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From Nationalization of Islam to Privatization of Nationalism: Islam and Turkish National Identity

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İSLAM'IN MİLLİLEŞTİRİLMESİNDEN MİLLİYETÇİLİĞİN ÖZELLEŞTİRİLMESİNE: İSLAMİYET VE TÜRK MİLLİ KİMLİĞİ

*Tamer BALCI**

ÖZET

Bu makale Türkiye’de dinin millileştirilmesi ile ilgili farklı projeleri içermektedir. İlk önerilen projeler İslam ve laikliğin birarada yaşayabilmesini sağlayabilecek felsefi temelden yoksun oldukları için başarılı olamamışlardır. Dinin millileştirilmesi konusunda daha önce yapılan çalışmalardan farklı olarak bu makale konuyu Soğuk Savaş dönemine taşıyarak Türk-İslam Sentezi’nin dinin millileştirilmesi çabalarının ulaştığı son aşama olduğu tezini vurgulamaktadır. TİS’in Atatürkçülük rejimini değiştirme gibi bir hedefi olmaması ve İslam’ın milliyetçilik, laiklik ve Atatürkçülük ile uyum içinde olduğu görüşlerini savunması TİS’in aranan milli din olmasa bile İslam ve laik devlet arasında bir sistem ayarlaması yapmasını sağlamış ve İslam’ın gayr-i resmi olarak Türklük tanımına dahil olmasını sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türklük, İslam, Türk-İslam Sentezi, Türk milliyetçiliği

FROM NATIONALIZATION OF ISLAM TO PRIVATIZATION OF NATIONALISM: ISLAM AND TURKISH NATIONAL IDENTITY¹

ABSTRACT

This article traces the origins of various proposals to nationalize Islam in Turkey. The initial Turkish proposals failed because none of them had a feasible philosophical base to facilitate the co-existence of Islam and secularism. Aside from the previous studies on the nationalization of Islam, this article carries the topic

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to the Cold War by arguing that the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis was the last stage on the nationalization of Islam. Since TIS had no vision to alter the official ideology, Kemalism, and it claimed the compatibility of Islam, nationalism, secularism as well as Kemalism, it fulfilled the need of a national religion the Turkish state envisioned but it created a *de facto* Turkish national identity that made Islam a prerequisite for Turkishness.

Key Words: Turkish identity, Islam, Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, Turkish nationalism

As secularism entered the Middle East, an ideological battle ensued between Islam and secular nationalism that would last throughout the twentieth century. Secular nationalism won mostly the minds of intellectuals and politicians, who then designed public education systems to win over the conservative masses. Ruling elites knew well that a constantly open confrontation against Islam would be counterproductive. Thus, neither Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Kemalist ideology nor Michel Aflaq's Baath ideology totally rejected Islam. Instead, they aimed to harness and use the social power of Islam to further the interests of the nation state. This would not be possible unless Islam was nationalized by the state.

This article aims to shed light on the multiple outcomes of the nationalization of Islam in Turkey. I present two interwoven hypotheses to explain the intricate relationship among the Turkish state, Islam and Turkish nationalism. Primarily, Turkey's unrelenting efforts to nationalize Islam during the early republican period (1923-50) failed but created a *de facto* Turkish identity tied to Islam. Despite the constructive aims of the Turkish leaders, nationalization of Islam could not be achieved because none of the reform proposals had a feasible philosophical base that could be implemented in the society. They were cosmetic, unpractical or marginal as it shall be outlined in the following pages. Nevertheless, when the early Cold War political conditions removed the political restrictions, a more liberal approach with the checks and balances system paved the road for the creation of a historical philosophy, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (TIS) (1950-1970). The TIS formulated the middle way between Islam and the state and it became the nationalized Turkish Islam. Furthermore, the TIS strengthened the *de facto* policy that regards Islam a prerequisite for Turkishness.

Setting the Goals

The TIS was conceptualized during the Cold War but the raw and unformulated idea predates modern Turkey. As Islam had been the dominant socio-cultural force for centuries, early sentiments of Turkish nationalism were expressed in a religious form. A secular nationalism would not be attractive in a largely conservative society. Islam and Turkish nationalism blended first in the frontiers from the Caucasus to the Balkans, where Ottomans retreated. Not surprisingly many early Turkish nationalists were from these lands. While the Young Turks were still gathering their thoughts on nationalism, the Balkan Turks declared in 1898 that “Islam and nationalism had merged into a single construct.”² Initially, the Young Turk entity, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), did not take the Islamic blended Turkish nationalism of the local CUP branches seriously but conditions necessitated the CUP to reconsider this approach. Nationalist movements in the Balkans, such as the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian nationalism, went along with Orthodox Christianity. Would the CUP embrace an Islamic blended Turkish nationalism? Within ten years the CUP not only recognized Turkism but also exploited it. Turkism, Ottomanism and pan-Islamism were all at the service of the CUP to reach its political objectives.³ The CUP did not have a common voice about Turkish nationalism but the positivist ideology of the leading Young Turks created a tendency toward a secular model. Whether or not Islam and nationalism would coexist was the question of the time. From positivist Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932) and pan-Turkist Ahmed Ağaoğlu (1869-1939) to Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) and Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935) many Turkish intellectuals believed in compatibility of Islam and nationalism. Furthermore, they suggested that nationalism would strengthen the power of Islam and that Islam should be used to promote the interests of the state.

The ruling elite of the new Turkish Republic turned the Young Turk ideas into the ideology of the new republic, Kemalism. Gökalp’s ideas shaped the early cultural policies of the Turkish republic, especially on Islam, secularism and nationalism. Gökalp derived his ideas and concepts from Emile Durkheim (1858-

² M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 211.

³ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 296.

