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# Secular Republic and the Old Order –
# Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Turkish identity\*\*

The predominant thought of this text is that the transformation and reforms that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk deviced and instigated in Turkey in 1920s and 1930s, especially those aiming at the strict separation of religion and state, and secularization of the Turkish society, to large extent drew from the thinking of the European Enlightment, predominantly the French writings, but also from the 19th century social sciences, in particular from Auguste Comte's works. Those were the resources that inspired radicalism of the Turkish dictator, and those were the reasons of their incompatibility with the Islamic heritage of the Ottoman empire, in terms of religion and in politics.

To understand the scope of changes that Atatürk inspired and introduced to the Turkish state, especially those aiming at attaining the lay civility of the state – the changes that without a doubt can be classified as revolutionary – one should first attempt to grasp the essence, and elucidate, the starting point of it all, being the intimate unity of the state, politics and religion in the Ottoman empire. That is the position that enables one to analyze the issues and problems of laicity and lay civility of the Turkish state.

The idea that issues of religion should be divorced from issues of politics stems from the essence of Christianity we find in the words uttered by Jesus: "give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21). That thought for centuries constituted the European autonomy of both religion and politics. Such divorcing the religious order from politics, however, has never been a characteristic of Islam. Muslim modernists believe that "secularism in Islam, properly speaking, is the acceptance of laws and other social and political institutions without reference to Islam, i.e. without their being derived from, or organically linked with, the principles of the Qur'an and the Sunna" (Rahman, 1970: 331).

Quite often that process is given a name of 'secularization', however, as José Casanova points out, the very word can be interpreted threefold. Firstly, it can denominate the

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process involving modernization of society, resulting in differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres. Secondly, it refers to a proposition assuming that the process of secularization will effectively reduce and dismiss religion. The third meaning of the word implies that secularization involves the privatization of religion and entrophy of the classic ecclesiastical religions (Casanova, 2005: 47 ff.). All those grounds inspired the Kemalists, and also their ideological predecessors, i.e. the activists of the Committee of Union and Progress.

However, it should be stressed that secularization, i.e. some independent and objective social process differs distinctly from laicity, a doctrine that assumes that the state, lay by its nature, "should be totally void and separate from all and any religious influences" (Gilson, 1994: 162). Laicity understood this way – as opposed to the process of secularization – is of a normative and not a descriptive character. From that perspective, religion is perceived as the enemy of the state (Drury, 2017: 293). Notably, Atatürk, drawing inspirations from the French, introduced laicity in the newly formed Turkish Republic (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, VanAntwerpen, 2011: 9) while secularization, in the Casanova's understanding of the word, appeared there only mariginally.

## Islam in the Ottoman Empire

After the Seljuks conquered Arabs[1], and Persia was won, in the middle of 11th century, the Caliph of Baghdad provided the Turkish ruler the title of The King of Eeast and West and the dignity of a Sultan. Thus, the Turkish ruler became the superior religious leader of Islam and the carer of the Caliphate (Reychman, 1973: 26-28). The stately and religious institutions merged at the very beginning of the Ottoman Empire[2] which was at the turn of 13th and 14th centuries. From that time, the identity of the Turks was the subject of important developments. Bernard Lewis says that the Ottoman Turks identified with religion to that extent that they "submerged their identity in Islam – to a greater extent than perhaps any other Islamic people", and the Sultans "gave to the Şeriat, the holy law of Islam, a greater degree of real efficacy than it had had in any Muslim state of high material civilization since early times" (Lewis, 1968: 13).

Life of the Turks, and also of all the Muslim believers, was regulated by *ummah*[3], i.e. a local religious, social and political community. It was because of the *ummah* that the

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[1]  Seljuk Turks originates from the name of Seljuq, one of the local rulers living at the turn of 10th and 11th centuries, who succeeded in uniting Oguz (Ghuzz) tribus; for more see: (Grousset, 1970: 148-159).

[2]  The Ottoman empire draws its name from Ottoman, the Sultan of Turkey, ruling in 1299-1326. The dynasty he commenced produced 26 rulers of the Ottoman Turkey during six centuries of their remaining in power; for more see (Inalcik, 2006: 71).

