

**THE IMPACT OF STRONG STATE TRADITION**  
**ON THE EARLY REPUBLICAN REFORMS OF SECULARIZATION**  
**IN TURKEY (1923-1938)**

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
**MASTER OF ARTS**

in

**THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
**BILKENT UNIVERSITY**  
**ANKARA**

**MAY 2005**

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims at identifying the implications of strong state tradition from the Ottoman Empire to the Early Republic within the case of the secularization process. It relies on the theory that the Turkish nation-state has inherited from its predecessor a strong state tradition, in which the state is more than the sum of sectional interests within the society. In the Ottoman-Turkish polity, the state enjoyed a supreme position, which resulted in a pragmatic view toward social institutions like religion.

In addition, elitism appeared through the conception of state as the sole agent for total development. Atatürk maintained the same mentality parallel to the Turkish state tradition: he had a pragmatic approach to religion along with the conception of the supreme state. He also continued the elitist top-down modernization launched by the Ottoman reformers. This thesis argues that in Turkish practice, it is the state that prevails.

Key Words: Strong State Tradition, Turkey, Secularization, Early Republican Reforms

## ÖZET

### TÜRKİYE'DE GÜÇLÜ DEVLET GELENEĞİNİN ERKEN CUMHURİYET DÖNEMİ LAİKLEŞME DEVRİMLERİNE ETKİSİ (1923-1938)

Hakkı Taş

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Bu tezin amacı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Erken Cumhuriyet dönemine güçlü devlet geleneğinin etkilerini laikleşme sürecini ele alarak tanımlamaktır. Çalışma, Türk milli devletinin Osmanlı'dan, devletin toplumdaki çıkar öbeklerinin toplamından fazlasını ifade ettiği güçlü devlet anlayışını miras aldığı görüşüne dayanmaktadır. Osmanlı- Türk siyasasında, devlet üstün bir konuma sahipti ve bu, din gibi sosyal kurumlara karşı faydacı bir tutuma yol açtı. Bunun yanında, devletin

bütün gelişmeden sorumlu tek özne olarak kabul edilmesinden kaynaklanan bir seçkinci anlayış belirdi. Atatürk, Türk devlet geleneğine paralel olarak aynı zihniyeti devam ettirdi: Üstün devlet kavramının yanında dine karşı faydacı bir yaklaşımı benimsedi. Ayrıca Osmanlı yenilikçilerinin başlattığı seçkinci ve tepeden inme modernleşmeyi de devam ettirdi. Bu tez, Türkiye özelinde, egemen olanın hep devlet olduğunu öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güçlü Devlet Geleneği, Türkiye, Laikleşme, Erken Cumhuriyet Devrimleri

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Ergun Özbudun. Just being his student was a great honor for me, but, by providing invaluable advice during the preparation of this thesis, he has given me even more than this.

I would like to articulate my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Dr. Aylin Güney, Dr. Berrak Burçak, and Dr. Başak İnce for their backing and faith in me. Without their emotional support in my hardest times, I could not have completed my post-graduate study.

Special thanks are due to my sincere friends Adnan and Mustafa who contributed to this study through numerous enjoyable academic discussions. I can never forget their companionship, either. In addition, I would like to thank Diane Grabowski for her help during the editing process of this thesis. Her remarkably detailed examination of the draft papers enlightened me. Last, but not least, I would like to thank to my mother for her emotional support during the whole period of my education far from home.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **STATE MATTERS!**

For many observers of Turkish politics, secularism is the essence of the Turkish Revolution. (Timur, 1968: 117) Although a straightforward reading of Atatürk's Turkey would indicate a strong commitment to positivist secularism, the Kemalist political and intellectual elites have rather a dual understanding of religion and secularism: While they have seen Islam as the source of backwardness and tried to erase it from all public visibility, they have at the same time incorporated religion into some aspects of the polity. In their conception of religion, for instance, a non-Muslim person is usually considered as a minority person or as a Turkish citizen, but not a Turk. 'Turk' implies an ethno-religious characteristic of the political community. Moreover, the politicians often talk about "our religion," although the secular system is not assumed to have such an element. "Our religion" refers to all citizens with Islamic credentials regardless of the various sects. In addition,

missionary activities and cases of conversion are commonly considered as almost “subversive” acts. Islam was not supposed to legitimize the regime or to be an appropriate base for political action, “yet one’s claim to membership in the political community, in behavioural terms, was validated by the possession of Islamic credentials.” (Turan, 1991: 38-40) As reflections of the Kemalist mixed conception of religion, these examples illustrate that there must be something else that dominates Turkish politics.

Despite the centrality of the issue, it is commonly observed that students of Islam and Turkey have not sufficiently conceptualized the position of Islam in Turkey and its interaction with the “evolution of regimes of power and knowledge.” The contextual patterns of power holding in both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic still need much clarification, when the concern is the peculiar interactive relationship between state and religion. (see Silverstein, 2003) In fact, “Islam is not a phenomenon of today or yesterday in Turkey.” It has been an intrinsic part of Turkey’s sociological reality. Islam has played an important role in Turkish politics since the very early days of the Republic. (Mango, 1993: 740-742)

The Turkish political literature about Islam and religious fundamentalism in Turkey has usually been influenced by Orientalist examinations pioneered by Bernard Lewis (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xv) and by other foreign observers’ Middle Eastern studies. Therefore, it can, to a great extent, miss the peculiarity of the Turkish path to modernity due to some generalized assumptions about state-Islam interactions. In fact, every revolution has its own peculiar national characteristics. According to Taner Timur (1968: 2), despite their international targets, the French Revolution was primarily French, and the Russian Revolution Russian in character. The Turkish case

is distinctive because of its long state tradition, in which the state has always had primacy vis-à-vis religion. This study tries to examine the mixed understanding of religion of the Kemalist elite in the light of the concept of Turkish state tradition, by which I primarily refer to the superiority of the state as the sole agent responsible for all social and political changes.

Unlike previous studies on this subject, which have primarily examined the influence of religion on politics, this thesis aims to analyze how the state has shaped and utilized religion in Turkey. Rather than focusing only on the institutional developments, it tries to shed light on the influence of Turkish political culture, which would consequently configure the institutional and political developments of the Turkish modernization process. This thesis is a modest attempt to explore the impact of strong state tradition on the Early Republican secularization reforms as part of a continuum with the Ottoman past. Such a short analysis could never do justice to this broad subject. However, as this study shows, despite ongoing heated debates regarding the so-called growing threat of Islam in Turkey, the nature of Early Republican secularization reforms indicates that the state has traditionally had primacy over religion in Turkish practice.

The secularization reforms have been taken as the objects of this thesis because they are the most prevalent examples for exploring the influence of Turkish state tradition on the Turkish Republic. In the Turkish context, religion, as a very sensitive issue, can be considered as the only social force to mobilize the masses. As this study reveals, in Turkish political history we observe a pragmatic attitude toward even Islam, i.e., the state has benefited from religion whenever it was useful for state matters, and suppressed it whenever it was seen as an obstacle. As a consequence of

this pragmatic attitude of the state, Islam has never been able to pose a threat to the superiority of the state. It is the state that supersedes all other factors in Turkish practice.

Since “variation in early state-building experiences” has some “implications for the subsequent form and substance of political activity” (Heper, 1985: 7), my study is centered on the examination of the Early Republican period, which is taken here to comprise the period of the presidency of the founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of the Turkish Republic, from 1923 to 1938. Although the Early Republican period is commonly considered as to have continued from 1923 to 1940 or 1945, namely from the foundation of the Republic to the beginning of multi-party system, I chose to omit the İnönü period (1938-1945). This is because Kemalism, the official ideology of the Turkish Republic, was basically formulated in Mustafa Kemal’s time, and the political developments in İnönü’s period display a strong continuity with those of his predecessor’s era in terms of ideology and *raison d’état*.

Kemalist ideology, which developed as an immediate response to the needs of the modernization process, was not based on a detailed examination of Turkish political and social patterns. Modernization in the Republican period was shaped inevitably by the difficult conditions of the War of Independence and inter-war periods; the principles of Kemalism arose largely from the practical requirements of this process. Accordingly, the Republican elite formulated their guidelines in a pragmatic way. As these principles, especially nationalism and secularism, emerged and developed according to some historical conditions and specific events, a mere conceptual analysis of secularism in terms of the meaning of its Western counterpart cannot

adequately explain the political developments in Turkey. Therefore, secularism in Turkey should be studied through historical analysis.

Having analyzed recent studies of Turkish politics, Özbudun and Kazancıgil (1997: 2) give two reasons as to why a historical perspective is necessary in the study of Kemalism. First, “certain doctrinaire Kemalists” in Turkey and some foreign observers consider the foundation of the new republic as a sudden and total transformation from the so-called theocratic Ottoman Empire into a modern nation-state. Second, Islamists and third-world critics of Kemalism see it as an alien and forcible imposition of secularization upon a Muslim society through isolation from its cultural and political past. In fact, both are “historical over-simplifications.”

This study, hence, employs a historical approach to elaborate its thesis on the peculiarity of Turkish state tradition and its relation to Turkish secularism. In line with Heper’s (1985: iv) recommendations, a more historical approach that would also compare Turkey with both the Anglo-Saxon and continental European countries will be used. Such a position, instead of a solely conceptual analysis, will be used to explore the roots of Turkish secular developments in its Ottoman past, as well as to identify the continuum that existed in the state tradition and the modernization process between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.

Besides having a historical point of view, this thesis follows a state-centered formulation. As Migdal (1994: 8) observes, “recently, a more state-oriented approach has attracted much attention.” It is, in fact, rather than a mere methodological preference, a practical necessity for students of Turkish politics to put the state at the core of their studies. This is because Turkey experienced a state-led modernization in which society remained passive in keeping with the Turkish

state-centered political culture. According to Barkey (2000: 87), “Turkey has always been regarded as one of the best examples of modernizing strong states.”

Following this first introductory chapter, Chapter II aims to outline the theoretical framework upon which the thesis will be structured. Starting with the definitions of religion and state as political concepts, this chapter mainly deals with the paths taken by secularization as a consequence of modernization, which differentiate according to diverse state traditions. Modern science, having equated the secular with the modern and progressive, has designated the traditional as “backward.” The secularist approach has “created the Oriental ‘other’: Islam.” According to Yavuz and Esposito (2003: xv), such scholars of Islam, who defend the idea of there being a unity of religion and polity in Islam, are exemplified by Bernard Lewis (1994: 135-136), who claims that “Islam was ... associated with the excessive use of power from the very beginning... This association between religion and politics, between community and polity, can ... be seen in ... the religious texts in which Muslims base their beliefs”. Unfortunately, this superficiality, which appears due to a lack of historical analysis, has prevailed in much of the Turkish studies (for instance Berkes, 1995). This chapter draws attention to the danger of such Orientalist assumptions. In practice, “the boundary between the religious and the political is not fixed and text centered, but rather fluctuating and depends on the specific context.” (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xv) Therefore, religion, Islam in particular, is taken here in its relation to the specific historical contexts.

The same charge of superficiality is valid in the case of the secularization thesis, too. The basic assumption of the secularization thesis is that the development of modernity gradually decreases or even erases the influence of religion. Actually, as

Brown (1992: 38) says, empirical evidence as opposed to merely a conceptual analysis proves that “religion can and has retained its social significance across the change from preindustrial to industrial society.” Moreover, very much like Islam, which has been perceived and experienced differently in diverse settings for varying purposes, the secularization process is not a unique path of modernization, but differs according to varying levels of state autonomy, by which we refer to “the insulation of the state from societal pressures and to its freedom to make important decisions.” (Özbudun, 1996: 134)

Chapter III examines the Ottoman state tradition, the basic patterns of which are: the patrimonial and bureaucratic configuration of the state, with a strong center versus a weak periphery; elitism; the state predominance over religion; and, state-led modernization. Kemalist historiography from the 1920s onwards has tended to emphasize the novelty of the new Turkish republic and a clean break with the Ottoman past. Feroz Ahmad’s *Making of Modern Turkey* is a recent example of scholarship that points up the contrast between the backward past and the progressive new nation-state. From the 1950s, however, pioneering scholars such as Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Şerif Mardin and Niyazi Berkes in Turkey and Bernard Lewis and Stanford Shaw in the West have presented a different approach, which has dominated Turkish studies. They have observed a link between the former and the latter and acknowledged “the debt of the republic to its immediate predecessors”. (Zürcher, 2004: 99-100)

Understanding the Ottoman legacy is important for grasping the foundation of Republic because the members of Republican elite were once Ottoman pashas.



Despite the dramatic change from a multiethnic, multi-religious empire to a “monolithic” nation-state, the same political culture remained salient in determining state policies. Within this framework, the state was the major, in fact, the sole force for political and social change in the Ottoman Empire, in which there existed a strong center and a weak periphery. (İnalçık, 1964: 3-5) The elimination of the alternative political and economic forces strengthened the center and erased any possibility of an opposing periphery balancing the imperial capital, Istanbul. Even when such an alternative force arose from religion, the state elite did not hesitate in suppressing religious scholars and institutions, as it did other individuals and institutions. Despite the religious character of the Empire, they were able to consider it legitimate to make secular decisions about a state matter even if religion assumed the contrary. The Turkish Republic was born on the basis of such a political inheritance. The secular reforms in the Republic cannot be understood without having insight into the Ottoman state tradition and modernization reforms, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The modern secular Turkish nation-state was an eventual consequence of the earlier developments, and it was a dream that many Westernist Ottoman reformers had envisaged for a long time.

Chapter IV aims to investigate the secularization reforms launched in the Early Republican period. The Turkish case of modernization has been quite distinctive among its counterparts. Regarding the types of modernity, Ernest Gellner proposes an analogy of bride (culture) and groom (state). According to him, the way to modernity can be divided into four time and space zones. The first three are European: a) The West –the Atlantic coast and Britain– had the happiest marriage of all; bride and groom were ready at the same time. b) The center –Italy and Germany–

had a difficult marriage at the beginning; the bride was ready, but it took some time for the groom to be found. c) The East –Eastern Europe– had a painful union; neither bride nor groom was ready, necessitating both cultural and political engineering. The fourth zone is unique to Turkey. According to Gellner, none of the above typology is valid for the Muslim world, since nationalism has always been rejected by Islam, but the Turkish case is peculiar within the Muslim world. The groom (state) was ready and chose a bride. (Çataltepe, 1994) For the wedding, however, Turkey needed many reforms.

These reforms were initiated across a broad spectrum varying from the acceptance of the Western hat and the adoption of the Gregorian calendar to the abolition of the Caliphate. Scholars of Turkish politics agree that secularization reforms in Turkey had a strong impact on different facets of politics and social life. (Heper, 1981: 355) The secular developments in the Early Republican period manifested a strong desire to modernize the new country. However, despite the strong commitment of the founding elite to positivist secularism, we observe a dual attitude toward religion. In a continuum with the Ottoman pragmatism about religion, the new political elite readily benefited from Islam whenever they found it useful, and eliminated the old religious authorities and institutions whenever they saw Islam as an obstacle to modernization. The continuity appears clearly in the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Here, the Republican elite did not separate religion from the state, but incorporated it into the state apparatus, just as it had been in the Ottoman Empire. Rather than separating state and religion, in the Turkish version of secularism, the state could manipulate and control religion through its own apparatus without allowing it to form alternative civil sources of power. The continuity of the

state tradition between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic appears in the case of the state-led modernization, as well. The state has been the sole agent for modernization. This elitist approach had its reflections in the early state-building process of the new nation-state.

As has been indicated above, political developments in Turkey cannot be evaluated without taking the peculiar historical and cultural context into consideration. In this respect, the relationship between Islam and state in Turkey displays the same peculiarity as an example that best reflects the Turkish state tradition.

## CHAPTER II

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Nations come and go, empires rise and fall. But Islam persists and continues to include the nomads and the settlers, the builders of civilizations within Islam and those who destroy them. What then are the factors that keep together as one ummah those many people that consciously or not inclined to maintain their individuality while cultivating their tie with universal Islam as their most precious spiritual possession?*

Von Grünebaum

(1962:52-53 in Davutoğlu, 1994: 63)

### 2.1 Defining the Concepts

It is necessary at the beginning to define the two concepts of greatest importance for this study: religion and state. The social sciences, for a long time, promoted the assumption that religion is more or less irrelevant to the domains of modern life. (Robertson, 1987: 5) Religion, which, in fact, remains one of the most ambiguous objects of social study, has recently regained considerable interest among political scientists. (Brown, 2000:1) Similarly, we observe the return of scholarly concern

with the state. (Hall and Ikenberry, 1989: 1) The “state” has been issue for heated debate between different theoretical and ideological views for quite some time now. (Nalbantoğlu, 1993: 346)

Defining the concept of religion is crucial for this study, because whether one sees modern society as secularized or as undergoing a process of secularization depends very much on what one means by religion. Discussions about secularization stem from the conflict among the radically different conceptions of what religion is. Functional definitions approach religion in terms of “what it does,” whereas substantive definitions say “what it is.” (for the discussion see Bruce and Wallis, 1992: 9-11) As a result, those who use “functionalist definitions” tend to reject the secularization thesis while those using “substantive definitions” are more likely to support it. (Hamilton, 1995: 166)

Substantive (theological) definitions largely emphasize the spiritual or “irrational” component of religious belief and practice. Such definitions of religion include, for instance, Schleiermacher’s conception of the “feeling of absolute dependence”, Rudolf Otto’s emphasis on “awe, a unique blend of fear and fascination before the divine” or Mircea Eliade’s view of religion as “embodied in sacred space and time”. (King, 1987: 283-285) Unfortunately, these definitions prove of limited use from the perspective of the social sciences.

Durkheim, whose work is perhaps the cornerstone of the sociology of religion, defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden –beliefs and practices which unite in one

single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them". (Coser, 1977: 136) Clifford Geertz (1973: 90) gives a more functional definition, describing what religion does, by defining it as

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Geertz points out that religion is a set of symbols which may either stand for something, represent or express something or act as a sort of instruction for what to do. Religion does these things through formulating concepts of general order. People need these concepts because they need to see the world as meaningful and ordered. Moreover, Geertz sees religious beliefs as attempts to bring abnormal events and experiences "within the sphere of the explicable." (Hamilton, 1995: 158)

Scholars, thus, have not been able to develop a widely accepted definition of religion. In general, what all of these approaches, both substantial and functional, share in common is the idea that there is a distinct and universal social phenomenon called "religion" that can be clearly distinguished from other aspects of social reality. The current definitions usually link the concept to belief and behavior transcending the empirical reality. The belief in a deity is taken as the absolute truth about human existence. Most religions have some ethical norms. As a consequence, religious beliefs have influences on the thinking and behavior of human beings in ordinary life. Religion influences the world view of its believers. (Nielsen, 1992: 8) Bruce and Wallis (1992: 10-11) combine both substantial and functional aspects well and define religion as consisting of

actions, beliefs, and institutions predicated upon the assumption of the existence of either supernatural entities with powers of agency, or

impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose, which have the capacity to set the conditions of, or to intervene in, human affairs.

The other concept we are dealing with is the “state.” The term “state”, which is derived from the Roman law concept “*status rei Romanae*”, the public law, refers to an independent political community ruling a specific territory. (Nielsen, 1992: 8) The state is a relatively modern institution, dating back to the sixteenth century when the nation-state emerged from the feudal system and the central power gained control over the military forces and powers of legislation and taxation for the entire territory under its domination. Hall and Ikenberry (1989: 1-2) give a composite definition of state including three elements. The state is, firstly, a set of institutions (especially those of violence and coercion). Secondly, these institutions function within a geographically-bounded territory. Thirdly, the state has a monopoly on rule-making in that territory.

As centers of power, states regulate collection and distribution of resources, control policy making, and deeply affect many aspects of their citizens’ lives. (for instance, see Trimberger, 1978) They are the most important determinants of sociopolitical change in modern times. It is therefore not possible to satisfactorily explain social changes without considering the state. How much states can get done, and how much of the lives of their citizenry they control, are functions of their strength. Thus, what constitutes strength and weakness in a state, and how that influences politics, economics, and social change, is very important (for a detailed analysis, see Migdal, 1988).

Another way of looking at the state is based on an intellectual tradition that is built around an abstract theory of the state. This tradition dates back to Plato, and is the “cumulative contribution” of numerous philosophers and thinkers, among whom Machiavelli, Locke, Jefferson, Rousseau, Mill and Weber are only some of the more notable names. (Ozay, 1990: 56) According to it, good government, being the implementing arm of the state, is one which succeeds in improving living standards by means of public policy in education, housing, employment and social services, and in establishing appropriate economic, legal, cultural and national institutions.

Initially, the issue of applying all these religious and political ideas to the non-Western world appears as an epistemological problem: an attempt to use Western phenomena to understand the non-Western world. Thus, a fundamental problem arises when one tries to apply social categories such as religion and state to non-Western contexts. For example, Jeff Haynes (1998: 8) suggests that the universal application of western social categories is problematic because it tends to force one to perceive social reality, not in terms of the society itself, but in terms of the West:

When we think of Church-state relations we tend to assume a single relationship between two clearly distinct, unitary and solidly but separately institutionalized entities. In this implicit model built into conceptualization of the religio-political nexus there is one State and one Church; both entities’ jurisdictional boundaries need to be carefully delineated.[...] In sum, the conventional concept of State-Church relations is rooted in prevailing Western conceptions of the power of the state of necessity being constrained by forces in society, including those of religion.

In this way, Haynes argues that the study of state-church relations is biased in content, possessing some assumptions about the nature of religion and politics in society. Haynes (1998: 9) concludes that

In their specific cultural setting and social significance, the tension and the debate over Church-state relations are uniquely Western



phenomena... overloaded with western cultural history; these two concepts cannot easily be translated into non-Christian terminologies.

On the other hand, one should also notice another danger in this understanding; i.e., the deep-rooted Western tendency to “obscure” Islam and Muslims through “veils of esoterica” and –in extreme forms– even to suggest that entirely different rules of logic and evidence are required to take the measure of Islam and Muslims. “This is nonsense. Muslims *can* be understood, just like other people.” (Brown, 2000: 19) Although there are problems in “translating” religion and politics into a different context, this does not mean that states and societies will not try to reformulate themselves.

## 2.2 The Functions of Religion

There are different opinions regarding the essential functions of religion. Nevertheless, for most members of advanced societies, religion performs certain individual and social functions at least to some extent, as it does for traditional societies. Essentially, religion, Islam in particular, as identified by Heper (1981: 346), is a “multi-functional institution” because it has been taken advantage of different groups for different purposes. When analyzing the functions of religion, it is almost essential to start with Emile Durkheim.

Durkheim [1995 (1915): 489] identifies three basic functions of religion. One of the functions of religion, according to Durkheim, is social cohesion. Religion brings people together through shared symbols, values, and norms. Religions can be powerful forces in society. By reinforcing group norms, they facilitate the formation of social homogeneity. They can provide a basis for common purposes and values that maintain social solidarity. Religion, in this way, integrates and unifies. According to Collinson (1999: 53), religion creates a bond, not only legitimizing and strengthening existing social constructions like churches, sects, and nations, but also inventing, “imagining” them. The Jewish nation is an obvious example, as is the Armenian.

Another function of religion is social control. Societies may use religious doctrine to promote conformity. In most societies, religions play an important role in social control by defining what is right and wrong behavior. Thus, religion has a vital role in social maintenance. It also gives sanctity, more than human legitimacy and

transcendent importance to some values; for example, regarding marriage as a sacrament, much law breaking as sinful, and occasionally, the state as a divine instrument.

Providing meaning and purpose is the third function of religion. "Religious beliefs offer the sense that the vulnerable human serves a greater purpose. [Thus] people are less likely to collapse in despair when confronted by life's calamities". [Durkheim, 1995(1915): 489] The sacred texts of religions usually set forth examples for proper behavior in common situations. The religious system provides a body of ultimate ends for a society.

O'Dea (1966 in Hamilton, 1995: 120-121), one of the best-known functionalists, gives six functions of religion for the individual and society:

1. It provides support for established values and goals.
2. It ensures stability of the social order and often helps maintain the status quo. Through cult and ceremony, it provides emotional security and identity and a fixed point of reference among a variety of conflicting ideas.
3. It "sacralizes" norms and promotes group goals above individual goals.
4. It can be a basis for criticisms of existing social patterns. It can form a basis for social protest.
5. It helps the individual in understanding him- or herself and provides a sense of identity.
6. It is important in aiding the individual during life crises and in transition from one status to another and is, consequently, part of the educational process.

O'Dea does not think that these functions are always fulfilled by religion, but notes that they have been practically universal in known social systems. (Hamilton, 1995: 121) He also admits that religion may have actual dysfunctions and again lists six of these, which correspond to its positive functions:

1. It may hinder protest against injustice by reconciling the oppressed.
2. Sacralizing norms and values may hinder progress in knowledge.
3. It may prevent adaptation to changing circumstances through its conservatism.
4. It can lead to utopianism and unrealistic hopes for change and, consequently, inhibit practical action to this end.
5. It can attach individuals to groups to the point where conflict with other groups is promoted and adjustment prevented.
6. It can create dependence on religious institutions and leaders, and in this way, it may prevent maturity.

Especially notable for purposes of this thesis is what functions religion provides in its relation with the state. The state can be based on either coercion or legitimate authority through popular support. Because the use of force tends in the long run to be costly and inefficient, government will seek to establish a basis of ideological legitimacy for its rule. Religion can provide perhaps the strongest basis for the legitimation of the government. Thus, government may need the support of religious authorities, or at least seek to avoid open conflict with them. (Nielsen, 1992: 20)

According to Weber, officials and bureaucrats are, in fact, little inclined towards religion. (Hamilton, 1995: 140-141) Nevertheless, they are greatly interested in the

maintenance of order, discipline and security, and they regard religion as a useful instrument for achieving these goals.

## 2.3 State in Islam: Dawlah

*Know that you can have three sorts of relations with princes, governors, and oppressors. The first and worst is that you visit them, the second and the better is that they visit you, and the third and surest that you stay away from them, so that neither you see them nor they see you.*  
Ghazzali, Muslim theologian of the twelfth century  
(Robbins and Robertson, 1987: 183)

Before analyzing the relation between Islam and state, it would be beneficial to take notice of Khalidi's (1992: 28) caution that one should always be somewhat suspicious of sentences in which Islam appears as the subject, such as "Islam is x, y and z", or "Islam teaches a, b, c", "Islam demonstrates that", "Islam has shown that", and so forth. It should be perfectly obvious that the Islam of one time and one place is quite different from the Islam of another time and another place. On the other hand, as Esposito claims, a "selective presentation and analysis of Islam" also distorts its image. (Göle, 1996b: 21) Both the theological and historical aspects of the subject should be reckoned together.

The Islamic tradition of the state, as it evolved after the death of Muhammad, differs radically from the western secularist state. The idea of a secular state is "the by-product of European positivism." In the positivist tradition, the *raison d'être* of the state is the collective good, i.e., national progress or development. The nation is a culturally and geographically distinct entity, and this sustains social cohesion and political consensus. The strength and survival of the nation is secured through legislation, which articulates the political consensus, implementing it through public policy for the sake of improving the human condition. (Ozay, 1990: 56) Such a

concept of state, with its modern connotations, did not form a part of Islamic political thought in the classical period, and the modern conceptualization of state is surely a Western one, which evolved in relation to the phenomena of the Renaissance and capitalism. For this reason, 'state' will be used here only as a monopoly of political power or authority. For the same reason again, it is natural not to find such a concept in Islamic thought prior to the modern era, either. The term *dawlah*, which is used today to connote state in European sense, existed in the Qur'an. However, according to Lewis (1988), the first time that the term *dawlah* (*devlet* in Turkish) appears in its modern meaning of state, as distinct from dynasty and government, is in a Turkish memorandum in 1837.

The state has, theoretically, no independent basis in Islam. An independent basis was accorded only to the *umma*, the community of believers, which was supposed to live not by the commands of the ruler but by the *Shari'ah*, the holy law. This law was to be known through the Qur'an and the hadiths, the sayings of the Prophet as reported by his companions. The ruler had no role in this theoretical framework, although the situation was complicated by the fact that the first four rulers, or caliphs, were also companions, who certainly made an effort to gain a say in fixing the form of the community. (Gerber, 2002: 66) Abu Bakr and Umar, the first two "rightly guided caliphs", emphasized the aspect of legitimacy by applying to as great an extent as possible the principles of *shura* (inner consultation), *aqd* (ruler-ruled contract), and *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance). (Shahrough, 1995: 319) These principles were used in the appointment of their successor, Uthman. Gradually, however, *shura* was overlooked, and then *aqd* and *bay'ah* were also dropped with the establishment of the Umayyad family.

One should also note that, given the limited nature of political provisions in the Qur'an and the hadiths, Muslims had to borrow and improvise in developing their political systems. The Islamic systems have been inspired by *Shari'ah*, as represented in the Qur'an and the hadiths, by Arabian tribal traditions and by the political heritage of the lands Muslims conquered, especially the Persian and Byzantine traditions. Further evidence for the argument that the form of the state and the nature of government cannot be deduced directly and only from the Qur'an and the hadiths is provided by the fact that the few polities both in the past and present that have called themselves Islamic states are very different from each other in their most important political aspects. (Shahrough, 1995: 318)

After the holy Migration (*Hicret*), Muslims were not only a religious community, but also a political one, whereas Christianity could not form a political entity until three centuries after its emergence. This fact alone leads many readers to think simplistically that Islam envisages a theocracy. (Watt, 1995: 76) Accordingly, it is commonly argued in Islam, unlike Christianity, that there is no tradition of a separation of church and state. At least, this is "the oft-repeated statement" contrasting the two religions. One simple reason for this difference between Islam and Christianity is that Islam knows no "church" in the sense of a corporate body whose leadership is clearly defined, hierarchical, and distinct from the state. The organizational arrangement of *ulama*, Muslim religious scholars, makes an institutional confrontation between Muslim church and Muslim state virtually impossible. A Muslim scholar may speak out against a ruler, but there is "no canonical way" he can summon a Muslim "church council." (Brown, 2000: 31)



In fact, the understanding of the unity of religion and politics in Islam has resulted in the subjugation of the former by the latter because it does not allow religion to build a corporate body for itself. Throughout Islamic history, the state has always had great power to influence the *ulama*. The state has always assumed the right to appoint and dismiss *qadis* (religious judges and local administrators) and teachers in Muslim seminaries, has exercised control over financial aspects of Muslim religious properties such as mosques and *medreses* (religious schools), and has used state police power to punish, imprison, and exile unruly Muslim religious leaders. In certain cases, state control over the Muslim religious establishment became so pervasive that the *ulama* virtually became an arm of government. The best example was the Ottoman Empire, in which the *ulama* were largely integrated into the state apparatus. (Brown, 2000: 35)

From a broader view, some cleavages and conflicts among religious schools and religiously oriented parties have occurred occasionally in the Islamic communities, but there has been no conflict between Islam and state. (Dursun, 1993:78)

Brown (2000: 54) cites appropriate examples when explaining that this passive attitude of the Sunni religious authorities toward the state was justified substantially by the primary resources, where obedience to the rulers is very much emphasized: “O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority.” (Qur’an, 4:59) This Qur’anic advice became “the scriptural foundation” for a submissive attitude toward political authority that reached its zenith in the oft-cited maxim “Better sixty years of tyranny than one hour of anarchy.” The Islamic tradition asserts, in effect, that mankind’s need for government is so overwhelming that it makes the quality of that government decidedly secondary. For instance,

Suhrawardi, a highly regarded twelfth-century Sufi scholar wrote that “Prayer is permitted behind any imam, pious or impious ... Revolt is prohibited even if the ruler is unjust.”

The uniformity that hinders opposition and revolt similarly is underlined in the hadiths: “He who separates himself even a single span from the community, removes the noose of Islam from his neck.” “The hand of Allah is with the community. He who stands alone stands alone in hell.” “He who seeks to divide your community, slay him.” (Brown, 2000: 58) Although there are some other hadiths encouraging revolt against cruelty (e.g., “If men see evil and do not change it, God will swiftly blind them with His punishment”), yet, on balance, the weight of Muslim historical tradition was on the side of political submission. (Brown, 2000:55)

Based on the lack of prescriptive information in the primary sources of Islam and on the submissive positioning of religious authorities in practice, Islamic political thought actually provides enough material for both authoritarian and democratic regimes, depending on the nature of the specific political culture and the attitudes of the political elite. The particular historical development (for instance, economic basis and class structure) of Muslim lands and the international network of economic relations should be taken into account in the analysis of Islamic political ideas. Therefore, we cannot make a clear-cut statement regarding Islam’s relation to the modern idea of statehood.

According to Duran (2001: 43-44), the discussion of the interplay between Islam and modern nation-state can best be summarized by two views. The first view, which

sees the emergence of the nation-state in the West as a result of the process of secularization (limiting religion to one's private life), is best represented by P.J. Vatikiotis. Referring to the unity of religion and politics in Shari'ah and the nonterritorial/universal aspect of the Islamic community, Vatikiotis (1987: 36) claims that Islam is not compatible with nationalism, which is a constructive loyalty to a territorially defined national group. This approach also emphasizes that the concept of the nation-state has no equivalent in classical Islamic writings. On the contrary, classical Islam stresses a division of the world into two hostile realms: *dar al-Islam* (the realm of Islam or peace) and *dar-al harb* (the realm of war). With its insistence on holy war, Islam has the aim of conquering the non-Islamic world at the expense of other beliefs.

The second view, which stresses compatibility between Islam and the nation-state, is best articulated by James P. Piscatori (1986: 144), who observes some indications of "territorial pluralism" in classical Islamic theory. A significant indication of the acceptance of territorial pluralism is found in the verse of the Qur'an that states that God divided mankind into nations and tribes for the purpose of their better knowing one another. After discussing the Islamic historical experience as the record of pragmatic adaptation to diversity under different states and empires such as the Ottoman, Persian and so forth, Piscatori (1986: 77) underlines the important effect of Islamist sentiments on the establishment of the some nationalist movements and in validating the idea of a territorial separation between "them" and "us".

Stemming from the fact that the original Islamic sources, the Qur'an and the Hadith, do not set forth a specific type of government, Islamic political thought, especially in

the last centuries has given rise to some differing opinions on the issue of the connection between Islam and democracy.

## 2.4 The State as an Agent of Social Change and Modernization

Recently, in the field of political science, a more state-oriented approach to the question of social transformation has attracted much attention. (Migdal, 1994: 8) In this approach, the state is not just a legal entity having a monopoly over violence as argued by Weber, but a political entity shaping the course of policy making and the content of the polity. (Skocpol, 1985) In this formulation, the state is not a simple reflection or sum of sectional interests, but rather a concept based on the public interest developed independently of classes and sections of society. (Heper, 1987: 3) In the same vein, Pierre Birnbaum (1996: 203) argued that “the state is seen as an independent variable around which the entire system in all its aspects recognizes itself.” The state is considered to be independent of society and social groups, an autonomous agent shaping social groups and imposing policies on society.

As stated by Özbudun (1996: 134), “state autonomy refers to the insulation of the state from societal pressures and to its freedom to make important decisions.” In other words, the state as formulated here is taken vis-à-vis civil society, and, as Metin Heper (1987: 3) noted, to the extent that there is a state highly differentiated from society, we can talk of the phenomenon of the state and the levels of stateness corresponding to the different institutionalization patterns of various polities. Since the institutionalization patterns show significant differences among countries, the level of “stateness” also differs regarding the polities of these countries. We can claim that “in empirical reality there are states not *the state*.” (Heper, 1987: 5)

The state autonomy or “stateness” is not a fixed phenomenon. It shows major differences among polities and within the same polity at different periods. (Heper, 1987: 4) It can be said that a society having an autonomous state tradition has a state high in capacity, whereas a stateless society is expected to have a state with low capacity. Kenneth Dyson (1980: 51-52) summarizes the overall characteristics of the state societies and stateless societies as follows:

State societies exemplify strongly non-economic, non-utilitarian attitudes towards political relations, which attitudes deny that the public interest is simply the sum of private interests; a rationalistic spirit of inquiry; a stress on the distinctiveness of state and society, whether in terms of the special function of the state or in terms of the peculiar character of its authority; a consciousness of institutions which reflects the strength of legalism and codification within the political culture and reveals itself in the ubiquity of formal organizations and their detailed constitutions; a concern for formalization and depersonalization which lend a “republican” character to the political system....

