Chapter 4

From Culture of Politics to Politics of Culture: Reflections on Turkish Modernity

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Introduction

A perusal of modern Turkish literature beginning from the first novel published in the year 1872 rather surprisingly demonstrates that an issue referred to as the “crisis of civilization” is a constantly debated topic. The debate most likely derives from the fact that there has been a lack of consensus on the roots of the concept of the word, “civilization.” The Ottomans traditionally used a word they had borrowed from the Arabic, medeniyet, but the meaning of this word remained nebulous. Medeniyet expressed a broad spectrum that includes the entire culture, tradition and customs produced in a certain social environment. The borrowed word was parochial in nature and its meaning quite different from the new concept of civilization taken from the West, a word that has a significant “implementation” history which I dealt with in another article. Even this significant unfolding was a remark of an ongoing change because the original meaning of the word civilization was diametrically opposite to that of culture and excluded all local connotations.

This clash of the old and new is a common issue in all societies undergoing a (radical) modernization process. The Turkish example eventually led to an interesting solution proposed by an influential thinker of the Young Turk and Kamesit eras, Ziya Gökalp. He proposed the use of the Arabic word hars to refer to the local social elements and differentiated it from the earlier concept of medeniyet, arguing that the former more closely eluded to civilization whereas the latter refers to culture. The extension of this debate was inevitable because, beginning with the Tanzimat (Reformation) period, Turkey—then the Ottoman Empire—was undergoing vast transformations at all levels—social, political and cultural. The call for such a continuous transformation was defined as modernization; in Turkish this became medenitleşme (to be (some) modernized) or as-
elated to the contemporary. Whenever word was preferred, the source of the concept of civilization lay in the West and envisioned a huge transformation of the prevailing social norms.

The generations that succeeded the Tanzimat period, namely the Mevlevihane (Constitutional), and Cumhuriyet (Republic), did not compromise on the transformations and supported the same model with an ever-increasing intensity of will to change. The state and members of the political elite did not refrain from clashing with any opposing groups among the masses and this resulted in the creation of specific models of both modernity and republic. In any case, the long history of total change was inspired by the French Revolution in a series of radical methodologies disregarding the habits and the practices, more specifically, the culture of the society.

The introduction of new ideas taking hold with a new set of ways of living resulted in elites, read intellectuals, forcibly attacking the existing social structure rather than the political. In other words: the track of transformation in Turkey was not from the political or economical to the social but from the social to the political. In this sense, the entire history of modernity in Turkey may be qualified as a cultural transformation having impacts and ramifications at all levels, including that of direct interventions on everyday life. The relevant literature refers to this as authoritarian modernity. This transition has two interconnected and significant corollaries.

The first is that the early Tanzimat, even though it is consistently accused of starting all these troublesome set of transformations, did not ask for a radical change in the social life. On the contrary, it constantly looked for ways to reconcile the cultural norms with the past. The Câlîhane Hüüt-i Hümâyûn (1923 Chamber Rescript) talks about the “violent renovation and reform of the ancient procedures (vessâ-i asâhan hatim bânam tagyir ve tecâl). This is a rather forgotten or vastly ignored issue which defines the early epistemological visions of the “will” that created the Reformation Period as well as showing the scope of what is meant by the “reformation.” However, approximatively fifty years later, the course of the approach took a radical turn and, with the penetration of positivist ideas into the intellectual circles in the era of the Young Turks, intellectuals deliberately set upon a campaign against the existing structure and its roots at all levels. The new Republic in the following period and its constitutive ideology, Kemalism, also claimed that the “new” could only be sustained if all existing structures were entirely demolished. In return, the political transformation of Turkey up until very recent times has been in fact a modernization via cultural transformation based on the dismantling of the whole “past.” I describe this as the transition from the culture of politics to politics of culture and in this chapter I will try to show the basic aspects of the difference between the two concepts.

Secondly, a fierce debate continues among the students of Turkish politics regarding the nature and the meaning of modernization. While one camp argues that it is a process of rupture, the second group supports the idea that, with all due information about the radicalism of the “reforms,” especially those of the Kemalist era, the process sustains a certain continuity with the past. The latter

From Culture of Politics to Politics of Culture
not only emphasizes the clear connection between Kemalists and the Young Turks, a move from which the prominent names of the latter arose, but, as I will argue in this chapter, that it is possible to find an epistemological perpetuation on three levels. These are the state, society, and individual levels that interwove in the different political periods and—despite all divergent interests and ambitions—there existed a deep stream linking one movement to the other.

The basic aim of this chapter is to focus on and explain this aspect, with specific emphasis on a significant fact: that is, not only is there a continuity between Kemalism and its predecessors, but that even the developments in Turkey that are generally classified as belonging to the “post-Kemalist period” are also congenial elements.

The Culture of Politics and why it is not the Politics of Culture: Turkey and the Politics-Culture Clash

The Early Movement
As a country with a “short” history of “modernization,” Turkey for many reasons is a significant example of a country in which politics and culture clash. The main reason for this is not that politics has always been intent on dominating the cultural field, but rather it is the fact that culture developed out of the structure and particularities of politics in the modernization process. In other words, the political culture in Turkey depends on a large extent on the twists of modernization. To understand this, one has to delve into the ideological mechanisms of the Kemalist modernization; this might be analyzed on the basis of two important concepts: the state on the political side and the positivism constructing both the political and the cultural. Leaving the brief analysis of positivism to the next section, I will first start with the natural relationship between politics and culture in Turkey.

