

such as Hamas and, to a lesser extent, Islamic Jihad have gained support at the expense of secular ones by combining Islamic identity with the Palestinian struggle for rights, dignity, and nationhood.

SEE ALSO *Arab-Israeli Conflict; Jerusalem; Palestine.*

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## ISTANBUL

Istanbul is the cultural and economic capital of modern-day Turkey. As Turkey's largest city, its 14 million inhabitants comprise 18 percent of the country's population. However, it has not been the administrative capital since the founding of the Republic of Turkey (1923). Before that and for over 1,500 years of its history, it was an imperial capital of the Eastern Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Empires. The city was established by Emperor Constantine on the site of an older Greek colony (330 CE), at which time it became known as both New Rome and Constantinople, the city of Constantine. Its conquest in 857/1453 by the Ottomans became a catalyst in the growth of what used to be a frontier principality into a world empire. Today, the city's exact beginnings are uncertain as construction work on a new suburban train line in Yenikapı led in 2005 to the discovery of an ancient port, taking the city's timeline back to 8,500 years ago.

Istanbul is located in northwestern Turkey, straddling the Bosphorus strait (Boğaziçi) between the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. The vast city sits on the border between Europe and Asia and is served by its natural harbor, the Golden Horn. Today, the city has almost merged with İzmit to the east and Tekirdağ to the west through continuous development along the Sea of Marmara, creating what resembles a city-region. The forests, wildlife, freshwater streams, and agricultural areas to the north of the city are threatened by redevelopment projects and proposals. Adjacent to one of the most

seismically active fault lines in the world, the city has witnessed many major earthquakes throughout its long history—including a disastrous one in 1999.

#### BYZANTINE AND OTTOMAN PERIODS

There are significant differences in urban morphology between the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. The Byzantine walled city featured a triangular layout defined by forums connected by porticoed avenues (*mese*). Under Ottoman rule, the city walls lost their importance for security purposes; the city expanded beyond the walls, attaining an outward-looking character. Key public buildings were built on prominent hilltop locations along the Golden Horn side—Topkapı Palace (completed in 882/1478) and Sultan Ahmed Mosque (1025/1616) on the first hill, the Grand Bazaar (865/1461) and Nuruosmaniye Mosque (1169/1755) on the second, Süleymaniye Mosque (965/1558) on the third, Fatih Mosque (875/1470) on the fourth, and Yavuz Sultan Selim Mosque (934/1528) on the fifth. The eighteenth century CE witnessed a new building boom. Summer palaces and mansions, picnic grounds, public gardens, and fountains were commissioned along both the Bosphorus strait and smaller water channels leading to the “suburban” expansion of the city. During the nineteenth century Istanbul underwent a series of modernization projects paralleling those in other world cities. Most of the services, however, benefited the Galata (Pera) area, north of the Golden Horn, across from the historic peninsula, and mainly populated by affluent non-Muslims of Ottoman or European citizenship—so much so that the contrast of the historic peninsula and its old historic wooden homes and centuries-old mosques with the affluent, newer northern area might have given the impression of a “divided city.”

#### REPUBLICAN ERA

Istanbul remained the capital of the Ottoman Empire until the Allied occupation from 1918 to 1923. After Ankara was designated the capital of the newly founded Republic of Turkey, Istanbul was cast in official publications as the opposite of Ankara. The city was portrayed as old and dusty, cosmopolitan and decadent, whereas Ankara was touted as new and clean—a model for the new Turkey. The state promoted civic nationalism, manufacturing a homogeneous national identity out of a very diverse population, and ended up imposing the language (Turkish) and the religion (Sunni Islam) of the majority. This resulted in the exodus of Istanbul's non-Muslim populations, mainly Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Levantines. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the city's population was about one million, half of which consisted of non-Muslims, but by 1960 they constituted only 10 percent, and their numbers continued to

*Istanbul*

# Not For Sale

dwindle while the city witnessed rapid population growth owing in part to the national increase in life expectancy and in part to rural-to-urban migration.

