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TURKISH SECULARISM

Looking forward and beyond the West

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Introduction

Until recent years, Turkey was hailed in the world as a relatively secularised and dynamic society and as a flawed yet nevertheless laudable example – or even model – of secular democracy in a Muslim-majority country. Of course, there were many criticisms of Turkish secularism (*laiklik*). As I will elaborate later, a major and popular string of criticisms exclusively focused on *laiklik*'s undue restrictions of public and political religion, such as the limitations it imposed on the Islamic headscarf and Islamist political parties.

Against this backdrop, the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in 2002 reinforced Turkey's positive image. It was an 'unsecular party' of political Islamist origin and a voice of religious-conservative constituencies (Kalyvas 2003), yet it claimed that it embraced constitutional secularism and aimed to promote a more 'religion-friendly' version of *laiklik*. Hence, the AKP raised hopes among many that it would liberalise, democratise, and strengthen secular democracy in Turkey (Nasr 2005; Yavuz, ed. 2006; Kuru 2009; Bayat 2013).[1] These expectations seemed confirmed when, as recently as 2011, the party's leader, then Prime Minister Erdoğan, publicly recommended a 'secular state' to Egyptians in the aftermath of Arab uprisings. By doing so, he received wide acclaim from pro-secular international audiences and sharp criticism from Islamists (Champion and Bradley 2011; Hundley 2011).

While either commending or criticising *laiklik in toto*, few analyses explicitly distinguished between its interlinked yet different dimensions, such as legal, institutional, political, and social, or, for that matter, between secularism vs secularisation. However, the perception of the AKP, and the political and social classes the party represented as supporters and potential reformers of *legal and political secularism*, was not the only reason why many observers and scholars welcomed their ascent. Importantly for our purposes here, the AKP and its key constituencies were also recognised as products and agents of a social and cultural *secularisation* that was thought to have been occurring among the pious segments of society in a context of economic globalisation and development (Göle 1996; Gülalp 2003; Yavuz 2003; Gumuscu and Sert 2009; Bayat 2013).

In recent years, however, the image of both Turkey and the AKP has changed drastically in popular and academic writings alike. The AKP has increasingly been criticised for

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1   For a typical journalistic analysis, see Hundley (2011).

undermining secularism and secular democracy and for promoting Islamic authoritarianism and social and political Islamisation (Somer 2007, 2015, 2017; Kaya 2014; Başkan 2015; Lüküslü 2016; Kuru 2017; Öktem and Akkoyunlu, eds 2017; Kirdiş 2018). Disconcertingly for current research, more or less the same social and political actors and even the same social-cultural processes that used to be described as reflections of social–cultural secularisation are now portrayed as manifestations of Islamisation.

How can this happen? And what does all this say about our understanding, description, and explanation of *laiklik*? What insights can we derive from the 'Turkish case' that can improve our comprehension, categorisations, and causal accounts of secularism(s) in the world at large (Somer 2014b)?

Social, political, and intellectual struggles over *laiklik* and *laikleşme* – i.e. secularisation or more appropriately contemporanisation, as I will argue later – have been among the foci of Turkish politics and Turkey's experience of modernisation since at least the late Ottoman times (Berkes 1998; Mardin 2000, 2005; Zürcher 2004; Findley 2010; Kerslake et al. 2010). Yet, major conceptual and inferential disagreements pervade scholarship on *laiklik*. There is scant agreement over how to define *laiklik* and causally explain its evolution and over the failures and accomplishments of the Turkish experience. Consequently, there is divergence among scholars concerning which key research questions need to be pursued. Further, research continues to present contradictory criticisms regarding the goals, principles, and practices of *laiklik*, or, for that matter, of cultural and political secularists (*laikçiler* or *laiklik taraftarları*).

In particular, I have identified three areas where the question of Turkish secularism would benefit from being revisited, reposed, and reevaluated:

- Classifying *laiklik*.
- Explaining *laiklik*.
- *Laiklik* and the question of secularity beyond the West.

A first step would be to try to redefine *laiklik* by more properly situating it in the context of other experiences in the world, and in light of more comparative and general-theoretical insights. A second step can be taken by disaggregating *laiklik* into its interrelated components pertaining to secularisation, secularity, and (legal, institutional, social, and political) secularism. These different components require different empirical and theoretical questions, evidence, and methodologies. Finally, research would benefit from more careful periodisation and cross-temporal comparisons. Five periods seem to have been constitutive of *laiklik*:

1. Pre-Modern Period: social–cultural legacy.
2. Modern Ottoman Period: modernisation/secularisation.
3. Early Republican Period: radical legal-political secularism, social-cultural secularisation and nation-state building under single (secularist) party regime.
4. Transition to Electoral and Illiberal Democracy: partial moderation of legal-political secularism under multi-party democracy.
5. AKP Era: instrumentalisation and reconfiguration of *laiklik* under dominant religious nationalist party.

Empirically and analytically distinguishing between phenomena such as secularism and secularisation is not easy for a variety of reasons. The meanings of these terms are undoubtedly contested. Definitional problems also haunt general-theoretical studies of secularism, which induces major collected volumes to avoid 'imposing' any common definition on

contributors (Zuckerman and Shook, eds 2017, 1–2). One should acknowledge that there are multiple secularisations, secularities, and secularisms as ideal, practised, and conceivable modes in the world (Bhargava, ed. 1998; Stepan 2010; Bhargava 2011; Bilgrami, ed. 2016).

