

Country Report

Turkey

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This Country Report offers a detailed assessment of religious diversity and violent religious radicalisation in the above-named state. It is part of a series covering 23 countries (listed below) on four continents. More basic information about religious affiliation and state-religion relations in these states is available in our Country Profiles series. This report was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:

Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

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The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Raciunas from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

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Introduction: The Controversy over Turkish Secularism

Turkey is widely considered to be a pioneering example of a secular state in a Muslim-majority nation. According to Ernest Gellner, for example, who could be counted among the “orientalists” writing on Muslim society along with Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, Islam is an exception among religions because it cannot be secularized and Turkey is “the exception within the exception” (Gellner, 1997, p.236). Because of the political/ideological significance of this seemingly unlikely combination of Islam and secularism, much controversy and myth-making have accompanied scholarly analyses of the Turkish experience. Whether as an expression of appreciation or regret, there has nevertheless been a general agreement around the view that Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his associates, i.e., the Kemalist leadership of the Republic of Turkey, embarked on a course of state-led, top-down modernization and secularization that aimed to transform this Muslim nation into a Westernized, secular entity, albeit with only limited success.

A new generation of scholars, however, have been producing a growing literature that challenges and complicates this received wisdom. Ceren Lord (2018, p.xi), for example, building on Deniz Kandiyoti’s (2012) critical description of the “master narrative” of Turkish history, notes that “many previous studies adopted a binary framework of analysis in which Turkish history was narrated as being marked by a confrontation between an authoritarian secular Kemalist state and a Muslim society,” and goes on to argue that this framework led many to welcome the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power as a process of democratization. In addition to a series of works that question the assumptions of this “master narrative” (e.g., Azak, 2010; Akan, 2017; Lord, 2018), there is also a set of recent writings (e.g., Adak, 2015; Tombuş and Aygenç, 2017; Mutluer, 2018; Öztürk, 2018) that address state-religion relations in Turkey in the light of the AKP experience and critically note the central role, under AKP rule, of what has always been described as the backbone of state secularism, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, DIB). Building on this literature, as well as my own previous work, I offer in this report a critique of the received wisdom and question whether Turkey’s model of state-religion relations has really ever been an example of secularism, let alone “oppressive” (Yavuz, 2003) or “assertive” (Kuru, 2007) secularism.

A succinct articulation of the received wisdom on Turkish secularism may be found in Tariq Modood and Thomas Sealy (2019, p.10), who speak of “Ataturk’s Turkey, which sought to control and utilise religion; through, for example, the Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs).” But this account is misleading on several counts. The institutions that are held responsible for “controlling” or “regulating” religion in Turkey, such as the DIB, were not invented by Kemal Atatürk himself or the Kemalist leadership of the modern state, but inherited from the Ottoman Empire and then transformed to a certain extent. Thus, first, if the Kemalist state is to be considered secular because of these institutions, then by definition the Ottoman Empire ought to be considered secular as well. Second,

the Kemalist leadership in fact restructured these institutions in order to separate religion from the state, but did not (or could not) go far enough. An implicit element of the received wisdom is that Islam was suppressed by the Kemalist regime, a “grievance” frequently expressed by Islamist circles. This too is false, as the regime’s intention was not to suppress religion or religiosity per se, but to prevent the manipulation of religion for political ends. Here again the regime was unsuccessful. The Kemalist project of separation was never accomplished, but remained as an object of contestation throughout Turkish political history. Finally, if by “utilization of religion” is meant the political mobilization of the masses through religious language, this is something that would be done more by those political forces or movements that are closer to Islamism than to secularism, and that has indeed been the case in Turkish political history. For the Kemalists, a proper separation between religion and the state had to include a separation between religion and politics. This was partly justified on grounds of freeing state affairs from religious influence and partly based on a concern about the danger of debasing religion by instrumentalizing it for political ends. Both of these are relevant concerns for a politics of secularism and their veracity has indeed been borne out by the recent AKP experience.

In order to elaborate on these points in this essay, I first aim to show in the next two sections that religion has always had a central role in the Turkish state (a) in defining the core of the nation and (b) bureaucratically occupying part of the state structure. The possibility of instituting an Islamist regime always existed due to this configuration, and the recent AKP experience served to demonstrate this potential, alarming not only the secularists (Kemalist or otherwise) but also the erstwhile supporters of the AKP who were liberal critics of Kemalism. The AKP’s efforts to institute an Islamist regime from above also alarmed a range of religious circles, because the use of state institutions to impose religiosity in effect turned pious people away from religion, a danger noted by Kemalists early on.

Nation and Religion: Islam as the Defining Core of the Turkish Nation

In early modern European state-building, cleansing of populations in order to create “national” homogeneity took place first along religious lines (Marx, 2003). By contrast, the Ottoman Empire (OE), although an Islamic empire, self-confidently contained diverse populations that were identified and organized on the basis of religion rather than ethnicity or language. A religious community (called “millet”) could include different ethnic and linguistic groups, and residents of different regions of the empire, and had some measure of political power and significance. While the Muslim population was at the top of the hierarchy, the imperial state nonetheless granted each millet some form of autonomy in their internal legal, judicial, as well cultural and educational affairs, and each was represented by a leader whose position was incorporated into the central administration of the empire (Braude and Lewis, 1982; Barkey, 2008).

The issue of a homogeneous “national” identity in the OE only arose when the concept of equal citizenship was first introduced in the mid-nineteenth century. The effort to build a collective identity led to the notion of Ottomanism – a premature and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to create a proto-secular nationalist ideology. The notion of

Ottomanism represented an attempt to imagine a unified territorial identity for the internally diverse empire. It was created in an effort to retain the loyalty of non-Muslims and combat the separatist movements that had appeared in the Balkans, by building equal citizenship irrespective of religion (Kayalı, 1997). Regardless, the empire continued to be dismembered throughout the late nineteenth century and, in constant warfare during its last decades, lost much of its Balkan territories, which were populated mostly by Christian subjects and whose Muslim occupants migrated to Anatolia. Alternative ideologies competing with Ottomanism were Islamism and “Turkism” (Akçura, 1904). Particularly during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamit II (1876-1909), Islamism became more prominent as state ideology, although Ottomanism was not officially abandoned until World War I. Finally, the failure of Ottomanism initiated a policy of primarily religious purification of what would eventually become Turkey, although it was legitimized as Turkish nationalism. The Armenian population was subjected to forced migration, conversion and massacre during the War (Akçam, 2004). Further purging of Christians took place with the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in the 1920s, which was on the basis of religion rather than language: Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians of Anatolia were exchanged for Greek-speaking Muslims (Hirschon, 2003).

