Post-Secular Society and the Multi-Vocal Religious Sphere in Turkey

Alper Bilgili[1]

....

ABSTRACT

Secularism in Turkey has been an area of fierce discussions driven primarily by the existence of a state institution regulating religious affairs, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (The *Diyanet*). Having emerged as a product of ideas and developments of the 21st century, the new post-secular society in Turkey is spearheading a multi-vocal religious sphere that is providing areas of influence to religious communities (*cemaat*s). The significant question with regard to this changing structure in Turkey is whether this increasing influence of the *cemaat*s will lead to an Islamicized Turkey. To answer this question, the article argues that the emerging multi-vocal religious sphere is a result of the democratic climate that has been created out of the possibilities offered by globalization and European Union accession. Thus, multi-vocality should be interpreted as a normalization process that will redress the problems created by the hyper-secularist practices of the early republican era, rather than an attack against the democratic pillars of the Republic.

KEYWORDS
Islamic communities, Diyanet, *cemaat*, Secularism, Post-secularism

---

Introduction

Ever since the allegedly Islamist AKP (The Justice and Development Party) came to power in 2002, Turkish secularists have been talking about an inherent danger, a danger they envision as an Iran-like Turkey that will be governed by a version of *Sharia* law. This fear was so ubiquitous in secular circles that in the 2007 general elections the opposition party CHP (The Republican People's Party) based its election strategy solely on their perceived threat of an Islamic state. Four years later, in the 2011 elections, this same party abandoned its earlier secular-state-in-danger rhetoric, a step that can be interpreted as a sign of a paradigmatic shift being experienced by Turkish society and its politics. We may term this shift a normalization process that is replacing the hyper-secularist paradigm with a moderate one. This paper dwells on this change and tries to grasp the factors that led to it. The new secularism in Turkey will be analyzed with a special focus on the main domestic actors such as the *Diyanet* and the *cemaats,* as well as the European Union as an influent international actor. The implications of such a redefinition of secularism in Turkey will be addressed at the end of the paper.

Secularism à la Turca

The journey of Turkish secularism begins with a belief in the universal applicability of Western experience. The secularization thesis, assuming the replacement of religious worldviews with rational thought, was embraced by the late Ottoman intellectuals and early Republican cadres. The pro-secular cadres of Turkey used terms like "enlightenment" and "darkness" – that they borrowed from the West- to illustrate their position vis-à-vis the pro-Islamists'. As Atatürk, the founding father of Turkish Republic, claimed in the opening ceremony of the parliament in 1937, the party programme of his party would replace the books that were assumed to be revealed from God ("Atatürk'ün Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisinin V. Dönem 3. Yasama Yılını Açış Konuşmaları" 1937). The extensive role attributed to Islam was used as a scapegoat in explanations for the underdevelopment of the Turkish state, and the remedies for development included a harsh version of secularism that would secularize not only the state but also the society as a whole. Yet, the prescriptions should have been different, for the problems that gave birth to secularism in Europe were not the same as those of the Turkish state. The secularism,

as a European invention, aimed to curb social power of the Church and achieve peace in a society which was threatened by confessional wars (Habermas 2008: 22). This was certainly far different from the issues Turkey faced in the early republican era and the historical experience suggests that in Turkey the religious authority never constituted a rival to the political authority.

First of all, the Ottoman Empire lacked a Church-like institution that could mobilize the masses against the political authority (Gözaydın 2009: 15). The title of *caliph,* which was described as "the shadow of God" and "the successor of the prophet", was held by the Sultan himself, and thus could not pose a threat to Sultan's authority. Besides, despite the existence of an *Alevi*[2] minority in Anatolia, there was no sign of a confessional war in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. Thus, the conditions that paved the way to secularism in the West were absent in the Turkish case. Still, the Turkish state elites who designed the republican state interpreted secularism as essential in creating solidarity along nationalist lines. Gökalp, who shaped the minds of the early republican intellectuals, argued that nationalism would be the triumphant ideology of modern times and it should have replaced religious ideologies in creating solidarity. (2007, 76) The Arab revolts of World War I[3] were used as proofs of the need to immediately inculcate nationalist sensibilities. This forced the republican cadres to accelerate the establishment of a secular state, rather than testing the validity of the idea that religion would wither away in the socio-political spheres without any intervention.

