TURKEY'S SECULARISM EXPERIMENT AS AN IMPEDIMENT TO DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION[1]

Research Article

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Abstract

Despite having a secular government since the foundation of Turkish Republic, certain segments of Turkish society have suffered from the pathological state-religion relationship. Turkey has been one and only Muslim and also a secular democratic country in the Middle East. Thus politics and religion relationship in Turkey has been of scholarly endeavor. The sui generis secularism style of Turkey has steadily undermined democratic consolidation as a result of weakening the principles of religious pluralism and equality. Using "assertive secularism" coined by Ahmet Kuru (2006) and "democratic consolidation" described by Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz (1996) as the theoretical framework, the purpose of this study is to cover the problem of democratic consolidation in Turkey vis-à-vis the illiberal and nondemocratic practices secularism policies have steadily caused. The Alevi citizens, and practicing Muslim citizens (in this study the women wearing headscarf) have been subjected to unfair state policies. The argument of this study is that Turkey's secularism weakens democracy rather than making it a consolidated one. The headscarf ban until it is lifted in 2013 has been one of the problems that eroded democratic consolidation in Turkey. With regard to Alevi citizens, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) which put a state-sponsored monopoly over religious life has been another factor that has undermined democracy. DRA has narrowed the social and legal grounds of religious pluralism. The exclusion of Alevi citizens from the DRA has created crisis repeatedly. Alevi citizens face discrimination and this erodes democratic consolidation as well.

Keywords: Alevis in Turkey, Assertive Secularism, Headscarf issue, Directorate of Religious Affairs, Democratic Consolidation.

DEMOKRATİK PEKİŞMENİN ÖNÜNDE BİR ENGEL OLARAK TÜRKİYE'NİN LAİKLİK DENEYİMİ

Araştırma Makalesi

Özet

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kuruluşundan bu yana laik bir siyasi sisteme sahip olmasına rağmen, Türk toplumunun belli kesimleri patolojik devletdin ilişkisinden muzdarip olmuştur. Türkiye Ortadoğu'da hem Müslüman ve hem de aynı zamanda laik ve demokratik tek ülke olmuştur. Bu nedenle Türkiye'de siyaset ve din ilişkisi bilimsel olarak ilgi konusu olmaktadır. Türkiye'nin kendine özgü laiklik tarzı, dini çoğulculuk ve eşitlik ilkelerinin zayıflatılmasının bir sonucu olarak, demokratik pekiştirmenin önüne geçmştir. Teorik çerçeve olarak Ahmet Kuru (2006) tarafından ortaya atılan "baskıcı laiklik" ve Alfred Stepan ve Juan Linz (1996) tarafından tanımlanan "demokratik pekişme" kullanılarak, bu çalışmada amaç, Türkiye'deki demokratik pekişme sorununu laiklik politikalarının yol açtığı liberal ve demokratik olmayan uygulamalar özelinde ele almaktır. Alevi vatandaşlar ve dindar vatandaşlar (bu çalışmada başörtülü kadınlar) haksız devlet politikalarına maruz kalmıştır. Bu çalışmadaki argüman, Türkiye'deki laikliğin, demokrasiyi sağlamlaştırmaktan çok zayıflattığıdır. 2013'te kaldırılan başörtüsü yasağı, Türkiye'de demokrasinin pekişmesini engelleyen sorunlardan biri olmuştu. Alevi vatandaşlarla ilgili olarak ise, dini yaşam üzerinde devlet destekli bir tekel oluşturan Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı demokrasiyi zayıflatan bir başka faktör olmuştur. Diyanet, dini çoğulculuğun sosyal ve hukuki temellerini zayıflamıştır. Alevi vatandaşların Diyanet tarafından dışlanması kriz yaratmıştır. Alevi vatandaşların ayrımcılığa maruz kalması da demokratik pekişmeyi engellemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye'deki Aleviler, Baskıcı laiklik, Başörtüsü meselesi, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Demokratik pekişme

INTRODUCTION

Being founded on the heritage of a multiethnic and multi-religious empire, the Turkish Republic witnessed a heavy homogenization process as parts of the nation-building project. In the nation-building process, certain groups have been subjected to discrimination in the aftermath of the definition of who can be a "desired citizen" under Republican regime. During the nation-building process, the limits of citizenship were drawn. It can be said that if the citizenship is used as a tool for modernization and nation building, citizenship then becomes formalized pragmatically based on the needs of modernization (Burak, 2015: 27). This is one of the reasons why Kemalist elites used the citizenship regime as a tool in social engineering, and even demonizing the undesired citizens within the scope of the state ideology.

