Potret Pemikiran

From Secularism to Islamism: A Portrait of Minority Dynamics in Turkey's Changing Political Landscape

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the evolving dynamics of minority groups within Turkey's shifting political landscape, from Atatürk's secular reforms to the rise of Islamist ideology under Erdoğan's leadership. It traces Turkey's political transformation from the decline of the Ottoman Empire through the establishment of a secular republic and the recent resurgence of Islamic influence in governance. The research employs qualitative methods, including historical analysis and case studies, to explore how these political shifts have impacted minority rights, cultural expressions, and societal integration. Findings reveal that both secularization and Islamization processes have presented challenges for minority communities, albeit in different ways. The study highlights the ongoing tension between modernization, traditional values, and religious identity in shaping Turkey's national character and its treatment of minority groups. This research contributes to broader discussions on the role of religion in public life, the limits of secularism, and the complexities of managing diversity in modern nation-states.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

How to cite:

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of Turkey's political development reflects the dynamic changes in the relationship between religion and state in the Islamic world (Albayrak, 2019; Kuru & Stepan, 2012; Şentürk, 2014). From the 7th to the 13th centuries, Islam experienced a golden age with significant advancements in various fields (Renima et al., 2016). During this period, the majority of classical Islamic political scholars viewed religion and state as inseparable entities (Axiarlis, 2014; Dalacoura, 2019). This perspective saw Islam not merely as a set of spiritual guidelines, but as a comprehensive system for organizing society and governance (Dorroll, 2014; Valk et al., 2017; Yavuz, 2020). The concept of the caliphate, spanning from the time of Abu Bakr as-Sidiq to the end of the Ottoman Empire, embodied this fusion of religious and political authority (Khaleel, 2016). The ulama played a crucial role in legitimizing and maintaining the caliph's position, exemplifying the symbiotic relationship between political and religious spheres in classical Islamic thought (Acar, 2019; Sacmali, 2021).

Entering the 19th century, the Islamic world faced a significant turning point (Islahi & Islahi, 2015). Western powers began to colonize Muslim-majority territories, bringing not only industrial and technological advancements but also new ideological concepts, including secularism (Olivier & Olivier, 2020). This period of colonization coincided with a decline in Islamic political and economic power, challenging traditional notions of Islamic governance and sparking debates about modernization and reform within Muslim societies (Becker et al., 2021). The Ottoman Empire, long considered the bastion of Islamic political authority (Melvin-Koushki, 2018), found itself increasingly unable to compete with Western powers, leading to a series of reforms aimed at modernization but often at odds with traditional Islamic governance structures (Bari, 2019; Cornell, 2014).

The culmination of these trends came with the actions of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey (Rustow, 2016). On March 3, 1924, Atatürk officially abolished the caliphate, sending shockwaves through the Islamic world and fundamentally altering the course of Turkish history (Κουτσουράς, 2019). This move was part of a broader secularization campaign that included the elimination of religious authority from governance, the banning of religious symbols like the headscarf in public institutions, the replacement of Arabic script with Latin alphabet, and the substitution of the Arabic call to prayer with a Turkish version (Göl, 2017). Atatürk's reforms were predicated on the belief that Islam's involvement in public and political spheres had contributed to its decline, and that secularization was necessary for Turkey to modernize and compete with Western nations (Cloudsley, 2014).

Under Atatürk's leadership, Turkey proclaimed itself a secular state, with the government asserting control over religious affairs (Cloudsley, 2014). This model of secularism was distinctive in that it did not merely separate religion from state affairs but placed religious institutions under state control (Al Faruki & Siddiky, 2017). Atatürk viewed this form of secularism as essential for Turkey's progress and its alignment with Western, particularly European, standards of modernity (Çinar, 2020). The military, which Atatürk had carefully cultivated as a guardian of secular principles, played a crucial role in enforcing and maintaining this new order (Onar et

al., 2014), often intervening in politics to protect the secular constitution from perceived religious threats (Adar & Seufert, 2021).

In subsequent developments, the study of Turkey's transition from an Islamic empire to a secular republic has produced extensive and diverse literature. Scholars have examined this transformation from various angles, including political science, sociology, and religious studies. Several seminal works have provided comprehensive analyses of the historical processes that led to the establishment of the secular Turkish state. These views challenge simplistic narratives of Atatürk as the sole architect of Turkish secularism, placing his reforms in a broader historical context. Recent studies have focused on the complexities and contradictions within Turkish secularism, exploring how Turkish nationalism, often presented as secular, has always been intertwined with Islamic identity. These arguments suggest that the seemingly clear-cut division between secularism and Islamism in Turkey is, in fact, much more blurred, with many Turks' embracing a form of "Muslim nationalism" that combines elements of both.

