

Turkey is on the Right Side of History on Hagia Sophia

*By Gregory T. Papanikos**

This paper sheds light on the recent decision by Turkey to change the status of Hagia Sophia from a museum into a mosque. I argue that all international reactions to this legitimate Turkish decision are hypocritical. They do not aim at protecting Hagia Sophia, but at insulting Turkey and Turkish People by undermining their right to use their property as they please. Even worse, they use this insignificant issue to attack once more the Turkish Republic, which after two centuries of retreat and yield to the great powers of the world, at last found a leader who wants to revive the glory of the Ottoman Empire. These international hypocrites attack Turkey not because they care about Hagia Sophia, but because they want to confine Turkey to its current geographical boundaries. In this paper, I examine the policy alternatives available to be used by the Turkish People which concern the status of the Hagia Sophia. On the other hand, I uncover the hypocrisy of all those who lament over Hagia Sophia by stating what would be their alternatives if they really cared about how this historical monument is used.

Keywords: Hagia Sophia, Turkey, Ottoman Empire, Europe, Religion.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to vindicate Turkey's position on Hagia Sophia. Turkey's decision to change the status of Hagia Sophia from a museum into a mosque is the unfettered sovereign right of a strong independent state which is a member of the United Nations, NATO and G20.

It is my strong conviction that the Honorable President of the Turkish Republic is on the right side of history on Hagia Sophia, reversing an almost two centuries of Turkey standing on the wrong side of history, which resulted to a considerable shrinkage of its geographical area (see the two maps in the appendix).

Turkey's leader's decision to sign the change of status of Hagia Sophia shows that he is an independent, charismatic statesman who has great respect for his country and his people—he promised and he delivered; this is the essence of true democracy. Great democratic leaders must keep their pre-election promises and modern Turkey found such a Great Leader. All other countries must respect Turkish People's will. This decision is an internal issue, and of concern only to Turkish People.

All of the international voices against his legitimate decision to use their property as judged appropriate are hypocritical. They are an insult and constitute an attack on Turkey's rights of deciding how to manage their internal affairs in general, and in this particular case, their property of Hagia Sophia. The historical monument belongs to Turkish People. They are the only ones who should decide what would happen to this landmark monument which so many Turks gave their blood to acquire and defend throughout the centuries since 1453.

*President, Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER), Greece.

Within this contextual framework, this paper rationalizes two options available for the future status of Hagia Sophia, and both of them relate to the property rights on Hagia Sophia. The first option assumes that the property of Hagia Sophia remains with the Turkish People. The second option speculates on a possible transfer of property rights of Hagia Sophia to an external authority. The former includes four key policy alternatives. The latter includes two and a half of policy alternatives on how property transfer of Hagia Sophia can be achieved. However, the transfer of property does not change the four policy alternatives of the first option. It might change the policy objective function and the probabilities assigned to various constraints. Thus, in essence there is no difference. It is this reason that I consider that the issue of how to use Hagia Sophia is not important. It is not important for Turkey and it is not important for the external powers who cry over Hagia Sophia. What becomes important is the Turkish use of Hagia Sophia by hypocritical outsiders—states and groups of people—who found another excuse to attack the Turkish People and their Great Leader.

Including this introduction, this paper is organized into seven sections. The next section deals with the innocent (Turkish People) and the hypocrites (external authorities). The third section provides an introduction to the two options of property rights ownership. Following this, in two sections, I discuss the policy alternatives of each option. The sixth section reveals who the hypocrites are and makes a strong historical argument against them. The last section concludes. I should state that this is not a scientific paper and therefore I do not cite any literature. However, supportive scientific documentation can be easily found.

2. Innocents and Hypocrites

In the story of Hagia Sophia, Turkey and the Turkish People belong to the naive and innocent side. All other authorities outside Turkey, states and organized groups of people, are hypocrites and liars. I will explicitly name these countries and people in the sixth section of this paper. My understanding of the naivety-hypocrisy dichotomy is deeply historical and has been profoundly influenced by Hesiod's theory of human progress as this is narrated with his five (or six) historical races/ages. I do not expose Hesiod's theory here, but I simply inform the innocent reader of my theoretical background of the analyses of this and the following sections; one consequence of this is that I would like to look into the long-term which extends to at least a few centuries—this enables me to separate the important from unimportant.

Human progress is not linear; it can be described as non-Euclidean, i.e., long periods (centuries) of progress, followed by long periods of stagnation or even by retreat. What applies to the entire human race is relevant to individual countries such as the Ottoman Empire in the past, or Turkey now, which is considered its successor.