Turkish modernity started with the early attempts of the Young Ottomans. As analyzed in the seminal book by Serif Mardin, this period saw an attempt to inject the basic ideas of the French Enlightenment into the institutions of the Ottoman Empire. Even though the fundamental aim was to convince the Sultan to ascend to the establishment of a parliament and transform the Empire into a parliamentary monarchy, the intervention comprised more than this. Accompanying the “innocent” idea of a parliamentary system were also early political notions of “rights.” The Ottoman Empire of the period put into the Islamic (takm), and to a certain degree “customary” (çeft), notions of rights but what was being suggested by the Young Ottomans extended far beyond this. It was inclusive of the preliminary construction of a relatively solid secularism in the sense that it implied, as Mardin has shown, the attachment to reason. This was a transition from a sacred or heavenly explanation of the material world towards a materialistic conceptualization. I propose this as the principal definition of secularism.
The second issue raised by the Young Ottomans along the same line was the birth of the concept of both the public and the private spheres in the context of public opinion. Both the birth of the public press and the publication of daily papers combined to trigger this intervention. Accordingly, both the "invention" and the "discovery" of the novel and its publication in daily papers as serially also contributed to this development, as well as the construction of the "reader." The third point that emanates from the Young Ottomans period is the birth of the intellectual both in accordance with the state and set against it. This kind of intellectual in its new form was completely different from the traditional ulama. Whereas ulama was on the whole part and parcel of the Islamic law and social system, and in that context in connection with the state, the new group of intellectuals was intent on change, which meant the introduction of a new mind set and clash with the existing state. The fourth issue developed in this period was the creation of early notions of two political concepts: vatan (literally, "the country," but more attached to the French word patrie) and millet (nation). Young Ottomans were mostly a group of men of letters and their source of inspiration was dominantly the French literature of the day and especially the Romanticism. Namık Kemal was a devotee of Victor Hugo as the "patrie of vatan and millet." These four elements make the Young Ottomans era one that I call the period of transfer of knowledge (system), where knowledge stands for the West. Nevertheless, "West" here especially emphasizes two things: technology and politics. In this period the idea of culture is limited to the notion and practice of politics, but it was also a period in which traditional values and customs were highly respected. The defenders of these ideas did not demand that people drastically alter their way of living. There was an apparent transformation but it was a more natural and spontaneous type. This is obvious once again in Namık Kemal's writings and basic arguments. As the prominent figure of the period, Kemal was a fervent supporter of a new set of mind and political structure but this did not bar him from defending the idea that those entities present and effective in Western culture also already existing in Islamic culture. Accordingly, Kemal did not refrain from writing a treatise against French historian and thinker Ernest Renan, whom he believed to have repudiated and heretical Islam. As Kemal saw it, the possibilities of Islam were now being hampered by a denominational ignorance and inefficiency, and Islam was no longer being practiced and enjoyed as it had previously in the high days of the Ottoman Empire. Stressing the traditional "progressive" methodology of the classical Islamic model, Kemal proposed a return to the practices of the golden days, asi-ı sadeet, meaning that one should do what the fathers had done before. The significance of this period can be summarized in a few points: i) the political environment the formation of a new society; ii) there was a call for a new understanding of politics within the context of (natural) rights and secular vision; and iii) this period enabled the birth of new classes who would reshape the society and the state. These three issues created a common ground that may be termed early modernization. Nevertheless, these issues also delineated the shortcomings of Turkish modernity. From this perspective, the most important of the shortcomings is that the concept of the "rights" and the implementation of the "rights" did not foresee the sharp separation of the state and the society. On the contrary, the main aim of the Young Ottomans was the salvation of the (neo-Islamic) state. The way to achieve this was found in the new "system," but with the condition that the society should be loyal to the state and should never forget that it was the state that provided opportunities for salvation and happiness. Second, as mentioned above, in the course of the reform—although at some point the state may conflict with the intellectuals—it did not refrain from forming a coalition with them. Though sometimes problematic, this coalition also made the intellectuals, if not fully obedient, loyal to the state. This collaboration would in time evolve into a situation that I define with a term borrowed from Gramsci, the historical bloc, a situation in which the army and bureaucracy are joined together. Here it should also be noted that the aim of "new" or the "modern" state was to create a rational bureaucracy, and instead of it succeeding in that, this very new charter became a non-separable part of the state. Relative to the formation of this structure and its outcome, I refer to the period and process as the culture of politics. Second period: Birth of a New Culture of Politics As far as the culture of politics is concerned, the era of the Young Turks differs in many aspects from its antecedent period. First of all, this period introduced to both political and social life a number of issues and concepts that up to then were completely alien to the interested circles and the society, in general. The important contributing element to this development was the "long-life" of the period. It was so long that in itself it can be separated into different periods. When Abdülmecit II banned the Ottoman Parliament upon his reign in the year 1876, a struggle for "freedom" started in different circles and these proponents came later to be known as the Young Ottomans. As Abdülmecit's inattentive lasted for 33 years, generations changed and the history of the Young Turks can be pulled back to the year 1889 when Ahmed Riza decided not to return from Paris, where he had traveled for the centennial celebrations of the French Revolution, and joined the Positivist circles. The second period had a beginning date but it is not easy to determine its closing date. It was at the Second Congress of the Committee for Union and Progress that the rule of the army was accepted as necessary and indispensable for a revolution. This (pre)condition set the stage for the army to be regarded as the constituent internal constituent of modern Turkish politics. More than that, the army has been considered as the key modernizing force in Turkey, a path-setter. This occurred before the Second Congress started to be popularized, intellectualized, and theorized in the writings of Ahmed Riza. In the year 1907 he produced a pamphlet called Vartif ve Mehalliyet: Askar (Duty and Responsibility, Soldier). Here, he not only set forth an elitist theory of military and complained of the secondary role given to it by civilians, but also called for a new mission for the army. Henceforth, the military should no longer accept the role
of "conquest," but should work to protect the existence of the Empire. To defend the new responsibility, Riza reminded the reader of the function of the army in the revolutions in the Ottoman Empire.25

Riza came to this conclusion, not only because of the military power of the army, but by drawing on another very significant question that emerged historically and in concert with the modernization process in Turkey, that is: "how might the country be saved?" This question in return has two implications. The first one which can be understood through different experiences analyzed by the school of political transformation is the importance attributed to technology transfer. Riza argued for the need for new military methodologies to enhance the power of the army, making it once again as strong as it was in the past. With a radical decision very similar to that of Riza's, and as a first step, Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) transformed the structure of the army by demolishing the traditional Janissary Hearths. The modernization of the army continued during the reigns of all succeeding sultans and demarcated a significant history.23

Second, modernization in the context of army involved more than simply a transfer of war techniques and arms. Military modernization represented the implementation of a new world-view, namely the positivism, in the society. For that reason, it was not only the military school students who were being exposed to the materialistic explanation of the world, in the context of pure mathematics and related scientific knowledge, but medical and engineering schools were also made branches of the military academy and doctors and engineers were graduated as members of the army.24 It is not surprising that, as will be seen, the most ardent positivist ideas emanated from the medical school as well as the core of the political organization which will be transformed into CUP first formed there.

The generation of young military school students born around the year 1850 were introduced to these new and revolutionary ideas and the critical role—to be played by the army during their schooling. Eventually they all graduated from the War Academy around the year 1908 when the Second Constitutional Period (İkinci Meclisli) was proclaimed. In the military schools they were educated according to "scientific" principles in both secular and positivist sense, and they thus became crucial supporters and defenders of "enlightenment" principles.25 In that capacity they remained emotionally and persistently attached to the idea that the army should play the leading role in both the salvation and the reshaping of the country. Thus, both direct and indirect, military interventions turned out to be a "natural" outcome of this belief, making the armed forces the key element of modern Turkish politics.

