

A REBUTTAL TO PSYCHOANALYTIC BIOGRAPHY OF MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK: NO CLINICAL CONCERN FOR CAREGIVING CONTEXT IN INFANCY

OSPORAVANJE PSIHOANALITIČKE BIOGRAFIJE MUSTAFA KEMALA ATATÜRKA: NEMA KLINIČKE TJESKOBNE U KONTEKSTU PRUŽANJA NJEGE U DOJENAČKOJ DOBI

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SUMMARY

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) was the founder of the modern-day Turkish Republic. Although much has been published about his life, only one biography adopted a psychological/psychoanalytic perspective. The authors Vamik Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz argued that the main driving mechanism behind Atatürk's behavior was his narcissistic personality organization. Their framework considered Mustafa's birth, which occurred shortly after his elder brothers had passed away, and how his mother, presumably in a state of severe depression, could not provide adequate emotional care, which gave way to compensatory narcissistic tendencies in the child. For several decades, the hypothesis has remained unchallenged, and no serious review has yet been carried out. In this article, I argue that Mustafa Kemal was a highly intelligent and gifted child based on his well-developed verbal skills and his record as a high achiever at school. While considering the impact of adverse events in early childhood on cognitive development and personality, a review of historical texts revealed that his elder brothers died in 1883—not before Mustafa's birth, as the authors had believed.

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Thus, no serious event appears to have taken place in his early years when rapid brain development is thought to occur. Since the central premise has lost its integrity to support the biography, Volkan and Itzkowitz's hypothesis can no longer be regarded as tenable and viable.

Keywords: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, psychobiography, narcissism, giftedness, child development

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 19th century and early 20th century, many successive political and economic events revealed that the Ottoman Empire lagged behind its age and was rapidly approaching its end. The empire's structural problems did not respond to efforts to reform and transform. Consequently, while the Great War, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, led to the collapse of monarchies that seemed much stronger in Europe, the Ottoman monarchy could not stay out of it. The problem was how to make the transition from an imperial legacy to a successive state, and this would not be an easy task in the occupied lands. The name of the leader who would endeavor to address this hard and difficult task and guide it to success was Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) (Figure 1), who not only led the Turkish War of Independence to victory but also modernized the society and took his place in history as the founder of the independent Turkish Republic in which we live today.

As an impressive and influential leader, his life has always aroused interest, as has the makeup of his personality. To date, and as far as we are aware, only one academic work has attempted to examine Mustafa Kemal's personality. Starting in the 1980s, US academics Vamık Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz published a series of studies which, according to them, could be regarded as a psychoanalytic biography of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Volkan, 1980; Volkan & Itzkowitz, 1984). They concluded that Atatürk had a narcissistic personality organization with associated reparative characteristics. Interestingly, although Volkan and Itzkowitz's work has aroused interest, it has thus far not been subject to rigorous academic evaluation and criticism. Most authors agree that a certain amount of healthy narcissism is essential to maintaining a healthy life and that inherent narcissism does not indicate a pathological meaning (Schmidt, 2019). On the other hand, no mental illness should ever be conceived of as a source of shame or stigma, including narcissistic personality organization at any severity level. In addition, extreme caution is required while attributing behavioral patterns to individuals, whether living or deceased. In our opinion, the biography in question contains very

serious errors, unsupported claims and excessive commentary. In the present article, we aim to draw attention to the analytic gaps in question and prove that the hypothesis is not valid.



Figure 1. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) (1881–1938), having reached the rank of Captain in 1907.