There is, though, one very important exception. History teaches us that the human race has never died even though Hesiod did mention that once upon a time, God eliminated an entire race and created a new one. Since Hesiodic times, the evidence shows that the human population has increased despite many catastrophic wars, diseases and natural disasters. In addition, the means to materially support this ever-increasing population has also risen at an unprecedented rate.

However, nations and entire ethnicities do disappear. Turkey must be aware of this because it is seated on a geographical area that has hosted many different ethnicities and empires that are now stories of the past. Very few nations were able to survive in this turbulent Mediterranean area which extends from the sea, to the fertile land and rich in natural resources of Mesopotamia.

Turkey must be very careful because in the last two centuries its geographical boundaries have been dramatically decreased. Only sadness can generate to the innocent and proud Turkish People the comparison of the map of the Ottoman Empire under the great rule of the Suleiman I the Magnificent in the sixteenth century, and the map of modern Turkey in the twenty-first century. I reproduce the two maps in comparison in the appendix for all hypocrites to see how much Turkey has suffered in the last two centuries.

One may only imagine the bitter sentiments this comparison of the two maps creates to the innocent Turkish who study their history at all levels of education: elementary, secondary and tertiary (I am sure the teacher would never dare to put both maps on the same PowerPoint). The Turkish students would feel as Athenians felt when the tragic poet Phrynichus played in front of the Athenian public in 476 BCE his tragedy “Sack of Miletus” which depicted in detail the destruction of Miletus by the Persian Invaders in the Asia Minor. The City of Athens banned the play from ever being played again and Phrynichus was fined as Herodotus so eloquently informed us in his history books (see 6.21.10).

I think any Turkish teacher who will dare to put the two maps on the same PowerPoint will have the same luck, if not worse, with Phrynichus’ luck twenty-five centuries ago. I can relate to the feeling because I felt the same way when, as an elementary student, I compared the map of classical Greece (fifth century BCE) with a modern map of Greece (twenty-first century A.D.). At that time, I blamed the Europeans (the Roman Empire), but my teachers insisted that I should blame the Ottomans in general and any individual Turk in particular. I had great difficulties in accepting such an unfounded criticism against the innocent Turkish People, but throughout my high school years I was divided between blaming the Roman Empire or the Ottoman Empire. It is true that my teachers never asked me to blame the modern Italians as the closest heirs of the Roman Empire—this would have been much easier to accept because Mussolini invaded Greece in 1940s. From what I know, Turkey never invaded Greece and actually never instigated a war against Greek people. Greeks, along with Europeans, attacked the Ottoman Empire more than once since the eighteenth century which resulted in dismantling the Empire and restricting Turkey to its modern, unbearable, geographical boundaries.

Turkey naively believes and behaves (mainly verbally) as being a super power. However, it is true that it is a great regional power. Modern Turkey can carry out a successful regional war such as in Syria and in Libya pending that they get the green light from the true great powers of the modern world. Turkey’s real enemies in the region are others, e.g., Russia, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but as long as it does not take the green light of the true great powers of the modern world, would never dare in “punishing” them. I have my doubts that even if the light turns green, whether modern Turkey would be able to carry out such a huge military endeavor as their great ancestors of the Ottoman Empire did.

Many innocent Turkish People do believe that they are a Great Power. However, they are split into two groups. One group believes that they are a great Muslim country and their future lies in leading the Muslim world or Brotherhood. This innocent and honest view is on the rise and it seems that their current Great Leader as a true democrat has adopted it. The second group of Turkish People, who decline in numbers, innocently and honestly believe that Turkey can become a great power within the European Union (EU). They believe that Turkey is a modern European country. They are naive because they do not understand that the majority of the EU countries, especially those with the highest number of people, do not consider them Europeans. They think that Turks are backward, uncivilized, and belong to the barbaric group of nations which adopt religious and cultural practices that once upon a time were practiced by the Great European

countries themselves. They do not hate the Turkish People themselves, but they hate their past. No country, or area of countries, can ever surpass Europe in using its people's religious beliefs to justify such atrocities inside and outside of Europe. One of the greatest of such atrocities was the Byzantine Empire itself as I mention later in this paper.

It is within this context that I analyze the minor issue of Hagia Sophia: that the innocent Turkish People have felt victims of the so-called "advanced countries" who are the hypocrites of this story. These charlatans unfairly attack the Turkish People because they exercise a well-accepted legal right by the international community—they would never dare do such a despicable thing five hundred years ago when the Ottoman Empire reached its highest power. Since then, the Empire has been in constant decline. Even the leadership of modern Turkey naively believes that by changing the status of Hagia Sophia from a museum into a mosque, which is a simple and unimportant exercise of their sovereign right, will become a great power again. Of course, the hypocrites know very well that they have trapped modern Turkey into a constant apologetic stance on an unimportant issue. Unfortunately for Turkish People, they would become neither the leaders of the Muslim world by force or persuasion, nor would ever become a Great European power. Their support for the honest Muslim Brotherhood Movement did not bring the desired results because it was undermined by the international conspirators against Turkish People.