These two periods jointly spanning 1889–1908, one determining the ideology and the other the practicality of the politics, have yet another supporting buttress, that is, the birth of enlightened professions. These were especially the young teachers and administrative bureaucrats graduated from the School of Administration (Meclis-i Milliye) as governors (Vali, Kaymakam), together with a cluster in lower ranks like post officers and other civil servants.26 Among this group the role of military originated doctors and engineers still need further studies.

From Culture of Politics to Politic of Culture

The last subgroup in this category is made up of the lawyers who graduated from the law schools, got exposed to new ideas in Istanbul, returned to their homelands and held key places to motivate the people as renowned and powerful members of the local bourgeoisie.26 These were already well-equipped with the idea of westernization/modernization and intent on disseminating the same ideology in deep Anatolia. The existence and role of the local press, the enlarging possibilities of communication, were also supporting factors for this young generation. This provincial group was also in contact with the local bourgeoisie whose children were sent to western style schools in Istanbul. On the whole, the 1908 revolution was not a matter of overnight intervention but of a process long prepared by the contribution of different ingredients whose effects had had a long influence; this process continues to remain active even today, as this socio-cultural structure was later inherited by the Kemalist movement and period.27

This composition brings forth and better describes the essential essence of what I have called above as the Historical Bloc I, in passing, have defined it as the coalition of the military, bureaucracy and the state. To that, the intellectual/literal should now be added. However, provincial bourgeoisie (esnaf) can also be added to this grid in a crucial way. This network first backed the 1908 Revolution and its political organization CUP (Community for Union and Progress), rather than Kemalism and its political organization the Republic's People Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) which can be taken as the extension of the former.28 Nevertheless, one should observe that this network also served to form parties like the Türk Milletverî, Cumhuriyet Fırkası (Progressive Republican Party) and Demokrat Parti (Democratic Party), which sprang out of a spontaneous and real political opposition or Serbest Fırka (Free Party),29 which had started as a counterfeit opposing political organization under the control and authority of the regime.

The only difference was the importance and the role attributed to mobs and masses, the people (halk), as a social and political actor. Whereas hard-liners like CUP and JPP had called for populism30 from the beginning, despite the fact they continued with uncompromising elitist policies, the other parties showed more respect for the mobs and masses, especially on ideological matters, without disregarding the importance and function of the elites. Other than that, the political priorities of the political organizations were similar to each other. Cultural ideology, namely positivism, was the common tie that merged all these groups and it needs a further look at it is still the most important ideology, open and hidden, in Turkey.

The Mother of All: Positivism

Positivism has played a significant historical role in the formation of Turkish modernity in that it has never fully been grasped as a philosophical concept, but rather used as a tool to transform society through the political intervention from above.31 In this sense, the history of positivism should be analyzed mainly as a policy-making instrument. However, this should not diminish its meaning as a
beliefs in the material world not imply that positivist assumption in Turkey envisaged a kind of materialistic relativism that opens itself to different interpretations of matter. Positivism is, rather, geared toward a strong belief in the existing materialistic norms. Comte suggested that classical metaphysics and epistemology should be replaced by "scientific methodology." The main task should be the rationalization of all social relations through positive politics. What is needed is the construction of social physics and sociology that will support positive politics. It can be broken down into three main components.

The first is that in the configuration of Comte's philosophy, the role of the intellectual as scientist leads to a more important role than the structure itself. The scientist has two important tasks: first is the explanation of the laws of the nature even if it is being ontologically proven and analyzed through observation and experimentation, and second, when the scientist satisfied with this, he should demonstrate the future consequences of the laws of the nature. In other words, he should be a prophetic as well. This very notion of "scientist as a prophet" is the main agent in Comte's theory giving it its social tone.

Second, scientists using the power of the diagnostic, that is, as "the knowing subject," should arrange and organize social matters according to the laws of both science and rationality following scientific truth and reality. The main achievement of this task and process would be the creation of a positive society in the content of the other critical component of this philosophy, namely the concept of evolution. Comte argued that societies could evolve in a manner similar to the evolution of the nature. The last crucial issue in the political aspect of this philosophy is the role of the intellectual, even though this role has been shaded by the scientist, inheriting the knowledge provided by the scientist, the intellectual would motivate and enforce the society to transform itself, as he is also thought to be diagnostic in nature.

Ottoman intellectuals of the Young Turks era adhered to this ideology of various levels. First of all, Ottoman intellectual history has a materialistic background that goes all the way back to Tanzimat period (1839–1856). As has been analyzed by Hanafi in his groundbreaking article, this generation inherited the German tradition of "Vulgar materialism" and the biology of the period. However, the politization of materialism took precedence in the following generation, for when the Ottomans tried to find a way out of their troubles they found themselves facing positivism with all its characteristics, both philosophical and political, a movement that was already on the scene at that time. The Ottomans were not interested in the epistemological side of the question; rather, they relied on the political issues. The "right" and the role supplied by positivism to the intelligentsia proved an indispensable opportunity for the Ottomans, for it made it possible to intervene in society to reshape it with the belief that all societies have the same innate characteristics and, if the scientific way is followed, could all end up being similar. It was also the provision of positivism—one declared by Comte himself—that these conditions could also lead to the eventual union of societies.

By drawing especially on the knowledge of evolution, Ottoman intellectuals moved with the strong belief that all societies share the same basic qualifications....
now first focus very briefly on this question and then turn to the analysis of Kemalism as a constitutive politics of culture.

Is Kemalism a Break or Continuity?

According to one group—the adherents—Kemalism ushered in a completely new and unprecedented period in Turkish history. They hold that it is a unified project shaped in the mind and realized by the strong will of Kemal Ataturk himself. The supporters argue that the components of this movement, that is the reforms carried forward in the course of Westernization, served to detach the society radically from the past. Conversely, critical approaches argue that the Kemalist movement was a prolongation of the long history of Westernization that started during the Tanzimat period. Moreover, they would continue correctly, most of the reforms implemented by the Kemalist cadres—former army officers and a handful of young intellectuals—had been ideologically shaped by the Westernizing branch of the Young Turks headed by Abdullah Cevdet and his Journal Vakit. The further proof of this thesis is a textbook published by Kiliçbek Hakkı that lists the reforms necessary for the westernization of a country.47

Given its stance, this debate cannot cast a light on the basic parameters of the politics of culture reigning in Turkey, for the “originality” of Kemalism needs a further and deep analysis into the relative historical, methodological, and epistemological issues. Due to the constraints of space, I will merely attempt here to touch upon a few issues that have contributed to the transformation of the political perception in Turkey. We should start with the basic argument that the notion of break and continuity both appear in a dualistic way in Kemalism.

