

Secularism and Islamic Movements in Turkey

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The Turkish state's conception of Islam is informed by its understanding of secularism, as the only path to modernity, progress, and a powerful state. This "otherness" of religion, in general, and Islam, in particular - - constitutes the meaning and role of the secular in Turkey. This discourse of secularism, even more than the real acts of Muslims, shapes the policies of the Turkish state and secularist elite.¹ The aggressive policies of the elite are an extension of the orientalist construction of Islam: for instance, the way the actions of the Welfare/Virtue Party are read and interpreted within this orientalized Islamic framework. The Kemalist position on secularism could be summarized in the following way: modernity and democracy requires secularism. Islam is neither secularizable nor privatizable. Thus, in order to bring modernity, Islam either has to be kept under strict state control or confined to personal conscious.

In order to understand the cultural struggle in Turkey, one needs to privilege the concept and practice of secularism. This examination is crucial for our understanding of interweaving relations between politics, modernity, and religion.² Since the Turkish elite's conception of Islam is very much formed by their understanding of secularism, this paper will explore first the concept of secularism and its realization within the Turkish context. In the second part, we will provide background of this cultural struggle by indicating that the struggle is basically divisive in its effects, and did not harbor an emancipatory potential for religion itself, namely, leading to religious pluralism. Only

¹ Nuray Mert, *Laiklik Tartışmasına Kavramsal Bir Bakış: Cumhuriyet Kurulurken Laik Düşünce* (Istanbul: Baglam, 1994); Ernest Gellner, "Kemalism," in *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 81-91.

² For more on the role of Islam in Turkish society, see Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989); Nilufer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). Indeed, modernity, is not about time, but a new configuration of social relations, in which the rise of impersonalism and the inclusion of the masses as citizens play an important role.

with the openings of new social and cultural spaces that the state relaxed the control of Islam and this, in turn, allowed religious groups to reinterpret Islam according to the needs of modern society. The case of the Nur movement indicates an attempt to cultivate faith without becoming embroiled in a confrontation with modernity.³ Moreover, the movement demonstrates not only multiple patterns of modernity but also a constant fluctuation in the understanding and implementation of secularism. The articles in this edited volume all indicate the transformation, not the decline or extinction, of religion in the modern society.⁴ Thus, the volume explores not only for the reexamination of the secularization paradigm but also the possibilities of multiple modernities.

Secularism as an intellectual and political project in Turkey has a long history of differentiating, marginalizing, and excluding large sectors of Turkish society.⁵ In the examination of Islamic social movements, one needs to take this exclusionary history of secularism into account. Secularism in Turkey is different from the United States in

³ There are very few studies on the Nur movements, M.H. Yavuz, “The Assassination of Collective Memory: The Case of Turkey,” *The Muslim World*, Vol. 99 (1999), pp. 193-207.

⁴ The “decline” paradigm, see Olivier Tschannen, “The secularization paradigm: A Systematization,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (1991), Vol. 30, pp. 395-415; Byran Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Those who are critical of the “decline” paradigm and propose a new secularization theory are Roger Finke, “Religious Deregulation: Origins and consequences,” *Journal of Church and State* (1990), Vol. 32, pp. 609-626; Rodney Stark, “A Supply-side reinterpretation of the ‘secularization’ of Europe”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 33 (1994), pp. 230-352; N.J. Demerath, “Rational paradigms, a-rational religion, and the debate over secularization,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (1995), Vol. 34, pp. 105-112. Jose Casanova, *Public religions in the modern world* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁵ In the decisions of the Turkish Constitutional Court, only the secular public sphere assumed to offer peace by removing any form of difference rooted in ethnicity or religion. The state wants to make sure that the Turkish public sphere is homogenous and unified without any religious marking. In other words, religiously rooted arguments in the public sphere are treated as divisive and dangerous for the peace and stability of the public sphere. Secularism has become an authoritarian state ideology to root out religious and ethnic difference in the name of enlightenment values. The assertion of universal equality and nonviolence has become the source of inequality and oppression here. The symbolic violence and denial of any religious presence in the public domain have become public policy.

terms of its project to control the “lifeworld” and impose a way of life upon the people.⁶ In the study of Islamic movements, one sees that the Muslims do not act passively when their “lifeworld” is colonized by the forces of centralizing bureaucratic state, the market economy, and expert opinion but rather there is a process of negotiation and readjustments. Many Islamic groups understand secularism as part of a strategy to preserve the authoritarian elite’s domination, since the elite use “secularism” to rationalize relations of exploitation and exclusion of ethnic and pious Muslims from the decision making processes. It is this forced “modernization” that has made Islam an important resource for challenging the secularist project. However, one needs to realize that Islamic movements did not only utilize Islam to resist this hegemonic system but also sought to promote change by vernacularizing modernity with Islamic practices. Islamic movements embody two contradictory aspirations for becoming modern by developing a contemporary terminology to deal with contemporary social and political issues and also by preserving its authentic Muslim identity and ethics. These trends toward modernity and conservation punctuate internal debate within Islamic tradition.