By contrast, the “stateless” societies are characterized by the lack of a notion of autonomous public interests, an instrumental conception of government and a pragmatic view of politics, a tradition of pluralism and debate, mutual respect and tolerance among citizens and a high level of civility. (Dyson, 1980: 52) It is the existence of this intellectual heritage in Britain and the United States that leads Dyson to characterize them as “stateless” societies. Britain, in his view, “lacks a historical and legal tradition of the state as an institution that ‘acts’ in the name of public authority..., as well as a tradition of continuous intellectual preoccupation with the idea of the state right across the political spectrum.” (Dyson, 1980: viii)

There are also some historical, intellectual and cultural factors central to the existence of an autonomous state. (Yılmaz, 2002: 58) Accordingly, if there is a historical tradition of an isolated sovereign state in a society, there emerges a strong state. Intellectual factors operate insofar as that if the political ideas and the norms of

policy making in any society incorporate a sovereign state, the possibility of the emergence of a strong state is high. There is also a cultural element in terms of the ideas held by individuals in a country about a generalized concept and cognition of the state. If this concept of the state is active in the perceptions and actions of individuals, the probability of existence of a strong state is high. (Nettle, 1988: 312 in Yılmaz, 2002: 58) In shaping the modern institutional dynamics of societies, specifically, in the direction of either strong or weak institutionalization patterns, antecedent cultural traditions have special importance.

As indicated, different “levels of stateness” are very much attached to the different state traditions by which it is referred to “clusters of institutions and cultural practices that constitute a set of expectations about behavior” (Perez-Diaz 1993:7 in Peters, 2000). Peters (2000) identifies four distinctive state traditions in the West:

- 1) Anglo-Saxon (minimal state)
- 2) Continental European: Germanic (organicist)
- 3) Continental European: French (Napoleonic)
- 4) Scandinavian (mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic)

The basic difference is between the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental European traditions. In the former, the state does not exist as a legal entity but rather one speaks of "government" or "government departments". In the latter, by contrast, the state is a separate entity “capable of entering into legal contracts with other moral persons (such as regions, communes, universities, etc.)”.

In the Germanic tradition, including much of continental Europe, and perhaps Japan, (Dyson 1980) the state is a transcendent entity. In spite of the inevitable division of

government into departments and agencies, the authority of the state is not considered divisible or bargainable. In this tradition the servants of the state are to some degree “the personifications of the power and centrality of the State”. In short, because the state is so central to political life, servants of the state must have a firm moral and legal foundation. (Peters, 2000)

The Anglo-Saxon tradition is evident in the United Kingdom and the United States. “Whereas in the Germanic tradition state and society are conceptualized as a part of one organic entity, within the Anglo-American tradition the state commonly is conceptualized as arising from a contract among members of society”. (Peters, 2000)

The boundaries between state and society are therefore more distinct, and perhaps more flexible. The separation of politics and administration is important in a good deal of thinking about governance in the Anglo-American tradition. Possible bureaucratic dominance of public policy has been most salient in the Anglo-American democracies, too. (Peters, 1992)

The Napoleonic State is conceived as unitary and indivisible, much like the Germanic State (Hayward, 1983 in Peters, 2000). Indeed, this state form evolved as part of a nation-building project aiming at overcoming deep divisions in civil society. In the French case, nation building was largely, if not completely, successful. In other countries, such as Spain and Belgium, the process was far less victorious. The Napoleonic conceptualization of government naturally has been associated with “a highly centralized state structure to ensure the uniformity of policy throughout the political system”. The most obvious difference between the Napoleonic and the Germanic traditions is that the later relies more fully on the legal framework of the state to guide action by policy makers. The Germanic tradition therefore permits, or



even encourages, federal solutions, whereas the Napoleonic tradition relies more on the direct imposition of central state authority over its citizens. (Peters, 2000) The Turkish state tradition resembles the French one most.

The Scandinavian state tradition is in-between the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic traditions. The characteristic that most distinguishes this tradition is, that of the welfare state. If the state has any kind of existence that extends beyond a simple contract with its population, it also has extensive rights as well as extensive rights in dealing with those population. (Peters, 2000)

## 2.5 Secularization as a Consequence of Modernization

Secularization is the process whereby the domains of social activity and human experience previously organized around religious norms are “desacralized” by their reinterpretation and reorganization in terms of ideals of a less sacral nature. (Berger, 1967: 106-108) The societal aspect of secularization manifests itself in the institutions as the significant decline of the influence of religion. In Western history, this process was experienced as the separation of church and state, expropriation of church lands, and secularization of education. The cultural aspect of secularization implies a gradual decline of the religious content in art, philosophy, literature and science. Moreover, science becomes the most important secular perspective on the world. So, an analytical distinction can be made between the “objective” side of secularization as the secularization at the socio-structural level, and the “subjective” side, or secularization at the level of consciousness. (Berger, 1967: 107-108)

Donald Smith (1974: 7-8) conceptualizes “secularization” by dividing the term into five analytical categories:

- 1- *Polity-separation secularization*: the institutional separation of religion and politics, removal of religious influence in a polity, non-recognition of a state religion (e.g., the Peace of Westphalia in 1648).
- 2- *Polity-expansion secularization*: the growing extension of the political system into areas of social life previously dominated by religion such as education, law, and the economy (e.g., Nepal, Burma, Turkey, Latin America).

- 3- *Political-culture secularization*: transformation of values; secular notions of political community replacing traditional ways of thinking (e.g., the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in the West).
- 4- *Political-process secularization*: the decreasing significance of both religious issues and leaders or interest groups in political matters (e.g., Latin America in the twentieth century).
- 5- *Polity-dominance secularization*: revolutionary efforts to push religion out of politics or modify it according to official ideologies (e.g., the French, Mexican, Russian and Soviet, Turkish, and Chinese Revolutions).<sup>1</sup>

The orthodox model of the secularization thesis claims that modernization leads to a decrease in the social significance of religion. Three patterns of modernization are crucial in this process: social differentiation, societalization and rationalization. Social differentiation refers to the process in which specialist institutions are developed to handle specific functions previously carried out by one institution (religion). “The differentiation of lifeworlds encourages a differentiation of metaphysical and salvational systems along lines more suited to each class or social fragment.” Secondly, societalization, by which life is organized more societally (in *society*), rather than locally (in the *community*), allows religion to become privatized. Religion is no more a matter of necessity, but “a matter of preference”. The third

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<sup>1</sup> In Turkey, polity-separation secularization did not occur, since religion maintained its position within the state apparatus after the foundation of the new Republic. The secularization reforms in Turkey are, however, good examples of polity-expansion secularization whereby the Republican elite removed religion from all social and economic domains of life. The third category, political-culture secularization, is difficult to apply to countries such as Turkey and Russia, which did not experience the Renaissance and Enlightenment processes. Political culture in Turkey was secularized in a top-down manner. This condition is a consequence of polity-dominance secularization in Turkey, where secularization had not appeared as a social force at the periphery, but rather in the top-down policies of the Republican elite at the center. The Kemalist revolution was also successful in terms of political-process secularization to a great extent. Despite some fluctuations in political orientation, religion has in general remained relatively marginal to political matters.

important process, rationalization, involves changes in the way people think and act and entails “the pursuit of technically efficient means of securing this-worldly ends.” Consequently, the growth in technical rationality and technology displaced supernatural considerations. (Bruce and Wallis, 1992: 11-14)

The revisionist model of the secularization thesis criticizes the orthodox model basically upon empirical evidence. (see Brown, 1992) Instead of a unilinear classical understanding, the revisionists claim that the social significance of religion can rise and fall according to the social and economic context. Moreover, religion does not necessarily have a negative correlation with the growth of human knowledge and rationality, and with urbanization and industrialization. In fact, religion can suffer as a result of dramatic social and economic changes, but it can eventually adapt itself to the new setting. (Brown, 1992: 55-56) In short, they claim that secularization, rather than diminishing the significance of religion, encourages it to take different forms.

It will also be useful to evaluate secularization in terms of its position among different theoretical approaches to the church-state relationship. According to Vergin (1994: 5-23), with regard to the relationship between the state and religion, four main groups of theoretical views can be identified. The first group sees the state as subordinate to religion. The state has no existence independent from religion and is based on norms derived religion. Thinkers who were also the members of clergy, such as Calvin and Luther, developed this view. The second group gives primacy to the state and sees religion as subordinate to the state. Influential political philosophers including Machiavelli, Hobbes, Montesquieu and Rousseau adhered to this view. They sometimes speak of religion serving the state, and sometimes claim

that the state should determine religion. The third group demands the full divorce of state and religion. Locke and de Tocqueville, in particular, exemplifies this more liberal outlook, which sees state and religion as different and independent domains. De Tocqueville says the state has no competence in religion, and religion should be free and should have an autonomous area in society. This tradition of secularization developed particularly in Anglo-American traditions. The last view, offered by August Comte, not only claims the primacy of state over religion, but also offers a new religion for society. For him, humanity had replaced God although his functions were still valid. What Comte offered was nothing other than a secularized religion based on atheistic-humanistic tenets. This form of secularization differs from the previous three views. For example, it allows for the interference of the state in religious matters, and strongly indicates that the state has the right to make judgments on religious issues and to impose these upon society. This is what has been called “laicism” and has developed primarily on the basis of the French political experience. The instances in which the state develops an alternative ideology and imposes it on society fall into this category.

The form of secularization in a given place and time depends upon the political culture in question, particularly the autonomy of the state vis-à-vis civil society. The weaker the state is, the more liberal a form of secularization develops, and in such “stateless societies,” the state-church separation takes place in a relatively peaceful manner in the course of the secularization process. (Dyson, 1980: 51) This form of secularization characterizes the Anglo-American traditions. Conversely, it is highly possible to find an extreme secularity in state-dominated societies, along with deep

conflicts and confrontations in the secularization process. This is the case in France and to some extent in Turkey.

Within this framework, Martin E. Marty's classification of the different experiences of secularization provides useful categories for understanding these traditions of secularization in different contexts. Marty (1969: 10) differentiates continental secularity from the Anglo-American tradition of secularity on the basis of the state's attitude towards religion. In continental Europe, particularly in France, we observe "maximal secularity," which "involved a formal and unrelenting attack on gods and churches and a studied striving to replace them." In the Anglo-American historical experience, there was a gradual and increasing disregard of gods and churches without attempts to replace them. He calls this type of secularism "mere secularity." In England and the United States, a smooth reconciliation between the state and religion has occurred in the process of the formation of modernity.

As an ideal example of a weak state tradition, the English form of secularization did not produce a radical secularist attitude towards religion. Unlike the case of France, "the Protestantism of England has prevented any massive confrontation of religion with secular radicalism." (Martin, 1978: 123) The English secularists were not against religion; rather, their goal was the separation of the state and the "church." They demanded to establish a national church, not to destroy the religious establishment.

As the best example of the strong state tradition in the West, the French state has always been suspicious of religion. Secularism can be seen as the primary indicator of progress in the state-building process in France, marking the step-by-step separation of the state from all other social systems. (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983:

110) It was not surprising that the Revolution took harsh measures against established religion and instituted legal secularization in a decisive manner. The numbers of the clergy were reduced, the religious orders were banished, and the church lands were taken under state control. Education was removed away from the control of the church. (Marty, 1969: 23)

In short, two modes of secularism evolved from two different contexts and state traditions. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xv) The French model of secularism is antireligious 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. The first model sees the state as the agent of social change and the source of the “good” life, whereas the second treats the state with suspicion and sees civil society as the source of change and of the “good” life.

In Turkey, then, the experience of secularism, is apparently not that which occurred in the Anglo-Saxon world, where the state simply claimed no say on the issue of religion, which was increasingly being transferred to the realm of the “private.” The Turkish model is much closer to French “laicism,” in which religion is not separated from something called public life, but rather dominated by a state that considers itself to be founded on principles not grounded in a “religious” regime of power and knowledge. (Silverstein, 2003) It is not an accident that the picture in Turkey resembles to that of France, since both societies have similar state traditions. Because of the lack of peripheral feudal forces in its past, the state in Turkey is even stronger

than that of France; thus, one comes across a more extreme form of secularism, which is all but absent in Western countries.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **OTTOMAN LEGACY**

There is a considerable literature about the Turkish nation-state's link with its Ottoman past. (for instance, see Zürcher, 1993; Shaw and Shaw, 1977; Özbudun, 1996) The Turkish Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire a strong state tradition and a weak civil society, and the bureaucratic elite continued to conceive of the state as vital for holding together the community. (Heper, 1985: 16) The creation of the new republic was involved addressing the heritage of the Ottoman Empire. The founders of the nation-state aimed to break away from the influence of its predecessor in many terms. Nevertheless, the early Turkish Republic can be better understood as a re-construction of existing religious and political legitimacy structures through the creation of a new nation-state. Thus, it is important for this study to elaborate what we should understand about the Turkish state tradition inherited from the Ottomans.

*Devlet*, the Turkish equivalent of the term “state,” linguistically refers to bliss, felicity and luck. Therefore, it is an old usage of the same word that people used in greeting others, saying “*devletle, ikbal ile*” (with bliss and fortune). It means God-sent blessing (*nimet*), as well. (Banarlı, 1985: 9) The word *devlet* is used in the well-known couplet of the Suleyman the Magnificent with two different meanings:

Halk içinde muteber bir nesne yok **devlet** gibi

Olmaya **devlet** cihanda bir nefes sıhhat gibi <sup>2</sup>

As Özbudun’s study clearly shows, the state has been considered as a sublime entity in both popular and official usage:

The state is valued in its own right, is relatively autonomous from society, and plays a tutelary and paternalistic role. This paternalistic image is reflected in the popular expression *devlet baba* (father state). Another popular saying is *Allah Devlete, Millete zeval vermesin* (may God preserve the State and the Nation). Ottoman writings on politics and government are replete with such terms as *Devlet-i Aliye* (Sublime State), *hikmet-i hükümet* (raison d’etat), and *Devletin ali menfaatleri* (sublime interests of the State). Such notions readily found their place in the political discourse of the Turkish republic. Indeed, the preamble of the 1982 Turkish constitution described the State (always with a capital S) as *kutsal Türk Devleti* (sacred), adding that no thoughts or opinions could find protection against “Turkish national interests” – presumably meaning state interests as defined by the state apparatus. (Özbudun, 2000: 128)

Some scholars of Turkish history argue that the Turkish state tradition resembles the shepherd-flock metaphor. One of them, İsmet Bozdağ, explains that in the Turkish state tradition, the rulers have been considered as shepherds, and the ruled society as their flock. This understanding has to do with the responsibilities of the state, rather a humiliation of society. Without the flock, the existence of the shepherd is meaningless. The shepherd is responsible for the flock’s survival and maintenance. If something bad happens to the flock, the shepherd will be considered guilty and

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<sup>2</sup> Nothing is as worthy among people as the **state**  
No **blissing** can be like a breath of health

removed from his position. If, on the other hand, the shepherd can protect his flock from possible dangers and provide the conditions the flock needs, he can continue in his position. (Taşar, ny) This metaphor is actually a good illustration of the state-centered political culture of the Turkish society, where society is the submissive recipient and the state is the sole agent for development.

“Within the Islamic community of peoples Turks have had a special State tradition from the time they entered and controlled the Islamic world in the eleventh century.” This tradition can be defined as “recognition of the state’s absolute right to legislate on public matters.” (İnalçık, 1980: 7) Although the Turks have adopted the Arabic word for the “state”, in practice, the Turkish *devlet* is different from the Arabic *dawlah*. Count Ostorrog (1927: 42 in Ozay, 1990: 69-70), the legal advisor to the last Ottoman Sultan, outlined the Arabic and Turkish understandings of the state some eighty years ago:

The Arab mind remained inviolably faithful to the following fundamental conception [of legislation]: Legislative power belongs to the Calife; the Doctors of the Law, who interpret the Law, are the indispensable intermediaries between God and the Calife. The consequence of that conception was that no such thing as a Statue, an Edict, drafted in systematic legal shape and promulgated as binding, is to be found in the whole of Arab Mohammedan history.

Not so with the Turks. The Turkish Hans professed to be, and certainly were, very good Moslems, but from the outset they asserted their right to enact regulations that were to be obeyed because they so willed, because at the top of the document they deigned to write in their purple Imperial ink: *Mujebinje’amel oluna!* Which I think may be adequately translated by, ‘Be it acted as enacted’ – or because they caused their sign-manual *Tughra*, figuring the impression of their open hand, to head the document as a mark of its Imperial origin.

In a similar vein, the Ottoman state tradition is very different from the classical Islamic state tradition. According to Gerber (2002: 67-68), the Ottoman Empire

presents a new political reality, one that can be summarized as follows: First, the historical caliphate disappears, and the Ottoman sultan becomes the successor of the caliph. Second, the division between the actual and nominal ruler ceases to exist. The sultan is the real and nominal ruler, even at the nadir of the empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Third, political stability is sustained as never before in Islam, particularly since the late fifteenth century. There is not even a change of dynasty, no instance of power usurped by force, not one real break in the orderly succession of rulers. All this is “unprecedented in Islam”, and extremely unusual in world history. Fourth, with the division between *ulama* and ruler completely gone, the Ottoman state is, on the whole, highly legitimate. There are no known ideological attacks on its validity, whether by *ulama* or by other intellectuals; no governor of any province is known to have ever attempted formal separation from the empire. In fact, “as remarkable as the low level of legitimation of the late classical Islamic state is the high level of legitimacy of the Ottoman state, even in its latter days.” Lastly, the Ottoman Empire never saw itself, or depicted itself to others, as just another state, certainly not as just another Turkish state (*dawla turkiyya*). (Haarman, 1988, in Gerber, 2002) On the contrary, it was to a certain extent a rebuilding of the polity of the rightly guided caliphs, inasmuch as Islam never again geographically spread its message at such high speed as under the Ottomans. Even in relative decline, the Ottoman Empire stood as the only safeguard against the infidels. In other words, the Ottoman Empire was unique in Islam in being throughout its history “the cutting edge” between the *dar al-Islam* and the *dar al-harb*. This role was naturally an extremely potent factor in its legitimation. Gerber describes the Ottoman state as a novel model: “the non-caliphal, religiously relevant state.”

### **3.1 The Patrimonial and Bureaucratic Character of the Ottoman State**

According to Kazancıgil (1991: 349), the strong and centralized Ottoman state tradition was relatively unique among Islamic societies. Although the Ottoman state had a strong religious dimension, the legal role of Islam was often moderated by the state's pragmatic concerns. (Gerber, 1994: 76) Notions of the political and the religious were both ultimately derived from and closely connected to the state.

The Ottoman state, as one of the most enduring multi-religious and multi-ethnic empires, survived for half a millennium. The Ottomans tried to establish an immortal state which they called *Devlet-i Aliye-i Ebed-Müddet* (Eternal Sublime State). The state was the center of the polity and the source of justice as the famous Ottoman maxim (circle of justice) expressed by Naima: a ruler could have “no power without soldiers, no soldiers without money, no money without the well-being of his subjects, and no popular well-being without justice.” (İnalçık, 1964: 43)

According to Tursun Beg, a well-known Ottoman statesmen and historian of the late fifteenth century, “harmony among men living in a society” could be achieved only by statecraft. Every society should have one ruler with absolute power, and the authority to issue non-religious laws. The ruler should, at the same time, preserve the social order and ensure justice. These ideas constituted the political philosophy of the Ottoman state. The Ottomans maintained the traditional view that everyone should be kept in his appropriate place. (İnalçık, 1964: 3-4) Thus, there existed clear

boundaries between the center and the periphery. According to Halil İnalçık (1964: 5) Ottoman society was divided into two groups: 1) the *askeriya*, such as officers of the court, army, civil servants and *ulama*, to whom the Sultan delegated the religious and executive power, 2) the *reaya*, consisting of all Muslim and non-Muslim subjects who paid taxes but were excluded from administrative positions.

Again according to İnalçık (2000: 65-76), the Ottoman state tradition had two roots: the Central Asian and the Sassanid. Summarizing his findings, we may say that the Ottomans derived from their Central Asian roots the belief that the state existed through the maintenance of *törü* or *yasa* – a code of laws laid down directly by the ruler. In doing so, the Sultans from very early on unified political with legislative power. Similarly, the Ottomans and the Seljuks inherited from the Sassanids a political understanding that equated the state with the absolute authority of the sovereign and his maintenance of justice. The fairness of the government therefore ultimately depended on the sovereign's ethical qualities.

These Central Asian and Sassanid legacies, İnalçık argues, played an important role in the development of an Ottoman tradition of absolutism based on sultanic order, which often went beyond what Islamic law allowed. Accordingly, in the classical institutional structure of the Empire, the absolute nature of Ottoman political power was evidenced by the extent to which all civilian, military and religious officials depended directly on the Sultan. The state's ownership of the land and the presence of a centralized system of taxation were additional dimensions of Ottoman absolutism. Such a political and economic framework of centralist absolutism was designed essentially to hinder the development of peripheral feudal structures.

The Ottomans eliminated any potential alternative economic or political center of power. The accumulation of wealth could not pave the way to democracy, as it did in the West. As Özbudun (2000: 126) aptly states, the relationship between the economic and political powers in the Ottoman Empire was the opposite of that in western Europe: i.e., rather than economic power leading to political power, political power provided access to wealth. The accumulated wealth could not be transformed into private property, and it remained liable to be taken away by the state. The Ottomans never favored the development of a powerful merchant class. *Sipahis* (the fiefholders) and *ayans* were the nominal landowners, but ultimate ownership of the lands was still in the hands of the state. The *sipahis* were not land-based aristocracy, and their titles could be removed by the state. The *ayans*, on the other hand, lacked the political legitimacy of an aristocracy, in the sense of the feudal aristocracy in Western Europe. The local notables, who emerged during the later centuries, on the other hand, remained “local” in the real sense. In addition, because the Ottomans were constantly threatened by powerful Turcoman ghazis (warriors), they also pushed those warriors to the periphery so as to keep everyone in their place. (Heper, 1985: 15) In short, no important threat to the power of the state elites existed. The Kemalist elite would later benefit from this situation.

Keyder (1997) underlines the fact that because of “the absence of large landlords” and “the relative independence of the bureaucracy”, the Republican revolutionists did not face strong opposition in the early Republican period. In the absence of a strong landlord class that might have demanded economic liberalism and civil and political rights for its narrow constituency, no group in society found it possible to challenge

the absolutism of the state. In terms of political functioning, the polity of the Ottomans was “patrimonialism,” while the case in England was “centralized feudalism” in its past, and the French one, “decentralized feudalism”. “Whereas in both centralized and decentralized feudalism central authority is effectively checked by countervailing powers, in patrimonialism the periphery is almost totally subdued by the centre.” (Heper, 1985: 14)

Sunar (1974: 4) portrays the patrimonial character of the Ottoman Empire by a quotation from Machievelli’s *The Prince* (1950: 15-16):

Examples of these kinds of government in our time are those of the Turk and the King of France. All the Turkish monarchy is governed by one ruler, the others are his servants, dividing his kingdom into “sangiaccates”, he sends to them various administrators, and changes them or recalls them at his pleasure. But the King of France is surrounded by a large number of nobles, recognized as such by their subjects, and loved by them; they have their prerogatives, of which the king cannot deprive them without danger to himself.

Machiavelli admired the Ottoman paradigm of order particularly for its strength and durability. Political authority so penetrated the social sphere of life so that society was considered as being under the state, and the ruler closely controlled economic life. (Sunar, 1974: 5-6) The quoted passage points out that the sultan ruled through a body of officials having the legal status of household slaves. Taken from the adolescent children of Christian families and trained either by some Muslim families or within the sultan's palace, they had no substantially independent social identities or loyalties. The ministers of the Ottoman sultan, "being all slaves and bondsmen," were loyal and obedient servants of their master, but lacking any connection to the subject population, they could not "carry the people with them." The actual Ottoman slave official (*kul*), a product of specific measures of recruitment and training, took his place in a centralized bureaucracy. (For a detailed analysis see Meeker, 2002.)



These slave officials (*kul*) were unchallenged by any system of estates. There was no aristocracy ruling its own people and territory, and no bourgeoisie granted the privilege of governing its own cities. The sultan possessed a sovereign power, which any other monarch in early modern Europe never had.

Regarding the Oriental empires, Weber saw one line of political/bureaucratic development as theoretically moving toward patrimonial bureaucracy, which might, in turn, reach an extreme form in “sultanism”: “With the development of a purely personal administrative staff, especially a military force under the control of the chief, traditional authority tends to develop into patrimonialism”. Where absolute authority is maximized, it may be called “sultanism.” (Brown, 2000: 65) Although this part of the thesis tries to depict the patrimonial character of the Empire, one should also realize that the issue is not as simple as Weber’s concept of “sultanism”. An article by Halil İnalçık (1993: 16) states that while official Ottoman discourse depicted the sultan as above any law and authority, the reality was much more complicated. The masses possessed means to influence the sultan—for example, by deserting villages—and the government could not ignore such possibilities. In contrast to the theory that nothing restricted the sultan stands the claim that the sultan was in fact severely restricted by the concept of *adalet*, justice. In addition, the Islamic concept of *hisba* functioned as a social contract between the ruler and the ruled in order to assure the welfare of society. (İnalçık, 1993: 9-18)<sup>3</sup>

In addition to its centralized nature, the Ottoman Empire was a truly bureaucratic state as well. This characteristic is especially important in terms of the secularization

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<sup>3</sup> *Vienna Şikayet Defteri*, a book containing some 2500 complaints, all relating to the year 1675, sent by citizens from all over the empire to the sultan about wrongs committed primarily by officials, is a good example of the extension of the phenomenon of justice. (see Gerber, 2002: 79)

reforms during the Turkish Republic. For instance, Mardin (1997: 192) claims that Atatürk's secularization reforms had two antecedents in the Ottoman experience, which influenced his opinions as to the functions of religion in society and the methods, which he used to implement his ideas into policy. The first was the "empiricism of Ottoman secular officialdom", and the latter was legislation as the sole means of secularizing the country. In order to understand the former, one should look at the *adab* tradition.

On the basis of principles like 'necessity' and 'reason', as well as the norms of rationality, the Ottoman centre created a new viewpoint for the ruling elite. It was called *adab*; this was "a secular and state-oriented tradition" which "developed as a consequence of efforts 'to identify the state with established values'." (Heper, 1985: 25) The *adab* tradition was a kind of "organizational socialization" based upon a formulation of "a particular outlook that provided ideals and values for the ruling strata" and "developed as a consequence of efforts to identify the state with established values". It was so pervasive that from the seventeenth century on, the sultans lost their primacy, which was now attributed to the state itself. "The sultans could be now deposed in the name of the state." (Heper, 1981: 347) Heper (1985: 25) further argues that this institutionalization of the state around certain norms (*adab*) resembles the state institutionalization of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth century around such values as order, hierarchy, secularism and solidarism.

Mardin (1997: 194-197) describes the "bureaucratic style" of the Ottoman government as "hard-headed, empirically minded and pragmatic" as a result of their training, which was different from that of the *ulama*. The *ulama* were trained in a

specific curriculum in schools known as *medrese*, the graduates of which were expected to be scholars in one of the religious fields. They were very adept at finding religious justification for many activities, like the charging of interest, that were literally prohibited in the Koran. However, they still had some idealism in their thinking. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, were sent to government bureaus after their elementary education. Consequently, their perspective was shaped by the power struggles of the real world. All of the Westernizing developments of the later Ottoman period were the result of typical mentality of this secular Ottoman bureaucracy: their desire to restore the state's power and pragmatism, in the sense that if western institutions could strengthen the empire, they should be adopted. These bureaucrats, having usually come from the Ottoman recruitment system (*devşirme*), had no ties with any interest group. As slaves of the state, they struggled for the existence and supremacy of the state. This motivation caused them to approach other values in a pragmatic way. The next chapter will show that the founders of the new republic were of the same mentality.

### 3.2 State vs. Religion

Religion was not an alternative force to the empire's strong central administration. A considerable number of scholars think that it is difficult to consider the Ottoman state to have been a theocratic system because the laws of secular authorities, rather than religious instructions, dominated the system in the political and social contexts. (Ortaylı, 1986: 162) The Ottoman state was sovereign vis-à-vis Islam. One cannot deny that the aim of the state was to realize the ideals of Islam. In addition, religion in the Ottoman Empire linked the popular structures with the ruling institution, assuring the state's legitimacy. It was also as the sole source of social control the core of the socialization process. (Mardin, 1971: 205-206) However, while Islam was definitive in private matters, it was inadequate in terms of public policies. (Heper, 1985: 27) Islamic rule does not recognize corporate identities. The Ottoman religious class was not a corporate body, but dependent on the state for its appointments, promotions, and salaries. (Özbudun, 2000: 127) The members of the religious institutions were appointed and removed by the Sultan. "The *Şeyhülislam* had no right to interfere directly in the government or in legal administration." (Heper, 1985: 27) In addition, the Ottomans, following the earlier Turkic-Iranian tradition, could take measures that conflicted with the sacred law, if the public interest required it. Heper argues that the Ottomans incorporated "the early Turkic idea of a supreme law (*yasa/yasak*) that the ruler had to enforce with justice regardless of his personal wishes". As a derivative of *yasa*, the Sultans developed *örf-i sultani*, which refers to the will and command of the sultan as a secular ruler. (Heper, 1985: 24-25)

In this respect, the Turkish Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire a long-standing tradition of *raison d'état*, which often emphasized state hegemony over religion. In the Ottoman context, such political supremacy over the religious realm was achieved through the incorporation of the Islamic establishment into the administrative apparatus of the empire. In apparent continuity with Ottoman patterns, secularism in modern Turkey did not attempt to separate state and religion. Instead, the Republican regime maintained tight control over the religious establishment by monopolizing Islamic functions and incorporating the religious personnel into the state bureaucracy. Analyzing this historical continuity will therefore greatly improve our understanding of Turkish laicism, as well.

Throughout Islamic history, state control over the Muslim religious establishment became so pervasive that the *ulama* virtually became an arm of government. (Brown, 2000: 35) In comparison to other Muslim states, *ulama* were more clearly integrated into the state apparatus in the Ottoman Empire. Considering their control over the educational, judicial and administrative network, one can conclude that they acted as agents of the state and ensured the state's control of social life. "Ottoman government was therefore both 'Islamic' and 'bureaucratic'." (Mardin, 1997: 194)

While the Ottomans may have sought to give a religious appearance to their policies and actions, in reality they exercised their power over different ethnicities and religions in rather secular ways. Their policies and actions, in short, largely responded to political, economic, and social necessities. "Here perhaps lies the secret of the longevity of an empire that privileged the political over the religious factor in its pre-modern forms." (Nalbantoğlu, 1993: 355) Mardin (1983: 138-140) describes

this attitude by saying that the *raison d'état* in the empire was the foundation of political practice, and that the Ottoman state always had primacy in the well-known formula of *din-u devlet* (*din wa dawlah*).

Religion, in the centralized political and economic context of the Ottoman Empire served to legitimize state power. Indeed, starting with its backing by the majority of the Turkic tribes in Central Asia, Islam came to play an important role in the consolidation of central authority. Most importantly, the new religion brought with it means of sociopolitical control and a belief system that proved more appropriate than the mystical and “esoteric” world of shamanism for the functioning of patrimonial kingdoms. As a result, Turkish states like the Seljuk strongly encouraged conversion to Islam throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries and began to defend its core values. (Taşpınar, 2002: 11)

In addition, the new religion’s devotion to *gaza* – the ideology of holy war in the name of Islam— well suited the “nomadic” and “combative” culture of Turkic principalities bordering the Byzantine Empire. During the centuries that followed the Seljuk defeat of the Byzantine army in 1071, the religious motivation of *gaza* motivated Turkmen tribes, including the Ottomans, to conquer the Christian lands of Asia Minor. It is therefore important to note that conversion to Islam —beyond the undeniable religious convictions involved— had a functional dimension aimed at territorial expansion and stabilization of political authority. (Taşpınar, 2002: 11-12)

Since Islamic values took root in Ottoman society, the Shari’ah emerged as a sort of “social contract” between the state and its Muslim population. In that sense, an

Islamic moral and legal framework came to play an important role in supporting the patriarchal machinery of the state. Yet, the founding dynasty remained reluctant to let Islam determine the political and legal limits of state power. Given the mobilizing power of religion, even the ulama —the guardians of Islamic law— could become suspect in the eyes of Ottoman rulers. With such a cautious frame of mind, the Ottoman answer to all potential threats coming from Anatolian society was to establish bureaucratic control over the religious establishment. In that sense, the Ottoman sultans considered their patrimonial authority over the guardians of Islamic orthodoxy as a natural extension of state supremacy. In this framework, the members of the religious institutions were appointed and removed by the Sultan. (Heper, 1985: 27)

The characteristic features of the mutually beneficial relationship between the ulama and the state involved integration and subordination. “High” and “proper” Islam, represented by the *Şeyhülislam* at the top of the *ulama* hierarchy, was incorporated into the state apparatus. The livelihood and office of the *Şeyhülislam*, like those of the rest of the religious class, were granted by the state, and the Sultan determined the path he traveled in his career. The *Şeyhülislam*, as the supreme religious official and head of judicial system, sat on the Imperial Council. However, despite his high position within the state hierarchy, he could, like all government officials, be easily dismissed during any serious conflict with the Sultan. For instance, Özek (1962: 42 in Taşpınar, 2002: 15) gives the case of a *Şeyhülislam*, who in 1702 tried to obtain for himself the position of Grand Vizier and paid for his presumption with his life. Another example comes from İnalçık (1964: 43-44), telling how “once, when Şeyhülislam Ali Cemali Efendi came over the seat of the government to protest a

decision of Sultan Selim I, which he thought contrary to the Shari'ah, the Sultan denounced him as interfering in state affairs.” The *Şeyhülislam*, hence, had no right to interfere directly in the governmental affairs.

In the eyes of the religious establishment, the legitimacy of the state came from its ability to protect the Islamic realm. Therefore, endangering the state, by definition, made a movement heretical. In this political framework, the religious class could very rarely object to the secular laws related to the administrative functions of the state. Ultimate authority and sovereignty rested with Ottoman palace officials and with the Sultan himself. As Mardin (1991: 116) argues,

Trained in the religious seminary (the medrese), the ulama had to endure a period of practical apprenticeship to assuage their shock as they discovered that the rule of Muslim law did not discover all cases brought before them, and that there existed an Ottoman reason of state which operated independently of Islamic values.