The abolishment of the caliphate in 1924 was a necessary -but not necessarily sufficient- condition to the establishment of a secular society along western lines, as was the adopting of secular rules or of the Latin alphabet. The secular state was aware that it had to ease any potential religious discontent that could trigger a religious counter-revolution -especially after banning the Islamic communities (*cemaat*s)[4] in 1924- and chose to do this

---

[2] Alevis constitute a non-Sunni Muslim community, which is interpreted to be similar to Shia Islam in certain respects. It is by far the largest Muslim minority in Turkey. In this respect see Çarkoğlu, Bilgili 2011 for a detailed analysis of the Alevis.

[3] The Arab revolts had a deep impact on Turkish cultural memory. Although various other nations revolted against the Ottoman Empire especially starting with the 19th century, the Islamist ideology that Islam could unite Muslims lost ground after the Arab revolts. This, certainly, strengthened the nationalist and secular claims of the state elite.

[4] Islamic communities (*cemaat*s), very crudely speaking, refer to hierarchical religious organizations that are mostly influenced by a religious authority. The cemaats aim to perform religious rituals and

by satisfying the religious needs of the masses. The *Diyanet*[5], paradoxically enough, was invented by secular cadres to protect the secular state from those religious threats. The state planned to teach its own understanding of Islam, whose borders, at least partly, were drawn by secularism, nationalism and modernity. The potential of multi-vocality within Islam was present in the first decades of the Republic, so the *Diyanet* was used to curb the "radical" voices and thus lead people to an understanding of Islam that it viewed as "convenient." The *Diyanet*, which bears responsibility for providing public religious services, has been functioning as a state institution ever since. Indeed, until quite recently, it alone could decide what is "truly Islamic" and what is not. The paradigmatic shift that we will focus on broke up this monopoly of the *Diyanet* and created a space for alternative groups and their interpretations of Islam.

The *Diyanet* continues even today to play a guiding role in religious issues. It issues *fatwa*s (legal statements in Islam) and provides commentary on contemporary issues. The important point that should be underlined is that the *Diyanet* functions within boundaries defined by the secular state. A research on the Friday *hutba*s (sermons) prepared by the *Diyanet* between 2003 and 2005 illustrates this point. While the subject of "the love of Allah" was used five times as a *hutba* topic, "the love of fatherland" was used six times (Gözaydın 2009: 166). Another example of this statist tendency is the *hutba* titled "Republic is a virtue," which argues that a democratic republic is the form of government that best accords with Islam ("Cumhuriyet Fazilettir" 1999). Further examples can be found in the speeches given by *Diyanet* officials on television, speeches praising Atatürk and referring to his views that underline the importance of religion for a healthy society -though the idea sounds quite Comteian. In an interview I conducted with İzzet Er, the former Deputy Director of the *Diyanet*, the *Diyanet*'s official view was explicitly stressed: "We try to reconcile Islam with secularism" (Interview with İzzet Er, February 11, 2010).

---

social-religious activities as well as creating solidarity among its members.

[5] Article 136 of the Turkish constitution defines the Diyanet's responsibilities. As a state organization the *Diyanet* is "responsible for the execution of the duties specified in the special law in order to provide national unity and solidarity, and remain separate from all political views and thoughts in accordance with the principle of secularism". The duties mentioned in the constitution are explained in the special law as follows: "to execute the works concerning the beliefs, worship, and ethics of Islam, enlighten the public about their religion, and administer the sacred worshipping places." See http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/english/tanitim.asp?id=13 for more information on the *Diyanet*'s basic principles, aims and objectives.