BIOGRAPHY OF MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) was the founder and first President of the Republic of Turkey. He was born in Thessaloniki, which, at that time, was a multicultural Ottoman city where Eastern and Western influences converged (Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, n.d; Coşar, 1973; Kinross, 1994). His mother, Zübeyde Hanım, was a woman of faith who adhered to traditional values, while his father, Ali Rıza Bey, was a modern-minded customs official, and both were members of native Turkish families (Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, n.d;

Coşar, 1973; Kinross, 1994). After Mustafa started school, he lost his father to a terminal illness. When he left elementary school, Mustafa Kemal volunteered to pursue a military school career and graduated from the Army War College in 1905 with the rank of captain. In the years that followed, Mustafa Kemal served on various fronts and missions (Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, n.d.; Coşar, 1973; Kinross, 1994). When the First World War broke out in 1914, he was appointed as a military attaché in Sofia. Upon his request for active combat duty in the Great War, Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal was assigned to Gallipoli, where his command made history as one of the main factors that led to the defeat of the Allied forces in the Dardanelles (Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, n.d.; Kinross, 1994). However, the Ottoman Empire lost the Great War and signed the Armistice of Mudros (1918), which was akin to a death warrant as it imposed very harsh conditions. Mustafa Kemal refused to cooperate and started a national resistance movement after landing in Samsun (1919) (Kinross, 1994; Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, n.d.). He then led the opening of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the formation of its government. At the end of a series of battles, the Turkish struggle for national independence culminated in victory with the liberation of Izmir and, subsequently, Istanbul (Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, n.d.; Kinross, 1994). After the Ottoman State was abolished, the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, and Mustafa Kemal became its first president. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk carried out a number of radical reforms to modernize society and left behind an unforgettable legacy that shaped the lives of the Turkish people. He passed away in 1938 (Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, n.d.; Kinross, 1994).

THE HYPOTHESIS ON THE PERSONALITY ORGANIZATION OF ATATÜRK

Volkan and Itzkowitz's research on the life of Mustafa Kemal began in 1973, and their extensive book was published in 1984, entitled *The Immortal Atatürk: A Psychobiography* (Volkan & Itzkowitz, 1984). A summary of Volkan's formulation on Mustafa Kemal's personality may be found in an earlier article (Volkan, 1980). The hypothesis centers on the premise that Mustafa's mother had lost three children before he was born and that this experience plunged her into a state of severe depression, which meant that she was unable to provide emotional care for her newborn. The authors argued that, as a result of neglect by his mother and the negative emotional impact that this had, Mustafa developed narcissistic personality traits. Volkan wrote as follows:

“... He was born in 1881, as Mustafa, into a *house of death*. His mother, who had been a child bride, had already borne three children by the time of his birth and had seen them all die before reaching the age of seven. ... This birth came during a brief period of family prosperity after the three deaths, and Mustafa’s mother saw him as a symbol of hope for the future and the family’s savior. Thus, the infant was not only a living *linking object* in relation to the siblings, but he was also connected through his name—Mustafa—with a dead infant so named, an uncle killed in infancy in an accident for which the new baby’s father had been responsible (Kinross, 1965). ... I believe that his grandiose self was ultimately crystallized around such convictions of being “special,” but this must be seen against the background of an underlying need arising from the ways in which his grieving mother used him for her own narcissistic ends and ignored his need of psychological nurture. ...”

While Volkan argued that the mother might have developed an aloof and distant attitude towards the possibility that Mustafa could also die, he also left room for the possibility that she might have adopted an over-involved parenting style in caring for her baby. Furthermore, Volkan drew attention to another barely noticeable point in the above quotation; that is, the argument that Mustafa was a replacement child (Volkan & Itzkowitz, 2011). *Replacement child syndrome* refers to a condition in which the psychological and emotional bonds that parents have formed with a deceased child are continued and transferred onto another pregnancy and subsequent child.

In psychology, *personality* is defined as relatively stable and enduring patterns of cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior that are activated under specific circumstances (Oldham, Skodol & Bender, 2014). Personality organization refers to how different parts of a person’s personality exist and function together. Among several approaches developed to understand personality constructs, psychodynamic and cognitive-social or cognitive-behavioral models are the ones commonly applied in clinical settings. In recent times, trait theories and biological perspectives have also received increasing attention from professionals worldwide (Oldham, Skodol & Bender, 2014). The psychodynamic theory argues that personality development is achieved through psychosexual stages, during which internal conflict and defense mechanisms lead to the maturation of structural elements like id, ego, and superego.