However, the process of Islamization in Turkey began to gain momentum in the latter half of the 20th century, culminating in the rise of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the early 2000s. This shift was preceded by the efforts of Islamic-oriented political figures such as Necmettin Erbakan, who challenged the secular establishment in the 1990s. Erdogan's ascent to power marked a significant turning point in Turkish politics, as he skillfully navigated the complex terrain between Turkey's secular institutions and its Islamic heritage. Under Erdogan's leadership, Turkey has witnessed a gradual but steady reintegration of Islamic principles into public life, including the lifting of the headscarf ban in public institutions, increased support for religious education, and a more assertive role for Turkey in the Muslim world. This process of re-Islamization has been accompanied by significant economic growth and political reforms, allowing Erdogan to maintain broad popular support despite growing concerns about authoritarianism and the erosion of secular safeguards. The Erdogan era thus represents a complex renegotiation of Turkey's identity, balancing its Ottoman and Islamic past with its aspirations for modernity and regional influence (Tamadonfar & Lewis, 2024; Vidotto, 2022).

In subsequent developments, the study of Turkey's transition from an Islamic empire to a secular republic, and then to its current state under Erdogan, has produced extensive and diverse literature (Göl, 2017). Scholars such as Adar and Seufert (2021), Azgın (2020), Çinar (2020), Dogan (2017), and Onar et al. (2014) have examined this transformation from various angles, including political science, sociology, and religious studies. Several seminal works have provided comprehensive analyses of the historical processes that led to the establishment of the secular Turkish state and its subsequent evolution (CSahin, 2020). These views challenge simplistic narratives of Turkey's political development, placing reforms and changes in a broader historical context. Recent studies have focused on the complexities and contradictions within Turkish secularism and the resurgence of Islamic politics, exploring how Turkish nationalism, often presented as secular, has always been intertwined with Islamic

identity. These arguments suggest that the seemingly clear-cut division between secularism and Islamism in Turkey is, in fact, much more blurred, with many Turks embracing a form of "Muslim nationalism" that combines elements of both.

Current research on Turkish political development increasingly recognizes the need for more nuanced approaches that move beyond binary oppositions of secularism and Islamism (Agbaria, 2018; Gulmez et al., 2023; Judge, 2020). Recent studies have begun to explore the ways in which secular and religious discourses in Turkey have influenced and shaped each other, rather than existing as entirely separate or antagonistic forces (Sørensen, 2012; Warhola & Bezci, 2010). Some researchers have examined how the interplay between secular and religious politics has shaped Turkey's democratic trajectory, arguing that the country's political development cannot be understood through the lens of secularization or Islamization alone (Gulmez et al., 2023; March, 2015). Additionally, focus on grassroots movements and social dynamics that have facilitated the rise of political Islam within the context of a nominally secular state has provided new insights into the complex negotiations between religious and secular actors in Turkish civil society (Marshy, 2005).

This research aims to provide a more comprehensive perspective by tracing the evolution of Turkish politics from the Ottoman era through to the contemporary period under Erdogan's leadership. By examining the continuities and ruptures in Turkish political thought and practice across different regimes, from the late Ottoman reforms through Atatürk's radical secularization to the more recent resurgence of Islamic politics under Erdogan, this study offers new insights into the ongoing negotiation between secular and religious ideologies in Turkish public life. Furthermore, the research's focus on the role of minority dynamics within these shifting political landscapes adds a crucial dimension often overlooked in broader historical narratives.

Despite extensive research on Turkish politics and secularism, significant gaps remain in our understanding of how these historical processes have affected different segments of Turkish society, particularly minority groups. While much attention has been paid to the high-level political struggles between secularists and Islamists, less research has focused on how these ideological shifts have impacted the daily lives and identities of Turkey's diverse ethnic and religious communities. Additionally, there is a need for more comparative work that situates Turkey's unique experience within broader global trends of secularization and religious resurgence. This study aims to address these gaps by providing a more inclusive analysis that considers the perspectives and experiences of minority groups throughout Turkey's political transformations, while also drawing connections to similar processes in other post-imperial, Muslim-majority states.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to highlight the complex dynamics of secularism, religion, and national identity in modern nation-states. Turkey's experience offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by countries attempting to navigate between religious traditions and secular modernity. By examining how Turkey has grappled with these issues over time, this study can contribute to broader discussions about the role of religion in public life, the limits and possibilities of secularism, and the ways in which diverse societies manage

competing claims to national identity and political legitimacy. Furthermore, understanding Turkey's political evolution is crucial for comprehending contemporary geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East and Europe, as Turkey continues to play a pivotal role as a bridge between these regions.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach (Khan, 2014; Mohajan, 2018; M. S. Rahman, 2020) to examine the dynamics of minority groups within Turkey's changing political landscape, from Atatürk's secularism to the rise of Islamist thought under Erdoğan's leadership. The research design combines historical analysis and contemporary case studies to provide a nuanced understanding of how these political shifts have affected minority communities.