This exceptional secular design has been criticized by secularists as well as by Islamic fundamentalists, while certainly for different reasons. Secularists argue that in genuine secular countries the state is indifferent to all beliefs -including disbelief. The *Diyanet*, however, acts to solely satisfy the religious needs of Sunni Muslims, although it is funded by the state rather than the believers of this sect. The religious demands of Alevis, Caferis[6] and other non-Sunni Muslims are not satisfied by the *Diyanet,* let alone the demands of other communities. If the *Diyanet* singles out the Sunni Muslims as the only orthodox and acceptable group, then the rest should have a right to choose not to fund such kind of an organization. On the other side of the coin, the fact that the *Diyanet* focuses on Sunni Islam does not please all Sunni Muslims since this focus is interpreted to be the result of a control-or-perish mentality. The state is aware of the fact that Sunni Muslim communities are eager to step in if the state withdraws from satisfying religious needs and hence feels the need to exercise such a control. Theologian Kemaleddin Taş, for that reason, argues that leaving the religious affairs to *cemaats* will endanger the solidarity of the country, since in such a scenario the mosques would be shared by different religious communities espousing different beliefs (Taş 2007: 508). In another interview, Mustafa Çağrıcı, the *Mufti* of Istanbul, claimed that the *Diyanet* prevents radical ideas and brings about unity. To support his claim he gives the example of Pakistan – a country that lacks such a central religious institution and thus ended up with fragmentation and turmoil (Interview with Mustafa Çağrıcı, January 18 2010). This kind of a unity, doubtless to say, is not welcomed by all the *cemaats* -especially by those with differing interpretations of Islam. All in all, the state's ambition to prevent potential religious reactionary movements by promoting its own understanding of Islam has been criticized by two different groups, namely secularists and "unorthodox" Muslims (a group that also includes radical Muslim groups) even though both base their uneasiness on totally different reasons. That is secularism *à la Turca*.

Towards a post-secular, multi-vocal Turkish society

The republican elites have never interpreted secularism –whether it refers to a separation of Church and State or the decreasing role of religions in everyday life of individuals- as a temporary phase in the history of mankind,

---

6 Caferis belong to the Shia Islam as well and do not have any representation in Diyanet despite their similarity to the Sunnis in religious rituals.

but praise it as a universal and eternal human virtue. The concept of secularism has been by far the most treasured of Atatürk's principles and is so emphasized that any and all other principles –including democracy- can be sacrificed for its sake. Some of the experiences that support this argument are the military coups of 1960 and 1997. Those coups should be analyzed -at least in part- to have an idea of the robustness of the secularism in Turkey.

The Republican People's Party, the founding party of Turkey, ruled the country for more than 20 years without any free and fair elections.[7] It was held that free elections carried the threat of ending republican rule, since the reforms needed time to be embraced by the masses. Thus, as mentioned before, the secular state sacrificed certain Western values to become Western sooner. Yet, international politics forced the Turkish elite to revise their to-do list. Upon the defeat of Germany in the Second World War, the Turkish elite realized that it had no option but to pursue reforms that would enhance a more democratic state. With the introduction of a multi-party system in the mid-1940s, the radical secular policies of the Republican People's Party were curbed by the threat of a defeat in the 1950 elections. Yet, the secularists' efforts to change their image were futile and in the first fair elections, they lost their governing position to the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party's success was interpreted by the masses to be a victory for Islam (Tunaya 1991: 206). The Democratic Party, despite the fact that its members were recruited from secular cadres of the Republican People's Party, pursued various populist policies -such as restoring the use of Arabic as the language of the call to prayer, a step that touched a nerve with some secularists. The military, a staunch defender of secular principles, interpreted the Democratic Party's policies as exploitation of religious feelings and intervened in politics in 1960. The moderate policies of the Democratic Party towards religion resulted in a coup d'état that diminished the role of religion in social life. A similar incident was experienced in 1997. The pro-Islamist stance of the ruling Welfare Party was punished with a post-modern coup[8], by which the military dictated its demands to the government to stop further Islamization of the country. In both cases, the regime's attachment

---

[7]   See Zürcher 1993, for a detailed analysis of the Kemalist one-party rule between 1925 and 1945.

[8]   The coup is defined as post-modern, since the military forced the government to resign rather than directly seizing the political power. The government was replaced with another civilian coalition government which did not pose, according to the military officials, any threat for the secular values of the Republic.

to secular principles was put to the test and its robustness was proved at the expense of democracy.

