

AN ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS OF RECENT POLITICAL SECULARISM IN TURKEY AND HABERMAS' PROPOSED REMEDIES

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Abstract

Within the intricate structure of global political landscapes, the nation of Turkey emerges as a captivating subject of study, particularly when examining its progressive secularism and the complex interplay of socio-political dynamics. This study aims to examine the fundamental structural factors that surround the implementation of Turkey's present political secularism, while also employing Habermas' proposed notion of a post-secular society as an approach to address and resolve these intricacies. This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology by doing literature studies and relying on secondary data for data collection. The findings of this study suggest that Habermas's notion of a post-secular society has the potential to develop a sociopolitical structure that is more democratic and inclusive in the setting of Turkey where it is being investigated.

Keywords: Secularism, Secularization, AKP, Kemalism, Erdoganism, post-secularism

INTRODUCTION

As a contested term, in general, secularism can be defined as the separation between state affairs, or more broadly political, and religious affairs, or more practically, between matters of this world and those of the afterlife. While secularization refers to the Institutionalization of secularism and can be defined as a process by which religious influences, practices, and institutions lose their influence in various sphere of life. Throughout their conceptual histories, both secularism and secularization have evolved and even transformed in parallel with the modernization process occurring in Western society, which subsequently has an impact on the entire world.

Since its emergence, secularization has opened the floor for the debate over the future outlook of religion. Some scholars like Durkheim and Weber as cited by Berger argued that within the modernization process of the world, the religion will not be any longer needed to be applied in social or political affairs.¹ It means that the decline of religion is basically the consequence of today's growing modernity. According to secularization proponents, it is believed that secularization is an inevitable call. It happens because of some social and cultural structures that have changed. Particularly, the issues like cultural diversity and self-individualism play a vital position on why secularism emerges. Besides, the development of science and technology provide the new knowledge or insight which opens a promising alternative guidance apart from the directions which is so far stimulated by religion.² In other words, the plausible ideas are more capable of answering the social realities rather than the conceptual believes coming from religion. For instance, the believe, of prayer can make the agricultural fields fertile, will be less paid attention after the awareness that fertility scientifically is the result of a good watering and fertilizing system.

In contrast, Peter L. Berger argued that modernity does not mean secularizing, but it is more pluralizing. Because he sees that the main character of modernity itself is a rise of plurality within the same society, of different beliefs, values, and worldviews.³ He also criticized that the secularization theory did not put its effort to see that plurality is an important assumption in a way to challenge all religious traditions.⁴ Moreover, "the decline of religion" argument is somehow rejected by the data showing that the levels of subjective religiousness remain high. In addition, as it is said by David Martin which is cited by Stark that the secularization thesis had served only ideological and polemical rather than theoretical functions, and the shift to the secular period from religious one is seen unprovable.⁵ In accordance with these critiques, during 1990s, in spite of modernization, American and European religious participation had not gone into decline. Specifically, in America, the church membership keep increasing highly, while other religious aspects remain steady or have increased relatively moderate.⁶

¹ Peter L Berger, "Secularization Falsified," *First Thing: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 180 (2008): 23.

² Steve Bruce, "Secularization and Politics," in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, ed. Steve Bruce (London: Routledge, 2011), 151.

³ Berger, "Secularization Falsified," 24.

⁴ Ibid, 25.

⁵ Rodney Stark, "Secularization R.I.P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 254.

⁶ Ibid.

According to Norris and Inglehart the classic notion of secularization theory are divided into two approaches.⁷ *First*, rationalist approach, which is symbolized by the loss of faith. This approach is initiated by Weber and advanced by many sociologists during 1960s-70s. The primary premise is that, throughout the process of modernization, all aspects of life should be derived from a logical perspective of the world, grounded in empirical evidence, scientific understanding, and technical proficiency. As a result, this theory causes the elimination of religious elements and rituals within society's life. In their view, the awareness of plausible evidence can shift the claims of religion, specifically the church, and in that way, religion is no longer considered important. *Second*, Functionalist approach, which is symbolized by the loss of purpose. This perspective was introduced by Durkheim, and became the leading sociological view. Functionalists argue that religion is not simply a system of belief, but also it contains formal rituals and symbolic ceremonies to mark the passages of life. Since these rituals have the essential function for maintaining order and stability, Durkheim argued that the character of industrialized society is functional differentiation, where the replacement of church or religion tasks to modern institutions in education, politics, and others does not mean the elimination of entire religious functions. He argued that despite the gradual disappearance of spiritual and moral roles of religious institutions in industrial societies, some religious rituals like birth and marriage will still remain with their functions.