At the same time, however, one should keep in mind that different definitions and practices share common roots and normative bases. Thus, 'secularisms are not so diverse that they defy description' (Berlinerblau 2017, 93).

Since I maintain that further research would benefit from carefully defining *laiklik* and disaggregating it into its various meanings and dimensions, such as secularity, secularisation, and social, legal, political, and institutional secularism, I will start by defining in what sense I employ these concepts. To keep this section as brief as possible and start my discussion of *laiklik*, I will only include summary definitions in the main narrative and discuss the rest in the footnotes. It is hoped that this will make the chapter an easier read for a variety of audiences, without reducing the importance of the full definitions for my arguments. Readers may find it useful to refer to these footnotes during the forthcoming analysis.

Secularisation

Secularisation refers to certain political-institutional, social-cultural, intellectual-philosophical, and cognitive-psychological *processes of change* that alter people and societies (Casanova 1980; Bhargava, ed. 1998; Davie 2000; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Taylor 2007; Berger and Zijderveld 2009; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and Van Antwerpen, eds 2011; Zuckerman and Shook, eds 2017). These processes increase the extent to which the temporal and spiritual realms and the political and religious authorities are differentiated in people's minds, in the organisation and functioning of societies and states, or in both.

When it comes to religion, different actual cases of secularisation can produce one or a mix of three effects: (1) the differentiation of secular spheres from religious norms and institutions (2) declining religious or spiritual beliefs and practices, and/or (3) the privatisation of religion to people's conscience and individual lives (Casanova 1980; Casanova 2001). Actual cases of secularisation (as in southern and northern Europe, the US, India or Turkey) differ based on how much they entail (1) through (3). Similarly, different descriptive, explanatory, and normative models of secularisation (as in 'secularisation theories' and liberal versus republican models and understandings of secularisation) highlight or prescribe different combinations of these three phenomena.[2]

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2   Early secularisation theories and *positivist understandings of secularisation* focus on (2) and partly on (3). Northern European cases of secularisation, for example, stand out in how much they display these effects compared to the rest of the world where faith and religion often remain or become vivid and publicly assertive (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). Hence, revised secularisation theories and *interpretivist understandings of secularisation* emphasise (1). They stipulate the transformation but not necessarily the erosion and privatisation of religious 'beliefs, belongings, and behaviour'.

   Laic and civic-republican models interpret and expect secularisation to entail a specific type of religious emancipation, which is anti-clerical and rationalist. Accordingly, secularisation is expected to produce a self-reflexive public, and the state is expected to keep a vigilant eye on the political, militant, and irrational potentials of religion. Laic and civic-republican models are supposed to produce these outcomes in two ways. First, they alter traditional religious hierarchies by empowering ordinary citizens ('laymen') and their political and bureaucratic representatives at the expense of the clergy and their established institutions. The former gains the upper hand in interpreting, reproducing, and enforcing religion and in producing social knowledge and 'truth'. Second, they try to rationalise

For achieving a better understanding the Turkish experience, it is important to recognise that secularisation may require — and historically drew upon – critical theological and philosophical debates and paradigm shifts. These pertain to such questions as the degree and purpose of divine involvement in the operations of nature, the universe, and human agency. The resulting intellectual legacies can have – as the Islamic and Turko-Iranian heritages had on Muslim Ottoman reformers – important influences on how people experience secularisation and how they interpret, imagine, and practise secularism at a political-institutional level. This can occur by means of the different 'political theologies' these ideational legacies help generate (Mardin 2000, 81–106).

Secularity

What kind of a society does secularisation produce? Secularisation processes foster secularity, namely a cognitive, psychological or cultural *condition* or *state*. Secularity can exist at personal, social, and political levels (Zuckerman and Shook, eds 2017, 9–10). In majority Western-Christian societies, Charles Taylor argues and demonstrates that the outcome of secularisation was a type of secularity he calls the 'secular age' (Taylor 2007). Like Casanova, he maintains that different secularities may entail the privatisation ('type I') or decline ('type II') of religious beliefs and practices. However, he particularly highlights the importance of 'type III' for western secularity. This third type describes a cognitive, social, and legal-political situation where two sets of individual choices became accepted as possible and normal: the choice between belief and unbelief, and the choice between different beliefs. Hence, secularisation does not necessarily eviscerate faith. It does not necessarily alter *what* people believe but changes *how* people believe.[3]

Thus, secularisation is a dynamic and ongoing process. Therefore, its product, secularity at any point in time — and that includes Western secularity — cannot be the final stage of history and human development. This gives rise to discussions of 'post-secularity,' as well as 'non-Western secularities,' which I will discuss below.

Secularism

Secularism (including its laic variety) refers to *normative beliefs, philosophies, ideologies, institutional rules,* and *norms* based on which secularists justify and promote secularisation. It can also denote the social-political *movements* and the social and political *methods* based on which secularists pursue their goals on individual, societal, and political-governmental levels. Secularisms can be anti-religious, religion-friendly, or agnostic. Some can put forward arguments about why religion is unnecessary or harmful. Others may explain why people should be moral and contribute to the public good regardless of their religious beliefs, without any prejudice against religion (Zuckerman and Shook, eds 2017, 4).

religion and to tame its militant potential from the outside, through the purposeful efforts of citizens and the state.

