

5 The politics of Islamophobia in Turkey

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Introduction

This chapter analyses the dominant years of the politics of Islamophobia in Turkey, which roughly covers the years from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the late 1990s. It takes the definition of Islamophobia as the construction of Islam and Muslims as the enemy. Based on that definition, it argues that Islamophobia played a constitutive role in the establishment and construction of the modern Turkish state. First of all, the politics of Islamophobia served to replace the Ottoman Empire with the secular–nationalist Turkish Republic. Following the completion of this political transition, Islamophobia was deployed to produce a secular–nationalist reality, which included the forming of a secular–nationalist society in its domestic realm, backing a Westphalian regional order and a Western-centric global order on its outside. The politics of Islamophobia remained dominant in Turkish politics until the 2000s.

This study discusses the political function of Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies, concluding that Islamophobia is an important problem in Muslim societies as well, especially as it pertains to countries that underwent a radical modernization process. Second, this study examines the theoretical foundations of Islamophobia and asserts that only those criticisms towards Islam and Muslims that make the latter the enemy can be considered as Islamophobia. Finally, the study applies those theoretical findings to the Turkish case. Here, it first seeks to manifest how Islamophobia was utilized in transforming the political form and ideological basis of the political community towards the nation-state and secular–nationalism before the republic was established. Then, it analyses how the secular republican elite deployed Islamophobia in the reproduction of the secular–nationalist nation-state to hold on to power until the late 1990s.

The political function of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is often defined as ‘unfounded hostility towards Islam, unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs’, (Elahi and Khan, 2017,

p. 7) ‘anti-Muslim racism’, (Bayraklı and Hafez, 2018), ‘anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiment’ (Ogan *et al.*, 2014) ‘indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed towards Islam and Muslims’ (Bleich, 2011, p. 1582) or ‘fear of Islam’ (Shryock, 2010). All these descriptions point at the process of antagonization of Islam and Muslims or ‘making Muslims the enemy’, (Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2008) especially in the Western world after the Cold War.¹ Indeed, there is a long history of conflict and enmity between Muslims and Christians (or Westerners) which goes back to the Middle Ages. However, the intra-European wars in the first part and the presence of the Soviet threat in the later years of the twentieth century decreased the political importance of Islam and Muslims. The collapse of the Soviet Union and communism, along with the unification of Europe, put the spotlights back on Islam and Muslims (Huntington, 1993). This process of antagonization of Islam and Muslims gained momentum after 9/11 and recently continued with the ISIS threat (Morgan and Poynting, 2012). The rising population of Muslims in the last decades and the pouring of refugees from conflict areas and civil wars into Europe after the Arab Spring exacerbated the situation.

Indeed, the study of Islamophobia has created a vast literature on the subject. However, this literature appears to be lacking the study of Islamophobia in Muslim majority countries. Islamophobia is also an important problem in Muslim societies. The colonial past and radical secularist policies implemented by the state elites have created a fertile ground for Islamophobia in Muslim countries. In the process of modernization, which was carried out by the state elites in an authoritarian way, Islam and Muslims were made the enemy. The dosage of Islamophobia differed among Muslim societies with respect to how radical the modernization process was perceived and handled. In extreme cases, Islamic past and symbols were wiped out, religious-conservatives were denied basic rights and freedoms and were politically repressed as a consequence (Atabaki and Zürcher, 2004). In a nutshell, there was an attempt to destroy the political existence of Muslims in Muslim societies through brutal means in the last century.

This chapter highlights the rather systematic and institutional character of Islamophobia, which is backed by the state and is ingrained in the official ideology. It is a norm that resides at the centre of politics. This is because politics is essentially about transforming the identities of others by integrating them into an overarching identity (through immigration laws, for example)² in an open political struggle or within the framework of democratic politics. Islamophobic policies come into play when political actors fail to hegemonize by integrating others into themselves or reject to add them into themselves or else put pressure on them to give in. Consequently, they tend to make them the enemy (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

For instance, in Turkey, the secularist political forces, which strived to produce a modern political community on the basis of a secular-nationalist identity, always kept Islamophobic politics as an option. When the republican elite failed to transform the identity of Muslims to secular-nationalism, which was

substantialized by the six arrows or principles of the Republican People's Party (CHP) – republicanism, populism, nationalism, laicism, statism, and revolutionism – that served as the official ideology of the Turkish state, (Parla, 1995) or bring religious–conservative sections of society under the overarching secular–nationalist identity, they had a tendency to present them as enemies of the regime. This was also the case when the republican elite, which sought to set positivistic science and nationalism as new bases for the legitimacy of the political order, failed to nationalize and rationalize Islam in order to hegemonize it under a secular–nationalist political project (Sakallıoğlu, 1994). Accordingly, Islam and Muslims were kept outside the 'official us'. To give an example, for quite a long time in Turkey, women wearing headscarves were not allowed to enter into the Parliament and become part of the ruling circle, not to mention that they could not even become public servants (Shively, 2005). Moreover, political parties with no ties to violence or terrorist activities were closed down with the accusation of being hubs of anti-secularist activities.³ The secularist identity had therefore decided the dividing line between the centre that harboured those who were part of the ruling group and enjoyed public life and the periphery that included those who were being ruled and relegated into private life (Mardin, 1973). This was neither periodical nor temporary; although its visibility rose in times of increasing polarization and declined in other times, it always remained there.