Secularism as a Source of Normative Conflict

What is secularism? How has secularism translated into public policy? What is the connection between nation building, secularism and modernization? How does our understanding of secularism inform our conception of religion, in general, and Islam in particular? What are the consequences of state-imposed secularism in terms of widening the normative conflict in Turkey?

Secularism, removal of the domination of religious authority from diverse spheres of society, is the key constitutive category of modernity.⁷ European secularism emerged

⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1*, tr. by Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1984), pp. 287, 398.

⁷ One needs to disaggregate the concept of secularism in terms of its social, political, and philosophical meanings. Politically it means the separation of religion and politics. Socially it means a this-worldly orientation and recognition of individual reason and science as the means to engineer society. In terms of ideas, it means that religious views and beliefs are regarded as humanly constructed rather than as divinely ordained mysterious. P. L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

as a solution to the wars of religion in Europe. Hobbes, the father of modern philosophy, created independent ethics, outside of Christianity, on the basis of human conditions to capture and control human allegiances by excluding religious concerns and values from the public sphere. Due to religious wars in Europe, secularism became a necessity for civil peace and stability and states refused to pursue any religious goals. The separation of the state and religion became the bedrock of the European state system. Secularism became the constitutive feature of modernity to free different social spheres and public reasoning from religious control. Scholars and philosophers, utilizing the European experience, emphasized a great transformation from traditional to the modern world; from religion to reason; from hierarchical and status-based society to rights and impersonal society, with the inclusion of the masses into politics as citizens.⁸ All founding fathers of sociology - - Comte, Durkheim, Weber and Marx - - in different degrees examined and predicted a steady shift from a religion-centered life worldview to a secular, science and reason centered worldview.

While in the European experience, philosophers and politicians tried to expand the power of the state and restrict religion to the private sphere, in the United States, secularism was formed to shield diverse religions from state manipulation. Thus, two modes of secularism evolved from two different contexts. The first model of secularism, or *laicism*, which was evolved in France, is anti-religious and seeks to eliminate or control religion. The second model of secularism, evolved from the Anglo-American experience, seeks to protect religions from state intervention and encourages faith-based social networking to consolidate civil society.⁹ In short, the first model sees the state as the agent of social change and the source of “good” life; whereas, the second treats the state with suspicion and sees civil society as a source of change and of a “good” life.

⁸ Charles Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 31-53.

⁹ John L. Esposito, “Islam and Secularism in the Twenty-First Century,” in John Esposito and Azzam Tamimi, *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 9.

Turkish secularism is based on the radical Jacobin *laicism* that aimed to transform society through the power of the state and eliminate religion from the public sphere.¹⁰ The Jacobin faith “in the primacy of politics and in the ability of politics to reconstitute society” guided Mustafa Kemal and his associates.¹¹ (It is this Jacobin tradition that would set a model for political action for the Islamists, nationalists, and the leftists as well.) The Kemalist project treats secularism as above and outside politics. In short, secularism draws the boundaries of public reasoning. Any attempt to use religious argument in public debate, even in the Turkish parliament, could be used to ban that party or exclude the group. In Europe, philosophers sought to overcome sectarian conflicts by replacing religious argument with reason and universal philosophy. Not God but rather the moral subject became the source of ethics. Moral philosophy and rational religion became the source of morality. William E. Connolly, who wrote *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, argues that Kantian rational religion sought to get rid of the Christian God but it has four ecclesiological futures:

“First, it places singular conceptions of reason and command morality above question. Second, it sets up (Kantian) philosophy as the highest potential authority in adjudicating questions in these two domains and in guiding the people toward eventual enlightenment. Third, it defines the greatest danger to public morality as sectarianism within Christianity. Fourth, in the process of defrocking ecclesiastical theology and crowning philosophy as judge in the last instance, it also delegitimizes a place for several non-Kantian, nontheistic perspectives in public life.”¹²

Thus, secularists seek to perpetuate the Kantian “effects” by preventing any form of religious intrusion into public life.

¹⁰ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹¹ S. N. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 73

¹² William Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) p. 32.

