The Establishment of Kemalist Secularism in Turkey

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Abstract
Three mechanisms (exit, sincere voice and self-subversion) mediated the establishment of Turkish secularism. Exit means purging opponents out of decision-making. Sincere voice is public expression of dissent against the secularist reforms. Self-subversion refers to concealment of underlying opposition to Kemalist project in the face of perceived pressures. Exit ensured the absence of the opposition leaders in the Assembly, allowing the Kemalists to intimidate the opposing deputies to self-subvert themselves, clogging sincere voice, to such a degree that all the secularizing reforms were unanimously approved without a single vote of dissent in the parliament. Thus, the Kemalist secularism was established as a result of the dominance of exit and self-subversion over sincere voice. The very same interplay of these three mechanisms later led to the rise of a secular public sphere in Turkey during the early republican era (1923-1938). The article ends with discussing the social ramifications of this intense secularization in contemporary Turkey.

Keywords
secularism; Islam; Turkey; opposition; reform; authoritarianism; exit; voice; self-subversion

...in the event it is possible that some heads will be chopped off.
—M. Kemal, 1922

I. Introduction

M. Kemal Atatürk spearheaded Turkish secularization with an unprecedented force during 1920-38. “Is Turkey a Mohammedan Country?,” 1 “The Passing

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of Islam in Turkey,” 2 “The Near East Marches on: Infidels at Home,” 3 and Allah Dethroned 4 captured the shocking nature of radical secularization sweeping the Turkish society. Kemalist pressures triggered three forms of social mechanisms in instituting secularism. Exit purged opponents out of decision-making. Sincere voice represented open expression of dissent against the secularist reforms. Self-subversion concealed underlying opposition to Kemalist project in the face of perceived pressures. 5 This essay argues that, in Turkish politics, exit and self-subversion dominated over sincere voice, consolidating Kemalist secularism. These two mechanisms distorted collective decisions in the Turkish parliament to such a degree that all the secularizing reforms were unanimously approved without a single vote of dissent during the formative years of the young republic between 1920 and 1938. After explaining how the legal framework of Turkish secularism was constructed at the parliamentary level, the article focuses on the societal ramifications of this rapid secularization, generating ongoing disputes between secularism and Islam(ism), not only in Turkish politics but also in everyday life in Turkey. Thus, it sheds some lights on how the Turkish society today became a prisoner of its schizophrenic past.

II. Background

In the aftermath of the Second Constitutional Era (1908-18) three schools of thought responded to the apparent failure of the Ottoman Empire to cope with western modernity: Westernist, Islamist and Turkist. 6 Common to all

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6) For more information on the these schools, see Niyazi Berkes, Development of Secularism in Turkey (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), 348-51.
these schools was the belief in the superior Western technology, but not in Western values. Idealizing secular modernity as a social project, the Westernists claimed that Islam, especially the domination of Şeriat (sacred law, Arabic: Shari`ah) over the public life presented a major obstacle to modernization. To counter Western modernity, the Islamists called for complete re-Islamization, demanding Şeriat to cover the minute details of life. The Turkists advanced that Islam per se was not the cause but its superimposition at the expense of national culture accounted for the confusion in social values. Thus, they advocated Turkification. In short, while the Islamists called for complete re-Islamization, the Westernists and the Turkists found common ground in secularism.

When the secular nationalist Young Turks were in power, they gradually introduced several reforms with the hope of saving the empire. They specifically targeted old religious organizations considered barriers to modernization. As the major ideological guide in re-shaping the social structure, secularism in an Islamic context emerged as “the acceptance of laws and other social and political institutions without reference to Islam, without being derived from, or organically linked with, the principles of the Qur’an and the Sunnah.”  

In practice, the secularist reformists basically followed two complementary strategies. They either broke up traditional religious institutions with a claim that such institutions had no Islamic character or provided an Islamic justification for the intended reform.

The first strategy was useful in separating religion from daily affairs, especially from those of the state. The Young Turks dropped the Şeyhülislam (Minister of Religious Affairs) from the cabinet, restricting his authority over the evkaf (pious foundations, Arabic: awqaf). A new ministry began to manage evkaf, along with the finances of all other religious institutions, such as mosques and medreses (higher schools of Islamic learning, Arabic: madrasa) whose administration was also delegated to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Justice took control of Şeriat Courts.

The second strategy appeared with the introduction of a Family Code for the first time in a Muslim country. The new code declared marriage a secular contract. Still included some religious provisions, the code ended the religious


8) For further information on these reforms, see Berkes, Development of Secularism in Turkey, 411-423.
monopoly over an important segment of life. A modified Gregorian calendar (with the Islamic origin) was also put in use.

Along with others, these reforms laid down the basis for the Kemalist secularism. M. Kemal emerged as the leader of a successful national liberation movement in Anatolia in 1922. By this time the old polity had been disintegrating, but the reconstruction process had barely begun. At this critical juncture, M. Kemal seized the opportunity to put his Enlightenment ideas into practice, especially Comte’s positivism and Durkheim’s solidarism. He indeed became the first practitioner who welcomed westernization as “a positive and desirable good rather than submitting to it regrettfully as a necessary evil.” In Arnold Toynbee’s words, he set for the nation “a maximum instead of a minimum program,” including a strict secularism that would force religion to withdraw from daily life. To achieve his goal, M. Kemal tolerated no opposition. In the early 1920s, M. Kemal said: “Let the people leave the politics alone for the present. … For ten or fifteen years more I must rule. After that perhaps I may be able to let them speak openly.”

III. The Politics of Intimidation

Exit and self-subversion enabled the Kemalists to get secularist reforms approved by a predominantly conservative parliament. Exit ensured the absence of opposition leaders from the parliament in critical times. Hence, the Kemalist minority passed reform laws with the approval of the self-subverting deputies. The lack of sincere voice distorted collective decisions in instituting

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10) Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, 307.

11) Ibid., 308.

12) For other reforms see ibid., 305-310.


15) Ibid., 176.

secularism. M. Kemal had long anticipated the coming internal power struggle. In a private conversation, he remarked: “After the Greeks, we will fight each other … I will [have] those [referring to his opponents in the parliament] lynched by the people.”17 “This is exactly how M. Kemal legitimized his power in the First Assembly of 1920-23.