Unfortunately, the Muslim world is divided and will remain as such for a few more centuries if the trajectory of the European religious history teaches us anything. At the end, there will be no winner, and all will conclude that fighting over religious issues is a bad idea after all. In Europe, the long religious wars lasted three centuries (fifteenth - eighteenth) and ended with making religion a less important issue. Simply put, Turkey is unable to persuade the rest of the Muslim world to accept its leadership. In addition, Turkey is unable to impose its will by force.

On the other hand, Turkey would never become a great European power because it is not going to become a full member of the European Union in the foreseeable future. I think the period of innocence which started in the 1960s is over. After sixty years, the Turkish People have realized that they are not considered Europeans by almost all other Europeans. The Turkish People are rightly sick and tired of waiting outside the European fortress quietly knocking for one of its doors to open. I think it is a great insult to Turkish People by the EU countries to leave them waiting for so long outside their door. Other countries less significant than Turkey were given the red-carpet treatment. Many others will follow which once upon a time were part of the Great Ottoman Empire such as Albania, Serbia, and North Macedonia. The disrespected Turkish People have at last turned their back on the EU, but the best for the pride of these Great People would have been to be accepted as full members, and then decide to leave the EU following the example of Great Britain.

Regrettably, the only reaction Turkey was left with is the status of Hagia Sophia, an unimportant issue for the other great powers of the world. However, the other countries hypocritically and unashamedly use it to attack the innocent Turkish People and their Great Leader. They claim that Turks, this Great and civilized ethnos, are "backward" and belong to the Middle Ages. It is interesting to note that a political party of the most populated country of the European Union (EU) of the 27 now suggests that the negotiations between EU and Turkey must be terminated. As I was writing this article the government of another EU member demanded a complete cut off of all negotiations. Why? Because the Turkish People legally and morally want to exercise their sovereign right on a property that belongs to them after sacrificing so many innocent Turkish lives outside the walls of Constantinople.

Turkey has the right to use Hagia Sophia to the satisfaction of the Turkish People. There are many legitimate policy alternatives that Turkish People have concerning the use of Hagia Sophia.

These policy alternatives are examined in the next section of this paper. However, I will return to the issue of hypocrites and the innocence of the Turkish People and their Great Leader in the sixth section of this paper.

3. What are the Options and Alternatives for Hagia Sophia?

I am not talking about two possible solutions because I do not consider the issue of Hagia Sophia a problem; national or international. I use the world options to emphasize that both are possible and they can be achieved if all of the interested stakeholders are willing to undertake the costs and of course enjoy the potential benefits of the outcomes.

Both options are characterized by uncertainties and risks and include various policy outcomes which can be implemented using a number of policy alternatives. I was able to identify four such policy alternatives under the first option and two alternatives under the second option. However, in the second option what is more important is the transfer of property rights and if this is feasible then all policy alternatives of the first option can also be implemented by the new owner of the Hagia Sophia.

My approach in presenting these policy alternatives is strictly economic. First, I assume that people and their leaders are orthological, i.e., they choose the alternatives which is best for themselves which include their country, nation, ethnicity, people, future generations etc. Second, in doing so they implement a meticulously crafted cost-benefit analysis which is based on careful examination of the Political, Economic, Social and Technological (PEST) environment—national and international—which imposes certain constraints on the choice of an optimal policy.

It is well known in the relevant literature that whatever relates to future costs and revenues is characterized not only by a number of risks (known probabilities and outcomes), but by uncertainty as well in which case probabilities and outcomes are unknown. However, I do believe that the Turkish People and their leadership since 1453 have chosen that policy alternative of the use of Hagia Sophia which was best for them. This is the essence of democratic (economic) policy: sovereign people must decide how to use their property. Hagia Sophia belongs to the Turkish People and they are the only ones who will decide what use maximizes their benefits taken, however, the constraints imposed by the PEST analysis into consideration. One conclusion which emerges from this analysis is that the use of Hagia Sophia cannot remain the same over the centuries. Change of use is an optimal decision which could be made by the sovereign Turkish People. In the next section, I examine these alternative uses which are available to be used by the proud Turkish People.

4. First Option: Hagia Sophia Remains the Property of Turkish People

This option assumes that Hagia Sophia remains the property of the Turkish Republic and to the extent that the Republic echoes people's preferences the landmark monument is the property of the Turkish People.