It is entirely true that the prenatal period and the experiences of children in early development have a crucial and profound impact on psychological well-being in later life. There is agreement that a parent with mental problems will negatively affect the personality development of an infant in the

postpartum period. Winnicott's conception of narcissism emphasizes caregiver failure, which leads to the infant's adoption of a false self to accommodate the needs of the other party (Lapsley & Power, 2012). Likewise, according to Bowlby's attachment theory (Pistole, 1995), narcissistic personality traits emerge when the insecure attachment that develops between the infant and the caregiver negatively affects the individual's self-development. Regardless of the mechanism proposed by such theorists, all of the most prominent frameworks agree that the postpartum period affects personality development and regard it as a potential source of psychopathology.

IMPACT OF PERINATAL MATERNAL DEPRESSION ON INFANT DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR

Maternal depression, which can be understood as complicated grief, has been strongly implicated in the formulation developed by Volkan and Itzkowitz. Thus, there is a need to take a closer look to examine what this is and its consequences on infant development. *Perinatal depression* is a mood disorder that affects women during pregnancy or the first year after childbirth. It is characterized by symptoms of low mood, irritability, vegetative disturbances, loss of interest, feelings of hopelessness, and thoughts of suicide (APA, 2013; DSM-5). Estimates of prevalence indicate that up to 14% to 23% of mothers may suffer from perinatal depression (Gaviria, Duque, Vergel & Restrepo, 2019; Yonkers et al., 2009). It is thought that perinatal depression is the outcome of a complex interaction between genetics, epigenetics, the neuroendocrine hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, and environmental and social factors (Van Niel & Payne, 2020). Several risk factors, such as teen pregnancy, poverty, lower educational attainment, history of depression and/or anxiety, a history of miscarriage and pregnancy termination, childhood sexual abuse, low social support, and an ongoing health problem with the baby, were reported to be associated with perinatal depression (Leigh & Milgrom, 2008; Van Niel & Payne, 2020). Among all these factors, depressive symptoms during pregnancy strongly predict postpartum depression (Robertson, Grace, Wallington & Stewart, 2004). Undetected and untreated perinatal depression has serious consequences for mother, baby, and community health. Prenatal depression or anxiety disrupts a mother's prenatal attachment, mental preparation for delivery, and baby care after birth. Antenatal depression significantly contributes to infant developmental, emotional, and attachment problems, as well as a spectrum of mental health problems in later life (Dadi, Miller & Mwanri, 2020). Similarly, through a number of mechanisms, such

as the child's exposure to the mother's depressive symptoms and parenting difficulties in the context of depression, postnatal depression significantly impacts the child's mental health (Murray & Cooper, 1994).

Since the human nervous system is extremely vulnerable to toxic influences, prolonged perinatal stress may leave its marks in either the gestational period or postpartum period. In a recent multimodal MRI study (Lebel et al., 2016), maternal depressive symptoms prenatally and postpartum were linked to altered gray matter and white matter structure in children's brains. A recent review of structural and functional neuroimaging research concluded that, in children exposed to perinatal maternal stress, changes in connectivity between amygdala and prefrontal cortex, decreased hippocampal growth, decreased cortical thickness, and increased amygdala volumes were the most prominent findings indicating a substantial impact on developing brain architecture (Duan et al., 2019). Consequently, in children affected by perinatal depression, symptoms of slow development (e.g., social-emotional, cognitive, language, motor, and adaptive behavior) and even low intelligence may be expected. The pooled results of 192 studies that examined the issue suggested that perinatal depression adversely influences all childhood developmental domains (Rogers et al., 2020). It has been reported that maternal depressive symptoms from pregnancy onwards may be associated with reduced cognitive scores in the child (van der Waerden et al., 2017). Research has now revealed that there are strong associations between early developmental attainments and later intelligence. Peyre et al. (2017) reported that early developmental milestones, in particular early language skills, predict a sizeable component of later intelligence assessed at age 5-6. Furthermore, adult IQ at age 20-34 years was found to be predicted by attainment of developmental milestones in the first 3 years of life, with language development having the strongest associations (Flensburg-Madsen & Mortensen, 2018).