1917) and altered them to fit Turkey. Gökalp's views in regard to religion were largely inspired by Durkheim's last major work of, *the Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. This work was an outcome of Durkheim's research on the primitive religions of Australian native tribes. Based on this study, Durkheim drew general conclusions about the interaction of religion and society. He concentrated on understanding religion as a social reality regardless of its origins. He criticized positivist scholars for totally rejecting religions because some religions might have artificial origins. Durkheim argued that "fundamentally, then, there are no religions that are false. All are true after their own fashion."⁴ Furthermore, he pointed out similarities of all religions, saying that "[t]here is no religion that is not both a cosmology and speculation about the divine."⁵ Durkheim concluded in his work that "nearly all the great social institutions were born in religion...If religion gave birth to all that is essential in society, that is so because the idea of society is the soul of religion. Thus religious forces are human forces, moral forces."⁶ Religion, according to Durkheim, was an irreplaceable part of society.

Durkheim regarded religion as a source of morality, consciousness and identity formation. He acknowledged the role of religion as a motivational source to unite people and emphasized the significance of social cohesion religion provides. That social cohesion, according to Durkheim, was almost impossible to achieve through individualism. In that regard Durkheim believed in the strength of social action rather than individualism. His reliance on society as opposed to individualism was his common ground with Karl Marx but as opposed to Marx, Durkheim made it clear that his approach to religion was sociological not political.

Durkheim developed general ideas about religion and society. Since he believed that his findings would apply to all societies, he used a general term society, without referring to a specific group. His Turkish counterpart, Gökalp took Durkheim's general concept of society and narrowed it down to nation. Then, Gökalp defined what would constitute a nation. For him, *millet*, nation, was a community of people united by the same language, religion, morality and aesthetics. Hence he suggested that Turks should embrace the concept that they

⁴ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (New York: Free Press, 1995), 2.

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Ibid., 421.

are from the Turkish nation, Islamic faith and the Western civilization.⁷ Similar to Durkheim's approach, Gökalp regarded religion as a corner-stone of society. Thus, according to Gökalp, Islam was the corner-stone of Turkish nation and the source of ethics and morality.

Gökalp argued that it was possible to mix Turkish history and culture with Islam to create a "Turkish-Islamic Historical Philosophy."⁸ He believed that modern science and philosophy could be interpreted based on Turkish and Islamic traditions and "a modern Turkish-Islamic Civilization"⁹ would evolve out of it. What would be the role of religion in this civilization? Gökalp advocated secularization of the justice system. The laws of the state, he suggested, should not be determined by religious rules but by the conditions of the society.¹⁰ Thus, secular laws and schools should replace religious laws and schools.

As well as many of his contemporaries Gökalp suggested that Turks should nationalize Islam. He proposed that the sermons and prayers should be in the Turkish language.¹¹ In his understanding, Islam could be a cultural component to promote Turkish national culture and Turkish interests, making nationalism a modern manifestation of Islam. In that case, the interests of the nation were above the interests of Islam. Islam could be used for national goals or become a national religion. The Ottoman sultans called themselves the servants of Islam. For Gökalp it was now time to have Islam serve the nation.

Nationalization of Islam

Durkheim's books were translated into Turkish as early as 1923. Atatürk read them in French. Gökalp's influence on the ideological development of Kemalism was limited as he died in 1924 before major Kemalist revolutions were introduced. Nevertheless, in regard to his approach to Islam, Atatürk followed Gökalp. How Atatürk dealt with Islam in real life is different from what he thought about Islam. No matter how strong the convictions of a leader are, what a leader can implement in a real politics is limited by the social forces of that society. Considering the strong social power of Islam, Atatürk often acted as a political leader not as an idealist intellectual.

⁷ Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, (Istanbul: MEB, 1990), 22-23.

⁸ Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak*, (Istanbul: Toker Yayınları, 1992), 25.

⁹ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰ Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 174-175.

¹¹ Ibid., 176-177.

His secularist reforms came along with a nationalization program, which promoted nationalism as an alternative to Islam by creating a national religion. Perhaps his most radical step was the abolishment of the centuries old Caliphate title. The day the Caliphate was abolished on March 3, 1924, the Directory of Religious Affairs (DRA) was founded and a state monopoly was established over all Islamic and educational institutions. The abolishment of the Caliphate was certainly the biggest political step toward secularization but the law by itself did not initiate secularism because the abolishment law stated that “the meaning and the concept of Caliphate are embedded in the government and the republic.”¹² Indeed, in 1924 the official religion of the new Turkish republic was Islam and the judicial system was largely based on Islamic laws. By 1928, the Latin alphabet replaced the Arabic alphabet, secularism replaced the religion article in the constitution and the Western laws replaced Islamic laws. Although Sufi orders were prohibited, the practice of Islam or any other religion was not officially prohibited.

In regard to religious affairs modern Turkey inherited a Sunni Islamic structure from the Ottoman Empire. In order to protect the Sunni Islamic texture of its subjects, the Ottomans solidified the office of Grand Mufti, *Seyhulislam*, and a Sunni Islamic religious structure under the Shia Safevid threat in the sixteenth century. As the Ottoman Empire collapsed its religious structure was reshaped to fit the Turkish republic. Because the 1924 education monopoly law allowed only the state employees to teach, preach and interpret Islam, no private teaching or preaching of Islam has been allowed. Based on current regulations of the DRA, no pupil can be registered for summer Qur’an courses to learn basic Islamic instruction before they finish the 5th grade, when pupils are around 12 year old.¹³ State monopoly over all Islamic institutions was an overly ambitious goal that was difficult to achieve. The logistical and financial needs of the new republic limited its abilities to reach that goal. Thus, despite the law, many Islamic groups have provided with religious education without the state inspection.

As much as Atatürk wished to nationalize Islam, he was careful not to destroy the main components of Islam. He discouraged political Islam but kept Islam as a cultural component. Moving on Gökalp’s path, Atatürk ordered that the call to prayer, *ezan*, had to be called in Turkish instead of Arabic. Imams

¹² Reşat Genç, *Türkiye’yi Laikleştiren Yasalar*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 1998), 35.