Only the Turkish People have the right to decide what becomes of Hagia Sophia. Those who claim otherwise do not respect the free and democratic will of the people of a sovereign nation. Turkey is a sovereign nation and a member of United Nations, NATO and the G20.

Within the framework of this option, the Turkish People have a number of options; none are novel, and have been implemented quite a few times in the past. The Turkish People can learn from history and from the practices of other ethnicities and religious groups by examining what they did in analogous situations. For the purpose of this article, I have pinpointed at least four policy alternatives; and let me repeat and emphasize that all have been implemented in the past primarily by those countries which now unfairly criticize Turkish People of their legitimate choice.

Firstly, the Turkish People may decide to demolish Hagia Sophia following a long tradition of the Byzantine Empire, which, during its reign, had destroyed many ancient Greek temples, statues and libraries. In addition, two times they burned down Hagia Sophia itself. Yes, it is true that the previous two “Hagia Sophia” were burned down by the Byzantine Christians themselves. The current structure is the third that survived and was built by the Emperor Justinian I in 537 A.D. The Ottomans destroyed part of the Hagia Sophia but they did not burn it down as the “civilized” Byzantine Christians did before them.

The disadvantage with this option is that it is irreversible. Once it is demolished, it cannot be returned to its original glorious status. It is true that it can be rebuilt but it would never be the original. Nevertheless, it can be built better which I consider the most probable outcome given the modern knowledge of architecture and the other related scientific disciplines. I am not sure that a cost-benefit analysis of this alternative would be positive at all possible internal rates of return of the investment. It seems to me that it does not pay off to demolish Hagia Sophia given the current stylized facts and data.

Fortunately, the Turkish People have three more options, and all of them are reversible. They may decide to keep the current status and preserve it as a museum. They may collect entrance fees, and they may set the fee at a price which maximizes their net revenue (fee sales minus cost of maintenance). Of course, a thorough cost-benefit analysis will take into consideration other costs and benefits which primarily include political costs and benefits. It is also true that recently these fees have been falling because tourism has decayed. The present value of this option has declined which may be one reason why the sovereign Turkish People want to change its use. From an economic point of view, Hagia Sophia does not pay off to be maintained as a museum.

The other reversible option is to turn it into a mosque. A similar analysis might apply to this option as well and a meticulous calculation of the economic and other costs and benefits will reveal the attractiveness of this option. It seems to me that their cost benefit analysis of this option has shown a sharp increase in the net present value. I relate this to the higher demand by all those who support the Turkish political option to become the leader of the Muslim World. Converting Hagia Sophia into a mosque may not be a bad idea after all.

Lastly, the Turkish People may decide to turn it into a Christian Church and Hagia Sophia becomes something like the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. This alternative requires a sophisticated (clever) cost-benefit analyses to provide accurate estimates. This alternative relates very much to the second option which I discuss below in the next section. This option turns out to be the less profitable one and relates to the tourism impact of the recent years. Fewer and fewer international Cristian tourists visit Hagia Sophia. On the other hand, the old good domestic demand by Turkish Christians has been eliminated. A century ago, the Christian population of Turkey was twenty percent, and is less than one percent today.

Thus, a cost-benefit analysis cannot be static. In a dynamic world, the political, economic, social and technological conditions change. At any given point in time, a re-evaluation of the cost-benefit analyses of the three reversible policy alternatives may show a reversal of the ranking of the preferred alternative.

This may be demonstrated with the history of the changes of the status of Hagia Sophia. After 1453, Hagia Sophia became a mosque. I am sure the Sultan's office made a meticulous cost-benefit analyses of all four alternatives (demolition, mosque, church, museum) and found that the most beneficial for the Ottomans was the policy alternative of a mosque. This served the Turkish People very well until 1934. At that time, a new cost-benefit analysis showed that the policy alternative of a museum was to be preferred over all other possible policy alternatives. However, this did not last as long as the mosque. In 2020, a new cost-benefit analysis has shown that the mosque policy alternative provides better results and it should be implemented.

It seems to me that the Turkish People and all those who represent them are rational decision-makers. The fact that they changed their decision on the status of Hagia Sophia reflects their flexibility in adjusting to new circumstances which in general characterizes smart people. This is not new in property management. Sometimes a property may yield more net revenue if it is used as a house; any type of house. Other times it may be used as a shop; any type of shop. In some cases, many properties have been demolished and new edifices were built, or they were turned into parks, roads and other public infrastructures. Hagia Sophia is a property of the Turkish People and they are the ones who have the right to decide what will become of it.