M. Kemal was “the first among equals” in the victorious cadre, comprising Rauf Bey, the commander of the Navy, Kazım Karabekir Paşa, the hero of the Eastern front, Ali Fuat Paşa, the first Ambassador to Moscow, Refet Paşa, the War-time Defense Minister, and İsmet Paşa, the commander of the Western front. The only civilians were Halide Edip and Dr. Adnan. This cadre was de facto in power. Rauf Bey had religious and traditional loyalties. Kazım Karabekir Paşa and Ali Fuat Paşa were too conservative for Kemal’s taste. The idealistic Halide Edip and Dr. Adnan naively believed in Anglo-Saxon-style democracy. İsmet Paşa was Kemal’s only confidant and unwavering supporter.18

The opportune moment for M. Kemal arrived when the controversy over who would represent Turkey in peace negotiations broke out. In need of political legitimacy, M. Kemal came up with a practical formula: abolish the Sultanate while keeping the Caliphate.19 This daunting task required the approval of the Assembly composed of various cliques and fractions including “bigoted individuals who wore fez, Kurds and Circassians wrapped up in their national costumes, astrakhan-wearing nationalists, the doctor, pharmacist, commander, ulema, judge, dervish, sheikh, lawyer, telegraph official - pasha, bey, efendi, aga, haci, hoca, of every sort, from every occupation, all the types of a society.”20 On May 1921, Kemal’s supporters in the Assembly unified under the Defense of Rights Group (First Group) with 197 members while the 118 opposition members organized as the Second Group. The remaining 122 deputies had no affiliation.21 With almost equal numbers of clerics in

18) İsmet’s collaboration proved even more useful after M. Kemal’s heart attack in late 1923.
19) After invading Egypt in 1517, Sultan Yavuz Selim took the title of the Caliph (successor to Prophet Mohammed). Thereupon the Ottoman Sultans had claimed the title.
21) Frey, The Turkish Political Elite, 307. Another study claims Frey’s classification is grossly misleading since 82 deputies were already left out from the First Assembly before the formation of the Groups. Therefore, the First Group consisted of 202 deputies, while the Second Group
each, the Second Group tended to be more conservative with religious loyalties, opposing Kemalist ambition to abolish the Sultanate. This opposition regularly questioned Kemal’s tendency to impose his will on the Assembly and considered his imposition “anti-democratic.”

M. Kemal had to win over three main groups irritated by his desire to terminate the Sultanate: Internal opposition within the First Group by the moderates, the conservative committees controlled by the ulema, and the Second Group opposition together with non-affiliated deputies in the Assembly. The Kemalists exerted enough pressure to self-subvert each group in their quest for becoming the only legitimate representative of the nation.

Fully aware that even his close comrades, including Refet, Ali Fuat, and especially Rauf, were against this idea, M. Kemal decisively followed his agenda. He instructed Rauf, “You will make a declaration from the tribune to the effect that you approve of [abolishing the Sultanate,]” and asked Kazım Karabekir for his total cooperation. Both Rauf and Kazım caved in under Kemal’s pressure. After a parliamentary speech, in an obvious act of self-subversion, Rauf even proposed that the dethronement should be commemorated as a public holiday. Kazım and Refet also publicly supported the idea

had only 63, and the number of non-affiliates was 90. See Table 3 in Ahmet Demirel, Birinci Meclis’te Muhalefet: İkinci Grup [Opposition in the First Assembly: the Second Group], 2nd edn. (İstanbul: İletişimYayınları, 1995; first edn, 1994), 134.

22) Demirel, Birinci Meclis’te Muhalefet, passim.

23) The 13% of the First Group were clerics whereas the Second Group had 15% and the non-affiliates had 29%. Frey, The Turkish Political Elite, 311-312. According to Demirel’s classification, the First Group had 9.9% clerics; only 3.2% made up the clergy in the Second Group while 21.1% of non-affiliates were also clerics. Demirel, Birinci Meclis’te Muhalefet, 134.

24) M. Kemal [Atatürk], Nutuk/Söylev [Speech], vol.2, 3rd edn. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basmevi, 1989), 910. English readers may also see M. Kemal [Atatürk], A Speech Delivered by Ghazi Mustapha Kemal (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler Press, 1927), 572. M. Kemal made a six-day long speech to the deputies of the Republican Peoples’ Party in Oct., 1927, just before the fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic. This Speech, called Nutuk in Turkish, summarized the Turkish National Struggle by M. Kemal. Note that some parts of Nutuk are missing in the English edition, which is also full of typological errors. I use the Turkish version, translating my quotations while citing the English version for the English reader, except in the cases of passages published only in Nutuk.

25) M. Kemal [Atatürk], Nutuk/Söylev, 914, and M. Kemal [Atatürk], Speech, 574.

26) See M. Kemal [Atatürk], Nutuk/Söylev, 914, and Rauf [Orbay], Cehennem Değirmeni: Siyasi Hattatlarım [The Wheel of Hell: My Political Memoirs], vol. 2 (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1993), 111. In his memoirs, Rauf [Orbay] did not refer to the dinner party at that night.
they privately opposed. As war heroes, they impressed the deputies as if the Kemalists were a unified majority.

Kemalist deputies drafted a proposal to dethrone the Ottoman Dynasty, which initiated a hot debate in the Assembly. M. Kemal himself presided on 30 October 1922. The First Group pushed for an immediate enactment. While some religious deputies such as Salahaddin Bey and Ziya Hürşit Bey vocally opposed the draft, others such as Hakkı Hami Bey and Hacı Mustafa Efendi attempted to block it over procedure. Yet, their repeated efforts to address the Assembly were suppressed by either President M. Kemal himself or the deputies shouting at the dissident voices. M. Kemal demanded open balloting to pressure the opposition. İsmail Şükrü Efendi uttered “There cannot be voting by force,” which was followed by a walk-out of some deputies from the Second Group. The absentees were called one by one. Concurrently, a decree was passed with a raise of hands prompting a deduction from the daily wage of each absentee’s salary. The session ended with 132 deputies voting for the draft, two against, and three abstentions, short of 25 votes for enactment.

In the next session on 1 November 1922, M. Kemal made a long speech on an “Islamic” justification for the draft in order to expedite its enactment. The Kemalist deputies required the review of the draft by the Committee of Constitutional Act while the opposition demanded the opinion of the Committee of Şeriat. A compromise was reached to send the draft to a mixed

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27) This became obvious later as all three favored an Islamic state, specifically a constitutional monarchy under the Caliph. It became clear from their reactions to the proclamation of the Republic, the abolition of the Caliphate and the following reforms. They would later constitute the main pillars of the Progressive Republican Party, which was founded in 1924 in opposition to the Kemal’s Republican People’s Party.

28) For the name of the deputies who participated into the voting, and the color of their votes see, Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 24 (30 Oct. 1338 [1920]), 297-298.

committee of three: of Constitutional Act, of Şeriat, and of Justice. After electing Hoca Müfìd Efendi as its chairman, this committee began its deliberations. The Committee of Şeriat argued for the inseparability of the Sultanate from the Caliphate. Following the debates anxiously from a corner, M. Kemal jumped on the bench and made an intimidating speech:

Neither the sovereignty nor the right to govern can be transferred by one person to anybody else by an academic debate. Sovereignty is acquired by force, by power and by violence. … And this will be done at any price. [If you all agree on this,] it would be very appropriate from my point of view. Conversely, the reality will nevertheless be manifested in the necessary form, but in the event, it is possible that some heads will be chopped off.\(^{30}\)

At this time, M. Kemal was swinging his hand like a sword pointing to the neck of Hoca Mustafa Efendi, an influential clergy.\(^{31}\) Kemal’s fury was upon all in opposition, forcefully suppressing overt dissidence.\(^{32}\) Hoca Mustafa Efendi gave into pressure: “Pardon me, we regarded the question in another light. Now we are informed.”\(^{33}\) By this response all the *ulema* in the mixed committee approved the draft.