Still, it is an oversimplification to argue that these interventions enhanced the utopia in secularists' mind. Despite the bans on religious activities and communities, the *cemaat*s have managed to survive in different circumstances. In a Darwinian sense, those that adapted to the changing circumstances better increased their influence in the society, while others that resisted changes dictated by globalization, modernization and westernization paid the price by losing ground in society and turning into marginal groups.[9] The *cemaat*s, which expect certain benefits from globalization, have lent their support to this development (Kuru 2005: 273), despite the fact that this support does not come without any costs. Today, the *cemaat*s are far different from the same *cemaat*s of the pre-globalization period.

An understanding of these changes requires an understanding of the factors that have been catalyzing those changes: the globalization process, the European Union, civil society and the military, among others. Despite the latitude of factors that are contributing to the re-formation of Turkish secularism, none of these can be analyzed in isolation[10]. For instance, the military, as a noteworthy actor, has to consider both the European Union's views, as well as the possible reactions of the civil society, reactions that are indeed partly shaped by the globalization process. Among these factors, globalization and the impact of the European Union towards further democratization deserve special attention. Before focusing on the liberal-democratic values promoted by the European Union, the complicated concept of "globalization" should be touched upon.

Turkey, especially starting with the 1980s, began to experience a fundamental globalization process. Turgut Özal, a conservative liberal politician who served as Turkey's prime minister between 1983 and 1989 was the leading actor in this change. He worked for the World Bank and was aware of the fact that Turkey's isolation from the Western World would exacerbate the economic and social conditions that led to either military coups

---

[9] One such example is the Mahmut Efendi community. The followers of Mahmut Efendi resist the modern, global and western values -even list watching TV as a sin. It goes without saying that, with an anti-globalization attitude as such, Mahmut Efendi's followers could not compete with other cemaats which make use of virtually every opportunity provided by the contemporary media technology.

[10] Ahmet Kuru, for example, argues that, the support of a *cemaat* to Turkey's European Union membership is a sign of its being pro-globalization. (2005: 257)

or economic crisis. He thus embraced both neo-liberal economic policies that would increase wealth and enhanced political rights that would create a civil society that could criticize the status quo. This was a unique moment in Turkish history as it marked the emergence for the first time of a genuine civil society that could oppose any and all kinds of secular fanaticism. Generally speaking, the *cemaat*s increased their social and economic capital during this period and began to use this capital for diverse religious and social activities. The economic development of the *cemaat*s enhanced ideological emancipation as well. They established their own private schools, TV stations, and newspapers, thus breaking the monopoly of secular ideology. The Islamic bourgeoisie created by neo-liberal policies and globalization began in turn to affect the political agenda. Many argue that the AKP would not have been able to come to power without this support of the bourgeoisie class (Taslaman 2011: 173). The *cemaat*s used civil society to increase their popularity among the masses and indeed they were quite successful in creating sympathy despite -or maybe because of- the ban on religious communities. The Justice and Development Party's assumption of power in 2002 was, for many, a reaction of the masses to the post-modern coup d'état launched in 1997.

There is another aspect of globalization that might be related to the secularism/post-secularism debate. Globalization and the post-modern values that it has disseminated throughout the world resulted in the "secularization of secularism," which is the idea that secularism should not be spared from criticism (Kyrlezhev 2008: 29). The underlying idea is that there are no absolutes in the world. This critical approach towards secularism has been accompanied with an increasing popularity of search for a meaning in life. Secularism could not offer anything that could replace the ontology of religion in answering existentialist questions that would make life more meaningful.

As a result of these motivations, religions and religious communities regained the power that they had lost in the post-World War II era (Habermas 2008: 17). Western societies can no longer be defined as secular societies, for religion has become an important mechanism in rallying the masses for social and political purposes. In this sense, the post-secularism phase that Western societies are currently passing through is reminiscent of the secularization process in the 1750s. The language, symbols, concepts and the understanding of the dominant ideology are being re-evaluated and history is being re-interpreted, this time, through post-secular lenses (Morozov

2008: 41). The Turkish experience of post-secularism is definitely being affected by the trend that the (post)modern world has been undergoing. By the last quarter of the 20th century, the same period that globalization became more and more important in shaping people's minds, new criticisms of Kemalist secular ideology began to emerge. These criticisms have been primarily based on the futility of this system in creating a meaning for life. Although it may be a bit of an exaggeration to assert that globalization has been the main factor leading people to question secular ideology, its impact should not be ignored.

