DİYANET and POLITICS

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Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Presidency of Religious Affairs) (herein after Diyanet) is a laic administrative unit in the Republic of Turkey established in 1924 to execute services regarding Islamic faith and practices; to enlighten society about religion; and to carry out the management of places of prayer. I think that in order to try to understand religion, politics and the politics of religion in Turkey, as an initial step, Presidency of Religious Affairs/ Diyanet should be scrutinized. Thus, this article is primarily concerned with this agency which was initially instituted to regulate Islamic services, but actually was used as a means of 'securing' secularity in Turkey for over a period of 80 years. This apparent paradox in terms was the muse which led me to reflect on the representation of the construction (and deconstruction) of 'modernity' and of 'state' and religion' in Turkey. In order to develop my argument I focus on the politics and Diyanet; however, in order to comment on these issues I need to clarify what politics means for me in the context of this article. I use politics not only in the context of the regulation of a political unit, namely the state/government in the general sense, but also as the methods and tactics used to formulate and apply policies to set up an official ideology supported by “pillar” institutions of that unit, as the military in the Turkish case. In other words, politics in this context is, in essence, power: the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means. Andrew Heywood, in his textbook Politics demonstrates power as

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1 Translations used for Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı vary in literature, including terms as Department of the Affairs of Piety, Directorate-General of Religious Affairs, General Directorate of Religious Affairs, Religious Affairs Department, Directorate of Religious Affairs, and Religious Affairs Directorate. I prefer to use “The Presidency of Religious Affairs”, since the Administration uses this term as the official title.

2 I use the terms laicité/laic/laicists for a preference of the state’s control of religion as opposed to secularism which implies the separation of state and religion. As Rex Ahdar and Ian Leigh point out, “The longstanding French policy of laïcité exemplifies … desire to restrict, if not eliminate, clerical and religious influence, over the state. The French Parliament’s ban in 2004 of conspicuous religious clothing and insignia in public schools – aimed at the wearing of Muslim headscarves- illustrates this suspicion of religion and is an attempt to avert the growth and influence of an incipient Muslim fundamentalism in that nation. The modern Islamic society of Turkey is similarly an example of a state founded on strongly secular principles where restrictions on individual religious liberty have been introduced to prevent pressure being exerted by the predominant religious group” (Ahdar & Leigh, 2005: 73).

For a comparative essay on laicité and secularity in the contexts of France and U.S.A. see Gunn, 2004. For a comprehensive argumentation on the terms laïc and secular, and their derivatives, see Davison, 2003. I totally agree with Davison in his arguments, thus I prefer to use the term ‘laïcist’ for republican state practice in Turkey. Furthermore, laiklik (laïcité) is the concept that is preferred by the Republican decision-making elite of Turkey in all legislations and other legal regulations. However, I will sometimes be using also the terms “secular/ secularity” in addressing not a means/policy but the telos or purpose.

3 I use the word state as the central state and its own employees, not regions or cities or “government” in general.
follows: “whenever A gets B to do something that B would not otherwise have done. However A can influence B in various ways. This allows us to distinguish between different dimensions or faces of ‘power’ (like) power as decision-making; power as agenda setting; power as thought control” (Heywood, 2002: 11). In this article, thus, I aim to figure out the actors that exercise power in the field of religion and state in Turkey in Republican times, and their activities in politics of religion which apparently is composed of interactive processes that all actors actually shape each other⁴.

To vest sovereignty fully and unconditionally in the nation of the new born state of Turkey founded in 1923, indicated a new political choice of a modernization project that was based on laicism and the nation-state. The statements of President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk indicated that the principle of laïcité, along with republicanism, was the foundation of the new regime and the nation-state. Atatürk's policy on laïcité was to remove religion from the public realm and reduce it to a matter of the faith and practice of the individual, so that the principle of freedom of religion was to protect “individualized religion” only. Religion was to remain in the personal domain and only to require state intervention to the extent that it concerns and objectifies the social order⁵. The Turkish Republic was designed to be a strictly temporal state. Mustafa Kemal stated this clearly: ‘We get our inspirations not from the heavens or invisible things but directly from life.’ (Atatürk, 1945: 389) These clearly were the words of a typical Enlightenment secularist, separating religion and state to ensure dangerous religious passions and ‘superstitions’ to be confined to the private sphere. The purpose of the new leadership in this period was to secularize and modernize not only the state and the ‘political’, but also to transform society into a modern body. Actually the radical program of reform and Westernization that the republican cadres pursued in the 1920’s and 1930’s had earlier started within the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century, especially by the reception of Western codes and political principles. In my view, the biggest difference between Republican and Ottoman westernizations was the spectrum of their telos; and laïcité was the pillar for the Republican founding elite, which designed the ‘Presidency of Religious Affairs’ as an administrative tool to ‘regulate’ Islam. “Regulating” Islam was to “put orthodox Islam under the state control” (Toprak, 2006: 27-28) and to nationalize it, while establishing secular systems of law and education; destroying the influence and power of the ulama (scholars of