¹³ Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Kur’an Kursları İle Öğrenci Yurt ve Pansiyonları Yönetmeliği, <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr/turkish/mevzuaticerik.asp?id=2204>.

were ordered to preach in Turkish. The Qur'an was translated into Turkish and printed in the Latin alphabet. Still, the Kemalist criterion to create a Turkish nation state in Anatolia was not based on secular nationalist principles; Islam remained as a defining factor for Turkishness in the 1920s. For the Turkish state, the ideal Turk was a Muslim Turk.¹⁴

Atatürk needed a nationalized religion, an altered Turkish Islam, to protect secularism. Before he took a big step, Cemalettin Efendi, a Turkish imam in Istanbul, initiated the discussion by leading a prayer in Turkish rather than in Arabic in 1926. While a group of columnists in the Turkish press, including Ahmed Ağaoğlu, supported the imam for his reformist act, the president of the DRA, Rıfat Börekçi declared that prayer has to be performed in Arabic.¹⁵ After the complaints of the mosque regulars, the imam was relocated from the DRA to the Ministry of Education where he served as a teacher of religion.¹⁶

Soon Atatürk initiated intellectual discussions to formulate a Turkish Islam. He asked Rüşeni Barkur, a deputy from Samsun, to write a book on nationalization of Islam. Barkur titled his book, *Din Yok Millet Var, There is No Religion but Nation*. Atatürk read the book and inscribed "Bravo, applauds" on the margin of a paragraph where Barkur wrote "Our holy book is our nationalism, which protects knowledge, carries creatures, embraces happiness, glorifies Turkishness and unites all Turks. Therefore, in our philosophy the exact equivalent of religion is nationalism."¹⁷ Barkur's book boosted up nationalism over Islam but did not introduce any feasible proposal to bridge them together so that the state could benefit. Atatürk assigned another book project to Reşit Galip, who shortly served as the minister of education in 1928. The book, *Türkün Milli Dini: Müslümanlık, National Religion of the Turk: Islam*, claimed that Islam was originally a Turkish religion and Prophet Abraham and Prophet Muhammad had Turkish origins.¹⁸ Atatürk apparently found this argument marginal. Galip's off the chart historical arguments were not included in Kemalist history textbooks (1931-1941).

¹⁴ Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is A Turk?*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 39-40.

¹⁵ Başak Ocak Gez, "Fikirden Eyleme Türkçe Namaz Meselesi: 1920'lerin Cesur Bir Hocası," *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 47 (1997): 15-19.

¹⁶ Cemal Şener, *Anadilde İbadet: Türkçe İbadet*, (Istanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1998), 80.

¹⁷ Gürbüz D. Tüfekçi, *Atatürk'ün Okuduğu Kitaplar-Eski ve Yeni Yazılı Türkçe Kitaplar*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1983), 170-171.

¹⁸ Şener, *Anadilde İbadet*, 83-84.

A middle way had to be found for the coexistence of Islam and secularism. Atatürk set some boundaries for his reforms in Islam. Whenever the boundaries were crossed he stepped in. In one case he ordered the collection and destruction of a translated book because he found the book to be extremely offensive to Islam.¹⁹ Another book written by A. Ibrahim faced the same destiny because it was prohibited by the Turkish government.²⁰ The whole book is inaccessible and its name was not recorded in the printed book catalogs of Turkey either²¹; only a few pages of this book were translated into English by Lootfy Levonian.²² In his book A. Ibrahim suggested that Turks should abandon Islam and create a national religion. He regarded Islam as the religion of the Arabs. Furthermore, he wrote that “[w]e must seek the religion of the Turk, the God of the Turk, in the self-consciousness of the Turk.”²³

A similar proposal was left without an owner. On June 22, 1928 Turkish newspaper, *Vakit*, published a reform project, allegedly prepared by a committee of professors from Istanbul University. The proposal embraced nationalization of all social institutions including religion. The authors suggested that religious life had to be reformed based on scientific ideas and methods so that religion could match other institutions. The last section listed proposals: desks should be placed in the mosques and people should be encouraged to enter mosques with shoes; the language of prayer should be Turkish; Turkish versions of verses, prayers and sermons should be used. Moreover, the proposal suggested that musical instruments should be placed in mosques and imams and preachers should be trained in the faculty of divinity of Istanbul University. At the end the authors assured that they would write books and articles, organize courses and conferences on this subject.²⁴ As soon as it appeared in the press, the government disowned the proposal.

¹⁹ Ahmet Gürtaş, *Atatürk ve Din Eğitimi*, (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1999), 25-27.

²⁰ Düccane Cündioğlu, *Bir Siyasi Proje Olarak Türkçe İbadet I [Turkish Prayer as a Political Project I]*, (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1999), 284-289.

²¹ Turgut Akpınar, “İslamiyet Yerine Milli Türk Dini.” *Tarih ve Toplum*, 69 (1989): 42.

²² A. Ibrahim, “A Book on the Sentiment of National Religion and Genuine Religion of the Turk,” in Lootfy Levonian. *The Turkish Press: 1932-1936*, (Beirut: The American Press, 1937), 37-41.

²³ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁴ For modern Turkish translation of the reform proposal see İsmail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi, II*, (Istanbul: Risale Yayınları, 1987), 495-499.

In a later interview, Yusuf Ziya Yörükan, who was one of the alleged authors of the proposal, claimed that there was no such committee, although the first sentence of the proposal mentioned that it was prepared by one. Yörükan told the interviewer that whatever was published in *Vakit* was an early draft prepared by one person but he did not mention who that person was.²⁵ Nevertheless, more proposals were on the way. Another Turkish newspaper, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, devoted a book with a new version of the *iman-i mufassal*, details of faith, for the Turks in August 1928. It included passages such as “I affirm my faith in that there is no Day of Judgment for Turkey.... I believe that good and evil comes from humans.... Ghazi [M. Kemal] is the loveliest servant of God.”²⁶

Moreover, Kemalist poet Behçet Kemal Çağlar attempted to rewrite the Qur’an. He even prepared some sample verses.²⁷ The honor book of Republican Public Party, the first political party of the Turkish Republic, which was founded by Atatürk, referred him as “the son of God.”²⁸ Similar views and proposals were expressed after Atatürk’s death as well. Arın Engin argued that prayers, fasting and the seating arrangements could be changed based on the conditions of the age and it was religiously legitimate.²⁹ Another Kemalist, Osman Nuri Çelmen initiated a monthly periodical in 1957 and published several books solely for the reformation of Islam.³⁰ In the first issue of his periodical, Çelmen declared that “for a nation religion is not a goal but a tool”³¹ that could be used to promote national interests. He compiled 54 farz, obligations, from the Bible, the Qur’an and the Hadith along with the speeches of Atatürk. None of these proposals could satisfy Atatürk’s desire to reconcile Islam, secular Kemalism and nationalism. He acted cautiously in regard to daily Muslim religious rituals.