As previously stated, globalization has increased the capacity of the *cemaat*s to access the masses. In addition to this, the rise of post-modern values has also devalued the secular ideology. Finally, the Islamic communities, which lacked legitimacy for decades, gained serious public approval during the globalization process. Yet, in the eyes of the secular actors, public approval is of no worth. The masses, secularists argue, do not have the ability to evaluate the indispensability of secular principles. As in the post-modern coup of 1997, the masses had to be reminded that secular ideology would be protected by the military whenever necessary. Indeed, without the protection of a supreme authority, the *cemaat*s were vulnerable to military intervention. The European Union filled the need for such an authority.

The European Union's impact on democracy and the secularism debate

The role that is being played by the European Union in redefining the boundaries of secularism should be seen as part of a larger democratization process. The Union, without any doubt, has been the most eminent advocate of democracy and pro-democratic policies in Turkey, especially since 1999 (Bac 2005: 17). The strengthening of civil society is –at least partly- a natural result of this democratization process. Moreover, the European Union is also crucial for its contribution to the improvement of civil groups –including the *cemaat*s- to react to unjust laws –such as those enacted after the coup d'états.

A vast literature exists on the relationship between secularism and democracy. Here, we will focus on the "twin tolerations," a concept introduced by Alfred Stepan. He defined the concept as "the minimal boundaries of

freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions vis-à-vis religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups vis-à-vis political institutions" (Stepan 2000: 37). Thus, according to this argument, in a true democracy, religious institutions should have boundaries that should not be violated by politicians for any reason. Stepan further argues that, contrary to what secularists argue, a strict separation of church from the state is not the case even in the most advanced democracies of the world. He gives the examples of European democracies with established churches, religious-based parties, religious schools funded by the state, etc (Stepan 2000: 41). Religious organizations and groups should not be forced to function in private life, Stepan argues, but have the right to organize in civil society and should even be allowed to organize political activities (2000: 42). Actually it is not only Stepan who claims that a genuine democracy should include the element of tolerating others' views even if they have religious origins. Lipset, for instance, argues that for a healthy democracy different beliefs should be tolerated and freedom of religion should be enhanced (1994: 3).

Indeed, what Stepan argues has important practical lessons for Turkish politics. First of all, in Turkey, religious communities do not have the right to express their identities, establish social organizations or political parties. The Justice and Development Party, for instance, was accused of having an Islamic agenda. The *chief* prosecutor of the Supreme Court claimed that Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and President Abdullah Gül should be banned from politics as well. Although the Constitutional Court did not close down the party, it announced that the party was the focal-point for anti-secular activities. This was not the first time that a political party was accused of using democracy to reach their hidden goal, the establishment of an Islamic state in Turkey. In the Turkish experience, groups with religious motivations are not allowed to organize political institutions. Indeed, the law banning the existence of religious communities is still on the books. Despite the existence and public recognition of many *cemaat*-related charity organizations, universities and TV channels, there are laws forbidding any such "anti-secular" establishments. This is certainly far from the twin tolerations of Stepan since in Turkey the state has -at least in theory- the right to violate the boundaries and does not have any sympathy for a civil society enriched by the existence of religiously-based organizations. Kemalists dream of a religion that is a matter of conscience, one that does not have any social or political function (Gözaydın 2009: 236-237). Indeed, that is not something they hoped for, that is what they believed,

which is quite contrary to the realities of contemporary societies. Religious institutions and groups with their potential to fight against crime and to solve social problems as well as to enhance welfare, became a supporter of civil society especially starting with the 1990s and Turkish society is no exception. (Cromartie, Loconte 2007: 35).

All these have resulted in paradoxical situations in Turkey. While moderate Islamists support the membership of Turkey to the European Union, at least the process of accession, Kemalists oppose it due to the freedoms Islamists gain within this period (Taslaman 2011: 179). Muslim communities see the Union as a way to break down the secularist dictatorship and trust the European Union more than they do the Turkish Constitutional Court (Yavuz 2005: 336). This is paradoxical in that it has always been argued that it is the Kemalists who have embraced Western societies as role models for modern Turkey.