⁴ Politics and religion, both in domestic and international contexts is rather a frequently focused subject especially in the last decade, most perhaps as a consequence of 9/11. In the context of Turkey particularly, for two cliché-oriented approaches see Bruce (2003/2005): 59; Madeley (2006): 61, 66, 68; and a for two deeper insights see Hanson (2006): 246; Zubaida (2000): 71-75.

⁵ “Privatization” of religion is quite a common term in related literature used for such praxises. See (also for an interesting argument on secularism) Keane (2000): 11.
religion) within the state administration; banning the unorthodox Sufi orders; and outlawing the use of religious speech, propaganda or organization for political purposes. Şerif Mardin, a very prominent scholar that has been working on religion and politics in Turkey since 1970’s, brilliantly analyzes this phenomenon, in an article dated back to 1991, by using terms for the secularizing republican founding elite, “positivist-nationalist generation”, and in class alliances (Mardin,1991: 125, 127). Niyazi Berkes (1908-1988), a prominent sociologist, evaluates this phenomenon as follows:

The Islamists, who had strongly opposed separationism when they were promoting the idea of an Islamic state, favored the separationist interpretation of secularism following their defeat. They now claimed that provisions restricting the political power of religion were incompatible with secularism, which implied non-interference in the affairs of religion; therefore, Kemalist secularism was not true secularism, but shoddy legitimization for the persecution of Islam. A modern secular state, said the secularist jurists on the other hand, should let religion follow its own course if the state did not intend to liquidate religion altogether. The inference was that, if Kemalist secularism did not fit one shoe, it should, perforce, fit into the other. (Berkes, 1998: 479-480.)

The state elite tried to secure the laic order after the foundation of the Turkish Republic through a series of legal regulations. The provision concerning the state religion (Islam) in the Constitution in power got abolished in 1928; and the adjective “laic” was added to the Constitution to define the Turkish state in 1937. One of the most important legal tools in this context was the Act dated 3rd March 1340 (1924) no. 429 on the abolishment of The Ministries of Şeriyye (Religious Affairs) and Evkaf (Pious Foundations). The new legislation preferred to place the management of religious affairs in the hands of an administrative bureau, not to a ministry in the cabinet. This was a key part of the overall policy of the founding political decision-making elite of Turkey who wanted to establish a strictly secular state and to transform society into a modern one. They did not want to have a unit within the cabinet dealing with religious affairs. Instead, by assigning religious affairs to an administrative unit, the ruling elite both took religion under their control and at the same time managed to break the potentially sacred significance of the Diyanet. Their praxis may be

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comparable to the French Republican public administration system with a Central Office of Organized Religions (Bureau Central des Cultes) within the Ministry of the Interior. According to official French interpretation le culte involves three elements: the celebration of the culte, as in the mass; its buildings; and the teaching of its principles. (Bowen, 2007: 17) These were practically the duties assigned to Diyanet, too. “Controlling” religion seems to be justified both in republics of Turkey, and in France as an intention to guarantee public order; ironically resembling the rhetoric of classical Islamic political theory, which assigned to the ruler the task of avoiding disorder or fitna.

The first article of Act no. 429 states that, ‘In the Republic of Turkey, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Cabinet which is formed by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey are responsible for the legislation and execution of provisions concerning the affairs of people; and the Diyanet will be formed as a part of the Republic for the implementation of all provisions concerning faith and prayer of the religion of Islam, and the administration of religious organizations’. This is a reflection of Kemalist laïcité. With this regulation, religious affairs concerning faith and prayer were made the concern of the Diyanet, and all other areas of interest were considered to be under the legislative power of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, thus sharia as a legal system was abolished.