These qualities underline the fact that, in the politics of Muslim countries, Islamophobia is a constitutive element that lays out the foundations of the new political community. It is deployed in the political struggle over the construction and reproduction of a political community. This is actually not much different in non-Muslim societies. Despite the fact that Islamophobia is often associated with marginal political actors or portrayed as a political anomaly in many non-Muslim societies, it is also observed that mainstream political actors can easily and increasingly resort to the same exclusionist discourse and practices. Islamophobia can turn into a norm that is utilized in organizing the totality of the political community. The basic political function of Islamophobia in Muslim minority countries is to cleanse the political body from Islam and Muslims and keep them outside the political community by turning them into the enemy.⁴ Moreover, this serves to draw boundaries and differentiate the modern world from the 'backward' or 'dangerous' Muslim world. For instance, senior British diplomat Robert Cooper argues that there are postmodern, modern and pre-modern worlds with specific rules of conduct and therefore calls for a liberal imperialism and admission of double standards in foreign policy towards the less civilized worlds (Cooper, 2003).⁵ The traces of this attitude that harbours double standards – such as offering Turkey a 'privileged partnership' instead of a full membership status – can be detected within European Union (EU)–Turkey membership negotiations as well ('Merkel Says Still against Turkey Joining the EU', 2015).

Although Islamophobia is a constitutive element of the political community in Muslim societies, it displays itself in a different manner. In contrast to non-Muslim majority societies, Islamophobia is adopted in Muslim societies to

repress or wipe out the elements that might produce difference and hinder integration with the outside, namely with the modern Western world which is deemed as the 'friend'.⁶ That is why Islamic symbols were demolished and religious-conservatives were denied basic political rights and freedoms and rendered politically invisible. And that's why it causes fear and angst in the political circles that seek integration with the modern world as Islamic symbols and Muslims gain larger visibility and presence in public life.⁷ While Islamophobia establishes division lines with the outside and serves as a 'wall' between us and them in the non-Muslim case, it is deployed for integrating the political community with the outside and serves as a 'bridge' between us and them in Muslims countries.⁸

The basic tenet of Islamophobia in a Muslim society such as Turkey is, therefore, rejection of the political existence of the Islamic civilization and Muslims in order to integrate with the modern Western civilization. Accordingly, Islam is provincialized and reduced to a particularistic position. Religious-conservative sections of society, on the other hand, are subjected to policies of assimilation and otherization. In doing that, Islam is argued to belong to the pre-modern era or not applicable in the modern world. In other words, it is claimed that Islam is culturally backward, conflicting with modern science, strategically incompetent and a hindrance to progress in our time. The institutional outcome of this historical-cultural break is replacing Islamic political concepts and institutions with modern Western concepts and institutions.⁹

One of the major institutional changes is replacing empires, which claimed universal sovereignty, with particularistic territorial nation-states. In terms of Islamophobia and among its many other functions, the nation-state serves double purposes in a Muslim country like Turkey. On one hand, as a political tool, the nation-state facilitates the integration of Muslim majority communities into the modern world (the secularist dimension). On the other hand, it ensures that Muslim majority communities produce a political difference with the outside with their own sovereign polities (the nationalist dimension). The nation-state thus helps to tackle one of the important problems of modern international relations, which is the handling of the problem of inside/outside (Walker, 1993).

Islamophobia through the lenses of Carl Schmitt

To analyse above-mentioned problem properly, we have to focus on one of the major definitions of Islamophobia, which is 'making Muslims the enemy' and discuss what it means to make someone or some group of people the enemy. Since the meaning of any concept could be understood in relation to its opposite, the enemy can only be understood by comparing it with its polar opposite, the friend. As Carl Schmitt puts forward: 'The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation' (Schmitt, 2007, p. 27). Rather, the enemy is the one who is outside of 'us' or outside the political collectivity we form. The enemy does not have to be morally evil, aesthetically ugly or culturally backward (Schmitt,

2007). To be evil, ugly or backward does not make someone our enemy, although we resort to these non-political categories when producing our enemy. It does not need a specific content, since any content that can produce an intense separation between us and them is capable of creating an enemy. Therefore, the enemy is rather a matter of the intensity of the differences between the inside and the outside of a political collectivity and, as the intensity of the differences increases, the level of animosity mounts accordingly (Morgenthau, 2012). The enemy, thus, refers to other collectivities of people who are outside the boundaries of the nation-state.¹⁰

According to Schmitt, either the enemy should be other political collectivities or the enemy within a society could only exist before the state is formed, that is in the state of nature or the state of war in which everyone is against everyone else (Hobbes, 1962). However, as we observe in the discussion of Islamophobia, the enemy could also be within the state. Can the enemy be within the state? This raises the issue of social cohesion in the state. There are three degrees of social cohesion on the basis of the nature of the inter-relations between fellow citizens that can be found in society (Schmitt, 2000). At the top of it lies consensus on social values and principles. The whole society may gather around a certain set of ethical–political values. Members of a society perceive each other as ‘friends’ and each defines his identity and interests not independently from the others in the society. This transcendental form of society characterizes a rather communitarian and Hegelian type of political community (Taylor, 1984).

This is followed by another situation where society is divided into multiple social groups on the basis of value or identity differences. Here, members of a society perceive each other as ‘rival’ or ‘adversary’. Despite individuals defining their identity, values and interests differently than others, they at least share some form of interests such as accepting the rules of competition among each other. Here, the consensus is merely over the rules of conflict, which are the basic elements of any political order. In this instrumentalist type of society, one can at least find a political order that allows for fair and open elections and a peaceful transfer of power among rival political forces. This poses a rather agonistic democratic order (Mouffe, 2000).

Both political orders, in which everybody views others as friends or rivals, require an enemy outside its borders. The enemies are those other political collectivities that do not share our cultural values, national identity or ethic-political principles. If there is not an enemy outside the borders, the enemy is produced within the borders. Here, we find a form of society in which members of the society perceive each other as ‘enemy’. In this situation, individuals or social groups neither share a common identity and interest nor the rules of competition among each other. Rather, what members of the society share is a common understanding based on not attacking each other, *pacta sunt servanda*. One can argue that, in this situation, the key to political order is the presence of a balance of threats that keeps the society from dissolving or plunging into a bloody civil war. This poses a rather anarchic and antagonistic political situation that can only be observed in international politics (Walt, 1987).