²⁵ Ibid., 500-502.

²⁶ Partially translated from Turkish. For whole Turkish version see Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Bir Başka Açıdan Kemalizm*, (Istanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 1988), 34.

²⁷ For sample verses see Ibid., 141-142.

²⁸ *Şeref Kitabı, The Honor Book*, was originally published in 1938 by the Republican Public Party. Abdurrahman Dilipak reprinted it along with additional readings from the 1920s and the 1930s. Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Cumhuriyet’in Şeref Kitabı*, (Istanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1993), 17.

²⁹ Arın Engin, *Atatürkçülük’te Dil ve Din*, (Istanbul: Özyürek Basımevi, 1955), 58.

³⁰ Osman Nuri Çelmen, *Dinde Reform ve Kemalizm Işığında Dinimiz’in Esasları*, (Istanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1958).

³¹ Osman Nuri Çelmen, “Din Bir Millet İçin Gaye Değil Vasıta” *Dinimizde Reform: Kemalizm* 1 (1957): 13.

Nationalization of Islam was not achieved conceptually but officially. Italian laws helped the Turkish state to set a checks and balances system. In 1928 the Turkish reformers translated and adopted a Turkish penal code from fascist Italy. Article 163 of the Turkish penal code was the backbone of state control over religion. According to Article 163, any movement or person that aimed to change social, economical and political and judicial system of the state even partially based on religious principles and beliefs would be imprisoned up to fifteen years. Appealing to religion, religious books and sentiments for personal power would be punishable as well.³² Until it was abandoned in 1991, Article 163 was used to make sure no Islamic movement outside the state apparatus emerged to challenge the secular state. No civil Islamic group was legally allowed to provide religious education. The Turkish state did not want anyone other than state employees to teach, preach and even interpret Islam. This law also curbed Christian missionary activities and protected the *de facto* Muslim Turkish structure. Nevertheless, any Islamic group close to state apparatus was let off the radar screen.

A contemporary of Durkheim, Jean-Marie Guyau (1854-88), whose idea of *anomie* was influential on Durkheim's approach to religion, suggested that "a religion without myth, without dogma, without cult, without rite is no more than that somewhat bastard product, "natural religion", which is resolvable into a system of metaphysical hypotheses."³³ Most of the above mentioned proposals concentrated on the physical appearance of prayers and rituals. Nationalization of Islam was partially achieved with the help of fascist punitive measures, but forceful measures could not last forever. A myth, a dogma, or as Gökalp suggested, a philosophical base was needed to build upon. In order to turn Turkey into an at least partially democratic state, reconciliation of Islam and nationalism had to be formulated. That goal could not be attained before the Second World War. Many scholars and politicians made arguments to use the power of Islam for national interests but the fragile balance between secularism and Islam made it difficult to implement. Kemalist elites created some myths and even a "civil religion" according to Donald E. Webster but the Kemalist cult was far from

³² *Terörle Mücadele Kanunu, Türk Ceza Kanunu, Cezaların İnfazı Hakkındaki Kanun, Ceza Muhakemeleri Usulu Kanunu*, (Istanbul: Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım, 1991).

³³ Marie Jean Guyau, *The Non-Religion of the Future*, Translated from the French. (London: William Heinemann, 1897), 10.

being a religion.³⁴ Nevertheless, side effects of the intellectual investment on a Kemalist cult can still be traced among the elites of modern Turkey.³⁵

Privatization of Nationalism

While the Turkish state jealously controlled Islam, multi-party politics of the Cold War brought along the privatization of nationalism, which allowed the non-state actors to interpret nationalism. Atatürk kept a strict state control over the interpretations of Islam and nationalism. He silenced not only the groups that appealed the socio-political power of Islam for political gains but also the pan-Turkish opposition to Anatolia centered Kemalist nationalism. During his tenure (1923-38), challengers to the Kemalist Turkish History Thesis (THT), which connected Turkish history to ancient Sumerians and Hittites³⁶, were either forced into exile or marginalization. Pro-Islamic pan-Turkism led by Zeki Velidi Togan and racist pan-Turkism led by Nihal Atsız were pushed into isolation. Anatolia centered Kemalist nationalism had rejected pan-Turkism in the late 1920s but the Turkish state's anti-communist Cold War stance changed the Kemalist status quo. As both Islam and nationalism became antidotes to communism, The Turkish state privatized Turkish nationalism unintentionally by lifting the state monopoly on the interpretation of nationalism. The privatization was certainly not an economic step but a social one that allowed the optimum public use of nationalism. Alternative understandings of history and nationalism were allowed to be expressed outside the state apparatus. Then, civil nationalist organizations mushroomed and became sanctuaries to conservatives, where they could raise their Islamic arguments under the banner of nationalism. Islam could be reasserted only after it was blended with nationalism.

Regardless of their affiliation, almost all prominent post-WWII Turkish nationalists believed in the compatibility of Islam and nationalism³⁷ and many were in favor of the nationalization of Islam. Nevertheless they could not explain how their wishes might be implemented in real politics within the secular state structure. After its closure by the government in 1931, the semi-official nationalist

³⁴ Donald E. Webster, *Kemalism a Civil Religion? A Case Study in the Social Psychology of Religion: The Turkish Experience*, (Sey Press: 1979).

³⁵ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

³⁶ Büşra Ersanlı Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de "Resmi Tarih" Tezinin Oluşumu (1929-1937)*, (Istanbul: AFA Yayıncılık, 1992).

