

Religion, Politics and the Politics of Religion in Turkey

İřtar B. Gözaydın

Introduction

This article is primarily concerned in a power struggle within Turkey for over the last 80 years, leaving aside a much longer one of 200 years. Working on religion, politics and politics of religion anywhere involves varies parties as the state, the society, and the individual of the political body of that given country. In order to try to understand the state-religion relationship in Turkey, I suggest that Presidency of Religious Affairs / Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı should be scrutinized as an initial step. Within the Turkish society, there have been existing an increasing friction between two groups that may roughly be defined as laicists¹ and Islamists² during the whole republican era ongoing since 1923, but has become more visible especially in the 1990's. In this article, I will be debating on the basic and crucial questions, as I perceive it, 'what is a capacitated democracy and how to achieve it?' in the context of law and politics in Turkey. Actually, in order to evolve my argument, I will initially be focusing on the development of the relations among the state, the groups in society, and religion in the Republic of Turkey. Then, I will be discussing the need and possibility of a mutually acceptable ground for a peaceful coexistence in this country. Obviously my preference to work on the last 80 years instead of the 200 year span of the phenomenon stems out of my acceptance of the republican times to be a more visible stage of the above mentioned contestation.

The argument I put forward in this essay runs as follows:

- a) Initial consideration for laicist policies and legislation of the republican decision making elite were to alter not only the supra-structure of Turkey towards a modern/Western body as their predecessors in the late Ottoman times, but also to transform the whole Turkish society into a modern one. Traditional belief appeared there as a threat for this seemingly ambitious project of modernity. Therefore, the

¹ I use the term laicists for ones that prefer 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 comprehensive argumentation on the terms laic and secular, and their derivatives, see Davison, 2003. I totally agree with Davison in his arguments, thus I prefer to use the term 'laicist' 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.

² Islamists are typically defined as those who advocate the *shari'a* (Islamic law derived from the Qur'an) as basis for a system of government. In order to be consistent, an Islamist has to prefer the *shari'a*. However, in Turkey, the term also encompasses a group that prefer more religious references in daily life like according dressing codes, rituals etc., but not necessarily a *shariatic* order. A survey dated May-June 2006 indicates that in Turkey a majority in Turkey define themselves as Islamist (48.4%), as opposed to laicist (20.3%). (www.tesev.org.tr/etkinlik/Presentasyon-2006.pdf)

Republic of Turkey's founding elite implemented policies to remove religion from the public realm and reduce it to a matter of faith and practice of the individual, so that the principle of freedom of religion was to protect "individualised religion" only. In fact, many of the strongest supporters of laicism consider themselves religious, and would be offended to be perceived as atheists and/or agnostics etc.

- b) Such policies found quite a many devoted followers in society; however yet another part of the society preferred to remain faithful to their traditional beliefs. Also, political Islam, a modern ideology rooted in nineteenth century, has been more and more visible in the political arena in Turkey especially in the last decades. Thus, in more than eighty years, divisions became even deeper in Turkey's political and social body. However this has was not a 'revival'³ as many scholars in the field claim as, it has always been a part of the Turkish social body, but has grown in the last decades in parallel with the worldwide resurgence of religion. It is obvious that the internal policies of the 80's in Turkey also triggered the escalating conservatism.

A Story of the State and Religion in Turkey: “*Diyanet*”

Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Presidency of Religious Affairs- hereinafter *Diyanet*) is a secular administrative unit in the Republic of Turkey established in 1924 to execute services regarding Islamic faith and practices. It was designed to enlighten society on the topic of religion as well as carry out the management of places of prayer. In order to explore politics of religion in Turkey, *Diyanet* is, as I see it, a fruitful case study to make. Thus one of the concerns of this article is to focus on the tensions between its services and the processes of securing secularism in Turkey. This complexity led me to reflect on the representation of the construction (and deconstruction) of Turkish 'modernity' and of 'state and religion'. In order to develop my argument, initially I focus on the legal and bureaucratic structure of the Presidency of Religious Affairs. Here I should clear up an issue first: 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

³ For some such usage see, Esposito (1985); Davison (1998); Howe (2000: 7, 8, 15, 305); Kramer (2000:55-84); Karpat (2001: 527); Nachmani (2003: 90). I assert that 'revival' may limitedly be used for the revitalizations of the religious orders (see Mardin, 1989: 149) in the 19th century that was part of emergence of political Islam which in fact was completely a modern ideology. (see Türköne, 1991)

Directorate. For the English term I prefer to use “The Presidency of Religious Affairs”, since the Administration uses this term officially.