[3]  The Arabic word ummatun means 'the nation', 'community', 'commune', see (The Qur'an, 1986: 856, translated by J. Bielawski). Laws regulating the functioning of the ummah as being the community of the Muslim people were initially produced in the first three centuries of Islam's existence; see also (Danecki, 2007: 205).

relations that bound a Muslim person with the community were of both social and moral character. Janusz Danecki, an Arabist and scholar on Islam, noted that *ummah* was in fact

the principal instrumwent for instigating social integration, as it provided a Muslim with the sense of belonging to a community much broader than the one defined by tribal boundaries […]. The act of an individual's rejecting or forsaking the community constituted much more than a mere social act, it was also a deed morally deplorable and so deserving punishment. By doing so one not only curtailed his or her relations with people but also severed his links with God […]. This is Islam's power to bond the faithful together manifesting itself in practice (Danecki, 2007: 33).

The Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam, on numerous occasions reiterates the importance of *ummah*, and its, the *ummah's*, members are described as being the best nation produced for mankind (The Qur'an 3:110), further, the Qur'an warns against any divisions of the *ummah*, or within it (The Qur'an 3: 105).

The Turks' position and authority within the Muslim world was being established and fixed by their successful military conquests in Europe, but also in the East. In 1516, they invaded Syria and subsequently Egypt, where the last Abbasid Caliph nominated the Turkish ruler with the title of the Servant of the Mecca and the Medina, and the Sharif of Meca despatched the keys to the Holy Cities to the Sultan (Inalcik, 2006: 45). By conquering the native Arab lands, Turks sealed their unchallenged leadership of the Muslim world. And thus, they assumed the role of the defenders of Islam.

The following centuries brought about more successful Turkish European and Asiatic conquests, and the political and military might culminated in 16th century[4]. From that moment on, only slow decline of the state was observed. Attempts to reform the Empire involved, among other ideas, efforts to assume European technology, firstly of the military disciplines, but never European values or scholarly ideas, as the Islamic culture was sealed tight against those (Reychman, 1973: 83-84).

## Europeization

Europeization of Turkey (Tur. *Avrupalaşmak*) was initially attempted by the Turkish Sultans in the first half of 18th century; still, the European intellectual and scholarly achievements were not to exert marked influence on Turkish history until the French Revolution and its ideas of nationalism and secularism. Those novelties were introduced to, and spread among, Turks by the Turkish military circles. It was the influence exerted by the French culture that was of key importance for the future transformation of Turkey, and, as Lewis stated,

such attemps at reform as had been made during the eighteenth century had all been under the guidance of French instructors, usually working in French language. […] Such nuclei of trained officers as were available in Istanbul had been taught by French teachers and with French text-

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[4]  Between 1520 and 1530, Muslims constituted 62.4 % of inhabitants living in large cities of the Empire; most of the remaining population, non-Muslim, was Christian; see: (Barkey, 2012: 16).

books. The only treatises available in Turkish were translations from French, printed at the press of the French Embassy – the best equipped press in the city. What little knowledge of European languages Turkish intelectuals possessed was French (Lewis, 1968: 56).

When new military schools were being set up, the Sultan Selim III ruled that "French officers were recruited as teachers and instructors, French was made a compulsory language for all students, and a library of some 400 European books acquired, most of them French, and including, significantly, a set of the Grande Encyclopédie" (Lewis, 1968: 59). The new elites of the state were forming under a strong influence of ideas spreading from France and its Enlightment.

The ideas of the French Enlightment, in particular the laicism, were decidedly rejected by the Porta's conservative rank and files – the strong words on the subject by the Turkish Foreign Minister of the time, Ahmed Atif Efendi, contained in a special report prepared for the Divan in 1798 on the situation in France, seem to confirm the claim: "that heresy and wickedness spread like syphilis to the arteries of their brains and corrupted their beliefs" (Lewis, 1968: 66) – however, nothing could prevent the further spreading of the ideas throughout the entire Ottoman Empire.