Hagia Sophia is not the first historical landmark monument which is used by the victors according to their free will. Parthenon was a noticeable case because its superb glory cannot compare with Hagia Sophia. Perses in 480 BCE invaded and captured Athens and destroyed whatever monument existed on the Parthenon Hill. As mentioned above, rebuilding is possible. Pericles rebuilt the top of the Acropolis Hill which included the Parthenon Temple. We cannot really compare the two if Parthenon is better than that what existed before the Persian invasion, but it seems to me that most people would accept that the Parthenon cannot compare to anything else, including Hagia Sophia.

Under the Byzantine rule, Parthenon changed from a temple devoted to the goddess Athena into a Christian temple of Virgin Mary. This lasted for one thousand years until in the fifteenth century the Ottomans made Parthenon a mosque which lasted a few centuries as well. It was the right of the Byzantines to make it a Christian church, and it was the Ottoman's right to make it a mosque. After the Greek War of Independence, Parthenon is not a religious site anymore but a monument to be preserved for the entire human race.

Thus, the owners of a property have the right to do whatever they want with their valuable possession. Perses destroyed it but paid a high price. First, they lost the war with Greeks and second, one and half centuries later, a Greek, the civilized student of Aristotle Alexander the Great, destroyed Persepolis to retaliate for the catastrophe of Athens by Perses. Both Perses and Alexander the Great exercised their legitimate right to do whatever they wanted to do with their property.

As far as Hagia Sophia is concerned, only in the case that the property rights change hands, then the Turkish people will lose their legitimate right to use any of the above policy alternatives. History has provided a good lesson on this to all of us. The issue of property rights transfer is discussed in the next section of this article.

5. Second Option: Change of Ownership of Hagia Sophia

This option requires that the property rights on Hagia Sophia are transferred from the Turkish People to some other authority. For the time being, I leave the discussion of the authority who will

implement the policy alternatives considered here for the next section. I envisage two possible policy alternatives of property transfer. In the next section I will discuss another policy alternative which may be used to force the desired use by the authority without a property transfer being necessary. The two policy alternatives discussed here have been used in the past, and as a matter of fact, Turkish People took advantage of both of them.

According to the first proposed policy alternative, the change of ownership involves the authority making an offer to the Turkish People to buy Hagia Sophia which will involve the transfer of all rights that are currently enjoyed by them. The new authority will have the same rights and they may use Hagia Sophia as they please without any permission from the Turkish Republic.

It is obvious that this new authority will decide on how much to pay based on a cost-benefit analysis. Of course, the new authority under the new circumstances and arrangements could implement any of the four policy alternatives available to Turkish People now. The new authority can decide to demolish it, turn it into a museum, convert it into a mosque or a religious worship site of any religion.

The Chinese Buddhists would have been a good buyer because China has accumulated huge liquidity. Hagia Sophia can become a worship place of all the Buddhists in the world and China may justify this as part of its mega project of silk road which is currently at a stalemate. This project will connect not only the economies, but cultures and religions as well. Hagia Sophia would have been a good bargain for the Chinese.

Even though all the proposed policy alternatives which I refer in this article have a nonzero probability of occurrence, I must admit that the probability of Turkish People accepting to sell Hagia Sophia is close to zero.

However, those who have a deep knowledge of the past will reiterate that my knowledge of history is limited. In the past, sovereign states sold their properties including entire areas to some foreign authorities (states). In one of these business deals, the seller was the Ottoman Empire itself and the buyer was a big economic power as is China today. In 1878, the British Empire bought from the Ottoman Empire the island of Cyprus. On other occasions, a great power like Great Britain can lease a property for many years as it did with Hong Kong for 150 years in the nineteenth century. Similarly, in 1867, the United States bought Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million in 1867 dollars.

In the latter case, the transaction was very transparent which reflects the American (USA) way of doing business. The Alaska Purchase Treaty between USA and Russia is available for all to see. Nobody has ever questioned the property rights transfer from Russia to USA. Both countries lived peacefully thereafter. Not even the Russian Revolution, which came half a century after, questioned this property transfer contract.

In the first example, the treaty of transferring the property of the island of Cyprus from Turkey to Great Britain was not so clear which reflects the British way of doing business. The so-called Cyprus Convention was a secret agreement between Great Britain and the Ottomans and involved both money and fringe benefits. The former was supposed to be a rent which the British never paid and the latter was a promise to support the Sultan in case of a Russian attack. Instead, by 1914, the British engaged in a war with the Ottoman Empire. This is the British and Turkish way of doing business, which unfortunately for all the stakeholders involved (primarily the people), the details of the contract are clarified through a process which is called “gun diplomacy.” This brings us to the second policy alternative.