The citizenship regime in Turkey has its constitutive others through which it reproduces itself. These others of the Kemalist regime consist of the Kurds, Alevis, non-Muslims (Greek Orthodox, Jews and Armenians as stated in the Lausanne Peace Treaty) and the pious Muslims. This study attempts to analyze how Turkish secularism practices have repeatedly undermined democratic procedures and processes with regard to Alevi citizens and pious Muslim citizens (headscarf wearing women). In other words, this study is an attempt to analyze how certain secularism practices have impeded democratic politics with a special emphasis on Alevi identity and pious Muslim identity. Concerning these identities, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and the ban of headscarf that was finally lifted in 2013 will be under scrutiny.

In the early years of the Republic, the top-down process of modernization included a considerable degree of secularization. The aspiration for adopting a Western type of social and political life further strengthened the secularizing reforms. The secularization policies such as the abolition of religious colleges and the creation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs all helped the new regime put religion and its expression under state control. In this study, by trying to explore the main determinants of the relationship between democracy and secularism, a critical point of view will be revealed to address the Turkish case. The main argument of this study is that the state policies toward religion in Turkey have constituted a major problem in the consolidation of democracy although a considerable degree of development has been achieved in order to make these practices more compatible with democratic norms.

Turkey is the only secular and democratic country among Muslim majority countries in the Middle Eastern region. In this regard, analyzing Turkish case is significant for pursuing answers to the following questions: "How can secularism practices promote democratic consolidation?" "How far can religion and secularism be reconciled?"

Following the objective of analyzing how certain secularism practices in Turkey have impeded democratic consolidation with a special emphasis on Alevi

identity and pious Muslim identity. firstly, the conceptualizations of Kuru's "assertive secularism" and Linz and Stepan's "democratic consolidation" will be addressed as the theoretical framework. Then, Turkish secularization history and secularism policies since the establishment of the Republic up until 2018 when a presidential regime was introduced will be addressed. In the next chapter, the state policies towards the Alevi citizens and pious Muslim citizens and how these policies transformed over time will be evaluated based on two dimensions: The Directorate of Religious Affairs and the headscarf issue. These two dimensions will be covered with definitions and historical developments. Finally, in the analysis chapter, the impact of the secularism policies upon Alevi citizens and pious Muslim citizens will be evaluated through the conceptualizations aforementioned.

1.Theoretical Considerations: Assertive Secularism and Democratic Consolidation

Secularism in general sense can be defined as a philosophy advocating the separation of religion and state whereas secularization can be defined as the process whereby religious thinking and institutions lose significance in social life (Wilson, 1966:11). Secularism history has different reflections in Eastern and Western world. Based on the features of state-religion relationship, secularism has different types. According to Ahmet Kuru, there are two models of secularism: Assertive secularism and passive secularism. Kuru (2006: 146) writes that in the Anglo-Saxon world especially in the US, the dominant ideology is "passive secularism" which allows public visibility of religion. On the contrary, the dominant ideology in countries such as France is "assertive secularism" which aims to confine religion to the private domain. The states which adopt assertive secularism exclude religion from the public sphere and play an assertive role as the agents of a social engineering project. The idea of assertive secularism restricts the religious presence in politics and this generally results in the marginalization of different identities.

France is one of the countries adopting assertive secularism. In French Constitution, the state is defined as a secular state. The basic dynamics determining the religion-state relationship in France have been the French Revolution and the law made in 1905 regarding the separation of the state and the church. This law provided the political, ideological and financial separation of the state from the church and aimed to put church properties under state control (Yılmaz, 2014: 13). The French-type of secularism which has an exclusive and repressive character aims at providing a homogeneous national identity and a secular public sphere. It can be said that assertive secularism is a "comprehensive doctrine" that aims to eliminate religion from the public space (Kuru, 2006). The assertive secularist elites defend the idea of confining religion to the home and to the individual's conscience.