By presenting the secular as modern and progressive and European, colonized countries and their traditional ways of life were presented as “backward” and underdeveloped. In the construction of the secularist view, scholars always created an Oriental “other”: Islam. The scholars argue that political and religious authority have become increasingly separate in the West since the Reformation, and increasingly unified under Islam. Those scholars who tend to defend the myth of the unity of religion and politics in Islam are led by Bernard Lewis, who argues that “Islam was..associated with the excessive use of power from the very beginning... This association between religion and politic, between community and polity, can...be seen in...the religious texts in which Muslims base their beliefs.”¹³ Lewis concludes that religious and political authority in Islam are not separate but one. This unexamined Lewisian idea has dominated Turkish studies.¹⁴

A group of scholars have challenged this orientalist assumption on two different grounds. First, they argue that politics and religion are elusive and contextual.¹⁵ The boundary between the religious and the political is not fixed or text-centered but rather fluctuating and porous. Second, they argue that Islamic social movements are not a conservative reaction to modernity but rather attempts to create their own version of modernity.¹⁶ These movements seek to raise Muslim consciousness and expand the boundaries of the public sphere. Ira Lapidus challenges the assumed “separation” of religion and politics in the West and their “unification” in Islam by arguing that:

“The European societies are presumed to be built upon a profound separation of state and religious institutions. This view ignores the variety and complexity of the European cases. It ignores the numerous examples of state control of religion,

¹³ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, p. 135-36.

¹⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *Teokrasi ve laiklik* (Istanbul: Adam, 1984); Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islâmcilik Akımı* (Istanbul: Simavi, 1991); Tunaya, *Devrim hareketleri içinde Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük* (Istanbul: Baha, 1964).

¹⁵ Ira Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1988); John Voll, *Islam, continuity and change in the modern world* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982).

¹⁶ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of religion: discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); James Piscatori, *Islam in a world of nation-states* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1986); idem, ed. *Islam in the political process* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

the phenomenon of established churches (such as the Anglican Church in England), and the concordats in Italy. It ignores the integral connection between religious and political nationalism in such countries as Ireland or Poland.”¹⁷

There is no single pattern of interaction between religion and politics in Islam but “rather several competing ones. Moreover, in each of the models there are ambiguities concerning the distribution of authority, functions and relations among institutions.”¹⁸

Another leading authority on Islamic politics, John Voll draws the complex and context-sensitive relations between religious and temporal authority in Muslim societies.¹⁹

In many developing countries, secularism became a theology of progress and development. It is important to study Turkey for a number of reasons. Normative fault lines of modernity are nowhere else as clear as in Turkey. The interaction between secularism and Islam plays an important role in normative and ethnic conflict, cultural politics of remembering and representing the past, and the formation of new social movements in Turkey. The forced secularization process, which seeks to civilize (Westernize) Turkey, created a major normative struggle around the following questions: Who are we? How are we to live together? What are the moral boundaries of community? For theoretical and empirical reasons we believe Turkey is an important country. Not only the Turks developed one of the most comprehensive models of ethno-religious co-existence *qua* the Millet system, but also it was the first to experience the modernization project in the Muslim world. This shift from an “ancien regime” to the building of a “modern” society and a nation-state is the source of many normative conflicts in different societies. Three major outcomes of modernity were nationalism and secularism and, recently, the pluralization of beliefs and values. Despite different challenges and conflicts, the premodern Ottoman polity had a reasonable framework of maintaining a unified normative charter that could command allegiance of the great majority of Muslims, Christians and Jews. With the introduction of modernity, the

¹⁷ Ira Lapidus, “State and Religion in Islamic Societies,” *Past and Present*, No. 151 (May 1996), p. 3.

¹⁸ Lapidus, “State and Religion,” p. 4.

¹⁹ John O. Voll, *Islam, continuity and change in the modern world* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982).

politics of nationalism and secularism raised the question of legitimacy and shattered the traditional framework of co-existence.

Neither nationalism nor secularism divorced from their European context helps to solve the problem in the ex-Ottoman regions of the Middle East, Caucasus, and the Balkans. Secularism in Turkey did not evolve to bring peace and stability to fighting religious groups but rather to modernize the state and homogenize society. The Kemalist principles of nationalism (i.e. the attempt to create a homogenous nation) and secularism (i.e. forming a modern society that is based on rationalism) destroyed the multi-ethnic character of society by getting rid of Greeks and other Christian communities and denying the cultural rights of the Kurds. The source of Turkish political morality became the nationalism to serve for the state. Nationalism did not replace religion but managed to nationalize religions which, along with secularism, became the sources of ongoing tension. In the post-nation-building period, as a result of globalization, pluralism becomes a key virtue—peaceful coexistence by recognizing diversity within these “nation-states.”