Secularism versus Religion

Starting with secularism, it is best to say that, since its very birth, Kemalism has been a devotee of a radical rationalism with a fierce denial of anything irrational. In that sense, it is attached to the idea of universal reason and is unapologetically modernist.48 Kemalism in this context might also be described as part of the tradition of “enlightened despotism.”49 For Kemalism, secularism means an unquestioned devotion to the materialistic exploitation of nature, as well as the separation of the state from the religious affairs. The scientism of the nineteenth century, which was one of the constitutive movements of modernization and of the early secularization processes in Turkey, appears once again in the rhetoric of Kemalism but now with an overpowering pneumatics—Gaining Jacobin content and meaning, secularism was now transformed into laicism, taking the post-French Revolution practice (as well as the French model of Enlightenment) as its model.50 This radical attempt would naturally result in the notion of tradition. The demise of the Caliphate and the annulment of the Ottoman Empire were expected consequences because Kemalism, since its very beginning, considered and constructed Islam as its constitutive outside and this sense reflects a radical difference from the earlier practices.35 Islam has always been a crucial issue in the history of modernization. It was not only “revolutionary” in the first generation like Namik Kemal who sought the conclusion of Islam with modernity, but those with even much more radical insights like Ali Riza, who also attributed a certain importance to Islam. Riza in his later period of his “revolutionary” life attributed a significant and special importance both to Islam and tradition by referring to Comte. He clearly takes a position against the separation of state and religion from each other, saying that in an Islamic state the king obeys the laws and the advice of the intellectuals, in the same line with Young Ottomans:51 This convoluted mind system is also true for Abdullah Cevdet, a fierce Westerner. He also shifted back and forth when Islam is the subject matter.52

The significant novelty of Kemalism appears when it totally disregards all these presumptions and situates itself as a perfectly new system. It removes Islam from the public space, completely limiting it to conscience and personal practice space and space never refers to it as part of administrative processes. Neither does it take an initiative to reconcile Islam with worldly affairs. In that sense Kemalism attributes a kind of religiosity to the importance of science and rationalism, reminding us of the positive-religion conceptualization of Comte.53 Tradition was another adverse issue for Kemalism. In its great ambition for the total modernization of the society it aimed to entirely eliminate traditions and traditional value systems. Kemalism is an unceasing endeavor aimed at replacing Islamic values with individual/personal ones.

These interventions have a deeper impact at another level, namely the sphere of politics. Nineteenth century Turkish modernization cang to the traditional meaning of politics. It systematically refrained from using politics as an instrument to transform the structure of the things. When secularism entered the intellectual arena as a thought system to be used for the dissection of the matter and for the construction of a new relation among the things it would necessarily correspond to the conceptualization of the politics as a solid and materialistic value to give new meanings to social issues. When based on a secularist rational politics encompasses the basic tool for the “explanation” of social issues, as well as a new “science” capable of “rehabilitating” the society. Unless secularist principals were fulfilled, it was impossible as a matter of fact to intervene in the political realm in this sense. Also it was not possible to reshape the state if it were a heavenly issue. In that regard Kemalist secularism may be seen as a radical move in the history by way of positivism.

Citizen: Old or New

The second realm in which Kemalism appears as a new phenomenon is the introduction of the new notion of citizenship.54 Even though in the relevant literature Kemalism has been criticized at not having fulfilled the necessities of citizenship on a more social and democratic level and on the contrary saw citizens as subjects who should obey the rules of the state, the implementation of the Civil Code might be taken as a turning point in modern politics.55 The Civil Code above all sheds the ground on which the subject and the state meet towards contractualism. With the Civil Code, the citizen becomes a social entity on the
basis of rights. Perhaps not as understood in the full liberal sense, but still in line with the basic principal of the contractual model state—as demarcated by Süleyman Rıza Paşa of the Tanzimat period—the existence of the citizen is protected, liberties corpus, and rights are the domain of the citizen, rather than existing for the good of the state.

This is an important point because it critically dismantles the concept of "rights" as understood by the first and second generations. Tanzimat thinkers conceived of "right" only in terms of a "natural right" with an Islamic rationalism. To Namık Kemal, the Qur'an qualifies the human being as a virtuous creature, to the state should approach him thusly. This was a clear contradiction with modernity, for in modern thinking, "rights" are extremely material in nature and represent an "invented" concept. Kemalism, for the first time in Turkish history, brought a secular understanding of citizenship and by making it a political actor introduced the notion of political reasoning. With these tenets Kemalism stipulated a Atatürk meaning—his citizen, arguing that the enlightened individual should break away from the tutelage that imprisons him, be it Islam or tradition. In order to understand the implications of this, one should remember the ideas and the poetry of Tevfik Fikret, a prominent poet of the Young Turks period who had resisted Abdülmecit and a positivist/materialist who contributed to the journal Servet-i Fünun (The Treasure of Sciences). He was a sheer materialist defining himself as a poet whose conscience, ideas and reasoning are free. Lale Atamak reminded readers that the new regime exported them to main students who have free reasoning and conscience.

The New Notion of Progress

The third issue with which Kemalism might be evaluated as a "break" in the idea of progress. In classical Islamic thought, as I explained above in passing, progress/change always meant a backward move in history. The point of departure, in a sense, the starting point of the history, is the "first sultan" (happy era) in which the prophet was alive and governing. The purpose of history, and that of governments, should be the emulation of his governance, as well as the return to those rules and that period. Should there be any changes that would become evident through public outcry; the government should again retreat to those former days and rules.

Kemalism was the first time in Turkey's modern history that this model was bypassed, as it not only erased the reminders of the past with its attack on Islam and traditional values but because it also introduced concepts of futurism and utopia. For Kemalism, the progress would be in the future, in other words in the transcendentalist mentality of modernism itself. When Kemalism introduced the task of catching up with modern civilization, it was referring to the utopic futureism of modernism. In that sense Kemalism defined itself as a perpetual forward motion having Hegelian notes of historicity. Nevertheless, in this point it is necessary to discuss the concept of ideologue that is implicit in the Kemalistic understanding of time, as this also has an impact on secularism and, in doing so, I will refer to Ulkten.