Within the context of the worldwide resurgence of religion, Turkey constitutes a sociologically illuminating and theoretically challenging case. 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 secularism and the nation-state. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the state elite, through a series of legal regulations, tried to secure secularism. 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 Seriyye (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*.

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 Presidency of Religious Affairs 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 which may be indicated to be similar to the French one with a *Bureau des Cultes*⁴ within their Ministry of the Interior. 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, in the hierarchal order of the Turkish administrative system, the *Diyanet* was put under the auspices of the Prime Ministry. The President of Religious Affairs was appointed by the President upon the proposal of the Prime Minister. In this Act, the organizational structure of the Presidency and positions under it were not specified except by

⁴ For an interesting argument on this “central office of organized religions” see. Bowen (2007) 22-28.

the provision that ‘the place where muftis would refer to is the Presidency of Religious Affairs.’ Legal regulations concerning the administrative structure of the *Diyanet* organization in this period can be found in the ‘Budget of the Presidency of Religious Affairs’, which was a part of the annual Budget Act.

The administrative structure of the central and provincial organizations of the *Diyanet* was first stated in the 1927 Budget Act. In the ‘Permanent Positions Table’ attached to the Act dated 30th 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* got stated for the first time, and as per the Article 2 of the said law, this table was considered the organizational law for the *Diyanet* until a new law was made in 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 the Presidency of Religious Affairs were considerably reduced. Furthermore, article 7 of the Act stated that mosques and prayer rooms would be classified according to ‘real 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 the Presidency of Religious Affairs. 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 Günaltay⁵ Cabinet changed considerably the organization of religious

⁵ Şemsettin Günaltay (1883-1961), Turkish prime minister from 1949 to 1950 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, a prominent sociologist, that he met in those years. Gökalp was the theoretical

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 pleased by the positive changes in religious organization and in the status of relevant individuals.⁶ The difference in attitudes observed in these proceedings compared to previous related laws is especially interesting. Previous debates were generally just votings on the proposed regulations; whereas now serious debates were held. Also, the statement that took place in the preamble of the Act no. 5634 as, 'the necessity and need reflected by continuous requests by members in party congresses' was yet another indication of the same change in climate that was decidedly more sensitive to religious issues. 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 several new units were created within the organization. Moreover, the management of mosques and prayer rooms and mosque personnel which had been transferred to the Presidency General for Foundations by the 1931 Budget Act was given back to the *Diyanet* in 1950.

The organizational and personnel structure of the *Diyanet*, 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 the Presidency of Religious Affairs 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.' To create an administrative body to offer services to meet the general, daily needs of practicing Islam may be justifiable as 'public service' where about 95% of the population

founder of the "six pillars (republicanism, nationalism, laicism, popularism, statism, reformism)" of the republican Turkey. In 1914 Günaltay became a professor of Turkish history and Islamic nations at *Darülfünun*/ Faculty of Letters, and then got appointed as the dean of the Divinity School. He got into politics in 1915 as a member of the Parliament. He took posts in the Anatolian Movement. 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.

⁶ For speeches by the Seyhan deputy Sinan Tekelioğlu and the Erzurum deputy Vehbi Kocagüney see *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi (GNA proceedings)* VII, 25 (1950), 838.

belongs to Islam; however to assign to this organization a function such as 'to carry out affairs related to moral foundations' whose content is legally ambiguous, indicates that the state preferred to use the organization as an ideological tool in a manner different from the original intent of the founding elite. Such a wording in an issue as political as the regulation of religion in a secular state reveals that the state's choice of propagating and protecting a particular religion is completely incompatible with the notion of a secular state. However one may assume that the legislators of the 1960 Constitution aimed to correct the Kemalist mistake of not adequately recognising the role of Islam in the formation of the Turkish individuals' identity.