By comparison, Anglo-Saxon and liberal models and practices understand secularisation as a more self-induced and less anti-clerical transformation. Hence, an important implication is that the impetus for differentiation may come from within religion and the pious segments of society.

3 Further and significantly, Taylor maintains that Western secularisation did not result mainly or exclusively from scientific progress and 'secular enlightenment'. It followed also from theological-ideational developments within religion (Christianity). This refers to internally induced religious enlightenment and freedom.

Political secularism

Political secularism can likewise have several meanings. In a narrow sense, it can mean 'the doctrine that defends (secular states)' (Bhargava 2011, 92). More generally, it can denote any political ideology prescribing how secularity should be promoted through political activity and agency, and by structuring the state–religion relationship in various ways. Hence, there can be varieties of political secularism in the same way that there are different versions of political religionism.[4]

A second and related meaning of political secularism captures legal-political principles, institutions and practices that differentiate religious from political and state authority, while defining the bases, limitations, and protections of religious and secular rights and freedoms. Hence, different versions of political secularism can differ based on *who* (namely, which authorities) should differentiate between religious and state affairs and safeguard religious and secular rights and freedoms, and *how* they should do so, namely through which institutions and practices and by using which principles. Accordingly, one way to categorise different models of political secularism is institutional. It is based on the degree of institutional mixing versus separation of religious and state institutions. Hence, integrationist versus separationist models can be distinguished (Philpott 2007; Fox 2008; Berlinerblau 2017).

Separated or not, and to differing degrees, an 'asymmetric relation of power' prevails in all institutional models of political secularism between religious and state institutions in favour of the latter. 'What varies is how (state institutions) exert control and whether they are as committed to freedom and equality as they are to maintaining order' (Berlinerblau 2017, 94–95).[5]

Explaining political secularism(s)

The vast literature explaining the rise of political secularisms highlights several major drivers. Historically, these drivers were the prerogatives and consequences of enlightenment/modernisation, nation-state building and interreligious peace (Bhargava, ed. 1998). Accordingly, crucial causal roles were played by the cultural-ideological, historical-institutional, and religious-demographic contexts in which modernisation and nation-state formation occurred in a society (Kalyvas 1996; Davie 2000).[6]

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4   For example – keeping in mind the difficulties of conceptualisation, identification, and measurement – conservative versus reformist, authoritarian versus democratic, and radical versus moderate forms of political Islamism or Catholicism. Similarly, one can conceptualise authoritarian versus democratic, laicist versus Anglo-Saxon, civic-republican versus liberal, anti-religious versus religion-friendly, and radical versus moderate political secularisms.

5   Hence, another way of categorising different political secularisms is by focusing on the extent and nature of the power asymmetry between religious and state institutions. One can do so by asking to what extent peace versus antagonism, conflict versus accommodation, and 'twin tolerations' versus twin prejudices underlie the relations of power between the religious and state institutions in each case (Stepan 2000). Hence, one can identify interventionist versus liberal, active versus passive, and authoritarian versus democratic political secularisms.

6   Laic and state-dominated models are expected to flourish in societies with relatively homogenous populations and relatively independent, centralised, and powerful clerical institutions, such as many majority-Catholic societies. By comparison, liberal and separationist models are expected to develop in contexts of religious diversity, large and politically relevant religious minorities, and decentralised religious institutions.

    Ideologically, the mode of a society's historical engagement with modernisation matters. This shapes how social and political elites interpret the ideal path of modernisation. Strong legacies of positivist-secular enlightenment and antagonism between secular and religious interests support laic,

However, what ultimately determines the dominant mode of political secularism in a country may be *politics*, namely the nature of the political actors who hold the political power and the way they acquire and maintain that power.[7]

Secularity beyond the West and post-secularity

Most of our extant knowledge on secularism is based on memories and research on 'Western' experiences. In response, a growing body of more recent research has been investigating which types of secularity, secularisation and secularism historically existed in 'non-Western' societies, and how these historical contexts and memories affect contemporary practices, ideas, and prospects (Bilgrami, ed. 2016; Künkler, Madeley, and Shankar, eds 2018).

Against the backdrop of these works, one wonders to what extent we need to modify Nikki Keddie's important insight that 'non-Western and non-Christian' secularisations have been 'more influenced by government action than by autonomous societal changes' (Keddie 1997, 22). Clearly, the formal models of secularism that prevail in contemporary non-Western cases were significantly influenced by colonisation, Western domination, and state-led modernisation experiences modelled on Western blueprints. However, we need to better understand how indigenous social dynamics and legacies of pre-modern contexts contribute to the shaping of these secularisms. This can also help propose legal-political models that may prove to be more viable for these societies.