As per this enactment, the Diyanet was under the Prime Ministry. The President of Diyanet was appointed by the president of the republic upon the proposal of the prime minister. In this Act, the organizational structure of the Diyanet and positions under it were not specified except by the provision that ‘the place where muftis would refer to is the Diyanet.’ The administrative structure of the central and provincial organizations of Diyanet was first stated in the 1927 Budget Act. In the ‘Permanent Positions Table’ attached to the Act dated 30 June 1929, no. 1452 on the unification and equation of the salaries of civil servants, which was published in the Official Gazette and went into effect on 30th June 1929, the permanent positions of the Diyanet were stated for the first time, and as per the Article 2 of the said law, this table was considered as the organizational law for Diyanet until a new law would be made, that was until 1935. With this regulation, the claims made during the previous meetings of the Assembly, namely, that there was a lack of legal basis, were rendered invalid. Since the management and personnel (hademe) of all mosques and prayer rooms were transferred to the Presidency-General for Foundations by June 1931 with the 1931 fiscal year budget law of the Presidency-General for Foundations, adopted on 8th June 1931 and published in the Official Gazette on 13th June 1931, the personnel of the Presidency of Religious Institutions and Presidency of Supplies which had been under the central
organization of the Presidency of Religious Affairs were transferred with their posts to the Presidency-General for Foundations. Thus the powers of Diyanet were considerably reduced. Furthermore, article 7 of the Act stated that mosques and prayer rooms would be classified according to ‘actual needs’; and duties that could be combined would be specified in order to determine new positions, so that the personnel were also reduced. Despite all these changes, the legal regulation was passed in the Assembly without any objection. The annulment of article 5 of the Act no. 429, which was inconsistent with the said law, was clearly stated by the Grand National Assembly decision on 4 January 1932.

Act No. 2800 on The Organization and Duties of Religious Affairs that was passed on 14th June 1935, and published in the Official Gazette on 22nd June 1935, is the first organizational enactment of Diyanet. But, more importantly, Act no. 5634 came into effect on the 29th April 1950 after the passing of a draft bill (dated 7th March 1950) on 23rd March 1950, towards the end of the Republican People’s Party government. Thus the Günaltay Cabinet (16 January 1949-22 May 1950) changed considerably the organization of religious affairs. This law is a reflection of a religiously different climate of the late 1940s that affected the 7th Republican People’s Party Assembly in 1947. This change in climate can be observed also in speeches made by various deputies during the debates on this law, in which they stated that they were glad about the positive changes in religious organization and in the status of relevant individuals.

The difference in attitude observed in these proceedings compared to previous, related laws is especially interesting. Previous debates were generally just votes on the proposed regulations. Furthermore, the statement ‘necessity and need reflected by continuous applications and dictated requests in party congresses’ in the preamble of the Act no. 5634 was another indication of the same change in climate. By this legislation, the name ‘Reislik’ was changed to the name ‘Başkanlık’ which reflected a change in the use of the Turkish language (Reis is the Ottoman equivalent of ‘president’, whereas ‘başkan’ is modern Turkish) and created several new units within the organization. Moreover, the management of mosques and prayer rooms and mosque personnel which had been transferred to the

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8 Şemsettin Günaltay (1883-1961) was a graduate of Lausanne University, Faculty of Natural Sciences. In 1900’s he started working on the Turkish history, under the influence of Ziya Gökalp that he met in those years. In 1914 he first became a professor of Turkish history and Islamic nations at Darülifnuni Faculty of Letters, and then the dean of the Divinity School. He got into politics in 1915 as a member of the Parliament. He took posts in the Anatolian Movements. He was in the Parliament again from 1923 to 1954 as a member. He got appointed as the prime minister on January 16, 1949. His cabinet was in power until May 22, 1950, when the Democrat Party got a vast majority of the votes in the elections. He published very many books on Islam and politics, appearing to be bringing together a republican approach with religious sensitivities.