The second policy alternative of changing the ownership of Hagia Sophia was used by Ottoman Empire in acquiring the property rights of Hagia Sophia. Following the long historical tradition of war and conquer, the Ottomans after many attempts and a long seize of the City of Constantinople, finally on the 29th of May 1453 were able to get hold of Hagia Sophia. Winning a war is an effective way of acquiring property rights of all assets of the occupied areas. Hagia Sophia was no exception.

However, the Ottomans were not the first to acquire the property rights of Hagia Sophia from the Byzantines. In 1204, crusaders sacked and held Constantinople for more than half a century until 1261 when the Byzantine Empire was restored but never reached its old strength; this made the city an easy prey for the Ottomans. As a matter of fact, Emperor Baldwin I of Flanders was crowned in the Hagia Sophia which became a Roman Catholic cathedral.

This option is very easy to explain because it has been used quite often in history. In this case, the authority decides to conquer Istanbul by force. The Hagia Sophia becomes the property of the authority and she would have the legitimate right to use Hagia Sophia as she pleases.

Thus, the key issue here is not what to do with Hagia Sophia, but whether those who disagree with its current use and ownership are willing to force their will using money or guns—both have been validated by long historical practices, and have been as long as history itself.

As already mentioned above, the authority has another policy alternative which is discussed in the next section. It does not involve a property transfer, but it can enforce the desired use.

6. The Authority

Who could implement the two policy alternatives under the second option? This question is addressed in this section of the paper. I also discuss another policy alternative which does not require a transfer of property rights. Quite a few times in history, great powers had the ability to retaliate. Common retaliation has been economic sanctions, but this is not what I recommend here.

I have already mentioned the Chinese but that was just an example of a country that could buy the property rights of Hagia Sophia. China does not belong to the group of authorities whom I call hypocrites and liars here.

Throughout history, the great European powers and their smaller allies like Greece have been the hypocrites and the ones who use historical lies to force their interests. In 1828, the joint military forces of France, England and Russia compelled Turkey to accept the creation of a new Greek state and with their continuous support, this Greek state has expanded to unprecedented geographical boundaries. Never before in their long history, Greeks enjoy so much territory. This has been achieved at the expense of territorial loss of the Ottoman Empire with the help of the so-called “great powers.”

The great powers can do the same now. If they are not hypocrites, which I strongly doubt, then the modern great powers such as USA, France and Russia have the military power to force Turkey to either sell the area around the Hagia Sophia and create a status like the Vatican City State which is enclaved within the boundaries of Rome. Similarly, Turkey could be forced by the use of money or guns to yield sufficient area around Hagia Sophia to create a Hagia Sophia City State.

Alternatively, Turkey could be forced to move to the Asian part of Istanbul through war. A century ago, the Great Powers of France, England and Italy occupied Istanbul for five years from 3 November 1918 to 4 October 1923. If they wanted, they could have made it a Christian City

State and Hagia Sophia its Christian cathedral. In the 1920s, half of Istanbul's population was non-Muslim with many westerners living in the city. As a matter of fact, there is a story that a Greek priest performed a mass in the Hagia Sophia early in 1919.

Instead, the great powers decided to return the city to the new Turkish Republic without using war and without asking any money. Some malicious anti-Turks who want to defame the Great Ottoman seize of Constantinople claim that the same happen in 1453 when the infidels of Europe undermined the Byzantines and indirectly helped the Ottomans to conquer the city. Why do they say such lies? It is difficult to give an answer to this question and for all intents and purposes this goes beyond the scope of this non-scientific article.

Turkey got Istanbul and Hagia Sophia by force; by the heroic fight of their Great People. The three European powers did the same in 1918. Why did they decide to return it to Turkey and not make it a Cristian City State? Why now hypocritically lament over the destiny of Hagia Sophia when they decided to give it to Turkey themselves? Nobody would blame the Europeans of capturing the city by force because the Turks did the same five hundred centuries before them. It is never too late. If they really care about Hagia Sophia—my opinion is that they do not care—they can plan a war and ask Turkey to give back Istanbul to the British, French and Italians either by offering money or by using guns.

Of course, there is another policy alternative available at the hands of Europeans; they can decide to retaliate and convert all Turkish mosques located in the European Union into Christian churches. They will remain so as long as the Hagia Sophia is not converted into its pre-1453 status along with other churches which were converted into mosques.

From what I know in Europe, no mosque has ever been converted into a Christian church. When you really want to achieve something, you raise the costs of the policy alternative of Hagia Sophia becoming a mosque. The cost can become so high that the Turkish People decide that it pays off to convert Hagia Sophia into a Cristian church again. Just think how the Great Leader of the Turkish People would look like when he trades off the Hagia Sophia Mosque for 900 converted Turkish mosques which exist in Europe.