Situating laiklik in the world and overcoming Turkish exceptionalism

We now have a massive body of descriptive, interpretive, causal, and critical writing on *laiklik* (Berkes 1998; Toprak 1981; Göle 1996; Davison 1998; Mardin 2000; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Mardin 2006; Azak 2010; Özdalga 2012; Turam, ed. 2012). We also have a growing number of comparative analyses (Tepe 2008; Hurd 2008; Kuru 2009; Altinordu 2010; Tezcür 2010; Kuru and Stepan 2012b; Başkan 2014; Akturk 2015; Elbasani and Somer 2015; Somer 2017a; Akan 2017; Fabbe, forthcoming). But many discussions still tend to treat *laiklik* as a unique or exceptional case, and mainly a product of pro-westernising political elites. For example, one recent review, in passing, made two claims that are also frequently encountered in other studies: (1) Turkey is a 'unique exemplar … the only *politically* [emphasis mine] secular country with a Muslim majority population …' and (2) '[but a country where] secularism has little social or historical basis' (Sevinc, Hood Jr., and Coleman III 2017, 155).

In response to the first claim, it should be highlighted that Turkey is *not* unique among Muslim-majority countries in having legal-political secularism. Surveying their constitutions reveals that, among the 50 Muslim-majority states in the world, 15 (including Turkey, as

republican, and anti-clerical models, as in France and other continental European cases. More balanced and cooperative legacies of religious and secular enlightenment foster more religion-friendly, liberal, and pluralist models, as in the United States and other Anglo-Saxon cases. It is also important to keep in mind that real cases are more mixed than ideal types. For example, liberal principles significantly influenced French laicism, while civic-republican ideals affected Anglo-Saxon secularisms.

7 Hence, political rivalries, capabilities, conflicts, and outcomes are critical. It is critical which political groupings become dominant and set up the rules, design institutions, and construct official ideologies. It also matters greatly whether these dominant actors do so more democratically, such as through power-sharing with others, or autocratically, such as according to their own ideals and interests only. Some practices and principles of political secularism can emerge also because of their instrumental benefits to political actors' dominating their rivals and by serving as bulwarks against challengers after these actors have established political supremacy.

well as countries such as Mali, Senegal, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Bangladesh) have constitutional clauses of secularism. Furthermore, in addition to these countries with constitutional secularism or *laïcité*, [8] other important majority-Muslim countries, such as Indonesia, have no constitutional secularism but do have other constitutional clauses that stipulate religious and secular freedoms and accommodative religion-state relations. Many scholars even consider these cases more 'secular' in a political-institutional sense than Turkey's *laiklik* (Künkler and Stepan 2013).

Political secularism, of course, cannot be limited to constitutional principles. But, however political secularism is defined, one would be hard pressed to argue that Turkey is unique. From Syria and Algeria to Azerbaijan and Tartarstan, political secularisms have long been major and influential components of the ruling ideologies and political, institutional, and ideological spheres of many Muslim-majority states. There may be other aspects of secularism that make Turkey and *laiklik* exceptional, as I will discuss below, but these aspects need to be carefully formulated and specified.

Likewise, the second claim in the above statement, namely that secularism is without social and historical basis, also needs critical and comparative theoretical and empirical scrutiny. This assertion poses a simplistic juxtaposition of the secular state and religious society (Turam, ed. 2012). What's more, secularism is understood as the exclusive product of 'secular' elites. In the words of one contribution: '[political secularism] was a project of the [secular] political elite, and not internal to the religious community' (Gülalp 2005, 356).

Empirical evidence must compel analysts to question the validity of these claims. First, during the last decade or so, Turkey has witnessed massive, mainly bottom-up, cross-class and pro-secular social-political mobilisations. These included the 2007 Republican Rallies and the 2013 Gezi Protests, attended by millions and where 'pro-secular political preferences' and 'defending *laiklik*' were among the participants' chief motivations (Somer 2007; Yörük and Yüksel 2014). Women's movements offer further evidence. They include secular women viewing legal-political *laiklik* as an insurance of women's freedoms and gender equality, as well pious women interpreting Islam in more gender-empowering, and, arguably, *secularised* ways (Kandiyoti 1991; Göle 1996; Arat 2000; White 2002; Arat 2007; Fisher and Müftüler-Baç 2011).

Second, empirical studies find that self-identified notions of being 'secular' and 'modern' versus 'pious' and 'religious-conservative' are among the main determinants that shape social-political values, relations, and preferences at mass as well as elite levels (Toprak et al.. 2008; Çakır and Bozan 2009; Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009; Somer 2010; Konda 2017; Erdoğan and Semerci 2018). This is important even though categories such as 'Islamic' and 'secular' often operate as markers of other qualities or 'empty signifiers' (Kandiyoti 2012). Other works highlight how every-day and popular celebrations of Kemalist secularism have been spreading and transcending official rituals since the 1990s, among other reasons, in reaction to perceived social-political Islamisation (Özyürek 2006).