In summary, since the effects of perinatal stress are enormous, all developmental domains should be considered when there is cause for concern. Today's modern infant psychiatry approach regards multiaxial assessment as essential, as it evaluates clinical disorders, relational contexts, physical health conditions and other considerations, psychosocial stressors, and developmental competence, all of which help to create a comprehensive picture of the child (Zero to three, 2016). With this approach, overly reductionist and rapid judgments that identify psychopathology in the child of every depressed mother may also be minimized.

NARCISSISTIC TRAITS AND COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING

It has long been believed that narcissistic traits are associated with higher cognitive performance, but recent research contradicts this viewpoint. An early study reported an overestimation of their own intelligence in male and female college students who scored high on narcissism (Gabriel, Critelli & Ee, 1994). Likewise, in another study, while grandiose narcissism significantly and negatively predicted verbal intelligence scores, excessive overconfidence in mental abilities still remained present (Littrell, Fugelsang & Risko, 2020). Executive functions also appear to be deficient in narcissistic individuals (Nenadić, 2021). From a brain science standpoint, since early adverse events are implicated in the pathogenesis of narcissism, it is very likely that these experiences lead to adverse cognitive consequences. Neuroscience research provides evidence that narcissism is associated with altered brain activity, particularly in the salience network consisting of the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex and anterior insula, as well as the default mode network comprising the medial prefrontal cortex (Jauk & Kanske, 2021). Taken together, narcissism is associated with behavioral features such as a lack of objectivity, distortion of reality, and suboptimal-risky decision-making, which make it hard to accomplish higher goals (Yang et al., 2018). This line of research is consistent with the above-mentioned literature, which shows that early adverse events not only affect healthy personality development but also impact cognitive development and functioning.

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK'S INTELLIGENCE

Although Mustafa Kemal Atatürk advised against attributing any extraordinary qualities to him, he is often regarded as a genius for his accomplishments. In their book, Volkan and Itzkowitz (1998) twice referred to Atatürk as a “genius” and as “extremely intelligent”, but roughly speaking, they did not choose to elaborate any further on this matter. Recent research indicates that personality and cognition are two interrelated concepts, although little emphasis has been placed on this topic in the psychoanalytic literature. Therefore, the authors, whose background was psychoanalytic in nature, might have deemed it pointless to explore this issue further. However, we can now take further steps to examine what may be revealed by historical sources.

Dating back to as early as 1953, historians published works on the school grades that Mustafa Kemal received during his military school career. According to these reports, he completed Military Middle School in the fourth

rank (Güler, 2000). In Monastir Military High School, he came third among 52 cadets in the second grade and second among 54 cadets in the third grade. Next, Mustafa Kemal attended the Military Academy in Istanbul, which was a large academy that schooled hundreds of cadets. It was one of the few schools that provided higher education during the Ottoman period. Mustafa Kemal graduated in eighth rank in a class of 459 cadets (Güler, 2000). All of these reports clearly indicated that Mustafa Kemal was a consistent high achiever throughout his military school career. Currently, high achievers are defined as those students who score at the 90th percentile or above based on their school grades or assessments (LeBeau et al., 2020). Mustafa Kemal's graduation score from the Military Academy falls into the 98th percentile and is, therefore, indicative of levels of achievement that are at the high-end of the spectrum. At this juncture, a relevant question emerges; that is, whether such an achievement score is associated with higher intellectual abilities. Although intelligence and academic achievement are two separate constructs, previous research has revealed that they are highly correlated (Roth et al., 2015). In connection with this, studies have shown that higher-achieving students have significantly higher intelligence scores than students with average school grades (Chandra & Azimmudin, 2013). Consequently, when dealing with children exhibiting signs of superior intelligence, a behavioral, as well as an educational perspective should or must consider a further dimension that we term 'giftedness'. By definition, giftedness refers to children who have an IQ of 130 or above, along with traits of creativity and task commitment (Ren-zulli, 1986). Giftedness presents with a variety of behavioral traits that shape personality development in gifted individuals. Based on extensive evaluations, I believe that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's life history points to several signs of giftedness, which apparently formed the main mechanism that came to determine his historical existence and significance.