The Kemalists rushed it to the Assembly.\(^{34}\) The chair prevented four opposing deputies from coming to the podium. A motion to voting by name-calling came to the agenda. To avoid a potential snowballing of unfavourable votes, M. Kemal demanded, “I believe that the High Assembly will unanimously adopt the principles which are destined to preserve the independence of the nation and the country for all time.”\(^{35}\) Galvanizing shouts of “Let’s Vote! Let’s Vote!” charged the chair to put the motion to vote by hand-raising. He announced: “Unanimously agreed.” A single voice of “I am against it”\(^{36}\) was

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30) M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Nutuk/Söylev*, 920, and M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Speech*, 577-578, my italics.
31) Ceylan, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Din/Devlet İlişkileri*, 59. Şevket S. Aydemir reports M. Kemal jumped to a desk announcing as he pointed a cleric deputy who had questioned the draft: “Let it be so, or some heads would be decapitated!” Aydemir added that one of Kemal’s hands swung in the air like a sword. Şevket S. Aydemir, *Tek Adam* [The Unique Man], vol. 3, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1966), 58.
32) The rush to vote the draft rules out the possibility of Kemal’s speech persuading the mixed Committee.
33) M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Nutuk/Söylev*, 920, and M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Speech*, 578.
34) For the records of the second sitting of the Assembly see Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 24 (1 Nov. 1338 [1920]), 313-316.
35) Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 24 (1 Nov. 1338 [1920]), 314. See also M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Nutuk/Söylev*, 920, and M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Speech*, 578.
36) This only objection came from Ziya Hurşit Bey, who was, later, hanged with some others in 1926 due to his alleged involvement in the assassination attempt of M. Kemal in İzmir.
surpassed by the cries of “Silence!” The Assembly of which one-fifth of its members were clerics, including 14 müftüs (Arabic: Muftis) and 8 leaders of religious orders “unanimously” approved Law No 308 on 1 November 1922, retroactively abolishing the Sultanate, and, next day, deposing Sultan Mehmed VI and appointing his cousin Abdülmecid as the new Caliph. None of the clerics, and the Second Group members dared to stand up against Kemalist pressures. Neither the dissident First Group deputies nor the non-affiliates raised their voices. Effectively intimating all the opposing groups, the Kemalists in fact distorted the Assembly’s collective decision.

On 1 April 1923, the First Assembly where the Kemalists coerced deputies into submission dissolved itself to prepare for the first elections. Through the two-stage election, M. Kemal attempted to create a pliable Assembly that could devote itself to Turkey’s radical reconstruction. In the first stage, he himself had weeded out the foreseen opposition—almost all the Second Group and the non-affiliated, and some conservative deputies in the First Group from the Assembly. He mainly targeted the men of religion. He kept only ten tame clerics “who were used to make more palatable this bitter but salutary dose of [coming] laicism and to take the sting out of the predictable charges of a ‘godless regime.’” In the second stage, the pre-screened candidates were presented for the “approval of the people.” As a result, the Second Assembly included less than one-third of the incumbents. The number of the clerics fell from around 17 per cent in the First Assembly to only 1 per cent in later Assemblies. From 1931 to 1946, not even a single cleric held a seat in the parliament. During the Presidency of M. Kemal (1923-38), on average,

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37) Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 24 (1 Nov. 1338 [1922]), 315. See also M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Natuk/Söylev*, 920, and M. Kemal [Atatürk], *Speech*, 578.
38) Rustow, “Politics and Islam in Turkey,” 73.
41) Kemal [Atatürk], *Speech*, 606. The date was cited as 16 April 1923 in Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 255.
44) Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu, *İlk Meclis, Milli Mücadele'de Anadolu* [The First Assembly, Anatolia during National Struggle] (İstanbul: ÇağdaşYaymları, 1990), 246, as quoted in Demirel, *Birinci Meclis’te Muhalefet*, 574-575.
46) Ibid., 183.
47) Ibid., 126.
72.5 per cent of the incumbents were re-elected.\textsuperscript{48} Even this seemingly cohesive legislative body contained a core of powerful conservative opposition.

IV. The Establishment of the Secular State

The abolition of the Sultanate terminated the political power of the Throne that had ruled Turkey in the name of God for six centuries. Only the Ankara government represented Turkey at the Lausanne Peace Conference, \textit{de jure} establishing Turkey’s independence. The next decision involved the regime type: an Islamic state or a secular republic,\textsuperscript{49} a thorny issue that proliferated the differences among the victorious cadre,\textsuperscript{50} polarizing the National Assembly. Exit and self-subversion, once again, helped the Kemalists in suppressing the opposition in proclaiming the Republic and abolishing the Caliphate.

After 1923, contrary to Kemal’s expectations, the opposition in the second Assembly did not completely vanish.\textsuperscript{51} The vocal opposition derived from Kemal’s closest associates in the victorious cadre with some deputies from the Second Group elected as independents, later organizing under the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkipever Cumhuriyet Firkasi) in 1924. With the participation of Rauf, Kazım Karabekir, Ali Fuat, Refet, Cafer Tayyar, Dr. Adnan and Bekir Sami, the opposition favoured a constitutional monarchy under the Caliph, in conformity with old customs and traditions, clashing with the Kemalist vision.

The opportune moment for M. Kemal to establish a secular state arose when the disagreement in making Ankara permanent capital brought a cabinet crisis in late 1923. Resigned Premier Rauf was off to İstanbul in protest. Left to choose between politics and the military, Ali Fuat became the commander of the First Army in İstanbul while Kazım Karabekir of the Second Army in Konya. Only female member of the cadre, Halide Edip was ineligible to serve in the parliament. Dr. Adnan was in İstanbul for personal reasons. Thus, the opposition leadership remained temporarily out of the political loop. At the

\textsuperscript{48} The reelection rate is calculated from a table in \textit{ibid.}, 164.

\textsuperscript{49} Berkes, \textit{Development of Secularism in Turkey}, 455.

\textsuperscript{50} Michael M. Finefrock examines in detail the violent controversy among the victorious cadre over issues of political change. See Michael M. Finefrock, “From Sultanate to Republic: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Structure of Turkish Politics, 1922-1924,” (Ph. D. diss., Princeton, 1976), especially Chapter 14.

\textsuperscript{51} Demirel, \textit{Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet}, 589-599.
same time, İsmet, Kemal’s right arm, returned to Ankara from Lausanne. Hence, the rest of opposition in the Assembly was effectively with no leadership, vulnerable to Kemalist aspirations.