Blackmail and retaliation have been used quite often in the past. Similarly, as mentioned above, buying Hagia Sofia from Turkey or conquering it by a war will not be unique in the long history of humanity. Turkey itself has used both policies in the past, and if the conditions are similar, they can be used in the future.

I would like to point out that I am completely indifferent which policy option and which policy alternative within each option is adopted. What I wanted to point out is the hypocrisy of all the great powers who happened to be Christians; all of them. They exploit the legitimate decision by the Turkish People to use Hagia Sophia as they please claiming that is a crime against humanity. Turkey never in its Glorious History committed such crimes. If something happened that looked like genocides these were either historical accidents or false accusations of the enemies of the Turkish People. If these powers wanted to prevent the conversion of Hagia Sophia, they could use money, guns or retaliation. They would not do it because they do not want to do it.

They want a small Turkey which becomes their pawn. Unfortunately, such small issues as the use of Hagia Sophia, become an ideological tool for all those who for different reasons want an isolated Turkey which is preoccupied with small regional wars such as in Syria and Libya which will never end. In the good old days of the Ottoman Empire such wars would have been finished successfully for Turkey in a couple of years.

The great powers hypocritically use the Hagia Sophia issue to justify their unfounded claims against Turkey. The EU countries found another excuse to delay the negotiations for Turkey's

membership to the EU. Unfortunately, the innocent Turkish People have been trapped into the net of “Byzantine” diplomacy and nothing can take them out of that.

One quick look at the current map of Turkey shows that all of the countries at its borders and at its vicinity are fanatic enemies of the Turkish People. Russia is the big historical enemy in the northeast; Syria, Iraq and Persia in the southwest; Egypt, Israel in the South; and Greece in the west—a complete isolation. This is the real problem and not the use of Hagia Sophia. Turkish People must stand united and support their Great Leader and have nothing to fear. In a few centuries the Glorious Ottoman Empire will re-emerge.

Two more things undermine the future of Turkey’s existence; one is internal and relates to the long hate of the Kurds towards the Turkish State. The other is external and is pertinent to the long hate of the European powers which include all of the so-called Anglo-Saxon world (USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). These countries hate both the Turkish religion and culture. They are anti-Turks. They are infidels.

Decisions for such unimportant things as the use of Hagia Sophia as a Mosque fires up the anti-Turkish flame around the world. There is a real danger that the hypocrites will win and Turkey will lose again. Turkey must do whatever its Great Leader claims otherwise there is a real danger that it will become a smaller power in world affairs. It will be forced to surrender to whatever demands these great powers will have in the future. Hagia Sophia is another excuse to prepare their public opinion for whatever is going to happen to the Turkish People. I am afraid that the shrinkage of their territory and the material immiserating of their people is inevitable. The first symptoms of the latter have already appeared: the Turkish economy has been declining dramatically and one must put the blame on external forces; the Turkish Gross Domestic Product declined from its unprecedented peak of 951 billion US dollars in 2013 to 717 billion in 2020, a 25% loss of output. The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a Holy Mosque is fully justified from an economic point of view. It is the least that the sovereign Turkish Republic can do to retaliate the international conspiracy of hypocrites, infidels and liars who aim at undermining the strength of the Turkish economy. I am certain that Turkey’s Great Leader is fully aware of this plot against his country and he will react accordingly. The conversion of Hagia Sophia should be only the beginning.

7. Conclusions

This paper does not argue in favour of any policy alternative. For all practical purposes, any policy alternative is as good as any other. History teaches us that how Hagia Sophia is used is the legitimate right of its occasional owner (captor). Originally, it was used as a Greek Orthodox church. When the Crusaders captured and sacked Constantinople in 1204, Hagia Sophia was used as a Roman Catholic cathedral. In 1453, the Ottomans used it as a Mosque. In 1934, the new Turkish Republic opened it up as a museum. In 2020, the Turkish Republic decided to use it as Mosque. Hagia Sophia remains the same but its “dress” changes according to the preferences of its owner. One thing is certain: the new dress will not reverse the material immiseration of the Turkish People and it will not help Turkey to end its internal and regional wars. It is within this context that I argue that the issue is trivial and soon will be forgotten unless another important issue necessitates the use of the Hagia Sophia use as an excuse for something else.

In addition, this paper did not speculate on the probabilities of occurrence of any of the policy alternatives presented herein. It is obvious that the probabilities are all strictly positive and they

add up to one. However, their range is huge. For example, what is the probability that the Turkish People decide to change the status of the Hagia Sophia to its original use as a Greek Orthodox cathedral? I cannot provide a guess estimate but I think it is higher than the probability of the Greek people deciding to make Parthenon a Temple of Athena which was its original use.