The relevance of the discourse on the secularization theory to the realm of political secularism in Turkey lies in its ability to demonstrate that the alterations in political circumstance can fundamentally affect the status of secularism. Turkey's distinctive historical background, characterized by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's vigorous advocacy for secularism, has experienced considerable transformations in recent years, primarily owing to the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). This study is an attempt to dissect the intricacies of how secularism is discussed and contested inside the political structure of Turkey. This also examines a fundamental framework that enables a nuanced understanding of the challenges and transformations that have shaped contemporary political secularism, where the conflicts between traditional and modern secular values could be revealed. The Problem of secular politics in Turkey is resolved by borrowing Habermas' theory.

⁷ Pipa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7–11.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the author employs a qualitative research design characterized by the utilization of comprehensive information for data interpretation. This approach is non-quantitative in nature and facilitates a thorough and comprehensive exploration of phenomena, rather than a broad and extended examination. In this research, the author concurred with Miles and Huberman's assertion that the qualitative method of data analysis is an interactive approach that encompasses the stages of data collecting, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.⁸ As Creswell also argues that qualitative research refers to a type of study that does not rely exclusively on statistical techniques or other quantitative research methods for the generation of findings.⁹

The present study utilizes literature review method. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the author's analysis and comprehensive response to the issue formula, allowing for focused attention on a specific region. This research also uses secondary data sourced from academic journals, books, papers, and internet platforms that are pertinent to the case studies examined in this research. The data will be thoroughly examined by applying the relevant formula to address the discussion of this research and developing meaningful conclusions based on the research findings.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Secularization Models

Throughout history, the dominant influence of the Christian church, with its unwavering theological framework, has been identified as the primary issue underlying the thesis of secularization. This is due to the fact that the church, which purports to be the authoritative establishment representing God on earth, exercises dominance over individuals' lives and shapes the shared perception of the world. Religious elites were considered as legal authority in putting the standards of transcendent belief which are applied in all aspects of life.¹⁰ This is what was rejected by European society at that time and made them gradually shift towards a more secular

⁸ Anis Fuad and Kandung Septo Nugroho, *Panduan Praktis Penelitian Kualitatif* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Ilmu, 2014), 64.

⁹ John W Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approach and Mixed Method Methodologies* (CA: Sage Publication, 1998), 24.

¹⁰ Frank J Lechner, "Secularization," 2020, 1, <https://www.scribd.com/document/480834714/Lechner-Secularization>.

society until now. However, by moving towards a secular society, does not mean to bring the problem to the end. Particularly, in the present of Europe, where a lot of immigrants are coming in and make religious diversity increasing, some parties present an offer to increase the dose of secularism when the persecution and discrimination towards religious minorities occurs and religious conservatism escalates. Because they simply see that the core of the problem is a shortage of secularism.¹¹ However, the circle of contemporary scholars disagree and criticize this argument. According to them, instead of solving the problem of religious minorities' subordination, secularism can actually intensify the conflicts due to majority-minority imbalances and further tense the relations between different faiths, although in the beginning, secularism was campaigned behind the promises of religious freedom and civil equality in honoring pluralist democracy.¹²

Political secularism itself can be meant as the power of the modern state in reorganizing socio- religious life, determining what and how religion should be, including censoring what religious content and expressions are appropriate within a certain moral or ethical framework.¹³ It appears in line with the power of the state in recognizing the existence of a religion and regulating or limiting religious freedom. Due to the fact that secularism is still considered as a contested term in theory, its application also can be translated or interpreted in various ways. In this context, there are some main variants of secularism model that exist in today's world of politics;

i) the French model. This separation is well known as one-side exclusion. Simply, because only state is allowed to interfere religion, while religion is not allowed to do vice versa. State's control over religion makes religion become the object of law and public policy, but only in terms of the state authority. The root of this idea stems from the disrespect for religion which is caused by over-domination of the church. This conception is intended to help state to control the aspect of interreligious domination when any religious community's domination comes out. In fact, instead of dealing with it, the interreligious domination is not properly addressed when the discrimination, marginalization, and persecution between any religious communities took place.¹⁴

ii) the American Model. Different from French, America puts forward a mutual exclusion

¹¹ Fiqh Vredian, "Masalah Sekularisme Dan Dampaknya Dalam Hubungan Mayoritas-Minoritas," 2018, <https://crcs.ugm.ac.id/masalah-sekularisme-dan-dampaknya-dalam-hubungan-mayoritas-minoritas/>.

