Islam, Secularism and Democracy in Turkey

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• Religious and Secular Politics (Sakallıoğlu 1996, Somer 2014)

• Societal attitudes and mentality (Bilgin 2015, Somer and Glüpker-Kesebir 2015)
• Ottoman Empire, four major sources of legitimacy:

  – Islamic legitimacy and Sharia

  – Kanun ("secular" customary law)

  – Turkic roots (yasa)

  – Byzantian traditions
• **Official Islam** (Şeyh-ül-Islam and ulama) versus **Folk Islam** (Sufi orders)

• Center-periphery division less problematic because traditional empire: Ottomans tried to *rule*, not to *govern* and *transform*

• **Indirect** rather than **direct** rule

• Pax Ottomanica or Islamica, not Ottomanization or Turkicization
Beginning of the Religious-Secular Cleavage: Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876)

- Widespread reforms implemented by Ottomans to arrest decline

- Strengthen central state and modernize military

- Modernize education

- Modernize judiciary

- Top-down

- Both “Islamist” and secular-western ideas
• Major long-term cleavage

• Deep-rooted and mostly elite level between state and province. Ideological, but over power

• Secular-westernizing state elite (military and bureaucracy) vs. religious state elite (*ulama*)

• Mostly over power. Ulama not always against reforms

• Ideological
  – Western/secular ideologies (liberalism, socialism, nationalism) vs. secular nationalism
  – Modernist Islamization vs. religious nationalism
• Secular-westernizing elite gain ground, sidelining the ulama

• The ulama increasingly allied with the periphery (Anadolu) and their previous competitors, Sufi religious elite

• But no linear process and attempts of synthesis
  – Abdülhamid II (1876-1909)’s Islamism, Muslim-Ottoman nationalism
  – Ottomanism
  – War of Liberation (1919-1922)
1923: Turkish Republic

1923-1925: Secularist elites establish their hegemony
  – Cizre: “Ottoman ruling elites (minus) the ulama”
  – Somer: Ottoman ruling elites minus the disobedient state ulama minus the Sufi ulama minus the evolutionary secularists

Islam re-established and the obedient state ulama employed in the service of the secularization project

Sufi elites excluded and oppressed
1920-1945

The Emergence of the Secularist Political Center

- Radical secularism: Top-down secularization
  Authoritarian one-party regime
Republican Reforms

• 1922-24
  – Abolished Sultanate, Caliphate and the highest religious body (Şeyhülislam), founded the Diyanet
  – Closed religious convents and Sufi lodges
  – Unified secular education system

• 1925-30
  – Polygamy banned, gender equality in divorce and inheritance
  – Secular (Western) legal codes
  – Latin alphabet, Gregorian calendar, metric system and Sunday (as opposed to Friday) weekly holiday
Reforms Cont.

• 1930s
  – Equal political rights for women
  – Secularism enshrined in constitution
  – Law on Family Names
  – Abolished religious titles and by-names
  – Turkish Language and History Associations
Reforms Cont.

- Vernacularized ezan (call to prayer)
- Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet)

- Cultural homogenization
  - Kurds
  - Alawites
• Religious-secular cleavage expanded to mass level
  – Urban vs. rural
  – Urban centers such as Ankara and Istanbul and the province (known in Turkish as Anadolu) : center-periphery cleavage
  – Sunni and Alevi
  – Educated vs. uneducated
Break or continuity with Ottoman reforms?

- Ataturk and Kemalists former Ottoman officers. Wanted to rescue the (first Ottoman then Turkish) state (rather than the individual)

- State continues to control official (orthodox) religion rather than the other way around (E.g. Şeyhülislam and Diyanet)

- Obedient ulama still employed by the state

- Continued Ottoman reforms like modernization of education and military
• But went much further and discredited the Ottoman past

• Completely secularized the legal system and education

• Unlike the Ottoman reforms, brought the autonomous religious foundations under state control and restricted Sufi (unofficial) Islam

• Islam perceived as an inferior cultural marker to mainstream Turkish identity
• Asset side:
  – “overarching national identity”
  – Helped achieve “the level of political, economic and cultural development today.”
    (Hale and Özbudun, 2010)