Although our work recognizes the vital role of democratic institutions to navigate competing norms and interests, we stress that normative charter is essential for deliberative democracy and coexistence of diversity. Non-denominational or non-sectarian Durkhemian “collective conscience” (or what I term as normative charter) is *sine qua non* for the adjudication of sectarian ideas and interests. A religiously-based normative charter is necessary to answer some of the most important questions: What is the purpose of our existence? And how are we to live together with our differences? As long as late modernity raises the question of difference, we cannot assume a society without normative charter but need to develop an inclusive normative charter. Thus, the Nur movement is significant because it deals with the formation and dissemination of this non-denominational Islamic ethics of engagement with religious, cultural and ideological “difference.”

The origins of Turkish secularism: positivist philosophy

In order to understand the current normative conflict in Turkey, we need to understand it in the context of the Ottoman legacy. The source of power in the Ottoman

empire was the complex web of relationships between a military and a bureaucratic system with Islamic institutions. The system had a deep understanding of the autonomy and unity of institutions. The major source of tension was between state institutions and Islamic scholars, sects and Sufi orders. Since Sufi orders and networks were the protective shield against the excesses of the state power, these networks contained and nourished civil code of interactions. European colonial penetration and the loss of territory forced the Ottoman bureaucracy to complete modernization by removing societal centers of resistance.

The modernization of the Ottoman system started with the goal of “consolidating and strengthening the state” (not society) to resist European penetration and ethno-religious rebellions in the Balkans. The 19th century Ottoman elite consolidated state power by primarily modernizing the army. This process, in turn, transformed the army into a trendsetter and an agent of ordering the society in accordance with the needs of the state. In addition to the modernization of the army, the second instrument of consolidation of state power was the introduction of science and technology for economic development. Science, for the Ottoman bureaucratic intellectuals, became the progressive force to order and regulate society and alter modes of thinking. The affinity between positivist worldviews of the bureaucratic elite, who carried out these reforms, and their interests needs to be examined. The “carriers” of positivism had very special characteristics. Their vested interests were attached to their ideological position. The bureaucratic elite exploited the reform campaign to consolidate their power vis-à-vis the religious intellectuals by framing all opposition as “religious fanaticism.” The Republic did not only use this Young Turk legacy of division to delegitimize all forms of opposition as a struggle between science and religion, progress and fanaticism but also criminalized it.

The Young Turks presented themselves as progressive since they had scientific education and were guided by science and reason not by religion. The major characteristics of Young Turks, who were trained in secular schools, were: (a) unquestioned faith in positivism as a guide to polity and society; (b) determination to create a modern society to consolidate the power of the state; and (c) passion for elite rule. Due to these three characteristics of positivism, statism, and elitism, the Young

Turks were neither liberal nor democratic. Although the Young Turks stressed the significance of the parliamentary system and constitutionalism as a way of coping with ethnic challenges in the Balkans, their first and foremost goal was to protect and consolidate the power of the Ottoman state. Even the attempts to create “Ottoman citizenship” were aimed to expand the social basis of the Ottoman state. Thus, for the Young Turks, the heirs of the Republican elite, identity was constituted by two contradictory trends of radicalism (by stressing science and rationality based society) and conservatism (by seeking to consolidate state and their power). They presented themselves as “revolutionary” to change the society but also used the state to consolidate their own power.²⁰ As a result of 19th century reforms, the legacies of authoritarian state structure and new administrative military-civilian bureaucratic elite punctuated the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.

Mustafa Kemal, just like the Young Turks during the wars in the Balkans and the World War I, never hesitated to utilize Islam to mobilize the population against the invading European armies and always treated Islam as an integrating glue to blend all Anatolian Muslims into the Turkish nation.²¹ In the formation of the Turkish nation, the Republic assumed that Muslimness as a *sine qua non* for becoming a Turk. After achieving national independence, the Republic implemented a rigid positivist project by denying any role for Islam in the formation of the new polity.

In the late 1920s, *laicism* became the constituting principle of the Kemalist project of building a nation-state. In the IV. Congress of the People’s Republican Party in 1935, Mustafa Kemal codified his ideas and goals as “Kemalism”, which consisted of six eclectic principles of nationalism, secularism, republicanism, statism, revolutionarism, and populism to guide the party, state and the nation.²² The Kemalist

²⁰ Şerif Mardin, *Jon Turklerin Siyasi Fikirleri* (Istanbul: Iletisim, 1983).

²¹ For more on the connection between nationalism and Islam in the Turkish context, see M.Hakan Yavuz, “Nationalism and Islam: Yusuf Akçura, Üç Tarz-i Siyaset,” *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1993), pp. 175-207; idem, “The Patterns of Political Islamic Identity: Dynamics of National and Transnational Loyalties and Identities,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 14, No. 3,(1995), pp. 341-372.