The emergence of the French laicism is inseparably connected to the French Revolution, and the revolution's anti-Christian character. Article X of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen dated 1789, which guaranteed religious freedom introduced at the same moment important reservation as to the limits of that freedom: "as long as the manifestation of such opinions does not interfere with the established Law and Order" (*Declaration of Human and Civic Rights*, 1789). The discord between the general norm and the specific, particular exception defined in the Law – which in itself is quite understandable – was in practice the tool adopted to combat religion. The idea of violating the public order could have been defined and interpreted in a variety of ways, also in the ideological manner. Everyday practice of the Revolutionaries revealed that their goal was to subordinate Church to the state, and the most significant example of that trend was the adopting, in July 1790, of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. That was a particular attempt to build a National Church free from being subjected to the external rule of papacy. Following the decree of that constitution, all clerics were bound to pledge allegiance to the said constitution, and those refusing to do so, would be deprived of their functions and positions, and the civilian authorities would replace those dismissed with new clergy and bishops (Burleigh, 2011: 72). In October 1791, a new decree was issued; according to its provisions those of the clergy who were not sworn in yet, were given two weeks' time period to leave the country or, otherwise, face deportation to French Guinea (Burleigh, 2011: 77). As Michael Burleigh explains, until 1794 only 150 of 40 000 parishes had the holy mass celebrated officially (Burleigh, 2011: 79). Neither the members of the religious convents nor the clergy were allowed to run schools or provide care in hospitals anymore.

The separation appears for the first time as a category of law (Fr. *la separation*) in the decree dated February 21, 1795 entitled *Separation of Church and State* (*La premi-ère «Séparation» de 1795 Décret du 3 ventôse an III*, 1795). Article 5 of the said decree provided that the law would not recognize any spiritual cult; and no-one was allowed to show up in public wearing clothes, decorations or vests devised to be used at or during a religious ceremonies, while its Article 7 plainly forbade placing any symbols of a religious cult in public space.

The Church was being fought against, with some short breaks, thoughout the entire 19th century in France. (The establishing of the 3rd Republic in 1870 was followed by intensifying of the activities against the Church). However, it was the Law of 1905 (*Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat*, 1905) on the strict separation between the state and the church that became the most important element of introducing the lay model in France. Following its provisions, the ownership of all real estate in the possession of the Church to date was transferred onto the state. The law also banned and banished all religious congregations with the exception of those involved in charity. Almost all elements of the ideas on relations between the state and the church (religion) were implemented in Turkey.

The first manifestations of such order were visible already in the period of the *tanzimat* (*tanzimat-i hayriye*) reforms lasting between 1839 and 1876. Those reforms brought the Ottoman tradition of tight union between the state and religion to an end. *Tanzimat* marked the process of gradual detachment from the the Şeriat law. In the provissions of the new laws, which were based to great extent on the French laws, rights of believers of all and any religions were made equal (Özal, 1991: 239). In 1850, a new Commercial Code was published; it set up a new law and system of courts independent of the power of ulems – Islamic theologians and scholars specialized in the Şeriat law, which, as Lewis explains, was "a radical departure from previous Ottoman practice, and the harbinger of a complete legal and social revolution" (Lewis, 1968: 115). In 1855, an additional, mandatory tax paid by all non-Muslims was abolished (Lewis, 1968: 116). In 1856, civilian courts for most categories of civil cases were introduced (Reychman, 1973: 230). In 1876, the first constitution in Turkey was in place and operational, and following its provisions the first parliamentary elections in an Islamic country were held in Turkey[5].

Still, as early as in the period of the reforms, emerged a group of the Young Ottomans – they were the intellectual elite remaining under the influence of the Western European, mainly French, thought; they openly manifested their dissatisfaction with the sluggish progress of the Turkish state' restructuring. Among the group's leadership were found such individuals as Ibrahim Şinasi (1826-1871) – a member of the February

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[5]  Both pronouncing of the Constitution and holding the parliamentary elections was, on the part of the Sultan Abdülhamid II, an element of the political game. The subsequent developments, i.e. suspending the Constitution and halt to the social reforms confirm that supposition; see: (Lewis, 1968: 160-169).