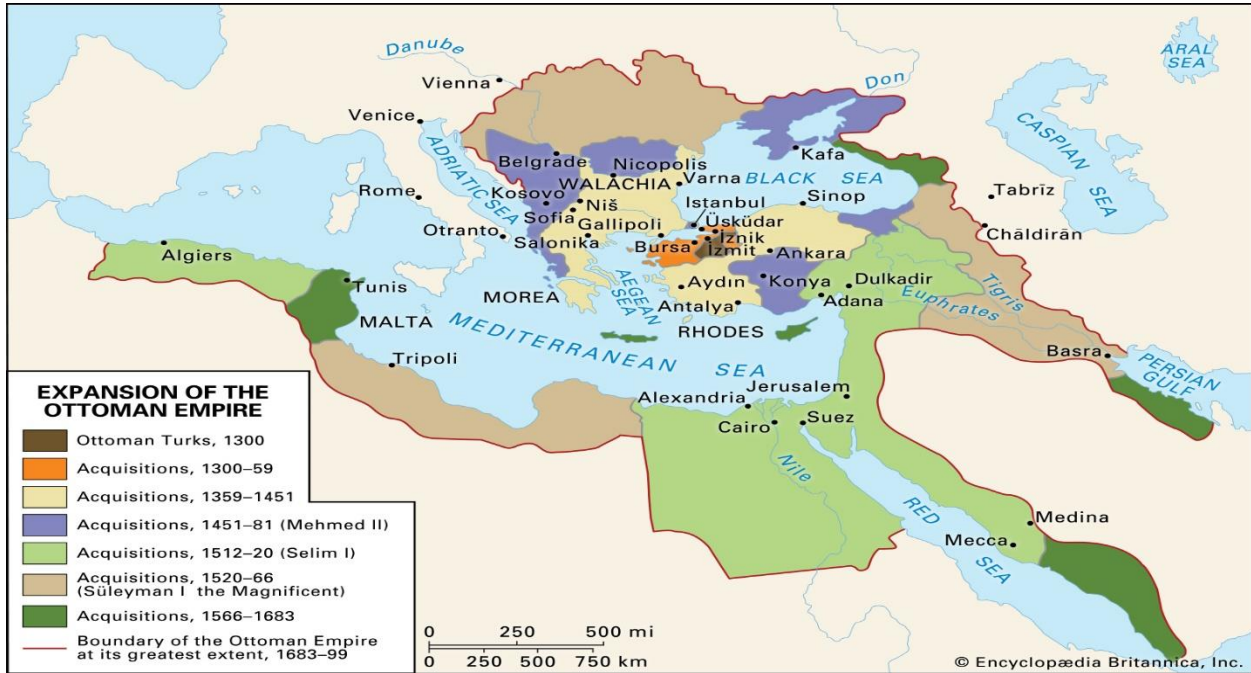
However, what motivated the writing of this non-academic piece was not the issue of changing the use of Hagia Sophia, but how this legitimate decision made by the Turkish People is used by the hypocrites of the EU, Russia and USA to name a few. To the group of hypocrites and liars I add all Christian religions of the world which condemned Turkish People in exercising their legitimate right to change the use of Hagia Sophia. The historical past of the hypocrites does not legitimize them to be critical of Turkey, which after all, preserved Hagia Sophia when the Byzantine Christians burned it down twice.

One must compare Hagia Sophia's destiny with what happened to Parthenon. It was a British ambassador who, allegedly, "legally," but never proved, decided in the first decade of the nineteenth century to cut off half of the statues and temples of the Acropolis Hill and transport them to the British Museum. It is true that to acquire something of value, either you must be able to make it, or steal it. The British were unable, and still are unable, to produce something of such value so they steal it wherever they can find it. The civilized British people are deaf in Greece's shouting of returning the marbles to where they belong. Again, this is insignificant when one compares with the crimes against humanity that the British people did to other people and never apologized for it or more important never paid for it.

Even worse, where did those who bombarded Parthenon come from? The Europeans under the flag of Venetian Army destroyed part of the Parthenon by bombarding it in 1687. I think the European hypocrisy must end and if they want to do something about Hagia Sophia there is only one solution. They have the power to force Turkey either to sell or to surrender. It happened many times in the past and it will happen many times in the future. Whatever less than this is a hypocrisy which aims at all innocent people of the world. Unfortunately, the innocent and honest Turkish People have become the victims of these great hypocrites. Fortunately for the Turks, they have a Great Leader who for many years (decades) to come he will lead them to glory. They should pray for him; preferably inside the Hagia Sophia Mosque.

Appendix

Map 1. Ottoman Empire



Map 2. Modern Turkey