As discussed in the above section, narcissism and higher intellectual functioning seem to be incompatible. Thus, we need to have a closer look at the early life events that in some way shaped Mustafa Kemal, those that Volkan and Itzkowitz referred to, in order to construct their psychoanalytical formulation.

WERE MUSTAFA KEMAL'S BROTHERS ALIVE WHEN HE WAS BORN?

As noted in the introduction above, the crucial part of Volkan and Itzkowitz's formulation is the death of Mustafa Kemal's brothers, which occurred prior to his birth and presumably caused his mother to fall into a se-

vere state of depression. However, although an appealing story it is, the reality may have been quite different. Currently, the official website of the Turkish Military Academy (n.d.-a), where Mustafa Kemal received his education and training, states that Mustafa had three older siblings. The eldest was a girl named Fatma, who lived between 1871/1872 and 1875. Mustafa Kemal's two older brothers were Ahmet (1874–1883) and Ömer (1875–1883), both of whom passed away in the same year due to an epidemic disease. Since Mustafa was born in 1881, it emerges that Mustafa's brothers were alive when he was born, and they shared the same environment until 1883. This information can be sourced in a presentation by Republican-era historian Faik Resat Unat (1956) (Figure 2).

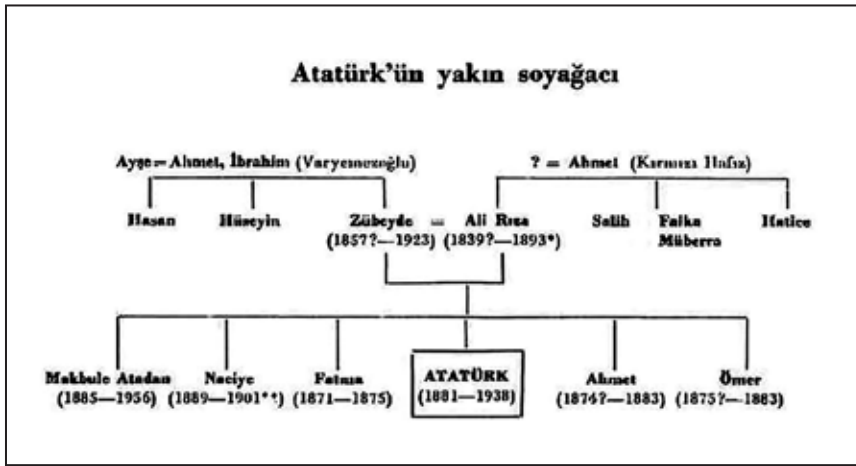


Figure 2. Atatürk's Family Tree, according to Faik Reşat Unat (1956).

Another historian, Ömer Sami Coşar, described the local newspaper's coverage of the epidemic in 1882/1883 and drew attention to the possibility that Mustafa could also have lost his life during this time (1973). Furthermore, historian Cemal Kutay quoted Fuat Bulca, who was a close comrade of Atatürk, about the older siblings (1994). Atatürk shared the following remarks with Fuat Bulca: "... I cannot remember either my sister Fatma or my brothers Ahmet and Ömer. The last two died in the same year, 1883, when I was two years old."

A period of at least 24 months in infancy represents a huge span of time in an individual's development. It emerges that the chronology of life events on which Volkan and Itzkowitz based their formulation significantly deviated from the historical factual events we referenced. In fact, there was no *house*

of death, nor was Mustafa a *replacement child*. The sensitive period postulated in the pathogenesis of narcissism was over when the older brothers lost their lives. We understand from the work of Volkan and Itzkowitz that they heavily relied on a book entitled *The Man*, a biography of Atatürk (Aydemir, 1963). In this book, the author, Sevket Süreyya Aydemir, argued that Mustafa's older siblings had passed away before he was born. However, a careful reading of the book reveals a vivid description of how Zübeyde Hanım was longing for a baby girl during her pregnancy with Mustafa. Obviously, it is not reasonable to expect such a state of mind in a mother who had recently lost two sons. Eventually, it is understood that, Volkan and Itzkowitz did not take this section into consideration and repeated the flawed information. The authors did not even elaborate or try to validate Aydemir's story about the older brothers, although the references outlined above (Coşar, 1973; Unat, 1956) were available at the time they wrote the book. In their follow-up book, *Atatürk-Anatürk*, Volkan and Itzkowitz only admitted that there was no document that had recorded the date of death of the older siblings (2011). However, a lack of documentation in this regard does not mean that it is appropriate to accept any date that has not been validated.