During the nineteenth century, as new norms of equal citizenship were being instituted in the OE, the term “millet” had begun to acquire its current meaning in the Turkish language, i.e., “nation” (Karpát, 1982). Although the millet system was significantly circumscribed in the last decades of the OE and it formally disappeared with the creation of the Turkish Republic, there are still remnants of it both in the formal structures of the state and in popular notions of nationhood. Indeed, as a legacy of the millet system, both Turkey and the post-Ottoman nation-states in the Balkans pursued nation-building through religious homogeneity (Todorova, 1996).

Modood and Sealy (2019, p.9) characterize Gandhi as “the first nationalist to mobilise masses through a religion,” and Pakistan as “the first modern state based on a religious identity.” In both regards, however, the Turkish experience is historically prior to these cases. In 1920, during the Turkish War of Liberation, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) referred to the people of Anatolia not as Turks but as a mosaic of ethnicities united by Islam. Addressing the National Assembly, he declared “[the members of this Assembly] are not just Turk or Circassian, Kurd or Laz. They are composed of all the Islamic elements and constitute a coherent whole.” (Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, 1990, p.74). The Turkish nation was indeed created by the expulsion of non-Muslims from the territory defined as Turkey, and the remaining small populations of non-Muslim communities were given “minority” status and brought under protection (and granted some small measure of autonomy) by the Lausanne Treaty, signed on 24 July 1923, which secured Turkey’s independence and laid the foundation for the declaration of the Turkish Republic on 29 October 1923. Turkish republican nationalism thus had mutually contradictory sources, inherited from the Ottoman period. It unsuccessfully attempted to synthesize Islamism, Turkism and territorial nationalism, though as a legacy of the Ottoman millet system, religion retained its centrality in Turkish national identity (Kirişçi, 2000; Çağaptay, 2006). Kurds, for example, as non-Turkish speaking Muslims, were considered capable

of assimilation into the Turkish nation, but non-Muslims were always assumed to be inassimilable and fundamentally alien. The hope and expectation were that they would leave the country, as they indeed did during political crises involving coordinated attacks on their lives and property in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s (Yannas, 2007). Therefore, during the republican era, as well, the remaining Christian populations of Anatolia (Armenians, Greeks, and the often-forgotten minority of Syriacs) were forced to leave in successive waves.

In short, minority and non-Muslim have been (and still are) identical in Turkish national consciousness: a non-Muslim citizen of Turkey is not considered a “Turk.” Non-Muslims remain as “step-citizens” of the Republic, with significantly curtailed citizenship rights (Ekmekcioglu, 2014). In a law passed in 1926, and still de facto in practice despite its repeal in 1965, positions in high bureaucracy and the military are effectively closed to non-Muslim citizens. Indeed, the Islamic identity of the new Turkish state was evident in its first constitution, adopted by the National Assembly in April 1924. Article 1 defined the state as a Republic, and Article 2 defined the religion of the state as Islam. The clause that defined the religion of the state was removed in 1928 and subsequently replaced by a clause that defined the state as “secular” in 1937. While the characterization of the state as “secular” has remained in the constitution to this day, the same cannot be said about actual structure of the state and its policies, as we see in the following sections.

In terms of both popular cultural assumptions and state policy, then, the Turkish nation is primarily imagined as a (Sunni) Muslim entity. This religious core of national identity seems to defy the secularism of the state, enshrined in the Constitution and uncritically accepted in established historiography. Unless declared and proven otherwise, every child born as a citizen in Turkey is registered as Muslim and this is indicated in their government-issued identity card. Moreover, there is a limit to the choice of religions that could legally be stated in an identity card – only those religions officially recognized by the state are acceptable, identifying oneself as “atheist” or even just leaving that box blank are not (albeit in practice there may be exceptions). “Muslim” is thus an identity conferred upon the Turkish people by the presumably “secular” state. Islamists especially delight in repeating at every opportunity that 99 percent of the people of Turkey are Muslim. But this nominal characterization does not reflect the demographic reality, for many of those listed as Muslim do not necessarily practice, and self-declared atheists may constitute up to 3 per cent of the population (Azak, 2018). A recent survey (conducted in May 2019) found that only 90 per cent believe in the existence and unity of God, and only 40 per cent say that they regularly perform their prayers, nearly 5 per cent believe in the existence of a Creator but not in any religion, and the remaining 5 per cent are either unsure or do not believe in the existence of a Creator (T24, 15 May 2019).

As religious minorities are not counted in the official census, we only have estimates of their current variety and numbers. The 1965 census was the last one in which Muslims (albeit without any account of their division into sects) and officially recognized non-Muslims (Jews, Greeks and Armenians) were counted. Despite some inconsistency between the provinces in their definitions and classifications, nation-wide surveys from 1927 to 1965 nevertheless give us a sense of the decline in their numbers. The number of “Christians” in general declined from about 320,000 (2.4 per cent of the population)

in 1927 to about 207,000 (0.65 per cent) in 1965. The large decline is primarily due to the exodus of those Greeks that were initially exempted from the population exchange in the 1920s. The number of “Armenians” declined from about 78,000 in 1927 to 70,000 in 1965, and the number of Jews from about 78,000 in 1927 to about 38,000 in 1965, as many migrated to Israel after that state’s creation. Also, the remaining minorities chose to move from their provincial locales to Istanbul, where they would feel safer. For the Armenians, the percentage of those living in Istanbul rose from 70 to 90 between 1927 and 1965, and for the Jews from 60 to 80. Finally, the number of those belonging to all other non-Muslim religions, classified in the census as “other/unknown” declined from 20,000 in 1927 to 15,000 in 1965 (Dündar, 2000, pp.55-64).

Currently we have no official data, but a number of sources (ranging from the US State Department, Minority Rights Groups, and private companies that administer questionnaire surveys) offer estimates that vary widely. Still, in a total population of roughly 82 million, non-Muslims are in miniscule proportions. Armenians may be anywhere between 60,000 and 90,000, Greeks between 2,000 and 5,000, and Jews between 16,000 and 20,000. In addition, there may be 3,000 Chaldean Christians, 5,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses, up to 7,000 members of Protestant denominations, 10,000 Bahais, 15,000 Russian Orthodox (mostly composed of Russian immigrants), 25,000 Roman Catholics (again, composed of immigrants), and 25,000 Syrians. There are also roughly 3 million Shia Muslims.

But the most significant religious minority in Turkey are the Alevis, that may be anywhere between 10 to 30 per cent of the population (i.e., roughly 10 to 25 million people). Considered a heretic sect by mainstream (Sunni) Muslim opinion, as well as by Sunni authorities within both the theological faculties of universities and the DIB, the Alevis themselves are divided between those who emphasize the syncretic nature of their faith and those who insist that they are part, or indeed the correct interpretation, of Islam. Regardless, whether under the Kemalist or the AKP regime of secularism, the demands of the variety of Alevis have been ignored, and they have been discriminated against or outright persecuted. The limits of Turkish secularism are most clearly revealed by the status and experience of the Alevis (Gülalp, 2013).