Ulkten argues that Young Turks confronted the problem of living space to the society in expressing its shortcomings. But this openness should rely on two preconditions: one, it should have been based on scientific arguments and the second, it should not disturb it. The crucial argument is that, according to Ulkten, this approach should have also been carrying a conservative point of view, while still being uncompromising in its reformist nature. The concept of "sociological positivism" developed by Gülbahar is the key solution found to this problem, for his basic argument was that his ideas were based on science. Despite this claim, Ulkten "science" is more like the ancient "feth" or beliefs of the Islamic political and social culture. Continuing, Ulkten argues that positivism never assumes matter to be the substance of its theory of knowledge. On the contrary, the basic elements are always impressionistic. In this sense, sociological accounts become "matters of conscience." Essentially, what Gülbahar has called "the sociological positivism" is easily transformed into sociological idealism. Gülbahar finds a link between the methodology of Gülbahar and the policies of CUP. In that context he argues that materialism is more "violent," whereas idealism appears rather personal. The best way to impose his Gülbahar's ideas on the masses as a "true belief" (musta) was to replace the absolute order of feth with the scientific idealism of sociology. This quotation and argument not only concerns the ideological background of CUP but also, by way of influence of Gülbahar, the basic epistemology of Kemalism that claims that scientism works more like a religious belief system.

These three elements at first glance match Kemalism in terms of a theory of break. But in a further analysis they have their internal shortcomings, which in turn reinforce the continuity thesis in accordance with the basic argument of this chapter that in the culture of politics in the modern period has followed a continua, even if at various moments it appears in different guises, and Kemalism is not immune to this principal, despite the fact that it has at some points certain peculiarities.

The Shortcomings of Kemalism and the Continuity Thesis

It is a sore much easier to show the shortcomings of Kemalism that links it to a past from which it ambitiously wants to detach itself. Continuing on the same issues as explained above, it may be argued that Kemalism has: i) a problematic relationship with secularism; ii) if it has not been successful in the construction of civil rights in the context of citizenship but rather it has once again envisaged a transcendental state and asked the citizens to accept it as obeying subjects; and iii) if even in terms of the idea of futurism and utopianism, Kemalism has constructed itself as a kind of anti-social and in that sense annulled its modernist epistemology. In the next section of the chapter I will reflect further on these issues.

Secularism

The term of the Kemalist tenet of secularism still remains the most debated topic today in Turkey. In the post-1980 period this principle became the subject
of a heated debate regarding the veil/headscarf issue. As political Islam began to erupt in the 1990s, the critics of Kemalism asserted that Kemalism in its essence lacks a "real" secularist opening. The core of this argument was based on three important points. The first one is that Kemalism, rather than separating the sacred and the profane from each other, meticulously strove to put religion and the religious under the control of the state. The General Directorate of Religious Affairs is a government office and it is attached to the Ministry of State. This gives the state the opportunity of managing religious affairs by excluding any possible intervention from the society.

Secondly, limiting the sacred to the private space and excluding it from public secularism again worked in favor of the controlling elite. Thirdly, the state's intervention in religious matters ends up (or starts with) the selection of the Sunni sect of Islam as the "official" one. Other religious groups and sects are completely ignored. Especially Alevites, who encompass a large group of about ten million members and who are also fervent supporters of Kemalism, are unhappy with this situation, arguing that the teaching of religion in the school system is in violation of their existence.

Citizenship

In the relevant literature covering the criticism of Kemalism in the context of citizenship, the main argument is that Kemalism has not been able to create the Kantian notion of citizen emancipated from his tutelage. It is not, as has been argued by the prominent ideologists of early Republican era, a notion of citizenship based on culture but it is definitely a racist one and is an extension of the "Turkist" nationalism that has started in the post-1968 era. On the contrary, Kemalism, even though it has attempted to "construct" an ethereal citizen, has been inadequate in achieving this goal. The main cause for this insufficiency has been the transnationalism of the state. Instead of creating the liberal conditions necessary for the formation of the emancipated citizen by way of minimizing the state, Kemalism has reinforced the state both ideologically and practically.

Ideologically, the state delineates the limits of the society and the citizen. In this sense the citizen is obliged to obey the state. This is clear at two points: the first one is in the notion of "authority" that penetrated public opinion in the early republican era. Mahmut Esat Batur, long time Ministry of Justice in Kemal Ataturk's cabinets and one of the prominent ideologists of the era, argues that Kemalism is a "democracy with the ingredient it needs: authority. Kemalism is an authoritarian democracy." This is also true when the corporate structures of Kemalism are analyzed. Kemalism, which rejects the existence of classes in the society while relying on Gokalp's corporatist interpretation of Durkheim, fervently advocates policies of solidarity and a transnational state.

On the practical level, statism, which appears primarily in the economic sphere, is one of the six tenets of Kemalism. Although in the 1930s—due to the reason explained above—it was rather difficult to expose a more democratic society, Kemalism used statism to form a new class, namely the bourgeoisie, a class that would support the reforms as they were introduced, in a "from the top" methodology. Certain Kemalist institutions of the 1930s, like the Halk Evi...

Turkey’s general elections in the year 1950 resulted in changes that were shocking in their impact. The Kemalist party, RPP, lost its majority in the parliament and an opposition movement that had started in 1946 under the name of Democrat Party (Democrat Party) assumed power. The result was not only political, for it also engendered a debate on the conditions that had triggered this spectacular shift. Among the many topics discussed, the most important was that of the contradiction between the center and the periphery as proposed by Mardin in his essay he argued that modern politics in Turkey is composed of a dualistic character. Those who started the process of modernization with the Tuncel can be referred to as the central forces, namely the state and the political elite.

The second is a rather vague concept, the periphery, that is in general what is usually referred to as the people and, in a larger sense, includes the provincial social forces. It is redundant to say that there had been friction or tension between these two actors. Whereas the center relies on traditional theories and social engineering utopias, disregarding the culture developed in the society (more concretely, the ideological tenets of Kemalism), the periphery is attached to traditional values, Islamic values and Islamic practice more than anything else. This really represents the dividing point between the two different groups. The center, especially so in the Kemalist era, has systematically tried to create a nation, as has been explained before, and, in fact, the early movements of the DP really involves such pro-Islamic symbols like reciting the call to prayer in Arabic but not in Turkish, a rule previously set by Kemalist cadres.

Besides the center-periphery clash, another core factor that has determined the demise of Kemalism in the post-World War II era was the economic management. Kemalism, especially in the 1930s following the Great Depression, returned to a rigid Stalinism as the basic economic policy. Parallel to the spirit of the 1930s that witnessed the birth of Stalinist regimes, Kemalism which also found itself in the course of trying to struggle in “nation building” from the position of extremely deprived conditions, decided not to rely on capitalist principals. Kemalist nationalism was barking and war in accordance with the political statisticians explained above. Despite this, during the 1940s a liberal wing even existed among the Kemalist cadres, Cevat Bayar, who would later become the third president of Turkey as the chairman of DP. This liberal wing held economic policies in various ways during the years spanning 1950–1957 all of Turkey’s governments period. During the years spanning 1950–1957 all of Turkey’s governments period. These DP leaders placed a great deal of state ownership in the hands of the state and its agents.