²² There are a number of good works on Kemalism, see Mete Tuncay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetin’de Tek Parti Yönetimi (1923-1931)* (Ankara: Yurt, 1981); Taha Parla, *Kemalist Tek Parti Ideolojisi ve CHP’nin Altı Oku* (Istanbul: Iletisim, 1992); Esat Öz,

doctrine was informed by the dominant European authoritarian ideologies in the 1930s and perceived modernization as westernization. In practice, Kemalism became the ideology and practice of eliminating class, ethnic and religious sources of conflict by seeking to create a classless, national (unified as Turkish), secular (to cleanse any religious sign or practice in the public sphere) homogenized society. Thus, the fear of difference became the guiding principle of the Kemalist state. Moreover, due to the impact of French positivism, the Kemalist project's sole legitimate agent of change has been the state itself. The change becomes "modern" and acceptable only if it is carried out by the state. Thus, any form of a bottom-up modernization project or civil society guided change become a source of worry and suspicion. Since Kemalism stated that the nation and state are the one and the same, Islam is excluded from the definition of the nation and state. The Kemalist reforms tried to create a new society and a "*homo Kemalicus*" a persona who is guided by voluntary positivism and forced amnesia (no deeper sense of identity). This human type that the Kemalists tried to create was neither democratic nor liberal but authoritarian, elitist, and ideological. Although some scholars such as Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Ergun Özbudun and Feroz Ahmad justified this tutelage system as a transition to democracy and civil society, this *ex post facto* explanation ignores the societal factors and authoritarian aspects of Kemalism.²³

Nothing shaped and guided the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal as much as positivism.²⁴ The Republican elite adopted the Comtian idea of "progress within order." Positivism shaped the domains of politics, economics and society. Expert opinion became the final reasoning in terms of setting public policy. Science and technology were regarded as the means to economic developments. Faith in positivism became the guiding principle of the Turkish educational system. Mustafa Kemal's saying "Science is

Tek Parti Yonetimi Siyasal katılım (Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1992); Levent Köker, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1990).

²³ On the official view of Kemalism, see Enver Ziya Karal, "The Principles of Kemalism," in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Özbudun, *Atatürk Founder of a Modern State* (London: Hurst, 1981), pp. ??

²⁴ Taner Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası, 1919-1946* (Ankara: Doğan Yayınları, 1971), p. 132; Şerif Mardin, "Atatürk ve Positif Düşünce," *Atatürk ve Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye'si* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ticaret Odaları, Sanayi Odaları ve Ticaret Borsaları Birliği Yayınları, 1981), pp. 57-67.

the truest guide in life” (*Hayatta en hakiki mürşit ilimdir*). So Kemalist laicism is not about the separation of politics and religion but rather about restructuring society in accordance with positivist philosophy. In practice, this means preventing religious influence in the spheres of education, economics, family, dress code, and politics.²⁵ This top-down nation building project did not only highlight the previous fault lines in the Ottoman society but also added new ones: Turks vs. Kurds, secularist vs. Islamists, Alevis vs. Sunnis. The following section will examine the first fault line in Turkey.

The “*ala turca*” secularism: Reconfiguring laicism as identity

In the context of Turkey, the adjective secular (*laik* in Turkish) became the identity of the ruling elite. This “*laik*” identity consists of being progressive (faith in science), modern (i.e., European), and nationalist (Turkish). This “laicism” constituted the hegemonic ideology and informed state policies. In fact, laicism is the *identity* of the ruling elite, the *ideology* of national-security state with a built-in code of violence to exclude anyone who does not fit the state’s definition of a “*laik* Turk.” Due to these exclusionary practices of “laicism” in Turkey, it has very little moral power to guide political action. In the context of Turkey, unlike the United States, the secular values and forms of identities are affirmed as an ultimate and alternative faith in opposition to religion. For instance, in Turkey morality, or moral conduct is the preserve of the family, neighborhood and community; whereas the political domain is regarded as the space of dirty tricks and duplicity. This moral emptiness of the political domain became the source of corruption. The Turks equate secularism with the domain of politics and the state; and thus it did not fully penetrate everyday interactions and regulations. Religion remains the source of family, neighborhood and community interactions. People are expected to be honest and rule-bound within their families, neighborhoods and community but not in politics or in the state. This sharp division between moral community and the dirty politics is the source of many problems in Turkey. The most

²⁵ Only with the democratization and the evolution of the market conditions that the Turks gradually overcoming these divisions.

important division emerged between European and local life style in terms of “*ala franga* vs. *ala turca*.” The last division is most important and significant since it punctuated everyday life. This includes lifestyles, dress code, taste in music, art, and ritual cleanliness, and the type of furniture one seeks to own. Thus, almost all Turkish homes are divided between a sitting room, where full privacy is practiced and preserved, and a European “salon”, where guests were welcomed and served according to formal rules. Both rooms require separate furniture, code of conduct, and clothing. So, almost all Turks learn to live in a hybrid world of European and Muslim forms of conduct. In other words, Turkish modernity created a possibility of sharing European and Muslim identity at the same time.