After the 1965 enactment, most legal regulations regarding religious affairs took the form of governmental decrees. Since both in the Constitutions of 1961 and 1982 it is stated that the organization shall be regulated by laws, this practice is obviously against the law. However 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. 1882, 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 1976 to be reviewed again. Upon rejection of this demand, the President filed a case against Act No. 1882 by claiming that the procedure was not constitutional, 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 except that, as explained above, the legal domain was regulated by cabinet decrees and other administrative regulations.⁷

⁷ 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

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.⁸The General Board of the Council of State ratified this decision by decision E.1971/22, K.1971/36 and dated 24th May 1971.⁹ 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, *Diyanet* 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 a clergy in Islam -unlike Christianity with its church system- is one of the most important facts legitimizing the state's intervention in religion categorizing it as a public service. Considering that public services 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, the state's involvement in religious affairs is generally accepted in this context as something that does not conflict with secularist principles. 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' are indeed public services fulfilling a collective need. However, the state makes 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". An interesting point here is the differing policies of administrations over time from being strictly positivistic to somewhat religious.

The principle of equality, construed and applied as 'equality in blessings and burden' by the Turkish Constitutional Court, 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 public service is religion is that the state is focused on a single religion rather than on services including all religions in the territory. However as concerns

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.

⁸ State Council Third Department, E. 1970/444, K. 1971/10, T. 9 January 1971. *Danıştay Dergisi (State Council Journal)*, 4 (1972) 69-70.

⁹ For this decision see *Danıştay Dergisi (State Council Journal)*, 4 (1972) 71-75.

our present subject matter, this problem is relatively easy to deal with, 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.

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.

The *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 regarding basic religious issues hence this indicates a denial of a separate ‘Alevi’ religious identity. The fact that Sunnites constitute the majority apparently appears to be justifiable to Turkish republican laic elite, as the state disregards other sects. The *Diyanet* pretending to be unaware of the religious belief of the Alevi population, and its building of mosques in Alevi villages, is a pressure exerted by the state to implant the Sunnite belief in this section of society.¹⁰

The existing legal structure provides a dual nature to the *Diyanet*. On one hand, religious life is being controlled by the secular state. This is assumed in so far as the Presidency is directed by managers loyal to the secular 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 to perform power, regardless of their political positions. thus the *Diyanet* as an administrative organism may indirectly obtain power over the government. However paradoxically, in this context, the state employs in Turkey the *Diyanet* against religion and its influence on the socio-political level.

A Story of the State, the Society and Religion in Turkey

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the state elite tried to secure the system they structured through a series of laicist legal regulations. Laicist reforms abolished the caliphate, established a state monopoly over education, disestablished the institution of the

¹⁰ For a report released by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor titled, “Turkey: International Religious freedom Report 2007” including information and legal/policy framework on Alevis see <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90204.htm>.

ulema (doctors of Islamic law), rejected Islamic law and adopted a modified version of the Swiss Civil Code, Latinized the alphabet, and, in 1928, struck out the sentence in the Constitution of 1924 which stated that the Turks were of Islamic faith (Zürcher, 1993 : 194)

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's policy on religion and state affairs was to remove religion from social realm and "to confine it to the conscience of people," and make it a set of beliefs that would not go beyond the personal lives of people. Thus the aim was to reduce religion to a matter of faith and prayer, and the principle of freedom of religion and conscience was to protect only individualised religion and prayers. Religion was to remain in the personal domain and to necessitate state intervention to the extent that it concerns and objectifies the social order.¹¹ "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) The purpose in this period was to secularise not only the state and the 'political', but also society and the 'social'. In my opinion, this is the biggest difference between Republican and Ottoman modernizations.