³⁷ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Rethinking Nationalism and Islam: Some Preliminary Notes on the Roots of "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis" in Modern Turkish Political Thought", *Muslim World* 3-4 (1999): 360-363.

periodical *Türk Yurdu (TY)* had a new statement in its first issue in 1942, “We are neither humanist nor communist, but we are Muslim Turks.”³⁸ According to the editor of the *TY*, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, being Muslim was a requirement for being a Turk.³⁹ Arın Engin, an ardent Kemalist, faithful of the THT and a member of the Turkish Historical Society, argued that “Atatürk was the greatest Turkish-Muslim. He saved the great Turkish-Muslim nation with his trust in God. Great God selected him to do this job.”⁴⁰ According to Engin, the primary principle of Islam was serving the nation. Interests of the nation came before everything else. Islam had to promote the national interests.⁴¹

Along with Islam, history instruction was expected to serve the interests of the state. Kemalist THT aimed to boost up Turkish nationalism. The THT heavily focused on pre-Islamic Turkish history to exhibit that Turkishness, not Islam, was the main cause of Turkish achievements in the past.⁴² Atatürk had even requested special research on the pre-Islamic religions of Turks from Yusuf Ziya Yörükkan, who finished his book in 1932.⁴³ The Ottoman rulers called Anatolian Turkish peasants, *etrak-i bi-idrak*, mindless Turks. Crafting a Turkish nation out of these despised peasants, which constituted over 80 percent of the population, was impossible unless they were injected with a heavy dose of nationalist pride. THT served that goal well but it could not be used for the nationalization of Islam. Another ideological tool was required to conceptualize the state’s nationalization of Islam.

Despite its irredentist goals, Togan’s pro-Islamic pan-Turkism proved to be a formidable alternative to Anatolia centered Kemalist nationalism. If altered, this nationalism could kill several birds with one stone. It could help the Turkish state to resist an emerging communist threat by harnessing the power of Islam for the nationalist cause. Furthermore, it could reconcile Islam and nationalism paving the way for the nationalization of Islam; Article 163 remained in place to make sure that no one could use Islam unless it served the interests of the state. State prosecutors would decide whom to punish and whom to let go. Under these

³⁸ Cemil Koçak, “Türk Milliyetçiliğinin İslam’la Buluşması” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 609.

³⁹ Vecihi Timuroğlu, *12 Eylül’ün Eğitim ve Kültür Politikası: Türk-İslam Sentezi*, (Ankara: Başak Yayınları, 1991), 63.

⁴⁰ Engin, *Atatürkçülük’te Dil ve Din*, 49.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴² Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 189.

⁴³ Yusuf Ziya Yörükkan, *Müslümanlıktan Evvel Türk Dinleri: Şamanizm*, Noted and prepared by Turhan Yörükkan. (Istanbul: Yol Yayınları, 2005).

conditions, the best way to express Islamic ideas was to subscribe to the ideology of pro-Islamic pan-Turkism. Thus, almost all early Cold War Turkish conservatives had to use nationalism to solicit their Islamic ideas. Nationalism was already attracting Islamic intellectuals to its camp. The state's checks and balances system was herding intellectuals to nationalist groups.

The Turkish Left and Kemalism

Shortly after the Russian revolution, Soviet Muslims carefully crafted a Muslim national communist ideology. National communism aimed to combine socialism, nationalism and Islam.⁴⁴ National communists and their ideologue, Mir-Said Sultan Galiev, a Tatar communist, emphasized the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist principles of Marxism rather than the class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat and the anti-religious stance of communism.⁴⁵ Sultan Galiev engineered a new version of communism for the Islamic world. The adherents of national communism, who were mainly the Muslim Turks of Central Asia, proposed to secularize Islam rather than to abolish it.⁴⁶ Galiev and his group were purged from the communist party after 1928 but their ideology of Muslim national communism, which is sometimes referred as Sultangalievism or Galievism, spread to the Islamic world.⁴⁷

The Kadro movement of the 1930s Turkey, which was the first intellectual group to connect Kemalism with socialism, was partially inspired by Galievism. Kadro ideologues organized their ideas in a monthly journal, *Kadro*. The leading writers; Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, Burhan Asaf Belge emphasized the anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism of communism. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, the founder of *Kadro*, belittled the significance of Ziya Gökalp as an intellectual and not surprisingly disagreed with Gökalp's understanding of historical materialism and Marxism, which was critical toward Marxism. Historical materialism served as a guide for

⁴⁴ Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), xx.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xx.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 76 and 124-125.

Aydemir and *Kadro*.⁴⁸ *Kadro* was published for three years before it was shut down by the state in 1934.

Another group that connected Kemalism to socialism was the Yön movement of the 1960s. The Yön movement flourished among the authors of *Yön*, a weekly political journal. The socialist founders of *Yön*; Doğan Avcıoğlu, Mümtaz Soysal, and Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu, reintroduced the socialist interpretation of Kemalism. The chief ideologue of Yön, Doğan Avcıoğlu regarded socialism as a natural outcome of Kemalism and democracy.⁴⁹ This argument left the official ideology, Kemalism, vulnerable to socialism. Because the socialist intellectuals embraced Kemalism by interpreting it as a leftist ideology, Kemalism alone could not create a strong opposition to the rising power of socialism. The socialist interpretation of Kemalism weakened the Kemalist ideology. Using Kemalism as a shield, socialist groups could spread their ideas in Turkey.

Evolution of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis

Zeki Velidi Togan (1890-1970) was the middle man as well as a respected fatherly figure among pan-Turkists. Prominent pan-Turkists of Cold War Turkey, such as Nihal Atsız, Reha Oğuz Türkkan, and İbrahim Kafesoğlu and Osman Turan were either students or colleagues of Togan. Before he became a history professor in Istanbul University in 1925, Togan had been the president of the defunct Başkırdistan Republic (1917-1920) in the Northern Caucasus until the communist takeover. He was actively involved in the Basmaji resistance movement against the Soviets. In 1932 Togan was forced to leave his post in IU because of his disagreement with the Kemalist THT. As opposed to Kemalist THT's non-irredentist Anatolian Turkish nationalism, Togan embraced a larger concept of Turkish nationalism, including the Turks of the Caucasus and Turkestan. After Atatürk's death Togan returned to IU in 1939. Along with many pan-Turkists, Togan, Atsız and Alparslan Türkeş, who later became the political leader of pan-Turkist Nationalist Action Party, were tried and acquitted during the pan-Turkist purge of the government in 1944. The purge made them more popular among pan-Turkists.