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the second claim disregards the insights of a long trajectory of historiography on Ottoman Turkey. Ottoman state practices, as well as the political theologies of Ottoman thinkers, which were advanced through the legacy of *siya-setname* (advices to state rulers), differentiated functionally between political and religious authority and between (mainly secular) *sultanic* and religious law. They also distinguished

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8   Six (Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, and Guinea Bissau) of the aforementioned 15 constitutions used the terms *laïc* or *laïque* in their French translations. These countries were former French colonies. The Turkish constitution, as already mentioned, uses the Turkish term *laik* in the original text but the term 'secular' in its English translation.

between the roles of different social groupings in a self-regulating (namely, functioning apart from divine intervention in practice if not in principle) and circular social order (İnalcık 1973; Karpat 2001; Mardin 2006). Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman communities developed social-cultural codes of inter-religious coexistence (Barkey 2008). Ottoman people were significantly secularised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through processes of social-cultural modernisation in such areas as trade, industry, arts, education, and sciences. These processes often resulted from local dynamics and the initiatives of local power holders (Karpat 2001; Yaycıoğlu 2016). Fourth, and finally, the 'secularism without a social and historical basis' claim overlooks long-standing movements of 'Muslim reformers' (Tezcür 2010; Fabbe, forthcoming).

Seminal early works on *laiklik* adopted a more well-rounded approach. Berkes' *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Berkes 1998) can still be called duly '*the* standard work on Turkish secularism … despite [its] lack of theoretical sophistication' (Özdalga 2012, 214). His work, and such important and influential analyses as Mardin's *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Mardin 2000; Mardin 2006) tackle long-durée processes of social-cultural secularisation and political secularism in (Ottoman and Republican) Turkey as interactive processes. These are analysed mainly as domestic and indigenous mobilisations initiated by elites at central and local levels and by pro-secular as well as religious intelligentsia.

These elites saw westernisation as a means of saving the Ottoman state by competing with Western and semi-Western rivals such as Russia. They did not view it as an end in itself, while trying to develop indigenous theories of social-cultural and 'cognitive' modernisation.[9]

Even the concept of contemporanisation (*çağdaşlaşma* or *muasırlaşma*) – the motto of Ataturk, the secularising as well as 'westernising' nation-builder – may be indicative here, when understood against this historical-intellectual legacy and as opposed to the concept of westernisation (*batılılaşma*). The meaning of the former concept could be interpreted as *coming to live in the present, temporal world*, namely a specific version – as I will elaborate in the Conclusions – of secularisation, rather than cultural westernisation as an end in itself.

It is, of course, true that secularist interests often interact with other currents such as nationalism and statism. In the words of Yael Navaro-Yashin:

> The conflict over secularism was probably one of the most central issues that shaped public life in Turkey in the middle of the 1990s … a study of the culture of secularism in Turkey is also, necessarily, a study of militarism, authoritarianism, and the culture of the state. Statism (or reverence for the state) in Turkey's public life is often represented in the garb and language of secularism.
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> *(Navaro-Yashin 2002, 6)*

But secularism has remained a central issue and vibrant social-political current throughout the early 2000s, when political religionists, namely the AKP and its constituencies, came to hold state power. During this time, Islamists and religious conservatives have increasingly identified themselves as the owners of the state and many secularists have found themselves as a target of state oppression (Somer 2017a). Presumably, then, secularism could not be an expression of statism in such a context. Hence, secularism has roots, drivers, and dynamics that are at least partially independent of other values and ideologies.

9 For example, for recent revisits of Ziya Gökalp's thinking on cultural and civilisational change as an indigenous attempt to cope with modernity, see Dressler (2015); Nomer (2017). For Kemalism as intended 'cognitive revolution' see Heper (2009).

One can conclude, therefore, that 'secularism' in Turkey, as a movement, condition, ideology, and identity, has significant social and historical bases, and is more than a derivative of other things. Just like *piety* and *political Islamism, secularity* and *political secularism* have many variations. These can be described in terms of typologies, such as liberal versus conservative, moderate versus radical, civil versus statist, and democratic versus authoritarian.

Classifying *Laiklik*

Constitutionally, one of the four 'unchangeable'[10] articles of the Turkish Constitution, Article 2, establishes that the 'Republic of Turkey is a democratic, *secular* (emphasis mine) and social state governed by rule of law.' [11] In this respect, Turkey is not unique, as discussed above.

But Turkey is also known for its top-down radical *secularisation* during the formation of the republic in the 1920s and 1930s, under the charismatic leadership of Kemal Atatürk and his secular–nationalist and modernist Republican People's Party (CHP). Republican reforms targeted both the political-institutional and social-cultural spheres. They included for example total secularisation of the constitution and other laws, extensive gender equality in civil matters, and the change of the Arabic-based alphabet to a Latin-based one. Hence, in terms of scope and impact, they arguably surpassed comparable examples of secularisation in places such as Bourgiba's Tunisia and Reza Shah Pahlavi's Iran.

Late Ottoman reforms had been based on 'institutional layering', whereby new and secularised institutions, such as secular schools or 'Nizamiye courts' enforcing laws modelled on European codes, were built parallel to 'old ones', such as Koran schools and Sharia courts (Fabbe, forthcoming).[12] Kemalist republican secularisation built on Ottoman reforms, but Kemalist reforms were based on institutional replacement and innovation in two important ways. First, they scratched old institutions, as in the abolition of the monarchy (1922) and Caliphate (1924), replaced old institutions with new ones, as in the replacement of the Sharia-based *Mecelle* (itself a product of Ottoman modernisation) with a Swiss-based new civil code (1926), restructured old institutions with a new identity and role, as in the reinstitution of the Ministry of Sharia and Foundations as the Directorate of Religious Affairs *Diyanet* (1924), and established new ones, as in the principles of national sovereignty (1920, 1923, and 1924) and constitutional secularism (1937) (Berkes 1998; Gözaydın 2009; Özdalga 2012).