9 For speeches by the Seyhan deputy Sinan Tekelioglu and the Erzurum deputy Vehbi Kocagüney see TBMM Zabt Ceridesi (Grand National Assembly proceedings) VII, 25 (1950), 838.
Presidency General for Foundations by the 1931 Budget Act was given back to the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

The organizational and personnel structure of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, introduced in 1950 by Act no. 5634, was preserved until 1965. The draft bill related to the organization proposed to the Grand Assembly of Turkey after the adoption of the 1961 Constitution was accepted and enacted after lengthy debates on 22 June 1965. The Act no. 633 on the Organization and Duties of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which was published in the Official Gazette on 2 July 1965 and came into effect on 15 August 1965, was in my view a sign of a different mentality compared to that of the founding elite. In this regulation the duties of Diyanet were stated as ‘to carry out affairs related to the beliefs, prayers and moral foundations of Islam, to enlighten society about religion and to manage places of prayer.’

In 1975, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey enacted a new law that altered the existing system regarding religious affairs to a large extent. New legislation titled Act no. 1893 was sent to the President for ratification on 6 May 1975, but President Korutürk, who was then in office, sent the legislation back to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to be reviewed again, in accordance with Article 93 of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic. During the revision of law No. 1893 in the Assembly, some fundamental changes were made on articles other than the ones that had led the President to return the law. In accordance with constitutional procedures in regards to legislative activities that did not require the President’s approval for a second round, the Assembly enacted the regulations as an Act dated 26th April 1976 No. 1982, and sent it to the Presidency on 30th April 1976 to be published. However this enactment was considered by the Presidency to be a new law because of the changes beyond the scope of the stated reasons for the rejection of Act No. 1893, and it was therefore sent back to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 7th May 1967 to be reviewed again. Upon rejection of this demand, the President filed a case against Act No. 1882, and the Constitutional Court decided that the enactment was "incompatible with the Constitution in form" on 30th April 1979. This Constitutional Court decision was published in the Official Gazette on 11th May 1980, with the requirement that it should be revised one year later. However, neither on this date, nor later, was any legal regulation enacted, and the legal domain was regulated by cabinet decrees and other administrative regulations.

Fahri Korutürk (1903-1987) was a graduate of High Naval Academy, and as an admiral was the chief of naval staff. After his retirement in 1960, he held several diplomatic positions like being the Turkish ambassador in U.S.S.R., and in Spain. In 1968 he got elected as a member of the Senate, and was elected in 1973 by the Turkish Parliament to be the sixth president of the Republic of Turkey.
Since there is still no change regarding legislation, a question to be asked is whether the provisions of Act No. 633 are in effect once again. This problem is solved by two decisions of the Council of State. A Third Chamber of the Council of State decision provides that a previous Act does not come into effect automatically, because the duty and authority of enacting and amending laws belong exclusively to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the decisions of the Constitutional Court are not retroactive. The General Board of the Council of State ratified this decision by decision E.1971/22, K.1971/36 and dated 24th May 1971. Thus, it cannot be claimed that after the annulment of Act No. 1982 came into effect, Act No. 633 would come into effect. In short, the Presidency of Religious Affairs can be defined as a legal oddity, which continues to exist as a very powerful administrative unit despite its lack of a technically legal basis.

The absence of an organized body of clergy in Islam, or a legally defined Muslim community in Turkey are the most important considerations put forward in legitimizing the state’s intervention in religion, and the legislators’ categorizing it as a public service. Public service can be defined as ‘an activity managed by public legal entities or by private entities supervised by the state for the purpose of meeting a shared and general need which has acquired a certain importance for the people’; thus since the founding ones, the legislators’ of the Republican Turkey has been claiming that absence of an ordained ministry in Islam necessitates the State’s management of religious affairs. An assessment of the duties of the Diyanet in this context reveals that duties such as ‘the management of places of prayer’ and ‘providing correct publications of the Koran’ appear to be public services fulfilling a collective need. However, the state’s use of the Diyanet as an administrative tool to propagate official ideology regarding Islam while fulfilling duties like “enlightening society about religion” and “religious education” is obviously a part of the official politics. An interesting