In the case of a formulation constructed by referring to a sequence of events, any alteration in the timing of a stressful event affects all following events, such that the entire story collapses. In line with historical reports, Mustafa's mother was not in a mourning state during her pregnancy with Mustafa, which might otherwise have affected the fetus in utero. As revealed in the memoirs of Makbule Atadan, Zübeyde Hanım was a maternal woman who loved childbearing (Genç Acar, 2005). After Mustafa was born, life went on as usual, and her older sons were still alive. In this way, Zübeyde Hanım was able to provide her little baby with every necessary care and attention he needed. In the first two years of life, infants achieve major developmental milestones, establish attachment relationships and acquire a foundation for their lifelong health and well-being. From birth to 3 years old, rapid brain growth and development take place, and the brain grows to 80% of its ultimate weight (Berger, 1988). As the evidence indicates, Mustafa's early years were characterized by healthy development. Undoubtedly, the loss of two children in 1883 was a great tragedy, and it would be expected that the family was emotionally affected by this situation. Eventually, family unity was maintained, and two more children joined the family in the years that followed.

A CONCEPT INTRODUCED TO REPAIR THE CASE FORMULATION:
REPARATIVE NARCISSISTIC LEADERSHIP

While we now understand that their formulation is not valid, Volkan and Itzkowitz were seemingly very determined to explain all significant events in Atatürk's life from their perspective. For example, the way Turkish troops concentrated against the enemy (center of gravity) during the Great Offensive was even interpreted as an expression of Mustafa Kemal's personality, even though that plan had been drafted long before by the Turkish General Staff. Likewise, Volkan and Itzkowitz's analysis of Mustafa Kemal's decision to take the initiative and order a counterattack against the advancing AN-ZAC troops, which averted both the encirclement of the Ottoman troops and the collapse of the war front during the 1915 Gallipoli campaign, viewed these actions as a manifestation of his narcissistic personality organization. I have published criticisms of these arguments elsewhere (Sabuncuoglu, 2021a, 2021b). We should bear in mind that the authors did not refer to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in their definition of narcissism and instead applied psychoanalytic theory and concepts (APA, 2013; DSM History, n.d.). However, for many, the distinction between healthy and pathological narcissism is unclear, and the discourse of high-level narcissism may easily be perceived as narcissistic personality disorder. Because the overall view of the authors does not reflect reality, even for the layperson, they may have realized at some point that they had gone too far and decided to introduce a restorative concept that they termed "reparative narcissistic leadership". Volkan viewed Atatürk as "a truly reparative national leader, narcissistic on a high level" with "a grandiose self" (Volkan, 1980). Keeping in mind the hollow nature of the formulation, this concept should also be addressed. While narcissism and concern/desire for reparation seem to be incompatible, recent reports indicate that there may be a relationship between covert narcissism and a certain form of concern known as a pathological concern (Friedemann, Tolmacz & Doron, 2016). Therefore, this is not a healthy concern. In addition, in a person who supposedly exhibits grandiose narcissism, the co-existence of genuine concern/empathy and narcissism is contradictory, as the former term indicates the existence of a healthy maternal caregiving experience, which would not lead to pathological narcissism. Beyond the task of reparation, Atatürk was a founding leader whose creativity was rooted elsewhere, not in "high-level" narcissism.