The Ottoman *raison d'état* was in historical continuity with the previously mentioned Central Asian-Turkic precepts of *Yasa*. Accordingly, the Sultan could make regulations and enact laws entirely on his own initiative. These laws, independent of the Shari'ah and known as *Kanun* or *Örf-i Sultani*, as mentioned previously, were based on rational rather than religious principles and were enacted primarily in the spheres of public, administrative and criminal law as well as state finance. (Berkes, 1998: 185) Secular lawmaking by the rulers was based on the Islamic conception of *Urf*. “This theory stated that where the Shari'ah did not provide a solution to existing problems, the measuring rods of ‘necessity’ and ‘reason’ could be used to enact regulations with force of law”. (Mardin, 1962: 102) Moreover, in practice, one can observe some *Kanuns* contrary to the Shari'ah. For instance, while in Islamic law, punishment of adultery for a married person was death by stoning (*recm*), in the



Ottoman *Kanuns*, adulterers were charged to pay “according to their means— three hundred *akces* [Ottoman lira] for the middle-income group, and one hundred *akces* for the poor. For illegal sexual relations, unmarried persons were fined one hundred, fifty, forty, or thirty *akces*, according to their means.” (İnalçık, 1973: 74)

Given the supremacy of the state over the religious realm, it is not hard to imagine the Ottoman *Şeyhulislam* and other members of *ulama* being involved in the intellectual exercise of fitting the *Kanun* within the proper Islamic framework. Türköne (2003: 182) exemplifies this with a case from Ottoman history that concerned putting a stamp on promissory notes. When the Spanish ambassador somehow saw a contradiction in terms of religious concerns, the *Reisül-küttab* of Selim III, Ebubekir Ratıp Efendi, replied to this objection by stating that every benefit can be justified in religious terms. (*Her maslahatın vech-i şer’isi bittaharri bulunabilir*) As another example, in summarizing the position of Ebu Suud Efendi, an Ottoman *Şeyhulislam*, Mandaville (1979: 298 in Gerber, 2002: 73) says: “What appears is an appeal to continued popular usage (*ta’amul* and *ta’aruf*), to the welfare of the people (*istihsan*), and to both throughout with a tone of ‘Let’s be practical,’ an appeal to commonsense.” What these words meant in real terms is made clearer in the detailed letter of a Sufi sheikh to the sultan: “God’s legislation has no other purpose than to ease the way of His servants through the exigencies of the time... One uses inadmissibility at times because it is better for the people of that time, at other times one does the opposite.” He further cites an opinion that says: “Be guided by whatever is more harmonious with how the people are living, what is kinder, better for them.” (Mandaville, 1979: 302-303 in Gerber, 2002:73)

What partly facilitated the Ottomans' being able to maintain the state's supremacy and open a secular space in which to legislate, was the nature of the religion they adopted. Ottomans were Sunni, a sect within Islam that allows enough room for new judgments in accordance with new necessities. Moreover, in the Sunni tradition, administration is not a primary (*aslî*) issue, but rather a secondary (*talî*) concern. The Shia tradition, on the other hand, takes the issue of *imamet* as being of primary importance. (Türköne, 2003: 253) Additionally, in the Sunni understanding, the existence of the state is more important rather than its quality. For instance, Mawardi, a distinguished Islamic scholar of the eleventh century, claimed that if someone takes political power through coercion and violence, one should evaluate his subsequent behavior. If he acts within the scope of religious rules and of justice, his acts can be approved for the sake of preventing divisions and chaos within the *umma*. (Türköne, 2003: 256) This approach enabled Muslim rulers to act according to their own will.

In this framework, orthodox Islam had only narrow opportunities to develop into a source of opposition. As a result, in contrast to what was going on in western Europe, there was no Ottoman equivalent of the confrontational relations between state and church. The Ottomans succeeded in creating a strong state where power was centralized in the hands of the Sultan and a group of officials entirely loyal to him.

On the basis of these findings, as Heper (1981: 348) states, in the Ottoman Empire “there was little need for ‘institutional secularization as disengagement’, or change from ecclesiastical control to public administration, because the state as a distinct entity, with ‘sovereignty’ and ‘autonomy’, and supporting resources, always existed.”

Even in the sixteenth century, at the height of Islamic influence, the Empire was not a real theocracy.

### 3.3 The Impact of Modernization

The Westernization reforms are the most lingering example of the Ottoman legacy because Kemalism was “an intensification of this earlier modernization trend.” It was not “an alien model imported from the West”, but a result of historical processes that occurred through the Empire’s interactions with Europe. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 3) Obviously, the Kemalist Republic is much different from the Ottoman Empire. However, Atatürk and his friends did not directly import their ideas from the West; rather, they used the intellectual treasury accumulated by Ottoman reformers up to that time. Furthermore, “Kemalism constituted a continuum with the *Tanzimat*, Young Ottomans and Young Turks, insofar as its major concern was the state, considered as the unique mediating mechanism and source of legitimacy in the society, prevailing over market relations.” (Kazancıgil, 1997: 37, 48) In the Turkish Republic, the bureaucratic elite continued to conceive of the state as being vital to hold the community together. (Heper, 1985: 16)

When analyzing the impact of the Westernization process during the Ottoman period on political developments in the Republic, one should keep in mind the specific features pointed out below. Differently from other countries of the so-called third world, Turkey initiated the modernization process under its own state apparatus. The Turkish modernization process is different in some ways from its precursors. One of its distinct features is that the administrative elite took “the survival of the state” as its primary concern throughout the modernization process. In the interaction between the public and the ruling elite, the priority of the state has remained a common space, as in the old traditions. The second point appears a logical consequence of the first

one. Modernization efforts occurred in order to strengthen the state and making it compatible with the West, or at least to enable it to survive. The sovereignty of the state would be preserved through the modernization of society; therefore, modernization has been perceived as the concern of the state. Such a perception explains why modernization projects have been planned by the state and implemented in a top-down manner. Throughout Ottoman history, each initiative was handled by the state. Moreover, contrary to developments in the Western Europe, there were no classes that would be able to resist on the basis of their interests. (Ahmad, 1986: 34) The reforms were discussed and implemented only by the military-bureaucratic elite, who did not feel the need to expand their ideas into the broader society. In addition, modernization was perceived by Ottoman intellectuals as Westernization. Beyond that, throughout the nineteenth century, what they meant when talking about the West was in fact only France. This is one reason of why Turkish secularization resembles the French case so much. They were so eager to imitate France that, as Türköne (2003: 23) relates, after “civilization” entered into “*Dictionnaire de l’Academie Française*” in its present meaning, the Ottoman elite invented the equivalent “*medeniyet*” only two years later.

The realization that the West was superior to the Ottomans dawned first during wars, and gradually this opinion was applied beyond the military matters to the social life. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Ottomans were well aware that they had begun to lose battles, mainly against the Austrians and Russians, which they used to win. The situation as it presented itself to the Ottomans was essentially this: "Given that it is a fact that we are in possession of the true faith, why are we losing wars to infidels?" (Silverstein, 2003) The question was considered to be essentially a

technical one involving expertise and equipment, and the eventual strategy was the well-known reorganization of the military beginning with Selim III's *Nizam-i Jedid* in the late eighteenth century. Selim III (1789-1807) has been regarded as initiator of Westernization in the Empire; however, his reforms aimed only to restore military power. "Despite his personal conservatism, Selim III created in Ottoman society a trend toward Westernization and a sense of the necessity for rapid and progressive change." (İnalçık, 1964: 10-11) The reforms continued under the *Tanzimat* after Mahmud II's destruction of the Janissary corps in 1826. (For a classical treatment, see Berkes, 1964) The importance of the reforms initiated by Mahmud II should not be underemphasized. Under his rule, there came about

the emergence of the idea of an Ottoman state, composed of peoples of diverse nationalities and religions, based on secular principles of sovereignty as contrasted with the medieval concept of an Islamic empire. The real beginning of modernization and secularization was in this charge. (Berkes, 1964: 90)

Mahmud II (1808-1839) increased the pace of the Westernization reforms, and removed the Janissary corps and put a modern army in its place. During his reign, the *Sened-i İttifak* (Covenant of Union) was signed in 1808 to settle the conflict between the center and the *ayans*, the local notables. Like Magna Carta, it limited the Sultan's power to some extent, but to be sure, it was not a preparation for a liberal democracy. The *ayans* were later suppressed brutally. It should be, however, noted that the state but not the sultan himself was regarded as party to the agreement. He soon restored the state's power. (İnalçık, 1964: 12-14)

It is important to recognize that the incorporation of modern techniques into the Ottoman administration did not take place as a result of colonialism, but rather as sovereign state reform on the part of a Muslim polity. Moreover, this process did not

appear to have been experienced by the Ottomans as a capitulation to the enemy's "cultural imperialism" even in later periods, as Keyder (1993:22) has pointed out: "Unlike other nationalists of the Third World, the Ottomans did not feel particularly resentful toward the West." Nevertheless, one should note that all of the developments were the efforts around the typical goal of the secular Ottoman bureaucracy: the restoration of the state's power. (Mardin, 1997: 197) If Western institutions could strengthen the empire, they would be adopted. What was new in this adoption of the techniques of modern disciplines was the relative authority and prestige accorded to this knowledge. Silverstein (2003) argues that this is the origin of the arrangements that later was called secularism in Turkey, and which in the Turkish context does not so much represent the separation of religion from something called public life, but refers in practice primarily to institutional issues of "how much power is to be accorded to those whose authority derives from their knowledge of the Islamic tradition". The question, as it posed itself to the Ottomans and to the early Republican generations who had just fought three wars over the course of little more than a decade for their own survival, was not a philosophical one, nor was it an identity issue. (For a detailed discussion see Silverstein, 2003 and Türköne, 2003.)

In a similar vein, the conditions, which moved the Ottoman ruling elite to enact the Tanzimat Decree, represented as the main turning point for Westernization, were, in general, security concerns. The Ottoman statesmen believed that in order to stop the Egyptian armies, which had come as far as Kütahya, they had to modernize the country. Modernization was for them, first of all, a security issue. (Türköne, 2003: 72) Accordingly, after the defeat of the armies of Mahmud II by Ali Pasha of Egypt

in 1838 and 1839, a new generation of reformers emerged “to save the state from total destruction”. (Heper, 1985: 25) The reformers were mostly from the bureaucracy whose members were trained within the *kul* system. The Tanzimat reform period (1839-1876), which was based on Sultan Mahmud II’s (1808-1839) reforms, was initiated with the Gülhane Imperial Edict of 1839 through the efforts of those bureaucrats. Some important changes were launched within the administrative, military, legal and education systems. (Özdalga, 1998: 7) “Equality before the law and the securing of life, honor, and property for all subjects were the revolutionary ideas in the rescript.” (İnalçık, 1964: 19) In fact, *Tanzimat* reformers wanted to westernize the administration, while preserving the traditional institutions like Shari’ah. Later, radical Westernists would blame the reformers of the Tanzimat period for this “dualism.” (İnalçık, 1964: 224)

The last century of the Empire witnessed the rise of, basically, three ideological orientations that influenced the political framework of the Empire during some periods of this time: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Ottomanism and Pan-Turkism. In order not to overstep the framework of the subject at hand, only one aspect will be highlighted; which is that although these three appear as totally different ideologies, they coincided in their target: they all aimed to save the state. The destruction of the old state was never an option. The primacy of the state remained even during this shaky era. (see Türköne, 2003)

The modernization process was going on in the hands of the changing elites in power who ascribed these different ideologies. The First Constitutional Period (1876- 1878) was important but only a “short-lived exception.” Following the Young Turk



Revolution in 1908, the Second Constitutional Period was initiated. In 1913, the Committee of Union and Progress (the Young Turks) staged another coup d'état one year after being removed from power. (Özdalga, 1998: 8) Not surprisingly, the administrative elites who were instrumental in the establishment of this Republic had been born and launched their careers in the late Ottoman environment, i.e. during the reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909) and, especially, the subsequent Young Turk regimes of the Committee of Union and Progress (1908-1918). (Silverstein, 2003) The Young Turks deserve special attention, since they were the precedents of the Republican elite in terms of ideology.

The major characteristics of the nationalist Young Turks, who were trained in secular schools, were: a) absolute 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) a passion for elite rule. Owing to these three characteristics- positivism, statism, and elitism- the Young Turks were neither liberal nor democratic. They were indeed strong Westernists. According to Abdullah Cevdet, one of the pioneering intellectuals of the Young Turks, “there is no second civilization; civilization means European civilization, and it must be imported with both its roses and its thorns”. (Lewis, 1968: 236 in Özdalga, 1998: 9)

In addition, like the former ones, the political elites of the Young Turks saw themselves as the basic force to change the Empire, and the Ottoman-Turkish society as a project. The people could be only the objects of this project. (Kasaba, 1997: 24) Although they 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 at expanding the social basis of the Ottoman state. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx) The oft-quoted dictum “How can the state be saved?” belongs to the Young Turks. “It is no exaggeration to say that for them, constitution and parliament were a *means* to further the modernization process by making the subjects into stakeholding citizens, rather than an *end* in themselves.” (Atabaki and Zürcher, 2004: 3) Their commitment to the parliamentarism is not for the sake of freedom, but it represents their aim to strengthen the state. (Köker, 2004: 130) “As a result, the legacies of an authoritarian state structure and a new administrative military-civilian bureaucratic style punctuated the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.” (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx)

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TURKISH NATION UNDER “CONSTRUCTION” TOWARD A SECULAR COUNTRY

*“The irony of history is that for centuries the Turks, who symbolized Muslim and barbarian -the ‘other’ for Europeans- now tried to enter the circle of the ‘civilized.’ And, even more ironically, they have had to reinvent their own ‘barbarians,’ those who are considered an obstacle to civilization who were first the Muslims and today the Kurds.”*  
(Göle, 1996b: 23)

Kemalist reforms were a consequence of the Westernization process that started early in the Tanzimat period, and they did not envisage a totally “alien model imported from the West.” (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 3) As Kazancıgil (1997: 48) also points out, Kemalism displays strong continuity with the modernization process after the Tanzimat period since it too was centered around the state, which was considered as the sole agent of political activity and the only source of legitimacy.

In terms of illustrating the continuity in the concept of modernization between the Ottoman past and the new Republic, Abdullah Cevdet's article entitled "A Very Wakeful Sleep", written in 1911, is a remarkable example. Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), one of the forerunners of Westernism and of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress, and an Ottoman medical doctor of Kurdish origin, envisaged a "dreamland" which would later be realized by Atatürk and his followers:

... the fez would be abolished, and a new head-gear adopted; existing cloth factories would be expanded, and new ones opened, and the Sultan, princes, senators, deputies, officers, officials, and soldiers made to wear their products; women would dress as they pleased, though not extravagantly, and would be free from dictation of interference in this matter by ulema, policemen, or street riff-raff; they would be at liberty to choose their husbands, and the practice of match-making would be abolished; convents and *tekkes* [dervish lodges] would be closed, and their revenues added to the education budget, all *medreses* would be closed, and new modern literary and technical institutes established; the turban, cloak &c., would be limited to certificated professional men of religion, and forbidden to others; vows and offerings to the saints would be prohibited, and the money saved devoted to national defence; exorcists, witch-doctors, and the like would be suppressed, and medical treatment for malaria made compulsory; popular misconceptions of Islam would be corrected; practical adult education schools would be opened; a consolidation and purified Ottoman Turkish dictionary and grammar would be established by a committee of philosophers and men of letters; the Ottomans, without awaiting anything from their government or from foreigners would, by their own efforts and initiative, build roads, bridges, ports, railways, canals, steamships, and factories; starting with the land and *Evkaf* [religious foundations] laws, the whole legal system would be reformed. (Lewis, 1968: 236 in Özdalga, 1998: 5-6)

His dream would become real less than fifteen years later. This example demonstrates that we cannot assume a Kemalist revolution putting the Ottoman past aside. The new regime was established upon the Ottoman intellectual heritage.

## 4.1 Secularization: A Sine Qua Non for the Republic

Having left the War of Independence (1919-1922) successfully behind, the Westernist elite put into motion the steps to transform Turkey into a modern and secular nation-state. Unsurprisingly, the Kemalist principle of nationalism was contrary to Islam's universalistic conception of *umma*, the Muslim community. Atatürk wanted to establish a new state upon the ruins of the collapsed empire and a new culture in place of the old one that could not renew itself. (Timur, 1968: 9) Following the foundation of the new Republic in 1923, Mustafa Kemal initiated a series of reforms to build a homogeneous nation-state through eliminating ethnic and religious identities under the guidance of a state-determined Turkish nationalism. These reforms, known as Kemalism, sought to control religion, as well, to create a new order.

The Kemalist republic was born under peculiar historical circumstances. It was established over a "multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire". Therefore, the new elite assumed that national consciousness could be achieved by erasing the Ottoman past. The revolution, which drew much inspiration from the French model of secularization, adopted a strict secularism and the concept of a centralized nation-state in which citizenship is based on the rights of the individual rather than on any ethnic or religious identity. (Rouleau, 1996: 70) Secular citizenship was intended to create a homogenous nation committed to modernity. For this purpose, it was necessary to meld the various ethnic and religious differences into a national identity, through violence and suppression if need be. The Kemalist

republic tried to establish national unity by imposing a Latinized Turkish alphabet and promoting a new culture cut off from the Ottoman past.

In the Fourth Congress of the People's Republican Party in 1935, Mustafa Kemal codified his ideas and goals as "Kemalism," which consisted of six "eclectic" principles to guide the party and the state: nationalism, secularism, republicanism, statism, reformism, and populism. The Kemalist doctrine was informed by the dominant European authoritarian ideologies of 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, and secular homogenized society. Thus, fear of differences became the guiding principle of the Kemalist state. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx-xxi) Moreover, again owing to the impact of French positivism, the Kemalist project's sole legitimate agent of change was the state itself. Change is was acceptable only when carried out by the state. Thus, in the process of building a Kemalist state, any form of bottom-up modernization of civil society became a source of worry and suspicion.

The Kemalist version of laicism is not obviously an Anglo-Saxon understanding of secularism. (Yavuz, 2000: 33) Instead of being neutral on the question of the religious practices and beliefs of its citizenry, the laicist state, with its origins in the Jacobin tradition of the French revolution, seeks to remove all appearances of religion from the public sphere and put it under the strict control of the state. Kemalist ideology has historically justified this position by placing its progressive and modernizing mission in opposition to Turkey's Islamic heritage. This struggle

against the traditional “forces of darkness” uses a “militant laicism” to justify an authoritarian military-bureaucratic position.

One of the distinctions of the Kemalist revolution in comparison to other modernization movements in the Islamic world is its greater emphasis on secularism. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 3) In the late 1920s, laicism became the basic principle of the Kemalist project. The overemphasis on secularism in the Kemalist revolution is not without a basis, Toprak (ny: 2-4) says, and lists five reasons for this. First, unlike Christianity Islam favors the unity of the political and religious realms. Second, it has a great potential for mass mobilization. Religion, especially in traditional societies, usually becomes the only source of common identity. Third, the Ottoman past proves that Islam can lead to the resistance to modernization efforts. The role of Islam and the ulama was considered by the early republican political elite as the primary cause of the collapse of the empire. Fourth, the ulama had widespread functions in different fields such as law, education, and public policy. This illustrated for the republican elite “to what extent Islam could assume influences on social and political power.” Finally, the very beginning of the Republic showed how Islam could play a dominant role in protest and revolt against the new regime. Several revolts against the new regime took place in the name of Islam. Actually, Islam was the only possible source of opposition. The Kemalist elite was, therefore, very sensitive on the issue of religion.

In this framework, the year 1924 saw the abolition of the Caliphate. On 2 March the Grand National Assembly passed a law overthrowing the Caliph and his office, “the function of the Caliph being essentially included in the meaning and connotation of

the Government of the Republic”. All princes and princesses would have to leave Turkey within ten days. Other secularizing laws were also passed abolishing the office of the *Şeyhülislam* and the Ministry of Shari’ah and Religious Foundations, replacing it by a new Department of the Prime Ministers’ Office—the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Religious courts were abolished on 8 April, and on 20 April, the 1924 constitution was accepted. (Salahi, 1989: 107)

On April 10, 1928, amendments were made to the 1924 Turkish Constitution. These amendments constituted the clearest moves of that period toward the secularization of the Turkish state and society in legal terms. Through these amendments, which applied to Articles 2, 16, and 38, the provision stating that the official religion of Turkey was Islam was removed, and reference to Allah in the official oath was eliminated. Article 75 of the Constitution providing for freedom of religious convictions and philosophical beliefs and for the right to belong to different sects was amended in February 1937, by removing the word *sect*. Previously, in 1925, all religious articles of importance, such as the mantle of the Prophet Mohammed, were passed on to the Turkish museum of antiquities. The palaces of the Ottoman Sultans came under governmental control and were opened to the public. In 1935, ecclesiastical clothing worn by all men of religion was forbidden except in actual places of worship. (Kili, 1969: 47-48)

In general, beyond these constitutional amendments, under Atatürk’s guidance the parliament passed, in rapid succession, a number of important laws. Among these, probably the most revolutionary were those concerning education and the legal system. The educational reforms erased the religious element from all schools,



making secularized instruction compulsory; and, the legal reforms abolished all religious courts (Islamic, Christian and Jewish), setting up instead secular courts with new laws based largely on Swiss models. (Kadioğlu, 1996: 186) The significance of these revolutions can be seen in the fact that “in some of the other successor states of the Ottoman Empire, religious courts were abolished only much later - in Egypt, in 1956 - while in others they are still active, as in Israel and Lebanon.” (see Kadioğlu, 1996)

According to Toprak (1981: 9), the program of secularization was initiated in three phases. These phases were “symbolic secularization”, “institutional secularization” and “functional secularization”. *Symbolic secularization* launched transformations in many facets of national culture that had a symbolic identification with Islam. The most important secularization reform in this sphere, the changing of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin script, took place in 1928. Since the new regime regarded language as a connection with history, culture and sacred scripture, changing the alphabet was an “effective step towards breaking old religious traditions” and weakening the link with the past. (Shaw and Shaw, 1977: 33-35 in Toprak, 1981: 36) The acceptance of the Western hat and Western styles of clothing, the introduction of Western music in schools, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, and the change of the weekly holiday from Friday to Sunday were other manifestations of symbolic secularization in Turkey. (Toprak, 1981: 36-37)

The aim of *institutional secularization*, on the other hand, was to eradicate the institutional strength of Islam and prevent its possible interference in the political affairs of the new regime. The basic goal of the Kemalist elite was “to completely

free the polity from religious considerations. Islam was not supposed to have even the function of a ‘civil religion’ for the Turkish polity; Islam was not going to provide a transcendent goal for political life”. (Heper, 1981: 350) Therefore, institutional secularization was initiated through the abolition of the caliphate on March 3, 1924. In the same year, the state also abolished the office of *Şeyhülislam* and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations. By doing this, it tried to transform the *umma* into a secular national entity in order to erase religion as a common bond of solidarity. Finally, the Sufi movements and their activities were outlawed in 1925. With the abolition of the caliphate and other religious institutions, the principles of political legitimacy were changed to replace Islam with loyalty to the state as the source of political legitimacy. (Shaw and Shaw, 1977: 534)

The third phase of secularization in Turkey was *functional secularization*. It consists of two stages: legal and educational. (Toprak, 1981: 48) To accomplish legal secularization, the court system was secularized through the adoption of Western codes. It was an urgent step, because the Shari’ah Law was regarded as an obstacle to the westernization program. (Shaw and Shaw, 1977: 385) By eliminating this law, the pro-westernization elite intended to reduce the functions of Islam in the community.

The second stage of functional secularization was implemented in the educational system. Under the Law for the Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisat), enacted in 1924, all educational establishments were unified under the close control of the state. Finally, during the one-party period of Turkey’s early history Atatürk’s successors also implemented reforms that “introduced a certain mobility” into the

political domains of “institutional and cultural life, but (they came) at the cost of a serious break with Islamic heritage.” (Küçükcan, 2003: 489)

The case of religious education is worth attention. All the Islamic educational systems were closed in 1924, and the new education system was unified under the direction of the Ministry of Education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*). Accordingly, religious education was also put under the guidance of this ministry. A new Faculty of Theology was founded at the *Darülfünun* (the University of Istanbul) in 1924. Moreover, special schools were opened in Istanbul and twenty other places to train a new generation of imams and *hatips*. In 1933, the Faculty of Theology was closed down and turned into an Institute for Islamic Research. Similarly, in 1926 there were twenty schools for imams and *hatips*, but in 1932 only two were left (in Istanbul and Konya). Likewise, the number of students in these schools, which had reached 2,258 in 1924, declined to ten in 1932. (Özdalga, 1998: 19)

In public schools, religion had been taught at the primary and secondary levels, but after the third congress of the Republican People’s Party in 1931, when the principle of secularism was introduced into the party program, the government declared that religious education was the responsibility of the family, not the state. Accordingly, religion was taken away from the primary and secondary school curricula in 1935, and was not introduced again until 1948. (Özdalga, 1998: 19-20)

This situation can be explained best by Mardin’s (1971: 208-209) point:

The most important function of “official religion” was that it provided a legitimating framework for the religion of the lower classes. By replacing the official religion with the principle of laicism, Atatürk erased the possibilities of legitimation offered by the framework. The

little man's religion was thus placed in an ambiguous situation: tolerated but not secure. It was this tension which Atatürk hoped would work in favor of secularization in the long run.

In other words, religion, which was used especially to legitimize the War of Independence against the wishes of the Caliph and which was benefited during the early stages of the nation-building process, became subject to gradual decline by having limits placed on its opportunities to grow. This was because it was considered an obstacle to the development of a modern and secular nation-state.

## **4.2 The Goal of Secularization Reforms: Freedom of Religion or Freedom from Religion?**

The secularization reforms should be considered according to their relations to the fundamental goal of Atatürk and his future expectations. This positioning is crucial to understand the secularizing reforms of Atatürk. As Mardin (1971: 202) states well in his often quoted passage, the Kemalist revolution was not due to a discontented bourgeoisie, or peasant dissatisfaction. The taking away of feudal privileges was not a motivating factor, either. The target was the values of the Ottoman past. Despite its radical nature, however, the revolution did not aim to eradicate Islam in Turkey. It rather aimed at individualization and privatization of religion. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 5) It also eventually succeeded in that by mid-century “Islam ...had indeed become a matter for the private consciences of Turks.” (Mardin, 1997: 211)

Atatürk envisaged his ultimate goal for the nation as reaching to the level of contemporary civilization. (Timur, 1968: 96) The Kemalist reforms connected to secularism were, principally, aimed at bringing Turkey to the status of the advanced states of the world, and justified on the basis of the “requirements of contemporary civilization”. (Mardin, 1997: 210) In order to achieve the level of contemporary civilization, it was necessary to create a modern national state based on a national sovereignty. Western civilization was the sole address for the new regime, and what was considered an obstacle to this goal had to be eliminated. The institutional part of the reforms were instituted both to get rid of the old functionaries of the state who were preventing its secular development, and to create the new institutions required

for a modern state. The cultural (symbolic) side of the reforms, on the other hand aimed to create the socio-cultural ground for a modern national state, that is, to redefine the nation as a new political community.

The target of the social and cultural reforms was the creation of a new individual compatible with the modern national state and society. The public representation of the republican citizen was imagined centrally in such a way that he would resemble his western counterparts. From this perspective, the Westernization process was considered not only a simple search for modernization, but also a search for a totally new civilization. Therefore, the republican reforms took as their targets deeply rooted components of society such as religion, traditions, manners, style, values, and the like. This was a distinctive feature of republican reformism. As Mardin (1971: 202) aptly noted:

“The Turkish Revolution was not the instrument of a discontented *bourgeoisie*, it did not ride on a wave of peasant dissatisfaction with the social order, and it did not have as target the sweeping away of feudal privileges, but it did take as a target the values of the Ottoman *anci en regime*. In this sense it was a revolutionary movement.”

Lewis (1968: 406) states that “The basis of Kemalist religious policy was laicism, not irreligion; its purpose was not to destroy Islam, but to disestablish it --- to end the power of religion and its exponents in political, social, and cultural affairs, and limit it to matters of belief and worship.” The Kemalist principle of secularism did not advocate atheism. There was no destruction of religion in Kemalist Turkey, but religion and religious men were removed from areas, which they had traditionally controlled and asked to confine themselves to their own field. In short, it can be stated that the Kemalist principle of secularism did not involve abolition but de-

emphasis of Islam. The aim was to eradicate Islam's influence on public realms.

However, the reforms were still so radical that, as Lewis (1968: 410) notes that

Although the regime never adopted an avowedly anti-Islamic policy, its desire to end the power of organized Islam and break its hold on the minds and hearts of the Turkish people was clear. The prohibition of religious education, the transfer of mosques to secular purposes, reinforced the lesson of the legal and social reforms. In the rapidly growing new capital, no new mosques were built.

Atatürk's main aim in the process of modernization was to change the basic structure of Turkish society and "redefine the political community". (Toprak, 1989: 39) He tried to remove society from an Islamic framework and introduce into it a sense of belonging to a newly defined "Turkish nation". (Eisenstadt, 1984: 9) To achieve this goal, Atatürk launched a movement of cultural westernization to provide the Turkish nation with a new world view that would replace its religious culture. (Mardin, 1997: 191-212) He viewed the separation of religion and politics as a prerequisite to open the doors to Western values. Therefore, secularism became one of the central tenets of Atatürk's program to accomplish modernization. As a part of this secularization policy, Atatürk initiated a major operation against the Islamic institutional and cultural influences in society. It was followed by the introduction of secularism into the Turkish Constitution during the single-party period of Republican People's Party rule. (Turan, 1991: 31-34) Secularization reforms undertaken during the first decade of the new republic aimed at minimizing the role of religion in every aspect of Turkish society. The motive behind this was to reduce the societal significance of religious values and to eventually disestablish cultural and political institutions shaped by Islam. (Mardin, 1983: 142)

In Kemalist Turkey, as was supposed to be due to the requirements of modernization, religion and religious institutions were removed from areas which did not fall within the “proper” sphere of their activity, such as education and law, and secular concepts and institutions were substituted. Historical experience with the religious faction’s opposition to modernization had a profound impact on the formulation of the Kemalist principle of secularism as well. The application of Kemalist secularism involved not only separation of state and religion and the severing of traditional ties between religion and education and law. In addition, the Presidency of Religious Affairs was attached to the office of the Prime Minister, and the Kemalist government assumed the right of interference, whenever necessary, for the purpose of controlling religion and in order to prevent the religious-conservative faction from attempting to play its traditional role in Turkish society. (Kili, 1969: 104-105) In this sense, Atatürk unrelentingly stood against any conservatives who might aim to link between Islam and politics: “The government of the Turkish National Assembly is national and materialistic: it worships reality. It is not a government willing to commit murder or drag the nation into the swamps in search of useless ideologies.” (Karal, 1997: 22)

“Under the Republican regime, secularism became a positivist ideology designed to liberate the Turks’ minds from the hold of Islam so as to allow them to acquire those rudiments of contemporary civilization considered to be desirable.” (Karpat, 1985: 407) In fact, excluding Islam’s universalistic claims for the state was the most important aspect of Atatürk’s secularism, because in doing so the scope of secularism was extended beyond the simple separation of the state and religion. Unsurprisingly, alternative sources for the formation of a new identity and a new ethic were then



needed. What was substituted for Islam was a Turkish nationalism made up of “positivistic” and “solidaristic” tenets. (Karpas, 1959: 254) Atatürk, as well, explains his aim in the *Nutuk*, his well-known speech, as the replacement of religion by Turkish nationalism,:

“What is the Turkish Revolution? This Turkish Revolution, a word that includes the reversal of the system of Government, means a fundamental transformation. Our present Constitution has become the most perfect, abolishing those old forms, which have lasted for centuries. The common bond that the nation has now found between individuals and communities for its general welfare and existence has changed the old forms and nature, which for centuries had existed. This means that the nation has united as individuals instead of being united by religion and as adherents of sects; now they are held together only by the bond of Turkish nationality. The nation has accepted as a principle an irrefutable fact that science and means are the source of life and strength in the field of international competition and only in modern civilization can these be found.” (Kili, 1969: 108)

In short, secularism in Turkey, unlike its Western counterparts, did not target bringing peace and stability to fighting religious groups; instead, it tried to modernize the state and homogenize society. The Kemalist principles of nationalism (i.e., the attempt to create a homogeneous nation) and secularism (i.e., the attempt to form a modern society based on rationalism) destroyed the multiethnic character of Turkish society by getting rid of Greeks and other Christian communities and by denying some ethnic groups their cultural rights. The source of Turkish political morality became nationalism, rather than religion, in service to the state. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xviii)

### 4.3 Secularization From Above

In simple terms, revolution is commonly defined as a totally drastic change either in the political and economic institutions, or in the culture or economy of a country. In Barrington Moore's reckoning, Kemalism was a "revolution from above", not a social revolution. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 5) The basic difference between "modernization from above" and "modernization as a self-generating societal process" is that in the former case the modernizers exert state power and are agents of the modernization process with their own interests. (Keyder, 1997: 37-38) In this sense, the "Turkish revolution was not a social revolution; rather, it combined features of a war of liberation and a political liberation." (Özbudun, 1997: 83)

The Kemalist project was launched by the modernizing elite who aimed to impose institutions and culture on the people of Turkey according to their own understanding of modernity. In Keyder's (1997) framing, this situation is very much tied to a fundamental feature in the continuity between the Ottoman modernizers and the founders of the Turkish state: the absence of large landlords and, therefore, the relative independence of the bureaucracy. The Ottoman capital eliminated all possible forces alternative to the strong center. Because of this absence, the guardians of the *ancien régime* were merely the nonreformist wing of the bureaucracy; the nationalist intelligentsia did not have to confront any serious opposition, either. Without a strong landlord class demanding economic liberalism and civil and political rights and the like, no group in society could challenge the absolutism of the state. In this respect, Turkish nationalism is an extreme example, in

which the masses remained silent and the modernizing elite did not attempt to accommodate popular resentment.

From another perspective, the main structural feature of the relationship between the state and society or religion has been the elitist political culture, which has been the ongoing characteristic of the Ottoman-Turkish polity. The bureaucratic elite has been the constitutive agent of this political culture; thus, neither the character of Turkish secularism nor the changes in the state-Islam relationship can be understood without looking at the role of and the changes in the attitude of the civil and military elites. The Turkish bureaucratic elite identified itself with the state and acted as the guardian of the state. This elitism appears as a consequence of the Turkish strong state tradition, in which it is the state (the state elite) that is responsible for social development, as the shepherd-flock metaphor represents.

Accordingly, the agents of Turkish modernization in Atatürk's view were the military-bureaucratic elites, who were in a position to show the true path to the people so that they would achieve rationality through education. Heper (1984: 86) argues that Atatürk believed in the capacity of the people to reach the level of contemporary civilization, but felt they should be helped by the educated elite. In a sense, the educated elite was given a temporary task, i.e., the education of the people until such time as they gained an adequate rationality. Therefore, he believed that reforms had to be imposed "from above." According to Atatürk, reforms needed to be imposed from above because when people are not educated they can be easily deceived for undesirable ends. (Heper, 1985: 50-51) "The people were passing through the necessary stages of progress towards a more civilized pattern of life."

The leaders should find the paths to those stages and direct society. (Heper, 1985: 62) Therefore, Atatürk initiated many reforms to break the ties with the past, which he considered to be obstacles to revealing the potential of the people. The elitist tradition of the Ottoman-Turkish politics constituted a center of significance in terms of this issue.

## 4.4 Atatürk's Conceptions of Science and Religion

Atatürk, as “an admirer of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment,” said, “For everything in the world —for civilization, for life, for success— the truest guide is knowledge and science.” (Cherry, 2002: 22) Believing that Turkey must catch up with the Western world, he declared that Enlightenment values were those of “universal civilization,” and that the nation's supreme goal must be to reach them. Andrew Mango (2000 in Cherry, 2002: 21) writes in *Atatürk*: “Atatürk’s message is that East and West can meet on the ground of universal secular values and mutual respect, that nationalism is compatible with peace, that human reason is the only true guide in life.” In line with this understanding, in the speech which Atatürk delivered in Bursa on October 27, 1922, to a group of teachers from Istanbul, he gave his views on the identity of the new Turkish nation, as well as what he thought should be among the principal objectives of this Turkish nation:

Yes, in social and political life, in educating the minds of the Turkish nation our guide will be knowledge and science. Only, through knowledge and science, as provided by the schools can the Turkish nation, Turkish art, the Turkish economy, Turkish poetry, literature and fine arts fully develop...