Second, republican changes served both to make new and 'secular'[13] truth claims and to actively encourage the 'forgetting' of the old (traditional and religious) ones. Hence, for example, Ottoman reformers tried to modernise the perception of time and history by introducing a new Rumi calendar while leaving the old lunar calendar in use. Instead, Kemalist modernisers mandated the exclusive use of the new Gregorian calendar. It is arguably partly as a result of this and similar reforms that 'public memory' continues to be a highly sensitive and politicised issue in Turkey to this day (Özyürek, ed. 2007).

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10 Most recently, new headscarf ruling.
11 Direct quotation from the English translation of the 1983 Constitution posted on the official website of the Turkish Parliament. The Turkish original uses the term *laik*, which is the Turkish equivalent of the French term *laic*. But both the practice and understanding of Turkish *laiklik* have had important differences from French laicism, as I will discuss below.
12 For the concepts of institutions and institutional change here, see (Mahoney and Thelen, eds 2010).
13 Some of these new codes such as the Gregorian calendar have (perhaps largely forgotten by ordinary people in modern times) religious historical roots, but they were arguably 'secular' for Muslim Turks in the sense of having no basis in Muslim religion.

Kemalist reforms could also be classified as anti-clerical, especially vis-à-vis religious non-state actors. Secularisation of the education and justice systems severely undermined the ex-Ottoman official clergy (*ulama*) class. However, many of them were able to assume redefined positions in the judiciary, education, and *Diyanet* (Fabbe, forthcoming). By comparison, the banning of religious orders, such as *tariqats,* more gravely delegitimised, disenfranchised, and displaced the religious elites outside the state apparatus, with long-term psychological and political effects. Their descendants played key roles in the later mobilisation of anti-secular, unsecular and Islamist movements and parties (Yavuz 2003).

Because of its radical secularisation in the early-Republican period, it might be tempting to group *laiklik*, or, for that matter, Kemalist Turkey, together with anti-religious regimes, such as 'communist regimes' (Taylor 2016b, 23). However, *laiklik*'s suspicion of religion outside the state's purview never amounted to anti-religionism. On the contrary, aspects of religion and religiosity were promoted through active state support. The majority religion was officially viewed as being vital for state legitimacy and national identity, solidarity, and morals (Sakallioğlu 1996; Turam, ed. 2012; Akan 2017). Moreover, political secularism moderated after the transition to multi-party electoral democracy in 1946–1950, diminishing *laiklik*'s anti-religious and (non-state) anti-clerical aspects and augmenting its promotion of the majority religion (Somer 2014a).

In terms of the republican-laic versus liberal-secular dichotomy, *laiklik* resembles the former. In addition to *laiklik*'s aforementioned anti-clericalism, a major motivation for Kemalists was cynicism toward traditional, unreformed religion. Furthermore, liberating state affairs from religion by bureaucratising and controlling religion was a goal for both Republican and late-Ottoman modernising elites. Consistent with an important aspect of laicism as defined above, many late-Ottoman and Republican modernising elites were 'laymen'. They came from the ranks of professions, bureaucracy, and military, even though they also included members of the official and unofficial *ulama* class.

Finally, *laiklik*'s scepticism of political religion, self-anointed civilising mission, and drive to privatise selective aspects of religion resemble French *laicité*. After ensuring 'freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction' for everyone in Article 24, the constitution bans the abuse of

> religion or religious feelings, or things held sacred by religion, in any manner whatsoever, for the purpose of personal or political interest or influence, or for even partially basing the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the State on religious tenets.

However, other characteristics, such as religion-promoting state activities, sharply distinguish *laiklik* from French *laicité*. In sharp contrast to France, in practice, religious sentiments, ties, and arguments are used extensively in Turkish politics, as well as in social and economic relations, often with the state's active endorsement and support (Turam 2012; Somer 2013). It could be argued that this could be explained away as an unintended outcome, or, from the point of view of the secularising elites, failure of secular reforms. But the public role of religion in Turkey cannot be seen as an entirely unintended outcome of *laiklik*. Unlike French *laicité,* Turkish secularisers in both Ottoman and republican periods purposefully engaged in reinterpreting and modernising religion and in promoting a rational and truthful version of Islam.

The Turkish state is involved in religious affairs primarily, but not exclusively, through the colossal state agency *Diyanet* (Gözaydın 2009). The latter regulates, controls, and promotes

state-endorsed interpretations of the majority Sunni-Muslim faith. By law, the *Diyanet* is tasked with 'carrying out the affairs of the religion of Islam pertaining to faith, worship and moral principles, *enlightening* [emphasis mine] the society about religion and administering the places of worship'. Its responsibilities include 'making decisions, issuing opinions, and answering questions on religious subjects, by considering *the principal sources of knowledge and methodology of the religion of Islam, and contemporary demands and needs* [emphasis mine]'.[14] Thus, the *Diyanet*'s responsibilities and authorities include interpreting Islam in a theologically 'rigorous' fashion, and, if necessary, renewing the religious orthodoxy and orthopraxy in accordance with the changing times.

