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Western Impact and Turkey
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State and Religion
within the Scope of
Democracy and Human Rights

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Laicism and Secularism

Laic, Laicism, Laicist	Secular, Secularism, Secularist
From "laicus"	From "saeculum"
French impact, Catholic States	Anglo-Saxon impact, Protestant States
An attribute of "State" (State policy to create a secular environment)	An attribute of "nation" (Source of sovereignty not spiritual but temporal)

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Minority Demands and "Competing Rights"

- "Protect my differences against my own people"
  - Will clash with individual rights upheld by Western tradition since Hobbes (except for "historical rights" – Ex. Amish),
  - The case has no relevance for Turkey (maybe except for "honor crimes").

- "Protect my differences against the majority"
  - May clash with established laws,
  - Western liberal tradition will yield, except in three cases:
    a) "New minorities" (immigrants); mostly out of racism or/and contempt.
    b) Health (Sikh's helmet, Newmann Family/Wisconsin - diabetic) (1966 UN Covenant, art. 18)
    c) Internationally acknowledged human rights (1992 UN Declaration, art. 4)
- Therefore, these demands (rights) compete with other kinds of rights stipulated in national laws and international practice. They also create fear.

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Fear: Old for Turkey, New for the West

- Turkey, a radical nation-state, is hardly a paradise for minority demands. It has always feared minorities.

- New in the West: The majority is affraid of the minority

- The reason of the fear in the West: The minority may become too salient
  - It may disturb the established balance between beliefs,
  - It may challenge the *primus inter pares* position of the dominant group(s)

- The reason of the fear in Turkey: The minority may become dominant.

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Socio-historical Foundation of the Fear in Turkey:
Religion as a remnant of Feudalism

- Mode of Production – Cohesion Ideology relation: Three types of States

    – Those that have never experienced Feudalism,

    – Those that have experienced it but were able to eliminate its remnants,

    – Those that have experienced it but were unable to eliminate its remnants.

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Feudalism and Religion

Focus of Supreme Loyalty	God	Nation	Working Class	?
Cohesion Ideology	Religion	Nationalism	Proletarian Internationalism	?
The Market (Fatherland)	The Manor	Nation-State	People's Republic	The Globe
Mode of Production	Feudalism	Capitalism	Communism	International Capitalism (Globalization)

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The First Type

- States founded by White colonists (direct transition: Hunting and Gathering $\Rightarrow$ Mercantilism)
- Total separation of Religion and State: To keep together people of different religions & confessions;
- No State controle over Religion: No fear of Religion as cohesion ideology.
- However, religious symbols/practices are a continuous headache here too
  Ex. 1990 Oregon Decision has influenced: (The State can prohibit the use peyote, a drug used in religious rituals) :
  - Sikhs' refusal of hard hats,
  - Jews' refusal of autopsy,
  - Muslim refusal of pork in prison diet,
  - Amish refusal to wear uniforms, etc.

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The Second Type

- England and France: State used to control Religion; they are in balance now
- In France "militant laicism" until 1905; afterwards Marianne and Marie have "mutually tamed each other"
- In England: "Dieu et Mon Droit"; "Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense" (evil to him who thinks evil of it)

- Although they seemed to have resolved the issue, new and harsh discussion on Muslim demands (Ex. Hidjab swimsuit in swimming pools banned in France).

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The Third Type: Turkey

- In addition to "health" and "internationally recognized rights", great official fear of Religion as cohesion ideology. (Lithmus test: "Who are you?")
- Laicism means: **State > Religion**. (Ottomans & Byzantium)
- What's more, fluctuating relations:
  - 1923-1950: The State dominated Islam
  - 1950s on: State cooperated with Islam against C(K)ommunism and Kurdism (2 Ks)
  - 1980 military coup used Islam as a "social glue" against Communism and Kurdism ("Turkish-Islamic Synthesis")
  - Now, upper middle class wants to enter the EU, breaks up with the Military & Civil Kemalists, for a less "laicist" Turkey:
    - * 1995 "Eastern Report" (TOBB – small and medium business)
    - * 1997 "Democratization Perspectives in Turkey" (TÜSİAD – big b.)
  - -- Nascent civil society produces its own report:
    - * 2004 "Minority & Cultural Rights Report" (Advisory Council on Human Rights).

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How to Make It to the French Year 1905?

- Things are simple for 2 sorts of people:
  - The Islamists: Although they now start building their own middle class ("Green Capital"), they still are very eager to continue exerting "neighborhood pressure" upon secular people.
  - The Laicists (Kemalists): They refuse any change that would alter anything in their dominant position set in 1920s.

- Things are more sophisticated/difficult for those who look for logical criteria to reach a rational solution:
  - Is the minority aiming at self-isolation or participation? (two Canadian Sikhs / girl students at uni.)
  - Will their demands affect public life? (working hours on Friday / Durham Uni.)
  - Is the minority aiming at more integration or disruption of secular public order & human rights? (religious marriage)
  - Will these demands also affect the life of the majority, and individual freedoms? (Restaurants, erotic films, sale of alcohol during Ramadan)

- The problem is multi-dimensional.

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The Problem Is Multi-dimensional

- Turkey has not experienced Enlightenment but a simulation of it only.
  Result: Feudal/religious traditions still strong

- The Founding Fathers have cleansed non-Muslims and intimidated Alevis.
  Result: A monolithic Islam facing the State

- Islamist middle class is still adolescent and tries to use Islam against the upper middle class (Istanbul Bourgeoisie).
  Result: Upper middle class hesitant to join the reformers

- Kemalist elites, particularly the Judiciary, keep pressurizing even the private life of Islamists.
  Result: In addition to their natural tendency to control public & private domains, Islamists also "learn" it from the Kemalists, (same for the Kurds)

- "State > Religion" continues.
  Result: After 1950 "State intervention" is only helping Islam to expand (Preacher schools, 1 mosque every 6 h, DİB budged 3 times MFA)

- Islamophobia in Europe is no help, either.
  Result: The Leyla Şahin decision of the ECtHR stiffened the positions of both Kemalists and Islamists.

- In addition: Religion may be a human rights violator.

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Religion as Human Rights Violator

- Religion in the Balkans & the Middle East is the most important component of identity-formation

  Religion is thus:
- A social cement (for the majority) →
- A difference creator →
- A conflict generator →
- A human rights violator (for the minority).

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Conclusion: A Solution for Turkey

- "Domestication" of Islam necessary, but should not preclude respect for democracy

- What's more, every time the Kemalist elites suppress the Islamists by force, the latter come to power with more strength ever since the first free elections in 1950:
  - Laicist/Kemalist action (revolution, military coup, military intervention, military memorandum) ⇒
  - Popular reaction in elections ⇒
  - More Laicist/Kemalist action ⇒
  - Stronger vote against Laicist/Kemalist parties ⇒
  - Weaker and weaker Laicist/Kemalist action.

- A Solution for Turkey: Distinction between "providers" and "receivers" of State services:
  - State employees will not wear religious symbols at work because the former represent the State that must remain "ethnicity & religion blind",
  - Those profiting from State services will wear anything, anytime, anywhere.

- Until the day Islam claims temporal power no more: 1905.

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Main Sources

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