¹² Rajeev Bhargava, "Political Secularism Why It Is Need and Why We Need to Learn from Indian Version," *32nd Congress of the German Society for Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2006): 326.

¹³ Vredian, "Masalah Sekularisme Dan Dampaknya Dalam Hubungan Mayoritas-Minoritas."

¹⁴ Rajeev Bhargava, "States, Religious Diversity, and the Crisis of Secularism," *The Hedgehog Review* 12, no. 3 (2010): 12.

on its interpretation towards secularism. It means that both state and religion are not meant to interfere the domain of one another. This mutual exclusion is considered as a mandatory aspect for religious liberty and general liberty of individuals. It is intended to resolve the conflict, and guarantees the equality and freedom for believers in case of their individual religiosity. In practice, the privilege of religion and the freedom of it only can be actualized in the private sphere in which this kind of negative liberty, according to Bhargava, encourages the state to have passive respect for religion.¹⁵

iii) the Indian Model. The same as other countries, India, which is better known as the plural country, cannot enforce democracy without secularism in the context of modernity. In terms of religious life, India is described as having the potential to become the home of all religions, due to the aspect of protecting religious freedom and the development of religious groups that live relatively well. The separation between religion and state in India is also not strictly or harshly implemented, but still it contains the porous limits of it. The intervention of state is more likely to help some specific role in any educational and socio-religious institution. The commitment of the Indian state to balance the principle distance and multiple values become a positive aspect which is seen comparably decent of being an example for other countries.¹⁶ While, the advocates of this model claim that India as a state respects minority and pluralism, on the other hand, because of its unclear position, it is criticized for its pseudo secularism.

iv) the Communist regime model. As in Soviet Union and other communist regime, secularism is not just practiced to privatizing religion, it also aims to repress it. A belief of Marxism influences the Soviet Union to wage war on any religious beliefs for many years. The communist party destroyed many sacred places of religion and executed religious leader. The propaganda of anti-religion is distributed within schools and media, and they tried to change all of elements of religion by generating their own new system of belief. Like religion, their propaganda also propounded the fundamental meaning of human life, a set of ethical principles, and established a repertoire of non-theistic rites and ceremonies.¹⁷

v) the Turkish model. In Turkey, the influence of secularism was evident when the Ottoman caliphate collapsed and replaced by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk regime. He changed the total

¹⁵ Ibid, 13-14

¹⁶ Ibid, 14-16

¹⁷ Paul Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 1 (2004): 35.

system of government and social life by replacing the old fashion of politics based on religion to secular nationalism. This change can be seen in the regime's attempt to eliminate certain religious values contained in the legal Islamic institutions, such as the change of official language, the closing of religious school, the abolishment of the Ministry of Sharia, the replacement of Adzan to Turkish language, and so on. This revolutionary movement symbolizes a resistance against anti-republican group which is identical with the old tradition of Islam at that time. Different from French which is attempting to reform only for political purpose, besides of demolishing this group, the aim of Turkish leaders were also to alter Turkish culture and morality itself. In short, by excluding religion from the core of system, the Turkish republic developed a new value system from the values that have ever existed before.¹⁸

The Intricate Dynamics of Turkey's Political Secularism

The initial significant interaction between Turkey and the Western world took place when the Ottoman Turkish forces, headed by Sultan Muhammad II, often known as 'al-Fatih', conquered Constantinople, the capital of Byzantium, in 1453. Later Constantinople was renamed Istanbul, where it became a metropolis city located between two continents; Asia and Europe. The Ottoman Empire's golden era began at this moment, during which its influence expanded from Northern Hungary in the west to Iran in the east, and from Ukraine in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, lasting until the 18th century.¹⁹ Despite the predominant Islamic population, the Ottoman Empire managed to establish a vast empire characterized by a diverse civilization comprising several ethnicities and religions. The Millet system, a theological doctrine-based system, offered independence and cultural autonomy to the non-Muslim community inside the empire. This system, which operated alongside the Caliphate system, displayed a noble attitude of tolerance and justice throughout that period.²⁰

The Sultan is at the same time the caliph, which means besides becoming the leader of the state, he also holds the position as a religious leader. The Ottoman Caliphate received assistance from the Ulama, also known as Seyhul Islam, which served as a religious organization with

¹⁸ Ertar Aydin, "The Tension between Secularism and Democracy in Turkey: Early Origins, Current Legacy," *European Views* 6, no. 11 (2007): 14.