Turkey is a country where assertive secularists have been heavily dominant. The Kemalist elites who claim to preserve the legacy of Atatürk,

defend the existing dominance of assertive secularism, whereas the conservative elites – as evident in Justice and Development Party circles today – want to promote passive secularism. The assertive secularist elites, such as the Republican People's Party officials want to confine Islam to the private sphere.

On the other hand it is stated that democratic consolidation is fully realized when democracy has become "the only game in town" (Linz and Stepan, 1996). Democratic consolidation includes three dimensions. The first dimension is the behavioral dimension. A democracy is considered consolidated when there is no noteworthy political actor that seeks to overthrow the democratic regime or by force try to secede from the state (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 6). The second dimension involves attitudes of the citizens. A democracy becomes "the only game in town" when the majority of the citizens are convinced that the institutions and democratic procedures are the most suitable system for governing. (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 6). The third dimension of democratic consolidation is related with the constitutional dynamics. A democratic consolidation is completed when governmental and non-governmental actors within the state are subjected to and adapted to the specific laws that are put in place to resolve conflict.

Linz and Stepan (1996: 7) argue that a consolidated democracy requires five interrelating arenas for such consolidation to exist. If there is an absence of these prerequisites, they must either be formed or created for a democracy to be consolidated. The civil society is the first of these interrelating arenas. The civil society is important as it is the arena where self-organizing groups, movements, journalists and individuals can share their opinion. Thus civil society acts as a counterweight to anti-democratic or corrupt forces (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 7). The second interrelating arena is political society. Linz and Stepan explain that the political society is the arena in which the political entity is set up and contestation of power occur. It is where the legitimate right to practice control over public power is built. It provides legal safeguards which are ingrained in the rule of law and regulated by an objective state apparatus (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 8).

The third arena required for a consolidated democracy is related to the principle of the rule of law. The rule of law upholds the framework for how these societies operate in consolidating a democracy. The fourth reinforcing arena of democratic consolidation is the bureaucratic structure. The fifth arena addresses the economic system. It is known that the economic development has a positive impact on democratization.

2.Historical Background of Turkey's Secularization

According to Taylor (2007: 1-3) there are three characterizations of secularization. The first one is related with the separation of state institutions from religious institutions. In this regard, religion is left to the private domain. The second characterization of secularization is about the decline of religious

practices in the domain of public space. The third one calls for a shift from a society where belief in God is unchallenged to the one in which it is understood to be one of the choices among the others. Based on the explanation of Taylor, it can be said that Turkey had an all-compassing secularization process in the early Republican period. However Turkey's secularization process dates back to the late Ottoman times.

2.1. Turkey's Secularization History (1839-1950)

Turkish secularization history is directly related with Turkish modernization history. The Turkish modernization process has begun in the 1800s in the Tanzimat Era. In this era, the first signs of a secular understanding were seen (Burak, 2012: 71-72). In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Sultans decided to establish a European-type of centralized bureaucracy and adopted laws and institutions from Europe. The Tanzimat Edict which was declared in 1839 witnessed the first attempts of secularization. One of the key developments in that century was the Ottoman Constitution published in 1876. According to the Constitution all of the subjects of the Empire were to be called Ottomans, without distinction whatever faith they had. However it was also stated that the religion of the empire was Islam (Hanioğlu, 2008). The secularization policies in late Ottoman times had been shaped by the intellectuals such as Abdullah Cevdet. Abdullah Cevdet was known as an absolute westernizer. He wanted to make society have a form purified from religion. The westernization understanding of Abdullah Cevdet was based on a strict idea of positivism (Saygın and Önal, 2008: 25).

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk established Turkish Republic in 1923 in the aftermath of National Independence War. The ideology known as "Kemalism" is based on two main principles: Turkish nationalism and secularism. In the single party regime led by Republican People's Party, the state elites got engaged in a heavy modernization process and one of the central aims was to erase the impact of religion from both public and private lives. In 1924, the caliphate was abolished. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) was established in 1924 to replace the Ottoman Ministry of Religious Affairs and Foundations. The DRA aimed to represent the Sunni Islam and through this institution the state aimed to put religious activities under control. The Directorate as a government agency led to the exclusion and discrimination of Alevi citizens and this has created crisis repeatedly.