After forcing the entire cabinet to resign on a trivial incongruity, 52 M. Kemal shared his intention to proclaim the Republic with İsmet and Fethi during dinner. The same night, M. Kemal and İsmet prepared a draft Constitution. 53 On 29 October 1923, in the People's Party caucus, M. Kemal pushed for a constitutional change. For a speedy enactment, the Justice Minister, Kemal’s ally, stressed upon the absence of any procedural obstacle. The conservative Islamist factions disapproved the proposed republican form of government, associating it with atheism and communism. 54 From 10:00 to 18:00, the Assembly deliberated on the draft constitution. At 20:30, in an open ballot voting, the entire Assembly 158 deputies strong, but shy of 130 members, unanimously proclaimed the Republic, 55 and elected M. Kemal as its first President. "By a masterly technique of timing, surprise tactics, and veiled intimidation, Kemal had assumed paramount power over the country." 56

The new constitution had the following defining articles: 57

Article 1: The Turkish State is a Republic.
Article 2: The religion of the Turkish State is Islam; the official language is Turkish; the seat of the government is Ankara.
Article 3: Sovereignty belongs without restriction to the nation.

The new constitution gave the President the right to choose a Prime Minister, who would, in turn, form a Cabinet accountable to the Assembly. As Robert

54) Berkes, *Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 455.
55) Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 3 (29 Oct. 1339 [1923]), 96.
58) This phrase was eliminated later from the 1924 Constitution in 1928. See below.
Ergang observed, "All power in the state was concentrated in Kemal's hand."59 Despite their initial disapproval, the war heroes in opposition, Rauf, Kazım Karabekir, Refet, and Ali Fuat, all publicly declared their support for the Republic. For the next 15 years, no one dared to openly question in public Kemal's status as the sole ruler of the Republic. Yet, supreme Kemal was still in need of active cooperation by defiant constituents in the transformation of Turkey. Exit and self-subversion, repressing sincere dissident voices aided him in this venture.

V. The Triumph of Turkish Secularism

A masterful pragmatist, M. Kemal planned to immediately dissolve the official Islamic institutions, placing Islam under state control. As Bernard Lewis pointed out, “Turkish Islam had always functioned on two levels; the formal, legal, dogmatic religion of the State, the schools and the hierarchy; and popular, mystical intuitive faith of the masses.”60 Official Islam could jeopardize the new regime, potentially activating popular Islam. The Caliphate, the stronghold of official Islam presented a major threat for upcoming reforms. After depriving the Caliph of state funding, M. Kemal coaxed some journalists about his plan to abolish the Caliphate, urging a non-controversial treatment of the issue.61 In his state of the union address on the opening day of the Assembly in March 1924, President M. Kemal advised “to liberate and to elevate the Islamic religion … from its position of being a tool of politics”62 with the clear intention of removing Islam from the public sphere. Among the underwriters of the draft for abolishing the Caliphate, there were two devout Muslims, Şeyh Saffet and Halil Hulki Efendi, complementing its legitimacy for Islamic correctness.63


60) Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 398-399.


62) As quoted in Kinross, Ataturk, 438.

63) Rustow, “Politics and Islam in Turkey,” 73, n. 5. Both deputies were among ten tame clerics elected by the M. Kemal's approval.
Only Halit Bey and a furious Zeki Bey openly challenged the draft. No one from the core opposition such as Rauf and Dr. Adnan that could potentially block the draft had yet arrived in Ankara. The absence of the opposition leaders in the parliament was critical in speeding up the process. After two long speeches, one for the abolition of the Caliphate and one against, the President put the draft on open vote. He first demanded, “Those who accept, please raise [your] hand.” The draft was enacted amidst the Kemalist cries “unanimously.” As Finefrock also observed, “Mustafa Kemal’s strategy of waiting until all predominant figures associated with the Opposition were absent from the capital, so advantageous at the time of the Republic’s proclamation, proved effective once again.”

Kemalists took immediate measures against possible public outbursts. The day after the İzmir daily *Turan* was closed down for a previously published pro-Caliphate article. A new decree required all the *hutbes* (sermons) preached in support of the Republic with no reference to the Caliph any longer. The public generally displayed overt indifference. However, when the disturbances in Reşadiye, Bursa and Adapazarı and the riot in Silifke, Mersin broke out, the government resolutely crushed them all. Kemal’s decisiveness paid off, and the expulsion of the Ottoman Dynasty from Turkey led to no major strife.

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64) Zeki Bey was not on the list of Kemal’s prescreened deputies. The Gümüşhane electorate overwhelmingly supported Zeki Bey as an independent deputy. But, the civil and army officials in the district intervened to election, causing a local unrest Zeki Bey got elected only after M. Kemal instructed the army officials as “Get back! Let the elections [there] be free. There cannot put more pressure on the people dedicated to such extent.” Mahir İz quotes this incident from unpublished memoirs of Zeki [Kadirbeyoğlu]. See, Mahir İz, *Yılların İzi* [The Trace of Years], 2nd edn. (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, [1990?]): 319. I was led to this source by Demirel, *Birinci Meclis’te Muhalefet*, 577.

65) Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 7 (3 March 1340 [1924]), 65. It is not clear from the records of the Assembly whether Zeki Bey and Halid Bey voted for or against the abolition of Caliphate. The records imply that they too should have been voted for the draft.

66) Finefrock, “From Sultanate to Republic,” 293.

67) ABK (Ankara Bakanlar Kurulu [Ankara Cabinet Minsters]), Kararname [Decree] No.315, 5 March 1340 [1924].

68) ABK, Kararname No. 316, 5 March 1340 [1924].

69) Çetin Özek, *Devlet ve Din* [State and Religion] (İstanbul: Ada Yayınları, [1982?]), 478.

70) ABK, Kararname No. 1693, 5 March 1341 [1925]. The Independence Tribunal later sentenced the leader of the Silifke riot, Askeri Hoca, to death. See below.

The Caliphate represented the link between Islam and the past. Its abolition crippled the entrenched Islamic orthodoxy, once the very base of public life. Now the Kemalists were ready to eradicate the shards of the Islamic civil, criminal and constitutional law.

VI. Secularization of the Codes

Turkey had already adopted certain western secular codes on technical subjects. Limited attempts to modify the laws on social life left the codes of family, succession and land retaining their religious characteristics. No modernist Ottoman reformer could dare to secularize such codes, especially family law, considered sacred by Islam. The Şeriat Courts were still regulating social affairs for the last six hundred years. As supreme rulers, only Kemalists completed the secularization of all the codes. After abolishing the Ministry of Şeriat along with the Caliphate, the Assembly under the control of Kemalists also terminated the Şeriat courts. The Constitution of 1924 delegated the exercise of judicial authority in the name of the nation to the independent courts, which were about to adopt secular codes.

On 1 March 1924, M. Kemal also demanded the secularization of civil and family law. On his advice, the Assembly rejected a civil code draft tracing the spirit of Şeriat. At the convocation of a Law Faculty on 5 October 1925, he proposed codes “based on secular grounds only” with “secular mentality.”

A year later, the Assembly took up en bloc, though by way of selection, an entire system of secular law. No deputy in the Assembly disputed the new codes. Contrary to the procedure requiring separate voting for each article, the President proceeded with en bloc voting. It was again open ballot by raising

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72) For example, French commercial law in 1850; French criminal law in part in 1858; Maritime law in 1864 combined from the laws of France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Prussia; the code of civil procedure in 1858 and, out of the French legislature that of criminal procedure in 1880. For further information on the reception of foreign law in Turkey, see several articles in the Part I of International Social Science Bulletin 9 (1957).