¹⁹ Imron Mustofa, "Turki Antara Sekularisme Dan Aroma Islam; Studi Atas Pemikiran Niyazi Berkes," *EL-BANAT: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Peradaban Islam* 6, no. 1 (2016): 53.

²⁰ H. Sule Albayrak, "Religious Pluralism and Religion-State Relations in Turkey," *MDPI Journal of Religions* 10, no. 1 (2019): 3.

significant influence and authority in affairs of state.²¹ In the context of law, due to the Ottoman Empire ruled the sharia, it can be said that the special features of pre-modern Turkish policy lied in the functions of the Ulama in the system of government. Therefore, Seyhul Islam had the important role in almost all state affairs, covering its authority not only in the executive, but also includes the legislative and judicial areas.²²

Following World War 1, the Ottoman Empire underwent a period of collapse. Gradually, the outlying provinces emancipated themselves from the dominion of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the allied nations attempted to partition Turkey's land in order to establish it as their colony. The fragmented state of the Turkish Empire stimulated a sense of nationalism among the younger generation of Turkey, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, prompting them to see the pressing need for a distinct national identity and the need of establishing a nationalist state at that period. This is shown by bureaucratic and military elites who are ready with their commitment for a change from a multi- national and multi-religious regime to become a secular and national Turkish state.²³ In this regard, traditional institutions, structures and belief systems have been eroded as a result of a series of complex processes collectively referred to as 'modernization'.

There are two areas, at least, that can be observed in the secularist drive which is the most prominent element of the Kemalist reform. *First*, was the secularization of the state, education, and law in the form of elimination on the traditional power centers of the Ulama which had been institutionalized. *Second*, was the secularization of social life and the separation of religious values that was embraced by the people. The termination of the sultanate and caliphate, the declaration of the republic, and the establishment of a new constitution between 1922-1924 marked the final steps in the process of secularizing the state. This process was concluded with the removal of the provision that designated Islam as the official religion of Turkey in the 1928 constitution. At almost the same time, the *medrese* or religious schools, were abolished and replaced with schools for imam khatib (prayer leader and preacher school), and with a theology faculty at the University of Istanbul. In addition, in 1924, secularization also indicated by the abolition of the functions of

²¹ Tabrani ZA, "Perubahan Ideologi Keislaman Turki: Analisis Geo-Kultur Islam Dan Politik Pada Kerajaan Turki Usmani," *Jurnal Edukasi* 46, no. 3 (2016): 131.

²² Gazi Erdem, "Religious Services in Turkey: From the Office of Seyhulislam to Diyanet," *The Muslim World*, 2008, 201–3.

²³ Isputaminingsih, "Sejarah Islam: Kasus Sekularisme Turki," *Criksetra: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah* 3, no. 1 (2014): 16.

Seyhul Islam and the *Ser'iye ve Avkaf Vekaleti* (Ministry of Religious Affairs and Foundation). Instead, for replacing both, two directorates were established, namely *Dinayet Isleri Mudurlugu* (Directorate of Religious Affairs) and *Evkaf Genel Mudurlugu* (Directorate General of Religious Foundations).²⁴

The second field was more related to the restraint of religious symbols, such as the control over dress, the banning of the veil, the replacement of weekly holiday to be Sunday from Friday, the change the official language, the replacement of Adzan to Turkish language and many more. This revolutionary movement symbolized a resistance against anti-republican group which is identical with the old tradition of Islam at that time. The aim of this was to reform Turkish culture and morality itself.²⁵ All forms of these restrain and change, especially the establishment of new directorates clearly showed that the perception of Kemalist secularism did not mean a separation between religion and the state but rather as a state control over religion.