As mentioned above, the European Union's emphasis on further democratization has been an important factor that has increased the visibility of religious communities in social and even in political spheres. The European Union's harsh criticisms of the military's intention to shape politics have certainly strengthened the religious communities' position. According to Turkey's 2008 Progress Report, "the armed forces have continued to exercise significant political influence via formal and informal mechanisms." Secularism is one of the issues, in which the military has been intervening (EC Progress Report 2008: 9). Additionally, Muslim communities in Turkey often point to examples of European secularism and try to defend their position vis-à-vis allegedly pro-European Kemalists. References are made to the European authorities -Members of European Parliament, academics and etc.- and mostly end by emphasizing that this is the case "even in France" (Gültaşlı 2006).

Yet, it is not easy to find a direct reference to Muslim communities in the European Commission's Progress Reports on Turkey. Under the heading of freedom of religion, the discussion focuses on the freedom of religion of either non-Muslim communities or that of the *Alevi* minority. While the developments on the public use of the Ecumenical Patriarch as a title (EC Progress Report 2006: 16) or the status of *Alevi* worship places (EC Progress Report 2008: 18) have been scrutinized by the European Union in almost all of these reports, there has been virtually no reference to the problems faced by Muslim communities. Still, it is widely understood that

the expansion of religious freedom in general will also improve and legitimize the social visibility of Muslim communities. Thus, although the impact of the European Union on the redefinition of secularism has been indirect, it is significant due to the reasons previously explained.

Does post-secularism pose a threat for Turkey?

The redefinition of the borders of secularism in Turkey is a complicated and on-going process that should not be interpreted as an extension of reactionary Islam. The actors who are undertaking the redefinition process are not the same actors of the pre-1980 period. Islam is not a static religion; on the contrary, it is open to re-interpretations and it is influenced by modern values. (Göle 2000: 94) There are several reasons why the *cemaat*s, in particular, have undergone a major change process. First of all, these groups noticed the success of moderate religious communities -especially that of *Nurcus*[11]- and embraced the same attitude towards secular forces of Turkey. Those who openly opposed the quasi-sacred secular values of the Republic were eliminated or remain marginal. Second, the possibilities offered by globalization forced the *cemaat*s to change their attitudes. The *cemaat*s abandoned some of their conservative beliefs whenever they were found to contradict with their interests in the process of spreading their beliefs. There is apparently a paradox here, since the common beliefs are changed in order that these same beliefs will be shared with a larger audience. To illustrate, TV stations belonging to the *cemaat*s frequently broadcast Hollywood movies in an attempt to increase and draw viewers, despite the fact that the message in these films may not be in line with the ideals of the *cemaat*. Indeed these attitudes cannot be explained by simply terming them hypocritical, since the members of the *cemaat*s seem to internalize the values that they declare regarding the democratic and secular state and the values that they disseminate with movies or TV shows. The attitude of these *cemaat*s regarding the headscarf issue seems to prove the point that the opinions of the followers of the *cemaat*s are far from being static, and indeed they are ready to change due to the trends of globalization, democratization and modernization embraced by the *cemaat*s. Instead of discussing the headscarf issue on religious grounds, the followers of the *cemaat*s adopt a discourse that perceives the problem as a violation of a basic

---

[11] *Nurcus* constitute the largest Sunni-Muslim *cemaat* in Turkey. Especially, those who follow Fethullah Gülen are known for their moderate stance and activities in virtually every sphere of modern social life. His followers prefer to name their community as *Hizmet* (Service).

human right. The *cemaat*s have internalized liberal values, even if that was not their intent. Today, there are only a handful of *cemaat*s that continue to espouse fundamentalist goals in Turkey. The popularity that they gained during the Islamist Revolution of Iran began to wane in the mid-1990s (Çarkoğlu, Bilgili 2010: 413). Indeed, it is the moderate Muslim communities that hold a more fundamental position in redefining secularism rather than the radical ones. Thus, it is not possible to argue that the increasing visibility of the *cemaat*s will pose a threat for the regime. On the contrary, moving away from the Turkish hyper-secularism can be interpreted as a normalization process, which may further curb the marginal ideas against the regime.