Data collection primarily involves an extensive literature review of academic articles, books, historical documents, and policy statements related to Turkey's political evolution and its impact on minority groups (Mohajan, 2018). This is supplemented by a critical discourse analysis of political speeches, media representations, and educational materials to examine how minority identities and rights have been framed and addressed across different political eras (Negrón-Gonzales, 2016).

This study explores the experiences of key minority groups such as Alevis, Kurds, and non-Muslim communities, analyzing how their status, rights, and societal position have changed from the secular republic to the current Erdogan government. The analysis centers on how the transition from secular to Islamist-leaning policies has affected minority rights, cultural expressions, and political participation.

The research examines the legal, educational, and social policy changes that have particularly impacted minority communities. It acknowledges limitations such as potential biases in historical sources and the challenges of representing diverse minority experiences through literature alone.

By employing this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive portrait of minority dynamics within Turkey's changing political landscape, highlighting both the continuities and ruptures in minority experiences as Turkey navigates between secularism and Islamism.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Decline of the Ottoman Empire: A Historical Overview

The Ottoman Empire, like most Islamic kingdoms, followed a typical pattern of expansion, zenith, decline, and ultimate destruction. Founded by Osman I in the late 13th century, the empire experienced rapid growth under Sultan Mehmed II (the Conqueror) in the 15th century, reached its apex under Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century, before finally entering a prolonged period of decline (May, 2006). This historical trajectory reflects a cycle common to many great empires throughout history.

The rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire is a compelling narrative that mirrors the cyclical patterns observed in many of the world's most powerful empires. Founded by Osman I in the late 13th century, the Ottomans quickly established themselves as a formidable force in the region. Their success was fueled by a combination of military prowess, strategic alliances, and the unifying force of Islam, which provided a cohesive ideological framework for the expanding empire. Under the leadership of Sultan Mehmed II, known as Mehmed the Conqueror, the empire achieved one of its most significant milestones—the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. This victory not only marked the end of the Byzantine Empire but also signaled the beginning of the Ottomans' dominance over Southeastern Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa.

The Ottoman Empire's zenith came during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century. Suleiman's rule was characterized by extensive territorial expansion, military victories, and an era of unprecedented cultural and architectural achievements. The empire became a beacon of Islamic civilization, with its influence extending across vast territories. The legal reforms and administrative structures implemented during Suleiman's reign ensured a degree of stability and governance that allowed the empire to thrive. This period also witnessed a flourishing of arts, literature, and science, solidifying the Ottomans' reputation as not just conquerors, but also patrons of culture and knowledge.

However, like many great empires, the Ottoman Empire eventually entered a period of decline. Historians often attribute this decline to a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, the empire faced challenges such as administrative corruption, economic difficulties, and the weakening of the central authority. The system of succession, which often led to power struggles among potential heirs, further destabilized the empire. Externally, the rise of European powers and the shifting balance of power in the region put the Ottomans at a disadvantage. The defeat at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 and the failed siege of Vienna in 1683 are often cited as turning points that marked the beginning of the empire's long decline.

Many historians identify the death of Sultan Selim II in 1574 as the inception of the Ottoman Empire's decline (Evrensel & Minx, 2017; Fanani, 2011; Lewis, 1962). The period following Selim II's reign was characterized by a lack of strong and effective leadership from subsequent sultans. This weakness became increasingly apparent as the empire faced new challenges from rising European powers.

One significant blow to Ottoman power occurred in 1571 when the Ottoman fleet, under the command of Kaptan Pasha Ali, suffered a decisive defeat against the combined Christian fleet led by Don Juan of Austria in the Battle of Lepanto (Fields, 2020, 2021; Walsh, 2015). This engagement not only resulted in the destruction of much of the Ottoman fleet but also marked the end of Ottoman dominance in the Mediterranean Sea. Although the Ottomans managed to rebuild their fleet rapidly, the event demonstrated that the empire was no longer invincible at sea.

While Ottoman land forces remained feared in Europe for some time after Lepanto, their defeat in the Second Siege of Vienna in 1683 marked a decisive turning point. The Ottoman failure to capture the Habsburg capital, led by Kara Mustafa Paşha, was not only a major military defeat but also signaled the end of Ottoman expansion into Central Europe (Ágoston, 2021; Hötte, 2015; Michels, 2019). This defeat was

exacerbated by the strong coalition between the Habsburg Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and other Christian states, demonstrating the increasing strength of European alliances against the Ottomans.

This series of military defeats, combined with internal exhaustion and the strengthening of alliances among European powers, forced the Ottoman Empire to increasingly seek peace or sign treaties with its enemies. One of the most significant was the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, which ended the Great Holy War (1683-1697). This treaty required the Ottomans to cede significant territories including Hungary, Transylvania, and most of Slavonia and Podolia to the Habsburgs and Poland-Lithuania (Ahmad, 2005; V. Aksan, 2021b; V. H. Aksan, 1993; Davison, 1990; Hötte, 2015; Mitev, 2010). It marked the first time the Ottomans were forced to surrender significant territory to their Christian adversaries.