Wherever knowledge and science is, we as a nation are going to be there, and implant these in the minds of individuals...

The basic goal of our educational policy and our educational program will be the destruction of ignorance, if this cannot be achieved we shall stay as we are, and anything that stays as it means that it is going backward...

We must admit that up until three and a half years ago we were living as religious community. They ruled over us as they wished. The world knew us according to those who represented us. For the past three and a half years we have lived as a nation. The concrete and explicit evidence of this is the form and nature of our government named by the law as the Grand National Assembly. (Kili, 1969: 36-37)

Such a deep belief in science is due to the fact that the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal were guided very much by positivism. The republican elite adopted the Comtian idea of “progress within order.” Positivism framed their ideas regarding the domains of politics, economics, and society. Positivism became the guiding principle of the Turkish education system as well. Accordingly, Kemalist laicism should not be understood as the separation of politics and religion, but rather as being about restructuring society in accordance with positivist philosophy. In practice, this restructuring meant eradicating religious impacts in the domains of education, economics, family, dress, and politics. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xxi)

The official understanding regarding the issue is well summarized in the *Program of the People’s Party of the Republic* (adopted by the Fourth Grand Congress of the Party May 1935, official translation published by the Party, Ankara, 1935). It was stated in *Part II- The Essential Characteristics of the Republican People’s Party* [articles 5(e) and 5(f)] that

The party considers it a principle to have the laws, regulations, and methods in the administration of the State prepared and applied in conformity with the needs of the world and on the basis of the fundamentals and methods provided for modern civilization by Science and Technique.

As the conception of religion is a matter of conscience, the Party considers it to be one of the chief factors of the success of our nation in contemporary progress, to separate ideas of religion from politics, and from the affairs of the world and of the State.

The Party does not consider itself bound by progressive and evolutionary principles in finding measures in the State administration. The Party holds it essential to remain faithful to the principles born of revolutions, which our nation has made with great sacrifices, and to defend these principles which have since been elaborated. (Kili, 1969: 79)

The R.P.P. Program in 1935 clearly indicated that the Turkish state was to be directed by the requirements and the principles of modern civilization and in

particular by modern science and technology. Religion was to be separated from politics and from temporal affairs. Secularism was considered the sine qua non of Turkish progress and development.

Looking at the principle of secularism from the point of view of the RPP's definition as well as from the broader perspective of Atatürk's secularist reforms and speeches, an underlying Kemalist conviction emerges: spiritual matters are other-worldly matters, and any matters accessible to reason are secular. Hence, for instance, through the complete secularization of the Turkish legal system, the spiritual authorities were also deprived of their right to judge on temporal matters. (Kili, 1969: 104)

Beside such positivistic convictions, Atatürk and his followers were inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution. Many of the Young Turks that supported Atatürk's creation of a Republic had spent years in exile in France. The enthusiasm with which the Republican reformers approached their project of refashioning society often has been compared to that of the Jacobins who dominated the French state between 1793 and 1794. Like the French revolutionaries, Atatürk believed that modernity, law and order were best imposed from a strong center. (White, 2003: 148-149) The reformers devoted themselves to moving society, in their terms, from the "old" to the "new" and from the "traditional" to the "western." Reason and science were the cornerstones of this drive toward civilization. The assumption was that if the state changed the institutions and the physical environment to match that of Europe, people's behavior and attitudes would then change accordingly. The over-emphasis placed on such public symbols as clothing, architecture, and the visibility of women

in the public sphere can be attributed to this perception. By the late nineteenth century, universalistic and liberal ideals of the Enlightenment were appearing in some European nationalist projects that defined progress and modernity by allowing for no ambiguities and excluding certain “generally ethnically defined cultures as unsuitable for progress in their present state.” (Kasaba, 1997: 26-27) In Turkey, as well, unity and collectivist purpose, rather than universally applicable civil rights, were utilized in the formulation of the new republican citizenship. (Keyder, 1997: 37-51)

Based as it was on these positivistic and Jacobin influences, the Kemalist conception of secularism can be summarized in this way: “Modernity and democracy require secularism. Islam, he [Atatürk] believed, was neither secularizable nor privatizable. Thus, in order to bring modernity, Islam had to be either kept under strict control or confined to personal conscience.” (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xiii) Atatürk (1962: 722 in Kili, 1969:46) explains this in one of his most quoted passages in the *Nutuk*:

Could a civilized nation tolerate a mass of people who let themselves be led by the nose by a herd of Sheikhs, Dedes, Seids, Tshelebis, Babas and Emirs; who entrusted their destiny and their lives to chiromancers, magicians, dice-throwers and amulet sellers? Ought one to conserve in the Turkish State, in the Turkish Republic, elements and institutions such as those which had for centuries given to the nation the appearance of being other than it really was? Would one not therewith have committed the greatest, most irreparable error to the cause of progress and reawakening? (1925)

As Timur (1968: 121) puts well from a broader perspective, Atatürk showed different attitudes towards the high Islam of the official religious scholars, *ulama*, and the folk Islam of the religious brotherhoods. With the former, he aimed to rationalize and redefine the religion. In Atatürk’s conception, Islam is the most rational among all the religions. Consequently, whatever illogical was also supposed to be contrary to



Islam. In this sense, Atatürk believed that The Turkish nation must be more religious. On the other hand, Atatürk found the religious brotherhoods detrimental to the revolution and tried to erase them totally since they could generate alternative sources of political power. As Timur (1971: 148) suggests somewhere else, the Kemalist positivism aimed at reformulating the official Islam in a secular way, while abolishing all the brotherhoods operating throughout the country.

## 4.5 Atatürk's Conception of the State

The creation and maintenance of an independent, sovereign state is an important aspect of Kemalist ideology, as indicated in Atatürk's speech to Turkish youth (*Atatürk'ün Gençliğe Hitabesi*):

Turkish Youth! Your primary duty is ever to preserve and defend the national Independence, the Turkish Republic.

That is the only basis of your existence and your future. This basis contains your most precious treasure.... (Kili, 1969: 61-62)

The ultimate aim of the Ottoman modernization, maintaining a strong state, was one shared by Mustafa Kemal. This is not a coincidence when we consider that Atatürk and his friends, the founders of the new republic, were previously Ottoman pashas.

In the early years of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal attempted to unite all powers in his personality. The proclamation of the republic is not separate from this understanding because he strictly supported the unification of powers as opposed to their separation. Along the same lines, the opposition of the Progressive Republican Party and the press were regarded as almost illegitimate; after some religious revolts occur, they were harshly suppressed through the enactment of the law for the Restoration of Order (*Takrir-i Sükun*).

Heper (1985: 56) states that "Atatürk opted for a Hegelian state -one that would safeguard the general interest without overwhelming civil society". *Vatandaş İçin Medeni Bilgiler* (Citizen's Handbook), written by Afet İnan in 1931 but dictated mostly by Atatürk, provides rich material to explore this kind of conception of the state. As the title indicates, the book is intended to help raise a republican generation

as citizens of the new, modern nation-state. It includes such themes as state, republic, rights and duties, solidarism, division of labor, vocations and work, military service and taxation.

Afet İnan's book (1998: 18, 26) gives the definitions of the Turkish nation by Atatürk: "The Turkish people who founded the Turkish Republic is called as the Turkish nation." "The Turkish nation is a state governed by the republican regime upon the people's sovereignty." Similarly, in a conference organized by the Republican People's Party in 1938, state was defined as the nation who comes together around Atatürk. (Köker, 2004: 161) As these definitions imply, state and nation are fused in the Kemalist understanding, and being a member of the Turkish nation is related to the participation in the establishment and development of the new republic.

In the same book, Mustafa Kemal argues that citizens' service is required for the government to achieve its goals. Hence, citizens who are charged with giving this assistance should be healthy; maintenance of their health is a duty of the government, as well. In this regard, state and citizens change places; citizens are conceived of as if they were instruments of state. This understanding indicates that Mustafa Kemal is talking about the state's citizens rather than a citizen state. He further declares that

The state demands healthy, sturdy citizens who have a high level of comprehension, national sentiment and affection for the homeland in order to maintain order and defend the country. The state is in need of highly qualified citizens to do the nation's business done at home and abroad. The state attaches importance to all citizens comprehending the state's laws and appreciating the requirement of obeying them in terms of order and the defense of the country. (Afetinan, 1998: 45-46)

Mustafa Kemal does not argue that the state should be strong enough to serve the citizens, but rather asserts that the citizens must be strong enough to preserve the existence of the state.

In Atatürk's reckoning, the question of freedom should be considered together with the interests of other individuals and the survival of the state and nation. Freedoms are not absolute and can be restricted by the rights and freedoms of other individuals and by the common interests of the nation. In this respect, he says that "restriction of the rights of individuals is the essence and duty of the state", and that "freedom should not jeopardize state activities". (Afetinan, 1998: 47-53)

According to Atatürk, sovereignty was to "belong to the people without any qualifications and conditions". In practice, however, this meant that the state elite, which was supposed to understand the interests of the people better than the people themselves did, would exercise sovereignty in the name of the people. The "transcendental" nature of the Republic, as a legacy of the Ottoman state, required that community and the state take precedence over their members, whose interest is identified with the common rather than the individual good. (Heper, 1985: 7-8)

Along similar lines, the Ottoman tradition of the father state (*devlet baba*) created a political culture that viewed the interventionist state as legitimate. (Özbudun, 2000: 147-148) As Mardin (1980: 23-53) pointed out:

It is conceded in the abstract that the state and its leaders have a right and obligation to set a course for society and to use public resources to pursue that course.... The emphasis is on the ends of state intervention, and checks and balances are not seen as preventing abuse of power but rather as impeding the state's course toward its goal. Therefore, to some extent, there has been an acceptance of a high concentration of power – economic, administrative and military.

The dominance of state interests over fundamental human rights, the model of the passive citizen, the lack of tolerance for religious influences and ethnic diversity, and the role of the military and bureaucratic elite as the guardian of the Western (secular) character of the Turkish state have all been longtime features of mainstream Turkish political culture.

The superiority of state interests can be observed in regard to religion, as well. Atatürk inherited from the Ottomans a state tradition in which religion played a marginal role in shaping politically important decisions. Unsurprisingly, Ankara, like Istanbul, maintained a monopoly over Islamic functions and there was no change in the tradition of incorporating religious personnel into the state bureaucracy. Understandably, the “secularist” republic wanted to control Islam even more effectively than had the “Islamic” Ottoman Empire.

This continuity can be explained in more pragmatic terms. The Kemalist founding elites were fully aware that any kind of opposition to their secularist reforms in the cultural and social sphere could be mobilized only by religion. They therefore feared that the caliphate could become a counter-revolutionary force. This explains why, after the abolition of the sultanate-caliphate and all other Islamic institutions of the Ottoman Empire, Atatürk established a governmental agency for religion. The Republicans decided to replace the Ottoman Ministry of Shari’ah and Religious Foundations with the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which has given responsibility for teaching and maintaining the Republican interpretation of Islam. (Shankland, 2002: 86) In later years, on the basis of the same reasoning, *Muftis* and imams (prayer leaders) were appointed by the government, and religious instruction was

taken over by the Ministry of National Education. “The establishment of these directorates clearly shows that the Kemalist perception of secularism meant not so much separation of state and religion as control of the state over religion.” (Zürcher, 1993: 195) What Atatürk was doing was actually the establishment of state control over religion and the religious classes. This included controlling and limiting religious education, outlawing religious brotherhoods, and severely limiting forms of dress associated with Islam. These were questions of power and control. (Keddie, 1997 : 32)

This pragmatic concern can also be seen in the abolition of the Islamic brotherhoods. Reaction to the revolution was most likely to come from militant Islamic brotherhoods (*tarikats*), the ex-Unionist leaders, and the Communists. It is interesting to note that the religious reaction came more from the brotherhoods than from the *ulama*, because the *ulama* were already a part of the state. According to Özbudun (1997: 96), this explains why the Kemalist regime tended to ban all the activities of the brotherhoods, while incorporating the official *ulama* under the new Directorate of Religious Affairs with weaker functions.

Bureaucratized Islam in the Republic, then, having submitted to the requirements taken on the task of unitary state-building, was pressed into service for constructing a “regime-friendly Turkish-Islamic identity,” just as its predecessor in the Ottoman Empire had attempted to justify the *Kanuns* in religious terms. (see Kili, 1969) Secularism, in this sense, was not a process that de-politicized Islam. Rather, it removed it from its political role in the old system and eliminated those empowered

by this role, while using Islam in new ways to program the project of the new regime.

In general, in order to accurately understand the state's centrality in Atatürk's reckoning, one should remember that the "Atatürkist state... is not the state that *existed* during Atatürk's life time, but the state as it was *espoused* by him." (Heper, 1985: 48) Atatürk's basic aim was the creation of a "transient moderate transcendental state". Moderate transcendentalism means that a consensus is imposed upon society through static norms, around which the state is institutionalized. (Heper, 1985: 8) Those who do not understand this goal "have not been able to distinguish Atatürk's strategy from his tactics. Thus, even his opponents could pose as 'genuine Atatürkists', because, when necessary, they could find a quotation from Atatürk, which apparently supported their point of view." (Heper, 1985: 11) Atatürk's authoritarian politics should be evaluated accordingly.

In the view of some scholars, in 1920s Turkey, democracy would have been as much a top-down imposition as the rest of Atatürk's modernization program. When he came to power, most Turks were illiterate farmers used to living under the absolute power of the imperial sultan. Many liberal historians have argued that benevolent dictatorship was necessary to prepare Turkey for constitutional democracy. In one of the first biographies of Atatürk, British historian H. C. Armstrong concluded, "His dictatorship -a benevolent, educating, guiding dictatorship— was the only form of government possible at the moment." (Cherry, 2002: 21) In fact, the modernist elite in the early Republican period feared that democracy could pave the way to the public representation of religious symbols. State authoritarianism, "enlightened despotism,"

and single-party regimes often became the only possible options for the secular Westernist elites. (Göle, 1996b: 19) The authoritarian period was considered to be tutelary. Consequently, the single party period prepared its end itself. Köker (2004: 228) criticizes at this point that although the undemocratic regime was not seen to be permanent, it was still the Kemalist ruling elite who would decide when the right time was to switch to full democracy.

After Atatürk's death in 1938, the regime deteriorated. As Bernard Lewis (1961: 297-298 in Barkey, 2000: 93) argues, "in the hands of lesser men than himself, his authoritarian and paternalist mode of government degenerated into something nearer to dictatorship as the word is commonly understood." His successor, İnönü, sought to build the regime's legitimacy on a strict interpretation of Kemalism, rather than the founder's pragmatism and vision. Politics was relegated to the boundaries of the single party, which gave the bureaucratic-military elite-dominated state an almost "sacred" status. The rationale behind İnönü's policies was that he understood the state as a realm above politics, and aimed at guarding the long-term interests of the community by preserving national unity. At this point, İnönü, like Atatürk, argued that religion was a sensitive issue that could be abused for political purposes and disrupt national unity embodied by the state. (Heper, 1998: 98-103)



## 4.6 Pragmatism in the Kemalist Revolution

As many scholars observe, Atatürk's "resourcefulness, careful exploration of alternatives, and keen sense of timing" contributed to his ultimate success. (Atabaki, 2004: 61) When analyzing Atatürk's style in introducing and implementing his reforms, one can recognize that a tactical component of the revolution dominated the process: pragmatism. The revolution was pragmatic since, it appeared as a response to the needs of modernization. To achieve his goals, Atatürk sometimes made use of opposing views and different groups whose ideals he did not share. Pragmatism, beside being a practical necessity as a result of the sensitive balance of power at that time, was the mentality of the Ottoman secular officialdom to which Atatürk and his friends had once belonged.

As a reflection of his pragmatism, Atatürk built the new state step by step, although in a short period of time. He was patient about waiting to declare views for which the political environment was not yet ripe. One example of Atatürk's political astuteness in this area is his dress reforms. Çakmak (2002: 66) argues that Atatürk tried to develop his country men and women in terms of the way they dressed, because he wanted his people look like Europeans. He wore a Panama hat in Kastamonu and became a model for them. In 1925, the "Hat Law" was enacted. Officials had to wear hats instead of the *fez*, the Ottoman version of a hat. The reform was not easy, because a man's headgear indicated his religion, and even his social status and job. When a man died, his headgear was put on his coffin, and his gravestone was usually shaped like this headgear, showing his status. A hat was a non-Muslim style. The acceptance of the hat, representing the West, instead of the *fez*, "the symbol of Ottomanhood and

eradicator of all national differences” provided the basis for a more difficult reform, the abandonment of veiling. (Göle, 1996a: 61) The effort to ban the veil took concrete form on January 15, 1924, in a declaration that teachers with a veil on were not allowed to enter the classroom. On April 3, 1924, a legal regulation was enacted concerning the official attire of judges and members of judiciary. Henceforth, local administrations made some attempts in parallel lines. In the 1930s, the number of women, who were educated and had a professional career increased. Accordingly, the young generations of women gave up wearing veils. (Yakut, 2002, 26-31) Geoffrey Lewis (1982: 18-19) notes that Atatürk did not abolish the veil: “Good soldier that he was, he knew that you should never give an order which you know won’t be obeyed.” Amanullah, the king of Afghanistan, tried to imitate Atatürk’s secularization policies after his visit to Turkey. It was reported that Amanullah’s men forcibly tore women’s veils off. Perhaps at least in part as a result of this, in May 1929 he was deposed.

In the very same way, the pragmatic understanding sometimes moved Atatürk to express some opinions which he did not in fact share. In his book *Nutuk*, he gives his declaration about the opening of the Grand National Assembly as an example: “I find it appropriate to present you the declaration I made on April, 21, 1920 to indicate my situation in which I was obliged to get parallel with the feelings and understanding of that time.” (Nutuk, 1996: 430-432) Elsewhere, Atatürk (1981: 8) describes this situation as follows:

Here, I should confess something important. The army and the nation, while not having been aware of the dishonesty of the Sultan and the Caliph, were also sincerely loyal to the palace with religious and traditional ties strengthened through centuries. The army and the nation ... could not imagine independence without the Caliph and the Sultan. What a pity for those who express their opinions in contradiction with this belief. They will be immediately called as irreligious, traitor, homeless, unwanted.

As Kinross (1990: 180) reports, Atatürk emphasized this at the Erzurum Congress (1919), too:

To a trusted friend who inquired privately of Kemal at the [Erzurum] Congress, ‘Are we going towards the Republic?’ he replied, ‘Is there any doubt of it?’ But this could not yet be divulged. He was careful at this stage to make it clear that the movement was not aimed against the monarchy and the Caliphate, but was united behind them against the threats of the foreigner.

For this reason, he sometimes spoke as if he were supporting the Caliphate:

From now on, the future will show exactly how abundant the Caliphate will be for the Turkish State and the Muslim world. The State of Turkey, which is both Turkish and Muslim, will be the happiest state of the world as being the cause for two times happiness. (Nutuk III, 1996: 1251)

We observe the same attitude in Atatürk’s relation to the *ulama*. After the abolition of the Sultanate and all the other institutions of the old order and of foreigners, the *ulama* remained as the only power in Turkish society that could challenge the leadership of the new regime. Atatürk was aware of their potential threat and, hence, at the beginning, he took care not to offend the *ulama* — a number of whom were also deputies in the Assembly— in order to preserve national unity. In fact, fifteen percent of the first Assembly was made up of religious men, imams, muftis, and *medrese* teachers, while another fifteen percent consisted of soldiers. In line with his policy of making gestures toward religion in order not to lose the support of the traditional segments of society, the Assembly, for instance, passed a law prohibiting the sale or use of alcoholic drinks on September 14, 1921. (Lewis G., 1982: 12-16)

In another instance, Mustafa Kemal allowed the article regarding the official religion to remain in the Constitution, although this did not confirm to his real opinion.

Atatürk (1981: 523-524) explains this situation in his *Nutuk*. While traveling to İzmit, he was asked by a journalist whether the new government would have a religion:

“I did not want to be posed such a question. I also did not want to express the answer which was indeed very short....I could not say that a government could not have a religion. I said the reverse. It has, I said, it is the religion of Islam. However, I immediately needed to add that Islam provides great freedom of thought. In order not to give an opportunity to those who wanted to benefit from this and tended to understand atheism from the term ‘laic government’, it is ignored to add a term which makes meaningless the second article of the constitution.” (Nutuk, II, 1981: 523-524)

Taner Timur (1968: 92-93) underlines this attitude when arguing that the ideologies of the National Struggle (*Milli Mücadele*) and the Turkish Revolution were different. During the whole period of the War of Independence, Atatürk kept his ideas about the coming revolution as a secret. The motive behind the National Struggle was nationalism. Nevertheless, it coincided with the aim of protecting the sultanate and caliphate, as well. In the first Assembly, Atatürk signed many drafts framing this aim. Considering the secular character of the Turkish Revolution, we should consider this duality as a necessity under the conditions of that time.

Pragmatism was the key feature of the revolution in terms of its methods. “According to Reşat Kaynar, ‘Kemalism is not doctrinaire, but pragmatic.’” (Karal, 1997: 11) For instance, although étatism was taken as one of the six arrows in the Kemalist ideology, “Atatürk never wished to give étatism ideological substance”. (Özbudun& Kazancıgil, 1997: x) In practice, statism in early Republican Turkey consisted of various pragmatic measures necessary for developing industrialization. As Özbudun (1997: 87-88) states, scholars usually point out that Kemalist thought

was established in response to immediate needs, rather than based upon “pre-determined thoughts”. “Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, an author close to Atatürk, quotes the following exchange with him: ‘My general, this party has no doctrine... Of course it doesn’t, my child; if we had a doctrine, we would freeze the movement.’” Due to its pragmatic character, Atatürkist thought is not considered to be an ideology; it is at most “a ‘soft’ ideology”. Heper (1985: 64-65, 71) thinks that it can be better described as a *Weltanschauung*. Özbudun (1997: 90), however, believes that this instrumental character of the revolution makes it “vulnerable to rational criticism”.

Recep Peker, one of Mustafa Kemal’s close friends, explained this pragmatic view in a speech delivered in 1935:

We are not among those who scribble on paper before getting down to action. We prefer to achieve results first. Superficial people reproach us with working without a plan or a program, but they lose sight of the fact that the best plans and programs are not always written down; the cardinal plan, the source and the starting point of all our programs are the energy and the insight concentrated in the brain and in the soul of our spiritual leaders. (Dumont, 1984: 25)

Sartori classifies the Kemalist regime as ‘one-party pragmatic’. (Heper, 1985: 65)

Clement Moore, in the same vein, categorizes one-party ideologies under four headings: totalitarian, chiliastic, tutelary, and administrative; and he puts Atatürk’s Turkey into the tutelary category, by which he refers to an ideology which “combines an instrumental function with the goal of a partial social transformation.” (Özbudun, 1997: 90) Kemalist ideology was formulated in response to the emerging needs of the modernization process and should be evaluated on the basis of the extent to which it fulfilled its stated goals. It did not start from an analysis of the structure of Turkish society. Modernization in Turkey was imposed forcibly by the conditions

of the War of Independence; the principles of Kemalism arose largely from the practical requirements of that process.

Atatürk attempted to use religion whenever he found it useful for his purposes. Atatürk was “a great tactician” having used Islam for its revolutionary purposes. (Timur, 1971: 38) For example, as of 1919, the Sultan had taken a stand against the Nationalist Movement. The *Şeyhülislam*, the head of the religious hierarchy, in a *fetva* of April 1920, labeled the Nationalists as rebels and ordered all good Moslems to kill these rebels whenever they had an opportunity to do so. (Kili, 1969: 18) Atatürk replied to this attack in the same kind: “As soon as the Assembly gathered, we initiated counter-attacks by getting *fetvas* (religious confirmation and decisions) from high religious scholars.” (Nutuk II, 1981: 327) Since a substantial number of the First Assembly’s members consisted of religious scholars and sheikhs. Atatürk was able to benefit from their religious approval. For instance, regarding the constitutional amendment of October 29, 1923, which proclaimed the republic, the representative of Antalya, Rasih Hodja approved from a religious viewpoint that the most appropriate regime is the republic. This prevented others from resisting the amendment. (Aydemir, III, 1995: 154)

Mustafa Kemal used the integrative function of the religion while switching from the millet system to the unitary state during the nation-building process. Islam as a culture was an implicit part of the new Turkish identity:

“This boundary is not drawn for military purposes, but it is rather a national boundary. It is indicated as to be the national boundary. However, one should not assume that within this boundary there is only one ethnic group. Within this boundary, there are Turks, Circassians, and other Muslim groups. Now this boundary is a national boundary within which

sister nations live integrated to each other with the same goals...” (Öztürk, 1992: 29-30)

Moreover, Mustafa Kemal, just like the Young Turks during the wars in the Balkans and World War I, never hesitated to utilize Islam to mobilize the population against the invading European armies and always treated Islam as the bond to integrate and blend all Anatolian Muslims into the Turkish nation. “Islam was used to mobilize the masses against ‘the infidel.’” National struggle against the will of the sultan was legitimized upon Islamic grounds. (Heper, 1981: 350) “In the formation of the Turkish nation, the republic assumed that Muslimness was a *sine qua non* for becoming a Turk.” After achieving national independence, however, the republic implemented a rigid program project by denying any role for Islam in the formation of the new polity. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx)

“Atatürk was careful to keep his options open. He cooperated with various religious leaders as he was organizing for the war against Greece, and he accepted the title ‘Gazi’ that was given to him by the National Assembly in 1921.” The title “Gazi” had religious connotations, but “Atatürk used this title throughout the rest of his life.” (Kasaba, 1997: 22) In fact, this pragmatism should be seen as a mark of Mustafa Kemal’s political talent, which should not be overlooked when examining his policies of secularization. For instance, Mardin (1997: 209) explores his use of the (Grand) National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*) as the source of political legitimation for the resistance. Article I of the 1920 Constitution stated that sovereignty belonged without reservation to the *millet*. Theoretically, the Sultan-Caliph was considered, when, in power leader of the Muslim community. However, he was now a prisoner of the Allied forces. The term *millet*, which originally denoted religious sub-divisions, in

this context was used to imply that the Muslim community would re-establish its sovereignty. In fact, the term had been used from the end of nineteenth century on to translate the word 'nation'. The ambiguity of the term is the main reason that the article was passed without any objections.

Combining all these findings together, we observe a pragmatic attitude towards religion. Islam was not supposed to legitimize the regime or to be an appropriate base for political action; yet, one's claim to membership in the political community was validated by the possession of Islamic credentials. In later years, the Directorate of Religious Affairs would send out "model sermons" to imams (preachers) who might then encourage the citizens to, for example, pay their taxes, or contribute to foundations established to assist the armed forces; in this way, "secular acts are identified as religiously desirable". (Turan, 1991: 40-42)

As Turan (1991: 42) argues, the Turkish state, while not viewing religion as giving direction to its policies and actions, continues to treat it as a resource which may be mobilized for 'purposes of state' whenever this is found useful or necessary. Some people have described the above-mentioned application of secularism in Kemalist Turkey as the "one-sided character of Turkish secularism". Writing about Turkey in the mid-thirties, Henry Elisha Allen (1935: 175 in Kili, 1969: 104-105) stated that the Kemalist attitude "is favorable to whatever in Islam is consistent with the Republican ideas, relentlessly opposed to anything which might endanger Kemalist success, and, for the rest, more or less neutral". In the Kemalist perception it was, on the one hand, impossible to keep Islam as it was; on the other hand, it was impossible to violently eradicate Islam. The government took the sole option: removing Islam



from the legal and educational system, removing all the religious leaders, and directing religion into channels that would contribute to the governmental program, insofar as possible.

According to Ayata (1996: 41), the founders of the new Republic recognized Islam in its both positive and negative aspects. They were aware that Islam was important for unifying and mobilizing the nation, as well as for its contribution to social and moral welfare. However, they also saw Islam as the root cause of backwardness in the country and an obstacle toward reaching their goals. “The attitude of the Republican leaders was supportive when Islam was consistent with Republican reforms, but extremely hostile when it was at cross-purposes with the main objectives of modernization.” In a sense, Mustafa Kemal and his friends perceived Islam as a mixed legacy, especially during the very early stages of the Republic’s foundation. In pragmatic terms, they recognized the dominant role of religion in Turkish society and its importance in promoting social cohesion across ethnic and linguistic cleavages. On the other hand, they understood the strength of religion as a competing source of legitimacy. They aimed to remove the legitimacy of existing traditional religious institutions.

Especially in the early years of the new Republic, the ruling cadre did not try to completely remove the authority of religion totally in the moral sphere. What they aimed at was eradicating the public visibility of Islam through certain acts and reforms. Previously, there had been some initiatives to use religion toward the modernization of the country. The Gökalpian type of modernization, which took religion to be a relatively important factor in the nation-building process, was not

totally discarded by the Kemalist ruling elite, especially at the very beginning of the new regime. They rather aspired to control and further restructure religion in conformity with the general objectives of the Revolution. “Islam was accorded a relatively influential role only insofar as it endorsed the principles of the new regime.” (Aydın, 2003: 244)

Göle (1997: 1) states that state identity with regard to secularism has become a contested arena, usually modifying the bounds of religion and politics in the Turkish context. She (1997: 48) points out that the new nation-state’s attempt to reconcile “the disparity” of the masses and state involved a process of “social engineering”. Indeed, “secularization itself became part of that process of social engineering rather than an outcome of the process of modernization and societal development.” In other words, secularization became both a means and an end in the creation of the new Turkish state. Secularization was used as a means to destroy the legitimacy and identity of the Ottoman system and to build the new state, while it also became a part of the Turkish identity with the modern state.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **FROM *DEVLET-İ ALİYE-İ OSMANİYE* TO *KUTSAL TÜRK DEVLETİ***

One of the students of Turkish politics, Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu (1993: 352) claims in his article “Modernity, State, and Religion: Theoretical Notes towards a Comparative Study” that “the peculiarities of modern-state building in Turkey emerged largely in response to the economic conditions of the time, particularly those domestic and international conditions that prevailed during the 1920s and the 1930s.” In his reckoning, the lack of a civil society in the 1930s cannot be explained simply on the basis of the Turkish state tradition. It must instead be considered as a consequence of the exigencies of the conjunctural and structural conditions that shaped the period.

In analyzing the state-led modernization process in Republican Turkey, this thesis does not ignore the specific internal and external conditions of the 1920s and 30s, which compelled the political elites to build a stronger center and act in a more authoritarian manner. The global economic depression in early 1930s and, consequently, the decreasing credibility in the world of liberalism and liberal economic principles, along with the emergence of a number of totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia; the Sheikh Said Rebellion; the *Menemen* incident; and, the failed experience of the multi-party system (the closures of the Progressive Republican Party and the Free Party) are the most apparent of those contextual patterns. As Nalbantoğlu's (1993: 352) argument implies, it is quite logical to link étatism to the political context that allowed the Kemalist elite to observe the Soviet system of state planning in the economic field.

I think where Nalbantoğlu and other scholars with similar views differs from the arguments supported in this thesis is primarily in the area of what we understand by the Turkish state tradition. The reflection of Turkish state tradition in the Republic is not merely the authoritarian administration, which could be regarded as a continuation of the so-called "Oriental despotism" in the Ottoman past. The basic assumption behind this state tradition is, instead, the superiority of statehood over all other social values. This perspective let the rulers approach other social determinants (religion, culture etc.) pragmatically. If we deliniate the concept in this way, then even the étatism of 1930s can be taken as a manifestation of that state tradition: if it is étatism which would be most beneficial for the empowerment of the state, then it should be (pragmatically) adopted. Along similar lines, as Göle (1997: 48) argues, even secularization becomes both a means and an end for the Republican elite:

secularism, which was incorporated into the principles of Kemalist ideology and adopted in the Constitution in 1937, was also, in fact, an urgent necessity if the new, small nation-state was to survive and develop out of the ashes of the old Ottoman political structures. In this study, secularization is taken as a reflection of the strong state tradition in Turkey.

This thesis follows Dyson's (1980: 51) argument that the form of secularization depends upon the political culture in terms of state autonomy. The weaker the state, the more liberal a form of secularization develops. For example, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, state-church separation took place in a relatively peaceful manner. Conversely, an extreme secularity is observed in strong states, e.g. France, with deep conflicts in the secularization process. The French state "whose construction occupied all of French history may be taken as the ideal type of *the* state" (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983: 107) and, consequently, as the best example of extreme secularity, in which the state dominates religion, rather than just separating it from the polity.

When describing the strong state, Heper (1987: 3-4) says, "... in some polities public interest means more than the sum of private or groups' interests. From this particular perspective we can talk about the phenomenon of the state... which reflects a notion of public interest with little affinity to sectional interests". The agents of the public interest are the state elites. In this regard, Turkey, like France, is one of the best examples of the strong state model. (Barkey, 2000: 87) Similarly to French secularization process, the Kemalist elite did not seek to separate religion from politics; it rather aimed to dominate religion, making its thinking and institutions obedient to the state. A comparable situation can be observed in Egypt, as well,

where in comparison to other Arab countries a state tradition exists. For example, the Nasserist regime imposed reforms on the Al-Azhar Islamic educational institution, and this had the effect of bureaucratizing the religious scholars as a prelude to making them subservient to the state. Resembling the Kemalist configuration of a state-Islam link, in Nasserist Egypt it was the ruling elite who appointed the head of Al-Azhar. (Nasr, 2001: 20)

To grasp the impact of the strong state tradition on the Early Republican secularization reforms, this thesis has analyzed the Ottoman past. The Ottoman Empire managed to maintain its existence for six centuries due to its strong center. There were several determinants sustaining this centrality of the state. For instance, the local authorities, *eşraf* and *ayans*, could not form alternative sources of authority, since the ultimate ownership of the lands and other properties belonged to the Sultan. *Timar*, the Ottoman land system, was based on the same principle. In addition, the bureaucratic circle had adopted the *adab* tradition, a secular pragmatic conception of the state, which valued statecraft in itself and separated it from the persona of the Sultan. These bureaucrats came mostly from the Ottoman recruitment system (*devşirme*), according to which a certain number of male children of Christian subjects were taken away and raised as slaves of the Ottoman state to eventually serve in its bureaucracy and army. This system empowered the center by eliminating the possibility of the formation of alternative interest groups. Moreover, the only remaining possible opposing force, the *ulama*, were suppressed, having been incorporated into the state apparatus. When religion clashed with the secular interests of the state, the religious concerns were superseded by the secular ones. Although the Ottoman state had a strong religious character, the role of Islam was often moderated

by the state's pragmatic concerns. (Gerber, 1994: 76) Beside this superiority of the state in Turkish political culture, the state has been perceived as the sole agent responsible for social change. Accordingly, modernization in the Ottoman Empire was launched by the state and considered a state matter only.

The Turkish Republic inherited this strong state tradition. In this respect, firstly, the state adopted a pragmatic attitude toward Islam. Atatürk utilized Islam to mobilize the masses against the invasion of the European armies and always saw Islam as the link to integrate and merge all Anatolian Muslims into the Turkish nation. National struggle against the will of the sultan was legitimized upon Islamic grounds, too. On the other hand, Atatürk saw religion as the main cause of backwardness of the country and so secularized the country in all facets of social and political life. This dual attitude, implemented as Turkish secularism, appears to have been "a successful project" on the whole. People have remained "sincere Muslims", while having a secular approach on political matters. (see Heper and Toktaş, 2003)

We can observe the implications of the strong state tradition in the Turkish process modernization from above as well. Due to the elimination of power formation in the periphery, e.g., by the fiefholders or local notables, the Ottoman Empire enjoyed the situation of having a strong center versus a weak periphery. As a consequence, the main structural feature of the relations between the state and society or religion has been the relative independence of the state bureaucracy and the elitist political culture. Modernization was, at this point, seen as a matter for the state. It was the responsibility of the center to save/modernize the country. Influenced by this tradition, as well as by the specific circumstances of the inter-war period, the Kemalist elite maintained the same mentality. One should not forget that the

founders of the new nation-state were once Ottoman pashas. The Republican state elite acted as the “self-appointed guardians” of secularism and Turkish nationalism. They took on the duty of “elevating the country to the level of the contemporary civilization” on behalf of the people.