State and Religion: The Institutional Framework in Historical Perspective

Although the received wisdom in Turkish historiography takes the creation of the republic under Kemalist leadership as a break in the history of religious affairs, there are in fact significant continuities between the Ottoman and Republican periods in terms of political culture and state structure (Deringil, 1993a; Meeker, 2002; Gülalp, 2005; Bottoni, 2007). This is true whether we consider the secularization of society as a modernization process or the institution of secularism as a normative political principle. By the former, I mean the process whereby “the social significance of religion diminishes” through economic, social, and institutional differentiation and rationalization (Wallis and Bruce, 1992, pp.8-9), while the latter refers to the principle that aims to guarantee citizens the right to freedom of “conscience and religion” as spelled out in international human rights documents (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18; European Convention on Human Rights, Article 9), which also includes

the freedom of “atheists, agnostics, sceptics and the unconcerned” (ECtHR, *Kokkinakis v. Greece*, 14307/88, 25 May 1993, para.31). It is useful to distinguish between these two concepts, because both in the Ottoman Empire (OE) and the Turkish Republic, the secularization of the economy, social life, and institutions of the state proceeded to a greater extent than the establishment of secularism as a political principle, despite serious efforts in that direction. Or, using Jose Casanova’s (1994, p.6) terminology, while secularization as “differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms” started early and progressed considerably, secularization as “privatization,” although attempted, remained far behind, with occasional bouts of “de-privatization” and even “de-differentiation.” This is evident from the above account of national identity, but also needs to be assessed with regard to the organization of the state, as we do in this section, and with regard to political struggles and fluctuations, in the sections to follow.

The early modernizing and secularizing “reforms” of the OE began during the reign of Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839), whose successor, Sultan Abdülmecit I (1839-1861), issued the *Gülhane Rescript* of 1839, starting the *Tanzimat* (Reorganization) period, culminating in the Constitution of 1876, which was proclaimed (but then quickly shelved) by Sultan Abdülhamit II (1876-1909). The *Tanzimat* reforms pointed toward the building of a modern state in place of the patrimonial empire that the OE was (Deringil, 1998, p.9). Drawing the outlines of a constitutional monarchy, the *Tanzimat* reforms introduced guarantees for the security of life, honor, and property, and protection from arbitrary actions of the state, as well as a fair system of taxation and a fair system of military conscription, to all subjects of the empire without regard to religion. The reforms would thus potentially bring the *millet* system to an end by making each individual, qua individual, equal before the law and independent of the communal hierarchy, thus turning imperial subjects into citizens. Although Abdülhamit II shelved the constitution almost as soon as he ascended the throne, he continued with the modernizing and secularizing reforms of the state, building a rational bureaucracy, expanding mass schooling, the postal service, railways, and so on, while at the same time he legitimized his power through Islamist ideology. He was an autocratic ruler and a fervent modernizer. Many of the bureaucratic institutions of Republican Turkey were founded during his reign. Abdülhamit was “implementing the concrete policy of a rational secular programme,” but he was doing so through the political language of Islam (Deringil, 1993b, pp.5-6).

As the OE was integrated into global capitalism, the judicial system also had to be secularized. In the classical *millet* system, there was judicial plurality because Jews and Christians had their own courts outside of the Islamic justice system. Additionally, there was another parallel justice system applicable to foreign traders, which was arranged through “capitulations” granted to the governments of their home countries. In dealings with them, an impersonal and written (“Weberian”) legal system prevailed, as opposed to the “kadi justice” of Islamic law. As these capitulations began to cover non-Muslim Ottoman citizens as well, because foreign powers could also bring them under their protection in business dealings, Muslim traders fell into a disadvantage. Consequently, the state was forced to create a system of “secular and heavily western-influenced

commercial courts in Istanbul and Cairo in the 1850s" (Kuran, 2011, p.208). A similar secularization trend also prevailed in the education system in the mid-nineteenth century. The needs of the bureaucracy and the military to adapt to the pressures of modernization, trying to catch up with Western European states, necessitated the introduction of secular curricula and methods of education, which developed alongside the traditional religious education dominated by the Islamic ulema (Ortaylı, 1983).

But these secularizing moves did not change the way that state-religion relations were organized in the OE. In Western/Christian societies, secularism is often conceptualized as a mode of relationship between church and state, i.e., between clerical and temporal authority, arranged in a variety of forms, such as strict separation, mutual autonomy, institutional cooperation, and so on. None of these concepts are relevant to the Ottoman-Turkish experience, as clerical authority has never had a corporate existence independent of the state. In medieval Europe, the Catholic Church was the only bureaucratic power that was organized across the continent, with authority over local powers. The establishment of territorial political authority in early modern Europe necessarily involved a confrontation with the Catholic Church. The opposition of these local powers to the centralized structure of the Church fueled the Enlightenment ideas and the political revolutions against the clergy (Gay, 1966; Harris 1966). Consequently, the European nation-states either became secular or founded their own national churches. The religious establishment in the Ottoman Empire, by contrast, was incorporated into the state structure, dominated by the sultan. Although doctrinally there is no clerical hierarchy in Islam, as no intermediary should go between God and the faithful, there was just such a bureaucracy as part of the Ottoman state (İnalçık, 1989, pp.169-71). But this bureaucracy did not have any real independent power, because the sultan was also the Caliph, and the religious establishment only exercised authority in his name. The Şeyhülislam, as the head of the religious hierarchy, was the government's chief jurist, whose advice the sultan would seek on legal and political matters, but he was directly appointed and deposed by the sultan (İnalçık, 1989, p.94).

When Istanbul came under British occupation at the end of World War I, paralysing the Ottoman government, the nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal formed a parallel government in Ankara waging the Liberation War (1919-1922). In 1920, the Ankara government created the Ministry of Sharia and Pious Foundation in place of the office of the Şeyhülislam, which was based in occupied Istanbul. After the Liberation War was won and the Republic founded (1923), among the new institutions created in 1924 was the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DIB) attached to the prime ministry, which took the place of the Ministry of Sharia and Pious Foundations. DIB formally resembled the Ottoman institution of Şeyhülislam, insofar as each was part of the respective state structure. But the substantive difference between them illustrates the character of Kemalism's project of "secularism." While the Şeyhülislam would issue religious opinion regarding matters of state and law, war and peace, and so on, as the sultans formally sought their political and legal advice, the republican regime, attempting to turn faith solely into a private and personal matter, had restricted the role of DIB to issuing opinions on the daily affairs of the average believer.