In the following years, the Islamic schools were abolished. The Ottoman fez was banned and the European-style hat was imposed by law for government officials. The Islamic calendar was abolished and the Gregorian one was adopted and the Arabic alphabet was replaced with the Latin alphabet. In addition, in 1928 the principle of "laiklik" (adopted from the French "laïcité") was established in the Constitution as a feature of the Turkish Republic.

Other measures that were implemented to weaken influence of religion in Turkish society was the change of the weekly holiday from Friday to the day of Sunday like the other countries. In terms of political discourse of Ataturk's political party, Republican People's Party, the principle of secularism was accepted as one of the "Six Arrows" of the Party in 1932. In 1942, Arabic ezan (call to prayer) was forbidden.

2.2. Secularism Practices in Multi-Party Years (1950-2002)

After the transition to multi-party system in 1950, the strict state policies about secularism began to relax. In 1950, Democrat Party (DP) gained electoral victory and became the ruling party and the policies of DP led to the softening of the strict secularization policies of the single party regime. Many of the votes for DP came from conservative and rural areas (Weiker, 1963: 8-9). One of the signs of the relaxation of the strict secularization policies was the legitimization of the Arabic call to prayer.

The visibility of religion especially that of Islamic groups and organizations increased during the DP rule. The number of Quran courses increased significantly. DP extended the number of institutions for the training of imams (religious civil servants). In religious instruction in public schools, DP revised that arrangement to allow all students to receive religious instruction automatically unless their parents requested that their children should not get this instruction. In addition, the strengthening of Sufi brotherhoods was witnessed. The Nurcu movement gained power in society and this alarmed the secular circles. The accusation of DP for Islamizing the country and undermining secularism principle was among the causes of the military coup in 1960. In the aftermath of 1960 military coup, state-religion relationship got a new form. The Constitution of 1961 introduced the freedom of association and this gave rise to the emergence of Islamic associations (Toprak, 1988: 124). The first Islamist party was National Order Party established in 1970. However, it was banned by Constitutional Court but reopened under a new name.

In 1971, a second military intervention occurred it was a partial coup rather than taking power directly, the military forced the resignation of the government. The constitution was amended twice and the amendments cut back on individual rights and increased the power of the executive branch and the military elites. A fully-fledged military coup was staged in 1980. In 1982, a new constitution was drafted. The second Article of the 1982 Constitution stated that the Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state. The beginning of the Constitution stipulated that as a requirement of the principle of secularism, the feelings of religion can never be mixed with state affairs and politics. With regard to having the right to religious education, an article of 1982 Constitution designated that religious education is to be applied under the supervision of the state (Oğuz, 2012: 196).

In the post-1980 period, Turkey took some measures against communist threat. One of them has been the promotion of Turkish-Islam Synthesis ideology. Turkish-Islam Synthesis can be defined as a right-wing ideology that emerged in the late 1970s and got stronger after the 1980 military coup (Eligür, 2010, 85-135). According to Çiler Dursun (2003) Turkish-Islamic Synthesis combines the concepts of "nationalism" and "Islamism" on the basis of Muslim identity. The emphasis put on Turkish Islamic Synthesis in the 1980s started to show its effects in the 1990s. By the 1990s, Islamism gained electoral victory and the Welfare Party came to power under such conditions. The Welfare Party has been one of the most critical political Islamist parties in Turkish politics.

It is known that, the issue of secularism has been the most triggering factor in paving the way for a state crisis in the late 1990s. The government was accused of abusing religion for political purposes and after the National Security Council meeting held on February 28, 1997 the government was forced to resign. Before this process known as February 28 process, the initiative of the Islamist Welfare Party to lift the ban on the beard and headscarf in the public offices, and the mosque project in Taksim increased tensions and created secularism debates in the society. Such steps of Welfare Party paved the way for a court file issued in State Security Court for the closure of the party in late 1996.