Despite these treaties, conflicts between the Ottomans and European powers, particularly the rising Russia, continued (Reynolds, 2011). Throughout the 18th century, Russia gradually expanded its territory southward, taking over areas previously controlled by the Ottomans or their allies (Ágoston, 2011; Kollmann, 2016). The Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 ended in a decisive defeat for the Ottomans, followed by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 (V. Aksan, 2021a; V. H. Aksan, 2011). This treaty not only forced the Ottomans to cede vast territories to Russia but also recognized the independence of Crimea, which soon fell into the Russian orbit (Bodger, 2005; Ostapchuk, 2013; Taki, 2015).

This series of defeats and territorial concessions illustrates the gradual decline of Ottoman power and its inability to keep pace with European technological and military organizational advancements. Internal factors such as corruption, inefficient governance, and the inability to implement necessary reforms also contributed to the empire's decline (Brisku, 2017; Duranoglu & Okutucu, 2009). Although the Ottomans would persist until the early 20th century, the foundations of their power had been significantly eroded by the end of the 18th century, transforming them from a feared power to the "sick man of Europe".

Mustafa Kemal Attatur and his Secularist Thought

Turkey's reforms predate Ataturk by several centuries, having been implemented by generations of Turks. before the reforms of Ataturk. The Turkish generation carried out reforms in the military, administration, economic, social, and religious spheres during the Tanzimat era, which spanned 1839 to 1876 AD. The Tanzimat program, which they viewed as being indifferent to social and religious needs, sparked the Young Ottoman era in 1876 AD, which spanned from the 1860s to the 1870s. a new generation of young Turks emerged by the end of the 1880s, one that was indifferent to social and religious obligations. This new generation of Turks called themselves (Ottoman Society for Union and Progress). This group ostensibly defending the continuity of the Ottoman empire, but they were explicitly agitated for the restoration of the Parliamentary and constitutional regime (Al-Usyairi, 2004).

One could view Ataturk's Turkish revival philosophy as a synthesis of the three earlier generations of Turks' ideas. Actually, the idea of Turkish renewal thought as it

is portrayed in the national framework of Turkish society today is essentially a distillation of the ideas of Ziya Gokalp, a Turkish scholar who is regarded as the founder of Turkish nationalism. Upon being posted to Sofia in 1913 AD as a military attaché, Ataturk's Principle of Renewal Thought got its start. military attaché in Sofia in 1913. It was at this point that he was introduced to Western culture, specifically the concept of parliament. Turkish nationalism, secularism, and westernism comprised the three pillars of Turkish renewal thinking, which subsequently became his philosophy. The Western World (Nasution, 1982).

From the three principles above, the ideology of Kemalism was born, which consists of: republicanism, nationalism, populism (populism), laism (secularism), etatism (statehood), and reformism (reformism). (statehood), and reformism (Esposito, 2001). The ideology associated with the figure of Musthafa Kemal then flourished in Turkey and was developed by his followers and judging from the above developments, the Republic of Turkey is a secular state. Nevertheless, Ataturk did not establish a fully secular state. As a nationalist supporter of the west who desired the advancement of Islam, Ataturk believed that religious changes were required to make religious laws more appropriate for the Turkish environment. Islam is a reasonable religion that humanity needs, but the clerics of that era corrupted it. As a result, he established a secular state structure and focused his secularization efforts on removing the religious class's influence over matters of politics and the state. Religion and the state must be kept apart (Sunanto, 2007).

According to Alfan Firmanto's (2005) view, the secularization process started with the French Revolution. Firmanto in his thesis, religious establishments were among the revolutionary regime's first casualties at that point. The reason religious institutions are employed as emblems of the previous regimes is that religion and political authority have a very intimate relationship, especially in traditional countries. Similar to Ataturk's belief that religion was a way of thinking that upheld the institutional and structural order of the previous regime and resisted the changes advocated by the revolutionary movement, secularization became a crucial component of his reforms to the Turkish government (Toprak, 1999)

As a legal term with multiple components, secularism possesses various features, including being one of the fundamental principles of the Turkish republic's constitution. 1) In a secular state, the state is in charge of ensuring that each individual is free to practice any religion in accordance with their conscience and also of shielding its citizens from pressure and compulsion from other faiths. is charge of shielding its people from religious compulsion and other forms of duress. Alfan Firmanto used this passage from Article 19, Paragraph 3 of the Republic of Turkey's 1961 Constitution as support for his theory. 2) The 1961 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, article 19, paragraph 5, states that the misuse and exploitation of religion or religious sentiments for political or personal gain, or for social, economic, political purposes, or the basis of a juridical structure for a state based on religion is against secularism. 3) In a secular state, educational institutions and their curricula cannot be based on religious rules. This is mentioned in the constitutional law of the republic of Turkey of 1961, article 19, paragraphs 4 and 21 (Firmanto, 2005).