Kemalist nationalists preferred what seemed a risky path. Although it actually was not so, they declared that all the ties with the Islamist and the Ottoman past were cut off. They chose to join totally to a utopic 'universal civilization' believed to be represented in an idealized form by Europe. (Gülalp, 2003a: 35) However, while the Kemalists denied Islam as a civilization project, they continued to imagine the Turkish nation as Muslim¹².¹³ Some time after the establishment of the republic, assuming the regime to be secured, a tendency appeared to include Islam in the legitimating ideology of the political power (Sakallıoğlu, 1996). Meanwhile two 'very different conceptions of life' (Howe, 2000: 243) formatted in Turkey: on one side is a secular life while, on the other, is a religious life. In Metin Heper, a political scientist academician,'s words, "those in the secularist camp are troubled by the 'fact' that a significant part of the population in Turkey does not think the way they do, and

¹¹ Actually this was a political/legal enforcement of the "secularization thesis" (see Casanova 1994: 17-39), and "privatization of religion" (see Luckmann: 1967) by adopting the right to individual belief, "a product of the only legitimate space (that was) allowed to Christianity by post-Enlightenment society (Asad 1993: 45.)

¹² "Turkey is often defined as a predominantly Muslim country; Islamists especially delight in repeating at every opportunity that 99% of Turkish people are Muslim. But this is mostly a definition given to them by the secular state. Unless declared otherwise, every child born in Turkey is registered as Muslim and this is clearly indicated in every person's government-issued identity card. Moreover, there is a limit to the choice of religions that could legally be stated in a person's identity card –only those religions officially recognised by the state are acceptable, identifying oneself as 'atheist' or even just leaving that box blank is not. 'Muslim' is evidently a social identity conferred upon the Turkish people by the 'secular' state". (Gülalp, 2003b: 394)

¹³ In areas other than the national capital Ankara, and some metropolitans like Istanbul and Izmir, also the 'nation' shared this perception. Michael E. Meeker points out a curious strategy of the local elite in the town Of to take part in the sovereign power of the state system. Meeker characterizes the phenomena as a fusion of identities, and presents two brilliant terms to the literature as 'Kemalo-Islamism' and 'Libero-Islamism' (Meeker, 2002: 51-54).

are not convinced by the assurances of those in the Islamist camp that if the latter capture power they will respect the secularists' life styles. Consequently, the secularists are hostile to virtually anything that smacks of Islam. In turn, those in the Islamist camp have lost all hope that the secularists will eventually accept them into their fold, and, as a result, have adopted an equally uncompromising attitude" (Heper, 2001).

A new middle class became visible after the 1980's¹⁴, accepting the ethical standards and cultural values of the traditional order but also adopted the rational business rules and the profit motive of the capitalist market system.¹⁵ Actually, as the late Ernest Gellner put it, "Of the Western monotheisms, Islam is the most Protestant. That is, ... Islam ... has certain appropriate 'Protestant' features: rule orientation, strict Unitarianism, a kind of completeness, the stress on the doctrine, and the finality of doctrine. Now, if this is a correct sketch of Islam, and if the Weberian thesis is correct ...", (Gellner, 1997: 234) than the new Turkish Islamic middle middle, and upper middle classes are very good examples of capitalistic spirit both as believers and entrepreneurs. Although coming not exactly from the same spiritual/philosophical sources, many in the cadres of AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party) in government¹⁶, and the followers of Fethullah Gülen (b. 1938) who is a leading contemporary disciple of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960) are typical specimens of such. Gülen specifically stresses the compatibility of Islamic ideas and practices with the market economy¹⁷, and his followers control a complex web of businesses and significant broadcast and print media in Turkey and in Central Asia. (Eickelman, 2002:123-127).

A relatively new friction between the laicists and Islamists emerged in the 1990's when the critical approach of a group of Islamist writers gained an unprecedented popularity. Ruşen Çakır marks the book titled *Üç Mesele: Teknik, Medeniyet. Yabancılaşma (Three Issues: Technique, Civilization, Alienation)* by İsmet Özel that was published first in 1978, as an initiator of such a line of criticism (Çakır, 1990: 252-253). This new literature was not only popular in Islamic wing, but also ignited the widespread debate of the 80's and 90's among the Turkish intelligentsia about the conduct to be taken in issues of modernity.

In February 1997, the mayor of Sincan, a town on the outskirts of Ankara, organised 'Jerusalem Day', to call liberation of the city from Israel. The mayor was from the 'pro-

¹⁴ For overviews of the 'new middle class', see Insel 2003: 297; Raudvere 2004: 168n.2;

¹⁵ Kemal Karpat makes a very similar statement for the last decades of Ottoman times. (Karpat, 2001, 21)

¹⁶ For the religious lineage that takes us to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's current prime minister, see Mardin, 2006: 15-18.