Despite the previous rigorous control over religious aspects during the early years of Turkey's establishment as a republic, today's turkey religious landscape has significantly changed. The meaning of secularism also has experienced a shift from what was originally meant by Kemal Ataturk during his leadership. This change happened due to uncounted complex factors in every field of social and political circumstances. In particular, since democracy, under Erdogan leadership, Turkey, with its own characteristic, has determined its own new model of secularism. Over the years, Erdogan and his Justice and Development party (AKP) has dominated the country's politics, making a state that is constitutionally secular to be more religious. Erdogan's policies and political messages always lead to a reinterpretation of secularism in which, according to him, only the state can become secular, not individuals. Two of many examples in this respect are his refusal to continue its strict ban on religion from all public domains and its restrictions on private life, and, in early 2012, Erdogan once said that he wanted to see a "pious generation". Subsequently, parliament approved a law that allows religious schools, Imam Hatips, to accept students who are in the age of 11 years old.²⁶ In fact, this situation generates a public debate, whether Turkey have recently adopted the Islamic world model of democracy and leaves the

²⁴ ZA, "Perubahan Ideologi Keislaman Turki: Analisis Geo-Kultur Islam Dan Politik Pada Kerajaan Turki Usmani," 138–39.

²⁵ Aydin, "The Tension between Secularism and Democracy in Turkey: Early Origins, Current Legacy," 14.

²⁶ Muhaimin, "Mengintip Sekularisme Di Turki Dari Ataturk Hingga Erdogan," 2018, <https://international.sindonews.com/berita/1360624/43/mengintip-sekularisme-di-turki-dari-ataturk-hingga-erdogan>.

secular model or still stick to the secular model that was pioneered by Atatürk.

Due to the fact that Erdogan has given the new color of Turkey's political secularism in which many scholars consider it as "a transformation from Kemalism to Erdoganism",²⁷ its application is also in line with the challenges and problems which basically emerge in every period of certain political regime. Meanwhile, in today's Turkey's political secularism, those challenges and problem can be found in some different discussion;

I) the Alevi Issue. The discussion regarding the Alevi Issues has been existent since the beginning of the republic period. Alevism constitutes another form of Islam in which its religious practice is considered as heterodox, because it contains Shi'ism and Sufism elements. As a minority, with 15 percent of the total population,²⁸ the Alevi asked for the fulfillment of its constitutional rights which is considered, so far, as a discrimination towards them. Especially, when it is compared to the rights and facilities that are provided to majority of Sunni. Instead of dealing with the problems of the Alevi, the movements done by the AKP government do not come with the positive outcome regarding the Alevi demands for its Identity. Yet, the movements look more like a symbolic gesture in which the political will to listen and reconcile the hopes of the Alevi community actually has never existed. The recognition of Cem house as their place of worship and the amendment to the compulsory religious classes in schools are some topics of their demands for their religious identity.²⁹ This condition is also exacerbated by the attitude of the state that does not pay attention to the symbol that tends to possibly hurt the identity of Alevism. For instance, naming the third Bosphorus bridge "Yavuz Sultan Selim," was evoking the collective memory of the Alevi community for the murder of thousands alevi done by the Ottoman ruler in Antaloia.³⁰

The debate over the authenticity of the Alevi problem revolves in two distinct approaches. The first is a political domain, where the government, under democratic meanings, is asked to recognize the existence of Alevism and its followers, and takes into account their desired aspirations in order to ensure equal citizenship rights. On the other side, the theological approach

²⁷ Ihsan Yilmaz and Galib Bashirov, "The AKP After 15 Years: Emergence of Erdoganism in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 9 (2008): 1813.

²⁸ Murat Borovali and Cemil Boyraz, "The Alevi Workshops: An Opening Without an Outcome?," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 2 (2015): 145.

²⁹ Mehmet Bardakci, "The Alevi Opening of the AKP Government in Turkey: Walking a Tightrope between Democracy and Identity," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 367.

³⁰ Ibid, 365

of this issue seems more complicated to find the wanted solution. This problematic issue rooted from conception, whether the Alevi belongs to Islam or out of it. The confession of the Alevi community that Alevism is part of Islam violates the provisions that exist in the understanding of the Sunnis. In concrete terms, for instance, the demand for the recognition of Cem house as a place of worship clearly contradicts the Sunni perspective which believes that only mosques are considered places of worship for Muslim. Therefore, solving the problems through a theological approach does not seem to be accepted by the majority of Sunni Muslims as long as the Alevi's 'part of Islam' confession remains exist. Conversely, the demand for such rights will probably be solved if the confession of being heterodox Islam does not exist, so Alevism could be considered as not part of Islam and be the same like other religions.³¹