Hence, many critics even argue that, rather than disestablishing Islam, *laiklik* re-established it 'differently' (Davison 2003). According to a recent contribution that analysed the discourse of the *Diyanet*-distributed sermons (*hutbe*s) to mosques nation-wide: 'the political domination of a secular state as an agency over religion has not suppressed, but transformed religion as a political tool for the same agency, to organize the polity and the society along its own ideological tenets' (Korkut and Eslen-Ziya 2018, 1). Last but not least, *laiklik*'s promotion of a state-endorsed version of Sunni Islam discriminates against indigenous Muslim minorities such as the Alevis — even though many Alevis see *laiklik* as their 'savior' (Azak 2010) – and violates Muslim, non-Muslim, and secular freedoms (Dressler 2013; Somer 2013).

All this gives rise to a level of government regulation of religion similar to the average in other Muslim-majority countries, but much higher than in Western secular countries, including France. In 2014, the average level of government regulation of religion measured in Muslim-majority states was 5.85 (on an increasing scale of 0 to 10), which qualified as 'high' (Somer 2017b; Pew Research 2016). This figure was nearly double the average for non-Muslim majority states, 3.11, which qualified as 'moderate'. Hence, it is problematic to group *laiklik* together with French *laicité*, or, for that matter, consider it an example of 'assertive secularism' (Kuru 2009; Kuru and Stepan 2012a).

In a nutshell, it is not easy to classify *laiklik* in terms of existing typologies and descriptive dimensions. Current descriptions make contradictory empirical and normative claims (Somer 2013) as in 'highly differentiated and conflictual religion-state relation' (Philpott 2007) versus 'differently established Islam' (Davison 2003). One possible solution is to use 'mixed categorizations with adjectives' as in 'state-civil religionism and anticlericalism' (Akan 2017) and 'statist production of religion' (Künkler and Madeley 2018, 4). Alternatively, research should focus on developing new categories through theoretical and conceptual development.

Explaining *laiklik*

Why did *laiklik* develop as it did? And how and why has it been changing? Most of the extant explanations addressing these questions can be divided into two groups. The first group draws on 'ideology', namely the *ex post facto* presumed ideological goals and priorities of the social-political actors who influenced *laiklik*'s evolution. Examples of such explanations are those based on the 'laicist' ideology of Kemalists or the 'passive secular' ideology of the AKP (Yavuz 2009; Kuru and Stepan 2012a). The second group of explanations is focused on 'socio-economy', namely an ostensible and unmediated relationship between socio-economic development, on one hand, and political preferences and institutional outcomes, on the other. Examples are those explanations that are based on the effects of 'globalist' economic

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14 Articles 1 and 5 of Law 633. Author's translation from the Turkish original.

policies on political preferences of religious-conservative constituencies (Gülalp 2001; Gumuşçu and Sert 2009).

The first approach runs into three immediate theoretical and empirical problems. First, it assumes that the ideological preferences of ruling groups — or, for that matter, constituencies — are homogenous and fixed over time. Second, it presumes that social-political actors have the power and capability necessary to translate their ideals into reality. Third, it cannot explain why ideologically dissimilar ruling actors, such as Ottoman ruling elites, Kemalists or the Democrat Party, implement similar policies, or why the same actor, say the AKP, adopts different policies over time. In turn, the second paragraph seems to draw on the revised secularisation theories discussed above, which expect modernisation to modify automatically – i.e. without the intervention of politics and other factors – how people believe. Thus, it suffers from the reductionist shortcomings of modernisation theories.

Both approaches are challenged by the empirical developments taking place during the last two decades under AKP governments. Many studies anticipated AKP governments would reform, or at least work toward reforming, *laiklik* in a 'post-Islamist', liberal-separationist, and 'passive secular' direction (Bayat 2013; Kuru 2009; Bilgrami 2016). They did so based on the early discourse and program of the AKP, and the assumed secularisation of Turkish society, which scholars more or less associated with material development, without investigating the cognitive-intellectual components discussed above.[15]

As the argument goes, if secularist elites constructed *laiklik* with the goal of oppressing religion, then more religion-friendly governments should reduce interference with religion. However, actual developments have contradicted these predictions. Turkey's score for (both supportive and restrictive) 'government regulation of religion' climbed from 7.52 in 2007 to 9.53 in 2014 (Somer 2017b).[16]

The AKP worked toward augmenting *laiklik*'s integrationism, bent on instrumentalising the institutions of the *Diyanet*, public education, and social policy for promoting Muslim-Turkish nationalism and a reformist-modernist view of Islam (Somer 2007, 2014a, 2015; White 2014). Hence, in 2012, Erdoğan declared one of his government's goals to be 'raising a pious youth' and, in 2018, he called on the *Diyanet* to 'take a more active role in updating religious practices in line with current conditions' (Lüküslü 2016; Hürriyet 2018).

Adequate explanations should account for both continuities and variations across different periods and for comparable cases, such as former Ottoman nation-states and other Muslim-majority states. The latter, for example, include a pattern of nationalising and state managing 'Islamic impulses within the framework of the central state authority' (Fox 2008; Elbasani and Roy 2015; Elbasani 2017, 12). Hence, why do different nation-states and Muslim-majority societies display similar patterns of state–religion relationship?