In line with the Turkish state tradition, Atatürk maintained the high value placed on the state. He opted for a Hegelian state. (Heper, 1985: 56) The Ottoman modernizers’ ultimate goal of maintaining a strong state was shared by Mustafa Kemal. In the Kemalist conception of the state, citizens’ service is required in order for the government to achieve its targets. Citizens are looked at as if they were instruments of the state. In Atatürk’s reckoning, freedoms are not absolute and can be restricted by the rights and freedoms of other individuals and by the common interests of the nation. In theory, sovereignty was supposed to “belong to the people without any qualifications and conditions”. In practice, however, this meant that the state elite, which was assumed to understand the interests of the people better than did the people themselves, would exercise sovereignty in the name of the people. Atatürk’s conception of state reflects the Turkish state tradition, by which I primarily refer to the supremacy of the state and the view of the state as the agent of social change.

The 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey constantly uses the phrase “Kutsal Türk Devleti” (Sublime Turkish State). This very much resembles the Ottoman conception of “Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye” (The High/Sublime Ottoman State). This little comparison illustrates very well the fact that despite the transformation from a religious multi-ethnic, multi-faith and multi-linguistic empire to a modern secular nation-state, the sublimity of the state has always remained its most salient feature.



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### STATE MATTERS!

For many observers of Turkish politics, secularism is the essence of the Turkish Revolution. (Timur, 1968: 117) Although a straightforward reading of Atatürk's Turkey would indicate a strong commitment to positivist secularism, the Kemalist political and intellectual elites have rather a dual understanding of religion and secularism: While they have seen Islam as the source of backwardness and tried to erase it from all public visibility, they have at the same time incorporated religion into some aspects of the polity. In their conception of religion, for instance, a non-Muslim person is usually considered as a minority person or as a Turkish citizen, but not a Turk. 'Turk' implies an ethno-religious characteristic of the political community. Moreover, the politicians often talk about "our religion," although the secular system is not assumed to have such an element. "Our religion" refers to all citizens with Islamic credentials regardless of the various sects. In addition,

missionary activities and cases of conversion are commonly considered as almost “subversive” acts. Islam was not supposed to legitimize the regime or to be an appropriate base for political action, “yet one’s claim to membership in the political community, in behavioural terms, was validated by the possession of Islamic credentials.” (Turan, 1991: 38-40) As reflections of the Kemalist mixed conception of religion, these examples illustrate that there must be something else that dominates Turkish politics.

Despite the centrality of the issue, it is commonly observed that students of Islam and Turkey have not sufficiently conceptualized the position of Islam in Turkey and its interaction with the “evolution of regimes of power and knowledge.” The contextual patterns of power holding in both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic still need much clarification, when the concern is the peculiar interactive relationship between state and religion. (see Silverstein, 2003) In fact, “Islam is not a phenomenon of today or yesterday in Turkey.” It has been an intrinsic part of Turkey’s sociological reality. Islam has played an important role in Turkish politics since the very early days of the Republic. (Mango, 1993: 740-742)

The Turkish political literature about Islam and religious fundamentalism in Turkey has usually been influenced by Orientalist examinations pioneered by Bernard Lewis (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xv) and by other foreign observers’ Middle Eastern studies. Therefore, it can, to a great extent, miss the peculiarity of the Turkish path to modernity due to some generalized assumptions about state-Islam interactions. In fact, every revolution has its own peculiar national characteristics. According to Taner Timur (1968: 2), despite their international targets, the French Revolution was primarily French, and the Russian Revolution Russian in character. The Turkish case

is distinctive because of its long state tradition, in which the state has always had primacy vis-à-vis religion. This study tries to examine the mixed understanding of religion of the Kemalist elite in the light of the concept of Turkish state tradition, by which I primarily refer to the superiority of the state as the sole agent responsible for all social and political changes.

Unlike previous studies on this subject, which have primarily examined the influence of religion on politics, this thesis aims to analyze how the state has shaped and utilized religion in Turkey. Rather than focusing only on the institutional developments, it tries to shed light on the influence of Turkish political culture, which would consequently configure the institutional and political developments of the Turkish modernization process. This thesis is a modest attempt to explore the impact of strong state tradition on the Early Republican secularization reforms as part of a continuum with the Ottoman past. Such a short analysis could never do justice to this broad subject. However, as this study shows, despite ongoing heated debates regarding the so-called growing threat of Islam in Turkey, the nature of Early Republican secularization reforms indicates that the state has traditionally had primacy over religion in Turkish practice.

The secularization reforms have been taken as the objects of this thesis because they are the most prevalent examples for exploring the influence of Turkish state tradition on the Turkish Republic. In the Turkish context, religion, as a very sensitive issue, can be considered as the only social force to mobilize the masses. As this study reveals, in Turkish political history we observe a pragmatic attitude toward even Islam, i.e., the state has benefited from religion whenever it was useful for state matters, and suppressed it whenever it was seen as an obstacle. As a consequence of

this pragmatic attitude of the state, Islam has never been able to pose a threat to the superiority of the state. It is the state that supersedes all other factors in Turkish practice.

Since “variation in early state-building experiences” has some “implications for the subsequent form and substance of political activity” (Heper, 1985: 7), my study is centered on the examination of the Early Republican period, which is taken here to comprise the period of the presidency of the founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of the Turkish Republic, from 1923 to 1938. Although the Early Republican period is commonly considered as to have continued from 1923 to 1940 or 1945, namely from the foundation of the Republic to the beginning of multi-party system, I chose to omit the İnönü period (1938-1945). This is because Kemalism, the official ideology of the Turkish Republic, was basically formulated in Mustafa Kemal’s time, and the political developments in İnönü’s period display a strong continuity with those of his predecessor’s era in terms of ideology and *raison d’état*.

Kemalist ideology, which developed as an immediate response to the needs of the modernization process, was not based on a detailed examination of Turkish political and social patterns. Modernization in the Republican period was shaped inevitably by the difficult conditions of the War of Independence and inter-war periods; the principles of Kemalism arose largely from the practical requirements of this process. Accordingly, the Republican elite formulated their guidelines in a pragmatic way. As these principles, especially nationalism and secularism, emerged and developed according to some historical conditions and specific events, a mere conceptual analysis of secularism in terms of the meaning of its Western counterpart cannot

adequately explain the political developments in Turkey. Therefore, secularism in Turkey should be studied through historical analysis.

Having analyzed recent studies of Turkish politics, Özbudun and Kazancıgil (1997: 2) give two reasons as to why a historical perspective is necessary in the study of Kemalism. First, “certain doctrinaire Kemalists” in Turkey and some foreign observers consider the foundation of the new republic as a sudden and total transformation from the so-called theocratic Ottoman Empire into a modern nation-state. Second, Islamists and third-world critics of Kemalism see it as an alien and forcible imposition of secularization upon a Muslim society through isolation from its cultural and political past. In fact, both are “historical over-simplifications.”

This study, hence, employs a historical approach to elaborate its thesis on the peculiarity of Turkish state tradition and its relation to Turkish secularism. In line with Heper’s (1985: iv) recommendations, a more historical approach that would also compare Turkey with both the Anglo-Saxon and continental European countries will be used. Such a position, instead of a solely conceptual analysis, will be used to explore the roots of Turkish secular developments in its Ottoman past, as well as to identify the continuum that existed in the state tradition and the modernization process between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.

Besides having a historical point of view, this thesis follows a state-centered formulation. As Migdal (1994: 8) observes, “recently, a more state-oriented approach has attracted much attention.” It is, in fact, rather than a mere methodological preference, a practical necessity for students of Turkish politics to put the state at the core of their studies. This is because Turkey experienced a state-led modernization in which society remained passive in keeping with the Turkish

state-centered political culture. According to Barkey (2000: 87), “Turkey has always been regarded as one of the best examples of modernizing strong states.”

Following this first introductory chapter, Chapter II aims to outline the theoretical framework upon which the thesis will be structured. Starting with the definitions of religion and state as political concepts, this chapter mainly deals with the paths taken by secularization as a consequence of modernization, which differentiate according to diverse state traditions. Modern science, having equated the secular with the modern and progressive, has designated the traditional as “backward.” The secularist approach has “created the Oriental ‘other’: Islam.” According to Yavuz and Esposito (2003: xv), such scholars of Islam, who defend the idea of there being a unity of religion and polity in Islam, are exemplified by Bernard Lewis (1994: 135-136), who claims that “Islam was ... associated with the excessive use of power from the very beginning... This association between religion and politics, between community and polity, can ... be seen in ... the religious texts in which Muslims base their beliefs”. Unfortunately, this superficiality, which appears due to a lack of historical analysis, has prevailed in much of the Turkish studies (for instance Berkes, 1995). This chapter draws attention to the danger of such Orientalist assumptions. In practice, “the boundary between the religious and the political is not fixed and text centered, but rather fluctuating and depends on the specific context.” (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xv) Therefore, religion, Islam in particular, is taken here in its relation to the specific historical contexts.

The same charge of superficiality is valid in the case of the secularization thesis, too. The basic assumption of the secularization thesis is that the development of modernity gradually decreases or even erases the influence of religion. Actually, as



Brown (1992: 38) says, empirical evidence as opposed to merely a conceptual analysis proves that “religion can and has retained its social significance across the change from preindustrial to industrial society.” Moreover, very much like Islam, which has been perceived and experienced differently in diverse settings for varying purposes, the secularization process is not a unique path of modernization, but differs according to varying levels of state autonomy, by which we refer to “the insulation of the state from societal pressures and to its freedom to make important decisions.” (Özbudun, 1996: 134)

Chapter III examines the Ottoman state tradition, the basic patterns of which are: the patrimonial and bureaucratic configuration of the state, with a strong center versus a weak periphery; elitism; the state predominance over religion; and, state-led modernization. Kemalist historiography from the 1920s onwards has tended to emphasize the novelty of the new Turkish republic and a clean break with the Ottoman past. Feroz Ahmad’s *Making of Modern Turkey* is a recent example of scholarship that points up the contrast between the backward past and the progressive new nation-state. From the 1950s, however, pioneering scholars such as Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Şerif Mardin and Niyazi Berkes in Turkey and Bernard Lewis and Stanford Shaw in the West have presented a different approach, which has dominated Turkish studies. They have observed a link between the former and the latter and acknowledged “the debt of the republic to its immediate predecessors”. (Zürcher, 2004: 99-100)

Understanding the Ottoman legacy is important for grasping the foundation of Republic because the members of Republican elite were once Ottoman pashas.

Despite the dramatic change from a multiethnic, multi-religious empire to a “monolithic” nation-state, the same political culture remained salient in determining state policies. Within this framework, the state was the major, in fact, the sole force for political and social change in the Ottoman Empire, in which there existed a strong center and a weak periphery. (İnalçık, 1964: 3-5) The elimination of the alternative political and economic forces strengthened the center and erased any possibility of an opposing periphery balancing the imperial capital, Istanbul. Even when such an alternative force arose from religion, the state elite did not hesitate in suppressing religious scholars and institutions, as it did other individuals and institutions. Despite the religious character of the Empire, they were able to consider it legitimate to make secular decisions about a state matter even if religion assumed the contrary. The Turkish Republic was born on the basis of such a political inheritance. The secular reforms in the Republic cannot be understood without having insight into the Ottoman state tradition and modernization reforms, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The modern secular Turkish nation-state was an eventual consequence of the earlier developments, and it was a dream that many Westernist Ottoman reformers had envisaged for a long time.

Chapter IV aims to investigate the secularization reforms launched in the Early Republican period. The Turkish case of modernization has been quite distinctive among its counterparts. Regarding the types of modernity, Ernest Gellner proposes an analogy of bride (culture) and groom (state). According to him, the way to modernity can be divided into four time and space zones. The first three are European: a) The West –the Atlantic coast and Britain– had the happiest marriage of all; bride and groom were ready at the same time. b) The center –Italy and Germany–

had a difficult marriage at the beginning; the bride was ready, but it took some time for the groom to be found. c) The East –Eastern Europe– had a painful union; neither bride nor groom was ready, necessitating both cultural and political engineering. The fourth zone is unique to Turkey. According to Gellner, none of the above typology is valid for the Muslim world, since nationalism has always been rejected by Islam, but the Turkish case is peculiar within the Muslim world. The groom (state) was ready and chose a bride. (Çataltepe, 1994) For the wedding, however, Turkey needed many reforms.

These reforms were initiated across a broad spectrum varying from the acceptance of the Western hat and the adoption of the Gregorian calendar to the abolition of the Caliphate. Scholars of Turkish politics agree that secularization reforms in Turkey had a strong impact on different facets of politics and social life. (Heper, 1981: 355) The secular developments in the Early Republican period manifested a strong desire to modernize the new country. However, despite the strong commitment of the founding elite to positivist secularism, we observe a dual attitude toward religion. In a continuum with the Ottoman pragmatism about religion, the new political elite readily benefited from Islam whenever they found it useful, and eliminated the old religious authorities and institutions whenever they saw Islam as an obstacle to modernization. The continuity appears clearly in the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Here, the Republican elite did not separate religion from the state, but incorporated it into the state apparatus, just as it had been in the Ottoman Empire. Rather than separating state and religion, in the Turkish version of secularism, the state could manipulate and control religion through its own apparatus without allowing it to form alternative civil sources of power. The continuity of the

state tradition between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic appears in the case of the state-led modernization, as well. The state has been the sole agent for modernization. This elitist approach had its reflections in the early state-building process of the new nation-state.

As has been indicated above, political developments in Turkey cannot be evaluated without taking the peculiar historical and cultural context into consideration. In this respect, the relationship between Islam and state in Turkey displays the same peculiarity as an example that best reflects the Turkish state tradition.

## CHAPTER II

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Nations come and go, empires rise and fall. But Islam persists and continues to include the nomads and the settlers, the builders of civilizations within Islam and those who destroy them. What then are the factors that keep together as one ummah those many people that consciously or not inclined to maintain their individuality while cultivating their tie with universal Islam as their most precious spiritual possession?*

Von Grünebaum

(1962:52-53 in Davutoğlu, 1994: 63)

### 2.1 Defining the Concepts

It is necessary at the beginning to define the two concepts of greatest importance for this study: religion and state. The social sciences, for a long time, promoted the assumption that religion is more or less irrelevant to the domains of modern life. (Robertson, 1987: 5) Religion, which, in fact, remains one of the most ambiguous objects of social study, has recently regained considerable interest among political scientists. (Brown, 2000:1) Similarly, we observe the return of scholarly concern

with the state. (Hall and Ikenberry, 1989: 1) The “state” has been issue for heated debate between different theoretical and ideological views for quite some time now. (Nalbantoğlu, 1993: 346)

Defining the concept of religion is crucial for this study, because whether one sees modern society as secularized or as undergoing a process of secularization depends very much on what one means by religion. Discussions about secularization stem from the conflict among the radically different conceptions of what religion is. Functional definitions approach religion in terms of “what it does,” whereas substantive definitions say “what it is.” (for the discussion see Bruce and Wallis, 1992: 9-11) As a result, those who use “functionalist definitions” tend to reject the secularization thesis while those using “substantive definitions” are more likely to support it. (Hamilton, 1995: 166)

Substantive (theological) definitions largely emphasize the spiritual or “irrational” component of religious belief and practice. Such definitions of religion include, for instance, Schleiermacher’s conception of the “feeling of absolute dependence”, Rudolf Otto’s emphasis on “awe, a unique blend of fear and fascination before the divine” or Mircea Eliade’s view of religion as “embodied in sacred space and time”. (King, 1987: 283-285) Unfortunately, these definitions prove of limited use from the perspective of the social sciences.

Durkheim, whose work is perhaps the cornerstone of the sociology of religion, defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden –beliefs and practices which unite in one

single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them". (Coser, 1977: 136) Clifford Geertz (1973: 90) gives a more functional definition, describing what religion does, by defining it as

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Geertz points out that religion is a set of symbols which may either stand for something, represent or express something or act as a sort of instruction for what to do. Religion does these things through formulating concepts of general order. People need these concepts because they need to see the world as meaningful and ordered. Moreover, Geertz sees religious beliefs as attempts to bring abnormal events and experiences "within the sphere of the explicable." (Hamilton, 1995: 158)

Scholars, thus, have not been able to develop a widely accepted definition of religion. In general, what all of these approaches, both substantial and functional, share in common is the idea that there is a distinct and universal social phenomenon called "religion" that can be clearly distinguished from other aspects of social reality. The current definitions usually link the concept to belief and behavior transcending the empirical reality. The belief in a deity is taken as the absolute truth about human existence. Most religions have some ethical norms. As a consequence, religious beliefs have influences on the thinking and behavior of human beings in ordinary life. Religion influences the world view of its believers. (Nielsen, 1992: 8) Bruce and Wallis (1992: 10-11) combine both substantial and functional aspects well and define religion as consisting of

actions, beliefs, and institutions predicated upon the assumption of the existence of either supernatural entities with powers of agency, or

impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose, which have the capacity to set the conditions of, or to intervene in, human affairs.

The other concept we are dealing with is the “state.” The term “state”, which is derived from the Roman law concept “*status rei Romanae*”, the public law, refers to an independent political community ruling a specific territory. (Nielsen, 1992: 8) The state is a relatively modern institution, dating back to the sixteenth century when the nation-state emerged from the feudal system and the central power gained control over the military forces and powers of legislation and taxation for the entire territory under its domination. Hall and Ikenberry (1989: 1-2) give a composite definition of state including three elements. The state is, firstly, a set of institutions (especially those of violence and coercion). Secondly, these institutions function within a geographically-bounded territory. Thirdly, the state has a monopoly on rule-making in that territory.

As centers of power, states regulate collection and distribution of resources, control policy making, and deeply affect many aspects of their citizens’ lives. (for instance, see Trimberger, 1978) They are the most important determinants of sociopolitical change in modern times. It is therefore not possible to satisfactorily explain social changes without considering the state. How much states can get done, and how much of the lives of their citizenry they control, are functions of their strength. Thus, what constitutes strength and weakness in a state, and how that influences politics, economics, and social change, is very important (for a detailed analysis, see Migdal, 1988).



Another way of looking at the state is based on an intellectual tradition that is built around an abstract theory of the state. This tradition dates back to Plato, and is the “cumulative contribution” of numerous philosophers and thinkers, among whom Machiavelli, Locke, Jefferson, Rousseau, Mill and Weber are only some of the more notable names. (Ozay, 1990: 56) According to it, good government, being the implementing arm of the state, is one which succeeds in improving living standards by means of public policy in education, housing, employment and social services, and in establishing appropriate economic, legal, cultural and national institutions.

Initially, the issue of applying all these religious and political ideas to the non-Western world appears as an epistemological problem: an attempt to use Western phenomena to understand the non-Western world. Thus, a fundamental problem arises when one tries to apply social categories such as religion and state to non-Western contexts. For example, Jeff Haynes (1998: 8) suggests that the universal application of western social categories is problematic because it tends to force one to perceive social reality, not in terms of the society itself, but in terms of the West:

When we think of Church-state relations we tend to assume a single relationship between two clearly distinct, unitary and solidly but separately institutionalized entities. In this implicit model built into conceptualization of the religio-political nexus there is one State and one Church; both entities’ jurisdictional boundaries need to be carefully delineated.[...] In sum, the conventional concept of State-Church relations is rooted in prevailing Western conceptions of the power of the state of necessity being constrained by forces in society, including those of religion.

In this way, Haynes argues that the study of state-church relations is biased in content, possessing some assumptions about the nature of religion and politics in society. Haynes (1998: 9) concludes that

In their specific cultural setting and social significance, the tension and the debate over Church-state relations are uniquely Western

phenomena... overloaded with western cultural history; these two concepts cannot easily be translated into non-Christian terminologies.

On the other hand, one should also notice another danger in this understanding; i.e., the deep-rooted Western tendency to “obscure” Islam and Muslims through “veils of esoterica” and –in extreme forms– even to suggest that entirely different rules of logic and evidence are required to take the measure of Islam and Muslims. “This is nonsense. Muslims *can* be understood, just like other people.” (Brown, 2000: 19) Although there are problems in “translating” religion and politics into a different context, this does not mean that states and societies will not try to reformulate themselves.

## 2.2 The Functions of Religion

There are different opinions regarding the essential functions of religion. Nevertheless, for most members of advanced societies, religion performs certain individual and social functions at least to some extent, as it does for traditional societies. Essentially, religion, Islam in particular, as identified by Heper (1981: 346), is a “multi-functional institution” because it has been taken advantage of different groups for different purposes. When analyzing the functions of religion, it is almost essential to start with Emile Durkheim.

Durkheim [1995 (1915): 489] identifies three basic functions of religion. One of the functions of religion, according to Durkheim, is social cohesion. Religion brings people together through shared symbols, values, and norms. Religions can be powerful forces in society. By reinforcing group norms, they facilitate the formation of social homogeneity. They can provide a basis for common purposes and values that maintain social solidarity. Religion, in this way, integrates and unifies. According to Collinson (1999: 53), religion creates a bond, not only legitimizing and strengthening existing social constructions like churches, sects, and nations, but also inventing, “imagining” them. The Jewish nation is an obvious example, as is the Armenian.

Another function of religion is social control. Societies may use religious doctrine to promote conformity. In most societies, religions play an important role in social control by defining what is right and wrong behavior. Thus, religion has a vital role in social maintenance. It also gives sanctity, more than human legitimacy and

transcendent importance to some values; for example, regarding marriage as a sacrament, much law breaking as sinful, and occasionally, the state as a divine instrument.

Providing meaning and purpose is the third function of religion. "Religious beliefs offer the sense that the vulnerable human serves a greater purpose. [Thus] people are less likely to collapse in despair when confronted by life's calamities". [Durkheim, 1995(1915): 489] The sacred texts of religions usually set forth examples for proper behavior in common situations. The religious system provides a body of ultimate ends for a society.

O'Dea (1966 in Hamilton, 1995: 120-121), one of the best-known functionalists, gives six functions of religion for the individual and society:

1. It provides support for established values and goals.
2. It ensures stability of the social order and often helps maintain the status quo. Through cult and ceremony, it provides emotional security and identity and a fixed point of reference among a variety of conflicting ideas.
3. It "sacralizes" norms and promotes group goals above individual goals.
4. It can be a basis for criticisms of existing social patterns. It can form a basis for social protest.
5. It helps the individual in understanding him- or herself and provides a sense of identity.
6. It is important in aiding the individual during life crises and in transition from one status to another and is, consequently, part of the educational process.

O'Dea does not think that these functions are always fulfilled by religion, but notes that they have been practically universal in known social systems. (Hamilton, 1995: 121) He also admits that religion may have actual dysfunctions and again lists six of these, which correspond to its positive functions:

1. It may hinder protest against injustice by reconciling the oppressed.
2. Sacralizing norms and values may hinder progress in knowledge.
3. It may prevent adaptation to changing circumstances through its conservatism.
4. It can lead to utopianism and unrealistic hopes for change and, consequently, inhibit practical action to this end.
5. It can attach individuals to groups to the point where conflict with other groups is promoted and adjustment prevented.
6. It can create dependence on religious institutions and leaders, and in this way, it may prevent maturity.

Especially notable for purposes of this thesis is what functions religion provides in its relation with the state. The state can be based on either coercion or legitimate authority through popular support. Because the use of force tends in the long run to be costly and inefficient, government will seek to establish a basis of ideological legitimacy for its rule. Religion can provide perhaps the strongest basis for the legitimation of the government. Thus, government may need the support of religious authorities, or at least seek to avoid open conflict with them. (Nielsen, 1992: 20)

According to Weber, officials and bureaucrats are, in fact, little inclined towards religion. (Hamilton, 1995: 140-141) Nevertheless, they are greatly interested in the

maintenance of order, discipline and security, and they regard religion as a useful instrument for achieving these goals.

## 2.3 State in Islam: Dawlah

*Know that you can have three sorts of relations with princes, governors, and oppressors. The first and worst is that you visit them, the second and the better is that they visit you, and the third and surest that you stay away from them, so that neither you see them nor they see you.*  
Ghazzali, Muslim theologian of the twelfth century  
(Robbins and Robertson, 1987: 183)

Before analyzing the relation between Islam and state, it would be beneficial to take notice of Khalidi's (1992: 28) caution that one should always be somewhat suspicious of sentences in which Islam appears as the subject, such as "Islam is x, y and z", or "Islam teaches a, b, c", "Islam demonstrates that", "Islam has shown that", and so forth. It should be perfectly obvious that the Islam of one time and one place is quite different from the Islam of another time and another place. On the other hand, as Esposito claims, a "selective presentation and analysis of Islam" also distorts its image. (Göle, 1996b: 21) Both the theological and historical aspects of the subject should be reckoned together.

The Islamic tradition of the state, as it evolved after the death of Muhammad, differs radically from the western secularist state. The idea of a secular state is "the by-product of European positivism." In the positivist tradition, the *raison d'être* of the state is the collective good, i.e., national progress or development. The nation is a culturally and geographically distinct entity, and this sustains social cohesion and political consensus. The strength and survival of the nation is secured through legislation, which articulates the political consensus, implementing it through public policy for the sake of improving the human condition. (Ozay, 1990: 56) Such a

concept of state, with its modern connotations, did not form a part of Islamic political thought in the classical period, and the modern conceptualization of state is surely a Western one, which evolved in relation to the phenomena of the Renaissance and capitalism. For this reason, 'state' will be used here only as a monopoly of political power or authority. For the same reason again, it is natural not to find such a concept in Islamic thought prior to the modern era, either. The term *dawlah*, which is used today to connote state in European sense, existed in the Qur'an. However, according to Lewis (1988), the first time that the term *dawlah* (*devlet* in Turkish) appears in its modern meaning of state, as distinct from dynasty and government, is in a Turkish memorandum in 1837.

The state has, theoretically, no independent basis in Islam. An independent basis was accorded only to the *umma*, the community of believers, which was supposed to live not by the commands of the ruler but by the *Shari'ah*, the holy law. This law was to be known through the Qur'an and the hadiths, the sayings of the Prophet as reported by his companions. The ruler had no role in this theoretical framework, although the situation was complicated by the fact that the first four rulers, or caliphs, were also companions, who certainly made an effort to gain a say in fixing the form of the community. (Gerber, 2002: 66) Abu Bakr and Umar, the first two "rightly guided caliphs", emphasized the aspect of legitimacy by applying to as great an extent as possible the principles of *shura* (inner consultation), *aqd* (ruler-ruled contract), and *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance). (Shahrough, 1995: 319) These principles were used in the appointment of their successor, Uthman. Gradually, however, *shura* was overlooked, and then *aqd* and *bay'ah* were also dropped with the establishment of the Umayyad family.



One should also note that, given the limited nature of political provisions in the Qur'an and the hadiths, Muslims had to borrow and improvise in developing their political systems. The Islamic systems have been inspired by *Shari'ah*, as represented in the Qur'an and the hadiths, by Arabian tribal traditions and by the political heritage of the lands Muslims conquered, especially the Persian and Byzantine traditions. Further evidence for the argument that the form of the state and the nature of government cannot be deduced directly and only from the Qur'an and the hadiths is provided by the fact that the few polities both in the past and present that have called themselves Islamic states are very different from each other in their most important political aspects. (Shahrough, 1995: 318)

After the holy Migration (*Hicret*), Muslims were not only a religious community, but also a political one, whereas Christianity could not form a political entity until three centuries after its emergence. This fact alone leads many readers to think simplistically that Islam envisages a theocracy. (Watt, 1995: 76) Accordingly, it is commonly argued in Islam, unlike Christianity, that there is no tradition of a separation of church and state. At least, this is "the oft-repeated statement" contrasting the two religions. One simple reason for this difference between Islam and Christianity is that Islam knows no "church" in the sense of a corporate body whose leadership is clearly defined, hierarchical, and distinct from the state. The organizational arrangement of *ulama*, Muslim religious scholars, makes an institutional confrontation between Muslim church and Muslim state virtually impossible. A Muslim scholar may speak out against a ruler, but there is "no canonical way" he can summon a Muslim "church council." (Brown, 2000: 31)

In fact, the understanding of the unity of religion and politics in Islam has resulted in the subjugation of the former by the latter because it does not allow religion to build a corporate body for itself. Throughout Islamic history, the state has always had great power to influence the *ulama*. The state has always assumed the right to appoint and dismiss *qadis* (religious judges and local administrators) and teachers in Muslim seminaries, has exercised control over financial aspects of Muslim religious properties such as mosques and *medreses* (religious schools), and has used state police power to punish, imprison, and exile unruly Muslim religious leaders. In certain cases, state control over the Muslim religious establishment became so pervasive that the *ulama* virtually became an arm of government. The best example was the Ottoman Empire, in which the *ulama* were largely integrated into the state apparatus. (Brown, 2000: 35)

From a broader view, some cleavages and conflicts among religious schools and religiously oriented parties have occurred occasionally in the Islamic communities, but there has been no conflict between Islam and state. (Dursun, 1993:78)

Brown (2000: 54) cites appropriate examples when explaining that this passive attitude of the Sunni religious authorities toward the state was justified substantially by the primary resources, where obedience to the rulers is very much emphasized: “O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority.” (Qur’an, 4:59) This Qur’anic advice became “the scriptural foundation” for a submissive attitude toward political authority that reached its zenith in the oft-cited maxim “Better sixty years of tyranny than one hour of anarchy.” The Islamic tradition asserts, in effect, that mankind’s need for government is so overwhelming that it makes the quality of that government decidedly secondary. For instance,

Suhrawardi, a highly regarded twelfth-century Sufi scholar wrote that “Prayer is permitted behind any imam, pious or impious ... Revolt is prohibited even if the ruler is unjust.”

The uniformity that hinders opposition and revolt similarly is underlined in the hadiths: “He who separates himself even a single span from the community, removes the noose of Islam from his neck.” “The hand of Allah is with the community. He who stands alone stands alone in hell.” “He who seeks to divide your community, slay him.” (Brown, 2000: 58) Although there are some other hadiths encouraging revolt against cruelty (e.g., “If men see evil and do not change it, God will swiftly blind them with His punishment”), yet, on balance, the weight of Muslim historical tradition was on the side of political submission. (Brown, 2000:55)

Based on the lack of prescriptive information in the primary sources of Islam and on the submissive positioning of religious authorities in practice, Islamic political thought actually provides enough material for both authoritarian and democratic regimes, depending on the nature of the specific political culture and the attitudes of the political elite. The particular historical development (for instance, economic basis and class structure) of Muslim lands and the international network of economic relations should be taken into account in the analysis of Islamic political ideas. Therefore, we cannot make a clear-cut statement regarding Islam’s relation to the modern idea of statehood.

According to Duran (2001: 43-44), the discussion of the interplay between Islam and modern nation-state can best be summarized by two views. The first view, which

sees the emergence of the nation-state in the West as a result of the process of secularization (limiting religion to one's private life), is best represented by P.J. Vatikiotis. Referring to the unity of religion and politics in Shari'ah and the nonterritorial/universal aspect of the Islamic community, Vatikiotis (1987: 36) claims that Islam is not compatible with nationalism, which is a constructive loyalty to a territorially defined national group. This approach also emphasizes that the concept of the nation-state has no equivalent in classical Islamic writings. On the contrary, classical Islam stresses a division of the world into two hostile realms: *dar al-Islam* (the realm of Islam or peace) and *dar-al harb* (the realm of war). With its insistence on holy war, Islam has the aim of conquering the non-Islamic world at the expense of other beliefs.

The second view, which stresses compatibility between Islam and the nation-state, is best articulated by James P. Piscatori (1986: 144), who observes some indications of "territorial pluralism" in classical Islamic theory. A significant indication of the acceptance of territorial pluralism is found in the verse of the Qur'an that states that God divided mankind into nations and tribes for the purpose of their better knowing one another. After discussing the Islamic historical experience as the record of pragmatic adaptation to diversity under different states and empires such as the Ottoman, Persian and so forth, Piscatori (1986: 77) underlines the important effect of Islamist sentiments on the establishment of the some nationalist movements and in validating the idea of a territorial separation between "them" and "us".

Stemming from the fact that the original Islamic sources, the Qur'an and the Hadith, do not set forth a specific type of government, Islamic political thought, especially in

the last centuries has given rise to some differing opinions on the issue of the connection between Islam and democracy.

## 2.4 The State as an Agent of Social Change and Modernization

Recently, in the field of political science, a more state-oriented approach to the question of social transformation has attracted much attention. (Migdal, 1994: 8) In this approach, the state is not just a legal entity having a monopoly over violence as argued by Weber, but a political entity shaping the course of policy making and the content of the polity. (Skocpol, 1985) In this formulation, the state is not a simple reflection or sum of sectional interests, but rather a concept based on the public interest developed independently of classes and sections of society. (Heper, 1987: 3) In the same vein, Pierre Birnbaum (1996: 203) argued that “the state is seen as an independent variable around which the entire system in all its aspects recognizes itself.” The state is considered to be independent of society and social groups, an autonomous agent shaping social groups and imposing policies on society.

As stated by Özbudun (1996: 134), “state autonomy refers to the insulation of the state from societal pressures and to its freedom to make important decisions.” In other words, the state as formulated here is taken vis-à-vis civil society, and, as Metin Heper (1987: 3) noted, to the extent that there is a state highly differentiated from society, we can talk of the phenomenon of the state and the levels of stateness corresponding to the different institutionalization patterns of various polities. Since the institutionalization patterns show significant differences among countries, the level of “stateness” also differs regarding the polities of these countries. We can claim that “in empirical reality there are states not *the state*.” (Heper, 1987: 5)

The state autonomy or “stateness” is not a fixed phenomenon. It shows major differences among polities and within the same polity at different periods. (Heper, 1987: 4) It can be said that a society having an autonomous state tradition has a state high in capacity, whereas a stateless society is expected to have a state with low capacity. Kenneth Dyson (1980: 51-52) summarizes the overall characteristics of the state societies and stateless societies as follows:

State societies exemplify strongly non-economic, non-utilitarian attitudes towards political relations, which attitudes deny that the public interest is simply the sum of private interests; a rationalistic spirit of inquiry; a stress on the distinctiveness of state and society, whether in terms of the special function of the state or in terms of the peculiar character of its authority; a consciousness of institutions which reflects the strength of legalism and codification within the political culture and reveals itself in the ubiquity of formal organizations and their detailed constitutions; a concern for formalization and depersonalization which lend a “republican” character to the political system....

By contrast, the “stateless” societies are characterized by the lack of a notion of autonomous public interests, an instrumental conception of government and a pragmatic view of politics, a tradition of pluralism and debate, mutual respect and tolerance among citizens and a high level of civility. (Dyson, 1980: 52) It is the existence of this intellectual heritage in Britain and the United States that leads Dyson to characterize them as “stateless” societies. Britain, in his view, “lacks a historical and legal tradition of the state as an institution that ‘acts’ in the name of public authority..., as well as a tradition of continuous intellectual preoccupation with the idea of the state right across the political spectrum.” (Dyson, 1980: viii)

There are also some historical, intellectual and cultural factors central to the existence of an autonomous state. (Yılmaz, 2002: 58) Accordingly, if there is a historical tradition of an isolated sovereign state in a society, there emerges a strong state. Intellectual factors operate insofar as that if the political ideas and the norms of

policy making in any society incorporate a sovereign state, the possibility of the emergence of a strong state is high. There is also a cultural element in terms of the ideas held by individuals in a country about a generalized concept and cognition of the state. If this concept of the state is active in the perceptions and actions of individuals, the probability of existence of a strong state is high. (Nettle, 1988: 312 in Yılmaz, 2002: 58) In shaping the modern institutional dynamics of societies, specifically, in the direction of either strong or weak institutionalization patterns, antecedent cultural traditions have special importance.