Some argue that the Kemalist regime created the DIB specifically in order to dominate religious affairs and even suppress religiosity in society. According to Hakan Yavuz (2000, p.29), for example, “In order to subordinate religion to the political establishment, as was done in the Communist Eastern bloc, the new Kemalist Republic created its own version of Islam by establishing the Directorate of Religious Affairs” (see also Turam, 2007, p.42; Kadioğlu, 2010, pp.492-3). But this interpretation is false. In fact, the creation of this institution had “liberal” origins, intended precisely to separate religion from politics. At the time that the law was passed, the government structure included both the chief of staff of the military and the head of the religious institution as members of the cabinet. Mustafa Kemal had already made clear his views on the role of the military in civilian politics (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1984, pp.66-7). In a single bill of law, both of these seats were removed from the cabinet and reduced to the level of departments of the prime ministry, on grounds that neither military nor religious affairs leaders should be involved in politics or political decision-making (Genç, 2005). This is how Mustafa Kemal spoke to the National Assembly about the bill: “Honorable members! The principle of keeping the army separate from the general life of the country is a point which the Republic always regards as fundamental... Along the same lines, ... it is indispensable to liberate the religion of Islam, within which we have been living peacefully and happily with devotion, from the customary ways in which it has been a means of politics” (quoted in Akan, 2017, p.139).

Moreover, as a result of the parliamentary debate on what to call this department’s affairs, the term “religion” (din), which was in the original proposal, was found inappropriate and the decision was made to call it “piety” (diyanet). The correct English-language rendering of the name of this directorate is therefore “affairs of the pious,” rather than “affairs of religion” (or religious affairs) as is customary. The difference is significant, for the objectives of the department were described in terms of helping pious citizens with questions about their private affairs regarding religious practice and no more than that. The intention was indeed the privatization of religion and its separation from politics.

The privatization of religion was not a new idea. An early precedent existed in a statement attributed to Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839). In a discussion of the concept of Ottomanism, Akçura (1904, p.20) notes that the Sultan famously said that he wishes to see religious differences between his subjects only when they have entered their mosques, synagogues and churches. While this ideal of “privatization,” precisely imagined in order to create equal citizenship, continued to exist as an ideal, it was never successfully achieved, even during the Republican period. In 1927, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk delivered a speech in the National Assembly that lasted several days, in which he gave a detailed account of the national struggle and the first years of the republic, indicating accomplishments and failures. This speech, which has been published in English (as *The Speech*) and other languages, has been treated as the authoritative history of the creation of the republic. Needless to say, this account reflected his own point of view and many of its details were disputed by other political actors of the period. But what concerns us here is his conception of secularism as stated in the speech: “A government that has various religious communities among its citizens and is

responsible for treating individuals from every religion in a just and equitable manner, and for providing justice in its courts equally to subjects and foreigners alike, is obligated to respect the freedom of religion and thought.” (Atatürk, 1927, p.523). He goes on to indicate that secularism meant bringing sovereignty down from the heavens to the people and that those who pursued politics by reference to religion were opposed to both popular sovereignty and the freedom of religion.

During the early years of the Republic, the government under Mustafa Kemal's leadership continued with the measures started in the Ottoman period to further rationalize and secularize the legal, judicial and educational systems. The dual structures in the form of parallel Islamic and secular institutions, still in existence as inherited by the Republic, were finally eliminated and unified. The Law of Unification of Education was passed in March 1924, on the same day that the DIB was created. All religious schools run by the defunct Ministry of Sharia were closed and responsibility for all education, including the religious, was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. A month later, in April, Islamic courts were closed and the judicial system was unified under the Ministry of Justice. But this unification did not mean that the legal system was unified. Religious laws continued to exist along with the secular. In 1926, a set of new laws were passed, which were mostly adopted from European codes taken as models. The most important of these for our purposes was the Civil Code, which replaced the Islamic family and personal status law. In the preparatory stage before the passing of this law, the leaders of the non-Muslim communities were invited (some would say, pressured) to relinquish their right to have their own family laws granted to them by the Lausanne Treaty, which they did, so that when the law was adopted it became universally valid for all citizens (Oran, 2003).

Usually counted among the Kemalist regime's "secularizing" measures is the abolition of the Caliphate, which incidentally took place on the same day as the creation of the DIB and hence considered to be somehow related to it, as if one institution took the place of the other. But as we saw, DIB took the place of the Ministry of Sharia, which in turn had taken the place of the Ottoman office of the Şeyhülislam. The abolition of the Caliphate was an altogether different matter. When the nationalist struggle ended in victory in the fall of 1922, European powers invited both the Ottoman government based in occupied Istanbul and the nationalist government based in Ankara to commence peace talks at Lausanne. In response, the National Assembly in Ankara met on 1 November 1922 to separate the Caliphate from the Sultanate and to abolish the Sultanate, in effect dissolving the Ottoman Empire for good. The Ottoman sultan at the time, Vahdettin, then sought refuge with the British and fled the country, and his cousin Abdülmecit II was named the new Caliph by the National Assembly. Two years later, in 1924, the newly declared Republic, passed a law that abolished the seat of the Caliphate occupied by Abdülmecit II, with the justification that the caliphate is intrinsic to the meaning and concept of government and republic, and therefore cannot exist as a distinct center of power (Genç, 2005, p.35). The same law banished the Ottoman dynasty from Turkey, sending Abdülmecit and his family into exile.

Paradoxically, however, these measures did not involve the building of secularism in accordance with the normative principles of equality and freedom. Islamic influence was

presumably removed from political and public affairs, but Islam still remained as part of the state establishment and identity. Herein lay the contradiction of the Kemalist project. As Kandiyoti (2012, p.516) remarks, “the blows that Kemalism dealt to the symbols and institutions of Islam ... must not be conflated or confused with a transition to a civic concept of citizenship that positions the state in an equidistant relationship to all its ethnically and religiously diverse citizenry.” The question is: how do we account for this?

Secularization of Social Life vs. Political Secularism

We have already noted that, as no religious organization such as the Catholic Church existed independent of the state, a concept like “mutual autonomy” would not be applicable. Unlike in France, for example, the Kemalists did not have to struggle against, or reach a mode of accommodation with, the clergy per se, because the clergy was already in the employ of the state. But one could perhaps imagine “mutual autonomy” between state and religion in a slightly different way and conceive of it in terms of the state leaving religious organization to the forces of civil society without any direct intervention or regulation, and abandoning precisely those actions that the state has assumed, such as licensing mosques and putting the clergy on government payroll, and so on. This would obviously be preferable, because, after all, the (Sunni) Muslim clergy’s salary comes out of the taxes of all citizens, whether Muslim or not, or whether religious or not. Could (or should) not the Kemalists have gone further and completely separate state and religion in this sense, and relieve itself and the non-Muslim and non-religious citizens of the burden?

Perhaps they could, except that they tended to see unchecked religious associations as a political threat or, worse, as simply dangerous, given the “ignorance” of the illiterate and uneducated masses. The way they saw it, their struggle was not against the clergy, but precisely against those “civil society” forces that might use the religious sentiments of the masses to politically undermine the regime (i.e., the republic). In this struggle, they saw the clergy on their side, as the project was not to suppress Islam, as has sometimes been claimed, but to build what they considered a “proper” and “enlightened” conception of Islam (Azak, 2010). The division that has historically existed between secularists and Islamists in Turkey, then, has not been between lay political leaders and the clergy, but between the secularists and Islamists that could be found both within the clergy and among the political leaders.