Moreover, the critiques also emerged regarding the contradiction of genuineness between the past and present demands of the Alevi. Some may argue that their present demand are not genuinely for religious freedom, because, according to them, during Kemalist regime, instead of voicing for the religious rights of Sunni citizens, the Alevis were not at all sensitive to fight against the unjust treatment of restrictions which is done by oppressive secularist regime at that time, instead, they actually had a close relationship to stay hand in hand with the regime. Therefore, when Sunni Muslims as the majority were asked to empathize with them for their equal religious rights, this would become a counter-question regarding their silence and previous approval of the regime's treatment to Sunnis in the past.³²

II) *Diyanet*. After the abolition of caliphate, *Diyanet* was formed as an official state institution that is intended to responsibly carry out religious activities of Turkish society. In particular, within the Islamic religion, partly because Islam is the extensive majority of the population in Turkey. The elements of religion, such as belief, worship, religious education, and worship places are all in the authority of this institution. Some people argue that the establishment of *Diyanet* was intended to separate the relation between religion and state, and some may argue that it is more apparently intended to be state's control over religion. Similar to the ministries of religion in other countries, the responsibilities of *Diyanet*, as an institution, may be categorized into four primary areas: providing services for religious rituals in Turkey, offering religious

³¹ Borovali and Boyraz, "The Alevi Workshops: An Opening Without an Outcome?," 150–52.

³² Ibid, 155-156

education, providing services overseas, and managing the *Diyanet* Foundation.³³

The status and the programs of *Diyanet* under a position of Turkish republic as a secular state, generates a deep debate in both religious and secular circles. Interestingly, both parties side have their own critiques and defenses to *Diyanet* accordingly. From the secular circle side, some secularists criticizing *Diyanet* for being an obstacle of practicing a complete secularism, and some may defend the position of *Diyanet*, due to the satisfaction of the role of *Diyanet* on behalf of the state's control over religion affairs. While from religious circle side, for the critique, some of them argued that *Diyanet* as a religious institution have been used as a tool of the state to control and limit religious practices and services, and some of them, in different way, are pleased by the opening for jobs, and by the availability of facilities and services provided by *Diyanet*.³⁴ Although there has been ongoing discussion about whether the *Diyanet* is compatible with secularism, the constitutional court has ruled that the state's oversight of religion is intended to prevent religious fanaticism by educating qualified religious scholars and providing religious services for the predominantly Muslim population.³⁵ In recent time, regardless many other problems, the challenging homework of *Diyanet* is mostly related to the dichotomy of majority and minority issue, where *Diyanet*, according to many scholars, is seen as a political agent of AKP and being not capable of fixing pluralism concerns by reattaching Sunni Hanefi as a central mission without putting another religious traditions, especially the Muslim Alevi Minority into account.³⁶

III) Economy. The winning of AKP in long term general election has become a unique phenomenon in which no other parties have experienced the same. The only party which may come close to the comparison of AKP is Democratic Party (DP) which had won three times general elections in 1950, 1954, and 1957. Nevertheless, due to the economic crisis and political instability, the domination of DP, through military intervention, had come to the end in 1960. On the other side, in the context of AKP, political economy, which is practiced by AKP apparently leads this party to a single dominant party in the country. None of the opposition parties could rival or compete AKP's hegemony in the electoral arena. Even, one can argue that AKP dominance will

³³ Ufuk Ulutas, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey: The Dilemma of Directorate of Religious Affairs," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 3 (2010): 394.

³⁴ Ibid, 389

³⁵ Ibid, 397

³⁶ Luca Ozzano and Chiara Maritato, "Patterns of Political Secularism in Italy and Turkey: The Vatican and the *Diyanet* to the Test of Politics," *Politics and Religion* 12, no. 3 (2019): 473.

remain the same within the next decade.³⁷ In performing the authority, AKP government also use the the attribute of Islam in upholding the business networks which contribute to the emergence of islamic capital. They realized that beside considering strong economy as a key contributor to the party's future electoral success, they also utilized the formal and informal redistributive mechanism not only for party's sustainability, but also to expand its electoral coalition.³⁸ In this context, Islamic parties become a tool used by islamic orders and communities to promote a penetration into the bureaucracy and democratic politics in order to provide legitimacy for material objectives. These ideas appear in line, with practices of neoliberalism which refers to political economy, and also with the attempt to facilitate the rise of Islamist business. Subsequently, this situation is expected to empower the Islamist business networks by giving them space for their integration in national and internaional arena. Thus, these networks have tried to confront the status quo in the Turkish economy and politics, which was, previously dominated by the hegemony of rigorously secular big business in close cooperation with the establishment of Kemalist state.³⁹