The society may evolve into any of these three generic political situations. Friends can become rivals and rivals can turn into enemies. This devolution to a Hobbesian situation can sometimes be limited to some sections of the society. Social groups, especially ethnic and religious minorities, may face a situation in which they are portrayed as the enemy of the society and the state. Indeed, every political order for it rests on a specific definition of us or an identity involves some sort of exclusion. They are constructed as outsiders and pushed to the outside of the political community. Their political demands are disregarded and even some of their basic rights can be breached. As noted above, this is likely to happen when the inclusiveness of the state declines, especially as a result of finding an enemy outside the national borders. When the state fails to include social groups into the political community on the basis of a common enemy outside itself, it tends to antagonize and securitize their demands and rights. As mentioned above, the decline of the communist or Soviet threat led to the emergence and rise of Islamophobia in the West. Islamic symbols and some Muslim practices, such as the wearing of the headscarf or burqa and even circumcision, have suddenly become a security problem. Why were they not a security threat during the Cold War?

All in all, Muslims in Muslim minority societies should interact with others in constructing the values and rules of political life. They have to participate and take responsibility in sustaining the political order. In that interaction, the state, along with major political actors, attempts to gain the consent of Muslims and enter into bargaining with them – this is most likely since Muslims are a minority – by satisfying their demands and integrating them into their political project. Muslims have the right not to give their consent and to expect more, just as those political actors have the right to criticize Muslims in return. However, this critique of Muslims should not reach to the level of making Muslims the enemy. In that case, we can start talking about Islamophobia, especially if it extends to an essentialist opposition to Islam and Muslims. Muslims should be friends or rivals in those democratic political settings, not the enemy. This is also true for Muslim majority societies. The religious–conservative social groups should not be made the enemy and put outside the political community. To reiterate, this is only viable as the state or main political actors find a common enemy outside the borders. As the friend–enemy distinction with the outside wanes, it inevitably pops up within borders. The enemy is constitutive in building the political community.

The politics of Islamophobia in Turkey

To understand Islamophobia in a Muslim majority society, one should look at how it is related to the construction and reproduction of the political community. If Islam and Muslims are made the enemy and systematically kept outside the political community, we can say that Islamophobic policies are already underway. Since Islam serves as the central value system and religious–conservative social groups are in the majority, Islamophobia is more likely to occur in Muslim

majority societies. This is because it is very difficult for political actors to produce an inclusive identity without coming to terms with Islam and religious-conservative social groups. This becomes a much more difficult task since political actors are supposed to modernize the country as well. This is especially more likely when modernization is equated with Westernization. In that case, the local value system and their representatives, meaning Islam and Muslims, become the natural enemy. In order to unite with the West or produce a Western identity, Islam and Muslims are taken as the outside and made the enemy. That is why, in many Muslim majority countries, political life is mainly determined by the polarization between the secularists and the conservatives.

Turkish politics is not an exception in this regard. In Turkish politics, the main line of conflict or division has been between the Turkish-Islamic tradition and the secularist Westernist politics since the nineteenth century (Mardin, 1973). From the nineteenth century onwards, the alliance of bureaucracy with local notables has strived to produce a modern or Westernized political community by secularizing politics (İnançık, 1941). This search for a secular Western-style politics had two dimensions. One of them was the transformation of the political form from ancient to modern by following the French example of 1789 through which the Islamic content was emptied out from the locus of power. In fact, this did not mean that the locus of power was supposed to be filled with a more appropriate, that is, secularist, content. Modernization, secularization or democratization of politics basically implies that 'the locus of power becomes an empty place',¹¹ it has to remain empty. For instance, elections in democratic politics are one of the major indicators or providers of the emptiness of the locus of power:

At the moment of elections, the whole hierarchic network of social relations is in a way suspended, put in parentheses; 'society' as an organic unity ceases to exist, it changes into a contingent collection of atomized individuals, of abstract units, and the result depends on a purely quantitative mechanism of counting.

(Zizek, 1989, p. 157)

Elections show that power belongs to no one or can belong to anyone.

This transformation involved the decline of the role played by religion or any other transcendental source of power that claims to fill the locus of power in political life; whereas the other dimension was about providing a secular ideological content to this new modern political form (Berkes, 1998). There are two crucial points here. The first is that the politics of secularism in Turkey inclined to Islamophobia since, in order to empty the locus of power, Islam and any other transcendental source of power in politics had to be delegitimized. The other point is that, since modernization was equated with Westernization, the secularist elite tended to make Islam and Muslims the enemy in their struggle to produce a secular-nationalist political order. With its political form – the modern nation-state – and its political content – the secular-nationalist identity – Islam

and Muslims functioned as the enemy. The sacred alliance between the bureaucracy and local notables deployed Islamophobia in order to further their political interests, which was to seize the state power in order to Westernize the country.

From ancient to modern politics

The basic difference between the ancient and modern political forms is found at the ontological level. In pre-modern times, political order was claimed to be the reflection of cosmic order on Earth. Its legitimacy, therefore, came from the outside, from the metaphysical world. As long as it lived up to the transcendental truth, political order was regarded as stable and healthy and those in a position of rule were considered successful in their task so long as stability was sustained. Indeed, the central task of politics was to guarantee and maintain the correspondence between the metaphysical and physical worlds (Larkins, 2010).

In Turkish–Islamic political thought and practice, this was formulated with the concept of *nizam-ı alem* (the order of universe). *Nizam-ı alem* was carried out by keeping each component of political order – the Sultan, the ruling class, and the common people – in its proper place. This was deemed to be key to render justice, which was the central concept in Turkish–Islamic political thought. The main task of the Sultan, who was regarded as the extra-political figure, was to sustain justice by arranging the relations between the ruling class (*askeriyye*) and the people (*reaya*) (İnalçık, 1958).