In this respect, one underutilised causal dimension is structural. For example, would *laiklik* have become more liberal and separationist if wars and political decisions in late Ottoman and early Republican periods had not significantly altered Turkey's religious demography? These changes transformed Turkey from a Muslim-majority society with major non-Muslim minorities to one that is overwhelmingly Muslim with 'negligible' or 'assimilable' non-Muslim minorities. Explanatory roles may also be played by historical-institutional factors such as Turkish Sunni Islam's internal organisation and state capacity to implement secularist policies (Yılmaz 2007).

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15 Secularity assumes the prevalence of important cognitive, social, and political conditions (for example Taylor's secularity III).

16 Calculated based on figures from (Pew Research 2016).

A related and also underused perspective is *political*, i.e. based on political interests and checks and balances (Somer 2007, 2014a; Akan 2017; Fabbe, forthcoming). For instance, Akan analysed the parliamentary debates taking place at critical junctures, e.g. 1924, 1961, and 1980, and asked why, i.e. with which expressed intentions, the decisions were made to have state-salaried imams and religion courses on Sunni Islam. He argues that political elite goals of containing socialism and the exclusion of 'religious minorities and the left' from political decision-making were as causally influential as ideology (Akan 2017). Finally, the factors of dialogue and trust between religious and secular actors and external support for democratisation and freedoms are crucial (Grigoriadis 2009; Somer 2010).

Conclusions: reforming and democratising versus vilifying and scratching *laiklik*

The English title of Niyazi Berkes' seminal book on *laiklik* is *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Berkes 1998). Yet, the Turkish title of the book is different: it is *Türkiye'de Çağda-şlaşma* (Contemporanisation in Turkey). I think that this difference implies more than a mere translation preference. The concept of secularisation refers to the rise of the temporal as opposed to the spiritual realm in *any time period*. By comparison, *çağdaşlaşma* refers to changes that reflect the dominant temporal realm of a *particular time period*, which we describe in our age in terms of concepts such as modernity. Hence, assumptions about falling behind and incongruity with what represents power and progress in the present age are implicit in the concept of *çağdaşlaşma*. Whichever values, ways of thinking and institutions dominate a particular age, of course, vary over time.

Accordingly, it seems to me that political secularism has been valued and understood in Turkey primarily as an instrument for development, modernisation and catching up with the West. This is different from other contexts in the world where political secularism has mainly been upheld in terms of goals such as interreligious peace and 'enlightenment', as I discussed above. This instrumental and utilitarian understanding may also imply that the philosophical-intellectual dimensions of secularisation might have received less than due attention by the defenders of *laiklik*.

It is certainly true that, as part of an overall strategy of 'catching up with the West,' the defenders of various forms of *laiklik*, who included secular as well as religious actors (Piscatori 1986; Berkes 1998; Mardin 2006; Findley 2010), more than anything else, meant it to be the vehicle of a cultural and 'cognitive revolution' (Heper 2009). But to what extent did *laiklik* produce a 'self-reflexive society' and the freedoms of movement in terms of Taylor's 'I' and 'II', discussed at the beginning of this chapter? (Somer 2017b). The answer to this crucial and underexplored question may well shape the future and quality of both secularism and democracy in Turkey.

Like in India, criticisms of secularism in Turkey include arguments that *laiklik* is valuable but failed to achieve its goals (and therefore needs reforming) and assertions that it is a source of problems (Bhargava, ed. 1998; Bhargava, ed. 2011). Similarly, critiques of *laiklik* are made by those who argue that secularisation undermined democratisation (Gülalp 2005) and those maintaining that deficits of democratisation weakened secularisation and the consolidation of *laiklik* (Somer 2007). Similar to the criticisms of secularism in India and other non-Western contexts, many charges against *laiklik* amount to due criticisms of authoritarianism and nation-state (Taylor 2016a). Alternatively, they can be seen as criticisms of mono-cultural nation-states or of states that disallow or discourage the expression of multiple nationalities within their territories, as opposed to 'state-nations' (Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2011).

Further, while interrogating *laiklik*, due attention should be paid, in addition to the *Diyanet*, to key institutions such as the Council of Higher Education, which has draconian authority to regulate higher education, and the Ministry of Education. Their authority stifles pluralism, diversity and freedoms, and, perhaps most importantly, critical and independent thinking in the education system, which are crucial for religious as well as secular 'enlightenment'.

When all is said and done, I think Rajeev Bhargava's and Jacques Berlinerblau's (2017, 96) general commendations apply well to lessons of Turkey's (at least) two-century-long modernisation/secularisation experiences with political secularism, and, especially, the last 15 years under the AKP governments:

> [We should see secularism] as a critical perspective not against religion but against religious homogenization and institutionalized religious domination … [different forms of which being] both more accommodating toward some aspects of religion *and* deeply critical of its other dimensions … [Interpreted in this way,] secularism remains our best bet to help us deal with ever-deepening religious diversity and the problems endemic to it. I argue that we need to rehabilitate, not forsake, secularism (Bhargava 2011, 92). When they work, political secularisms guarantee essential liberties − liberties that few other attempts through the ancient binary [of spiritual versus temporal rule] have been able to procure[.]

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