IV) The rise of both sides; conservatism and secularism. To answer the claim of both sides, it is seemingly better to analyze the article written by Volkan Ertit concerning the comparison of rising aspects in both secularism and conservatism. Based on his article, it is concluded that the claim of rising conservatism in Turkey only happens in the scope of the governmental policies where political Islam has been dominant under the power of AKP and Erdogan leadership. The motto of 'Islamization' in Turkey has been brought by recent government through their policies and political rhetoric. This claim basically are supported by the reality of increasing facilities and policies in which religious symbols and elements are reflected. The rise of built mosque, the rise in number of religious schools. The rise of theology faculties, the rise of Quran teaching foundations and associations, the control over alcohol advertisement, Erdogan's attempt to prohibit adultery by law, the attempt for prohibition of male and female student living together, and many more, are some indications in a way of people who might claim that today's Turkey has been changing from secular to more Islamist.⁴⁰ Thus, some may argue that, by this

³⁷ Ziya Onis, "The Triumph of Conservative Globalism: The Political Economy of the AKP Era," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 19, no. 2 (2012): 136–37.

³⁸ Ibid, 138

³⁹ Isik Ozel, "Political Islam and Islamic Capital: The Case of Turkey," in *Religion and Politics in Europe, Middle East, and North Africa* (London: Routledge/ ECPR Studies in European Political Science, 2010), 158.

⁴⁰ Ertit Volkan, "God Is Dying in Turkey as Well: Application of Secularization Theory to a Non-Christian Society," *Open Theology*, 2018, 205.

change, Turkish society has adopted a more religious and conservative structure.

Ironically, according to Volkan, AKP and Erdogan's effort to islamize Turkey, in fact, does not appear in line with its application in the level of society. On the contrary, while the attempts to make Turkey more religious or conservative are increasingly done by the government, the bottom society is more likely to have a more secular lifestyle. This argument can be seen in several issues; a). a declining number of mosque congregation and prayer rate. b). the increase of non-marriage relationships, divorce, and the decrease of children number. c). the increase of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) phenomenon and its movement. d). the disappearance of folk belief under modernization. e). the society preference to european clothing styles rather than religion compliant cloths. f). the loss of influence of religious leader (Imam). g). the reduction of embedding islamic names for newborn babies. In addition, the defeat of religious approach by secular one concerning any issue, make the rise of secular discourse within society. For instance, in the case of abortion and drinking alcohol, instead of prohibiting them based on Quranic verse, people would prefer to accept its prohibition under the line of 'endangering health' advice. Thus, all of these phenomena showed that, due to the dynamics of modernizations, Turkish societies have left religious lifestyle even more, and, those religious neglections confirmed that they tend to be more secular rather than conservative.⁴¹

As stated by Bilgili, Turkey's post-secularism is still grappling with unresolved challenges such as ethnic and religious divisions.⁴² However, there is an ongoing effort to establish a balanced relationship between secularism and religion. The majority of Islam in Turkey recognizes that the needs of its community are not met by a radical interpretation, but rather by a moderate one. Furthermore, given the heightened complexity of the current difficulties, it is imperative for it to align with the impact of contemporary values and be receptive to continual reinterpretation. In post-secularism, conventional religions will encounter the challenge of community plurality, as the rise of new sects becomes a worldwide phenomena that cannot be disregarded. Moreover, the process of modernization necessitates the emergence of a novel kind of civil society that embraces liberal and democratic principles. In this regard, in the context of Turkey, the *Diyanet* also has experienced the shift of function, in which, in the beginning, the control over religion is counted as main duty; however, it has started to change into multiple features. This is done because the

⁴¹ Ibid, 195-204

⁴² Alper Bilgili, "Post-Secular Society and the Multi-Vocal Religious Sphere in Turkey," *Journal of European Perspective of the Western Balkan* 3, no. 2 (2011): 142-143.

need of *Diyanet* to contend with other religious entities or symbols in order to get the attention from the masses. For instance, the establishment of Diyanetспор in 2007 is a proof of Diyanet's way as an institution to seek a balanced resolution in order to maintain its influence.⁴³ Given the ideals of liberalism, it is believed that the survival and establishment of a post-secular administration in Turkey will be more probable if the religious organizations and communities are more moderate.