In this hierarchic political form, therefore, the locus of power was not empty. It was filled with certain transcendental truth and a limited number of people were claimed to have access to this truth. Moreover, the representatives of this metaphysical truth in the physical world occupied places of power. They sustained the connection between these two worlds. Hence, the Sultan had a divine right to rule, he was believed to be awarded with *kut*.¹² The Sultan was identified with power and was designed as the natural ruler, whereas the rest were relegated to the position of the ruled (İnalçık, 1958).

Secularization of politics, in principle, involved emptying the locus of power. It introduced anarchy and a new division in the political universe, a division between the state and society. This encapsulated setting politics free from any higher authority, such as religion or morality. Politics became autonomous, an independent realm with its own rules and ethics. This process of freeing politics involved delegitimizing the metaphysical world, denying its role in socio-political life, and emptying the locus of power by forcing the Sultan to share power with the others through introducing the parliamentary system (shifting from absolute to constitutional monarchy) or eliminating the Sultanate altogether (shifting from monarchy to republic).¹³ Since there was no transcendental truth outside us, political order could not be legitimized with reference to the metaphysical world and the place of power could not be identified with the Sultan. This created the problem of finding a new source of political authority. The political order, therefore, had to turn to itself in order to sustain its own legitimacy (Flynn, 2006). An immanent source replaced the transcendental source.

Anarchic and self-organizing politics replaced hierarchy (Rasch, 2004). This immanent source was determined to be popular sovereignty or the political community itself. The people's or national interest thus had to be the ultimate source behind every decision made by the state. Popular sovereignty and national interest have become the ground for legitimacy in politics.

This process of secularization of politics in the Ottoman Empire encompassed a long time period (İnalçık, 1968). It followed a double and interacting process of de-sacralizing politics and gradually limiting and destroying the Sultanate (in 1922) and then the Caliphate (in 1924). To legitimize the de-sacralization of politics, secularist forces resorted to two discourses in order to make Islam the enemy: the culturalist and the realpolitik discourses. The culturalist line of argument took pains to assimilate Islamic history into 'universal' European history and argued that Islam shared the darkness and ignorance of the European Middle Ages, that it was something to be feared of and kept outside. Islam was claimed to be the primary obstacle and regressive force in front of both individual and collective freedom and progress (Akşin, 2018).

The realpolitik line of argument, on the other hand, asserted that Islam was the major reason why the empire lagged behind the European powers. Islam was claimed to obstruct the introduction and the application of modern ways of warring and adaptation to modern international politics (Quataert, 2013). Not to mention that Islam hindered the introduction of modern sciences and mass education, which facilitated the industrial revolution in Europe. In contrast to these anti-Islamic arguments, the proponents of Islam contended that Islam was the only legitimate source and served as the truest guide for conducting politics and that the reason why the empire lagged behind was that the state and society ceased and failed to follow the Islamic rules (Okumuş, 1999).

De-sacralization of politics was coupled with the emptying of the locus of power and transformed it into a modern political form. The first step was the limitation of the Sultan's power. In order to ensure this, secularist forces, mainly the bureaucratic class that took modern education and succumbed into the materialist culture that was prevalent in European capitals at that time, strived to transform the absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in 1876 (Mardin, 2000). After this attempt failed due to the resistance by Sultan Abdulhamid II, the anti-monarchist alliance of the bureaucrats and local notables gathered forces and pressed for the second time for a transition into constitutional monarchy in 1908 (Kansu, 2017). In the run-up to 1908, Abdulhamid was called the 'Red Sultan', which denoted his rule with an iron fist, and slogans from the French revolution of 1789, 'freedom, equality, and brotherhood', were chanted on the streets.¹⁴ The Sultan was finally toppled by a military coup and replaced with a more benign figure. Accordingly, in the post-1908 period, the Sultan lost his standing, especially after 1913 as the Committee of Union and Progress took control over the empire and ruled singlehandedly (Hanioglu, 2001). The secular alliance, in the end, crushed the Sultanate in 1922 and proclaimed the republic in 1923. The founding fathers of the republic argued that the people was the new basis for political authority in Turkey ('Egemenlik kayıtsız şartsız milletindir!'¹⁵).

Finally, popular sovereignty replaced *nizam-ı alem* as the source of political authority (İnalçık, 1998).

These transformations were supposed to bring about a modern democratic form of politics where the metaphysical world played no role in politics, the locus of power was emptied of the Sultan, and the qualitative difference between the ruling and the ruled was wiped out for good. In line with republican ideals, power was supposed to become accessible to everyone, since domination was no more acceptable (Laborde and Maynor, 2008). In this new political order, no one was supposed to have the right to rule before entering into and winning the competition for power. Moreover, power was supposed to belong to no one and the place of power could only be occupied for a temporary time until the next elections through which a new government was formed (Lefort, 1988). These colossal changes were supposed to introduce the phenomenon of ‘democratic’ conflict and contingency into Turkish political life. Yet, after the collapse of the monarchy in 1922, a secularist autocratic regime was institutionalized. It was a republican regime in theory, but an autocratic regime in practice. Thus, the ensuing conflict was between the supporters of a secularist autocracy who tended to make Islam and Muslims the enemy and those who sought to democratize politics. This conflict took place on two fronts.

Popular sovereignty and its rivals

At first sight, the order of 1923 seemed to have institutionalized a modern democratic political structure in Turkey. Yet, in practice, Turkey’s political and ideological transformation from the nineteenth century to 1923 produced an autocratic regime, whose essence was to control the state and not to share power with others (Köker, 2004). The difference between what was written and what was practiced paved the way for an inexorable struggle over the basis of political authority.