The idea that Islam had a conservative influence on the Ottoman Turkish Empire's political system was the fundamental source of Ataturk's criticism of Islam. Ataturk interpreted conservatism as anti-Westernization, despite the fact that he associated secularization with westernization. Since Ataturk believed that conservatism was a type of westernization, the secularization program seeks to oppose it. This makes sense if westernization was the revolution's driving force. oppose the conservatism he saw Islam to be the source of. Thus, Islam's influence in institutions, society, and politics was intended to be diminished through the secularization process of Ataturk's reform movement. Cultural, social, and institutional life.

According to Binnaz Toprak, Turkey's secularization program went through four stages, including (Toprak, 1999): First, secularization in symbolism. I.e., revitalization achieved through incorporating Islamic symbolic identity into national culture or social life. or an Islamic symbolic identity in social life. For instance, the Arabic and Persian terms that had been assimilated over the ages were replaced with Turkish words when the script switched from Arabic to Latin in 1928 AD. Consequently, the call to prayer was made without the usage of Arabic. Some instances include the adoption of Western-style attire and headgear in 1925 CE, the shifting of national holidays from Friday to Sunday in 1935 CE, and so on.

The second is the secularization of institutions. That is, modifications to organizational structures intended to undermine Islam's institutional dominance. For instance, the Caliphate and sultanate were abolished in 1924 CE, and the positions of Syaikhu al-Islam and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Waqf were abolished as well. In 1928, the article designating Islam as the official state religion was abolished.

The third is secularization with functionality. That is, altering the designated roles in institutions of government and religion. The reform of the legal field demonstrates this. The Tanzimat period, which preceded the republic and saw the first implementation of legal reforms, saw the beginning of legal reform at a time when prior legal products were still founded on Islam. After Tanzimat, the earliest legal codification, several secular laws pertaining to trade and commerce were passed in the ensuing years. Islamic law was supplemented by a number of secular laws in the areas of commerce, penal law, and civil law. to supplement the laws of Islam. Secular courts were also set up at the same time to enforce the new legislation. The shari'ah courts were ultimately eliminated and incorporated into the legal system in 1924 CE. were ultimately eliminated and integrated into the legal system, falling under the purview of the Ministry of Justice. Additionally, the Shari'ah courts were established, and secular laws were fully enforced. Governments have not been the only institutions to undergo functional modifications. During the Tanzimat period, for example, and in the years that followed, a large number of secular schools have grown to accommodate students pursuing degrees in the military, engineering, and medical sectors. Additionally, a law pertaining to education was passed in 1924 AD, effectively placing the Ministry of Education in charge of all schools. The Ministry of Education was in charge of schools. The Ministries of Religious Affairs and Waqf had formerly overseen schools; but, after a merger, the Ministry of Education assumed control over all of them.

Fourth, secularization by law. This is a shift in society's legal framework. With a legal framework that does away with rules and regulations based on religion, this secularization is carried out to increase symbolic, institutional, and functional secularization. functional secularization, removing rules and regulations based on religion from the legal system. In an attempt to create completely new secular legislation, the Ataturk government formed special commissions in 1922 and 1923. However, due to the heavy influence of religious laws, the project was discontinued and instead the government adopted the Swiss Civil Code, the Italian Criminal Code and the German Commercial Code, with minor changes. These changes included: a). Individual freedom to choose one's religion, while in Islam there is a strict prohibition against leaving Islam, the perpetrator of which is even punishable by death. b). Legal marriages must be registered with the civil authorities. c). The principle of marriage is monogamy, while in Islam polygamy is allowed. d). In Islamic law the right of divorce is only with the husband, whereas in the new law the wife has equal rights in divorce. e). In Islam, only Muslim men can marry women of different religions. In the new law this regulation is abolished. f). The right to care for children by their parents is the same for both men and women. g). In Islam, the share of inheritance for men is greater than for women, whereas in the new law both have the same rights (Firmanto, 2005).