Besides his school achievements described previously, the development and type of behaviors that Mustafa displayed in his childhood suggest that he

was a highly gifted child. Although a full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, I will merely refer to a significant event in Mustafa's adolescence to draw attention to relevant connections to the present rebuttal. This event took place when Mustafa was in secondary school. As quoted, a teacher who was also named Mustafa noticed Mustafa's advanced mathematical abilities and gave him his second name, *Kemal*, which meant "mature". According to Volkan, the word meant "perfect", and Mustafa adopted it as it was appropriate to his already developed grandiose self (Volkan, 1980). Unfortunately, the name of this national leader, which embodied his innate qualifications, is so poorly understood. *Kemal* is a Turkish male name of Arabic origin, meaning "mature" in the first sense. From a child psychology standpoint, gifted students are reported to be "...more mature socially than their age peers in spheres such as friendship patterns, play interests, social knowledge, and behavior and personality." (Robinson, 2008). Miraca Gross, a dedicated scholar in gifted children research, pointed out that emotional maturity is much more related to mental age than chronological age, and it is particularly noticeable in highly able children (Kerr, 2009). While close friends may tend to give more positive ratings about a child, peer nomination is an accepted source of gifted child identification. In Ali Fuat Cebesoy's memoir, which was published much later than Mustafa Kemal passed away (Cebesoy, 1967), Osman Nizami Pasha was reported to have voiced similar compliments to Mustafa Kemal in a meeting that they had attended: "...Mustafa Kemal Efendi, my son... Your sharp mind and high ability will have an impact on the future of your country. Don't take my words as a compliment. I see in you signs of exceptional talent and intelligence that the great men who came to rule the country displayed in their youth. I hope I am not mistaken." Brigadier General Mehmet Hayri Tarhan, Mustafa Kemal's classmate in military school, made the following remark about Mustafa Kemal: "...His Holiness Gazi was the smartest student in the class. He had an unexpected maturity beyond his age and condition." (Turkish Military Academy, n.d.-b). Lütfi Müfit Özdeş, another close classmate in military school, remembered Mustafa Kemal similarly: "Already at that time, he was presenting very well what great services he was destined to render in the future to the noble Turkish nation, of which he was a son. His friends, who were devout and sincerely believed in his honest thoughts as they always were, gathered around that great man." (Mujdeci & Karakılıç, 2013). The statements of Mustafa Kemal's fellow students published in his lifetime and after he had passed away (Cebesoy, 1967) are consistent in content. Therefore, it leaves little room for the possibility that statements about him during his time in power were sub-

jectively influenced. In short, from his early years, Mustafa Kemal gave the impression that his mind was different. I find it very interesting that an Ottoman military school teacher was able to detect and highlight this trait, whereas it has remained unexplored and unacknowledged by scholars even several decades later. No indication of awareness relating to giftedness is present in the formulation of Volkan and Itzkowitz (1984).

In fact, it has been noted that clinicians must ensure that they differentiate between narcissism and giftedness (Webb et al., 2004). According to Webb et al. (2004), while gifted individuals struggle to display their abilities outwardly, narcissistic persons try to conceal both their sense of inferiority and personal shortcomings through a variety of masking behaviors. Webb et al. (2004) called for competent evaluations by professionals to avoid stigmatizing misdiagnoses and provide a list of features to facilitate differential diagnosis. They argued that a person who is truly competent in a given area is more likely to have a higher intellectual ability rather than a narcissistic personality organization. A child or adult with gifted traits may display undue focus and neglect of others only (or mostly) when absorbed in a task in an area in which they excel. The individual may also be intolerant of careless incompetence, and gifted children may sometimes become impatient with the genuine attempts of others. A gifted individual is expected to show empathy and sympathy for others, and a humble attitude in regard to his or her achievements is common (Webb et al., 2004). Defending an idiosyncratic preference rather than seeking prestige may be the primary motive for people with giftedness. In the case of gifted individuals who exhibit narcissistic behaviors, such behaviors are neither persistent nor pervasive. The authors described a gifted individual as having "... a positive and realistic self-esteem and a strong sense of genuine confidence in his or her abilities." Most importantly, they emphasized an absence of an underlying attachment trauma that would otherwise cause a narcissistic disorder (Webb et al., 2004). This is exactly what we see in Mustafa Kemal's clarified early life history.