To judge whether the post-Kemal era brought a break in the existing normative structure very much depends on the analysis of the economic models. It is rather difficult to qualify this period as a break, even though there is a clear backlash as far as Kemalist principals are concerned, Stalinism was still perpetuated by the new groups. The main reason for this is the role of the bourgeoisie. Beginning with the Young Turk era in Turkey the leading elite had long been in search of a new bourgeoisie to support modernization.
realm. Despite this, the main spirit of the constitution clearly relies on state principals, with no compromise, and it positions station, especially at the economic level, as a governmental aim, even though the constitution is infused by a notion of autonomy, the single liberal concept to be found in the document.

This general stance toward station was also backed in many ways by the post-1960 governments. The coalition governments of the post coup period were strictly statist. In addition to that, the major governing party which was an extension of DP, namely the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi), claimed at the liberal spirit of the constitution during its governing years 1960–1971. Second the Justice Party also voiced opposition to the autonomy granted to universities and especially the judiciary supervision of the executive. Adhering to the principles of the Cold War era, JP governments also reflected strong opposition against liberal principals, once again arguing that they were leftist or even communist ideas.76 The conservation of these government was also demonstrated to their implementation of the nationalist principals.76 Since 1968, nationalism in Turkey has clouded internal relations with the state and mostly represent the pricing of the state over that of the society. In other words the nationalism espoused by conservative governments was actually justification of the transcendentalism of the state. This reasoning in Turkey ends up with a raison d'être that is the complete negation of the society and on this ground there is never a clash of interest between the army and the conservative in Turkey.

The military intervention of 1971 is a strong proof of this. In the aftermath of the "coup by memorandum," the parliament (with the support of the JP in a tacit coalition with the military) enacted major revisions to the 1961 Constitution and the changes encompassed a good deal of what JP governments had been demanding for years.76 The aim was to "bolster the state" against the post-1968 leftist shift in Turkey and the social demands raised by the developing and growing working class in concurrence with the youth and backed by the RPP, which had taken a serious shift in the year 1965. The Kemalist party of the frowning ideology started defining itself as a party politically situated on the left of center. However the "left" here did not include any disavowal of state policies and ideology.74

On the contrary this was the new disguise and period of station. It affirmed station as being a part and parcel of leftist politics and policies and this argument continued all through the rest of the 1970s up until the 1980s. Despite some revisions, it even remains a valid argument today for the same group. This means the 1970s were the towering years of station in both nationalist and leftist versions. The 1980s began with the last and most severe military coup, an event that exploded with the apparent claim of the restoration of both station and Kemalism. The Advisory Convention prepared a new constitution, a document that clearly separated station from society and bequeathed society as once again the domain of the state; the goal of the constitution was to restore the basic political culture that is politics excluding the society. This was to be one of the most sweeping evidences of the continuity thesis in modern politics.

By Way of Conclusion: The Last Trial, Post–1980 Period

If one is to speak about a break in Turkish politics it would probably lead to an observation of the 1980s. Although there are interesting determinations in the literature that the "new deal" period in Turkey in the post–1983 period also showed a consistency with the previous era, this period can be analyzed under the effects of two clashing forces. On the one hand, the government—under the influence of the neo-liberal politics—continued at another level with both the nationalist and conservative undertones within the influence of the New Right. Neo-liberal policies enabled the Motherland Party (ANAP) governments to openly and widely criticize station at all levels, both politically and economically, with the argument that we should now enter a period of economic liberalism unchained from the constraints of station.76 The bureaucracy was also challenged in this period with the argument that modernization of this institution had never before been achieved. In other words, there was a search for the "end," meaning Weberian, rationalization of the bureaucracy based on the merit system with a strong emphasis on the de-centralization of the government. This would lead the state to minimize itself in accordance with the liberal policies.

Despite these arguments and policies, MP governments continued with the existing non-liberal structure as far as the politics of culture is concerned. The MP made no step to change the 1981 Constitution, which forewarns an authoritarian regime.74 Another condition reflecting the MP's involvements in the commodity of the traditional political culture is again seen in its objective in creating a new privileged group of capitalists using state resources and other potentials. This attempt culminated when a great reaction gathered against the MP government on the basis of corruption.76 Not only did the MP lose power to the Social Democratic Populist Party in the 1980 elections, largely due to this reason, but a number of its ministers—ever later the prime ministers—were sent to the Supreme Court for reasons related to corruption and abuse of power. This was a good indicator showing that even the liberal movements of varying intensities are attached to station in Turkey.

The post-1980 period can also be analyzed as a period in which the break theories period reside. It is especially in this period that a certain search started for liberal concepts, not only in the forms proposed by the governments or parties but also in the forms of new cleavages in search of a civil society. The cry-word "Civil Society" became the magical concept of the 1990s and 2000.76 Although this concept started in the 1980s, it evolved in the following decades mainly due to the impact of the first wave of globalization.76 The movements, which had taken off in democracies that were searching for ways to implement and preserve cultural values in the society, also had an effect on Turkey. Especially the notion and practice of citizenship opened a debate with large outcomes from various ethnic and gender groups.

The second vital factor in this unfolding was the demands raised by religious groups that demanded to practice their religion in the public realm. Veli-
ing was the case of this debate and it still is. The arguments of these groups tacitly put the Kemalist tones into debate. Gender groups mainly criticized the understanding of citizenship, ethnic groups were questioning the nationalistic principal, and in religious spheres the debate was unfolding around secularization. In general, as the importance and functionality of NGOs developed in Turkey, their existence first and foremost questioned the transcendentality of the state. Finally, the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) as a political organization with an Islamic background is a pinnacle of this process, in which there has been a transition to a new culture, not in the form of a break but once that has been gradual and consistent.

The question appears now if the move of the JDP should be assumed to be a break in the history of modernization of Turkey, with its significant model of modernization led by the state and political elites. What has been argued in this chapter can be summarized into two specific remarks: the first is that the "intervention" of grassroots politics in Turkey has a long precedence and has been exercised since the early Free Party period of the 1920s. In that sense the present situation does not reflect a move that is specifically original. Second, the originality would appear if the JDP or any other political power radically daring to change the state-society configuration in Turkey. This would mean the transformation of the existing culture-politics alignment as well. Since 2002, under the pressure of the European Union, Turkey has undergone a remarkable change toward a "better liberalism" and this could be the start of a new process. Turkey now has the potential for such a change, namely to pass out of its long standing politics of culture to a culture of politics. But the most crucial potential is Turkey's recalling the time it lost in its long history of modernization.