Before ending this section two further implications of the emerging multi-vocal religious sphere should be noted: As previously mentioned, the *Diyanet* was designed by the secularists to be the only legitimate religious organization. Yet, the globalization process and the European Union have changed the rules of the game by strengthening the position of the *cemaat*s that were previously forced to function as underground communities. The rise of a robust civil society also has had other by-products along with the strengthening the existing *cemaat*s: the emergence of non-orthodox Islamic communities. One of these non-Orthodox Islamic communities is the Quranist movement, which was started in the United States and introduced to Turkey especially during the 1990s. The movement argues that Quran should be taken as the sole source of Islam and the other sources should be seen as Arab traditions that lack any sort of divine foundation (Kuran Araştırmaları Grubu 2000: 24). Indeed, the rise of new sects is a global phenomenon and, as is the case in all post-secular societies, the plurality of communities is a problem that traditional religions -or religious communities- have to face (Kyrlezhev 2008: 28).

Secondly, the increasing popularity of the *cemaat*s has also had an impact on the *Diyanet*. *Diyanet* officials now maintain that they should not limit their activities to prayer leading. They feel that they have to go outside and compete with religious communities in order to be taken seriously by the masses. One such attempt is the *Diyanet*spor, a sports team established by the *Diyanet* in 2007 ("Diyanet Gençlik Spor Klubü Derneği" 2007). Thus, the increasing visibility of the *cemaat*s in social life has forced the *Diyanet* to become active in spheres that do not seem religious or sacred. The paradigmatic shift taking place in Turkey is not only bringing about new actors, but also changing the attitudes of the already existing actors

in the game. The most important point about this change is its direction: more moderate, more liberal religious institutions and communities will survive and shape the post-secular regime in Turkey, while radicals will fade away.

Conclusion

This essay has argued that the *Diyanet* lost its monopoly in religious affairs as a result of the changes that have been taking place during, especially, the last three decades. The changes in Turkey cannot be explained solely by domestic factors, but, on the contrary, are products of the globalization and the European Union accession processes. These processes triggered the emergence of a civil society in Turkey in which liberal and democratic values have flourished. Hence, the secularist actors, especially the military, have lost their potential to shape the boundaries of religion in social -and even to some extent in political- life. Herein lies another contribution of the European Union, since the norms that flourished in the civil society need a legitimate base in order to be immune from any kind of military interventions. The European Union taught Turkey that secularism is not a virtue for which the rest of democratic values should be sacrificed. Democracy is a combination of values and none of its elements should be valued at the expense of the other. Not only the discourse of the European Union but also the Western experience prove this claim. As Stepan illustrates, Western European democracies have multi-vocal religious spheres that cannot be indoctrinated by a statist institution like the *Diyanet*.

It is further argued that this paradigmatic shift does not pose a threat for Turkish democracy. The *cemaat*s are aware of the fact that those who espouse radical interpretations of Islam have no chance of increasing their visibility in social life. There are several reasons behind that belief. First, they remain fearful of a secularist intervention that can be launched by the military. In addition, the *cemaat*s know that the masses demand moderate interpretations of Islam rather than radical ones. This is the awareness that the *cemaat*s developed in order to survive. Still, there is a more important point that should be stressed: the internalization of liberal and democratic values by the *cemaat*s. This attitude, as previously mentioned, can be observed in discussions revolving around secularism. The *cemaat*s tried on the liberal-democratic glasses and seem to be satisfied with them.

A further point should be noted about the relationship between the *Diyanet* and the *cemaat*s. Despite the diminishing influence -and thus importance- of the *Diyanet* vis-à-vis the *cemaat*s, it may be wrong to interpret their relation solely from a competitive perspective. With, especially, the moderation that is evidenced in the interpretations of the *cemaat*s and the elimination of those communities with radical views, the *cemaat*s seem to share more common beliefs than ever with the *Diyanet*. To illustrate, both the *Diyanet* and the *cemaat*s oppose any kind of top-down Islamization of Turkey. Despite their desire to increase the role of Islam in social life, the *cemaat*s prefer to persuade people about the necessity of faith and religion rather than seizing the state and implementing top-down "Islamist" policies.