¹⁷ For an overview of the significance of the movement, see Yavuz 1999, and Aras 1998.

Islamic' Welfare Party, a partner of the coalition government. The Iranian ambassador was invited and, making anti-secular statements, he called for the establishment of Islamic law in Turkey, while the crowd demonstrated in support of Hamas and Hizbullah, two Islamist groups waging armed struggle against Israel.¹⁸ Laicist forces in Turkey were infuriated and appalled by the rally so close to the capital, and the generals of the Turkish Joint Forces responded by sending tanks through Sincan as a warning. The mayor was arrested, the Iranian ambassador declared a *persona non grata*, and an investigation launched against the Welfare Party. "The Welfare Party had provided the generals with a pretext to curb the Islamic movement and they did so, with what is described as a soft or 'post-modern' coup" (Ahmad, 2003: 171-172) which may be named as February the 28th regime.

The parliament that emerged from the general elections on November 3, 2002, in Turkey has created an unexpected possibility of exit from the authoritarian regime established after the military coup of September 12, 1980 (Insel, 2003: 293), and empowered by the regulations after February 28, 1997. The currently governing AKP, born partially out of pro-Islamist Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party) persistently rejects being Islamist, defines itself as a conservative democratic party, and emphasises the democratic character of the party organization, its spirit of teamwork, and the importance of consensus-seeking in politics.¹⁹ "Turkey's secularist establishment, they believe will respect moderate religiosity in a pro-Islamic party if it refrains from employing a rhetorical discourse and if it maintains a transparent political agenda" (Cizre & Çınar, 2003: 327). As Keyman and İçduygu analyze, the AKP's economic program is a communitarian-liberal synthesis operating on the basis of three principles which actually are requirements of IMF:

- a) an effective and post-developmental state which is democratic, transparent and accountable in its interaction with society, but at the same time 'caring and assuming a supervisory role in its relation to the economy.
- b) a regulated free market which is not destructive and corrupted, but enriching contributing to economic development and socially just.

¹⁸ In addition to having an Islamist movement rooted politically to be represented in the Parliament by Milli Selamet Partisi (MSP, National Salvation Party) of Necmettin Erbakan, whose tradition is embodied in the ruling AKP, Turkey also has a number of active small and medium-sized radical Islamist groups. For a recent report published in September 2007 by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on the "reemergence of Hizbullah in Turkey" see Çakır, 2007.

¹⁹ In an article Erdoğan is quoted as saying "Let me be quite open and clear in stating a fact – we don't find it appropriate to mix religion and politics (...). We are not Muslim democrats, we are conservative democrats. Some in the west portray us as (Muslim democrats) but our Notion of conservative democracy is to atyach ourselves to the customs and the traditions and the values of our society, which is based on the family. This is a democratic issue, not a religious one. (Vincent Boland, "Eastern Premise" *Financial Times*, 3 December 2004.)

- c) social justice, which is to be established both in terms of the distribution of wealth and welfare services and with respect to the domain of recognition in which social segments will not be discriminated in terms of their different cultural practices. (Keyman and İcduygu, 2005: 5-6)²⁰

It is evident that the Kemalist model eroded. I personally feel that it would indeed be an ingratitude to the republican founding elite should we only hold them guilty for their deeds and their consequences, even though I think that especially it was extremely harsh, to say the least, to sever a culture by a means of changing and implicitly banning a script (the outcome unfortunately happened apparently to be an amnesiac, or at least, an aphasic society in terms of intellect). It also seems acceptable to me to come to a conclusion that all groups in Turkey somewhat benefited from the change created by the late Ottoman and early republican decision-making elite. Thus, it seems best to try to find some grounds of communication for negotiation and bargaining among different groups in Turkey. The Kemalist / laicist elite of Turkey enjoyed very many ‘faces’ of power as decision-making, as agenda setting, as thought control, almost all through the republican times. However, politics is inextricably linked to the phenomena of conflict and cooperation. Outcome of the 2007 general elections in Turkey reveal that almost 50% of the population that has voted, used their preference for AKP.²¹ This is an expression of the social change that Turkey has been experiencing especially within the last decade. Apparently this is a period of crisis which is an inevitable phase of modernity, as a product of decreasing space between the center and the periphery. In my opinion, currently this crisis has been left behind to a great extent; and a phase of integration has been started. However this integration is not built on an assimilation mechanism; but rather as a pluralistic texture of varying personal and communal interests, attitudes, expectations, and actions. Although it may seem to be paradoxical, actually as of internal dynamics, it has been conflicts that have nurtured this process of change. Social, cultural, and political encounters has made way for experiences involving interactions; and thus every field of experience has become a track of change. In terms of dynamics of change, what is significant among the actors is the altering perceptions of the others evolving from changes in self-perceptions. Therefore in such a change, compromise stems out of a social intersection, rather than an