2.3. Secularism Experiment in Justice and Development Party Era (2002-2018)

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan founded the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2001 and since 2002 the JDP has exercised a single party rule. The JDP elites reject formal reference to religion or to the identification of being "Muslim democrats" as suggested in Europe (Aydın and Çakır, 2007: 116). The identity of the party is called as "conservative democracy" (Akdoğan, 2004).

In the history of the Turkish Republic, there have been two main models of secularism. The first categorization of secularism can be seen as assertive secularism that limits the visibility of religion in the public sphere. However this secularism understanding was transformed under JDP rule. The JDP redefined secularism in line with society's expectations. Erdoğan rule adopted passive secularism and opened a broader space in public sphere for the religion by stressing the importance of state neutrality for all faiths. Erdoğan recognized problems of Islamic identity such as the headscarf ban. In 2013, under Erdoğan's leadership, within the scope of a democratization package the headscarf ban in public offices was removed.

The JDP redefined secularism in line with passive secularism or Anglo Saxon secularism (Kuru, 2009). The JDP elites redefined secularism in the party program. Accordingly, secularism was defined as a principle to protect religious pluralism without any discrimination or pressure from the state.

"Our party considers religion as one of the most important institutions of humanity and secularism as a pre-requisite of democracy and an assurance of the freedom of religion and conscience. It also rejects the interpretation and distortion of secularism as enmity against religion. Basically, secularism is a principle which allows people of all religions and beliefs to comfortably practice their religions to be able to express their religious convictions and live accordingly but which also allows people without beliefs to organize their lives along these lines. From this point of view, secularism is a principle of freedom and social peace" (Axiarlis, 2014: 72).

The period of 2002-2008 is regarded as the period when JDP took concrete steps and political initiatives in a limited scope and these were generally analyzed in the context of democratization and religious liberties (Szymański, 2007: 23). The first attempt to change the form of secularism over education occurred in 2005 with the regulations about imam-hatip schools and headscarf issue however it faced the veto of Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the then president who was known as a hardcore Kemalist statesman.

Another important development concerning secularism is the presidential elections of 2007. The step of ruling Justice and Development Party to elect Abdullah Gül to be the new president provoked a crisis. Gül has been an effective foreign minister. Nonetheless, secularist state elites saw him as a controversial candidate because of his prominent role in the past in Islamist parties and because of his pious identity with a wife wearing headscarf. Amid this crisis environment, on April 27, 2007, the General Chief of Staff posted a statement on its website accusing the government of having a hidden Islamic agenda. This was known as "e-memorandum".

On the other hand a major development about secularism has been about the Alevi citizens. In 2009, the JDP government declared the Alevi opening initiative as the first policy that aimed to address the Alevi citizens' demands. The government held seven workshops from June 3, 2009 to January 30, 2010 to address the Alevi citizens' problems. The Alevi citizens have faced denial and pressure policies with regard to their religious and cultural demands since the inception of the Turkish Republic. An initiative of a three-stage plan that foresaw the provision of financial assistance to cem houses ("gathering houses" –cem evleri– places for worship for Alevis) and extending them legal recognition was carried out (Milliyet, November 24, 2007). However, in 2012 the Supreme Court of Appeals has declared that cem houses cannot be given the status of place of worship.

On the other hand, with regard to the headscarf issue, in 2013 the JDP government released a democratization package. The package included the expansion of political rights, education in languages other than Turkish in

private schools, and removal of the ban on the headscarf in public offices. On October 8, 2013, the JDP lifted the headscarf ban in government offices.

With JDP's coming to power, Turkey has witnessed a certain degree of liberalization in state-religion relationship. The authoritarian practices that used to dominate state-society relationship with regard to secularism have been undermined to an important degree. The steps taken such as the lift of headscarf ban and Alevi opening liberalized state attitude towards secularism. However for the Alevi citizens the transformation of secularism practices has not been sufficient. Alevis still have demands such as the extension of legal recognition for Alevi worship places.

3.Secularism and the Directorate of Religious Affairs

The basic characteristics of Alevism are different from the ones of Sunnism. The "gathering houses" (cem evleri) rather than the mosque is the place of worship for Alevi people. Alevis attend prayer meetings without gender segregation. Instead of fasting during Ramadan Alevis fast during Muharrem month. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) was established to represent and promote Sunni Islam and through the Directorate, the state has aimed to put religious activities under control. The exclusion of Alevis from the Directorate has created crisis repeatedly.