REFERENCES

"Atatürk'ün Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisinin V. Dönem 3. Yasama Yılını Açış Konuşmaları", Available at:
http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tarihce/ataturk_konusma/5d3yy.htm (4 June 2011)

"Cumhuriyet Fazilettir" (1999), Diyanet Monthly Journal, available at:
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/DIYANET/eyl99/hutbe4.htm (17 June 2011)

"Diyanet Gençlik Spor Klubü Derneği"(2007): available at: http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/dspor/-icerik-diges-tanitim-1.aspx (11 June 2011)

"Basic Principles, Aims and Objectives": available at: http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/english/ tanitim .asp?id=13 (21 September 2011)

"EC 2006 Progress Report on Turkey" available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/Nov/tr_sec_1390_en.pdf (2 June 2011)

"EC 2008 Progress Report on Turkey" available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008/turkey_progress_report_en.pdf (1 June 2011)

Bac, Meltem M. (2005) "Turkey's Political Reforms and the Impact of the European Union" South European Society & Politics 10(1): 16-30.

Cromartie, Michael and Joseph Loconte (2007): "Religion and Religious Institutions in the Modern Public Square", in Çelebi, İlyas, eds. Avrupa Birliği Sürecinde Dini Kurumlar ve Din Eğitimi, 33-47, Ensar Neşriyat, İstanbul.

Çarkoğlu, Ali and Nazlı Çağın Bilgili (2010): "Turkey", in Rubin, Barry. eds., Guide to Islamist Movements, 407-415, M.E.Sharpe, New York.

Çarkoğlu, Ali and Nazlı Çağın Bilgili (2011) "A Precarious Relationship: The Alevi Minority, the Turkish State and the EU". South European Society and Politics, 16 (2): 351- 364.

Gökalp, Ziya (2007): Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak. Toker Yayınları, İstanbul.

Göle, Nilüfer. (2000): "Snapshots of Islamic Modernities". Daedlus 129(1): 91-118.

Gözaydın, İştar (2009): Diyanet. İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul.

Gültaşlı, Selçuk (2006) "Europe Keeps Renewing Notion of Secularism", Sundays Zaman (16 May): available at: http://www.sundayszaman.com/sunday/column-istDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=33169&columnistId=35 (3 July, 2011)

Habermas, Jurgen. (2008). "Notes on post-secular society". New Perspectives Quarterly 25(4), 17-29.

Interview with İzzet Er, February 112010.

Interview with Mustafa Çağrıcı, January 18 2010.

Kuran Araştırmaları Grubu (2000): Uydurulan Din ve Kuran'daki Din. Ozan Yayıncılık, İstanbul.

Kuru, Ahmet T. (2005) "Globalization and Diversification of Islamic Movements: Three Turkish Cases". Political Science Quarterly 120 (2): 253-274.

Kyrlezhev, Aleksandr. (2008): "The Postsecular Age: Religion and Culture Today". Religion, State and Society 36(1): 21-31.

Lipset, Seymour M. (1994) "The social requisites of democracy revisited". American. Sociological Review, 59: 1-22.

Morozov, Aleksandr. (2008): "Has the Postsecular Age Begun?" Religion, State and Society 36(1): 39-44.

Stepan, Alfred C. (2000) "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations'". Journal of Democracy, 11 (4): 37-57.

Taslaman, Caner (2011): Küreselleşme Sürecinde Türkiye'de İslam. İstanbul Yayınevi, İstanbul.

Taş, Kemaleddin (2007): "Dini Kurumların Yeri ve Uygulama-Müzakere", in Çelebi, İlyas, eds. Avrupa Birliği Sürecinde Dini Kurumlar ve Din Eğitimi, 502-509, Ensar Neşriyat, İstanbul.

Tunaya, Tarık Z. (1991) İslamcılık Akımı. Hürriyet Ofset, İstanbul.

Yavuz, Hakan (2005): Modernleşen Müslümanlar. Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul.

Zürcher, Erik J. (1993): Turkey: A Modern History. I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, London.