Despite the fact that the republican regime declared popular sovereignty to be the new basis of authority, the republican elite that was composed of bureaucracy and local notables struggled to base political authority on alternative sources. The discourse of popular sovereignty was used to topple the old monarchical system, although it was not institutionalized in practice. That is why the political process that took place between 1908 and 1923 is depicted as a ‘liberal’ revolution. (Kansu, 2008). The reason for that was that people were still loyal to Islamic ethos and making them the basis of authority was deemed counter-productive to the secular transformation in the country (Mardin, 1991). The secular elite thus often argued that the country was not ready for a democratic transition and Turkey had special conditions that did not allow for an organized popular opposition (Heper, 2006). In their mind, the country would only be ready for a democratic transition when the society lost its ties with Islamic ethos and the local symbolic world, embracing the secular world-view. Islamophobia, turning Islam and Muslims into the enemy, functioned here as a factor that hindered democratization in the country.

Accordingly, the bureaucracy has put forward the state as the basis of political authority and engaged in rendering the society ready for a democratic transition. This required the introduction and the top-down application of secularist revolutionary laws or Atatürk's codes, such as changing the alphabet from Arabic to Latin, enforcing Western style of clothing, replacing local civil laws with Western civil laws, closing down religious seminaries, dervish convents, and madrasas, rendering secular education obligatory and forbidding the pilgrimage (hadj) (Zürcher, 2004). The primary contradiction of those codes was that people's opinion was not taken into consideration. In a genuine democratic regime or a republic where popular sovereignty is the norm, one would at least expect that the government would present the reforms to people's vote in a referendum before legalizing them. However, this did not happen.

Authoritarian politics led to an autocratic political institutionalization where the locus of power was kept filled with a secular–nationalist content and the ruling and the ruled were separated on that essentialist basis. This was a real step back from the secularization of political life in the country in terms of political form. In this new regime, bearing the secular–nationalist identity or pursuing secularist politics became the new basis for the separation of the ruling from the ruled, or of the one inside from the one outside the official us. Those who bore a secular–nationalist identity were deemed to be natural members of the ruling group, whereas others were relegated to the position of the ruled. This amounted to pushing religious–conservative social groups into outside of the political community. They were targeted as the enemy of the state. Therefore, the basis of sovereignty was not the people but the secularist regime or identity. The decisions of the state were taken on the basis of the secular–nationalist identity. Those decisions were considered legitimate as long as they were in line with the secular–nationalist identity and furthered the secularization or Westernization of the country. The national interest of the state, too, was determined within the boundaries of the secular–nationalist identity (Zarakol, 2011).

This non-democratic political context produced a single-party regime. The single-party regime did not allow for multiple political parties, prevented the conduction of free and fair elections, and kept the opposition from entering the Parliament and sharing power with the government (Tunçay, 1981). Doing the reverse would mean setting politics free, rendering the sovereignty of secularist politics questionable. Therefore, the republican regime in Turkey violated the basic principle of democratic politics, which involves abiding by the principle of keeping the locus of power empty. The locus of power was filled with the secular elite gathered around the Republican People's Party (RPP). They acted as if they owned the state and the sphere of democratic politics was kept closed to the opposition. The two attempts to switch to a multi-party democratic regime in 1925 and 1930 were short lived. The Progressive Republican Party (PRP) in 1925 and the Free Party (FP) in 1930 were closed down by the regime on account of being the hub of anti-secularist politics. The societal upheavals against the secularist revolutionary laws were repressed with the same Islamophobic argument – fight against religious reactionism or obscurantism – by the

Independence Tribunals (Zürcher, 2004). For the republican regime, the threat of Islam and the old imperial regime was still alive.

However, in the 1940s, the secular alliance between the bureaucracy and local notables started to be shattered. One of the primary reasons for that was that the logic of politics and economics, despite being shaped by mundane concerns, were no more in agreement.¹⁶ The logic of economics desired to arrange a political system in order to create economic wealth and material benefit for everyone. The logic of politics, on the other hand, sought to arrange the political system in order to further the regime's secular ideological goals, thus keeping the control of the state. The notables, who tended to act according to the logic of economics within the RPP, also saw that the regime could not sustain itself if democratization was not introduced. The notables understood democratization as opening up a sphere of freedom for people both in the realm of politics, which meant switching to a multi-party system, and in the realm of civil society, which meant loosening the state's control of economic activities.

As a result of this friction in the secular alliance, the Democratic Party (DP) was established in 1946 by local notables who broke off of the RPP. Turkey switched to a multi-party system in 1946 and the DP won the first next elections in 1950 (Karpat, 1959). DP's election motto was revolutionary: 'Enough, it's people's turn!' The DP's main strategy was to shift the basis of authority in the political system (Demirel, 2016). Despite the fact that it represented the interests of local notables and the bourgeois (although not all of them, especially the so-called 'big business' were not convinced of the necessity to ally with the people against the secular bureaucracy) in general, it did not shy away from allying with the people. It used popular sovereignty for its political interests. As a party of local notables and the petty bourgeois, DP's first choice for the basis of authority was naturally the individual or the entrepreneur, not the people. Indeed, ideologically, DP was a liberal political party, not a democratic one. Thus, 1950 started a new era in Turkish politics, an alliance between the people and the notables versus the secular bureaucracy. In other words, the politics of popular sovereignty plus individual freedom versus the bureaucratic oligarchy became the major front of political conflict. Yet, we should note that the politics of popular sovereignty or national will was always in a secondary position to the politics of individual rights and freedoms within the anti-bureaucratic oligarchy alliance.

This new alliance softened the antagonism between secular and religious-conservative politics. This softened the secularist stance towards religion in the period between 1950 and 1960. For instance, it was decided that the call to prayer (*ezan*) was to be recited in Turkish in the 1930s in the context of the politics of de-Islamization and the DP reintroduced the practice of reciting the call to prayer in Arabic. Moreover, the party took the initiative to open up theology departments in universities and to establish religious vocational schools. Again, it decided to have radio shows on religious matters and that included the recitation of Qur'an.