²⁰ For a supporting view stressing on networkings and organizations like MÜSİAD (Müstakil İşadamları Derneği/Independent Businessmen’s Association) see Kahraman, 2007: 118-138.

²¹ Total number of registered voters: 42.799.303; Total number of votes: 36.056.293; Total number of valid votes: 35.049.691; AKP votes: 16.327.291 (%46,58) For official on-line figures of Elections High Council (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) see <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/docs/2007secim/gumrukdahil/gumrukdahil.htm>.

ultimate political agreement. ²²It is interesting in this sense that a quite recent survey in Turkey reveals that a large group of laicists and Islamists are coming closer to each other in their views about democracy, freedoms, and rights. It is also interesting that the ones that are resisting change in each group, and the poles that have been experiencing “reverse alteration” tend to be very similar in terms of mentality. (Bayramoğlu, 2006) ²³

In order to overcome ossific issues, several further means may also be sought. For example, deliberative democracy provides opportunities when citizens or their representatives disagree morally. In order to fulfil a deliberate democracy, it is required that the parties to continue to reason together to reach mutually acceptable decisions (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996: 1). Another process of negotiation may be exemplified by a work run in an Islamic context. A current project carried under the working title, ‘The Future of Shari’a’ by Prof. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law at Emory Law School, focuses on the struggle of Islamic societies to define themselves and positively relate to the local and global conditions under which they live²⁴. The fundamental concern of the project is how to ensure the institutional separation of Shari’a and the state, despite the organic and unavoidable connection between Islam and politics. The first part of this proposition sounds like ‘secularism’ as commonly understood today, but the second part indicates the opposite. This is a permanent paradox, which is part of the thesis, namely, that the relationship among religion, state, and society is the product of a constant and deeply contextual negotiation, rather than the subject of a fixed formula, whether a claim of total separation or total fusion of religion and the state. The project thesis proposes that the paradox of separation of Islam and the state while maintaining an organic relationship among Islam, politics and social interaction, can only be mediated through practice over time, rather than completely resolved through theoretical analysis. Insisting on ‘a constant and deeply contextual negotiation, rather than the subject of a fixed formula’ is evidently very similar to the basics of ‘deliberate democracy’, or any attempt alike that stems out from a need to communicate.

²² Nuray Mert, a prominent political analyst, claims that a social compromise may initially be achieved only if an awareness exists to live together. Consequent steps are mutual acceptance of social differences, an on-going social communication, and enabling minimum social, political, economic justice. (Mert, 1998: 182)

²³ A report published by the European Union Institute for Security Studies in June 2007, that is before the general elections of July 2007, conclude that, “Turkey’s ongoing crisis is multifaceted but essentially boils down to the fact that the TSK (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*/Turkish Armed Forces) does not want to allow the AKP to elect their Commander-in-Chief, i.e. the Turkish president.” (Posch, 2007: 47) Now that Abdullah Gül, the candidate of AKP, has been elected as the president it seems that “just another bump on Turkey’s road” to further democratization has been surpassed.

²⁴ See <http://people.law.emory.edu/~abduh46/#1>

As to scholarly work on republican issues, Serif Mardin points out a far too heavy emphasis on macro models and too little interest in micro aspects of social change, which he describes as ‘life-worlds’. (Mardin, 1997: 72). I totally agree with that only by reintegrating life worlds as a central component of the study and practice of modernity in Turkey will be able to move beyond the shortcomings of the existing historical experience and analysis. That may be a step for a communication between the laicist and Islamist groups in Turkey

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