As indicated, different “levels of stateness” are very much attached to the different state traditions by which it is referred to “clusters of institutions and cultural practices that constitute a set of expectations about behavior” (Perez-Diaz 1993:7 in Peters, 2000). Peters (2000) identifies four distinctive state traditions in the West:

- 1) Anglo-Saxon (minimal state)
- 2) Continental European: Germanic (organicist)
- 3) Continental European: French (Napoleonic)
- 4) Scandinavian (mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic)

The basic difference is between the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental European traditions. In the former, the state does not exist as a legal entity but rather one speaks of "government" or "government departments". In the latter, by contrast, the state is a separate entity “capable of entering into legal contracts with other moral persons (such as regions, communes, universities, etc.)”.

In the Germanic tradition, including much of continental Europe, and perhaps Japan, (Dyson 1980) the state is a transcendent entity. In spite of the inevitable division of



government into departments and agencies, the authority of the state is not considered divisible or bargainable. In this tradition the servants of the state are to some degree “the personifications of the power and centrality of the State”. In short, because the state is so central to political life, servants of the state must have a firm moral and legal foundation. (Peters, 2000)

The Anglo-Saxon tradition is evident in the United Kingdom and the United States. “Whereas in the Germanic tradition state and society are conceptualized as a part of one organic entity, within the Anglo-American tradition the state commonly is conceptualized as arising from a contract among members of society”. (Peters, 2000)

The boundaries between state and society are therefore more distinct, and perhaps more flexible. The separation of politics and administration is important in a good deal of thinking about governance in the Anglo-American tradition. Possible bureaucratic dominance of public policy has been most salient in the Anglo-American democracies, too. (Peters, 1992)

The Napoleonic State is conceived as unitary and indivisible, much like the Germanic State (Hayward, 1983 in Peters, 2000). Indeed, this state form evolved as part of a nation-building project aiming at overcoming deep divisions in civil society. In the French case, nation building was largely, if not completely, successful. In other countries, such as Spain and Belgium, the process was far less victorious. The Napoleonic conceptualization of government naturally has been associated with “a highly centralized state structure to ensure the uniformity of policy throughout the political system”. The most obvious difference between the Napoleonic and the Germanic traditions is that the later relies more fully on the legal framework of the state to guide action by policy makers. The Germanic tradition therefore permits, or

even encourages, federal solutions, whereas the Napoleonic tradition relies more on the direct imposition of central state authority over its citizens. (Peters, 2000) The Turkish state tradition resembles the French one most.

The Scandinavian state tradition is in-between the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic traditions. The characteristic that most distinguishes this tradition is, that of the welfare state. If the state has any kind of existence that extends beyond a simple contract with its population, it also has extensive rights as well as extensive rights in dealing with those population. (Peters, 2000)

## 2.5 Secularization as a Consequence of Modernization

Secularization is the process whereby the domains of social activity and human experience previously organized around religious norms are “desacralized” by their reinterpretation and reorganization in terms of ideals of a less sacral nature. (Berger, 1967: 106-108) The societal aspect of secularization manifests itself in the institutions as the significant decline of the influence of religion. In Western history, this process was experienced as the separation of church and state, expropriation of church lands, and secularization of education. The cultural aspect of secularization implies a gradual decline of the religious content in art, philosophy, literature and science. Moreover, science becomes the most important secular perspective on the world. So, an analytical distinction can be made between the “objective” side of secularization as the secularization at the socio-structural level, and the “subjective” side, or secularization at the level of consciousness. (Berger, 1967: 107-108)

Donald Smith (1974: 7-8) conceptualizes “secularization” by dividing the term into five analytical categories:

- 1- *Polity-separation secularization*: the institutional separation of religion and politics, removal of religious influence in a polity, non-recognition of a state religion (e.g., the Peace of Westphalia in 1648).
- 2- *Polity-expansion secularization*: the growing extension of the political system into areas of social life previously dominated by religion such as education, law, and the economy (e.g., Nepal, Burma, Turkey, Latin America).

- 3- *Political-culture secularization*: transformation of values; secular notions of political community replacing traditional ways of thinking (e.g., the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in the West).
- 4- *Political-process secularization*: the decreasing significance of both religious issues and leaders or interest groups in political matters (e.g., Latin America in the twentieth century).
- 5- *Polity-dominance secularization*: revolutionary efforts to push religion out of politics or modify it according to official ideologies (e.g., the French, Mexican, Russian and Soviet, Turkish, and Chinese Revolutions).<sup>1</sup>

The orthodox model of the secularization thesis claims that modernization leads to a decrease in the social significance of religion. Three patterns of modernization are crucial in this process: social differentiation, societalization and rationalization. Social differentiation refers to the process in which specialist institutions are developed to handle specific functions previously carried out by one institution (religion). “The differentiation of lifeworlds encourages a differentiation of metaphysical and salvational systems along lines more suited to each class or social fragment.” Secondly, societalization, by which life is organized more societally (in *society*), rather than locally (in the *community*), allows religion to become privatized. Religion is no more a matter of necessity, but “a matter of preference”. The third

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<sup>1</sup> In Turkey, polity-separation secularization did not occur, since religion maintained its position within the state apparatus after the foundation of the new Republic. The secularization reforms in Turkey are, however, good examples of polity-expansion secularization whereby the Republican elite removed religion from all social and economic domains of life. The third category, political-culture secularization, is difficult to apply to countries such as Turkey and Russia, which did not experience the Renaissance and Enlightenment processes. Political culture in Turkey was secularized in a top-down manner. This condition is a consequence of polity-dominance secularization in Turkey, where secularization had not appeared as a social force at the periphery, but rather in the top-down policies of the Republican elite at the center. The Kemalist revolution was also successful in terms of political-process secularization to a great extent. Despite some fluctuations in political orientation, religion has in general remained relatively marginal to political matters.

important process, rationalization, involves changes in the way people think and act and entails “the pursuit of technically efficient means of securing this-worldly ends.” Consequently, the growth in technical rationality and technology displaced supernatural considerations. (Bruce and Wallis, 1992: 11-14)

The revisionist model of the secularization thesis criticizes the orthodox model basically upon empirical evidence. (see Brown, 1992) Instead of a unilinear classical understanding, the revisionists claim that the social significance of religion can rise and fall according to the social and economic context. Moreover, religion does not necessarily have a negative correlation with the growth of human knowledge and rationality, and with urbanization and industrialization. In fact, religion can suffer as a result of dramatic social and economic changes, but it can eventually adapt itself to the new setting. (Brown, 1992: 55-56) In short, they claim that secularization, rather than diminishing the significance of religion, encourages it to take different forms.

It will also be useful to evaluate secularization in terms of its position among different theoretical approaches to the church-state relationship. According to Vergin (1994: 5-23), with regard to the relationship between the state and religion, four main groups of theoretical views can be identified. The first group sees the state as subordinate to religion. The state has no existence independent from religion and is based on norms derived religion. Thinkers who were also the members of clergy, such as Calvin and Luther, developed this view. The second group gives primacy to the state and sees religion as subordinate to the state. Influential political philosophers including Machiavelli, Hobbes, Montesquieu and Rousseau adhered to this view. They sometimes speak of religion serving the state, and sometimes claim

that the state should determine religion. The third group demands the full divorce of state and religion. Locke and de Tocqueville, in particular, exemplifies this more liberal outlook, which sees state and religion as different and independent domains. De Tocqueville says the state has no competence in religion, and religion should be free and should have an autonomous area in society. This tradition of secularization developed particularly in Anglo-American traditions. The last view, offered by August Comte, not only claims the primacy of state over religion, but also offers a new religion for society. For him, humanity had replaced God although his functions were still valid. What Comte offered was nothing other than a secularized religion based on atheistic-humanistic tenets. This form of secularization differs from the previous three views. For example, it allows for the interference of the state in religious matters, and strongly indicates that the state has the right to make judgments on religious issues and to impose these upon society. This is what has been called “laicism” and has developed primarily on the basis of the French political experience. The instances in which the state develops an alternative ideology and imposes it on society fall into this category.

The form of secularization in a given place and time depends upon the political culture in question, particularly the autonomy of the state vis-à-vis civil society. The weaker the state is, the more liberal a form of secularization develops, and in such “stateless societies,” the state-church separation takes place in a relatively peaceful manner in the course of the secularization process. (Dyson, 1980: 51) This form of secularization characterizes the Anglo-American traditions. Conversely, it is highly possible to find an extreme secularity in state-dominated societies, along with deep

conflicts and confrontations in the secularization process. This is the case in France and to some extent in Turkey.

Within this framework, Martin E. Marty's classification of the different experiences of secularization provides useful categories for understanding these traditions of secularization in different contexts. Marty (1969: 10) differentiates continental secularity from the Anglo-American tradition of secularity on the basis of the state's attitude towards religion. In continental Europe, particularly in France, we observe "maximal secularity," which "involved a formal and unrelenting attack on gods and churches and a studied striving to replace them." In the Anglo-American historical experience, there was a gradual and increasing disregard of gods and churches without attempts to replace them. He calls this type of secularism "mere secularity." In England and the United States, a smooth reconciliation between the state and religion has occurred in the process of the formation of modernity.

As an ideal example of a weak state tradition, the English form of secularization did not produce a radical secularist attitude towards religion. Unlike the case of France, "the Protestantism of England has prevented any massive confrontation of religion with secular radicalism." (Martin, 1978: 123) The English secularists were not against religion; rather, their goal was the separation of the state and the "church." They demanded to establish a national church, not to destroy the religious establishment.

As the best example of the strong state tradition in the West, the French state has always been suspicious of religion. Secularism can be seen as the primary indicator of progress in the state-building process in France, marking the step-by-step separation of the state from all other social systems. (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983:

110) It was not surprising that the Revolution took harsh measures against established religion and instituted legal secularization in a decisive manner. The numbers of the clergy were reduced, the religious orders were banished, and the church lands were taken under state control. Education was removed away from the control of the church. (Marty, 1969: 23)

In short, two modes of secularism evolved from two different contexts and state traditions. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xv) The French model of secularism is antireligious 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. The first model sees the state as the agent of social change and the source of the “good” life, whereas the second treats the state with suspicion and sees civil society as the source of change and of the “good” life.

In Turkey, then, the experience of secularism, is apparently not that which occurred in the Anglo-Saxon world, where the state simply claimed no say on the issue of religion, which was increasingly being transferred to the realm of the “private.” The Turkish model is much closer to French “laicism,” in which religion is not separated from something called public life, but rather dominated by a state that considers itself to be founded on principles not grounded in a “religious” regime of power and knowledge. (Silverstein, 2003) It is not an accident that the picture in Turkey resembles to that of France, since both societies have similar state traditions. Because of the lack of peripheral feudal forces in its past, the state in Turkey is even stronger



than that of France; thus, one comes across a more extreme form of secularism, which is all but absent in Western countries.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **OTTOMAN LEGACY**

There is a considerable literature about the Turkish nation-state's link with its Ottoman past. (for instance, see Zürcher, 1993; Shaw and Shaw, 1977; Özbudun, 1996) The Turkish Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire a strong state tradition and a weak civil society, and the bureaucratic elite continued to conceive of the state as vital for holding together the community. (Heper, 1985: 16) The creation of the new republic was involved addressing the heritage of the Ottoman Empire. The founders of the nation-state aimed to break away from the influence of its predecessor in many terms. Nevertheless, the early Turkish Republic can be better understood as a re-construction of existing religious and political legitimacy structures through the creation of a new nation-state. Thus, it is important for this study to elaborate what we should understand about the Turkish state tradition inherited from the Ottomans.

*Devlet*, the Turkish equivalent of the term “state,” linguistically refers to bliss, felicity and luck. Therefore, it is an old usage of the same word that people used in greeting others, saying “*devletle, ikbal ile*” (with bliss and fortune). It means God-sent blessing (*nimet*), as well. (Banarlı, 1985: 9) The word *devlet* is used in the well-known couplet of the Suleyman the Magnificent with two different meanings:

Halk içinde muteber bir nesne yok **devlet** gibi

Olmaya **devlet** cihanda bir nefes sıhhat gibi <sup>2</sup>

As Özbudun’s study clearly shows, the state has been considered as a sublime entity in both popular and official usage:

The state is valued in its own right, is relatively autonomous from society, and plays a tutelary and paternalistic role. This paternalistic image is reflected in the popular expression *devlet baba* (father state). Another popular saying is *Allah Devlete, Millete zeval vermesin* (may God preserve the State and the Nation). Ottoman writings on politics and government are replete with such terms as *Devlet-i Aliye* (Sublime State), *hikmet-i hükümet* (raison d’etat), and *Devletin ali menfaatleri* (sublime interests of the State). Such notions readily found their place in the political discourse of the Turkish republic. Indeed, the preamble of the 1982 Turkish constitution described the State (always with a capital S) as *kutsal Türk Devleti* (sacred), adding that no thoughts or opinions could find protection against “Turkish national interests” – presumably meaning state interests as defined by the state apparatus. (Özbudun, 2000: 128)

Some scholars of Turkish history argue that the Turkish state tradition resembles the shepherd-flock metaphor. One of them, İsmet Bozdağ, explains that in the Turkish state tradition, the rulers have been considered as shepherds, and the ruled society as their flock. This understanding has to do with the responsibilities of the state, rather a humiliation of society. Without the flock, the existence of the shepherd is meaningless. The shepherd is responsible for the flock’s survival and maintenance. If something bad happens to the flock, the shepherd will be considered guilty and

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<sup>2</sup> Nothing is as worthy among people as the **state**  
No **blissing** can be like a breath of health

removed from his position. If, on the other hand, the shepherd can protect his flock from possible dangers and provide the conditions the flock needs, he can continue in his position. (Taşar, ny) This metaphor is actually a good illustration of the state-centered political culture of the Turkish society, where society is the submissive recipient and the state is the sole agent for development.

“Within the Islamic community of peoples Turks have had a special State tradition from the time they entered and controlled the Islamic world in the eleventh century.” This tradition can be defined as “recognition of the state’s absolute right to legislate on public matters.” (İnalçık, 1980: 7) Although the Turks have adopted the Arabic word for the “state”, in practice, the Turkish *devlet* is different from the Arabic *dawlah*. Count Ostorrog (1927: 42 in Ozay, 1990: 69-70), the legal advisor to the last Ottoman Sultan, outlined the Arabic and Turkish understandings of the state some eighty years ago:

The Arab mind remained inviolably faithful to the following fundamental conception [of legislation]: Legislative power belongs to the Calife; the Doctors of the Law, who interpret the Law, are the indispensable intermediaries between God and the Calife. The consequence of that conception was that no such thing as a Statue, an Edict, drafted in systematic legal shape and promulgated as binding, is to be found in the whole of Arab Mohammedan history.

Not so with the Turks. The Turkish Hans professed to be, and certainly were, very good Moslems, but from the outset they asserted their right to enact regulations that were to be obeyed because they so willed, because at the top of the document they deigned to write in their purple Imperial ink: *Mujebinje’amel oluna!* Which I think may be adequately translated by, ‘Be it acted as enacted’ – or because they caused their sign-manual *Tughra*, figuring the impression of their open hand, to head the document as a mark of its Imperial origin.

In a similar vein, the Ottoman state tradition is very different from the classical Islamic state tradition. According to Gerber (2002: 67-68), the Ottoman Empire

presents a new political reality, one that can be summarized as follows: First, the historical caliphate disappears, and the Ottoman sultan becomes the successor of the caliph. Second, the division between the actual and nominal ruler ceases to exist. The sultan is the real and nominal ruler, even at the nadir of the empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Third, political stability is sustained as never before in Islam, particularly since the late fifteenth century. There is not even a change of dynasty, no instance of power usurped by force, not one real break in the orderly succession of rulers. All this is “unprecedented in Islam”, and extremely unusual in world history. Fourth, with the division between *ulama* and ruler completely gone, the Ottoman state is, on the whole, highly legitimate. There are no known ideological attacks on its validity, whether by *ulama* or by other intellectuals; no governor of any province is known to have ever attempted formal separation from the empire. In fact, “as remarkable as the low level of legitimation of the late classical Islamic state is the high level of legitimacy of the Ottoman state, even in its latter days.” Lastly, the Ottoman Empire never saw itself, or depicted itself to others, as just another state, certainly not as just another Turkish state (*dawla turkiyya*). (Haarman, 1988, in Gerber, 2002) On the contrary, it was to a certain extent a rebuilding of the polity of the rightly guided caliphs, inasmuch as Islam never again geographically spread its message at such high speed as under the Ottomans. Even in relative decline, the Ottoman Empire stood as the only safeguard against the infidels. In other words, the Ottoman Empire was unique in Islam in being throughout its history “the cutting edge” between the *dar al-Islam* and the *dar al-harb*. This role was naturally an extremely potent factor in its legitimation. Gerber describes the Ottoman state as a novel model: “the non-caliphal, religiously relevant state.”

### **3.1 The Patrimonial and Bureaucratic Character of the Ottoman State**

According to Kazancıgil (1991: 349), the strong and centralized Ottoman state tradition was relatively unique among Islamic societies. Although the Ottoman state had a strong religious dimension, the legal role of Islam was often moderated by the state's pragmatic concerns. (Gerber, 1994: 76) Notions of the political and the religious were both ultimately derived from and closely connected to the state.

The Ottoman state, as one of the most enduring multi-religious and multi-ethnic empires, survived for half a millennium. The Ottomans tried to establish an immortal state which they called *Devlet-i Aliye-i Ebed-Müddet* (Eternal Sublime State). The state was the center of the polity and the source of justice as the famous Ottoman maxim (circle of justice) expressed by Naima: a ruler could have “no power without soldiers, no soldiers without money, no money without the well-being of his subjects, and no popular well-being without justice.” (İnalçık, 1964: 43)

According to Tursun Beg, a well-known Ottoman statesmen and historian of the late fifteenth century, “harmony among men living in a society” could be achieved only by statecraft. Every society should have one ruler with absolute power, and the authority to issue non-religious laws. The ruler should, at the same time, preserve the social order and ensure justice. These ideas constituted the political philosophy of the Ottoman state. The Ottomans maintained the traditional view that everyone should be kept in his appropriate place. (İnalçık, 1964: 3-4) Thus, there existed clear

boundaries between the center and the periphery. According to Halil İnalçık (1964: 5) Ottoman society was divided into two groups: 1) the *askeriya*, such as officers of the court, army, civil servants and *ulama*, to whom the Sultan delegated the religious and executive power, 2) the *reaya*, consisting of all Muslim and non-Muslim subjects who paid taxes but were excluded from administrative positions.

Again according to İnalçık (2000: 65-76), the Ottoman state tradition had two roots: the Central Asian and the Sassanid. Summarizing his findings, we may say that the Ottomans derived from their Central Asian roots the belief that the state existed through the maintenance of *törü* or *yasa* – a code of laws laid down directly by the ruler. In doing so, the Sultans from very early on unified political with legislative power. Similarly, the Ottomans and the Seljuks inherited from the Sassanids a political understanding that equated the state with the absolute authority of the sovereign and his maintenance of justice. The fairness of the government therefore ultimately depended on the sovereign's ethical qualities.

These Central Asian and Sassanid legacies, İnalçık argues, played an important role in the development of an Ottoman tradition of absolutism based on sultanic order, which often went beyond what Islamic law allowed. Accordingly, in the classical institutional structure of the Empire, the absolute nature of Ottoman political power was evidenced by the extent to which all civilian, military and religious officials depended directly on the Sultan. The state's ownership of the land and the presence of a centralized system of taxation were additional dimensions of Ottoman absolutism. Such a political and economic framework of centralist absolutism was designed essentially to hinder the development of peripheral feudal structures.

The Ottomans eliminated any potential alternative economic or political center of power. The accumulation of wealth could not pave the way to democracy, as it did in the West. As Özbudun (2000: 126) aptly states, the relationship between the economic and political powers in the Ottoman Empire was the opposite of that in western Europe: i.e., rather than economic power leading to political power, political power provided access to wealth. The accumulated wealth could not be transformed into private property, and it remained liable to be taken away by the state. The Ottomans never favored the development of a powerful merchant class. *Sipahis* (the fiefholders) and *ayans* were the nominal landowners, but ultimate ownership of the lands was still in the hands of the state. The *sipahis* were not land-based aristocracy, and their titles could be removed by the state. The *ayans*, on the other hand, lacked the political legitimacy of an aristocracy, in the sense of the feudal aristocracy in Western Europe. The local notables, who emerged during the later centuries, on the other hand, remained “local” in the real sense. In addition, because the Ottomans were constantly threatened by powerful Turcoman ghazis (warriors), they also pushed those warriors to the periphery so as to keep everyone in their place. (Heper, 1985: 15) In short, no important threat to the power of the state elites existed. The Kemalist elite would later benefit from this situation.

Keyder (1997) underlines the fact that because of “the absence of large landlords” and “the relative independence of the bureaucracy”, the Republican revolutionists did not face strong opposition in the early Republican period. In the absence of a strong landlord class that might have demanded economic liberalism and civil and political rights for its narrow constituency, no group in society found it possible to challenge



the absolutism of the state. In terms of political functioning, the polity of the Ottomans was “patrimonialism,” while the case in England was “centralized feudalism” in its past, and the French one, “decentralized feudalism”. “Whereas in both centralized and decentralized feudalism central authority is effectively checked by countervailing powers, in patrimonialism the periphery is almost totally subdued by the centre.” (Heper, 1985: 14)

Sunar (1974: 4) portrays the patrimonial character of the Ottoman Empire by a quotation from Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1950: 15-16):

Examples of these kinds of government in our time are those of the Turk and the King of France. All the Turkish monarchy is governed by one ruler, the others are his servants, dividing his kingdom into “sangiaccates”, he sends to them various administrators, and changes them or recalls them at his pleasure. But the King of France is surrounded by a large number of nobles, recognized as such by their subjects, and loved by them; they have their prerogatives, of which the king cannot deprive them without danger to himself.

Machiavelli admired the Ottoman paradigm of order particularly for its strength and durability. Political authority so penetrated the social sphere of life so that society was considered as being under the state, and the ruler closely controlled economic life. (Sunar, 1974: 5-6) The quoted passage points out that the sultan ruled through a body of officials having the legal status of household slaves. Taken from the adolescent children of Christian families and trained either by some Muslim families or within the sultan's palace, they had no substantially independent social identities or loyalties. The ministers of the Ottoman sultan, "being all slaves and bondsmen," were loyal and obedient servants of their master, but lacking any connection to the subject population, they could not "carry the people with them." The actual Ottoman slave official (*kul*), a product of specific measures of recruitment and training, took his place in a centralized bureaucracy. (For a detailed analysis see Meeker, 2002.)

These slave officials (*kul*) were unchallenged by any system of estates. There was no aristocracy ruling its own people and territory, and no bourgeoisie granted the privilege of governing its own cities. The sultan possessed a sovereign power, which any other monarch in early modern Europe never had.

Regarding the Oriental empires, Weber saw one line of political/bureaucratic development as theoretically moving toward patrimonial bureaucracy, which might, in turn, reach an extreme form in “sultanism”: “With the development of a purely personal administrative staff, especially a military force under the control of the chief, traditional authority tends to develop into patrimonialism”. Where absolute authority is maximized, it may be called “sultanism.” (Brown, 2000: 65) Although this part of the thesis tries to depict the patrimonial character of the Empire, one should also realize that the issue is not as simple as Weber’s concept of “sultanism”. An article by Halil İnalçık (1993: 16) states that while official Ottoman discourse depicted the sultan as above any law and authority, the reality was much more complicated. The masses possessed means to influence the sultan—for example, by deserting villages—and the government could not ignore such possibilities. In contrast to the theory that nothing restricted the sultan stands the claim that the sultan was in fact severely restricted by the concept of *adalet*, justice. In addition, the Islamic concept of *hisba* functioned as a social contract between the ruler and the ruled in order to assure the welfare of society. (İnalçık, 1993: 9-18)<sup>3</sup>

In addition to its centralized nature, the Ottoman Empire was a truly bureaucratic state as well. This characteristic is especially important in terms of the secularization

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<sup>3</sup> *Vienna Şikayet Defteri*, a book containing some 2500 complaints, all relating to the year 1675, sent by citizens from all over the empire to the sultan about wrongs committed primarily by officials, is a good example of the extension of the phenomenon of justice. (see Gerber, 2002: 79)

reforms during the Turkish Republic. For instance, Mardin (1997: 192) claims that Atatürk's secularization reforms had two antecedents in the Ottoman experience, which influenced his opinions as to the functions of religion in society and the methods, which he used to implement his ideas into policy. The first was the "empiricism of Ottoman secular officialdom", and the latter was legislation as the sole means of secularizing the country. In order to understand the former, one should look at the *adab* tradition.

On the basis of principles like 'necessity' and 'reason', as well as the norms of rationality, the Ottoman centre created a new viewpoint for the ruling elite. It was called *adab*; this was "a secular and state-oriented tradition" which "developed as a consequence of efforts 'to identify the state with established values'." (Heper, 1985: 25) The *adab* tradition was a kind of "organizational socialization" based upon a formulation of "a particular outlook that provided ideals and values for the ruling strata" and "developed as a consequence of efforts to identify the state with established values". It was so pervasive that from the seventeenth century on, the sultans lost their primacy, which was now attributed to the state itself. "The sultans could be now deposed in the name of the state." (Heper, 1981: 347) Heper (1985: 25) further argues that this institutionalization of the state around certain norms (*adab*) resembles the state institutionalization of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth century around such values as order, hierarchy, secularism and solidarism.

Mardin (1997: 194-197) describes the "bureaucratic style" of the Ottoman government as "hard-headed, empirically minded and pragmatic" as a result of their training, which was different from that of the *ulama*. The *ulama* were trained in a

specific curriculum in schools known as *medrese*, the graduates of which were expected to be scholars in one of the religious fields. They were very adept at finding religious justification for many activities, like the charging of interest, that were literally prohibited in the Koran. However, they still had some idealism in their thinking. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, were sent to government bureaus after their elementary education. Consequently, their perspective was shaped by the power struggles of the real world. All of the Westernizing developments of the later Ottoman period were the result of typical mentality of this secular Ottoman bureaucracy: their desire to restore the state's power and pragmatism, in the sense that if western institutions could strengthen the empire, they should be adopted. These bureaucrats, having usually come from the Ottoman recruitment system (*devşirme*), had no ties with any interest group. As slaves of the state, they struggled for the existence and supremacy of the state. This motivation caused them to approach other values in a pragmatic way. The next chapter will show that the founders of the new republic were of the same mentality.

### 3.2 State vs. Religion

Religion was not an alternative force to the empire's strong central administration. A considerable number of scholars think that it is difficult to consider the Ottoman state to have been a theocratic system because the laws of secular authorities, rather than religious instructions, dominated the system in the political and social contexts. (Ortaylı, 1986: 162) The Ottoman state was sovereign vis-à-vis Islam. One cannot deny that the aim of the state was to realize the ideals of Islam. In addition, religion in the Ottoman Empire linked the popular structures with the ruling institution, assuring the state's legitimacy. It was also as the sole source of social control the core of the socialization process. (Mardin, 1971: 205-206) However, while Islam was definitive in private matters, it was inadequate in terms of public policies. (Heper, 1985: 27) Islamic rule does not recognize corporate identities. The Ottoman religious class was not a corporate body, but dependent on the state for its appointments, promotions, and salaries. (Özbudun, 2000: 127) The members of the religious institutions were appointed and removed by the Sultan. "The *Şeyhülislam* had no right to interfere directly in the government or in legal administration." (Heper, 1985: 27) In addition, the Ottomans, following the earlier Turkic-Iranian tradition, could take measures that conflicted with the sacred law, if the public interest required it. Heper argues that the Ottomans incorporated "the early Turkic idea of a supreme law (*yasa/yasak*) that the ruler had to enforce with justice regardless of his personal wishes". As a derivative of *yasa*, the Sultans developed *örf-i sultani*, which refers to the will and command of the sultan as a secular ruler. (Heper, 1985: 24-25)

In this respect, the Turkish Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire a long-standing tradition of *raison d'état*, which often emphasized state hegemony over religion. In the Ottoman context, such political supremacy over the religious realm was achieved through the incorporation of the Islamic establishment into the administrative apparatus of the empire. In apparent continuity with Ottoman patterns, secularism in modern Turkey did not attempt to separate state and religion. Instead, the Republican regime maintained tight control over the religious establishment by monopolizing Islamic functions and incorporating the religious personnel into the state bureaucracy. Analyzing this historical continuity will therefore greatly improve our understanding of Turkish laicism, as well.

Throughout Islamic history, state control over the Muslim religious establishment became so pervasive that the *ulama* virtually became an arm of government. (Brown, 2000: 35) In comparison to other Muslim states, *ulama* were more clearly integrated into the state apparatus in the Ottoman Empire. Considering their control over the educational, judicial and administrative network, one can conclude that they acted as agents of the state and ensured the state's control of social life. "Ottoman government was therefore both 'Islamic' and 'bureaucratic'." (Mardin, 1997: 194)

While the Ottomans may have sought to give a religious appearance to their policies and actions, in reality they exercised their power over different ethnicities and religions in rather secular ways. Their policies and actions, in short, largely responded to political, economic, and social necessities. "Here perhaps lies the secret of the longevity of an empire that privileged the political over the religious factor in its pre-modern forms." (Nalbantoğlu, 1993: 355) Mardin (1983: 138-140) describes

this attitude by saying that the *raison d'état* in the empire was the foundation of political practice, and that the Ottoman state always had primacy in the well-known formula of *din-u devlet* (*din wa dawlah*).

Religion, in the centralized political and economic context of the Ottoman Empire served to legitimize state power. Indeed, starting with its backing by the majority of the Turkic tribes in Central Asia, Islam came to play an important role in the consolidation of central authority. Most importantly, the new religion brought with it means of sociopolitical control and a belief system that proved more appropriate than the mystical and “esoteric” world of shamanism for the functioning of patrimonial kingdoms. As a result, Turkish states like the Seljuk strongly encouraged conversion to Islam throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries and began to defend its core values. (Taşpınar, 2002: 11)

In addition, the new religion’s devotion to *gaza* – the ideology of holy war in the name of Islam— well suited the “nomadic” and “combative” culture of Turkic principalities bordering the Byzantine Empire. During the centuries that followed the Seljuk defeat of the Byzantine army in 1071, the religious motivation of *gaza* motivated Turkmen tribes, including the Ottomans, to conquer the Christian lands of Asia Minor. It is therefore important to note that conversion to Islam —beyond the undeniable religious convictions involved— had a functional dimension aimed at territorial expansion and stabilization of political authority. (Taşpınar, 2002: 11-12)

Since Islamic values took root in Ottoman society, the Shari’ah emerged as a sort of “social contract” between the state and its Muslim population. In that sense, an

Islamic moral and legal framework came to play an important role in supporting the patriarchal machinery of the state. Yet, the founding dynasty remained reluctant to let Islam determine the political and legal limits of state power. Given the mobilizing power of religion, even the ulama —the guardians of Islamic law— could become suspect in the eyes of Ottoman rulers. With such a cautious frame of mind, the Ottoman answer to all potential threats coming from Anatolian society was to establish bureaucratic control over the religious establishment. In that sense, the Ottoman sultans considered their patrimonial authority over the guardians of Islamic orthodoxy as a natural extension of state supremacy. In this framework, the members of the religious institutions were appointed and removed by the Sultan. (Heper, 1985: 27)

The characteristic features of the mutually beneficial relationship between the ulama and the state involved integration and subordination. “High” and “proper” Islam, represented by the *Şeyhülislam* at the top of the *ulama* hierarchy, was incorporated into the state apparatus. The livelihood and office of the *Şeyhülislam*, like those of the rest of the religious class, were granted by the state, and the Sultan determined the path he traveled in his career. The *Şeyhülislam*, as the supreme religious official and head of judicial system, sat on the Imperial Council. However, despite his high position within the state hierarchy, he could, like all government officials, be easily dismissed during any serious conflict with the Sultan. For instance, Özek (1962: 42 in Taşpınar, 2002: 15) gives the case of a *Şeyhülislam*, who in 1702 tried to obtain for himself the position of Grand Vizier and paid for his presumption with his life. Another example comes from İnalçık (1964: 43-44), telling how “once, when Şeyhülislam Ali Cemali Efendi came over the seat of the government to protest a



decision of Sultan Selim I, which he thought contrary to the Shari'ah, the Sultan denounced him as interfering in state affairs.” The *Şeyhülislam*, hence, had no right to interfere directly in the governmental affairs.

In the eyes of the religious establishment, the legitimacy of the state came from its ability to protect the Islamic realm. Therefore, endangering the state, by definition, made a movement heretical. In this political framework, the religious class could very rarely object to the secular laws related to the administrative functions of the state. Ultimate authority and sovereignty rested with Ottoman palace officials and with the Sultan himself. As Mardin (1991: 116) argues,

Trained in the religious seminary (the medrese), the ulama had to endure a period of practical apprenticeship to assuage their shock as they discovered that the rule of Muslim law did not discover all cases brought before them, and that there existed an Ottoman reason of state which operated independently of Islamic values.

The Ottoman *raison d'état* was in historical continuity with the previously mentioned Central Asian-Turkic precepts of *Yasa*. Accordingly, the Sultan could make regulations and enact laws entirely on his own initiative. These laws, independent of the Shari'ah and known as *Kanun* or *Örf-i Sultani*, as mentioned previously, were based on rational rather than religious principles and were enacted primarily in the spheres of public, administrative and criminal law as well as state finance. (Berkes, 1998: 185) Secular lawmaking by the rulers was based on the Islamic conception of *Urf*. “This theory stated that where the Shari'ah did not provide a solution to existing problems, the measuring rods of ‘necessity’ and ‘reason’ could be used to enact regulations with force of law”. (Mardin, 1962: 102) Moreover, in practice, one can observe some *Kanuns* contrary to the Shari'ah. For instance, while in Islamic law, punishment of adultery for a married person was death by stoning (*recm*), in the

Ottoman *Kanuns*, adulterers were charged to pay “according to their means— three hundred *akces* [Ottoman lira] for the middle-income group, and one hundred *akces* for the poor. For illegal sexual relations, unmarried persons were fined one hundred, fifty, forty, or thirty *akces*, according to their means.” (İnalçık, 1973: 74)

Given the supremacy of the state over the religious realm, it is not hard to imagine the Ottoman *Şeyhulislam* and other members of *ulama* being involved in the intellectual exercise of fitting the *Kanun* within the proper Islamic framework. Türköne (2003: 182) exemplifies this with a case from Ottoman history that concerned putting a stamp on promissory notes. When the Spanish ambassador somehow saw a contradiction in terms of religious concerns, the *Reisül-küttab* of Selim III, Ebubekir Ratıp Efendi, replied to this objection by stating that every benefit can be justified in religious terms. (*Her maslahatın vech-i şer’isi bittaharri bulunabilir*) As another example, in summarizing the position of Ebu Suud Efendi, an Ottoman *Şeyhulislam*, Mandaville (1979: 298 in Gerber, 2002: 73) says: “What appears is an appeal to continued popular usage (*ta’amul* and *ta’aruf*), to the welfare of the people (*istihsan*), and to both throughout with a tone of ‘Let’s be practical,’ an appeal to commonsense.” What these words meant in real terms is made clearer in the detailed letter of a Sufi sheikh to the sultan: “God’s legislation has no other purpose than to ease the way of His servants through the exigencies of the time... One uses inadmissibility at times because it is better for the people of that time, at other times one does the opposite.” He further cites an opinion that says: “Be guided by whatever is more harmonious with how the people are living, what is kinder, better for them.” (Mandaville, 1979: 302-303 in Gerber, 2002:73)

What partly facilitated the Ottomans' being able to maintain the state's supremacy and open a secular space in which to legislate, was the nature of the religion they adopted. Ottomans were Sunni, a sect within Islam that allows enough room for new judgments in accordance with new necessities. Moreover, in the Sunni tradition, administration is not a primary (*aslî*) issue, but rather a secondary (*talî*) concern. The Shia tradition, on the other hand, takes the issue of *imamet* as being of primary importance. (Türköne, 2003: 253) Additionally, in the Sunni understanding, the existence of the state is more important rather than its quality. For instance, Mawardi, a distinguished Islamic scholar of the eleventh century, claimed that if someone takes political power through coercion and violence, one should evaluate his subsequent behavior. If he acts within the scope of religious rules and of justice, his acts can be approved for the sake of preventing divisions and chaos within the *umma*. (Türköne, 2003: 256) This approach enabled Muslim rulers to act according to their own will.