The “proper” Islam imagined by the Kemalists was free of the elements of “folk” Islam, such as “superstitious” beliefs and local “sheiks” who could manipulate the religiosity of the masses. Efforts to propagate “proper” Islam included publishing the Turkish-language translation of the Qur’an, so that the believer could find out what was in it for him/herself. This particular effort in fact started through private initiative before it was undertaken as a state project, and the government only got involved when the initial translations were seen to be of poor quality (Wilson, 2009). That Islamists objected to this endeavor to make the Qur’an accessible was further evidence for the Kemalists of the intention to keep pious people in the dark in order to exploit their religious sentiments.

1925 was a critical year for the Kemalist regime, when it was challenged by a serious uprising in the Kurdish-populated southeast, led by Sheikh Said, an influential and revered head of the Naqshbandi order. Said publicly condemned the Kemalist regime for destroying religion and incited rebellion to end the “blasphemy.” Researchers note that although the objective was to create an independent Kurdistan, or at least gain some form of autonomy, religious language was used to motivate followers into rebellion (Bruinessen, 1978; Tunçay, 1981; Olson, 1989). In addition, the British had a longstanding interest and involvement in Kurdish nationalism, and although there was no direct evidence of British involvement in the Sheikh Said rebellion, as far as the Kemalists were concerned, the Kurds were in alliance with the British and were serving a sinister imperialist plan to divide up the country which the nationalists had fought so hard to save from occupation (Tunçay, 1981, pp.130-1; Olson, 1989, pp.124-33). The rebellion broke out in February; Said was captured and executed in April. The incident led the regime to envisage an intimate connection between the Kurdish and Islamic threats to its own stability, and prompted it to accelerate its move towards further emphasis on secularization and Turkish nationalism.

In March 1925, soon after the beginning of the rebellion, the Law for the Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu) was passed, giving the government extraordinary powers. In June 1925 the regime closed down the opposition party in the parliament, the Progressive Republican Party, because of its alleged Islamist leanings (Ahmad, 1993, pp.57-60). In November 1925, the Law for Dervish Lodges (Tekke ve Zaviyeler Kanunu) was passed, banning sufi brotherhoods and other grassroots religious groupings, because they were seen by the regime as potential sources of political trouble. In March 1926, a new Penal Code was adopted, including an article that banned “the utilization of religion or religious sentiment or things considered sacred by religion for inciting people to violate the security of the state or to form associations to this effect” and “the founding of political associations based on religious ideas and sentiments.” The same code also included several articles protecting the “freedom of religion,” by banning any publications “denigrating any of the religions recognized by the state” and any acts “that prevented religious worship” or “damaged religious sites or objects.”

The Law for the Maintenance of Order remained in effect until 1929. Along with the introduction of the Civil Code and the Penal Code, the infamous “Hat Law,” often associated with the regime’s “secularizing” efforts, was introduced in this period, although its link with secularism or secularization is not clear, except that most of the opposition to it originated from Islamic circles and was based on the complaint that the rim of the fedora hat, mandated by this law to replace the use of the fez, was unsuitable for Muslim prayer, as if it could not be removed along with the shoes during the prayer. While one may debate whether implementing dress codes is a useful or even meaningful practice, one must also note that they have existed throughout history in all societies. Moreover, headgear regulation had a precedent in Ottoman history. In the classical regime, “clothes, and particularly headgear, were important markers of ethnic, religious, and other communal identities as well as of social class and rank” (Yılmaz, 2013, pp.22-3). Sultan Mahmut II had proclaimed the fez, an inauthentic item, as the national headgear to represent the equality of Ottoman citizens before the state through a

uniform appearance (Bottoni, 2007, p.181). The objective of the Hat Law was the same; but it also expressed the desire to simulate the outward appearance of what at the time was considered to be “civilized,” considering that the Europeans associated the fez with Ottoman tradition and backwardness (Yılmaz, 2013, p.29). No dress code was promulgated for women, but those who were using the face veil and *çarşaf* (similar to the Iranian chador) were encouraged to remove them and wear headscarves and overcoats instead. For the regime, this was a step in the legal and political emancipation of Turkish women; more steps would be taken later. Removing the face veil was necessary for women’s active presence and participation in the public sphere (Adak, 2014). Yet another novelty introduced in this time frame was the Latin alphabet in place of the Arabic script used to write Turkish during the Ottoman Empire.

These measures have often been described as top-down impositions rejected by society. In the portrayal of the “master narrative” alluded to before, “the religious sphere was particularly subject to constraint and repression by the authoritarian Kemalist regime,” with this view “being particularly pronounced among authors of Muslim sensibility” (Clayer, 2015, p.98). But, in fact, these measures, which could indeed be described as “secularizing” social life, were not planned and imposed as a blueprint, but arrived at in “a changing context both within Turkey and abroad” (ibid., pp.119-20). Anti-veiling campaigns, for example, “were shaped by discussions, negotiations and concessions at the local level” (Adak, 2014, p.60). Often local elites, such as newspaper writers and editors, prominent members of local associations, professional organizations, and so on, rather than state administrators, took the lead in these campaigns. Women themselves, who wanted to take their place in society as equal to men, were also active in anti-veiling efforts (ibid., pp.66-77). In fact, most of these “novelties” were not that novel at all, as they had origins in the Ottoman times, but also the collapse of the Empire and the nationalist rejuvenation created “a social and psychological environment conducive” to the institution of a new regime (Yılmaz, 2013, p.13). Therefore, many of these measures met with mixed reactions, giving “a much more complicated picture than either total compliance or total resistance,” and particularly “Westernized local elites found many of the state-promoted reforms and lifestyles acceptable and even desirable” (ibid., p.74 and p.105). It was likewise with the alphabet “reform,” in that the “transformation to the new alphabet was in fact more gradual and the government policy toward noncompliance more accommodating than has often been assumed in the literature” (ibid., p.178).

The regime felt securely established by the end of the “Maintenance of Order” period in 1929, but experienced a shock in late 1930, leading to a turn toward a new policy. In that year, the project of instituting a multi-party democracy by (re-)creating an opposition party to the ruling Republican People’s Party (RPP), founded by Mustafa Kemal in 1923, ended almost as soon as it began. The Free Republican Party was founded by a trusted associate of Mustafa Kemal, but was dissolved by the founder himself within three months of its existence, because the opposition that gathered around this party, mostly motivated by the economic crisis of 1929 due to the global depression, was much bigger than anticipated, posing a real challenge to the ruling RPP, and seemed (or was alleged by the government) to also include Islamist adversaries of the regime (Emrence, 2000). A bigger trauma than this for the regime, however, was an incidence of violence that took

place later in the year, all the more shocking because it took place in a district of a coastal city in the west, where secularization was supposed to have taken firmer hold. A mob, marching through town, chanting and calling for the reinstatement of the caliphate and sharia, attacked and killed two local guards and a reserve officer who arrived at the scene to maintain order. They then beheaded the young officer and paraded through the streets to the applause of bystanders. The government reacted by declaring martial law in the area and sentencing numerous rioters to the death penalty (Brockett, 1998, pp.54-6).