Revolution of 1848 in France; a poet, who later became high Ottoman official; Ziya Pasha (1825-1880) – the French language translator, and Namık Kemal (1840-1888) who propagated ideas from writings of Montesquie and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who advocated freedom and the idea of a fatherland. Namık was also one of the first intellectuals who argued for the introduction and acceptance of the parliamentary system rule in the country by quoting the Qur'an with those fragments that explained it was necessary the Prophet sought advice also (the so-called Shura)[6].

Although sultan Abdülhamid II promptly extinguished the Young Ottomans, still, the movement died out without effects, as it inspired creation of other, new and secret societies such as Young Turks (*Jön Türkler*). Those, in turn, in 1889, exactly 100 years after the French Revolution, transformed into an organization called the Committee of Union and Progress. The Young Turks, from whom also the future president of the Republic, Kemal Atatürk originated, worked to fall the Sultanate and to implement the far-reaching Westernization of Turkey (Hanioğlu, 1995: 8). Bettween 1908 and 1918, the Committee enjoyed almost unhindered power and rule over the Ottoman Empire. Their unequivocally lay, civil, though stained with strong nationalism ideology, exerted strong influence over the history of Turkey[7]. The Committee's ideology, and also its very name, drew inspirations from the works of Comte (1798-1857) and to large extent based upon the vision of a social progress, positivism and materialism (Hanioğlu 1995: 204). It was Comte who sketched the at that time generally accepted concept of development of the humanity to happen in three stages: theological, metaphysical and positivist. Comte's assumptions provided that in its theological stage, man sought explanation of phenomena in the supernatural; in the metaphysical stage man tended to explain phenomena with abstract ideas and notions, while in the positivist stage, objective analysis of phenomena and relations between them provided explanations. From that perspective, the religions of the past were thought to be early and primitive stage of the development of the humanity, and as such they had to give way to philosophy and then science and new religion, of positivism. In consequence, as Eric Voegelin observed, "Comte declares as illegitimate all questions that cannot be answered by the sciences of the phenomena. […] If we consider this structure of the Comtean situation, we arrive at the core of his attempt: it is the murder of God" (Voegelin, 1982: 166). God became an unlawful and unjustified assumption which was incompatible with rational and modern methods of thinking. Despite such attitude to the revealed religions, Comte himself thought very highly of the Ottoman elite and represented the view that Turks are the key nation of the Middle East (Hanioğlu, 1995: 203). While investigating the idea of setting up the World Republic, he envisaged a federation which would involve also the world of Islam (Voegelin, 1982:

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[6]  Surah III, see.: (Lewis, 1968: 155).
[7]  Ziya Gökalp was the chief ideologue of the Turkish nationalism, see: (Okyar, 1984: 46). It is the Turkish government of the Committee of Union and Progress that to great entent drew from Gökalp's ideology that is considered to be responsible for the slaughter of Armenians.

149). It is worth noting here the name of one of the main ideologues of the Committee, Ahmet Rıza (1858-1930), a student of Pierre Laffitte (1823-1903) who in turn had been one of Comte's closest assistants and collaborators, and who was considered to be the direct continuator of Comte's thinking. From 1895 onwards, Rıza published a bi-weekly magazine "Consultation" whose motto was "Order and Progress" a phrase directly referring to Comte's motto of the positivism (Lewis, 1968: 198). In his discourse, Rıza exposed similarities between Islam and positivism (Hanioğlu, 1995: 203). In his conclusion on the cultural dimension of the Committee's rule, he claims that

the main source of these foreign intellectual influences is still France, but in place of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, the social sciene of nineteenth century has come to dominate the thinking of Turkish reformers and revolutionaries. The first influence to emerge was that of Auguste Comte, whose positivist sociology inspired Ahmed Rıza to the first expositions of Union and Progess, and profoundly influenced the subsequent development of secularist radicalism in Turkey (Lewis, 1968: 231).

Further on, Lewis lists elements of Frederic Le Play's and Emile Durkheim's influences, and concludes that "a common feature of all these schools is their tendency to treat sociology as a kind of philosophy, even of religion, and as a source of quasi-revealed authority on moral, social, political, and even religious problems" (Lewis, 1968: 231).