⁴⁸ Mustafa Türkeş, "[Cadre] Movement: A Patriotic Leftist Movement in Turkey" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34: 4 (October 1998): 93-94.

⁴⁹ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Yön ve Devrim Yazıları: Atatürkçülük, Milliyetçilik, Sosyalizm*, (Istanbul: İleri Yayınları, 2006), 141.

While his proudly fascist and racist student Atsız was distant to Islam, Togan believed in the combined power of Islam and Turkish nationalism.⁵⁰ In 1950, Togan's close colleague, the historian Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, became the minister of foreign affairs from the Democrat Party. A serious scholar/social engineer Togan became the founding president of the Islamic Research Institute in 1953.⁵¹ The foundation of the IRI was one of the big steps for the nourishment of Islam in Turkey. Although in his early career Togan was a teacher in a Muslim Tartar madrasa, he was not in favor of giving up his free will for the guidance of religion in life.⁵² He was raised in a religiously conscious family with an extensive knowledge of Islam. His father was an imam attached to the Naqshbandi Sufi order. In his youth, Togan had originally considered Shamanism as a potential Turkish national religion and even memorized some Shamanist prayers but he later concluded that Shamanism could not become an attractive religion for the masses.⁵³

Togan was in favor of reforming Islam based on scientific principles.⁵⁴ However, he never explained how Islam could be reformed based on scientific principles. He was neither the first nor the last scholar to suggest the reformation of Islam. Indeed, what scholars often meant by the reformation of Islam was the reinterpretation of Islam based on modern conditions. For instance, in order to strengthen Islamic consciousness, Togan suggested the study of commonly respected Islamic scholars in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, only after the outdated parts of these works were eliminated.⁵⁵

Considering the early twentieth century arguments on whether or not praying in Turkish was acceptable in Islam⁵⁶, Togan referred to an unpracticed *fetva*, ruling, of Ebu Hanefi, which allowed praying in Farsi.⁵⁷ Togan's main argument was that the Turks converted into Islam with their own free will

⁵⁰ Zeki Velidi Togan, *Türklüğün Mukadderatı Üzerine*, (Istanbul: Hikmet Gazetecilik, 1970), 86.

⁵¹ Gün Soysal. "Zeki Velidi Togan" 488-495 in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002) 493.

⁵² Zeki Velidi Togan, *Hatıralar: Türkistan ve Diğer Müslüman Doğu Türklerinin Milli Varlık ve Kültür Mücadeleleri*, (Istanbul: Hikmet Gazetecilik, 1969), 82-83.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁴ Togan, *Türklüğün Mukadderatı Üzerine*, 84.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁵⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of praying in Turkish see, Cündioğlu, p. 40-63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 40. A. Zeki Velidi Togan, *Kur'an ve Türkler "The Qur'an and the Turks,"* (Istanbul: Kayı Yayınları, 1971) p. 26-27.

“without any compulsion”⁵⁸ and they “regarded the Qur’an as their national holy book.”⁵⁹ Togan embraced the Qur’an as it is rather than initiating any change on the Qur’an or on the main principles of Islam as it had been proposed in the earlier reform plans. Togan pulled examples from the early Turkish Muslim states of the Karakhanids and the Seljuks and argued that as soon as Turks converted Islam they separated Islam and politics.⁶⁰ Indeed, it was the case when the Seljuk sultan Tugrul Bey (1038-1063) entered Baghdad in 1055. Caliph, Al-Qaim (1031-1075), remained as the religious leader while Tugrul Bey was the political head. Togan solid arguments, which were knitted with examples from the Turkish history, helped to bridge the gap between Islam and secularism in modern Turkey.

Togan was in favor of using the appeal of Islam to stop communism. He was not in favor of making Islam the most dominant political force that would require a regime change. Like his other compatriots, Togan’s preference was that Islam should serve the interests of the state. Indeed, when both the Turkish state and Islamic culture were challenged by communism from the 1950s to the late 1970s, the interests of Islam and the state were the same. This political reality provided a respected place for Islam among the Turkish nationalists paving the road for the rise of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (TIS).

The ideas developed by Togan were later matured and formulated by his student İbrahim Kafesoğlu and colleague, Osman Turan, a prominent historian and a later editor of *Türk Yurdu*. They prepared the historical philosophy of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, which served as the core of TIS ideology. The TIS ideologues argued that pre-Islamic and Islamic Turkish history were linear, contradicting the Kemalist THT’s efforts to distinguish them. Osman Turan advocated that the Turkish states in both periods worked for the same goal of establishing *Nizâm-ı Âlem*, the world order.⁶¹ Despite conversion to Islam, Turkish political goals, according to TIS ideologues remained the same. Since they saw history as continuity, they argued that modern Turkey had to adopt the same goal of creating the world order. The liberation of the Turks in Central Asia would be the first step toward that goal.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 29-30.

⁶¹ Osman Turan, “The Ideal of World Domination among the Medieval Turks” *Studia Islamica* 4 (1955), 77-90.

Turan and Kafesoğlu's theories and even narratives were strikingly similar. Indeed, Turan blamed Kafesoğlu for plagiarizing his work.⁶² Both argued that pre-Islamic Turkish religion was monotheistic and very similar to Islam. Therefore, Turks easily converted to Islam. Islam thus was the most natural religion for the Turks and Turkish national consciousness could not be kept in faiths other than Islam. One slight difference between the two was the fact that Turan acknowledged that pre-Islamic Turkish tribes had followed different religions including a monotheist one⁶³ while Kafesoğlu argued that the totemic beliefs and Shamanism were not originally Turkish, that such beliefs came from neighboring nations.⁶⁴

Kafesoğlu originally had claimed in 1964 that Turks brought Shamanist Turkish cultural components into Islam and created a unique combination of the Turkish-Islamic culture.⁶⁵ This original argument connected pre-Islamic and Islamic Turkish history but Kafesoğlu later changed his theory arguing that Shamanism was not an original Turkish religion. He concluded that pre-Islamic Turks believed that there was one god in the sky, the sky god, *gök tanrı*. Thus, Kafesoğlu named this religion, *gök-tanrı dini*, sky god religion. The sky god religion was the Turkish national religion.⁶⁶ Although Kafesoğlu's facts changed, his analysis remained the same.⁶⁷