These incidents, perceived as threatening to the regime, caused a change in the government's orientation, which could be observed in its policies regarding the place of religion in social life. The holy month of Ramadan was always an occasion for festivities during the Ottoman Empire, in which the government took part and played an important role in organizing. This continued in the first years of the Republic, even in 1925, when the Sheik Said rebellion took place. There was, in other words, a clear separation for the Kemalist regime between the place that religion had (or ought to have) in social life and that in politics. During the "Maintenance of Order" years, there was a decline in the government's enthusiasm for these celebrations, but the real change came after 1931 (Adak, 2010). There was a considerable effort in these years to shift the orientation for defining national identity from Islam to Turkishness. The Association for the Study of Turkish History and the Association for the Study of Turkish Language were founded by the government, in 1931 and 1932 respectively, and each developed ideologically extreme theories that were later discarded, such as the "Turkish History Thesis," which claimed that Turks moving out of their original habitat in Central Asia spread their civilization to the rest of the world, including Anatolia, whose inhabitants, such as the Hittites and Sumerians, were therefore of Turkish origin, thus combining a racial definition of the modern Turkish nation with a territorial one, and the "Sun-Language Theory," which claimed that all languages of the world derived from the original one spoken by Central Asian Turks. National holidays, marking historical events of the national struggle, were promulgated by law in 1935 and began to acquire greater significance and more enthusiastic state-organized celebrations than religious holidays. Finally, in 1937, "laiklik" (secularism) entered the Constitution as a defining feature of the Republic of Turkey.

The Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory never took hold as convincing accounts of the identity of the Turkish nation, although remnants of some elements of these theories may still be found in the ideological accounts of nationalist extremists. In the end, by the time that Atatürk died in 1938, and his close associate İsmet İnönü took over as President and head of the RPP, the national identity was still Muslim and appealing to that identity was still an effective method of winning political support. Besides, racist definitions of the nation were to fall into disrepute with the end of WWII, which Turkey wisely managed to stay out of. Through all this, moreover, the religious bureaucracy (DIB) remained as part of the state structure. Complete separation never took place, although the significance of the DIB declined through the 1930s. Its budget and functions were already limited as it was primarily concerned with the administration of mosques and their personnel, with further limitation in 1931, when

this particular function was transferred to the Directorate of Pious Foundations, also part of the government bureaucracy. The DIB was then only directly responsible for the appointment of local muftis (Islamic scholars). But this decline phase did not last very long. At the end of WWII, only several years after secularism entered the Turkish Constitution, state policies on religion experienced yet another shift, this time in the opposite direction.

Policies, Politics, and Current Trends

The end of the World War opened a new chapter for Turkey in many ways. Recruited by the U.S. for the anti-Soviet front in the Cold War, the RPP government was encouraged, or perhaps pressured, to introduce multi-party democracy and expand the infrastructure for religion. Turkey was included in the Marshall Plan, although it had not participated in the World War, and was soon to become a member of NATO, after sending troops to distant Korea. In the context of the Cold War, Turkey's religious identity would be a useful ideology to reinforce national solidarity against the "foreign" influences of socialism and communism. The ruling RPP and the Democrat Party (DP), the most important among those parties formed in the immediate post-War period, were in full agreement on this policy of placing greater emphasis on Turkey's religious identity (Akan, 2017, pp.12-4, 137-8, 144-56). The DP was an offshoot of the RPP, seriously challenged it in the first multi-party elections of 1946, and brought it down from office in the 1950 elections. Already before the DP's ascent to power, and partly under the pressure of competition from the DP, the RPP government took steps between 1946 and 1950 to widen the space for religion. The administration of all mosques was returned to the DIB, and its size and budget were increased. A number of Imam-Hatip Schools were opened, designed to train preachers and prayer leaders employed by the DIB, along with a Faculty of Theology at Ankara University.

Despite these moves, the DP won the 1950 elections. Its active presence in political competition and in power, however, revealed the nuance between the Kemalists and the Islamists in terms of the exact place each would assign to religion in public and political life. The anthropologist Paul Stirling, speaking about local politics in the village that he was studying at the end of the 1940s, right before the 1950 elections that brought the DP to power, notes the following: "I remember a Democrat Party man ... [who] came to the village propagandizing. He actually went to the mosque and they all went with him, so that he actually did his prayers in front of the village and showed that he was a good Muslim. The Republican People's Party didn't do that" (Shankland, 1999, p.23). This type of behavior of the DP politicians was criticized by the leaders of the RPP while they were in opposition, including by İnönü, Atatürk's successor as president, who underlined the distinction between "the exploitation of religion" and the "religiosity of the citizens" (Azak, 2010, p.130). Reminiscent of Edgar Morin's concept of "catholaïcité" to define the fusion of Catholicism and laïcité in present-day France, the anthropologist Michael Meeker (2002, pp.52-53) uses the term "Kemalo-Islamism" to describe the activities of local RPP politicians in the village that he studied in the 1960s: "They would extol the radical secularist policies of the RPP in the midst of a coffeehouse discussion, then suddenly excuse themselves to perform their ablutions and prayers... Echoing official

RPP policy of the day, they condemned the JP and its predecessor, the DP, for injecting religion into politics, even as they took care to display their religious piety.” This behavior, in fact, reflected the Kemalist position of separating religion from politics, implying that one could be both Muslim and secular at the same time.

There has been, and there still continues to be, a debate (or struggle) on the proper place of religion in public and political life, where the outcome is determined by the relative room for maneuver that the politically powerful group may have. But, while the room for religious expression in the public sphere has been subject to political fluctuations, the institutional setup has remained the same, with a trend toward the expansion of the religious infrastructure. The Kemalists were critical of the DP’s use of religion in political discourse, but also wary of an institutional design that would leave religious affairs to the forces of civil society, and hence still in favor of keeping the DIB within the state structure. Despite some debate and discussion in the writing of the 1961 Constitution, after the military coup of 1960 that overthrew the DP government, the DIB actually found its way into the constitution for the first time. The expansion of this infrastructure reached a new threshold with the 1980 coup. While only a brief mention of the DIB may be found in the 1961 Constitution, Article 136 of the 1982 Constitution assigned a specific role to it, in a formulation that is internally contradictory: “The Presidency of Religious Affairs ... shall exercise its duties ... in accordance with the principles of secularism, ... aiming at national solidarity and integrity.” In another internal contradiction, Article 24 of the same Constitution made instruction in “religious culture and morals” compulsory in primary and secondary schools, while at the same time declaring the “freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction.” In short, national solidarity and integrity were important goals for the military as a bulwark against socialist and communist ideologies, and Islam was found to be a convenient identity to unite around (Akan, 2017, pp.135-6, 196-9). Thus, with the adoption of the so-called “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis” (Çetinsaya, 1999) as official ideology by the military and the further expansion of the religious infrastructure within the state, Islamist movements found unprecedented fertile ground for political mobilization.