In considering the relevance of present complex situations in Europe especially in Turkey, Habermas' idea on post secular society may become an ideal way to seek for an intermediate solution between religion and political space. His explanation for the return of a balance religion's role in the public sphere, the equal position of reconciliation for both religious and secular, and the existence of mutual learning effort between both, has emphasized the importance of inclusive dialogues, where both religious and secular citizens can contribute to discussions about the common good and ethical principle in a pluralistic society. In his findings, Habermas concluded that the role of religion cannot be longer denied its presence in the political space. For him, today religion is no longer imprisoned in a private space. Religion has the potential to fill the shortcomings of modernization and remain exist in modern society. One of the evidences that convinced Habermas for the influence of religion in the social system is the occurrence of acts of terror since 11 September 2001. According to him, these actions were born through consideration of religious legitimacy.⁴⁴ Apart from that, Habermas's belief in the post-secularization thesis is increasing with the existence of religion which is also supported by the failure of secularization. According to Habermas, one of the potentials for religions to fill the failure of secularism lies in a religious capacity in mobilizing moral sensitivity and solidarity.⁴⁵ What is expected afterwards is that secular citizens in the community and the political arena should have the opportunity to interact with their religious counterparts on an equal footing.

Regardless of the role of religion, Habermas still highly appreciates the legacy of modern thinkers. He did not immediately abandon modern traditions, and only saw some gaps in modern thinking that could be patched by the potential of religion. Habermas allows religion to appear in the public sphere, with all its potential, without leaving the tradition and legacy of modern

⁴³ Ibid, 143.

⁴⁴ Jurgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*, ed. William Rehg and Al Et (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 101.

⁴⁵ Jurgen Habermas, "Notes on Post-Secular Society," *New Perspective Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 29.

philosophy. He described that in post-secular society, religion and secularism both have shortcomings and must complement each other. The secular notion that views the metaphysical entity of religion as outdated and under the entity of modern philosophy is misleading. On the other hand, religion in modern era must adapt and be able to reconcile with pluralistic liberal and secular life.⁴⁶ Doing the process of learning from each other, both sides should embrace and accommodate one another in a spirit of mutual learning. For the religious side, the authority of natural reason must be accepted as the consequence of institutionalized science and universal equality values in law and morality. Conversely, in spite of some irrationalities, the secular side may not become the judge concerning the truths of faith.

CONCLUSION

The secularization has always become the intense discussion among scholars. regardless of the ongoing dispute over the existence of secularization, it must be admitted that a shift in the function of religion in the socio-political domain truly happened. The present discourse revolves around the various theoretical frameworks employed in the analysis of secularization within different nations. Notably, several countries have emerged as exemplars of secularization, including France, the United States, India, Communist states, and Turkey.

In the context of Turkey, it is noteworthy that the transition of regime leadership from the Ottomans to the present has been accompanied by distinct challenges that each regime must confront in order to achieve its objectives. In the contemporary political landscape of Turkey, under the leadership of Erdogan and the AKP, a number of challenging issues have emerged pertaining to the intricate interplay between religion and politics. These issues encompass alevism, the role of Diyanet, the relationship between conservatism and religious beliefs, the state of the economy, and the concept of post-secularism. These matters pose significant complexities and warrant careful examination within the Turkish context.

In light of the current state of Europe, wherein the inevitability of diversity is apparent, Habermas' reflections on post-secularism might present an ideal framework for potential implementation within contemporary Turkey. However, there are some advantages and disadvantages in its application, especially in a country where Muslims is majority. The

⁴⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (Malden: Polity Press, 2010), 15–23.

advantages could be on the resurgence of religion's role in the public sphere, the equitable position of reconciliation for both religious and secular entities, and the presence of mutual learning endeavors between the two can be attributed to its simplicity. For the disadvantages of Habermas' reflection could be identified from Islamic perspective, where the spirit of equilibrium, conciliation and mutual learning may jeopardize religious teaching and values. It is because there are some fundamental teachings of Islam which cannot be reconciled with secular values. The appearance of religious events in society, which is the very nature of religiosity in Islam, could create tension with secular member of society. Similarly, applying equality in social and political affairs for majority and minority on religious bases is not so simple.

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