Notes
1. For a lengthy analysis of the concept and how it was conceived by the Ottomans see Yavuz Baydar, Osmanlı İdareleri Değerlendirmesi: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu (Concept of Civilization in the Ottomans), (Istanbul: Akademi, 1993).


4. This point is stressed despite all endeavor of the first generation of Ottoman reformers beginning with the Young Turks. At least it should be remembered that even though Young Turks differentiated between the political and the social and comprehended the political as a part and parcel of the social. The following generations went further and refrained from touching the political issues in their literary works whereas the social structure was under various criticism.


7. Ibid., 86–94.

8. Ibid., 115–35.


11. The history and political analysis of the birth of Turkish intellectuals still is lacking but in part it can be found in Murat, Genesis. Another very controversial and political thesis is Yalçın Kılıç, Avrupalı Turist Tabelı (Thesis on Intellectuals). 5 volumes, İstanbul: Tökdin Yayıncılığı, 1984.


13. For the advent and development of the concept see Bernard Lewis, Political Language of Islam. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).


15. The first volume of the collection of Kemal’s basic articles has recently been translated by Namık Kemal, Osmanlı Modernity Understanding Mezareli (The Problems of the Ottoman Modernity). Ed. N.V. Aydinoğlu, I. Kar (Istanbul: Doğan Publication, 2005).


17. Avut: standa, which literally means “the times of happiness,” is an Islamic concept which denounces the age in which the Prophet was alive and ruling. In the classical Islamic epistemology the notion of "prophets," as has been the case for the Ottomans, was meant to emulate the virtues of the Prophet’s days. That means going back in the history in order to create a forward progress. I will touch on this later.
18. This argument does not counter Sadik Rahmi Pasha, who claimed that it is the state for the people and not the people for the state. His statement continued to be the idea prevailing to the realms of the right and would not diminish the limits set by the state. See, Lahman, “The Cultural.”

19. The difference between the groups and generations of the Young Ottomans is analyzed by Mardin. As a late study see, Serif Mardin, “Yeni Osmanlı Düzenlerine”, in Çevrelerin Develesi Durumu: Türkiye ve Moscou’nun İlişkisi (The Heritage Inherited by the Republic: The Accumulation Process and Its Impacts), ed. by M.O. Alkan (Istanbul: İletişim Yayını, 2001), 42-53.

20. The political ideas of the period are analyzed at length in Serif Mardin, Jan Türelinin Spisi Fördern 1895-1906 (The Political Ideas of Young Turks), Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınlari, 1964.

21. Riza sent a group of letters (iyaplı) to Sultan Abdülhamid, joined the political circles in Paris, and contributed to Le Monde Osmantique. He had been educated in his youth at the agricultural school in France, Grigny and, according to Professor Mardin, he was under the influence of Jules Michelet, the Enlightenment period philosopher. However, as he himself explains, he was exposed to political ideas in Istanbul in the year 1887 in a book written by Dr. Robert. Concerned. He also attended courses delivered by Pierre Lafitte who was then the head of the French positivist circle. At that time positivism was not that strange to the Ottomans and concretized the founding fathers of the movement. It had in that year period a letter to mighty Mustafa Rasyi Pasha. Riza then launched a journal called Mevrevey (Consultancy). Until the end, 1908, he ambitiously signed loyal to his journal and principles, defending all his other attempts to dissuade him. The first section is significantly marked by these events. As will be discussed more in the following section, the ideologues of the period in the penetration of the positivist ideas,的想法 and ideology into Turkey is a policy making tool, as well as a narrative and semi-social element. This very momentous matter determines the political-social dimension of the period that would evolve into 1920s, 1930s, and even today, as will be seen. The best source for Riza, prominently, is Sabit Hancioglu, Bir Sosyal Ortak Otoruh: Osmanlı İlişki ve Türk-Anadolu İlişki: Bir Türk-Cevreleri (The Social Otoruh: The Relationship and Turkish-Anatolian Relations), Istanbul: Istanbul University, 1988) and also Serif Mardin, Jan Türelinin Spisi Fördern, 123-67.

22. The history of this period can be followed through the seminal book by Sabit Hancioglu, Preparations for a Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

23. This period's international with military is analyzed with an extensively detailed approach in M. Nuri Turlan, Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse (London: New York, D. B. Taplin, 2000).

24. A great deal of importance has been attributed to the army in the modernization of the Ottoman Empire by those scholars who might be attached to the modernization school. The best example is Serdar Lewis, Emergency of Modern Turkey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, second edition, 1968), especially 75-126.


27. Among others especially Barrington Moore and his follower Theda Skocpol should be mentioned.

28. Lewis also gives very valuable information about the intellectual origins of the Young Turks' attempts. Serdar Lewis, Emergency, 80-82.

29. Ibid., 83-86.

30. Lewis traces the impact of the West on the Ottoman Empire on this stage and clearly shows the connection between the two cultures by way of teaching in the military academies drawing the attention to the books acquired among which Groenen Encyclopedia is particularly important. Bernard Lewis, Ibid., 59.

31. It is interesting that Kemal Atatürk himself started his education in his district school, malatya nekede where the education principals were traditional, namely Islamic teaching and the teachings of the Koran were the main elements of the education. He then transferred to first a civil primary school and then to a military school. One important element here is that according to his biography even in that time, in Selcuk, a province of the Ottoman Empire, a kind of binary educational system was available for the Muslim society, both religious and civil. This shows that civil education was already a part of civil life, but its nature was still ambiguous. However, from Atatürk's biography it is clear that he was sent to the traditional school due to the wishes of his mother, but left the school after being beaten by a teacher, an event that bound him with a remarkable feeling throughout his life. This shows that the society had not yet fully accepted the new ideas, even in a city like Selcuk known for its liberal character. Another event that runs through the memories of Atatürk's time, Malatya Askeri, was that he did not want her to go to school. He was already a prominent general in the army and even offered herself by transforming the house so that he could dismiss her from her eagerness for being educated. This is also another proof of the character of the social transformations of the period, as even Atatürk, who would in a decade be a figure of social rights for women, could not curtail himself from behaving traditionally. Though later he even asked Malatya Hanım to be a member of the new opposition party, The Free Party, she remained semi-iliterate throughout her life. For Atatürk's biography see, Andrew Mango, Atatürk (London: John Murray, 1999). The Insight for such "strange" attitudes of Atatürk is analyzed in his psychoanalytical analysis by Vasak Dikman and Helen Berkovitz, The Innocent Assassin: A Psychobiography (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964). For Selcuk see Mark Mawson, Selcuk, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1459-1954 (New York: Harper and Collins, 2004), for Malatya Atika's memoirs see Atika Muzaffer Kemal, Malatya Askeri Yazarı (My older brother Mustafa Kemal: Malatya Askeri Yazarı) (Istanbul: Ankara, 1963).