Superficially it appears as if, as Ernest Gellner (1994, pp.199-200) states in accordance with the received wisdom, that the military, regarded by all as the guardian of Kemalism, does not seem to hesitate to step in every time a democratic election results in Islamist victory. A closer inspection, however, reveals that “many crucial moments where the institutional preferences of the Kemalist CHP [RPP], intellectuals, or the military came from an explicit pursuit of the political end of mobilizing religion (as the cement of society) against left movements and had nothing to do with the common perception that the ‘threat of Islam’ requires a strategy of containment” (Akan, 2017, p.207). It is safe to say, therefore, that of the “control and utilize” model, which was perhaps more valid for the post-WWII Turkey than pre-WWII, the emphasis was on “utilize” more than “control”; and better “utilization” of religion was indeed made by governments with an Islamist bent, starting with the DP and following on with its successors, all the way to the currently ruling AKP.

The end of the Cold War created a temporary confusion and setback for the expanding Islamic influence. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the conservative

government in power took the opportunity to lift both the ban on “communist” organizations in the Penal Code and the ban, put in place back in 1926, on political organizations “based on religious ideas and sentiments.” This opening allowed greater room for Islamist mobilization at a time when the “communist threat” had already ceased. But, soon, Turkey’s geo-strategic position as a member of NATO led to a new form of assignment. In 1995, NATO formally shifted its attention from the now-extinct Soviet bloc to the rise of Islamist movements around the world, with Turkey as the “centerpiece” of U.S. policy and pursuit of interests in the MENA region. Now that the communist threat was replaced by the threat of Islamic “fundamentalism,” Turkey was urged by NATO (and the Western community of nations more generally) to take a firmer position domestically to prevent the development of Islamist politics (Gülalp, 1996). This configuration, combined with the electoral successes of the Islamist Welfare Party, resulted in yet another military intervention in 1997, which, by contrast to the 1980 coup, imposed limitations on religious expression in the public sphere. The Welfare-led coalition government was forced to resign, and in the following year the Constitutional Court ruled for the closure of this party for violating the principle of secularism. This closure was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in 2001 and by its Grand Chamber in 2003. An attempt to create another political party to replace Welfare also ended in similar closure in 2001. The ban in Turkish universities (and certain other institutions) on the use of the headscarf as a symbol of Islamic identity was implemented particularly in this time frame. Similar bans were imposed in a number of other European countries, and these bans were also upheld by the European Court.

This policy soon gave way to an alternative concept, however. In the post-9/11 context, a concept of “moderate Islam” was contrasted with “radical Islam” and promoted to counter the threat of “terrorism.” The AKP was founded in 2001 and conceived as a role model of “moderate Islam” that Turkey could offer to the Muslim world. Initially claiming a project of correcting the alleged past “injustices” of Kemalist secularism and describing its own ideology as “conservative democracy,” and welcomed by the West, the AKP swept to power in 2002 and has remained in office to this day. But, cautious at first and speaking the language of democratization, the AKP gradually turned authoritarian and began to Islamize the state and society as it more securely entrenched itself in power (Özbudun, 2014; Kaya, 2015). It did so by taking advantage of the instruments at the state’s disposal, paradoxically associated with Kemalist secularism.

I have elsewhere argued that Islamist-inclined governments may very well use the institutional instruments at the disposal of the presumably “secular” Turkish state to promote an Islamist agenda and that the rule of the AKP constitutes a perfect example in this regard (Gülalp, 2017). We may consider the case of the DIB, depicted by authors critical of Kemalist secularism as an instrument of the suppression of Islam in Turkey. The DIB continued to grow in size and extend its reach in the 1980s, during the hegemony of the ideology of “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis”; and especially during the AKP period, it turned into a powerful and prominent institution (Gözaydın, 2009). According to the statistics on the DIB’s official website, the number of its personnel grew roughly from 74,000 in 2002 to 120,000 in 2014. Its budget for 2015, as reported on the Finance Ministry’s website, exceeded the combined total of the budget of five cabinet ministries

(Ministry of Youth and Sports; Science and Technology; Forestry and Water; Customs and Trade; and the European Union). DIB's functions were diversified during this period. In 2012, it started to run its own television channel, Diyanet TV, targeting women and children in particular. New projects empowered DIB representatives to directly intervene in community and even familial affairs in provincial neighborhoods. DIB's Strategic Plan for 2012-2016, and for 2017-2021, included such strategic aims as playing an effective role in the solution of social problems, finding ways to prevent the moral degeneration of society, increasing collaboration with other Muslim nations in order to present to the world an "objective" image of Islam, and so on. In addition to its enormous size and daily involvement in social life, DIB also plays a significant political role in legitimizing government actions, which may take the form of public statements by the Director of DIB or written sermons prepared by DIB headquarters and sent to all mosques around the country to be read at Friday prayers.

Finally, the AKP government passed a new law in 2010 that vastly expanded the scope of activities of the DIB, conferring to the organization a wide range of responsibilities in the realm of social and cultural life, to keep values and morals alive, and to educate the people in the ways of Islam regarding the economy, gender relations, and so on (Adak, 2015; Akan, 2017, pp.239-43; Mutluer, 2018). The long list of duties enumerated in Article 6 of this law include "offering legal advice" on the laws, statues and regulations prepared by the administration, apparently bringing the DIB closer to the position of the office of the Şeyhülislam, as in the Ottoman Empire. Clearly, this reverses the role of the DIB as originally envisaged by the Kemalists, whose aim was to move toward secularism.

The institutional structure that incorporates the religious establishment into the state, then, readily allows for the use of religious language for political mobilization and hence offers a natural advantage to Islamist political forces and movements. Political mobilization based on the idea that the essence of national identity is religion has been most effectively expressed and put into practice by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, current President of Turkey and leader of the AKP. He expressed his political perspective most succinctly in an interview back in 1993, at the beginning of his successful political career. He noted that democracy is a "means rather than an end," useful only to arrive at the system desired by the people (Sever and Dizdar, 1993, pp.419-20). He added: "We believe that almost all people in Turkey, both due to their natural existence and the geography they live in and the historical mission they carry, are already Muslim. But they have been deterred from fulfilling this characteristic. They have been suppressed by force. If we could lift this oppression in their brains, they will naturally select Islam. For their essence consists of faith." (ibid., pp.431-2). This type of identity-based politics is naturally authoritarian and potentially totalitarian.