In so far Islam has been the constitutive framework and the source of ethics in Turkey, the idea of secularism, which does not include a similar ethical charter, remains an “alien” ideology and so does the “identity” of the ruling elite in Turkey.²⁶ In short, it is the ideology of the self-declared westernized elite to maintain their privileged position through the means of the state. Although the antonym of secular is religious, in recent years it is “opposition to hegemonic order.” Secularism in the Turkish context means excessive state penetration into everyday life and a means to justify the exclusion of ethnic, religious or regional difference. The Kemalist project of nationalism and secularism helped to construct an “oppositional and ideologicized Islam.” Thus, religious revival becomes the internal dialectic of the Kemalist modernity.

The Evolution of Islamic Social Movement 1950-1980

Although the Turkish state has always tried to use Islam for its own goals, it never allowed the free expression of religion and religious practices. The Turkish Republic established the Directorate of Religious Affairs to “administer and regulate” people’s religious needs and affairs in the public sphere. By not allowing society to regulate its own religious affairs, the Republic prevented the emergence of an alternative vision of Islam and banned all civil society based religious networks. This skepticism, or

²⁶ Taylor aptly argues that “an authoritarian programme designed to diminish the hold of religion on the masses, as in Turkey under Atatürk, or China under Mao” does not bring peace and stability. “Modes,” p. 37.

fear of society, was the major feature of the Kemalist project to create a secular nation-state. With the socio-economic transformation of the society, new political, economic and cultural “opportunity spaces” emerged.²⁷ These new spaces of political parties, actions groups, associations, reading circles, newspapers, market and fashion shows became sites of contestation and negotiation of Islam with modern lifeworlds. Since Islam has been the major source of the constitution of the self, religion increasingly became more important in the new urban spaces. As a result of the Turkish experiment of modernity, a number of religious, ethnic, and ideological movements have punctuated Turkish political history. The most powerful claim-making movement has been the Islamic movement, along with Kurdish ethnonationalism.²⁸ In short, the structural transformation (urbanization, industrialization, and education) empowered the marginalized sector of the Turkish society and facilitated their return to politics, economy, and education. The return of religious activism and religiously framed movement is not a fearsome “return of the repressed” but rather an attempt to *vernacularize modernity*.

This contemporary religious activism is an outcome of four interrelated socio-economic processes: geographic mobility of the population to new urban centers; the expansion of mass education, which led to the questioning of the state ideology and access to diverse reading sources; political participation, and utilization of religious networks for political purposes; and search for new values to cope with modern challenges of identity and morality. Since everyday life, community action, and the constitution of the self are organized by Islam, these new “opportunity spaces” of political action groups, markets, foundations, media networks, and cultural associations helped Muslims to live as “conscious Muslims.” Islam, just like other religions, became a moral framework within which to discuss identity and justice in society.

In the 1960s, as a result of economic development and the new legal framework of the 1961 Constitution, which created a number of legal spaces as rights, a new set of agents of modernity emerged. Kemalism, which only sees the state-guided reforms as

²⁷ For more on the opportunity spaces, see my “A Typology of Islamic Social Movements: The Opportunity Spaces and the Case of Turkey.”

modern, did not know what to do and how to respond to these new societal actors. The major issue was: who should define what institution, dresscode or practice as “modern.” The Democratic Party (DP), which came to power after the transition to a multi party system, in 1950, identified the newly emerging bourgeoisie as the agent of modernity. The major feature of the DP that differentiated it from the People’s Republican Party of Mustafa Kemal was its recognition of the societal forces as the agent of modernity and change. Indeed, Kemalism, the identity of the self-declared guardian of the Republic, became very suspicious of empowering society and ended the DP government with bloodshed by hanging the Prime Minister and two prominent ministers. Thus, top-down versus bottom up modernization was the major source of breakdown in the 1960 coup.