The Kemalist regime wanted to create a Turk-Sunni identity. After the foundation of Turkish Republic, Alevis faced state actions that affected their identity drastically. The Alevis faced religious and sectarian challenges as a result of homogenization policies in the early Republican era. In this environment the Directorate of Religious Affairs was established in 1924. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) was established to replace the Ottoman Ministry of Religious Affairs and Foundations. The DRA aimed to represent the Sunni Islam and through this institution, the state aimed to put religious activities under control. The exclusion of Alevis from the Directorate of Religious Affairs has undermined democracy. This was also seen as a practice against secularism as it promotes a particular understanding of Islam, Sunni Islam. It can be said that Kemalist elites created a Sunni-centered public control over religious groups rather than breaking all state ties with religion (Koçan & Öncü, 2004: 472).

In the single party years, the state exercised a heavy control over religion through DRA. In the multi-party years, one of the biggest problems of the Directorate was the shortage of trained personnel.

The Director of Religious Affairs of the time-being, Ahmed Hamdi Akseki accused the Ministry of Education of failing to educate people for the DRA (Akseki, 1951: 19). With the aim to fight this problem, İmam Hatip schools and a Higher Islamic Institute were opened in 1951 (Ulutaş, 2010: 393). The 1960 military coup did not make fundamental changes in the structure of the DRA. However some important steps were taken to propose changes. The Central Government Organization Research Project was a comprehensive project

regarding central government functions and it also proposed specific changes to the authority of DRA (Dinçer and Ersoy, 1974). A major change was made in 1976 regarding the role of the DRA outside Turkey. The Directorate was given the authority to open representative offices abroad (Ulutaş, 2010: 394).

After the 1980 military coup, the bureaucracy of DRA has grown to considerable size and scope. With the legal revisions made in 2010, DRA was raised from the general directorate to the level of undersecretary. Its budget has increased significantly as its staff in central and provincial organizations got strengthened. (Gibson, 2008: 393).

4.Secularism and the Headscarf Issue

The history of the headscarf problem in Turkey has its roots in the Kemalist top-down modernization project. From the perspective of Turkish secular logic, steps were taken for establishing political and legal institutions in the early Republican era. Among these steps dress code was a significant one. Based on Kemalist Revolutions regarding dress code, the headscarf gradually fell out of use.

The headscarf problem officially emerged in the early 1950s. In 1951, courses were set however no female students took them in the Imam Hatip Schools, then only male students enrolled. This started the debates over headscarf issue (Birdişli and Kaçar, 2017: 9). The debates were over the issue of whether the female students could take the courses with their headscarves or not. In 1968, a university student, Hatice Babacan refused to remove her headscarf while getting into the campus. With the emergence of Babacan event, headscarf problem in the universities emerged.

After the 1980 military coup, the headscarf was banned in university campuses. In 1982, The Higher Education Council (YÖK) issued its order concerning dress and attire, which stipulated a "modern dress". The order provided the following (Cindoğlu, 2011: 34):

> "All staff and students of institutions of higher education are required to have dress and attire that accord with the revolutions and principles of Ataturk and are of a civilized and modest shape. All male and female students, including those with foreign nationalities, will wear clean, neat and plain dresses, have their heads uncovered and will not wear a headscarf while in the building of the institution."

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the headscarf ban was not uniformly enforced. The headscarf ban in public offices had included students, personnel of courts of law, government officers and other civil servants. In 1990, the Turkish Grand National Assembly passed a law noting that, "at institutions of higher education, there is no dress code so long as students do not wear outfits that are

not antithetical to the laws enacted". The Republican People's Party applied to the Constitutional Court in order to repeal this article. The court decided that this article is in accordance with the Turkish constitution (Cindoğlu, 2011).