The secular notables and religious-conservative masses came together for a common political purpose. This common political purpose was indeed the

democratization of politics. Hence, the secular–religious antagonism, which had determined Turkish politics for many decades, was replaced by a new antagonism of democracy versus authoritarianism after the 1950s. This was the strategy of the democratic opposition since then. They argued that authoritarianism was the new enemy of a democratic political order. In response, the state bureaucracy kept Islam and Muslims as the enemy and placed the left as another enemy of the regime until 1989. However, the notables understood democracy as the increase of individual rights and freedoms against the state, whereas the religious–conservative masses viewed it as the domination of the national will in politics. Even though this caused frictions and periodical dissolutions within the democratic alliance, the presence of a common rival, meaning the authoritarian bureaucracy, kept the democratic alliance floating for a long period of time.

The bureaucracy's response to the shift to the multi-party system and the election victory of the democratic alliance was to end the process of democratization by way of a military coup in 1960. One of the major justifications of the coup was that the DP had become the hub of anti-secular activities, with, for example, the re-Arabization of the call to prayer and the allowing of religious figures and symbols in the public sphere. The DP's attempt to re-include Islam and religious–conservative social sections into the political community worried the secularist forces in the bureaucracy that still kept control of the state. Accordingly, the secularist elite created a new institutional design based on bureaucratic tutelage and that limited the role and sphere of democratic politics in the aftermath of the coup. Two steps were taken in the construction of the bureaucratic tutelage. One of them was to introduce new institutions such as the Constitutional Court, the National Security Board, the Military High Court, the Supreme Military Council, the Supreme Board of Radio and Television, the Supreme Council of Judges and Lawyers, the Board of Higher Education and the Higher Military Administrative Court. This set of new institutions served as a protective belt for the republican regime under the control of secular bureaucracy. Their basic political function was to limit or contain the transformative role of civil politics over the state. For the bureaucratic establishment, the obstruction of the arrangement of politics according to popular sovereignty has always been a primary political goal.

The other step was to keep the head of civil politics down. For this purpose, the 1961 Constitution divided the legislative into two branches, where the higher branch of the Parliament was designed to be populated by members of the secularist bureaucracy, such as retired judges and military generals. The 1982 Constitution that was produced after the 1980 military intervention, on the other hand, divided the executive into two parts by empowering the President with large powers against the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The Turkish President, who was chosen by the Parliament among the retired bureaucrats or bureaucracy-friendly senior politicians, was considered to be a check-and-balance over civil politics within the institution of politics (Karpaz, 2007).

When these two steps failed to contain politics or when civil politics failed to play its special role of providing stability for the continuation of the bureaucratic

tutelage, either the military directly intervened into politics – with the 1960, 1971 and 1980 military coups – or the judiciary stepped in to neutralize politicians or political parties – with, for example, the closing down of the ruling Islamist Welfare Party (WF) in January 1998 by the Constitutional Court – which were perceived to cross the red lines of the regime and were shaped around the protection of the secularist republican order.

In all these military or judiciary interventions, one could observe the common accusations that civil politics led Turkey back to the darkness of the Islamist past or losing national independence since the Islamists or the Sultan were accused of allying with the occupying forces against the national forces during the War of Independence. These two fears based on Islamophobia have always been fed into the public's mind in order to garner public support for bureaucratic interventions into civil politics and to keep the public in line with the regime at other times. The secularist civil society played a significant role both in the 1960 and 1997 interventions ('Bir Dakika Karanlık ve 28 Şubat', 2014).

Secular–nationalist identity

The other front was over defining the political community or nation since, at least in principle, the basis of political authority was the people. To hold on to power, the republican elite had to do more than champion the bureaucratic authority against the authority of the national will or popular sovereignty. They had to hegemonize the social realm by producing the most inclusive identity, or the conception of political community. The political community that the republican elite based its rule on was constructed around a secular–nationalist identity.

The production of this secular–nationalist political community had several moments. The first moment encapsulated the integration of Turkey into the modern Western civilization and cutting off its ties with the Islamic civilization. One of the strategies for that involved the denial of the existence of multiple civilizations or degrading other civilizations, including the Islamic one, to particularity in the face of Western superiority or universality. The motto of that goal was 'to catch up with the modern civilization' (Belge, 2009). This led to the portrayal of Islam as belonging to the pre-modern past and questioning its viability in modern times. In this way, the republic, or modern Turkey, was cleansed of Islamic elements. If Islam could not belong to the modern times, modern Turkey was not argued to have or need to have ties with Islam.

Another strategy to integrate Turkey into the Western world was constructing a new past, which was bereft of Islam, for modern Turkey (Bora, 2015). This involved the de-emphasis on Turkey's Islamic past and the discovery and reinforcement of the pre-Islamic history of the Turks. This secularist narrative had different versions. One of them was that, in pre-Islamic times the Turks were claimed to have ancestral ties with the Sumerians, whom were also claimed to be the ancestors of modern (Western) civilization. Thus, according to this narrative, the Turks and the Westerners used to be together in the past, although the Turks deviated as they entered into contact with the Arabs and converted to

Islam. Now, the Turks were thus returning to their real home, joining with their Western brothers.

The second moment was to produce Turkey's difference on the basis of Western universality. In the past, the Ottoman Empire claimed to represent the universal by being the real heir of the Roman Empire (Necipoğlu, 1989). Thus, the Ottomans tended to particularize European powers by locating themselves at the position of universality. Starting with the seventeenth century, as they weakened, the Ottomans started to view the European powers as their equal. The difference was in general produced on the basis of being two different yet equal civilizations. From the nineteenth century onwards, the empire sought to enter into the European international society in order to get protection, especially against the increasing Russian threat. This attempt, which involved admitting half-heartedly the European superiority, failed. After 1923, the universality of the West was admitted wholeheartedly and it was reciprocated by the European powers in the Treaty of Lausanne (1924). Turkey was admitted as an independent sovereign state and a member of modern law of nations (Khadduri, 1956). It started to produce its difference on the basis of being an autonomous sovereign nation-state. In short, from the empire to the republic, the mode of difference with the outside was demoted from the level of civilization to the level of nation-state.