73) For further information on this draft, see Berkes, Development of Secularism in Turkey, 468-469.

74) Ibid., 470.

75) See Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 25 (17 Feb. 1926), 229-234. In the same session, by the unanimous votes, the Assembly also excused pro-Caliphate Zeki Bey from his duty for one and half months because of family matters. See ibid., 229.
hands, which unanimously approved the new secular codes.\textsuperscript{76} Turkey borrowed the civil code, the code of obligation, and of civil procedure, bankruptcy law, and other measures with regard to individual rights from Switzerland. A new Turkish commercial code was compiled from the French, Swiss and German codes. The penal code was transplanted from Italy.\textsuperscript{77} The religious codes of taxation and land, too, were reformed. The new codes eliminated the reactivation of Şeriat in practice. Contrary to the Swiss Civil Code authorizing judges in the absence of laws to rule in accordance with social tradition and precedents, Turkish Code, however, required the judge to examine the related “scientific” data and proceedings only, deliberately preventing judges from referring to social traditions, possibly mended with Islamic elements.\textsuperscript{78} The code of taxation reduced the tax on agricultural produce with the annulment of the religious tax aşar, treating one-tenth of the produce as Allah’s right.\textsuperscript{79} The new secular codes drove Islamic law regulating marriage, divorce, succession, etc., out of the social life. They constituted an institutional framework that supported the secularization process.

It was time to formally assert and guarantee the secular characteristics of the state. In his famous six-day-long Nutuk/Speech of October 1927, President M. Kemal suggested that “the nation must eliminate [superfluous expressions contained in Articles 2 and 26] from [the] Constitution Act.”\textsuperscript{80} Article 2 included the phrase, “the religion of the state is Islam.” Article 26 stated that the Şeriat had to be respected in making laws. Upon Kemal’s demand, both were dropped from the Constitution on 10 April 1928. With the modified Article 16, Assembly would no longer open after Friday prayers with sermons, and deputies would be sworn in on a man’s honor, not in the name of Allah.\textsuperscript{81} Similarly, religious references were dropped from all military and judicial oaths in the criminal courts. Only in civil courts were witnesses required to swear in the names of both God and honor.\textsuperscript{82} Religion and its symbols practically were flushed out from state institutions. Even the word Allah was uttered less in the public sphere.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{76} Ibid., 234.
\bibitem{77} Versan, “The Kemalist Reform of Turkish Law and Its Impact,” 249.
\bibitem{78} Gothard Jäschke, \textit{Yeni Türkiye’de İslamlık} [Islam in Modern Turkey], trans. Hayrullah Örs (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1972; orig. German edn., 1951), 24.
\bibitem{79} Ibid., 26.
\bibitem{80} M. Kemal [Atatürk], \textit{Nutuk/Söylev} vol. 2, 956 and M. Kemal [Atatürk], Speech, 598.
\bibitem{82} Jäschke, \textit{Yeni Türkiye’de İslamlık}, 25-26.
\end{thebibliography}
VII. State Control of Official Islam

Besides the abolition of the Caliphate on 3 March 1924, the Kemalists also intimated the Assembly for unanimously approving two other laws by show of hands in an attempt to place Islam under state control. The first was Law No. 429 replacing the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations with the two separate Directorates: the General Directorate of Pious Foundations, and the Directorate of Religious Affairs, not only decreasing the status of religion from a cabinet ministry to a directorate level but also dissolving the direct financial link between the Pious Foundations (Evkaf) and Religious Affairs. State controllers started auditing the private funds available for the religious apparatus. The Directorate of Foundations became responsible for administering all remaining religious institutions, particularly the supervision of private pious organizations (vakıfs), with the remuneration of clerics and the physical maintenance of mosques (after 1931). The authority of the Religious Affairs Directorate was restricted to license preachers, to supervise the content of their sermons, to appoint all the miüftüs in the provinces and the staff to the mosques, and to render, if asked, an occasional opinion on religious law. The Prime Minister was in charge of setting its budget. With the approval of President M. Kemal, Prime Minister İsmet appointed Börekçizade Mehmet Rıfat, a close Kemalist ally, to the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

The second law was Law No. 430 on Unifying Instruction and Education, severing the traditional tie between religion and education. By this law, the

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83) Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 7 (3 March 1340 [1924]), 24.
84) The pious foundations controlled 15% of land in Turkey at the time. See Doğu Ergil, “Turkish Reform Movement and Beyond, 1923-1938,” Islamic Studies 14 (Winter 1975): 250. The income from the property of the tarikats remained available for the unofficial religious personnel. After the confiscation of the tarikats’ property upon their closure, only available private funds seemed the contributions of private citizens.
86) Later, the Law No. 1827 of 8 June 1931 restricted the authority of the Directorate in the administration of the mosques and charged the Directorate of Foundations with the appointment of the mosque janitors. For the current duties of the Directorate, see İştir Tarhanlı, Müslüman Toplum, ‘laik’ Devlet: Türkiye’de Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı [Muslim Society, ‘Secular’ State: The Directorate of Religious Affairs] (İstanbul: Afa Yayıncılık, 1993), 70-102.
87) The Müftü of Ankara, Mehmet Rıfat issued the counter fetva of 5 May 1920, outlawing the Sultan’s fetva which denounced the Kemalists as infidels during the War. The Sultan sentenced Mehmet Rıfat for the counter fetva to death on 6 May 1920. Rıfat stayed in office until his death on March 1941. Jäschke, Yeni Türkiye’de Islamlık, 58.
secular Ministry of Education controlled all the schools, closing all the medreses, restricting the religion courses in other schools in terms of content and duration. The law only allowed the establishment of some secondary religious schools, and of a faculty of religion. In only twenty-nine such schools, more than 300 instructors started educating future 2,258 imams in 1924 with mixed curriculum of science and religion. Very low levels of enrolment forced 18 of the schools to close its doors. By 1932, only two, one in Istanbul and one in Konya, left; even these closed their doors later. The centuries old Medrese of Süleymaniye, the Al-Azhar of Turkey, was turned into a Faculty of Religion under the state-governed Istanbul University with a revised curriculum centered on philosophy, psychology and matters of antiquarian interest, rather than on Islamic theology, offering fewer old Islamic courses taught in Arabic and Persian, more science courses with less emphasis on religion, and no language requirement. In 1933, an Islamic Research Institute with no training of theology replaced this school due to the lack of enrolment.

Thus, until 1949 the only mosque schools regulated by the Directorate of Religious Affairs had educated new imams. By the early 1940s, there left only 56 mosque school with a single instructor, teaching over a thousand students out of which only 12 graduates later took an imam certificate for state employment. Turkey did not have enough imams to preach in the mosques during the heydays of Kemalist secularism. Thus, through these two Directorates, the state would be able to “control all training for religious offices as well as the salaries and appointments of all religious officials.”