12 For this decision see Danıştay Dergisi (State Council Journal), 4 (1972) 71-75.
13 Actually, this currently remains to be one of the wonders of the Turkish socio-political system, especially from a legal anthropological point. On a purely legalistic ground, it is not easy at all to perceive how any administrative unit remains technically without proper regulations for over 35 years, let alone one concerning a very sensitive issue like religion that all interested parties seem to be totally obsessed with. I believe that a thorough survey on the legal mentality of the decision-making elite in Turkey would be very interesting and useful in trying to understand the politics in this country.
14 Legally ‘community’ is a term that may only be used for the Christian and Jewish communities that are defined by the Lausanne Treaty of 1926. Various de facto communities/religious orders have been organized as associations and/or foundations; however legally they do not represent Muslim communities.
15 Official expectancy for Diyanet publications seem to lie in two parallel lines: to provide religious knowledge that should be “without any superstitions”; and to unify religion with the state, with Republican ideology and with the reforms of the 1920’s. A statement of Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz, the former President of Diyanet, reveals this quite clearly: “Diyanet, that has the duty to indoctrinate (telkin) citizens the essence, spirit, reality of
point here is the one of the duties of Diyanet to be ‘to carry out affairs related to the … moral foundations of Islam’ in 1965 Act. In my opinion this wording is a reflection of the altering politics of religion in Turkey in 40 years starting from attempts of “reforming Islam” to coming to grips with it.

An interesting point regarding to politics of religion in Turkey is the differing policies of administrations over time from being strictly positivistic to somewhat religious, however it should be noted that, as with everything in Turkey, these lines of qualifications have blurred boundaries. This in fact is a reflection of altering political milieu. The implicit hostility to religion of the republican founding elite, built on a rivalry between nationalism and Islamism, and explicitly backed up by an explicit preference for the former, may easily be observed in above-indicated several legal policies and administrative actions of 1920’s and 1930’s. Especially the second half of the 1940’s, for single party – Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People’s Party) governments, appear to be a period of an attempt of reconciliation with ‘Islam’. This was most perhaps a tuning for potential voters in a process towards a participatory and competitive political system. Religious education was the topic debated in the Parliament on December 24, 1946. 16 Many of the members of the parliament were in favor of religious education to be a part of the national educational system; some claiming that it would provide a moral resistance against communism.17 In following years several other religion related regulations were enacted. Among these were allocating foreign currencies for hadj (the pilgrimage to Mecca performed by Muslims) pilgrims for a first time in republican times; placing optional religion courses in the fourth and fifth grade primary school curriculum (1949); establishing a faculty of divinity in Ankara University (1949); allowing the establishment of Qur’an seminaries (1949). In Democrat Party governments period, the ban over azan (call for Muslims to prayer) to be chanted in Arabic got abolished (1950). 18

During 1960’s a group of Turkish university students including Turgut Özal had gathered around Mehmed Zahid Kotku (1897-1980), a Nakşibendi sheik. 1970’s witnessed the establishment of the first pro-Islamic political party, Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party) to be followed by others founded one after the other upon Constitutional Court’s shutting down decisions for each of them. It is claimed that each of these political parties were

16 See TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi (Grand National Assembly proceedings) VIII, 3 (1947), 426.
17 For speeches by the Bursa deputy Muhittin Baha Pars and the Istanbul deputy Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver see TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi (Grand National Assembly proceedings) VIII, 3 (1947), 428; and 437-440.
established through Kotku’s promotion and support; and he supervised their activities all through his life. (Çakır: 1994, 22) In 1983 Turgut Özal came to power with the victory of his liberal Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party) in first election after the coup d’état in 1980. 19 Justice and Development Party of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, yet another character in allegiance with Kotku’s circle and to his successor, Kotku’s son-in-law Esat Coşan, had dramatic victories both in the Turkish general elections of 2002, and in 2007. All the changes in political milieu regarding to religion, had their mirror effects on politics of various Administrations regarding Diyanet.

The ‘occasional paper’ dated June 2007 of the European Union Institute for Security Studies describes Diyanet as “a state- run body whose members are carefully selected and vetted by the authorities and who, in good Ottoman tradition, preach a very pro-state interpretation of Islamic tenets.” (Posch, 2007, 7-8) It is a legal requirement for civil servants to act and speak in accord with state directives; and all the employees of Diyanet including its presidents are civil servants. Also as the employees of an administrative unit, it is their duty to uphold the constitutional provisions. Actually it seems that the task of the Diyanet has not been to educate ‘good Muslims’ or raise Muslim consciousness. A booklet that lays out the functions of Diyanet and its personnel by Ahmet Hamdi Akseki 20, third president of the Diyanet, reveals republican founding elites objective to create ‘good citizens’ with civic responsibility toward the state: to promote love of homeland, the sacredness of the military and civil service, respect for law and order, and hard work for the development of Turkey. (Akseki: 1945, 3-22) Article 136 of the 1982 constitution that is currently in power in Turkey sets the goal of Diyanet as ‘promoting and consolidating national solidarity and unity’. However, it is also a fact that Islamic movements that have been evolved by economic and political opportunity spaces in Turkey, had influences in Diyanet, too. For instance, as a result of the 1949 decision to open Qur’an seminaries and hire more preachers for the state mosques, Süleymançısı21 trained and employed preachers for Diyanet. The Süleymançısı preachers dominated the different levels of the Diyanet until the Act No. 633 (1965) which