The economic and social changes forced the Kemalist guard to give up its dream of creating a “classless society” and redefining Kemalism as the national security ideology of the state. Its main goal became the protection of the state and its purity against societal penetrations. Thus, in response to newly emerging social and political actors, Kemalism became a more conservative ideology to protect the state against assertive religious and ethnic identities. In the 1960s and 70s, the leftist intellectuals, grouped around weekly *YÖN* magazine, redefined Kemalism as an anti-imperialist and “national liberation” movement.²⁹ This group stressed the statism aspect of Kemalism and sought to consolidate state power against bourgeoisie. The deep division and radical politicization of society in terms of left vs. right, Alevi vs. Sunni, and Turk vs. Kurd, dominated the 1970s. The extremist leftist movements and Kurdish nationalism started to undermine the security and stability of society. Turkey became a battle ground in the second half of the 1970s and over 4 thousand people were killed. The military intervened to stop the fragmentation of the state in 1980. The multiparty system in Turkey created new political spaces for Islamic movements to work closely with the political parties. The Cold War and the communist movement in Turkey forced the state to use Islamic movements as an antidote to the left. These two factors: the deepening of electoral democracy and “the repression of democratic leftist forces” created political opportunities

²⁸ M. Hakan Yavuz, “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 7, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 1-24.

²⁹ Hikmet Özdemir, *1960'lar Turkiyesinde Sol Kemalizm yön hareketi* (Istanbul: İz, 1993).

for Islamic movements.³⁰ The 1980 military coup disrupted existing power arrangements and created opportunities for new actors who desired to restructure power relations and the distribution of resources.

On 12 September 1980, when the Turkish generals intervened to stop escalating left-right violence and a growing leftist movement, they not only utilized Islam as an antidote to communist movements but as a resource to mold a more obedient generation.³¹ Turkey's excluded groups were all mobilized during the 1983 elections to benefit from the new political opening since the state identified the leftist forces as the threat to national security. Those historically excluded groups activated their indigenous religious networks, such as the Naksibendis and the Nurcus, to seize material and cultural rewards. Between 1983-1990, religious networks were mobilized to offer welfare services, communal solidarity, and mobility to those newly educated classes and businesses. Özal's legal openings in terms of expanding the freedom of association, speech, and assembly removed the state monopoly over broadcasting system and further facilitated the communication and dissemination of local and global idioms. As a result of these factors, Islamic movements constructed an activist "consciousness" to shape the socio-political landscape of Turkey.

The "modernizing" Republic had full official control over education and telecommunication until the early 1990s. This enabled the state to organize and monitor the public sphere to insure it was adhering to the official national (i.e., Turkish) and secular (i.e., European) identity. Moreover, the state used high tariffs to create a pro-statist secular, not necessarily national, bourgeoisie by implementing exclusivist policies against Armenian, Greek, and Jewish merchants who hitherto, with the aid of Western imperial powers, had dominated trade in the Ottoman state. Although the formation of a

³⁰ Paul Lubeck, "Antinomies of Islamic Movements under Globalization," CGIRS Working Paper Series, 2001, p. 4.

³¹ The legal structure of the transitional period and the Constitution of 1982, like the 1980 Chilean Constitution, created many "authoritarian spaces" against full democratization. The National Security Council, which consists of the general staff, the ministers of national defense, internal affairs, and foreign policy, the commanders of the army, navy, and air force, and the gendarmerie, under the chairmanship of the president, has constitutional authority to make decisions on all national security related matters.

culturally diverse bourgeoisie began in the late 1960s, the economic policies following the 1980 military coup, which were implemented by Turgut Özal, helped the crystallization and expansion of a counter-cultural bourgeoisie class with Anatolian roots. In the 1980s and 1990s, Özal's free market policies were supported by small-scale provincial businessmen and the petite bourgeoisie of the cities. This sector, which includes peddlers, dealers, builders, restaurant owners, small and mid-size industrialists and food-processors, receives no public funding and thus opposes state intervention in the economy in favor of economic liberalization. Özal was a member of the Iskenderpasa Naksibendi Sufi order and he in particular promoted those of Anatolian origin who had close ties to such Islamic circles.³²

There are three interrelated reasons for the growing influence of Islamic discourses in the late 1980s.³³ First, Islamic discourse has produced a new vision of identity that is composed of national and religious symbols. Second, it managed to disseminate its cluster of ideas by combining the virtues of the oral patterns of cultural production within the broader print culture and mass media. Third, it developed intimate ties with the Anatolian bourgeoisie. Muslim entrepreneurs, who were not dependent on state subsidies and who were concentrated in foreign exchange earning export industries like food processing and textiles, were particularly well placed to prosper in this period. This economic elite funded many prominent new publications including *Türkiye, Zaman* and *Yeni Safak* newspapers and many national and regional TV stations. The neo-liberal economic policies of Özal have created and enlarged space in which people can establish new contractual ties and has incorporated a large segment of the population into economic and political spaces. Therefore, neo-liberalism, by creating gaps between the rich and poor and spaces between religious and secular groups, has led to a more pluralist society marked by differences rather than by unity. The economic liberalization and growth of the Özal period has created a dynamic Anatolian entrepreneurial class and