This new political community was a totality of three corresponding realities that were supposed to be constantly constructed through performative actions of the nation-state. This is because borders function very differently in the world of nation-states than the world of empires (Kratochwil, 1986). The borders are the existing limit points of the empire. They are rather the furthest post before the next move of enlargement. The borders are a gate to the outside world, not a wall that is used in the protection of the inside from the outside. Thus, for an empire, the outside is not absolute; it is rather contingent and relative. The whole world and human beings, in principle, belong to the empire, thus the whole world and humanity are perceived as the inside of the empire.

The nation-state differs significantly in this respect. For a nation-state, the outside world is absolutely outside. Only the territory and human beings under its sovereign jurisdiction are considered as inside. The boundaries are final. They are rather the wall against which national territories and citizens should be protected. For that reason, a nation-state has to construct two corresponding realities, one within its territories and the other in the outside: the national and the international.

These realities are to be constructed on the basis of a particular identity. Without an identity or ideology, the difference between inside and outside cannot be determined. The Turkish nation-state constructed these realities on the basis of the secular–national identity. In the domestic realm, the secular–nationalist nation claimed to represent the metaphorical totality of the society (Laclau, 2014). This hegemonic move led to two distinct policies. One was to integrate the people into this political whole by assimilating them through secularist revolutionary laws (Yıldız, 2007). This involved an enforced identity change. This policy of assimilation into secular–nationalist identity was met with strong popular reaction, especially under the single-party rule. With the

failure of that reaction, the religious–conservative groups retreated behind their own communal boundaries. Here, they established religious communities and gave priority to their communal ties rather than their citizenship status. The state and society in general were deemed as alien places.¹⁷ In order to re-establish ties with the society, the state put the so-called Turkish–Islamic synthesis into practice after the 1980 military coup (Taşkın, 2006). This policy tried to hegemonize Islam (‘rationalizing Islam’ was one of the major arguments in that context) within a nationalistic discourse and brought religious–conservative sections of the society into the ‘national’ political community (Çetinsaya, 1999). One of the basic reasons behind this policy was the presence of a common enemy, the communist Soviets, on the outside and also the strengthening of the leftist politics in the 1970s.

The other policy was to marginalize and make those people who resisted the policy of assimilation the enemy. The so-called 28 February Process in 1997 was a perfect example of how Islam and the religious–conservative sections of the society were made the enemy. The National Security Council gave a memorandum to the coalition government on 28 February 1997 that reminded the secularist red lines of the republican regime. The latter revolved around the protection of secularist revolutionary laws that were listed in the 174. Article of the Constitution as follows: (1) Unification of education under a secular institutional framework, (2) wearing a Western-style hat, (3) closing down of the Darvish convents, madrasas and tombs, (4) enforcing the conduct of marriage act only by state officials, (5) admission of international (Western) numbers, (6) admission of the Latin alphabet, (7) abolishment of traditional epithets and titles (such as *efendi*, *bey*, *paşa*) and (8) prohibition of wearing special costumes such as religious gown and turban by the imams and other personnel of religious affairs. The purpose of these laws was said to be ‘uplifting Turkey to the level of modern civilization and protecting the secularist character of the Turkish Republic’.¹⁸

The memorandum also presented a to-do list for the incumbent coalition government of Islamist Welfare Party (WP) and the centre-right True Path Party (TPP). This list included, among others, not to challenge the revolutionary laws, closing down of the Darvish convents that conflict with the revolutionary laws, not to encourage those who wear religious gown and turban, advising to bring back the 163 Article of the 1982 Constitution (which was lifted by Turgut Özal in 1991) that consisted of punishing those who resorted to a religious discourse in politics, readjusting the education policies according to the law on the unification of education under a secular institutional framework, extending the compulsory education from five to eight years (which aimed at undermining the secondary section of religious vocational schools), closing down some of the religious vocational schools, containing the infiltration of ‘fundamentalist’ religious persons into the state, controlling the building of mosques, preventing the recruitment of those who were suspended from the military over accusations of anti-secularist activities in municipality services, closely monitoring the financial institutions and foundations under the control of religious orders, monitoring the messages of TV channels and radio stations that use an anti-secularist language

to be kept in line with the Constitution, and increasing the control over Iran's activities that aim at destabilizing Turkey's secular regime and taking the necessary measures to contain them ('28 Şubat Kararları', 2002).

As a result of that military intervention in 28 February, many female students wearing the headscarf were not allowed to enter into universities and were forced to leave their education incomplete. Many religious-conservative people were blacklisted and were prohibited from ever getting a job in the state. Moreover, many financial institutions and civil society organizations were kept under pressure, if not closed down for good. This quasi-military coup was supported by secularist civil society organizations with slogans such as 'one minute of darkness for eternal light'.¹⁹ All of these Islamophobic policies that purged Islam and religious-conservative people from the political community were claimed to bring the state back to its factory settings after years of management of the country with a counter-revolutionary perspective since the 1940s.

On the outside, there are two realities. One is regional, and the other international. The Turkish nation-state boosted a Westphalian regional order in its vicinity. This is because this state-centred order served to shape the imperial borders into nation-state borders. The boundaries in the region became absolute, providing a clear-cut division between the inside and the outside of the state. The transformation of boundaries through the Westphalian order was necessary in order to keep the secular regime floating. By recognizing other Muslim societies as distinct nations and equal sovereign entities, the traditional concept of Ummah, which stipulated the unity of Muslims, was discredited (Sayyid, 1997). The Westphalian order guaranteed not only military security but also the ontological security of each nation-state and the post-imperial nationalist regimes in the region. Moreover, the Westphalian order established space for the Turkish state to create a distance from the Arabs, whom, in the secular Turkish mind, represented the 'backward' Islamic civilization. Relations with the Arabs were thus always kept underdeveloped and distant (Aykan, 1994).