## Kemal Atatürk's Reforms

World War I caused rapid political and social changes. Turkey, one of the countries that were defeated in the war, faced Greece invading the Turkish province of Anatolia in 1919. Paradoxically, the Greek attack was decisive in triggering radical acceleration of development of the Turkish national identity. Turks faced the humiliating necessity of defending their country against military advances instituted by a nation formerly subjugated. The Greeks' attacks on Anatolia sparked massive mobilization of the Turkish people; a Young Turk officer, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, assumed its leadership[8]. He started with the public defiance and mutiny against the Sultan, who by then was considered to have totally compromised himself and his position[9]. In the impressively short time, Mustafa Kamal gathered and arranged a military force capable not only of resisting and combating the foreign invaders – the Greeks, the English, the Italians and the French, but also the Sultan's army. His military talents soon earned him deserved popularity and opinion of an authority. These he soon made use of in his political actions.

Atatürk's goal in his political activity was to modernize Turkey, and he wanted to achieve that with his propagating the ideas of nationalism and secularism[10]. Atatürk

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[8]  More on Kemal Atatürk see: (Kinross, 2001).

[9]  The Turkish society's rapidly and massively turning against the government and the Sultan was caused by the government signing the Treaty of Sevres which was very detrimental and unfavourable for Turkey.

[10]  At the time of Atatürk's rule, modernization was understood mainly as a process to Europeize Turkey. On Kemalizm and its connotations with the modernizing the Turkish society see: (Giritli, 1984: 251-253).

thought of himself, and presented himself, as someone who brings about enlightment, a contemporary Frederick the Great, a Joseph II or a Catherine the Great (Hanioğlu, 2011: 183). What is more, Atatürk also shared Comte's belief in progress and science (Akural, 1984: 143).

Atatürk's own words best explain his conception of modernization:

Peoples who are not civilized are condemned to remain under the domination of those who are. And civilization is the West, the modern world, of which Turkey must be a part if she wishes to survive. The nation is determined to adopt exactly and completely, both in substance and in form, the way of life and the methods which contemporary civilization offers to all nations (Özal, 1991: 263).

In November 1922, the Turkish National Assembly – violating all and any democratic standards when Atatürk openly threatened that he was ready to resolve to use of force against it if disobeying (Köker, 2010: 23-25) – passed a resolution abolishing the institution of a sultan, and in 1923 Mustafa Kemal was elected the President of the Republic. Thus, Atatürk assumed full power, and the newly created Republican Peoples' Party that was under his full control became his instrument of political combat. In the following decades, with minor and brief exceptions, that organization was the sole party in the Turkish parliament.

The President acted with maximum dynamic and consequence. The capital of the country was moved to Ankara – which was far from Istambul, thought to be the den of the traditional institutions of the Ottoman dynasty. In 1923, all religious brotherhoods were abolished. In 1924, Atatürk attempted and succeeded in completing something revolutionary: he demanded that the Caliphate, the symbol of superior authority over the Muslim peoples be abolished; he claimed that foundations of the institution of the Caliphate are of historical rather than religious roots (Hanioğlu, 2011: 139). References to the caliph were banned in Friday sermons (Köker, 2010: 29). That was clear breaking with tradition which made Turkey appear in front of the Western countries as a defender and protector of Islam and the Muslims. Atatürk argued that abolishing the caliphate would free Islam from "being a tool of politics, in the way that has been traditional for centuries" (Kinross, 2001: 385). The same year, the Şeriat courts were also abolished (Hanioğlu, 2011: 158). Atatürk then dismissed the imam whose responsibility was to lead prayers in the Parliament and stated, quite offensively: "we do not need such things [prayers] here" (Hanioğlu, 2011: 145). In November 1925, a law was passed in which wearing fez – the most popular head covering for the Turkish men – was forbidden, and instead, the law ordered men to wear hats. Only during the first several tens of days in which the new law was in force, an Independence Tribunal passed about seventy

After World War II modernization of Turkey involved predominantly the industrialization and urbanization of the country. That understanding of the term is distant from its original meaning as understood and devised by Walt Rostow, i.e from the linear, single-route development aimed at creating the consumer society, driven basically by technological factors. This assumption in the case of Turkey turns out to be false because of the role of Islam.

sentences of capital punishment to those openly resisting the new law (Kołodziejczyk, 2000: 122). That was one of the numerous manifestations how revolutionary and how violent in its methods the Turkish modernization was.