Recall, however, that Ataturk's conception of Westernism actually implies the secularist premise. Ataturk's westernism. Ataturk's interpretation holds that secularism not only limits the influence of religion on state affairs (legislative, executive, and judicial), but it also minimizes its role in Turks' daily lives as a people. the significance of religion in Turks' collective lives. Secularism during the Ottoman era was more of an opposition to nearly anything that was in vogue. Still, but religion was not completely eradicated by secularization. The secularization process The sole purpose of secularization was to remove the ulama's role and influence in politics and power. authority, such that religiously motivated political parties—such as the Christian Party and the Islamic Party—were outlawed. Parties representing Islam, Christianity, and so on. Due to the fact that Ataturk's secularism merely sought to keep Islam from being exploited as a political instrument or as a means of defending political programs, it was able to function as a religion that is genuinely apart from world affairs. Because the use of religion as a political tool was deemed unreasonable by Ataturk's secularist principles. It is crucial to remember that Ataturk's secularism was not prompted by anti-Islamic or atheist sentiments. negative opinions on Islam. since Ataturk was a person who always proclaimed his adherence to Islam. to the Islamic faith. This can be seen for example in 1923 AD, he stated:

"Our religion (Islam) is the most reasonable and natural religion. That is why, our religion is the ultimate religion. A natural religion must be in accordance with reason, science science, technology and logic. And our religion does fulfill that requirement."(Anwar, 1989)

Political changes in Turkey, especially under the leadership of Atatürk and Erdogan, have had significant impacts on society, particularly on minority groups. During Atatürk's era, the drastic implementation of secularization altered social and political structures, affecting the lives of minority groups (Hudda, 2013). For example, the abolition of the caliphate and sultanate, along with legal reforms that replaced

Islamic law with secular legislation, impacted many minority communities that previously held important roles in the Ottoman religious and social structure. Minority groups such as Christians and Jews experienced changes in their rights and social roles. These reforms, while aimed at modernization and eliminating religious dominance, sometimes led to tensions and a sense of marginalization among minorities who felt they were losing their rights and identity (Idi, 2018).

In the context of Erdogan, the phase of Islamization brought different impacts. Policies supporting the wearing of hijab and the reinforcement of Islamic values in public life represent a significant shift in the country's orientation. While these policies might be accepted by a large segment of Turkey's Muslim population, minority groups such as Alevis, Christians, and other non-Muslims often feel marginalized and experience a decline in their rights (Podomi, 2021). The implementation of more pro-Islamic policies can sometimes exacerbate tensions between majority and minority groups, affecting social dynamics and creating uncertainty about the future of integration and social equality in Turkey. Consequently, these political changes highlight the challenges Turkey faces in balancing modernization, secularism, and respect for minority rights.

Erdogen and the Progress of Turkish Islamic Civilization

Turkey was formerly more widely recognized as a secular state; this is inextricably linked to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's contribution to the spread of secular thought in this nation that serves as the boundary between Europe and Asia. He formally ended the caliphate in Turkey on March 3, 1924 (Iqbal, 2010). Islam has declined, according to Kemal, as a result of its meddling in a number of public spheres, like as politics. Kemal made a comparison between the West and other cultures that ventured to secularize and remove religion from politics in order to create advanced civilizations. That means Turkey can only follow the West's lead and secularize in order to advance and modernize. We need to adapt Turkish society to Western norms.

The institutions of sharia were eliminated by Kemalist politics after the caliphate was overthrown, even though Ottoman reformers had greatly limited their use. Sharia was seen by Kemalists as the last stronghold of the old religious order. In addition, the Kemalists abolished the madrassas, which had been a part of Islamic education since the 1300s. The Kemalist government's meddling in the religious affairs of Turkish society manifested itself in this religious reform, also known as the Turkification or Nationalization of Islam. Kemalists enforce secularism with a strong nationalist bent, separating the state's guarantee of citizens' freedom of religion from the relationship between religion and governance.

But only until the collapse of the Kemalist (Republican People's Party) government did this religious nationalization program come into effect. The call to prayer has been in Arabic once more since 1950. Mosques in Turkey still have the same common forms as mosques in other nations. For Mustafa Kemal, civilization equates to Western culture. His major thesis regarding Westernization was that Turkey ought to adopt all of the practices of a Western country. In order to achieve this, the Kemalist administration imposed laws that forbade the wearing of religious attire in public

areas and encouraged Turkish citizens to dress in Western attire. Hat wear in European societies vanished long ago, along with the custom of donning them (Mustafa, 2016).

The most significant change of the Kemalist system, aside from religious reform, was linguistic reform. According to a decree issued on November 3, 1928, by the Supreme National Council, Arabic lettering was replaced with Latin script. As part of the language reform, the Turkish language was to be freed from the "shackles" of foreign languages, focusing on removing Arabic and Persian influences. Mustafa Kemal personally traveled to many locations to educate the Turkish people on how to write using the new script. Through a decree of the Grand National Council dated February 17, 1926, a committee of jurists adopted the Swiss Civil Code to replace Sharia Law to fulfill Turkey's legal needs. The Civil Code, which went into effect on October 4, 1926, incorporated monogamy, outlawed polygamy, and established equal rights for men and women in marriage and divorce. This equality of rights and obligations resulted in the elimination of Islamic inheritance law. The civil law also permitted interfaith unions. On January 1, 1935, the government banned the use of titles popular during the Ottoman Turkish era and made surnames mandatory for all Turks. Mustafa Kemal adopted the surname Atatürk, meaning "Father of the Turkish Nation." The lunar calendar system was replaced with the Gregorian calendar in 1935, and Sunday was declared a holiday instead of Friday (El Bakri, 2013; Heper et al., 2018; Kucukcan, 2009; Muzaki et al., 2021; Salehi, 2020; Yilmaz, 2023).