• Debit side:
  – disgruntled Muslim-conservative elites
  – Troubled relationship with the past
  – one of the deeper fissures that typically emerged between secular-nationalist and Islamist elites in Muslim countries
1946-1970

• Secular Moderation and the Emergence of A Semi-Democratic Centre
  – Transition to multiparty electoral democracy
  – Practical moderation of secularism
  – Compromise with pious median voters
  – Compromise with post-second World War international context
• Success depended on two factors under democracy

• For secular-westernizing elites: ability to control the state and get votes from the working class, urban poor and Anadolu

• For Islamic elites: represent Anadolu and those who felt to be excluded. Combine Islamist (ulama) and Sufi interests
The Democratic Party 1950-60

- Split from the CHP
- Moderation of radical secularist reforms earlier (give examples)
- Agricultural modernization
- Beginning of Anatolian bourgeoisie
- Nato membership
- Opposed to “Islamist” elements
- More legitimacy to Islam and traditional culture
- Became increasingly authoritarian after 1957
- Overthrown in 1960 military coup
Military Regime 1960-61

• Used Islam as an underlying ideological principle of its reform platform
  – Represented religion as the cause of backwardness
  – Progressive religion conducive to progress

• But made a liberal constitution (with military tutelage) creating opportunities for political Islamism
1961-80

- Liberal constitution creates opportunities for ethnic and religious political mobilization
- But legal limitations and watchful military
- Mostly center-right religious-conservative governments
- Center-left secularist parties able to govern in coalition with conservative parties
- Left-right polarization, anti-communism becomes major cause of Islamist politics
• First explicitly Islamist party and movement: National Outlook (Milli Görüş) in 1970

• Opposes all other parties as “gayrí-milli” (‘anti-national’).

• Anatolian bourgeoisie
• Sufi orders
• anticommunism
Islamism and the Post – 1980 State

- Islam promoted as antidote against communism: Turkish-Islamic synthesis
- neoliberal economic policies shrinking welfare state

- Global radicalization of Islamism
  - compulsory religion courses
  - Resurgence in Sufi Tarikats
  - Saudi capital

Sakallioglu
The Welfare (Refah) Party

- Founded in 1983
- 1984, 4.4% of the vote
- 1994, 19%
- 1995, 21.4% (national majority)
Refah in the 1990’s

- 1995, Refah wins the most seats (but must still form a coalition)
- Models itself as Islamic Kemalism
- More anti-systemic than earlier Islamist parties. Reflects change of Turkish society
- 1997, Islamic credentials emphasized through the proposal of a massive mosque in Taksim
Refah in the 1990’s cont.

• Military forces the government to step down in June 1997

• Party closed later
1999-2002 Islamist moderation

Suppression of religious & Islamist discourse

• Discourse of liberal as opposed to majoritarian democracy

Embraces Western alliances

• Embraces economic globalism
2003 – Turkey under AKP governments

- 2001-2002 collapse of the political center due to financial crisis and AKP comes to power
Three different Scenarios

• I) Weak secular rivals
  - AKP conservatives wield power pursuing hegemony; push for Islamization
  - weak democratization

• II) Strong secular rivals (balancers) with authoritarian ideology
  – Polarization, no consensus
  – weak democratization
The AKP: Three different Scenarios

III) Strong secular rivals with pro-democratization ideology

- AKP moderates/pragmatists dominate within the party
- Strong democratization based on consensus
What Happened?

  Secular De-Moderation and Religious-Secular Polarization

- 2008-2010: Erosion of Military Tutelage and Institutional Checks. Weak democratic rivals. Lost Chance of Democratization Renegotiation of Secularism
• 2011-2014:

• Weak democratic and institutional checks

The third scenario takes place

• Growing Authoritarianism and Islamic Social Engineering
Religion, secularism and social tolerance

• Respect, acceptance and appreciation for human diversity

• Tolerance (saygı, kabul, tanıma?) vs. toleration (hoşgörü?)

• What are the differences between
  • Toleration?
  • Respect?
• Religious vs. secular citizens and attitudes toward minorities (Armenians, Kurds, Alevis)

• Turks in general are not very socially tolerant

• 33rd among 41 countries
• Bilgin: Do people want a minority member as a
  – Neighbor
  – Employee
  – Employer
General intolerance

• Both religious and secular people are intolerant toward out-groups in general

• But tolerance toward specific “others” (target groups) are as important as general tolerance

• Religious and secular people have different “others”
• But religious people more tolerant toward Kurds. And secular people are more tolerant toward the Alevi.