The great secularizing reforms of 1924 and subsequent arrangements placed official Islam under strict state control without a strong reaction since “the Ulema, long accustomed to wielding the authority of the state, were unpractised in opposing it.” The Şeyh Said Rebellion of 1925 had signalled that the dervishes, the backbones of popular Islam, not the ulema posed the strongest resistance to further secularization. There was still an enormous challenge for the Kemalists to secularize the public life.

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88) For further information, see Jäschke, Yeni Türkiye’de İslamsık, 74-75. The following statistics are also from the same source.
89) S. A. Morrison, “Religious Liberty in Turkey,” 452.
90) Ibid., 452.
91) Jäschke, Yeni Türkiye’de İslamsık, 76.
93) Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 403.
VIII. Creating a Secular Public Sphere

As the rebels demanded the restoration of Şeriat and the Caliphate, the Kemalists defined the rebellion as a religious reaction to secularizing reforms.\(^{94}\) Later, they used it as an excuse to eliminate the entire opposition through exit and self-subversion, eradicating sincere voice from the public discourse. The Kemalists first suppressed the Progressive Republican Party in opposition, and then accelerated secularizing reforms.

Upon receiving the news of the rebellion on 25 February 1925, the Premier Fethi, a moderate, whom M. Kemal positioned to appease the opposition, asked the Progressive Party leaders to disband the party voluntarily.\(^{95}\) Displaying full support for the government, they refused. A week later, Fethi was forced to resign and İsmet become premier again. İsmet’s Cabinet asked the Assembly to pass the Law on Maintenance of Order on 4 March 1925, authorizing the government to ban, at its discretion, any organization or publication for the sake of law and order. The two Independence Tribunals, one in the east and one in the capital, were empowered to prosecute those who would “disturb the order.” Moreover, a modified High Treason Law now stipulated political exploitation of religion as an act of treason punishable by death. While the army was charged with suppressing the rebellion, the Ankara Independence Tribunal banned the publication of most dailies and periodicals except Cumhuriyet, the Kemalist İstanbul daily, and Hakime-i Milliye, the Official Gazette in Ankara. Several religious books disappeared from circulation.

After the state severely crushed the Şeyh Said rebellion in late May 1925, the Ankara Independence Tribunal closed down the Progressive Party at the request of the government on the grounds that it had “exploited religion for political purposes.” The Independence Tribunals also regularly sentenced “religious reactionaries” to heavy prison terms and sometimes to death.\(^{96}\) Fearful of

\(^{94}\) For further information on the rebellion, see Metin Toker, Şeyh Sait ve İyami [Şeyh Sait and His Rebellion], 2nd edn. (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1994; first edn., 1968), especially pp. 15-27 and Robert Olson, The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), especially chapter 5 and conclusion. Both sources assert that the Kemalists saw the rebellion as religious reaction, but Robert Olson claims that the genuine characteristic of the rebellion was ethnic in nature.


\(^{96}\) Askeri Hoca of Silifke and Sadi Efendi of Mersin were only a few among other Islamists persecuted by the Independence Tribunals. For Askeri Hoca, see ABK, Kararname No.1693, 25 March 1341 [1925], for Sadi Efendi, see ABK, Kararname No.1691, March 1341 [1925]. The leader of an Islamic riot, Askeri Hoca was sentenced to death. Çetin Özek, Devlet ve Din [State and Religion], 478.
being stigmatized as reform opponents, people habitually suppressed their religious views in public.

The opposition was largely silenced but still not completely eliminated. The outbreak of the İzmir conspiracy on 26 June 1926 justified the Kemalists in their efforts for its complete elimination. Using the plot by some deputies to assassinate M. Kemal in İzmir as a pretext, the Independence Tribunal ordered the arrests of not only the former Progressive Party members (except for Rauf and Dr. Adnan who were abroad) but also all the prominent surviving members of the old Union and Progress Party, accusing them of a planned coup d’état. The Tribunal sentenced a total of 18 alleged affiliates to death. The war heroes, such as Kazım Karabekir, Ali Fuat, Refet and Cafer Tayyar, were released in response to a potential public and military discontent. Nevertheless they lost their political status and exited from public life for the duration of the reforms. In Mango’s words, this was the period of “measured terror” followed by the period of “reforms and repression” during which it was impossible to voice any public opposition to the Kemalist secularizing policies. It was time to pursue full-fledged secularism with the motto of “Religion should be respected as long as it remains in the sphere of conscience.”

On 30 November 1925, the Assembly unanimously issued another law by open voting. Law No. 677 constituted the most effective move in breaking the backbone of popular Islam embedded in the tarikats (religious orders). It nullified all religious orders and closed their tekkes (dervish convents, Arabic: khanqahs), zaviyes (religious cells, Arabic: zawiyahs) and türbes (religious shrines). It further forbade any citizen to be a member of orders, wear their costumes, or bear the associated titles while closing all the mescids (chapels, Arabic: masjids) attached to tekkes and türbes. This law also abolished the

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97) Zürcher, Turkey, 182.

98) For the period of “measured terror,” see Andrew Mango, Atatürk (London: John Murray Publishers, 1999), 442-453. For the period of “reforms and repression” see pp. 430-441.


100) Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 19 (30 Nov. 1341 [1925]): 288-289. Toynbee also points to an administrative decree of 2 Sept. 1925 for the closure of the religious institutions. See Toynbee, “Abolition of Ottoman Caliphate,” 72-73.

101) The tarikats were the backbones of popular Islam: “By the eighteenth century the brotherhoods [tarikats] had established themselves in almost every town and village in Turkey. ... They were able to dominate the professional and social, as well as religious life.” See Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 401.
custodian office of such establishments and confiscated their property.\footnote{Doğu Ergil, “Turkish Reform Movement and Beyond, 1923-1938,” 250.} As a result, huge numbers of people in Turkey were forced to perpetually engage in self-subversion. “To a large extent, the tarikats simply went underground.”\footnote{Zürcher, Turkey, 200.} The tarikats, especially Nakşibendis and religious communities such as Nurcus started secretly meeting in private homes away from the public eye. Their acts of self-subversion bolstered the secular public sphere.