Moreover, the Council of Ministers "shall give priority considerations to the decisions of the Council." (See the Article of 118 of the 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey.)
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³³ Resat Kasaba, "Cohabitation? Islamist and Secular Groups in Modern Turkey," in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Democratic Civility: The History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Ideal* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998) pp. 265-282.

numerous opportunity spaces such as independent newspapers and television channels, which cannot effectively be muzzled in their demands that the political sphere be broadened. This transformation became a source of fear for the hegemonic elite.³⁴

Privatization of the Public Sphere: The process of de-secularization

In the case of Turkey, Özal's neo-liberal economic policies, and political liberalization, along with the introduction of new media technologies, a complex religious "market" has evolved in Turkey. In this expanding religious "market," Naksibendi orders and the Nur movement, along with the politically active National Outlook Movement of Necmettin Erbakan, start to compete over the "true" meaning and proper "action" of Islam. One of the major impacts is the simultaneous process of pluralization and expansion of Islam in public spaces. Just like other markets the religious one consists of diverse buyers and a set of firms seeking to serve potential customers. We are not only witnessing the transformation and pluralization of the religious sphere but most importantly the expansion of religious idioms and networks to other spheres of life such as the market, economy, media, and charity.

The groups which benefited the most from this political and economic liberalization has been the Nur movement of Fethullah Gülen. Fethullah Gülen, one of the most influential Muslim leaders of Turkey, utilized the ideas of Nursi to establish an extensive education system. This neo-Nur faith-based movement focuses on identity and ethics to overcome the normative conflict in Turkey. A closer examination indicates that Islam, for the Nur movement, constitutes a "social capital" that is mobilized for diverse instrumental ends. The Nur movement puts Islam into use by providing values and norms that channel conduct in a certain direction; promotes the circulation of information

³⁴ The "soft coup" launched against the Refah party is just the latest in a cyclical series of such interventions by the Kemalist establishment to suppress civil society. The greatest threat to this autocracy composed of bureaucrats, generals, state supported industrialists such as the Koç group, and their media outlets are not Muslim politicians or Kurdish activists but the prospects of political liberalization which would curtail their sweeping powers. It is questionable, however, how long this counter-attack against civil society and liberalization can be sustained as it faces a law of diminishing returns.

and knowledge, and shapes long-term interaction within the framework of trust and mutual obligation. By using new structural opportunities in the market and society, the Nur movement is creating its own vernacular modernity by directly addressing the needs that are ignored by the Kemalist ideology and state structure.

The case of Turkey indicates that secularism should not be always read as the telos of development and modernity. It does not always evolve with modernity, development, rationality and emancipation. Jose Casanova's path breaking comparative historical sociology of religious movements demonstrates that not all religious movements are fundamentalist but rather some are tied to democratization, social justice and leftist agendas.

“Throughout the decade religion showed its Janus face, as the carrier not only of exclusive, particularist, and primordial identities but also of inclusive, universalist, and transcending ones. The religious revival signaled simultaneously the rise of fundamentalism and of its role in the resistance of the oppressed and the rise of the ‘powerless.’”³⁵

The case of Turkey endorses Casanova's conclusion that (a) not all religious expressions are conservative; (b) the domain of religion is not a permanent fixed site of particularism and exclusiveness; and (c) the de-privatization of religion is the dominant trend in some countries. Indeed, in modern societies religion “finds refuge in the newly found private sphere.”³⁶ However, it is in this “private sphere” where religious activism is charged and extended to the public sphere. Modernity did not create a sharp division between public and private but rather created a contingent and flexible boundary where private becomes public or vice versa. Increasing penetration of the state and market forces activated a religious charter to defend the lifeworld against colonization and to protect human dignity.³⁷ The public “focus of [religions] is no longer the state but, rather, civil society.”³⁸

³⁵ *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994),

p..

³⁶ Casanova, *Public*, p. 40.

³⁷ Casanova, *Public*, p. 228-229.

³⁸ Casanova, *Public*, p. 63.

The study of the Gülen movement reveals not only the processes of “de-privatization” of Islam but also its increasing “publicness” in modern Turkish society. The Gülen movement indicates the social and political conditions under which faith becomes a source of social capital to empower society. The articles in this book adopt a bottom up approach by focusing on different sites of interactions such as education, media, economics, and civic associations in terms of recording events.