Professor Bryan S. Turner of Flinders University in South Australia concluded that secularism in Turkey during the Kemalist regime was a tool of the regime rather than a byproduct of modernization as in European nations. Furthermore, Turkey's secularization at the time was a deliberate emulation of more evolved and sophisticated European social mores. Binnaz Toprak, citing Darver, described the Turkish republic as a semi-secular state. According to Kemalists, the new Turkish man must not only think and behave rationally like Europeans but also adopt their clothing and mannerisms. Amien Rais might legitimately state in his introduction that the Turkish Republic is the only Muslim nation in the world to have undergone such extensive secularization. Under Kemal Atatürk's regime, Turkey became the first nation to experience widespread secularization, facilitated by the unbridled authority of the Atatürk government.

Turkey, led by Mustafa Kemal, proclaimed itself to be a secular state with religion existing in the private sphere under official supervision. To Mustafa Kemal, secularism was the best path to improving Turkey and bringing it up to speed with Western nations, particularly Europe. Under Mustafa Kemal's leadership, the Turkish military protected the constitution, therefore solidifying the ideology of secularism. His ability to enforce his beliefs was firmly rooted in the military. Secularism, however, contributed to the government and society's decline in Turkey along with other existing developments, which made people's consciences stir for positive changes to Turkey. This was demonstrated by the gradual eroding of the military's authority to uphold Mustafa Kemal's constitution, which resulted in modifications that reflected the country's needs and developments. Many people in Turkey had their eyes opened by the global wave of democratization in the 1980s, which was matched by a global wave of political awareness of civil society in various regions. In Turkey's

case, this was particularly true because joining the EU requires Turkey to run a fully democratic system. They established parties and took part in constitutional elections after realizing that Mustafa Kemal's concept of secularism had become stale. They also attempted to engage in politics in a constructive manner (Junaidi, 2016).

Additionally, it provided impetus for the Muslim middle class and proponents of Islamic principles to resurrect Islamic politics, which included the formation of Islamic-based political parties. Nonetheless, the secular nationalist ruling party—a devoted adherent of the late Mustafa Kemal—remains the dominant force in Turkish democracy and held significant influence within the National Assembly. Many Islamic parties were consequently outlawed for ideologies they believed to be in violation of the Turkish constitution; in this case, military intervention was also quite strong. Islam was no longer the center of sovereignty due to the circumstances that emerged at that time. Islam was seen as an ideology or set of teachings that had become outdated. The sharia component of government was, in other words, rendered obsolete by the drive to secularize the state. This did not, however, put an end to the people's ongoing struggle for Islam and faith. Sheikh Said Nursi Bediuzzaman, a prominent Turkish Islamic cleric, has, nevertheless, consistently opposed Attartuk's policies and waged a campaign to raise public awareness of the threats facing Turkey. Turkey is dealing with. Because it was forbidden for the call to prayer to be recited in Arabic, he was hunted down everywhere and once had his privacy violated when he was going to pray. Sheikh Mustaffa Sabri, Turkey's Sheikh al-Islam, has issued a fatwa criticizing secularism. Those who follow this instruction, according to him, are not Muslims. Despite the fact that very few people abide by his fatwa.

Nevertheless, this did not stop the fighters who promoted Islamism in Turkey. One such fighter was recognized as a prominent member of the Islamic movement and awarded the title "An Islamic Fighter" in recognition of his tenacious, unceasing, and unrelenting efforts. acclaimed as "A Fighter for Islam" in recognition of his lifelong, unceasing battle to preserve Islamic principles among Turkey's secular political landscape. Turkey's political life away from religion. His full name, Necmetin Erbakan, is how Turkish society addresses him. Constructed in a country that was once the center of the Islamic caliphate, he established the "Islamist Movement" in Turkey, which faced tough secular life and powerful military dominance. This movement became the "vanguard" of the secular system.

Erbakan collaborated with Tancu Ciller, the head of the Fatherland Party, to build the Turkish government after his party and the Islamic Refah party won the 1996 election. Erbakan was appointed prime minister. His government, however, was only in place for a year until it was overthrown by the Turkish military, who did not want Erbakan to advance his Islamist ideas, which would eventually become Turkish policy (Peena, 2012).