In this framework, orthodox Islam had only narrow opportunities to develop into a source of opposition. As a result, in contrast to what was going on in western Europe, there was no Ottoman equivalent of the confrontational relations between state and church. The Ottomans succeeded in creating a strong state where power was centralized in the hands of the Sultan and a group of officials entirely loyal to him.

On the basis of these findings, as Heper (1981: 348) states, in the Ottoman Empire “there was little need for ‘institutional secularization as disengagement’, or change from ecclesiastical control to public administration, because the state as a distinct entity, with ‘sovereignty’ and ‘autonomy’, and supporting resources, always existed.”

Even in the sixteenth century, at the height of Islamic influence, the Empire was not a real theocracy.

### 3.3 The Impact of Modernization

The Westernization reforms are the most lingering example of the Ottoman legacy because Kemalism was “an intensification of this earlier modernization trend.” It was not “an alien model imported from the West”, but a result of historical processes that occurred through the Empire’s interactions with Europe. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 3) Obviously, the Kemalist Republic is much different from the Ottoman Empire. However, Atatürk and his friends did not directly import their ideas from the West; rather, they used the intellectual treasury accumulated by Ottoman reformers up to that time. Furthermore, “Kemalism constituted a continuum with the *Tanzimat*, Young Ottomans and Young Turks, insofar as its major concern was the state, considered as the unique mediating mechanism and source of legitimacy in the society, prevailing over market relations.” (Kazancıgil, 1997: 37, 48) In the Turkish Republic, the bureaucratic elite continued to conceive of the state as being vital to hold the community together. (Heper, 1985: 16)

When analyzing the impact of the Westernization process during the Ottoman period on political developments in the Republic, one should keep in mind the specific features pointed out below. Differently from other countries of the so-called third world, Turkey initiated the modernization process under its own state apparatus. The Turkish modernization process is different in some ways from its precursors. One of its distinct features is that the administrative elite took “the survival of the state” as its primary concern throughout the modernization process. In the interaction between the public and the ruling elite, the priority of the state has remained a common space, as in the old traditions. The second point appears a logical consequence of the first

one. Modernization efforts occurred in order to strengthen the state and making it compatible with the West, or at least to enable it to survive. The sovereignty of the state would be preserved through the modernization of society; therefore, modernization has been perceived as the concern of the state. Such a perception explains why modernization projects have been planned by the state and implemented in a top-down manner. Throughout Ottoman history, each initiative was handled by the state. Moreover, contrary to developments in the Western Europe, there were no classes that would be able to resist on the basis of their interests. (Ahmad, 1986: 34) The reforms were discussed and implemented only by the military-bureaucratic elite, who did not feel the need to expand their ideas into the broader society. In addition, modernization was perceived by Ottoman intellectuals as Westernization. Beyond that, throughout the nineteenth century, what they meant when talking about the West was in fact only France. This is one reason of why Turkish secularization resembles the French case so much. They were so eager to imitate France that, as Türköne (2003: 23) relates, after “civilization” entered into “*Dictionnaire de l’Academie Française*” in its present meaning, the Ottoman elite invented the equivalent “*medeniyet*” only two years later.

The realization that the West was superior to the Ottomans dawned first during wars, and gradually this opinion was applied beyond the military matters to the social life. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Ottomans were well aware that they had begun to lose battles, mainly against the Austrians and Russians, which they used to win. The situation as it presented itself to the Ottomans was essentially this: "Given that it is a fact that we are in possession of the true faith, why are we losing wars to infidels?" (Silverstein, 2003) The question was considered to be essentially a

technical one involving expertise and equipment, and the eventual strategy was the well-known reorganization of the military beginning with Selim III's *Nizam-i Jedid* in the late eighteenth century. Selim III (1789-1807) has been regarded as initiator of Westernization in the Empire; however, his reforms aimed only to restore military power. "Despite his personal conservatism, Selim III created in Ottoman society a trend toward Westernization and a sense of the necessity for rapid and progressive change." (İnalçık, 1964: 10-11) The reforms continued under the *Tanzimat* after Mahmud II's destruction of the Janissary corps in 1826. (For a classical treatment, see Berkes, 1964) The importance of the reforms initiated by Mahmud II should not be underemphasized. Under his rule, there came about

the emergence of the idea of an Ottoman state, composed of peoples of diverse nationalities and religions, based on secular principles of sovereignty as contrasted with the medieval concept of an Islamic empire. The real beginning of modernization and secularization was in this charge. (Berkes, 1964: 90)

Mahmud II (1808-1839) increased the pace of the Westernization reforms, and removed the Janissary corps and put a modern army in its place. During his reign, the *Sened-i İttifak* (Covenant of Union) was signed in 1808 to settle the conflict between the center and the *ayans*, the local notables. Like Magna Carta, it limited the Sultan's power to some extent, but to be sure, it was not a preparation for a liberal democracy. The *ayans* were later suppressed brutally. It should be, however, noted that the state but not the sultan himself was regarded as party to the agreement. He soon restored the state's power. (İnalçık, 1964: 12-14)

It is important to recognize that the incorporation of modern techniques into the Ottoman administration did not take place as a result of colonialism, but rather as sovereign state reform on the part of a Muslim polity. Moreover, this process did not

appear to have been experienced by the Ottomans as a capitulation to the enemy's "cultural imperialism" even in later periods, as Keyder (1993:22) has pointed out: "Unlike other nationalists of the Third World, the Ottomans did not feel particularly resentful toward the West." Nevertheless, one should note that all of the developments were the efforts around the typical goal of the secular Ottoman bureaucracy: the restoration of the state's power. (Mardin, 1997: 197) If Western institutions could strengthen the empire, they would be adopted. What was new in this adoption of the techniques of modern disciplines was the relative authority and prestige accorded to this knowledge. Silverstein (2003) argues that this is the origin of the arrangements that later was called secularism in Turkey, and which in the Turkish context does not so much represent the separation of religion from something called public life, but refers in practice primarily to institutional issues of "how much power is to be accorded to those whose authority derives from their knowledge of the Islamic tradition". The question, as it posed itself to the Ottomans and to the early Republican generations who had just fought three wars over the course of little more than a decade for their own survival, was not a philosophical one, nor was it an identity issue. (For a detailed discussion see Silverstein, 2003 and Türköne, 2003.)

In a similar vein, the conditions, which moved the Ottoman ruling elite to enact the Tanzimat Decree, represented as the main turning point for Westernization, were, in general, security concerns. The Ottoman statesmen believed that in order to stop the Egyptian armies, which had come as far as Kütahya, they had to modernize the country. Modernization was for them, first of all, a security issue. (Türköne, 2003: 72) Accordingly, after the defeat of the armies of Mahmud II by Ali Pasha of Egypt



in 1838 and 1839, a new generation of reformers emerged “to save the state from total destruction”. (Heper, 1985: 25) The reformers were mostly from the bureaucracy whose members were trained within the *kul* system. The Tanzimat reform period (1839-1876), which was based on Sultan Mahmud II’s (1808-1839) reforms, was initiated with the Gülhane Imperial Edict of 1839 through the efforts of those bureaucrats. Some important changes were launched within the administrative, military, legal and education systems. (Özdalga, 1998: 7) “Equality before the law and the securing of life, honor, and property for all subjects were the revolutionary ideas in the rescript.” (İnalçık, 1964: 19) In fact, *Tanzimat* reformers wanted to westernize the administration, while preserving the traditional institutions like Shari’ah. Later, radical Westernists would blame the reformers of the Tanzimat period for this “dualism.” (İnalçık, 1964: 224)

The last century of the Empire witnessed the rise of, basically, three ideological orientations that influenced the political framework of the Empire during some periods of this time: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Ottomanism and Pan-Turkism. In order not to overstep the framework of the subject at hand, only one aspect will be highlighted; which is that although these three appear as totally different ideologies, they coincided in their target: they all aimed to save the state. The destruction of the old state was never an option. The primacy of the state remained even during this shaky era. (see Türköne, 2003)

The modernization process was going on in the hands of the changing elites in power who ascribed these different ideologies. The First Constitutional Period (1876- 1878) was important but only a “short-lived exception.” Following the Young Turk

Revolution in 1908, the Second Constitutional Period was initiated. In 1913, the Committee of Union and Progress (the Young Turks) staged another coup d'état one year after being removed from power. (Özdalga, 1998: 8) Not surprisingly, the administrative elites who were instrumental in the establishment of this Republic had been born and launched their careers in the late Ottoman environment, i.e. during the reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909) and, especially, the subsequent Young Turk regimes of the Committee of Union and Progress (1908-1918). (Silverstein, 2003) The Young Turks deserve special attention, since they were the precedents of the Republican elite in terms of ideology.

The major characteristics of the nationalist Young Turks, who were trained in secular schools, were: a) absolute 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) a passion for elite rule. Owing to these three characteristics- positivism, statism, and elitism- the Young Turks were neither liberal nor democratic. They were indeed strong Westernists. According to Abdullah Cevdet, one of the pioneering intellectuals of the Young Turks, “there is no second civilization; civilization means European civilization, and it must be imported with both its roses and its thorns”. (Lewis, 1968: 236 in Özdalga, 1998: 9)

In addition, like the former ones, the political elites of the Young Turks saw themselves as the basic force to change the Empire, and the Ottoman-Turkish society as a project. The people could be only the objects of this project. (Kasaba, 1997: 24) Although they 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 at expanding the social basis of the Ottoman state. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx) The oft-quoted dictum “How can the state be saved?” belongs to the Young Turks. “It is no exaggeration to say that for them, constitution and parliament were a *means* to further the modernization process by making the subjects into stakeholding citizens, rather than an *end* in themselves.” (Atabaki and Zürcher, 2004: 3) Their commitment to the parliamentarism is not for the sake of freedom, but it represents their aim to strengthen the state. (Köker, 2004: 130) “As a result, the legacies of an authoritarian state structure and a new administrative military-civilian bureaucratic style punctuated the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.” (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx)

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TURKISH NATION UNDER “CONSTRUCTION” TOWARD A SECULAR COUNTRY

*“The irony of history is that for centuries the Turks, who symbolized Muslim and barbarian -the ‘other’ for Europeans- now tried to enter the circle of the ‘civilized.’ And, even more ironically, they have had to reinvent their own ‘barbarians,’ those who are considered an obstacle to civilization who were first the Muslims and today the Kurds.”*  
(Göle, 1996b: 23)

Kemalist reforms were a consequence of the Westernization process that started early in the Tanzimat period, and they did not envisage a totally “alien model imported from the West.” (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 3) As Kazancıgil (1997: 48) also points out, Kemalism displays strong continuity with the modernization process after the Tanzimat period since it too was centered around the state, which was considered as the sole agent of political activity and the only source of legitimacy.

In terms of illustrating the continuity in the concept of modernization between the Ottoman past and the new Republic, Abdullah Cevdet's article entitled "A Very Wakeful Sleep", written in 1911, is a remarkable example. Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), one of the forerunners of Westernism and of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress, and an Ottoman medical doctor of Kurdish origin, envisaged a "dreamland" which would later be realized by Atatürk and his followers:

... the fez would be abolished, and a new head-gear adopted; existing cloth factories would be expanded, and new ones opened, and the Sultan, princes, senators, deputies, officers, officials, and soldiers made to wear their products; women would dress as they pleased, though not extravagantly, and would be free from dictation of interference in this matter by ulema, policemen, or street riff-raff; they would be at liberty to choose their husbands, and the practice of match-making would be abolished; convents and *tekkes* [dervish lodges] would be closed, and their revenues added to the education budget, all *medreses* would be closed, and new modern literary and technical institutes established; the turban, cloak &c., would be limited to certificated professional men of religion, and forbidden to others; vows and offerings to the saints would be prohibited, and the money saved devoted to national defence; exorcists, witch-doctors, and the like would be suppressed, and medical treatment for malaria made compulsory; popular misconceptions of Islam would be corrected; practical adult education schools would be opened; a consolidation and purified Ottoman Turkish dictionary and grammar would be established by a committee of philosophers and men of letters; the Ottomans, without awaiting anything from their government or from foreigners would, by their own efforts and initiative, build roads, bridges, ports, railways, canals, steamships, and factories; starting with the land and *Evkaf* [religious foundations] laws, the whole legal system would be reformed. (Lewis, 1968: 236 in Özdalga, 1998: 5-6)

His dream would become real less than fifteen years later. This example demonstrates that we cannot assume a Kemalist revolution putting the Ottoman past aside. The new regime was established upon the Ottoman intellectual heritage.

## 4.1 Secularization: A Sine Qua Non for the Republic

Having left the War of Independence (1919-1922) successfully behind, the Westernist elite put into motion the steps to transform Turkey into a modern and secular nation-state. Unsurprisingly, the Kemalist principle of nationalism was contrary to Islam's universalistic conception of *umma*, the Muslim community. Atatürk wanted to establish a new state upon the ruins of the collapsed empire and a new culture in place of the old one that could not renew itself. (Timur, 1968: 9) Following the foundation of the new Republic in 1923, Mustafa Kemal initiated a series of reforms to build a homogeneous nation-state through eliminating ethnic and religious identities under the guidance of a state-determined Turkish nationalism. These reforms, known as Kemalism, sought to control religion, as well, to create a new order.

The Kemalist republic was born under peculiar historical circumstances. It was established over a "multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire". Therefore, the new elite assumed that national consciousness could be achieved by erasing the Ottoman past. The revolution, which drew much inspiration from the French model of secularization, adopted a strict secularism and the concept of a centralized nation-state in which citizenship is based on the rights of the individual rather than on any ethnic or religious identity. (Rouleau, 1996: 70) Secular citizenship was intended to create a homogenous nation committed to modernity. For this purpose, it was necessary to meld the various ethnic and religious differences into a national identity, through violence and suppression if need be. The Kemalist

republic tried to establish national unity by imposing a Latinized Turkish alphabet and promoting a new culture cut off from the Ottoman past.

In the Fourth Congress of the People's Republican Party in 1935, Mustafa Kemal codified his ideas and goals as "Kemalism," which consisted of six "eclectic" principles to guide the party and the state: nationalism, secularism, republicanism, statism, reformism, and populism. The Kemalist doctrine was informed by the dominant European authoritarian ideologies of 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, and secular homogenized society. Thus, fear of differences became the guiding principle of the Kemalist state. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx-xxi) Moreover, again owing to the impact of French positivism, the Kemalist project's sole legitimate agent of change was the state itself. Change is was acceptable only when carried out by the state. Thus, in the process of building a Kemalist state, any form of bottom-up modernization of civil society became a source of worry and suspicion.

The Kemalist version of laicism is not obviously an Anglo-Saxon understanding of secularism. (Yavuz, 2000: 33) Instead of being neutral on the question of the religious practices and beliefs of its citizenry, the laicist state, with its origins in the Jacobin tradition of the French revolution, seeks to remove all appearances of religion from the public sphere and put it under the strict control of the state. Kemalist ideology has historically justified this position by placing its progressive and modernizing mission in opposition to Turkey's Islamic heritage. This struggle

against the traditional “forces of darkness” uses a “militant laicism” to justify an authoritarian military-bureaucratic position.

One of the distinctions of the Kemalist revolution in comparison to other modernization movements in the Islamic world is its greater emphasis on secularism. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 3) In the late 1920s, laicism became the basic principle of the Kemalist project. The overemphasis on secularism in the Kemalist revolution is not without a basis, Toprak (ny: 2-4) says, and lists five reasons for this. First, unlike Christianity Islam favors the unity of the political and religious realms. Second, it has a great potential for mass mobilization. Religion, especially in traditional societies, usually becomes the only source of common identity. Third, the Ottoman past proves that Islam can lead to the resistance to modernization efforts. The role of Islam and the ulama was considered by the early republican political elite as the primary cause of the collapse of the empire. Fourth, the ulama had widespread functions in different fields such as law, education, and public policy. This illustrated for the republican elite “to what extent Islam could assume influences on social and political power.” Finally, the very beginning of the Republic showed how Islam could play a dominant role in protest and revolt against the new regime. Several revolts against the new regime took place in the name of Islam. Actually, Islam was the only possible source of opposition. The Kemalist elite was, therefore, very sensitive on the issue of religion.

In this framework, the year 1924 saw the abolition of the Caliphate. On 2 March the Grand National Assembly passed a law overthrowing the Caliph and his office, “the function of the Caliph being essentially included in the meaning and connotation of



the Government of the Republic”. All princes and princesses would have to leave Turkey within ten days. Other secularizing laws were also passed abolishing the office of the *Şeyhülislam* and the Ministry of Shari’ah and Religious Foundations, replacing it by a new Department of the Prime Ministers’ Office—the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Religious courts were abolished on 8 April, and on 20 April, the 1924 constitution was accepted. (Salahi, 1989: 107)

On April 10, 1928, amendments were made to the 1924 Turkish Constitution. These amendments constituted the clearest moves of that period toward the secularization of the Turkish state and society in legal terms. Through these amendments, which applied to Articles 2, 16, and 38, the provision stating that the official religion of Turkey was Islam was removed, and reference to Allah in the official oath was eliminated. Article 75 of the Constitution providing for freedom of religious convictions and philosophical beliefs and for the right to belong to different sects was amended in February 1937, by removing the word *sect*. Previously, in 1925, all religious articles of importance, such as the mantle of the Prophet Mohammed, were passed on to the Turkish museum of antiquities. The palaces of the Ottoman Sultans came under governmental control and were opened to the public. In 1935, ecclesiastical clothing worn by all men of religion was forbidden except in actual places of worship. (Kili, 1969: 47-48)

In general, beyond these constitutional amendments, under Atatürk’s guidance the parliament passed, in rapid succession, a number of important laws. Among these, probably the most revolutionary were those concerning education and the legal system. The educational reforms erased the religious element from all schools,

making secularized instruction compulsory; and, the legal reforms abolished all religious courts (Islamic, Christian and Jewish), setting up instead secular courts with new laws based largely on Swiss models. (Kadioğlu, 1996: 186) The significance of these revolutions can be seen in the fact that “in some of the other successor states of the Ottoman Empire, religious courts were abolished only much later - in Egypt, in 1956 - while in others they are still active, as in Israel and Lebanon.” (see Kadioğlu, 1996)

According to Toprak (1981: 9), the program of secularization was initiated in three phases. These phases were “symbolic secularization”, “institutional secularization” and “functional secularization”. *Symbolic secularization* launched transformations in many facets of national culture that had a symbolic identification with Islam. The most important secularization reform in this sphere, the changing of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin script, took place in 1928. Since the new regime regarded language as a connection with history, culture and sacred scripture, changing the alphabet was an “effective step towards breaking old religious traditions” and weakening the link with the past. (Shaw and Shaw, 1977: 33-35 in Toprak, 1981: 36) The acceptance of the Western hat and Western styles of clothing, the introduction of Western music in schools, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, and the change of the weekly holiday from Friday to Sunday were other manifestations of symbolic secularization in Turkey. (Toprak, 1981: 36-37)

The aim of *institutional secularization*, on the other hand, was to eradicate the institutional strength of Islam and prevent its possible interference in the political affairs of the new regime. The basic goal of the Kemalist elite was “to completely

free the polity from religious considerations. Islam was not supposed to have even the function of a ‘civil religion’ for the Turkish polity; Islam was not going to provide a transcendent goal for political life”. (Heper, 1981: 350) Therefore, institutional secularization was initiated through the abolition of the caliphate on March 3, 1924. In the same year, the state also abolished the office of *Şeyhülislam* and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations. By doing this, it tried to transform the *umma* into a secular national entity in order to erase religion as a common bond of solidarity. Finally, the Sufi movements and their activities were outlawed in 1925. With the abolition of the caliphate and other religious institutions, the principles of political legitimacy were changed to replace Islam with loyalty to the state as the source of political legitimacy. (Shaw and Shaw, 1977: 534)

The third phase of secularization in Turkey was *functional secularization*. It consists of two stages: legal and educational. (Toprak, 1981: 48) To accomplish legal secularization, the court system was secularized through the adoption of Western codes. It was an urgent step, because the Shari’ah Law was regarded as an obstacle to the westernization program. (Shaw and Shaw, 1977: 385) By eliminating this law, the pro-westernization elite intended to reduce the functions of Islam in the community.

The second stage of functional secularization was implemented in the educational system. Under the Law for the Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisat), enacted in 1924, all educational establishments were unified under the close control of the state. Finally, during the one-party period of Turkey’s early history Atatürk’s successors also implemented reforms that “introduced a certain mobility” into the

political domains of “institutional and cultural life, but (they came) at the cost of a serious break with Islamic heritage.” (Küçükcan, 2003: 489)

The case of religious education is worth attention. All the Islamic educational systems were closed in 1924, and the new education system was unified under the direction of the Ministry of Education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*). Accordingly, religious education was also put under the guidance of this ministry. A new Faculty of Theology was founded at the *Darülfünun* (the University of Istanbul) in 1924. Moreover, special schools were opened in Istanbul and twenty other places to train a new generation of imams and *hatips*. In 1933, the Faculty of Theology was closed down and turned into an Institute for Islamic Research. Similarly, in 1926 there were twenty schools for imams and hatips, but in 1932 only two were left (in Istanbul and Konya). Likewise, the number of students in these schools, which had reached 2,258 in 1924, declined to ten in 1932. (Özdalga, 1998: 19)

In public schools, religion had been taught at the primary and secondary levels, but after the third congress of the Republican People’s Party in 1931, when the principle of secularism was introduced into the party program, the government declared that religious education was the responsibility of the family, not the state. Accordingly, religion was taken away from the primary and secondary school curricula in 1935, and was not introduced again until 1948. (Özdalga, 1998: 19-20)

This situation can be explained best by Mardin’s (1971: 208-209) point:

The most important function of “official religion” was that it provided a legitimating framework for the religion of the lower classes. By replacing the official religion with the principle of laicism, Atatürk erased the possibilities of legitimation offered by the framework. The

little man's religion was thus placed in an ambiguous situation: tolerated but not secure. It was this tension which Atatürk hoped would work in favor of secularization in the long run.

In other words, religion, which was used especially to legitimize the War of Independence against the wishes of the Caliph and which was benefited during the early stages of the nation-building process, became subject to gradual decline by having limits placed on its opportunities to grow. This was because it was considered an obstacle to the development of a modern and secular nation-state.

## **4.2 The Goal of Secularization Reforms: Freedom of Religion or Freedom from Religion?**

The secularization reforms should be considered according to their relations to the fundamental goal of Atatürk and his future expectations. This positioning is crucial to understand the secularizing reforms of Atatürk. As Mardin (1971: 202) states well in his often quoted passage, the Kemalist revolution was not due to a discontented bourgeoisie, or peasant dissatisfaction. The taking away of feudal privileges was not a motivating factor, either. The target was the values of the Ottoman past. Despite its radical nature, however, the revolution did not aim to eradicate Islam in Turkey. It rather aimed at individualization and privatization of religion. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 5) It also eventually succeeded in that by mid-century “Islam ...had indeed become a matter for the private consciences of Turks.” (Mardin, 1997: 211)

Atatürk envisaged his ultimate goal for the nation as reaching to the level of contemporary civilization. (Timur, 1968: 96) The Kemalist reforms connected to secularism were, principally, aimed at bringing Turkey to the status of the advanced states of the world, and justified on the basis of the “requirements of contemporary civilization”. (Mardin, 1997: 210) In order to achieve the level of contemporary civilization, it was necessary to create a modern national state based on a national sovereignty. Western civilization was the sole address for the new regime, and what was considered an obstacle to this goal had to be eliminated. The institutional part of the reforms were instituted both to get rid of the old functionaries of the state who were preventing its secular development, and to create the new institutions required

for a modern state. The cultural (symbolic) side of the reforms, on the other hand aimed to create the socio-cultural ground for a modern national state, that is, to redefine the nation as a new political community.

The target of the social and cultural reforms was the creation of a new individual compatible with the modern national state and society. The public representation of the republican citizen was imagined centrally in such a way that he would resemble his western counterparts. From this perspective, the Westernization process was considered not only a simple search for modernization, but also a search for a totally new civilization. Therefore, the republican reforms took as their targets deeply rooted components of society such as religion, traditions, manners, style, values, and the like. This was a distinctive feature of republican reformism. As Mardin (1971: 202) aptly noted:

“The Turkish Revolution was not the instrument of a discontented *bourgeoisie*, it did not ride on a wave of peasant dissatisfaction with the social order, and it did not have as target the sweeping away of feudal privileges, but it did take as a target the values of the Ottoman *ancién regime*. In this sense it was a revolutionary movement.”

Lewis (1968: 406) states that “The basis of Kemalist religious policy was laicism, not irreligion; its purpose was not to destroy Islam, but to disestablish it --- to end the power of religion and its exponents in political, social, and cultural affairs, and limit it to matters of belief and worship.” The Kemalist principle of secularism did not advocate atheism. There was no destruction of religion in Kemalist Turkey, but religion and religious men were removed from areas, which they had traditionally controlled and asked to confine themselves to their own field. In short, it can be stated that the Kemalist principle of secularism did not involve abolition but de-

emphasis of Islam. The aim was to eradicate Islam's influence on public realms.

However, the reforms were still so radical that, as Lewis (1968: 410) notes that

Although the regime never adopted an avowedly anti-Islamic policy, its desire to end the power of organized Islam and break its hold on the minds and hearts of the Turkish people was clear. The prohibition of religious education, the transfer of mosques to secular purposes, reinforced the lesson of the legal and social reforms. In the rapidly growing new capital, no new mosques were built.

Atatürk's main aim in the process of modernization was to change the basic structure of Turkish society and "redefine the political community". (Toprak, 1989: 39) He tried to remove society from an Islamic framework and introduce into it a sense of belonging to a newly defined "Turkish nation". (Eisenstadt, 1984: 9) To achieve this goal, Atatürk launched a movement of cultural westernization to provide the Turkish nation with a new world view that would replace its religious culture. (Mardin, 1997: 191-212) He viewed the separation of religion and politics as a prerequisite to open the doors to Western values. Therefore, secularism became one of the central tenets of Atatürk's program to accomplish modernization. As a part of this secularization policy, Atatürk initiated a major operation against the Islamic institutional and cultural influences in society. It was followed by the introduction of secularism into the Turkish Constitution during the single-party period of Republican People's Party rule. (Turan, 1991: 31-34) Secularization reforms undertaken during the first decade of the new republic aimed at minimizing the role of religion in every aspect of Turkish society. The motive behind this was to reduce the societal significance of religious values and to eventually disestablish cultural and political institutions shaped by Islam. (Mardin, 1983: 142)



In Kemalist Turkey, as was supposed to be due to the requirements of modernization, religion and religious institutions were removed from areas which did not fall within the “proper” sphere of their activity, such as education and law, and secular concepts and institutions were substituted. Historical experience with the religious faction’s opposition to modernization had a profound impact on the formulation of the Kemalist principle of secularism as well. The application of Kemalist secularism involved not only separation of state and religion and the severing of traditional ties between religion and education and law. In addition, the Presidency of Religious Affairs was attached to the office of the Prime Minister, and the Kemalist government assumed the right of interference, whenever necessary, for the purpose of controlling religion and in order to prevent the religious-conservative faction from attempting to play its traditional role in Turkish society. (Kili, 1969: 104-105) In this sense, Atatürk unrelentingly stood against any conservatives who might aim to link between Islam and politics: “The government of the Turkish National Assembly is national and materialistic: it worships reality. It is not a government willing to commit murder or drag the nation into the swamps in search of useless ideologies.” (Karal, 1997: 22)

“Under the Republican regime, secularism became a positivist ideology designed to liberate the Turks’ minds from the hold of Islam so as to allow them to acquire those rudiments of contemporary civilization considered to be desirable.” (Karpat, 1985: 407) In fact, excluding Islam’s universalistic claims for the state was the most important aspect of Atatürk’s secularism, because in doing so the scope of secularism was extended beyond the simple separation of the state and religion. Unsurprisingly, alternative sources for the formation of a new identity and a new ethic were then

needed. What was substituted for Islam was a Turkish nationalism made up of “positivistic” and “solidaristic” tenets. (Karpas, 1959: 254) Atatürk, as well, explains his aim in the *Nutuk*, his well-known speech, as the replacement of religion by Turkish nationalism,:

“What is the Turkish Revolution? This Turkish Revolution, a word that includes the reversal of the system of Government, means a fundamental transformation. Our present Constitution has become the most perfect, abolishing those old forms, which have lasted for centuries. The common bond that the nation has now found between individuals and communities for its general welfare and existence has changed the old forms and nature, which for centuries had existed. This means that the nation has united as individuals instead of being united by religion and as adherents of sects; now they are held together only by the bond of Turkish nationality. The nation has accepted as a principle an irrefutable fact that science and means are the source of life and strength in the field of international competition and only in modern civilization can these be found.” (Kili, 1969: 108)

In short, secularism in Turkey, unlike its Western counterparts, did not target bringing peace and stability to fighting religious groups; instead, it tried to modernize the state and homogenize society. The Kemalist principles of nationalism (i.e., the attempt to create a homogeneous nation) and secularism (i.e., the attempt to form a modern society based on rationalism) destroyed the multiethnic character of Turkish society by getting rid of Greeks and other Christian communities and by denying some ethnic groups their cultural rights. The source of Turkish political morality became nationalism, rather than religion, in service to the state. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xviii)

### 4.3 Secularization From Above

In simple terms, revolution is commonly defined as a totally drastic change either in the political and economic institutions, or in the culture or economy of a country. In Barrington Moore's reckoning, Kemalism was a "revolution from above", not a social revolution. (Özbudun and Kazancıgil, 1997: 5) The basic difference between "modernization from above" and "modernization as a self-generating societal process" is that in the former case the modernizers exert state power and are agents of the modernization process with their own interests. (Keyder, 1997: 37-38) In this sense, the "Turkish revolution was not a social revolution; rather, it combined features of a war of liberation and a political liberation." (Özbudun, 1997: 83)

The Kemalist project was launched by the modernizing elite who aimed to impose institutions and culture on the people of Turkey according to their own understanding of modernity. In Keyder's (1997) framing, this situation is very much tied to a fundamental feature in the continuity between the Ottoman modernizers and the founders of the Turkish state: the absence of large landlords and, therefore, the relative independence of the bureaucracy. The Ottoman capital eliminated all possible forces alternative to the strong center. Because of this absence, the guardians of the *ancien régime* were merely the nonreformist wing of the bureaucracy; the nationalist intelligentsia did not have to confront any serious opposition, either. Without a strong landlord class demanding economic liberalism and civil and political rights and the like, no group in society could challenge the absolutism of the state. In this respect, Turkish nationalism is an extreme example, in

which the masses remained silent and the modernizing elite did not attempt to accommodate popular resentment.

From another perspective, the main structural feature of the relationship between the state and society or religion has been the elitist political culture, which has been the ongoing characteristic of the Ottoman-Turkish polity. The bureaucratic elite has been the constitutive agent of this political culture; thus, neither the character of Turkish secularism nor the changes in the state-Islam relationship can be understood without looking at the role of and the changes in the attitude of the civil and military elites. The Turkish bureaucratic elite identified itself with the state and acted as the guardian of the state. This elitism appears as a consequence of the Turkish strong state tradition, in which it is the state (the state elite) that is responsible for social development, as the shepherd-flock metaphor represents.

Accordingly, the agents of Turkish modernization in Atatürk's view were the military-bureaucratic elites, who were in a position to show the true path to the people so that they would achieve rationality through education. Heper (1984: 86) argues that Atatürk believed in the capacity of the people to reach the level of contemporary civilization, but felt they should be helped by the educated elite. In a sense, the educated elite was given a temporary task, i.e., the education of the people until such time as they gained an adequate rationality. Therefore, he believed that reforms had to be imposed "from above." According to Atatürk, reforms needed to be imposed from above because when people are not educated they can be easily deceived for undesirable ends. (Heper, 1985: 50-51) "The people were passing through the necessary stages of progress towards a more civilized pattern of life."

The leaders should find the paths to those stages and direct society. (Heper, 1985: 62) Therefore, Atatürk initiated many reforms to break the ties with the past, which he considered to be obstacles to revealing the potential of the people. The elitist tradition of the Ottoman-Turkish politics constituted a center of significance in terms of this issue.

## 4.4 Atatürk's Conceptions of Science and Religion

Atatürk, as “an admirer of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment,” said, “For everything in the world —for civilization, for life, for success— the truest guide is knowledge and science.” (Cherry, 2002: 22) Believing that Turkey must catch up with the Western world, he declared that Enlightenment values were those of “universal civilization,” and that the nation's supreme goal must be to reach them. Andrew Mango (2000 in Cherry, 2002: 21) writes in *Atatürk*: “Atatürk’s message is that East and West can meet on the ground of universal secular values and mutual respect, that nationalism is compatible with peace, that human reason is the only true guide in life.” In line with this understanding, in the speech which Atatürk delivered in Bursa on October 27, 1922, to a group of teachers from Istanbul, he gave his views on the identity of the new Turkish nation, as well as what he thought should be among the principal objectives of this Turkish nation:

Yes, in social and political life, in educating the minds of the Turkish nation our guide will be knowledge and science. Only, through knowledge and science, as provided by the schools can the Turkish nation, Turkish art, the Turkish economy, Turkish poetry, literature and fine arts fully develop...

Wherever knowledge and science is, we as a nation are going to be there, and implant these in the minds of individuals...

The basic goal of our educational policy and our educational program will be the destruction of ignorance, if this cannot be achieved we shall stay as we are, and anything that stays as it means that it is going backward...

We must admit that up until three and a half years ago we were living as religious community. They ruled over us as they wished. The world knew us according to those who represented us. For the past three and a half years we have lived as a nation. The concrete and explicit evidence of this is the form and nature of our government named by the law as the Grand National Assembly. (Kili, 1969: 36-37)

Such a deep belief in science is due to the fact that the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal were guided very much by positivism. The republican elite adopted the Comtian idea of “progress within order.” Positivism framed their ideas regarding the domains of politics, economics, and society. Positivism became the guiding principle of the Turkish education system as well. Accordingly, Kemalist laicism should not be understood as the separation of politics and religion, but rather as being about restructuring society in accordance with positivist philosophy. In practice, this restructuring meant eradicating religious impacts in the domains of education, economics, family, dress, and politics. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xxi)

The official understanding regarding the issue is well summarized in the *Program of the People’s Party of the Republic* (adopted by the Fourth Grand Congress of the Party May 1935, official translation published by the Party, Ankara, 1935). It was stated in *Part II- The Essential Characteristics of the Republican People’s Party* [articles 5(e) and 5(f)] that

The party considers it a principle to have the laws, regulations, and methods in the administration of the State prepared and applied in conformity with the needs of the world and on the basis of the fundamentals and methods provided for modern civilization by Science and Technique.