This law reinforced the rise of the secular public sphere that Government Decree No. 2413 had already started on 2 September 1923.\footnote{Toynbee, “Abolition of Ottoman Caliphate,” 72-73.} This decree not only obligated all public employees to wear hats but also forbade anyone to wear religious costumes other than authorized persons, mainly imams. Its violations was considered criminal act punishable up to a year in prison.\footnote{Jäschke, Yeni Türkiye’de İslamlık, 29.} On 25 November 1925, again in an open voting, the Assembly outlawed the fez, making the European hat compulsory.\footnote{Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 19 (25 Nov. 1341 [1925]), 231.} The only opposition in the Assembly came the next day from Nureddin Paşa, an independent deputy from Bursa and one of the victorious generals in the War of Independence. He forwarded a motion declaring that compulsory western attire violated individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The Assembly, nevertheless, refused even to table his motion.\footnote{For the motion see Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 19 (25 Nov. 1341 [1925]), 222; for the refusal of the motion through open voting see ibid., 231. See also Brunton, “The Passing of Islam in Turkey” (note 2), 595.}

In the Ottoman Empire, distinctive headgear was used to show traditional outward marks of differences in nationality, occupation and religion.\footnote{Arnold J. Toynbee, “Abolition of Ottoman Caliphate,” 73.} The fez was a religious symbol, signifying Muslim solidarity and the superiority of Islam over the other faiths in Turkey.\footnote{Ritter von Kral August, Kamal Atatürk Land, 33.} Meddling with personal and religious life created severe disturbances in heavily conservative towns such as Sivas, Erzurum, Rize, and Maraş.\footnote{For further information on the disturbances from an Islamist view, see Hasan H. Ceylan, Cumhuriyet Döneminde Din/Develet İlişkileri, 42-57.} The clergy and conservative small town notables, including religious merchants who wore religious apparel to distinguish themselves from common people, reacted furiously.\footnote{Doğu Ergil, “Turkish Reform Movement and Beyond, 1923-1938,” 251.} The government viewed them as organized reactionary movements and adopted severe measures to
crush them. Although the maximum penalty to wear a fez was a month in prison, the Independence Tribunal sentenced 18 people to death\textsuperscript{112} for exploiting religion for political purposes. Even those wearing berets, a headgear similar to a fez, were arrested.\textsuperscript{113} “Through ruthless implementation of the Hat Law, the fez, an important symbol of Islam, disappeared from the public eye.

The ban on the veil came to the agenda of the People’s Party in its annual meeting in 1935, but the Party left the issue to the discretion of the local municipalities.\textsuperscript{114} Some municipalities (\textit{e.g.} in Trabzon) tried to implement the ban, yet as a result of immediate reaction, they did not force it, but discouraged it through public pressure. Webster described the emerging secular public sphere: “As late as 1931, veiled women were not uncommon in Izmir … By 1936, one might go about Izmir for a week without seeing a single woman with her face covered.”\textsuperscript{115} The last act to suppress religious dress came on 3 December 1935. Again through open voting, the Assembly issued Law No. 2596 forbidding the wearing of religious garb in public.\textsuperscript{116} The only persons authorized to wear the religious attire in public outside the mosques were the heads of the religious communities, adding up to eight individuals.\textsuperscript{117} This meant that in the public sphere, there remained only the President of Religious Affairs in Islamic garb.

Other Kemalist reforms contributed to driving Islam out of the public realm. The adoption of the western clock and calendar in 1926 replaced the Islamic time in effect since the tenth century in Anatolia. Islamic calendar counted the hours of the day according to prayer times in reference to Prophet’s immigration to Medina. The new Turkish calendar no longer contained such a reference to Islam. The adoption of western numerals in 1928 and of western weights and measures in 1931 in place of Arabic equivalents and the introduction of family names in 1934 further de-Islamized the Turkish society while infusing a heavy dose of western modernity.

The most important reform that severely tarnished Turkey’s ties with its Islamic past was the introduction of the Latin alphabet. There were previous

\textsuperscript{112} See Brunton, “The Passing of Islam in Turkey,” 595.


\textsuperscript{114} Jäschke, \textit{Yeni Türkiye’dede İslamlık}, 29.

\textsuperscript{115} Webster, \textit{The Turkey of Atatürk}, 253. But, it must be note that İzmir aka. ‘infidel İzmir’ has been one of the most liberal, if not the one, cities in Turkey where religious conservatives have played a minor role in determining the public discourse.

\textsuperscript{116} Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 25 (3 Dec. 1934), 77.

\textsuperscript{117} Jäschke, \textit{Yeni Türkiye’dede İslamlık}, 29.
proposals for a new Latin script, but it was M. Kemal who put the idea into practice with an impressive speed. On 1 November 1928, by raising their hands, the deputies in the Assembly unanimously approved Law No. 1353 the adoption of the new Script, making its use compulsory in all public communications within three months. Starting in 1929, the number of public documents written in the old Arabic Script started to decline in the public realm along with the public signs. As Eric J. Zürcher also emphasizes, the adoption of the Latin alphabet was just “another way to cut off Turkish society from its Ottoman and Middle Eastern Islamic traditions and reorientate it towards the west.”

IX. Captioning Kemalist Secularism

In 1937, Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of the Interior, clearly defined the crux of Turkish secularism: “to make sure that religion has no role and effect in the affairs of the country. … Religions should stay in [people’s] conscience and in their temples.” In short, secularism is to keep religion “out of material life and worldly affairs.” After the endorsing speeches in the Assembly, all the present deputies, a total of 321, openly voted for the enactment of a new article in the Constitution, firmly anchored also in the Constitutions of 1960 and 1982. Article 2 of the current Turkish Constitution defines the founding principle of the state: “The Republic of Turkey is a … secular State.” Article 4 bans its amendment and even a proposal for its revision as irrevocable. Both confirmed the full establishment of Kemalist secularism.

The Turkish Constitution has further safeguards against all possible attempts to reverse the reform laws that set the institutional framework of Turkish secularism. On the preservation of reform laws, Article 174 affirms that:

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118) The previous attempt in Ottoman land to adopt a Latin-based alphabet with the inclusion of Greek and Cyrillic characters was by Albanians in 1879. The short-lived “Stamboul [Istanbul] Alphabet” disappeared during the First World War. Trix claims that the Stamboul Alphabet was a precursor to Turkish script reform. See Frances Trix, “The Stambol Alphabet of Shemseddin Sami Bey: Precursor to Turkish Script Reform,” International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 31 (May 1999): 267-269.


120) Zürcher, Turkey, 197.

121) For the excerpts from Kaya’s speech, see Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 16 (5 Nov. 1937): 61.

122) For the specific voting for Article 2 and its results see ibid., 74-83.
No provision of the Constitution shall be construed or interpreted as rendering unconstitutional the Reform Laws indicated below, which aim to raise Turkish society above the level of contemporary civilization and to safeguard the secular character of the Republic, and which were in force on the date of the adoption by referendum of the Constitution of Turkey.

1. Act No. 430 of 3 March 1340 (1924) on the Unification of the Educational System;
2. Act No. 671 of 25 November 1341 (1925) on the Wearing of Hats;
3. Act No. 677 of 30 November 1341 (1925) on the Closure of Dervish Convents and Tombs, the Abolition of the Office of Keeper of Tombs and the Abolition and Prohibition of Certain Titles;
4. The principle of civil marriage according to which the marriage act shall be concluded in the presence of the competent official, adopted with the Turkish Civil Code No. 743 of 17 February 1926, and Article 110 of the Code;
5. Act No. 1288 of 20 May 1928 on the Adoption of International Numerals;
6. Act No. 1353 of 1 November 1928 on the Adoption and Application of the Turkish Alphabet;
7. Act No. 2590 of 26 November 1934 on the Abolition of Titles and Appellations such as Efendi, Bey or Paşa;

Each of these laws was passed unanimously through open voting, leaving no room for dissent. All members in the Assembly acted in unison with a raise of hands to approve the secular reform laws. Only once, a single vote of opposition surfaced against abolishing the Sultanate. The proclamation of the Republic and the abolition of the Caliphate were also approved in the Assembly in open voting. Rarely few deputies did openly argue against the reform laws, eventually yielding to pressure to favour secular reforms. Exit and self-subversion, suppressing voices of opposition during 1920-38 mediated the secularization process through which the centuries old Islamic institutions disappeared from the public realm. The reform laws with their supporting decrees and regulations constituted the secular institutional framework.