Kafesoğlu disagreed with Togan in regard to the origins of the Turks and the Mongols. Togan argued that the Turks and the Mongols were from the same ethnic and racial origin⁶⁸ but Kafesoğlu claimed the Turks were from the "brakisefal" white race while the Mongols were from the "dolikosefal

⁶² İbrahim Kafesoğlu, "Selçuklular" 353-416, *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, V. 10 (Istanbul: MEB, 1980). Osman Turan, "Selçuklular hakkında yeni bir neşir münasebetiyle (İslam Ansiklopedisindeki İ.Kafesoğlu'nun Selçuklular makalesi)" *Belleten* 29 (1965): 639-60. İbrahim Kafesoğlu, "Prof. Osman Turan'ın tenkid yazısı dolayısıyla Selçuklu tarihi meselelerine toplu bir bakış" *Belleten* 30 (1966) 467-479. For English translation of the argument see Gary Leiser, trans. and ed., *A History of the Seljuks: İbrahim Kafesoğlu's Interpretation and the Resulting Controversy*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 137-184.

⁶³ Osman Turan, *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi: Türk Dünya Nizamının Milli İslami ve İnsani Esasları*, (Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2005), 66-71.

⁶⁴ İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1993), 284-289.

⁶⁵ Leiser, *A History of the Seljuks*, 116.

⁶⁶ Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, 295- 301.

⁶⁷ For the final analysis of Kafesoğlu see, İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk-İslam Sentezi*, (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1999).

⁶⁸ A. Zeki Velidi Togan, *Moğollar, Çingiz ve Türkler*, (Istanbul: Bozkurt Yayını, 1941).

Mongoloid.”⁶⁹ Nevertheless, in regard to the compatibility of Islam and nationalism, Islam and secularism and Kemalism, their views were parallel. Both believed that the Turkish cultural features largely carried throughout the Turkish history from the pre-Islamic period to the present created a unique Turkish understanding of Islam.

Togan, Turan and Kafesoğlu all argued that the rise of Turkish nationalism predated modernity. Kafesoğlu claimed that the Turkish nationalism was the first nationalism in the world. He dated the beginning of Turkish nationalism to the Asian Huns from the first century B.C.⁷⁰ Furthermore, he claimed that the first practice of secularism was seen among the Turks⁷¹ and the Turks founded the first states in the world history.⁷² In regard to Turkish identity, Kafesoğlu took a civic nationalist stand. According to Kafesoğlu, whoever was raised with Turkish culture, spoke Turkish and felt Turkish could be regarded as Turkish.⁷³ He did not list the Turkish blood connection as a prerequisite to be a Turk.

In regard to their approach to democratic politics, the TIS ideologues were only slightly different from each other. Togan was in favor of a democratic parliamentary system rather than an authoritarian administration. He was convinced that the pre-Islamic Turkish leaders in history were not authoritarian. Even Genghis Khan, whom Togan considered a Turk, could not be able to bend the decision of majority.⁷⁴ Turan and Kafesoğlu were supporters of the spread of democracy in Turkey as well. Turan served as a deputy from the Democrat Party (1954-1960) and later from the Justice Party (1965-1967). Turan argued that none of the reforms brought from Europe was embraced as much as democracy.⁷⁵

Kafesoğlu’s support of democracy was conditional. He believed that democracy could be successful only if its practice did not contradict the cultural

⁶⁹ Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, 45-46.

⁷⁰ İbrahim Kafesoğlu, “Türk Miliyetçiliği” 1-5 *Türk Kültürü*, no. 2 (December 1962): 1-2.

⁷¹ Ibid., 4.

⁷² İbrahim Kafesoğlu, “Bir Türk Kültürü Yok Mudur?” 5-9, *Türk Kültürü*, no.25 (November 1964): 6.

⁷³ İbrahim Kafesoğlu, “Kültür Miliyetçiliği” 1-5 *Türk Kültürü*, no.5 (March 1963): 3.

⁷⁴ Togan, *Türklüğün Mukadderatı Üzerine*, 135-136.

⁷⁵ Mehmet Özden, “Osman Turan” 558-565 in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 5: Muhafazakarlık*, ed. Ahmet Çiğdem (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002) 565.

norms of society.⁷⁶ For Kafesoğlu, western ideology that aimed to spread democracy into every aspect of society was “the safest way to take humanity into salvation.”⁷⁷ Kafesoğlu argued that nationalism and democracy were compatible and they fulfilled each other. He was convinced that a democracy without nationalism or nationalism without a democracy could not function properly.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the limitless freedoms of democracy bothered him. He declared that “[i]n order to save our democracy from being a victim of attractive but artificial concepts of absolute freedom and equality, we only need to organize political, administrative, judicial, scientific and educational institutions based on Turkish nationalist principles and fill these institutions based on national interests.”⁷⁹ Interestingly, Kafesoğlu proposed the take-over of the state by nationalist forces and still believed that this action would be democratic. Along with many Cold War scholars of Turkey, Kafesoğlu understood democracy mainly as a way to elect leaders in free elections. The 1961 Turkish constitution introduced freedom of expression, freedom of press and many other freedoms that come with democracy. They were new concepts for many in the 1960s Turkey.

Philosophy into Ideology

Togan largely contributed to the evolution of the TIS historical philosophy. Kafesoğlu brought this philosophy that intertwined Islam and Turkishness into daily politics and turned it into an ideology. The 1969 congress of the pan-Turkist Republican Peasants Nation Party⁸⁰ was a turning point for the pan-Turkists. TIS adherents came to the 1969 congress well prepared with a strong ideological weapon, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. Kafesoğlu challenged Türkeş for the party leadership. Kafesoğlu could not win the party leadership but the TIS ideology did. In this congress, the name of the party was changed to the Nationalist Action Party (NAP), while the party flag was changed from the grey wolf, a pre-Islamic Turkish symbol, to three crescents, an Islamic symbol, over a red background.⁸¹ Furthermore, in this congress, Türkeş embraced the motto of

⁷⁶ İbrahim Kafesoğlu, “Miliyetçiliğin Yanlış Tefsirleri” 1-5 *Türk Kültürü*, no. 7 (May 1963): 1.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁸ İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Miliyetçiliğinin Meseleleri*, (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1999) 132-133.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 136.