• They are also distrustful of each other as employers.
• Question: can these surveys measure tolerance?
• Somer and Glüpker-Kesebir:

• How do Turkish religious and secular social and political elites compare in terms of:
  - social and political pluralism
  - «tolerance» for ethnic and religious minorities
  - «respect» for ethnic and religious minorities.
Nationalism

• Both religious and secular people are quite nationalist
Pro-secular newspapers: Nationalism

n, 444, 29%
- , 139, 9%
+, 965, 62%

Pro-Islamic newspapers: Nationalism

n, 318, 27%
- , 263, 22%
+, 595, 51%
Yeni Şafak (Isl.): references to Kurds (N=123)

- Neutral: 50; 41%
- Positive: 69; 56%
- Negative: 4; 3%

Zaman (Isl.): references to Kurds (N=114)

- Neutral: 65; 57%
- Positive: 37; 32%
- Negative: 12; 11%

Milliyet (Sec.): references to Kurds (N=347)

- Neutral: 233; 67%
- Positive: 107; 31%
- Negative: 7; 2%

Cumhuriyet (Sec.): references to Kurds (N=302)

- Neutral: 238; 79%
- Positive: 53; 17%
- Negative: 11; 4%

Milli Gazete (Isl.): references to Kurds (N=137)

- Neutral: 107; 78%
- Positive: 21; 15%
- Negative: 9; 7%
Total references to "separatists" by paper
• Konda (2011):
• Almost half of the AKP voters (47.8 percent) stated that they would shun Kurdish neighbors, business partners or spouses.
• Among CHP voters, the percentage was lower (43 percent).
3.2 Do Islamists have a different conception of national identity?

Milli Gazete (Isl.):
Basis of Turkish Identity
(N=160)

- Anatolia, 16, 10%
- Turkish, 74, 46%
- Islam, 70, 44%

Yeni Şafak & Zaman (Isl.):
Basis of Turkish Identity
(N=271)

- Anatolia, 16, 10%
- Turkish, 74, 46%
- Islam, 70, 44%

Milliyet & Cumhuriyet
(sec.):
Basis of Turkish Identity
(N=252)

- Anatolia, 16, 10%
- Turkish, 74, 46%
- Islam, 70, 44%
3.3. Are Islamists more open to ethnic politics?
Ideational Repertoire about democratization

• Seculars are better prepared
Institutional reforms to address the Kurdish Question

- **Yeni Şafak (isl.):**
  Education and TV in Kurdish (N=76)
  - Positive: 51%
  - Negative: 12%
  - Neutral: 37%

- **Milliyet (sec.):**
  Education and TV in Kurdish (N=394)
  - Positive: 48%
  - Negative: 41%
  - Neutral: 11%

- **Zaman (isl.):**
  Education and TV in Kurdish (N=61)
  - Positive: 30%
  - Negative: 34%
  - Neutral: 36%

- **Cumhuriyet (sec.):**
  Education and TV in Kurdish (N=239)
  - Positive: 17%
  - Negative: 69%
  - Neutral: 14%

- **Milli Gazete (isl.):**
  Education and TV in Kurdish (N=63)
  - Positive: 24%
  - Negative: 65%
  - Neutral: 11%
Konda (2011): 41.25 percent of the pro-secular CHP voters thought that people other than themselves faced social-political barriers in expressing their ethnic-cultural identities.

66.97 percent of the AKP voters did not think that other people suffered from ethnic-cultural inequality or discrimination that needed to be addressed.

44.6 and 31.1 percent of the CHP voters thought that the Kurdish question resulted from restrictions on “Kurds’ ability to express their own identity’ and from “state discrimination against Kurds” in respective order. Only 39.7 ve 24.8 percent of the AKP voters thought so.
Christian and Jewish Communities

Pro-secular newspapers:
Christian and Jewish communities

Pro-Islamic newspapers:
Christian and Jewish communities
• Which findings reflect more “toleration”?

• Which findings reflect more “respect” (tolerance)?