The republican-era city was shaped according to the designs of the French planner Henri Prost, who worked for Istanbul from 1936 to 1950. Prost's work aimed to improve the street network, open new boulevards, preserve monumental buildings and the city's distinct silhouette, and reorganize the city into an automobile-friendly space with zones.

**POSTWAR DECADES**

In the 1950s Turkey's new role in the postwar international order turned the government's attention back to Istanbul, with several high-profile investments, such as the Hilton Hotel (1955) in Maçka Park. Postwar governments continued piecemeal urban-form interventions and civic improvements, while closing their eyes to increasingly visible squatter settlements that formed into whole neighborhoods. The city was rebuilt and expanded with speculative housing developments on all sides. Concrete-frame walk-ups rapidly replaced the existing residential framework in the formal housing sector. One of the most important developments was the opening of the first Bosphorus Bridge in 1973; together with its connecting highways, this bridge opened new areas for development and facilitated the west–east expansion of the city along the Sea of Marmara. Now served by highways, industry gradually moved out of the Golden Horn area and spread to the Anatolian side.

**POST-1980 ERA**

In the post-1980 era, which was marked by economic liberalization, a new phase of urban restructuring centered on deindustrializing the city center, legalizing former squatter areas and incorporating them into the formal property market, and introducing a focus on international tourism. A second bridge spanning the Bosphorus was built in 1988 to the north of the first one. İstiklal Avenue (Rue de Pera), leading to Taksim Square, was pedestrianized (closed to traffic); Tarlabaşı Boulevard was carved out to speed up vehicular access from the historic peninsula; the banks of the Golden Horn were turned into public parks via demolition and infill; and former industrial buildings were repurposed into museums, galleries, and universities. The new Central Business District between Levent and Maslak was lined with glass-clad corporate high-rises. This is the skyline contemporary Istanbul projects as a counterpart to that of the historical peninsula with its domes and minarets.

All this rapid transformation meant that the traditional fabric of Istanbul almost disappeared. Only in the 1970s did calls emerge to preserve not only monuments

but also the wooden houses and the neighborhoods they constituted. Four areas in the historic peninsula were eventually designated, in 1985, as World Heritage sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): the Archaeology Park (encompassing the Sultan Ahmed–Hagia Sophia area), the Süleymaniye and Zeyrek quarters, and the Theodosian land walls. Some of the older areas were discovered anew as desirable inner-city neighborhoods, at the same time as the city rapidly suburbanized with gated communities and malls.

Under the rule of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) since 2002, Istanbul has experienced staggering growth. Mega-developments—including a third Bosphorus bridge, a third airport, and Kanal Istanbul (literally an artificial canal to the west of the Bosphorus)—are environmentally disconcerting and contested. Slum clearance and earthquake-related disaster prevention are the official slogans and excuses for forceful evictions of the urban poor and the redevelopment of the city's natural preserves. In parallel, Istanbul has witnessed an art boom, with new corporate-sponsored museums, such as the Istanbul Modern, Pera Museum, and Santral Istanbul; new contemporary art spaces, such as the Akbank Kültür Sanat Merkezi, Arter, Garaj, and SALT Beyoğlu; and a new generation of artists—and all have contributed to the rise of the city to the rank of one of the world's most-visited destinations.

The opening up of the economy in the post-1980 period has also been paralleled with the rise of an invigorated civil society that questions state-sanctioned narratives of secular modernity and top-down modernization. A notable point of cohesion for grassroots mobilization has been resisting imposed projects that harm local communities. Neighborhood associations, such as those in Kuzguncuk, Arnavutköy, and Cihangir, have been informing fellow residents about their rights to the city and on how to preserve and protect the city's cultural and environmental assets. The 2013 protests, which initially began in Istanbul's Gezi Park to protect trees from being destroyed to make way for a shopping mall, but spread to the rest of the country, translating into a call for democratic rights, transparency of government, and freedom of expression, were an important reminder of the key role of Istanbul in the Turkish public sphere.

SEE ALSO *Architecture; Ottomans; Turkey.*

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