⁸⁰ Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi.

⁸¹ The three crescents figure was used on Ottoman flags over a green background, which symbolized Islam. Three crescents symbolized three continents the Ottoman Empire spread, Asia,

the TIS adherents: “we are as Turk as Tanrı Mountain and as Muslim as Hira Mountain.”⁸² This motto has been used by the pro-Islamic pan-Turkists since the early 1960s. The Turkish world order theory of the TIS was undeniably attractive for the pan-Turkist NAP. Nevertheless, the “Nine Lights” ideology that set the goals of the RPNP was still embraced by the party leader, Alparslan Türkeş in the 1970s.⁸³

In 1970, Kafesoğlu founded the nationalist think-tank, Aydınlar Ocağı, Intellectuals’ Hearth (IH), whose goal was to create a common ground ideology for the Turkish political right. The TIS became the core of this common ground ideology. The political Islamic parties of Necmettin Erbakan, collaborated with the IH as much as it served their goals. The Kemalist pragmatic approach to Islam became a starting point for the IH. Because the TIS and its outlet the IH served the primary Cold War interest of the state, curbing communism, TIS found its way into public education system. Kafesoğlu authored the new history textbooks in 1976⁸⁴ and TIS ideas dominated the education system in the 1980s. The military junta (1980-1983) and the post junta civilian governments let the TIS dominate the Turkish education system.⁸⁵ The TIS promoted Islam as a cultural factor along with its prayers and rituals, but discouraged political Islam. As opposed to the revolutionary premises of socialism and political Islam, the TIS ideology did not have an aim to overthrow the Kemalist regime. Thus, the TIS managed to attract support from the official circles becoming the *de facto* nationalist ideology. The TIS fulfilled the need of a national religion Atatürk had planned.

Africa and Europe. The NAP adapted the same symbol with a hope to repeat the might of the Ottomans. The NAP flag, which has been used since 1969, has a red background symbolizing Turkish blood and three crescents.

⁸² “Tanrı dağı kadar Türk Hira dağı kadar Müslümanız”. Tanrı Mountain is located in Central Asia, original Turkish motherland. Hira Mountain is in the outskirts of Mecca. According to Islam, Prophet Muhammad received the first revelations of Qur’an from angel Gabriel while he was in a cave in Hira Mountain. Güven Bakırezer, “Nihal Atsız” 352-357 in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 353.

⁸³ Alparslan Türkeş, *Milli Doktrin: Dokuz Işık*, (Istanbul: Ergenekon Yayınları, 1972).

⁸⁴ Etienne Copeaux, *Tarih Ders Kitaplarında Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk-İslam Sentezine 1931-1993*, Translated from the French by Ali Berktaş, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), 83.

⁸⁵ Sam Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State: Education and the Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

Conclusion

To sum up, none of the ambitious projects of the early republican period (1923-1950) to nationalize Islam initiated a practical model to provide with a peaceful coexistence of Islam, secularism, nationalism and Kemalism. The attempts to nationalize Islam created several consequences, some of which were perhaps not intended. Although being Muslim was never a prerequisite for the Turkish citizenship, several proposals to nationalize Islam kept Islam in the core of Turkish identity and made Islam *de facto* precondition for Turkishness even at the peak of secularization in the 1930s. In all these efforts, the Turkish state monopolized the interpretations of Islam and nationalism. Only the state employees were allowed to teach, preach and interpret Islam. Similarly, only the Anatolia-centered non-expansionist nationalism was embraced, while pan-Turkism was pushed to the periphery.

As the socialist threat emerged in the early Cold War, Islam and nationalism became antidotes to socialism. Keeping the balance of power between Kemalist secularism and pro-Islamic nationalism required a peaceful reconciliation. In the early republican period (1923-1950), the Turkish state had intentionally kept pan-Turkism at bay in order to prevent a Soviet aggression. Once the Soviet threat turned from a possibility to a reality in the early Cold War (1950-1970), the Turkish state had no more reason to curb pan-Turkism. The Turkish state lifted its monopoly on nationalism by allowing public intellectuals and non-state actors to spread their nationalist interpretations.

Privatization of nationalism started a competition among several nationalist schools of thought. From racist pan-Turkists and racist Anatolia-centered nationalists to pro-Islamic pan-Turkists, Turkish nationalist ideas competed to become the mainstream Turkish nationalism. Under the close watch of the state, the pro-Islamic pan-Turkists brought Islam from the core of Turkish identity to the surface. A new historical philosophy, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (TIS), connected pre-Islamic and Islamic periods of the Turkish history. The ideological fathers of the TIS reconciled not only Islam and secular Kemalism but also Islam and nationalism. By embracing the Kemalist ideology, the TIS kept Islam as part of the Turkish cultural identity but rejected alternative ideologies from socialism and fascism to political Islam that would have required abandonment of Kemalism. The TIS ideologues proposed no change in the daily practice of Islam as opposed to the marginal proposals of the early republican period. This non-interventionist approach was welcomed by the conservative

circles. By 1970, the TIS became the most formidable nationalist interpretation. As the TIS turned from a historical philosophy into an ideology in the 1970s, it dominated the Turkish history curriculum from the mid 1970s to the early 1990s and made Islam *de facto* prerequisite of the Turkish national identity.

After the military tutelage of the 1980s ended, a glimpse of freedom of expression and the TIS ideology was challenged by liberalism and political Islam in the 1990s. Moreover, removal of Article 163 from Turkish penal code in 1991 partially broke state monopoly on Islam and allowed the expression of different interpretations of Islam other than the official one. Nevertheless, in the post-Cold War Turkish intellectual life no ideology has emerged to challenge *de facto* existence of Islam in the Turkish national identity.

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