Islam, Secularism and Democracy in Turkey

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• What do we learn from the Turkish case regarding democratization in Muslim countries?

» Moderate Islamist actors are in power in Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia
• GDP: $960.5 billion (2010 est.)
  Country comparison to the world: 17
• GDP growth: 8.2% (2010 est.) (-4.7% 2009 est.)
  Country comparison to the world: 16
• GDP per capita (PPP): $12,300 (2010 est.)
  Country comparison to the world: 94
• GDP composition:
  agriculture: 9.6%
  industry: 26.6%
  services: 63.8% (2010 est.)
• Not the only Muslim democracy but longest experience with democracy among Muslim majority countries

• First democratic transition in 1950
The Turkish case

- Until the 1990s: western world perceived the seculars as the country’s democrats.

- 2000s: moderate Islamists (AKP) shown as the democrats.
• Neither view was correct.

• Muslim and secular democratic values can only be evaluated comparatively and with respect to the country’s social, political-institutional and external context.
The Ottoman Legacy

• Inherited Structures and Legacies
  – Tanzimat reforms
  – Widespread reforms implemented by Ottomans to arrest decline
  – Strengthen state and military
  – Reforms caused a rift between the (more secular and pro-western) bureaucracy and the clergy (ulama)
The Emergence of the Secularist Political Center

- Radical secularism: Top-down secularization under the authoritarian single-party regime of the Republican People’s Party
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
  – Instituted secular (Western) legal codes
  – Adopted Latin alphabet, Gregorian calendar, metric system and Sunday (as opposed to Friday) as weekly holiday

Sakallıoğlu
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
Break or continuity with Ottoman reforms?

• Ataturks and Kemalists former Ottoman officers and products of reformist-Ottoman intellectual milieu. They wanted to rescue the state (rather than the individual)

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

• Ulama still employed by the state

• Continued Ottoman reforms like mecelle attempting to modernize/reform Islam
• 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
• Positive side:
  – “overarching national identity”
  – Helped achieve “the level of political, economic and cultural development it has reached today.” (Hale and Özbudun, 2010)

• Deficit side:
  – disgruntled group of Muslim-conservative modernizers
  – Troubled relationship with the past
  – one of the deeper fissures that typically emerged between secular-nationalist and Islamist elites in Muslim countries, in response to modernization/westernization.
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
The Democratic Party 1950-60

• Split from the CHP but alternative to the secular bureaucratic intelligentsia
• Agricultural modernization
• Nato membership
• Accused of being “soft on Islam”
• Took stance against Islamist elements
• Overthrown in 1960 military coup
• Ultimately gave more legitimacy to Islam and traditional culture

Sakallıoğlu
Military Regime 1960-61

• Used Islam as an underlying ideological principle of its reform platform
  – Misrepresentation of religion is the cause of backwardness
  – Progressive religion is conducive to progress
The Justice Party Period 1961-80

- Liberal constitution creates opportunities for ethnic and religious political mobilization
- But legal limitations and watchful military
- First explicitly Islamist party founded by National Outlook movement (Milli Görüş) in 1970
- Left-right polarization, anti-communism becomes major cause of Islamist politics

1980 Military Coup
Radical Islam and the Post – 1980 State

- The junta encourages Islam as antidote against communism
- Global radicalization of Islamism
- 1982, compulsory religion courses introduced
- Resurgence in Sufi Tarikats
- Saudi capital becomes a meaningful variable
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
• 1997, Islamic credentials emphasized through the proposal of a massive mosque in Taksim
Refah in the 1990’s cont.

• Mosque debate stirs up national debate over secularism’s future
  – Military becomes involved
• Pushed out of power and closed down shortly thereafter

• May 1997 PM Erbakan steps down
• Military forces the government to step down in June 1997
Religious politics and social class
Refah and NSP, a comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refah</th>
<th>NSP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Almost no mention of</td>
<td>Emphasis on state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industrialization</td>
<td>structured investment in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>heavy industry</td>
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<td>Private initiative</td>
<td>State initiative</td>
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<td>Popular in metropolitan</td>
<td>Popular in under</td>
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<td>developed regions</td>
<td>developed and rural areas</td>
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<td>(National Salvation Party)</td>
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Changing class basis of Islamism in Turkey

• NSP gains prominence during period of class conflict
• Secular state was unwilling to peruse welfare policies
• MUSAID (The Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen) is founded in 1990, Islamist leaning
Changing class basis of Islamism in Turkey, continued

• Massive influx of rural to urban migrants
  – 1980 Defunct welfare state functions assumed by Islamic organizations
  – Demographic changes saw a growing young population with Islamic leanings
2002-2012

• Religious Moderation and the Reproduction of the Semi-Democratic Centre

• Secular De-Moderation
Religious moderation

Suppression of religious & Islamist discourse

- Adoption of the discourse of liberal as opposed to majoritarian democracy

Embracing Western alliances

- Embracing economic globalism
The AKP

- 2002 (national): 34.43 %
- 2007 (national): 46.58 %
- 2011 (national): 49.9 %
The AKP: Three different Scenarios

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

• II) Strong secular rivals (balancers) with authoritarian ideology
  
  – Conservative moralists prevail within the AKP
  – AKP might capitalize on religious nationalism
  – weak democratization
The AKP: Three different Scenarios

III) Strong secular rivals with pro-democratization ideology

- AKP moderates/pragmatists dominate within the party
- Strong democratization
Secular Mobilization

• Middle class phenomena
  – Rise of Islamist middle class, in competition with secularist middle class
– Moderate Islam more threatening to secularists than radical Islamism. Embraces modernization. Can win majority support

– Radical Islam is not a viable political competitor. Cannot win majority support

– Moderate Islamist social projects are regressive for secular middle classes
Democratic Consolidation

- Democracy becoming the ‘only game in town’
- Major actors must trust each other
- Need for open/genuine exchange on secularism
Twin Tolerations and Democratization

• Secular ‘pro-democracy’ actors view the Military as a safety mechanism against ‘undesirable’ democratic outcomes

• AKP support democratization as long as it does not protect secularist interests or undermine Islamic agenda
  – EU HRC and the headscarf issue
  – Minority rights
  – Adultery ban
Bikinis and Ambiguity
• Ambiguous policy positions make the AKP hard to “pin down”
  – Allegedly, an AKP controlled municipality banned swimsuit advertisements
  – Secularists protested “creeping Islamization”
  – Advertisements reappear

• Thus, the AKP is not forced to clarify its position
Political parties

• Weaknesses in Turkish Party System
  – Failure to recruit able individuals
  – Lack of intra-party debate and policy innovation

• Military interventions have damaged party infrastructure and civil society ties
• Internal feuding
• Personality centered leadership and corruption