After nearly twenty years of unbroken AKP rule, however, there seems to be a societal backlash. Nader Hashemi (2018) describes how the top-down Islamization of society in Iran created the opposite trend toward secularization among the middle class, the youth, and civil society in general, including "negative feelings toward religion" (p.186). A similar process may be observed in Turkey today. Erdoğan announced in 2012 his intention to "raise pious generations" through the schooling system (Cengiz, 2014). The outcome however has been the opposite. Reports indicate a decline in religiosity and

rise in deism and atheism, alarming the AKP government and its religious establishment (Hurtas, 2019). A pamphlet prepared by the DIB and distributed to readers free of charge explained that there is an inverse relationship between secular education and religiosity, and that persons with higher levels of education tend to turn away from belief and worship as a result of the “questioning” and even “discriminatory attitudes” associated with “modernity and secularism” (Demokrat Haber, 29 January 2019). Umut Azak (2018) notes, however, that the recent rise in the visibility of atheism in Turkey is not an inevitable result of the secularist legacy of the Republic, nor a sign of secularization, but “a reaction to the success of Turkish Islamism” (pp.70-1). One might also add to this picture the growing trend among young women to shed their headscarves. An earlier generation of young women (and men), especially in the late 1990s, had struggled to have the right for women to wear the headscarf in universities and government offices and won this right under the AKP government, first in universities in 2011 and then all government offices in 2013. But, now, those wearing headscarves either through previous choice or under family pressure, or just out of seeing it normalized in their natural environment and among friends, have formed networks where they share their decisions to remove them and offer each other support. The best known of these networks is a website called “Yalnız Yürümeyeceksin” (<https://www.yalnizyurumeyeceksin.com/>), meaning “you will not walk alone.” These trends seem to confirm the misgivings expressed early on by Kemalist secularists, that the uneducated may be more politically pliable through religion and that bringing religion down from its exalted place in the hearts and minds of people to mix it up with the worldly affairs of politics and the power struggles of politicians would be a disservice to it.

Lessons of the Turkish Case

According to Bhikhu Parekh (2017, pp.321-2), the following four conditions should be met for a state to be considered “secular”: (1) “the state should be autonomous in the sense that the source of its authority should be located within it and not in some transcendental principle or being,” (2) “the state should pursue objectives that all its citizens share independently of whether or not they are religious and of what kind,” (3) “the state should not establish or institutionalise a religion or require its citizens to belong to it as a condition of their citizenship or occupancy of a particular office,” (4) “the state’s decisions, policies and laws should be publicly defended and justified, and should be based on reasons its citizens can assess and debate.” He concludes: “A state that fails on any of these is to that extent not secular, and cannot attain its basic objectives in a religiously diverse society.” It is clear from the foregoing that, judged by these criteria, among which perhaps only the first one is met, the Turkish state is not and has never been “secular.” Given both its institutional structure and prevailing notion of national identity, both of which have been inherited from the Ottoman Empire, albeit transformed to a certain extent, it cannot serve as a good model of secularism and regulation of religious affairs in a diverse society.

How do we then describe the Turkish model? Leaving aside those, already mentioned, who attach sensational qualifiers to Turkey’s secularism, such as oppressive, assertive

or even “pathological” (Kadioğlu, 2010), a more sophisticated analysis may be found in Andrew Davison’s attempt to draw a careful conceptual distinction between secular and laicist. He argues that Turkey is not secular because complete separation has not taken place, but is laicist because while religion has been removed from certain areas of political affairs it has been retained in others through state authority. He concludes that secularism is therefore prevented by laicism (Davison, 2003). Though interesting, and overlapping with aspects of the analysis offered in this paper, this argument still does not provide a satisfactory answer. First of all, it is not certain that there is indeed a clear distinction between these two terms. The European Court of Human Rights, for instance, uses the terms “secularism” and “laïcité” interchangeably in the English-language and French-language versions of their judgments. Second, if we define Turkey as “laicist” because the religious establishment is incorporated into the state structure through the DIB, as the argument goes, how do we define the Ottoman Empire, from which this institutional structure was inherited? Or, if we call Turkey “laicist” because the state has hegemony over religion and presumes to determine correct Islam through its religious institution, then do we also call Iran and Saudi Arabia “laicist”? Or, if we call Turkey “laicist” because the nation has a religious identity, and the state an established or at least a “preferred” religion with which the citizens are to be associated, then, again where do we put a whole host of other nations that have the same characteristics?

Considering what has been said so far, the Turkish model of state-religion relations most closely resembles “identity-based religious majoritarianism nationalism” among the categories identified by Modood and Sealy (2019, p.11). The primary goal of the Kemalist project was to sever the ties of the individuals to their parochial (religious or ethnic) communities and link them up directly (as distinct individuals) with the nation-state. This model of nation-state building followed the “ideal-normative” French example of nation-building. The Ottoman state had left the “primordial” communities intact; and yet in its own way it was also “secular” as far as the links between political power and religion were concerned, but obviously not in the normative sense of providing freedom of conscience and religion. Indeed, secularism understood as state domination of religion necessarily (or at least tendentially) precludes “neutrality,” which implies religious pluralism and the state’s equidistance to them. The Turkish Republican model was not so much a question of secularism (for enlightenment or for democracy) as a question of creating national homogeneity.

Perhaps, then, the focus of analysis must shift from the question of “secularism” to that of “equal citizenship.” The UK provides a good counter example. It has an established church and the head of the state is also the head of the church. Yet, one would be hard-pressed to define the UK as anything other than “secular” in the state’s treatment of its citizens, despite its outward appearance as a “religious state.” The UK had “blasphemy laws” in its books, when the “Rushdie affair” broke out. The Muslim community demanded that the same prohibition also apply to blaspheming Islam, to which the state responded (albeit belatedly) by lifting blasphemy laws altogether. This is a good example of the normative respect for equal citizenship. But suppose the Muslim demand was met, and then another religious community demanded the same kind of protection

for their own sacred beliefs. Would there ever be any end to this or would the state have to draw a line somewhere, and, if so, where?

The principle of freedom of religion and conscience, by definition, necessitates freedom from religion. The sanctity of a belief only concerns the believer. Non-believers or believers of other faiths have no obligation toward the faith that they do not share; they only have to respect the right of the believers to have the faith that they may wish to have. It is, in other words, a human right, the right of an individual to freedom of thought, belief and conscience; it is not the right or freedom of a faith or belief system to impose itself on others. To maintain social peace in a diverse society a secular logic must prevail in order to negotiate issues of common concern between believers of different faiths and non-believers alike. Secularism, then, entails the existence of a political space separate from and independent of religions for the purpose of negotiating common issues and areas of concern, so that the social and political needs of all religious and irreligious members of society may be met.

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