In 1997, a post-modern coup took place in Turkey. During the post-modern coup, the public visibility of headscarf was securitized by the state elites. The ban on headscarf was extended to all universities. Huge demonstrations regarding headscarf freedom were held in these years. An important event about the headscarf issue happened in 1999 showing how the state establishment had viewed the public visibility of religion. In 1999, Merve Kavakçı Affair has been one of the critical events. Merve Kavakçı, a computer engineer with a headscarf had been one of the parliamentary candidates of the Islamist Virtue Party. On the day she arrived in parliament, the deputies ran her out of the building in protest. Many mainstream media outlets depicted Kavakçı as a figure undermining the secular nature of the regime labelling headscarf as a threat to secularism. The forced removal of Merve Kavakçı from parliament had been based on a law coming from the military regime in the early 1980s.

In 2008, a constitutional amendment that would bring freedom to wearing headscarf in the universities has been approved by Turkish Parliament. However, Constitutional Court annulled the parliament's amendment, ruling, "removing the ban was against the founding principles of the constitution" (Birdişli and Kaçar, 2017: 10). In the same period, the JDP was faced with a closure case filed by the Constitutional Court mainly due to its move to lift the headscarf ban, because it was viewed as a political symbol (Çakmak and Dinç, 2010: 79).

On the other hand, the JDP government in September 2013 released a new democratization package. The reforms included the removal of the ban on the headscarf in public offices. On October 8, 2013, the JDP lifted the ban on headscarves for women the working in government offices. The then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan regarding the headscarf ban said that it had been a regulation that has hurt many young people and caused great suffering for their parents. (Pamuk, 2013).

5. Turkish Style of Secularism as a Factor Hindering Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation as noted earlier requires multiple interrelated factors to come into-being. In Turkish context, democratic consolidation is far from being fully accomplished due to a number of reasons such as the lack of civil society and rule of law. This section is an attempt to analyze the role of secularism practices in hindering democratic consolidation with regard to Directorate of Religious Affairs and the headscarf issue.

Turkey used to have an assertive secularist approach which led to the exclusion and discrimination of certain identities. The top-down modernization project had been accompanied by authoritarian secularization policies. The state

elites not only confined religion to the private sphere they also aimed to control Sunni Islam through the establishment of Directorate of Religious Affairs. Article 136 of the 1982 Constitution establishes a department of religious affairs within the general administration. This is known as the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The employees of this institution are civil servants, and its funds are appropriated from the budget of the administration. This leads to discrimination of Alevi citizens. Both Alevis and Sunnis pay taxes however this institution paves the way for inequality among the citizens. Government involvement in religious affairs undermines citizen equality by favoring certain religious views over others. The separation of religion and state is a critical component of democracy and the lack of such a separation erodes equality within the polity, thereby damaging the foundation of democracy (Brathwaite & Bramsen, 2011: 235).

Tolerance toward different world views and religious identities and respect for human rights is a vital component of democracy. In a democratic state, the political authority does not impose any behaviors upon the public. Democracies are the political systems wherein people can freely make their own choices about what kind of life they will lead: be it a religion-based one or not. They feel free while exercising religious practices. On the contrary, in the form of secularism seen in the French model –assertive secularism – state puts religion under pressure and does not reserve its right of autonomy, thereby also undermining democracy and democratic consolidation.

For several decades Turkish state used to adopt an assertive secularism understanding. As known, in assertive secularism state elites play an active role by excluding religious symbols from the public domain and confining religion to the private domain. This understanding has been evident in state approach towards the headscarf issue up until 2013. Through formal and informal mechanisms the headscarf had been banned. The headscarf problem started in the 1950s and got deepened in 1980s. The Cabinet issued the first regulation addressing headscarf issue in universities in 1981. The regulation required staff working for public organizations and institutions as well as personnel and students at state institutions to wear "ordinary, sober, modern dress". The regulations also provided that staff and students should not wear headscarf in educational institutions (Wing & Varol: 2005).

In the Feb 28 Process in 1997, some of the women who lost their jobs due to wearing headscarves faced accusations of "attempting to forcefully dissolve the Turkish Republic". One of them was Hüda Kaya. Kaya is now a member of the parliament in People's Democratic Party- HDP. In 2012 Kaya said the following words about the trials held in late 1990s: "We would like to see those who limited people's right to work and receive education during the Feb. 28 process stand trial. These cases [against coup perpetrators] should not just be opened. Despite positive developments, headscarf-wearing people are still not [allowed to participate] in all walks of life." (World Bulletin, 2012).