The Turkish nation-state also backed a Western-dominated international system. The reason for that was not only military security, but also the ontological security of the Turkish state. The existence of the Turkish state was tied to the Western-dominated international system. The Turkish state allied with the West against the Soviets to sustain its national security, but that alliance was also stipulated in order to reproduce its secular-nationalist identity (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2004). Indeed, the Turkish state, or rather the republican regime, got its legitimacy from the universality of the Western civilization. The decline of the West would always jeopardize the security of the secular-national conception of the nation in domestic politics. This was the case in the 1990s when post-modern ideologies and globalization became dominant. The questioning of modernity and the universality of the West put the secular regime in Turkey in a deep crisis (Erdoğan, 2009). The Turkish state in the Kemalist era, therefore, followed Western interests in international politics, as long as the Western powers did not violate or disregard Turkey's sovereignty and national existence as observed in the Cyprus problem (Uzer, 2011).

Conclusion

Islamophobia was central to the construction and reproduction of the political community in Turkey for about a century. There were two sub-periods in the golden age of the politics of Islamophobia. The first was the transition from the empire to the nation-state and from the monarchical regime to the republican regime. The second was the construction and reproduction of a secular–nationalist nation-state. In the first period, Islamophobia was utilized to empty the locus of power from its dynastic content and demolish the empire. In the second period, Islamophobia was deployed to create a nation-state on the basis of a secular–nationalist identity. This identity led to a secular–nationalist society in the domestic realm, backed by a Westphalian regional order and a Western-centric global order in its outside.

This secular–nationalist political order, which attempted to make Islam and Muslims the enemy or as its outside, was opposed by the democratic alliance that was formed by religious–conservative masses and some sections of the bourgeois. These political forces opposed the authoritarianism of the secularist republican order and struggled to institutionalize democratic politics after the 1940s. However, they failed to institutionalize a democratic regime and dislocate the republican elite from the state until the 2000s. The republican elite carried out the politics of Islamophobia very skilfully to push back on the democratic alliance.

After the 1990s, the politics of Islamophobia started to backfire due to domestic and international developments. In the domestic realm, the religious–conservative periphery poured into the cities and became very influential in politics. Whereas in the international realm, the international society, and especially the European Union, increased their pressure on the autocratic republican regime, criticizing its radical secularist (and also anti-Kurdish) policies. The regional instability, which was triggered by the collapse of neighbouring states, also made it very difficult for the secularist Turkey to continue its traditional foreign policy in the region. All these factors paved the way for the dislocation of the republican elite from the state, and thus the decline of the politics of Islamophobia in Turkey in the following decade.

Notes

- 1 Yet the history of this phenomenon goes back to the end of the nineteenth century, see Bravo Lopez (2011).
- 2 Attempts to create a ‘European Islam’ is one of the ways of hegemonizing Islam and Muslims. See Enes Bayraklı, Farid Hafez and Leonard Faytre, ‘Engineering a European Islam: An Analysis of Attempts to Domesticate Muslims in Austria, France and Germany’, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2018, pp. 131–156.
- 3 The notorious 163. Article of 1982 Constitution was providing the basis for those anti-democratic decisions. ‘Türkiye’de kapatılmış partiler’, *NTV*, 11 December 2009.
- 4 The French law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools bans wearing conspicuous religious symbols in French public or government-operated primary and secondary schools. ‘French Secularism on Trial’, *New York Times*, 2 December 2013.

- 5 See Anghie (2005) for a critique of this categorical thinking on international order.
- 6 In politics the friend is a social category on which different political actors come together on the basis of sharing ideational and material interests. According to this view, we have same identity and same interests with our friends. See Wendt, 1999.
- 7 For instance, when Turkey's relations with the Western powers deteriorate, the secularists got alarmed and put forward the argument that Turkey's axis is shifting in foreign policy. 'TESEV'in bulgularıyla eksen kayması', *Habertürk*, 15 June 2010.
- 8 'Muasır medeniyetler seviyesine ulaşmak' (catching up with the modern civilization), which implies integration with the West or Westernization, is the motto of the republican elite. See Belge, 2009, pp. 29–43.
- 9 This process of provincialization cannot be limited to the Islamic world. All non-European civilizations were subjected to the same cultural-political process. See Chakrabarty, 2000.
- 10 That's why anarchy is the constitutive concept of modern international relations, see Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979.
- 11 This is the quintessential character of modern democratic politics. See Lefort, 1988, p. 17.
- 12 The meaning of *kut* is very close to Aristotle's concept of political virtue or Machiavelli's concept of virtù. See Inalcık, 1993, pp. 1–18.
- 13 Parliamentarism in essence added a new distinction, which is the government and the opposition, to the old distinction of the ruling and the ruled. It served to include the opposition into power. Alongside the periodical elections, Parliament, as another modern political institution, helped empty the locus of power by dividing power between the government and the opposition. See Luhmann, 1990.
- 14 The secularist forces added 'justice' to those three concepts. However, in time the secularists ceased to refer to justice in politics.
- 15 That means 'sovereignty belongs to the people'.
- 16 The other major reason was Turkey's relations with the US. In the post-Second World War period, Turkey had to carry out some of the basic requirements of democratic politics in order to be considered a member of the Atlantic Alliance against the Soviets.
- 17 Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, who is one of the leading intellectual figures in Islamist politics, cultivated these themes of alienation with the existing political order. See Duran, 2005, pp. 129–156.
- 18 See the Turkish Constitution of 1982, www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa_2011.pdf.
- 19 In those demonstrations many secularists, among other things, put off their lights for a minute at nine in the evening to display their displeasure with the government. See 'Sürekli aydınlık için bir dakika karanlık', *Bianet*, 9 December 2014.

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