19 For a very illuminating assessment on political process led by Nakşibendi communities in republican times see Mardin: 2006.
20 Ahmet Hamdi Akseki (1887-1951) was one of the prominent names of Islamist thought of the Second Constitutional Era of the Ottoman times. He was appointed as the third president of Diyanet by the President of the Republic Ismet İnönü, and occupied that post from 1947 to 1951 when he died. Akseki’s appointment was similar to Günaltay’s as the prime minister. For an evaluation of this period and the above-mentioned appointments see Kara: 2004, 192.
21 Süleymançısı are the followers of the Nakşibendi sheik Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (1888-1959). For a brief information, see Yavuz:2003, 145-149.
allowed only the graduates of İmam Hatip and Divinity schools to be employed at the Diyanet. (Yavuz: 2003, 146)

The principle of equality, construed and applied as ‘equality in blessings and burden’ by the Turkish Constitutional Court in various decisions, requires that all persons eligible for a public service should be able to benefit from such service in a free and equitable manner. The first problem that arises when the subject of a public service is religion is that the state is focused on a single religion rather than on services which cover the whole population. However as concerns our present subject matter, this problem is relatively easy to solve, because Islam is the religion of the majority of the people and services related to other religions are provided by the respective communities according to the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty. However, a problem emerges in services to be offered to different Muslim groups having different beliefs. This is where the Diyanet is criticized most frequently and severely with respect to equality.

It has been observed that the religious belief promoted by the State is closer to the Sunnite tradition and that the Diyanet and its officers or spokespersons have sometimes tended to display hostility towards Alevi and Shiite citizens. A draft law prepared in 1963 for defining the organization and duties of the Diyanet proposed the establishment of a “Presidency of Religious Sects.” This proposal, however, was criticized on the grounds that it could “pave the way for official separation” and was never implemented.

Diyanet claims that Alevis and Sunnites are not subject to discrimination because, except for certain local customs and beliefs, there are no differences between these two sects as to basic religious issues; and this actually indicates a denial of any separate ‘Alevi’ religious identity. The fact that Sunnites constitute the majority does not justify the state’s disregard for other sects, since there is no majority or minority religion or sect in a secular state. The state should be impartial against all religions and sects. The Diyanet pretends to be unaware of the religious belief of the Alevi population, and allows having mosques built in Alevi villages, which appears to be a part of pressure politics exerted by the state to implant the Sunnite belief in this section of society.

The existing legal structure provides a dual nature to the Diyanet. On one hand, one gets the impression that religious life is being controlled by the laic state. This is assumed in so far as the Diyanet is directed by managers loyal to the laic state. However, the extensive network of the Diyanet all over the country, which no other administrative body enjoys, is a great opportunity for all governments, regardless of their political positions; thus the Diyanet as an administrative organism may indirectly obtain power over the government. Paradoxically, in
this context, the state has been aiming to employ the Diyanet against religion and its influence on the socio-political level in Turkey. However, it is interesting to observe recent instances like the ‘alternative celebrations’ in honor of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammed on an official national holiday held by the Diyanet, that all related parties of politics of religion in Turkey take some roles.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{22} A press declaration dated 27 April 2007 was issued by the Turkish military, when the parliament failed to vote for a president. According to the ‘memorandum’, conspiracies of some groups that aim to undermine and to destroy Turkey’s laic system went so far as to organize alternative celebrations in lieu of the official national holiday (23 April), which is ‘the symbol of the independence of our state and the harmony and conviviality of our nation’. For full text of the ‘press declaration’ see Turkish military’s website http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/basac/2007/a08.htm.
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