It is thought that gifted children are likely to become aware that they are different from other children around them at an early age (Gross, 1998). In addition, while many believe that high intelligence can be a very important source of narcissistic gratification, according to some authors, gifted children and teens may deny their potential and be reluctant to be labeled as such by their peer groups (Gross, 1998; Isaacs, 1964). An examination of Atatürk's life reveals that, although he was likely aware of his superior intelligence, he never outwardly displayed this condition. Moreover, he warned against

unrealistic idealization of his personality. As for the bond between the national leader and his followers, it is possible to say that this unique bond was determined by many factors. One thing is certain, a high degree of cognitive functioning is essential. The study has revealed that IQ estimates of the most prominent founding fathers of the United States, namely, George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, fell within the gifted range (130–160) (Simonton, 2006). I wish that the authors Volkan and Itzkowitz would have reviewed the biographies of these outstanding leaders first and foremost. An examination of the traits shared by all founding fathers might have provided further insights.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in this rebuttal, I aimed to demonstrate that the psychoanalytic formulation and psychobiography of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk put forward by the authors Volkan and Itzkowitz are incorrect and invalid. The authors argued that having lost two children shortly before, Mustafa's mother fell into a severe depression while looking after him. They, therefore, posited that Atatürk had experienced maternal neglect and emotional deprivation in his infancy and, as a consequence, developed high-level narcissism, which shaped his entire life. Research indicates that high intelligence in adult life is related to a nurturing home environment and responsive caregiving in the preschool years. I presented evidence that unhealthy narcissism and higher cognitive performance are incompatible. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had excellent verbal skills that began early in life, was a high achiever at school, and demonstrated cognitive performance consistent with giftedness. From this starting point, when I investigated his early life, it emerged that the storyline was completely different from that on which the authors had based their formulation. Atatürk's older brothers died in 1883, and when Mustafa was born in 1881, his mother was not in a condition that was suggestive of mental distress. Ultimately, we can see that the core story has collapsed, and Volkan and Itzkowitz's hypothesis is no longer tenable or viable. I believe that the present work accomplishes a long-overlooked task by shedding light on an incorrect assumption. It is important for people to understand the minds of their leaders—those who paved the way forward—so that they can make the right decisions for the future.

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SAŽETAK

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881. – 1938.) utemeljitelj je moderne Turske Republike. Iako je o njegovu životu objavljeno puno publikacija, samo je jedna biografija prihvatila psihološku/psichoanalitičku perspektivu. Autori Vamik Volkan i Norman Itzkowitz tvrdili su da je glavni pokretački mehanizam Atatürkova ponašanja bila njegova narcisoidna organizacija osobnosti. Okosnica njihova istraživanja bilo je Mustafino rođenje koje se dogodilo nedugo nakon što su njegova starija braća umrla te njegova majka, vjerojatno u stanju teške depre-

sije, nije mogla pružiti odgovarajuću emocionalnu skrb. To je, prema mišljenju tih autora, ustupilo mjesto kompenzacijskim narcističkim tendencijama djeteta. Hipoteza je nekoliko desetljeća ostala neosporena i još uvijek nije provedena nikakva ozbiljna revizija. U ovom članku tvrdi se da je Mustafa Kemal, na temelju svojih dobro razvijenih verbalnih vještina i uspjeha u školi, bio vrlo inteligentno i nadareno dijete. Dok je razmatran utjecaj nepovoljnih događaja u ranom djetinjstvu na Atatürkov kognitivni razvoj i njegovu osobnost, pregled povijesnih tekstova otkrio je da su njegova starija braća umrla 1883. – a ne prije Mustafina rođenja, kao što su autori Volkan i Itzkowitz vjerovali. Stoga se čini da se nije dogodio nikakav ozbiljan događaj u njegovim ranim godinama u kojima se smatra da dolazi do brzog razvoja mozga. Budući da je središnja premisa tog istraživanja izgubila svoj integritet u Atatürkovo biografiji, hipoteza Volkana i Itzkowitza više se ne može smatrati logičnom i održivom.

Ključne riječi: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, psihobiografija, narcizam, darovitost, razvoj djeteta