The removal of Necmekin Erbakan from office in 1997 is one instance of the nationalist-Islamist tensions that continue to influence Turkey's political climate. This demonstrates the conflicts between Islamists and nationalists that continue to influence Turkish political culture. However, as is well known, the fight to Islamize

Turkey is still ongoing. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a protege of Necmekin Erbakan, and Abdullah Gul took the lead in founding an Islamic party. Both of them have commonalities with their professors in that they have been persistent in battling for Islamic philosophy in Turkey. It was demonstrated by the fact that the AKP party, which was established on August 14, 2001, was well-received by the public as evidenced by its growth and success, which included winning the 2002 general election. won the 2002 general election. AKP won 367 of the 550 seats, making it the ruling party. 367 of the 550 seats in parliament are available for use. In the 2007 general election, the AKP, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, emerged victorious once again, with Abdullah Gul becoming the party's strategic nominee for president and Prime Minister. the presidency, which fell to Abdullah Gul, and the majority of parliamentary seats went to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who held the office of prime minister. Soccer Erdogan's activities and policies include bringing back the long-gone practice of teaching the Quran and Hadith in Turkish public schools as well as the right to wear the headscarf on Turkish campuses. Under Prime Minister Erdogan's direction, the Turkish state advanced quickly, and today Turkey is regarded as one of the most powerful nations in Europe. and established himself as one of the greatest leaders in the world. the greatest leaders in the world. So that in the 2011 general election, AKP won the trust of the people to win again and Erdogan served as Prime Minister for the next period in the general election to convey the aspirations of the Turkish people (Junaidi, 2016).

Following the conclusion of his tenure as prime minister in 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdogan entered the presidential race in Turkey with the backing of the AKP party. Consequently, Erdogan was duly elected to a five-year term as President of Turkey on August 10, 2014, following general elections. Five Years.

Erdogan has succeeded in winning over the Turkish people mostly through his remarkable Islamization effort, rather than just through his economic or "secular" programs. Erdogan is still despised by radical secularists despite the public's admiration for him due to the Islamic message of his nonviolent political practices. Erdogan has continuously battled for the right to wear a headscarf in Turkey before taking office, as was previously noted. Due to Turkish government regulations against kids donning headscarves, he was forced to send two of his children to school in the United States. Erdogan relentlessly pursued his Islamization policies up until he was elected president, removing restrictions on headscarves in all spheres of life, outlawing alcohol, endorsing the Palestinian cause, backing the overthrown president Mursi, and so forth.

The political changes in Turkey, particularly the transition from Kemalist secularism to more Islamist policies under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership, have had significant impacts on Turkish society, especially on minority groups. Under the Kemalist regime, secularism was implemented rigorously, resulting in the marginalization of non-Muslim minority groups and restrictions on their religious practices (Bahri, 2020). Religious schools and institutions were abolished, and nationalist policies eliminated various non-Turkish cultural and religious elements from public life. In this context, minority groups such as Christians, Jews, and Alevis experienced a reduction in their cultural and religious rights, and faced systemic discrimination that constrained their participation in society.

However, under Erdoğan's government, the resurgence of Islamist ideology has brought about other changes that also affect minority groups. Although there has been a shift back to some elements of Islam in public policy, such as the reopening of religious schools and the relaxation of restrictions on religious symbols like headscarves, these changes have not always had a positive impact on all minority groups. Some minorities feel marginalized as policies increasingly prioritize Islamic identity in public life, which can exacerbate tensions between the Muslim majority and non-Muslim minorities. This instability often reflects concerns about declining religious tolerance and increased social pressure on groups different from the majority, potentially triggering intergroup conflicts and threatening the pluralism that was established during the Kemalist secular period (M. T. Rahman, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Turkish history is a lengthy and intricate journey that started with the illustrious Ottoman Turks and ended with their decline as a result of peace treaties and military setbacks. After losing the Battle of Lipanto in 1571 and the unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683, the Ottoman Turks' golden age—headed by Sultans Sulaiman al-Qanuni and Salim II—became a period of decline. Sultan Salim II's demise brought about significant changes as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk ushered in a new era marked by intense secularization attempts. He implemented institutional, functional, symbolic, and legal reforms. Ataturk was pro-Western, but he did not lose Islamic influence when he implemented reforms like substituting Latin script for Arabic writing and outlawing the use of Arabic in the call to prayer as a symbolic act. Turkey had an Islamization phase during the reign of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Through his effective economic leadership, Erdogan altered the political and social perception of Islam. Islamic principles are being revived in a contemporary setting through policies like the return of the hijab's freedom of wear and the inclusion of Islamic education in the curriculum. A difficult conundrum is created in the framework of Turkish national identity by the conflict between modernity, secularization, and Islamic influence. At many societal and political levels, there are continuous discussions over religious identity, modernism, and traditional values. The ramifications raise important queries regarding Turkey's political course and identity in light of shifting international circumstances. The protracted evolution and transformation of Turkish identity from Ottoman to modern times is marked by this complete historical journey, which also produces a dynamic political scene.

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