As noted earlier, according to Linz and Stepan (1996) an effective bureaucratic mechanism, a strong civil society, a free market economy, rule of law and autonomous and valued political society are required for democratic consolidation. However the assertive secularist policies as seen in the case of headscarf issue have undermined civil society discriminating the women wearing headscarf. These discriminatory state policies also challenged the legitimacy of the bureaucratic system and political society. In other words, it can be said that the assertive secularism practices have hindered democratic consolidation in Turkey for a considerable period.

With regards to the Directorate of Religious Affairs, it can be said that in Turkey due to the existence of the Directorate of Religious Affairs unlike as seen in the Western world, there is no separation of state and religion. By contrast, state intervention in religious affairs is obvious. In this sense, secularism is exercised as the constitutional control of religious affairs by state elites (Keyman, 2007: 222). Through the DRA, the state also adopts and promotes one certain Islam, that is Sunni Islam. As such, another major sect in Islam, namely Alevism is excluded by public authorities. This is also a contradicting practice with secularism. The state does not adopt an equal distance towards each religious identity but instead favors Sunni Islam. It can be argued that the norm of equal citizenship gets under threat when state discriminates against any religion. This weakens democratic consolidation. One of the dimensions of democratic consolidation is related with the constitutional dynamics. A democratic consolidation is realized when governmental and non-governmental actors within the state are subjected to and adapted to the specific laws (Linz and Stepan, 1996). The DRA is responsible for appointing imams and muezzins representing Sunni Islam however the establishment of such an institution exercises laws for the whole Turkish population be they Sunni or Alevi.

CONCLUSION

This article aimed to analyze Turkey's unique secularism history and secularism policies with a special emphasis of how they influence democratic norms and processes. Following this aim, the theoretical framework of this study is based on the theories of "assertive secularism" coined by Ahmet Kuru and "democratic consolidation" described by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan. The Alevi citizens, and practicing Muslim citizens (in this study the women wearing headscarf) have been subjected to unfair state policies. The main argument of this study is that despite adopting secularism, Turkey has a fragile democracy rather than a consolidated one.

Turkish secularism has subordinated religion to state authority through the Directorate of Religious Affairs. İştar Gözaydın (2014: 13) argues that the state makes use of the Directorate as an administrative instrument to indoctrinate and propagate official state ideology. This institution reproduces the otherization of Alevi citizens and inequality among citizens. This institution has been a

controversial institution undermining secularism and weakening democratic norms as well.

For a long time assertive secularism has been dominant in Turkey giving no autonomy to religion in the public sphere. Religious symbols like that of headscarf was systematically labeled as an element that is at odds with secular Republican ideals thus headscarf wearing female students and public personnel faced major discrimination. This has been a threat to democratic consolidation in Turkey. Through excluding certain segments of society, state elites paved the way for the discrimination of some particular citizens, such as the Alevis or head-scarf wearing women. Such exclusionary attitudes should be eliminated in order to strengthen Turkish democracy and to make politics and society more plural and liberal.

Secularism in Turkish case has not been a principle that aims to protect freedom of religion. The most important reason why secularism has not served such an aim was about the instrumentalization of religion by state elites in the early Republican era. Religion in Turkey, a despite having a secular system has never been independent from the institutional structure of the state and could not find the opportunity to develop as an autonomous institution independent from the public authority. The non-existence of the autonomy of religion has mainly derived from assertive secularism practices. These practices have been clearly evident in two cases: the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the headscarf issue. The DRA was organized according to Sunni interpretation of Islam. The monopoly of DRA over religious life narrowed the legal grounds for religious pluralism in Turkey and this undermined democratic consolidation. The headscarf problem in Turkey first emerged in the early 1950s and got intensified in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2013, the Justice and Development Party government lifted the headscarf ban in public offices. Today every woman is free to wear the headscarf at workplaces or university campuses. This is a really positive development for democratic consolidation however it is not enough as there are major shortcomings in state-religion relationship as addressed in the issue of the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

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