32. The period of Abdulhamit II is crucial on these grounds. First and foremost, during his long reign there was a tremendous change in what might be called international relations, the enlargement of the military projects, the development of the notion of local administrations and municipalities, the commencement of new school systems, the enlargement of the postal structure. The birth of the new class of officials and civil servants as explained above is an outcome of this progress. For a discussion of the Abdulhamit II period seeltr Öztürk, İmperializm ve Osmanlı Devleti (The Longest Century of the Empire) (Istanbul: Eflux Yayınlari, 1983).

33. Although there has been significant research on this subject, the Turkish novel reflects important observations on the role of the lawyers and doctors. In all novels having the political turn as the key matter the male protagonist is a member of this group. See Turan Buga, Tavşan Baskırun (Istanbul: Gilat Yayınlari, 1981).
34. For this argument, see Erik Jan Zurcher, "Kamalıslar Dişinda Cumhuriyet" (Ortakelichen Resources of the Kemalist Thought), in Kemalist, haz. A. Inisli, Izmir: Baskent, 2001, 64-65.


36. The word "true" has a number of different meanings in Turkish. One is "Evet" (yes) and the other one is "liberal." The name of the party can easily be translated as Liberal Party. However, the word liberal is a purely political term in Turkish and at the time it was launched, although its program was established on relatively liberal ideas, the intention in naming it was not.


43. The Darwinian approach has been more popular in the formation of these ideas; see Hanan, Bilkent, and Hanan, Bilkent. "Sonsuz Orta," (A Political Organism), 604-13.

44. For the concept of "centralized orientalism" see Hanan Bilek-Kahraman, "Time, Place, and Space," in Kemalist, Ed. A lengthy analysis from a political perspective can be found in Hanan Bilek-Kahraman, "The Roots," Bilkent University Press, 1999.

45. For the oldest dimension of Young Turks see Sert, Nassar. "The Young Turks and the Young Turks." Istanbul, 1991.


47. The most important analysis for the Turkish Historians remains that of Fikret Şahin, "ImpressionistievenTurk Politikali," Tarih Çekirdeği, 1912-1913 (Tarih Kültür) 1 (1912-1913). Istanbul: İhsan Yayıncılık, 1997. See also, İbrahim Karan, Tarih Çekirdeği, 1912-1913 (İstanbul: İhsan Yayıncılık, 1997). See also, Ibrahim Karan, Tarih Çekirdeği, 1912-1913 (İstanbul: İhsan Yayıncılık, 1997).

48. Successively the art produced in this period was an inseparable part of the general culture which followed these political ideas. Here it should be noted that this intersected understanding of the social and political transformation ended up with two distinctive characteristics, (i) the counter-revolutionary aspect of the "Kemal Corps" that did not at all consider the democratic nature of the society and the modernization spirit and (ii) the proto-fascist faction of the New Turkey through the poetry of Yüksel Kemal who based all his ideas concerning the "invention" of the history, geography, and the language of the Turks on the ideas of Maurice Barrès and George Sorel. It is also the culture inherited by the following Kemalist period that needs a closer look, especially from the perspective of the absence of democratic principles. See Hanan Bilek-Kahraman, Yüksel Kemal Baskan ve Ohad' in Ed. Türk Modernizmi Liaturu ve Dergisi (Istanbul: Ege Yayıncılık, 1991).


50. A lengthy analysis of Kemalist with attachment to the "bunai" thesis can be found in Niyazi Berkes, The Development, 479-505. However in the same book there is a section devoted to the future developments. Berkes, Ed., 413-15.

61. Utopia is one of the most crucial concepts of early twentieth century Western modernism, especially in art. For a general discussion see Imaginary Communities [electronic resource]: Phillip E. Wegner, Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).


63. Ibid., 10. Italics are mine.

64. Ibid., italic added.

65. Andrew Davison argues that secularism can be seen in conjunction with Ziya Goktal’s ideas that have a corporatist base. Andrew Davison, Secularism and Revolution in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).


71. The first brief of this condition is surveyed in Tariq Jaber, Social Power and the Turkish State. (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 93-126.


Chapter 5

The Public Sphere and the Question of Identity in Turkey

Feyzi Bahau

During the tumultuous year of the Young Turk revolution in 1908, Jak Saman-
on, a Jewish subject of the Ottoman Empire, enthusiastically commits himself
to the ideas of freedom, equality, and justice. His commitment to the emerging
republic with the constitution at its center leads him to believe that there will no
longer be Jewish, Muslim, Christian subjects but one people subject to the same
laws and having the same rights. It seemed that the quiet and isolated Jewish
quarters of Istanbul no longer satisfied his sense of belonging and he began to
give passionate speeches to his family and neighbors about the importance of
moving out of the ghetto mentality and integrating with the rest of society as
equal citizens. Jak Saman’s passionate plea was not met, however, with a
warm welcome by the Jewish community of Istanbul. For centuries, the Jewish
community, like other religious communities of the Empire, enjoyed autonomy
in its internal affairs and found little reason to mix with the rest of the Ottoman
society. The Ottoman social system was organized around autonomy and strict
segregation of religious communities; as a result, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim
communities were able to live side by side without involving in each other’s
business. However, Jak Saman sensed that the ancient order was coming to an
end while a new society was emerging in which religious, ethnic and cultural
differences should not segregate individuals into isolated communities but allow
them to become equal members of society. Full of passion about the coming age
and no longer desiring to be confined within the physical and cultural bound-
aries of the Jewish quarter, Jak Saman broke away from the community in
which he grew up and became a dedicated activist of the new revolutionary era.

We fast forward in time. It is 1938, fifteen years after the declaration of the
Turkish Republic. Committed to create a modern society out of the ancien régime
order of the Ottoman Empire, the new Republic adopts a universal citizenship
regime in which all members are declared equal and entitled same rights
and obligations. Gone is the way of organizing individuals into the separate and
segregated communities in the Empire. Mevlana Ada, citizen of the Turkish
Republic, sits around the dinner table with his wife and their two sons. Mr.
Ada tells his family that from then on they are no longer Jews, but will be-