As the conception of religion is a matter of conscience, the Party considers it to be one of the chief factors of the success of our nation in contemporary progress, to separate ideas of religion from politics, and from the affairs of the world and of the State.

The Party does not consider itself bound by progressive and evolutionary principles in finding measures in the State administration. The Party holds it essential to remain faithful to the principles born of revolutions, which our nation has made with great sacrifices, and to defend these principles which have since been elaborated. (Kili, 1969: 79)

The R.P.P. Program in 1935 clearly indicated that the Turkish state was to be directed by the requirements and the principles of modern civilization and in

particular by modern science and technology. Religion was to be separated from politics and from temporal affairs. Secularism was considered the sine qua non of Turkish progress and development.

Looking at the principle of secularism from the point of view of the RPP's definition as well as from the broader perspective of Atatürk's secularist reforms and speeches, an underlying Kemalist conviction emerges: spiritual matters are other-worldly matters, and any matters accessible to reason are secular. Hence, for instance, through the complete secularization of the Turkish legal system, the spiritual authorities were also deprived of their right to judge on temporal matters. (Kili, 1969: 104)

Beside such positivistic convictions, Atatürk and his followers were inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution. Many of the Young Turks that supported Atatürk's creation of a Republic had spent years in exile in France. The enthusiasm with which the Republican reformers approached their project of refashioning society often has been compared to that of the Jacobins who dominated the French state between 1793 and 1794. Like the French revolutionaries, Atatürk believed that modernity, law and order were best imposed from a strong center. (White, 2003: 148-149) The reformers devoted themselves to moving society, in their terms, from the "old" to the "new" and from the "traditional" to the "western." Reason and science were the cornerstones of this drive toward civilization. The assumption was that if the state changed the institutions and the physical environment to match that of Europe, people's behavior and attitudes would then change accordingly. The over-emphasis placed on such public symbols as clothing, architecture, and the visibility of women



in the public sphere can be attributed to this perception. By the late nineteenth century, universalistic and liberal ideals of the Enlightenment were appearing in some European nationalist projects that defined progress and modernity by allowing for no ambiguities and excluding certain “generally ethnically defined cultures as unsuitable for progress in their present state.” (Kasaba, 1997: 26-27) In Turkey, as well, unity and collectivist purpose, rather than universally applicable civil rights, were utilized in the formulation of the new republican citizenship. (Keyder, 1997: 37-51)

Based as it was on these positivistic and Jacobin influences, the Kemalist conception of secularism can be summarized in this way: “Modernity and democracy require secularism. Islam, he [Atatürk] believed, was neither secularizable nor privatizable. Thus, in order to bring modernity, Islam had to be either kept under strict control or confined to personal conscience.” (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xiii) Atatürk (1962: 722 in Kili, 1969:46) explains this in one of his most quoted passages in the *Nutuk*:

Could a civilized nation tolerate a mass of people who let themselves be led by the nose by a herd of Sheikhs, Dedes, Seids, Tshelebis, Babas and Emirs; who entrusted their destiny and their lives to chiromancers, magicians, dice-throwers and amulet sellers? Ought one to conserve in the Turkish State, in the Turkish Republic, elements and institutions such as those which had for centuries given to the nation the appearance of being other than it really was? Would one not therewith have committed the greatest, most irreparable error to the cause of progress and reawakening? (1925)

As Timur (1968: 121) puts well from a broader perspective, Atatürk showed different attitudes towards the high Islam of the official religious scholars, *ulama*, and the folk Islam of the religious brotherhoods. With the former, he aimed to rationalize and redefine the religion. In Atatürk’s conception, Islam is the most rational among all the religions. Consequently, whatever illogical was also supposed to be contrary to

Islam. In this sense, Atatürk believed that The Turkish nation must be more religious. On the other hand, Atatürk found the religious brotherhoods detrimental to the revolution and tried to erase them totally since they could generate alternative sources of political power. As Timur (1971: 148) suggests somewhere else, the Kemalist positivism aimed at reformulating the official Islam in a secular way, while abolishing all the brotherhoods operating throughout the country.

## 4.5 Atatürk's Conception of the State

The creation and maintenance of an independent, sovereign state is an important aspect of Kemalist ideology, as indicated in Atatürk's speech to Turkish youth (*Atatürk'ün Gençliğe Hitabesi*):

Turkish Youth! Your primary duty is ever to preserve and defend the national Independence, the Turkish Republic.

That is the only basis of your existence and your future. This basis contains your most precious treasure.... (Kili, 1969: 61-62)

The ultimate aim of the Ottoman modernization, maintaining a strong state, was one shared by Mustafa Kemal. This is not a coincidence when we consider that Atatürk and his friends, the founders of the new republic, were previously Ottoman pashas.

In the early years of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal attempted to unite all powers in his personality. The proclamation of the republic is not separate from this understanding because he strictly supported the unification of powers as opposed to their separation. Along the same lines, the opposition of the Progressive Republican Party and the press were regarded as almost illegitimate; after some religious revolts occur, they were harshly suppressed through the enactment of the law for the Restoration of Order (*Takrir-i Sükun*).

Heper (1985: 56) states that "Atatürk opted for a Hegelian state -one that would safeguard the general interest without overwhelming civil society". *Vatandaş İçin Medeni Bilgiler* (Citizen's Handbook), written by Afet İnan in 1931 but dictated mostly by Atatürk, provides rich material to explore this kind of conception of the state. As the title indicates, the book is intended to help raise a republican generation

as citizens of the new, modern nation-state. It includes such themes as state, republic, rights and duties, solidarism, division of labor, vocations and work, military service and taxation.

Afet İnan's book (1998: 18, 26) gives the definitions of the Turkish nation by Atatürk: "The Turkish people who founded the Turkish Republic is called as the Turkish nation." "The Turkish nation is a state governed by the republican regime upon the people's sovereignty." Similarly, in a conference organized by the Republican People's Party in 1938, state was defined as the nation who comes together around Atatürk. (Köker, 2004: 161) As these definitions imply, state and nation are fused in the Kemalist understanding, and being a member of the Turkish nation is related to the participation in the establishment and development of the new republic.

In the same book, Mustafa Kemal argues that citizens' service is required for the government to achieve its goals. Hence, citizens who are charged with giving this assistance should be healthy; maintenance of their health is a duty of the government, as well. In this regard, state and citizens change places; citizens are conceived of as if they were instruments of state. This understanding indicates that Mustafa Kemal is talking about the state's citizens rather than a citizen state. He further declares that

The state demands healthy, sturdy citizens who have a high level of comprehension, national sentiment and affection for the homeland in order to maintain order and defend the country. The state is in need of highly qualified citizens to do the nation's business done at home and abroad. The state attaches importance to all citizens comprehending the state's laws and appreciating the requirement of obeying them in terms of order and the defense of the country. (Afetinan, 1998: 45-46)

Mustafa Kemal does not argue that the state should be strong enough to serve the citizens, but rather asserts that the citizens must be strong enough to preserve the existence of the state.

In Atatürk's reckoning, the question of freedom should be considered together with the interests of other individuals and the survival of the state and nation. Freedoms are not absolute and can be restricted by the rights and freedoms of other individuals and by the common interests of the nation. In this respect, he says that "restriction of the rights of individuals is the essence and duty of the state", and that "freedom should not jeopardize state activities". (Afetinan, 1998: 47-53)

According to Atatürk, sovereignty was to "belong to the people without any qualifications and conditions". In practice, however, this meant that the state elite, which was supposed to understand the interests of the people better than the people themselves did, would exercise sovereignty in the name of the people. The "transcendental" nature of the Republic, as a legacy of the Ottoman state, required that community and the state take precedence over their members, whose interest is identified with the common rather than the individual good. (Heper, 1985: 7-8)

Along similar lines, the Ottoman tradition of the father state (*devlet baba*) created a political culture that viewed the interventionist state as legitimate. (Özbudun, 2000: 147-148) As Mardin (1980: 23-53) pointed out:

It is conceded in the abstract that the state and its leaders have a right and obligation to set a course for society and to use public resources to pursue that course.... The emphasis is on the ends of state intervention, and checks and balances are not seen as preventing abuse of power but rather as impeding the state's course toward its goal. Therefore, to some extent, there has been an acceptance of a high concentration of power – economic, administrative and military.

The dominance of state interests over fundamental human rights, the model of the passive citizen, the lack of tolerance for religious influences and ethnic diversity, and the role of the military and bureaucratic elite as the guardian of the Western (secular) character of the Turkish state have all been longtime features of mainstream Turkish political culture.

The superiority of state interests can be observed in regard to religion, as well. Atatürk inherited from the Ottomans a state tradition in which religion played a marginal role in shaping politically important decisions. Unsurprisingly, Ankara, like Istanbul, maintained a monopoly over Islamic functions and there was no change in the tradition of incorporating religious personnel into the state bureaucracy. Understandably, the “secularist” republic wanted to control Islam even more effectively than had the “Islamic” Ottoman Empire.

This continuity can be explained in more pragmatic terms. The Kemalist founding elites were fully aware that any kind of opposition to their secularist reforms in the cultural and social sphere could be mobilized only by religion. They therefore feared that the caliphate could become a counter-revolutionary force. This explains why, after the abolition of the sultanate-caliphate and all other Islamic institutions of the Ottoman Empire, Atatürk established a governmental agency for religion. The Republicans decided to replace the Ottoman Ministry of Shari’ah and Religious Foundations with the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which has given responsibility for teaching and maintaining the Republican interpretation of Islam. (Shankland, 2002: 86) In later years, on the basis of the same reasoning, *Muftis* and imams (prayer leaders) were appointed by the government, and religious instruction was

taken over by the Ministry of National Education. “The establishment of these directorates clearly shows that the Kemalist perception of secularism meant not so much separation of state and religion as control of the state over religion.” (Zürcher, 1993: 195) What Atatürk was doing was actually the establishment of state control over religion and the religious classes. This included controlling and limiting religious education, outlawing religious brotherhoods, and severely limiting forms of dress associated with Islam. These were questions of power and control. (Keddie, 1997 : 32)

This pragmatic concern can also be seen in the abolition of the Islamic brotherhoods. Reaction to the revolution was most likely to come from militant Islamic brotherhoods (*tarikats*), the ex-Unionist leaders, and the Communists. It is interesting to note that the religious reaction came more from the brotherhoods than from the *ulama*, because the *ulama* were already a part of the state. According to Özbudun (1997: 96), this explains why the Kemalist regime tended to ban all the activities of the brotherhoods, while incorporating the official *ulama* under the new Directorate of Religious Affairs with weaker functions.

Bureaucratized Islam in the Republic, then, having submitted to the requirements taken on the task of unitary state-building, was pressed into service for constructing a “regime-friendly Turkish-Islamic identity,” just as its predecessor in the Ottoman Empire had attempted to justify the *Kanuns* in religious terms. (see Kili, 1969) Secularism, in this sense, was not a process that de-politicized Islam. Rather, it removed it from its political role in the old system and eliminated those empowered

by this role, while using Islam in new ways to program the project of the new regime.

In general, in order to accurately understand the state's centrality in Atatürk's reckoning, one should remember that the "Atatürkist state... is not the state that *existed* during Atatürk's life time, but the state as it was *espoused* by him." (Heper, 1985: 48) Atatürk's basic aim was the creation of a "transient moderate transcendental state". Moderate transcendentalism means that a consensus is imposed upon society through static norms, around which the state is institutionalized. (Heper, 1985: 8) Those who do not understand this goal "have not been able to distinguish Atatürk's strategy from his tactics. Thus, even his opponents could pose as 'genuine Atatürkists', because, when necessary, they could find a quotation from Atatürk, which apparently supported their point of view." (Heper, 1985: 11) Atatürk's authoritarian politics should be evaluated accordingly.

In the view of some scholars, in 1920s Turkey, democracy would have been as much a top-down imposition as the rest of Atatürk's modernization program. When he came to power, most Turks were illiterate farmers used to living under the absolute power of the imperial sultan. Many liberal historians have argued that benevolent dictatorship was necessary to prepare Turkey for constitutional democracy. In one of the first biographies of Atatürk, British historian H. C. Armstrong concluded, "His dictatorship -a benevolent, educating, guiding dictatorship— was the only form of government possible at the moment." (Cherry, 2002: 21) In fact, the modernist elite in the early Republican period feared that democracy could pave the way to the public representation of religious symbols. State authoritarianism, "enlightened despotism,"



and single-party regimes often became the only possible options for the secular Westernist elites. (Göle, 1996b: 19) The authoritarian period was considered to be tutelary. Consequently, the single party period prepared its end itself. Köker (2004: 228) criticizes at this point that although the undemocratic regime was not seen to be permanent, it was still the Kemalist ruling elite who would decide when the right time was to switch to full democracy.

After Atatürk's death in 1938, the regime deteriorated. As Bernard Lewis (1961: 297-298 in Barkey, 2000: 93) argues, "in the hands of lesser men than himself, his authoritarian and paternalist mode of government degenerated into something nearer to dictatorship as the word is commonly understood." His successor, İnönü, sought to build the regime's legitimacy on a strict interpretation of Kemalism, rather than the founder's pragmatism and vision. Politics was relegated to the boundaries of the single party, which gave the bureaucratic-military elite-dominated state an almost "sacred" status. The rationale behind İnönü's policies was that he understood the state as a realm above politics, and aimed at guarding the long-term interests of the community by preserving national unity. At this point, İnönü, like Atatürk, argued that religion was a sensitive issue that could be abused for political purposes and disrupt national unity embodied by the state. (Heper, 1998: 98-103)

## 4.6 Pragmatism in the Kemalist Revolution

As many scholars observe, Atatürk's "resourcefulness, careful exploration of alternatives, and keen sense of timing" contributed to his ultimate success. (Atabaki, 2004: 61) When analyzing Atatürk's style in introducing and implementing his reforms, one can recognize that a tactical component of the revolution dominated the process: pragmatism. The revolution was pragmatic since, it appeared as a response to the needs of modernization. To achieve his goals, Atatürk sometimes made use of opposing views and different groups whose ideals he did not share. Pragmatism, beside being a practical necessity as a result of the sensitive balance of power at that time, was the mentality of the Ottoman secular officialdom to which Atatürk and his friends had once belonged.

As a reflection of his pragmatism, Atatürk built the new state step by step, although in a short period of time. He was patient about waiting to declare views for which the political environment was not yet ripe. One example of Atatürk's political astuteness in this area is his dress reforms. Çakmak (2002: 66) argues that Atatürk tried to develop his country men and women in terms of the way they dressed, because he wanted his people look like Europeans. He wore a Panama hat in Kastamonu and became a model for them. In 1925, the "Hat Law" was enacted. Officials had to wear hats instead of the *fez*, the Ottoman version of a hat. The reform was not easy, because a man's headgear indicated his religion, and even his social status and job. When a man died, his headgear was put on his coffin, and his gravestone was usually shaped like this headgear, showing his status. A hat was a non-Muslim style. The acceptance of the hat, representing the West, instead of the *fez*, "the symbol of Ottomanhood and

eradicator of all national differences” provided the basis for a more difficult reform, the abandonment of veiling. (Göle, 1996a: 61) The effort to ban the veil took concrete form on January 15, 1924, in a declaration that teachers with a veil on were not allowed to enter the classroom. On April 3, 1924, a legal regulation was enacted concerning the official attire of judges and members of judiciary. Henceforth, local administrations made some attempts in parallel lines. In the 1930s, the number of women, who were educated and had a professional career increased. Accordingly, the young generations of women gave up wearing veils. (Yakut, 2002, 26-31) Geoffrey Lewis (1982: 18-19) notes that Atatürk did not abolish the veil: “Good soldier that he was, he knew that you should never give an order which you know won’t be obeyed.” Amanullah, the king of Afghanistan, tried to imitate Atatürk’s secularization policies after his visit to Turkey. It was reported that Amanullah’s men forcibly tore women’s veils off. Perhaps at least in part as a result of this, in May 1929 he was deposed.

In the very same way, the pragmatic understanding sometimes moved Atatürk to express some opinions which he did not in fact share. In his book *Nutuk*, he gives his declaration about the opening of the Grand National Assembly as an example: “I find it appropriate to present you the declaration I made on April, 21, 1920 to indicate my situation in which I was obliged to get parallel with the feelings and understanding of that time.” (Nutuk, 1996: 430-432) Elsewhere, Atatürk (1981: 8) describes this situation as follows:

Here, I should confess something important. The army and the nation, while not having been aware of the dishonesty of the Sultan and the Caliph, were also sincerely loyal to the palace with religious and traditional ties strengthened through centuries. The army and the nation ... could not imagine independence without the Caliph and the Sultan. What a pity for those who express their opinions in contradiction with this belief. They will be immediately called as irreligious, traitor, homeless, unwanted.

As Kinross (1990: 180) reports, Atatürk emphasized this at the Erzurum Congress (1919), too:

To a trusted friend who inquired privately of Kemal at the [Erzurum] Congress, ‘Are we going towards the Republic?’ he replied, ‘Is there any doubt of it?’ But this could not yet be divulged. He was careful at this stage to make it clear that the movement was not aimed against the monarchy and the Caliphate, but was united behind them against the threats of the foreigner.

For this reason, he sometimes spoke as if he were supporting the Caliphate:

From now on, the future will show exactly how abundant the Caliphate will be for the Turkish State and the Muslim world. The State of Turkey, which is both Turkish and Muslim, will be the happiest state of the world as being the cause for two times happiness. (Nutuk III, 1996: 1251)

We observe the same attitude in Atatürk’s relation to the *ulama*. After the abolition of the Sultanate and all the other institutions of the old order and of foreigners, the *ulama* remained as the only power in Turkish society that could challenge the leadership of the new regime. Atatürk was aware of their potential threat and, hence, at the beginning, he took care not to offend the *ulama* — a number of whom were also deputies in the Assembly— in order to preserve national unity. In fact, fifteen percent of the first Assembly was made up of religious men, imams, muftis, and *medrese* teachers, while another fifteen percent consisted of soldiers. In line with his policy of making gestures toward religion in order not to lose the support of the traditional segments of society, the Assembly, for instance, passed a law prohibiting the sale or use of alcoholic drinks on September 14, 1921. (Lewis G., 1982: 12-16)

In another instance, Mustafa Kemal allowed the article regarding the official religion to remain in the Constitution, although this did not confirm to his real opinion.

Atatürk (1981: 523-524) explains this situation in his *Nutuk*. While traveling to İzmit, he was asked by a journalist whether the new government would have a religion:

“I did not want to be posed such a question. I also did not want to express the answer which was indeed very short....I could not say that a government could not have a religion. I said the reverse. It has, I said, it is the religion of Islam. However, I immediately needed to add that Islam provides great freedom of thought. In order not to give an opportunity to those who wanted to benefit from this and tended to understand atheism from the term ‘laic government’, it is ignored to add a term which makes meaningless the second article of the constitution.” (Nutuk, II, 1981: 523-524)

Taner Timur (1968: 92-93) underlines this attitude when arguing that the ideologies of the National Struggle (*Milli Mücadele*) and the Turkish Revolution were different. During the whole period of the War of Independence, Atatürk kept his ideas about the coming revolution as a secret. The motive behind the National Struggle was nationalism. Nevertheless, it coincided with the aim of protecting the sultanate and caliphate, as well. In the first Assembly, Atatürk signed many drafts framing this aim. Considering the secular character of the Turkish Revolution, we should consider this duality as a necessity under the conditions of that time.

Pragmatism was the key feature of the revolution in terms of its methods. “According to Reşat Kaynar, ‘Kemalism is not doctrinaire, but pragmatic.’” (Karal, 1997: 11) For instance, although étatism was taken as one of the six arrows in the Kemalist ideology, “Atatürk never wished to give étatism ideological substance”. (Özbudun& Kazancıgil, 1997: x) In practice, statism in early Republican Turkey consisted of various pragmatic measures necessary for developing industrialization. As Özbudun (1997: 87-88) states, scholars usually point out that Kemalist thought

was established in response to immediate needs, rather than based upon “pre-determined thoughts”. “Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, an author close to Atatürk, quotes the following exchange with him: ‘My general, this party has no doctrine... Of course it doesn’t, my child; if we had a doctrine, we would freeze the movement.’” Due to its pragmatic character, Atatürkist thought is not considered to be an ideology; it is at most “a ‘soft’ ideology”. Heper (1985: 64-65, 71) thinks that it can be better described as a *Weltanschauung*. Özbudun (1997: 90), however, believes that this instrumental character of the revolution makes it “vulnerable to rational criticism”.

Recep Peker, one of Mustafa Kemal’s close friends, explained this pragmatic view in a speech delivered in 1935:

We are not among those who scribble on paper before getting down to action. We prefer to achieve results first. Superficial people reproach us with working without a plan or a program, but they lose sight of the fact that the best plans and programs are not always written down; the cardinal plan, the source and the starting point of all our programs are the energy and the insight concentrated in the brain and in the soul of our spiritual leaders. (Dumont, 1984: 25)

Sartori classifies the Kemalist regime as ‘one-party pragmatic’. (Heper, 1985: 65)

Clement Moore, in the same vein, categorizes one-party ideologies under four headings: totalitarian, chiliastic, tutelary, and administrative; and he puts Atatürk’s Turkey into the tutelary category, by which he refers to an ideology which “combines an instrumental function with the goal of a partial social transformation.” (Özbudun, 1997: 90) Kemalist ideology was formulated in response to the emerging needs of the modernization process and should be evaluated on the basis of the extent to which it fulfilled its stated goals. It did not start from an analysis of the structure of Turkish society. Modernization in Turkey was imposed forcibly by the conditions

of the War of Independence; the principles of Kemalism arose largely from the practical requirements of that process.

Atatürk attempted to use religion whenever he found it useful for his purposes. Atatürk was “a great tactician” having used Islam for its revolutionary purposes. (Timur, 1971: 38) For example, as of 1919, the Sultan had taken a stand against the Nationalist Movement. The *Şeyhülislam*, the head of the religious hierarchy, in a *fetva* of April 1920, labeled the Nationalists as rebels and ordered all good Moslems to kill these rebels whenever they had an opportunity to do so. (Kili, 1969: 18) Atatürk replied to this attack in the same kind: “As soon as the Assembly gathered, we initiated counter-attacks by getting *fetvas* (religious confirmation and decisions) from high religious scholars.” (Nutuk II, 1981: 327) Since a substantial number of the First Assembly’s members consisted of religious scholars and sheikhs. Atatürk was able to benefit from their religious approval. For instance, regarding the constitutional amendment of October 29, 1923, which proclaimed the republic, the representative of Antalya, Rasih Hodja approved from a religious viewpoint that the most appropriate regime is the republic. This prevented others from resisting the amendment. (Aydemir, III, 1995: 154)

Mustafa Kemal used the integrative function of the religion while switching from the millet system to the unitary state during the nation-building process. Islam as a culture was an implicit part of the new Turkish identity:

“This boundary is not drawn for military purposes, but it is rather a national boundary. It is indicated as to be the national boundary. However, one should not assume that within this boundary there is only one ethnic group. Within this boundary, there are Turks, Circassians, and other Muslim groups. Now this boundary is a national boundary within which

sister nations live integrated to each other with the same goals...” (Öztürk, 1992: 29-30)

Moreover, Mustafa Kemal, just like the Young Turks during the wars in the Balkans and World War I, never hesitated to utilize Islam to mobilize the population against the invading European armies and always treated Islam as the bond to integrate and blend all Anatolian Muslims into the Turkish nation. “Islam was used to mobilize the masses against ‘the infidel.’” National struggle against the will of the sultan was legitimized upon Islamic grounds. (Heper, 1981: 350) “In the formation of the Turkish nation, the republic assumed that Muslimness was a sine qua non for becoming a Turk.” After achieving national independence, however, the republic implemented a rigid program project by denying any role for Islam in the formation of the new polity. (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xx)

“Atatürk was careful to keep his options open. He cooperated with various religious leaders as he was organizing for the war against Greece, and he accepted the title ‘Gazi’ that was given to him by the National Assembly in 1921.” The title “Gazi” had religious connotations, but “Atatürk used this title throughout the rest of his life.” (Kasaba, 1997: 22) In fact, this pragmatism should be seen as a mark of Mustafa Kemal’s political talent, which should not be overlooked when examining his policies of secularization. For instance, Mardin (1997: 209) explores his use of the (Grand) National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*) as the source of political legitimation for the resistance. Article I of the 1920 Constitution stated that sovereignty belonged without reservation to the *millet*. Theoretically, the Sultan-Caliph was considered, when, in power leader of the Muslim community. However, he was now a prisoner of the Allied forces. The term *millet*, which originally denoted religious sub-divisions, in



this context was used to imply that the Muslim community would re-establish its sovereignty. In fact, the term had been used from the end of nineteenth century on to translate the word 'nation'. The ambiguity of the term is the main reason that the article was passed without any objections.

Combining all these findings together, we observe a pragmatic attitude towards religion. Islam was not supposed to legitimize the regime or to be an appropriate base for political action; yet, one's claim to membership in the political community was validated by the possession of Islamic credentials. In later years, the Directorate of Religious Affairs would send out "model sermons" to imams (preachers) who might then encourage the citizens to, for example, pay their taxes, or contribute to foundations established to assist the armed forces; in this way, "secular acts are identified as religiously desirable". (Turan, 1991: 40-42)

As Turan (1991: 42) argues, the Turkish state, while not viewing religion as giving direction to its policies and actions, continues to treat it as a resource which may be mobilized for 'purposes of state' whenever this is found useful or necessary. Some people have described the above-mentioned application of secularism in Kemalist Turkey as the "one-sided character of Turkish secularism". Writing about Turkey in the mid-thirties, Henry Elisha Allen (1935: 175 in Kili, 1969: 104-105) stated that the Kemalist attitude "is favorable to whatever in Islam is consistent with the Republican ideas, relentlessly opposed to anything which might endanger Kemalist success, and, for the rest, more or less neutral". In the Kemalist perception it was, on the one hand, impossible to keep Islam as it was; on the other hand, it was impossible to violently eradicate Islam. The government took the sole option: removing Islam

from the legal and educational system, removing all the religious leaders, and directing religion into channels that would contribute to the governmental program, insofar as possible.

According to Ayata (1996: 41), the founders of the new Republic recognized Islam in its both positive and negative aspects. They were aware that Islam was important for unifying and mobilizing the nation, as well as for its contribution to social and moral welfare. However, they also saw Islam as the root cause of backwardness in the country and an obstacle toward reaching their goals. “The attitude of the Republican leaders was supportive when Islam was consistent with Republican reforms, but extremely hostile when it was at cross-purposes with the main objectives of modernization.” In a sense, Mustafa Kemal and his friends perceived Islam as a mixed legacy, especially during the very early stages of the Republic’s foundation. In pragmatic terms, they recognized the dominant role of religion in Turkish society and its importance in promoting social cohesion across ethnic and linguistic cleavages. On the other hand, they understood the strength of religion as a competing source of legitimacy. They aimed to remove the legitimacy of existing traditional religious institutions.

Especially in the early years of the new Republic, the ruling cadre did not try to completely remove the authority of religion totally in the moral sphere. What they aimed at was eradicating the public visibility of Islam through certain acts and reforms. Previously, there had been some initiatives to use religion toward the modernization of the country. The Gökalpian type of modernization, which took religion to be a relatively important factor in the nation-building process, was not

totally discarded by the Kemalist ruling elite, especially at the very beginning of the new regime. They rather aspired to control and further restructure religion in conformity with the general objectives of the Revolution. “Islam was accorded a relatively influential role only insofar as it endorsed the principles of the new regime.” (Aydın, 2003: 244)

Göle (1997: 1) states that state identity with regard to secularism has become a contested arena, usually modifying the bounds of religion and politics in the Turkish context. She (1997: 48) points out that the new nation-state’s attempt to reconcile “the disparity” of the masses and state involved a process of “social engineering”. Indeed, “secularization itself became part of that process of social engineering rather than an outcome of the process of modernization and societal development.” In other words, secularization became both a means and an end in the creation of the new Turkish state. Secularization was used as a means to destroy the legitimacy and identity of the Ottoman system and to build the new state, while it also became a part of the Turkish identity with the modern state.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **FROM *DEVLET-İ ALİYE-İ OSMANİYE* TO *KUTSAL TÜRK DEVLETİ***

One of the students of Turkish politics, Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu (1993: 352) claims in his article “Modernity, State, and Religion: Theoretical Notes towards a Comparative Study” that “the peculiarities of modern-state building in Turkey emerged largely in response to the economic conditions of the time, particularly those domestic and international conditions that prevailed during the 1920s and the 1930s.” In his reckoning, the lack of a civil society in the 1930s cannot be explained simply on the basis of the Turkish state tradition. It must instead be considered as a consequence of the exigencies of the conjunctural and structural conditions that shaped the period.

In analyzing the state-led modernization process in Republican Turkey, this thesis does not ignore the specific internal and external conditions of the 1920s and 30s, which compelled the political elites to build a stronger center and act in a more authoritarian manner. The global economic depression in early 1930s and, consequently, the decreasing credibility in the world of liberalism and liberal economic principles, along with the emergence of a number of totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia; the Sheikh Said Rebellion; the *Menemen* incident; and, the failed experience of the multi-party system (the closures of the Progressive Republican Party and the Free Party) are the most apparent of those contextual patterns. As Nalbantoğlu's (1993: 352) argument implies, it is quite logical to link étatism to the political context that allowed the Kemalist elite to observe the Soviet system of state planning in the economic field.

I think where Nalbantoğlu and other scholars with similar views differs from the arguments supported in this thesis is primarily in the area of what we understand by the Turkish state tradition. The reflection of Turkish state tradition in the Republic is not merely the authoritarian administration, which could be regarded as a continuation of the so-called "Oriental despotism" in the Ottoman past. The basic assumption behind this state tradition is, instead, the superiority of statehood over all other social values. This perspective let the rulers approach other social determinants (religion, culture etc.) pragmatically. If we deliniate the concept in this way, then even the étatism of 1930s can be taken as a manifestation of that state tradition: if it is étatism which would be most beneficial for the empowerment of the state, then it should be (pragmatically) adopted. Along similar lines, as Göle (1997: 48) argues, even secularization becomes both a means and an end for the Republican elite:

secularism, which was incorporated into the principles of Kemalist ideology and adopted in the Constitution in 1937, was also, in fact, an urgent necessity if the new, small nation-state was to survive and develop out of the ashes of the old Ottoman political structures. In this study, secularization is taken as a reflection of the strong state tradition in Turkey.

This thesis follows Dyson's (1980: 51) argument that the form of secularization depends upon the political culture in terms of state autonomy. The weaker the state, the more liberal a form of secularization develops. For example, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, state-church separation took place in a relatively peaceful manner. Conversely, an extreme secularity is observed in strong states, e.g. France, with deep conflicts in the secularization process. The French state "whose construction occupied all of French history may be taken as the ideal type of *the* state" (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983: 107) and, consequently, as the best example of extreme secularity, in which the state dominates religion, rather than just separating it from the polity.

When describing the strong state, Heper (1987: 3-4) says, "... in some polities public interest means more than the sum of private or groups' interests. From this particular perspective we can talk about the phenomenon of the state... which reflects a notion of public interest with little affinity to sectional interests". The agents of the public interest are the state elites. In this regard, Turkey, like France, is one of the best examples of the strong state model. (Barkey, 2000: 87) Similarly to French secularization process, the Kemalist elite did not seek to separate religion from politics; it rather aimed to dominate religion, making its thinking and institutions obedient to the state. A comparable situation can be observed in Egypt, as well,

where in comparison to other Arab countries a state tradition exists. For example, the Nasserist regime imposed reforms on the Al-Azhar Islamic educational institution, and this had the effect of bureaucratizing the religious scholars as a prelude to making them subservient to the state. Resembling the Kemalist configuration of a state-Islam link, in Nasserist Egypt it was the ruling elite who appointed the head of Al-Azhar. (Nasr, 2001: 20)

To grasp the impact of the strong state tradition on the Early Republican secularization reforms, this thesis has analyzed the Ottoman past. The Ottoman Empire managed to maintain its existence for six centuries due to its strong center. There were several determinants sustaining this centrality of the state. For instance, the local authorities, *eşraf* and *ayans*, could not form alternative sources of authority, since the ultimate ownership of the lands and other properties belonged to the Sultan. *Timar*, the Ottoman land system, was based on the same principle. In addition, the bureaucratic circle had adopted the *adab* tradition, a secular pragmatic conception of the state, which valued statecraft in itself and separated it from the persona of the Sultan. These bureaucrats came mostly from the Ottoman recruitment system (*devşirme*), according to which a certain number of male children of Christian subjects were taken away and raised as slaves of the Ottoman state to eventually serve in its bureaucracy and army. This system empowered the center by eliminating the possibility of the formation of alternative interest groups. Moreover, the only remaining possible opposing force, the *ulama*, were suppressed, having been incorporated into the state apparatus. When religion clashed with the secular interests of the state, the religious concerns were superseded by the secular ones. Although the Ottoman state had a strong religious character, the role of Islam was often moderated

by the state's pragmatic concerns. (Gerber, 1994: 76) Beside this superiority of the state in Turkish political culture, the state has been perceived as the sole agent responsible for social change. Accordingly, modernization in the Ottoman Empire was launched by the state and considered a state matter only.

The Turkish Republic inherited this strong state tradition. In this respect, firstly, the state adopted a pragmatic attitude toward Islam. Atatürk utilized Islam to mobilize the masses against the invasion of the European armies and always saw Islam as the link to integrate and merge all Anatolian Muslims into the Turkish nation. National struggle against the will of the sultan was legitimized upon Islamic grounds, too. On the other hand, Atatürk saw religion as the main cause of backwardness of the country and so secularized the country in all facets of social and political life. This dual attitude, implemented as Turkish secularism, appears to have been “a successful project” on the whole. People have remained “sincere Muslims”, while having a secular approach on political matters. (see Heper and Toktaş, 2003)

We can observe the implications of the strong state tradition in the Turkish process modernization from above as well. Due to the elimination of power formation in the periphery, e.g., by the fiefholders or local notables, the Ottoman Empire enjoyed the situation of having a strong center versus a weak periphery. As a consequence, the main structural feature of the relations between the state and society or religion has been the relative independence of the state bureaucracy and the elitist political culture. Modernization was, at this point, seen as a matter for the state. It was the responsibility of the center to save/modernize the country. Influenced by this tradition, as well as by the specific circumstances of the inter-war period, the Kemalist elite maintained the same mentality. One should not forget that the



founders of the new nation-state were once Ottoman pashas. The Republican state elite acted as the “self-appointed guardians” of secularism and Turkish nationalism. They took on the duty of “elevating the country to the level of the contemporary civilization” on behalf of the people.

In line with the Turkish state tradition, Atatürk maintained the high value placed on the state. He opted for a Hegelian state. (Heper, 1985: 56) The Ottoman modernizers’ ultimate goal of maintaining a strong state was shared by Mustafa Kemal. In the Kemalist conception of the state, citizens’ service is required in order for the government to achieve its targets. Citizens are looked at as if they were instruments of the state. In Atatürk’s reckoning, freedoms are not absolute and can be restricted by the rights and freedoms of other individuals and by the common interests of the nation. In theory, sovereignty was supposed to “belong to the people without any qualifications and conditions”. In practice, however, this meant that the state elite, which was assumed to understand the interests of the people better than did the people themselves, would exercise sovereignty in the name of the people. Atatürk’s conception of state reflects the Turkish state tradition, by which I primarily refer to the supremacy of the state and the view of the state as the agent of social change.

The 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey constantly uses the phrase “Kutsal Türk Devleti” (Sublime Turkish State). This very much resembles the Ottoman conception of “Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye” (The High/Sublime Ottoman State). This little comparison illustrates very well the fact that despite the transformation from a religious multi-ethnic, multi-faith and multi-linguistic empire to a modern secular nation-state, the sublimity of the state has always remained its most salient feature.

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