuge for early Christians fleeing persecution. Martindale faculty and students as a result encountered just about everything — the new, the old and the very old — all during an intense and very fruitful research trip.

Henri Barkey