X. The Ramifications of Authoritarian Secularism

Kemal’s quest to “go beyond contemporary civilization,” infused a rapid Western modernity into public life diluting a predominantly Muslim society and initiating one of the most visible cleavages in Turkish society today: Secularist/Islamist divide. As I explained elsewhere in detail, the very same mechanisms: exit, sincere voice and self-subversion played a pivotal role in
the institutionalization of the secular public sphere in Turkey. In response to secularist pressures, the combination of exit and self-subversion pushed Islamic discourse underground. As some of the influential figures of Islamist discourse, such as Mehmet Akif, left Turkey, the others engaged in self-subversion by concealing their public religious expressions. The secularist legal framework created institutional pressures that forced previously religiously-oriented groups, such as religious brotherhoods and communities, to continually engage in self-subversion. This led to the distortion of public discourse—corpus of assertions, arguments and opinions about Islam in the public domain. Thus, the public discourse increasingly became secularized. As a product of this secularized public discourse, Kemalist secularism rooted among the new generations, especially solidifying itself within the rising Kemalist elite, including the military, and slowly creating of a substantial group of secularist activists sworn to protect the Kemalist legacy at any cost.

Despite all intimidations, Islam in the private sphere proved resilient, waiting for an opportune time to resurface in the public realm. Islam survived in the daily private lives of the masses in the forms of daily habits, routines, rituals, etc. In other words, Islam(ism) created its own, in James Scott’s words, “hidden transcripts,” especially among the masses, silently critiquing the power of the Kemalist elite in the configuration of everyday life in Turkey. For a long time, living Islam has not directly confronted the high modernism of the authoritarian secularism, which consistently disregarded the values, desires and objections of the masses. Yet, authoritarian high modernism and its main corollary, secularism, did not completely fulfill its promise of better

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123) Tolga Köker, “The Triumph of the Secular Public Sphere in Turkey” (paper presented at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 2006).
124) After the War of Independence, Mehmet Akif [Ersoy], an ardent Islamist and the poet of the Turkish national anthem, despised the Kemalist reforms suppressing Islam. He left for Egypt during the summers from 1923 to 1926. As the Kemalists initiated full-scale secularist reforms in 1926, he decided not to return to Turkey. He lived in Egypt during the heyday of the Kemalist secularism between 1926 and 1933. He returned to Turkey in 1936 as his health deteriorated and he died a few months later.
conditions for all as it is constantly overlooking Islamic values.  

While authoritarian secularism succeeded in converting hearts and minds of the rising elite into secularism by silencing the link between religion and the state in nation building it failed to fully suppress the effects of religion on the daily lives of the masses, leaving an “opportunity space” for the enterprising politicians to carry over Islamic values into politics once Turkey switched from single party rule to multi-party rule in 1946.  

As a reaction to this intense secularization, with the culturalization of politics, Islamist movement gradually permeated itself into the Turkish social life, demanding recognition of its long hidden transcripts in the public sphere.  

The contending constellation of Islam(ism) and secularism has increasingly manifested itself in Turkish public life, epitomizing itself in the veiling controversy, a subject of an increasingly confrontational debate in Turkey since the 1980s.  

The veil has become an prominent symbol of political Islam. Not surprisingly, Islamists adamantly encourage veiling in the public sphere, while secularists intently discourage it, considering veiled women as a direct attack to all the secularizing reforms. In time, as I explained elsewhere, an increasing

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127) I borrow the term “authoritarian high modernism” from James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). Scott uses the term in the sense that “a particular sweeping vision of how the benefits of technical and scientific progress might be applied” (p. 90) without investigating its relation to religion. Yet, the Kemalist project demanding rapid secularization is a good example of authoritarian high modernism based on social engineering for the sake of progress in modernizing the country.

128) On how the Islamist social movement has utilized such an opportunity space see M. Hakan Yavuz, Islamic Political Identity in Turkey (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), especially Chapter 1.

129) Tibi elegantly pinpoints that intensive secularization, resulting from globalization, and the culturalization of politics lie at the root of political Islam as a social movement not only in Turkey but also all over the world. See Bassam Tibi, “The Totalitarianism of Jihadist Islamism and its Challenge to Europe and to Islam,” in Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 8 (Spring 2007): 36.

130) As Ayşe Kadıoğlu points out, women’s public visibility has occupied a central place in defining the boundaries of Western modernity and traditional Islam since the early years of the Republic. Ayşe Kadıoğlu, “Women’s Subordination in Turkey: Is Islam Really the Villain?” Middle East Journal, 48 (Autumn 1994): 646. For example, in the mid-1990s, a debate televised between an “Islamist-feminist” and “Kemalist-feminist” took high national audience ratings. Ayşe Öncü, “Packaging Islam: Cultural Politics on the Landscape of Turkish Commercial Television,” New Perspectives on Turkey 10 (Spring 1994): 28.

confrontation of resurging Islam(ism) and authoritarian secularism led to the current polarization of the public opinion, resulting from an on-going “reciprocal process of stereotyping, blaming and exaggeration” between the Kemalist establishment and the challenging outsider political Islam.\footnote{Phillip W. Sutton and Stephen Vertigas, “The Established and Challenging Outsiders: Resurgent Islam in Secular Turkey,” \textit{Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions} 3 (Summer 2002): 77.} With the rise of the Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party (JDP) into power in 2002, political Islam has secured its place in the core of Turkish politics. Since then, unable to produce working solutions to the frictions of secularism and Islamism, Turkish politics is in a stage of deadlocks on many social issues like the veiling controversy. The uneasy co-existence of Islam(ism) and (authoritarian) secularism still plays an important role in the configuration of everyday life in Turkey, polarizing the society and creating anxieties in the daily lives of its members. As Şerif Mardin once highlighted, the essential problematique for Turkish elite is to provide opportunities to the masses in finding indigenous solutions within their own culture.\footnote{Şerif Mardin, “Türkiye’de ‘Kitle Kültürü’ Sorunu [The Problem of “Mass Culture” in Turkey],” \textit{ Özgür İnsan} 16 (Nisan 1974): 58-61. The article was also reprinted in \textit{Şerif Mardin: Siyasal ve Sosyal Bilimler: Makaleler 2} [Şerif Mardin: Political and Social Sciences: Articles, 2], Mümtaz’er Türköne and Tuncay Önder, eds. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990), 126-132.} Genuine solutions may come from peoples’ creative daily practices if the activist elite, both secularists and Islamists, trust them.