More changes in the sphere of religious issues soon followed. Sundays were pronounced a day free of work, although the entire Islamic world considered Fridays the day of public prayers (Hanioğlu, 2012: 44). In 1926, a civil code law based on examples drawn from laws of Switzerland was introduced. Its provisions nullified the centuries-old tradition of Islam and came to penalization of polygamy, as well as guaranteed equality of sexes in law (Özal, 1991: 262). In issues pertaining influence of religion on the civil law, the new Turkish civil code went further than the Swiss example as wherever no sufficiently precise regulations were available, the court judges were forbidden to call upon the social tradition, but instead instructed the judges' consulting and resting their verdicts exclusively on the 'scientific data'. This effectively eradicated the Islamic interpretation of laws and regulations (Köker, 2010: 31). From 1927 onwards, the content of the Friday sermons preached in mosques was subject to strict scrutiny by the Directoriate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet Işleri Müdürlüğü*) (Hanioğlu, 2012: 43). In 1928, articles defining that Islam is the state religion of the Turkish state were removed and abolished (Lewis, 1968: 276), and the Turkish deputies were required to swear their allegiance to honour, and not to Allah (Köker, 2010: 31). In 1930s, the specialist religious schools – *imam hatip* – where imams and preachers learned – were all closed[11]. Atatürk considered the ulems being the most important obstacles en route to modern Turkey. He was of the opinion that "the greatest and at the same time the most insidious enemies of the revolutionaries are rotten laws and their decrepit upholders" (Lewis, 1968: 274). The period after the Caliphate was abolished has been named "the time of the restricted terror". Sanctions and repressions were poignant to all who resisted the secular revolution and its motto uttered by the then Turkish minister of internal affairs, Şükrü Kay – "to make sure that religion has no role and effect in the affairs of the country. […] Religions should stay in [people's] conscience and in their temples" (Köker, 2010: 38).

No less profound changes were being implemented in other spheres of culture. One of the most radical ones was to give up the Arabic alphabet characters and replace them with the Latin alphabet (1928)[12]. Next, the Muslim lunar calendar was bashed and instead the Gregorian calendar was introduced. What is also significant, new nomenclature for the division of times before and after Christ was set in place (Hanioğlu, 2011: 159). In the same period, the classical concept that the Qur'an could be written, and published, exclusively in Arabic (Danecki, 2007: 79), the Book was translated into Turkish. Arnold Toynbee stated that

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[11] The science of religion, history of Islam and learning of the Arabic language constututed the greater part of the curriculum in the imam hatip schools; see: (Szymański, 2008: 43).

[12] According to Atatürk's own words, release from "these incomprehensible signs, that for centuries have held our minds in an iron vice was the purpose of the change" (Lewis, 1968: 278).

Turkish dictator's aim was nothing less to wrench his fellow-countrymen's minds out of their inherited Iranic cultural setting and to force them into a Western cultural mould; and instead of burning the books he contented himself with changing the Alphabet. From 1929 onwards all books and newspapers were to be printed and all legally valid documents composed in the Latin Alphabet. […] The classics of Persian, Arabic and Turkish literaturę had now been effectively placed beyond the reach of the rising generation. There was no longer any necessity to burn books when the Alphabet that was the key to tchem had been put out of currency (Toynbee, 1974: 519).

Profound changes occurred also in the social and political domains. In 1930, women were first assigned the right to vote at the local level, and then, in 1934 those rights were broadened to include elections to the National Assembly. In the national parliamentary elections held in Turkey in 1935, seventeen women were elected MPs, and for the first time in the history of Muslim countries women were incorporated in the personnel of the power (Lewis, 1968: 288). Yet another important change was the mandatory assuming of surnames – last names – by all Turks[13].

The Kemalists' ideology pertaining the state system was worked out and then presented in 1931 at the 3rd Congress of the Republican Peoples' Party. Its main elements were presented as the so-called Six Arrows: republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism and revolutionism (Zürcher, 2004: 181-182). Even today, although the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party assumed power nearly twenty years ago, the above mentioned ideas, and in particular nationalism and secularism, constitute important points of reference in processes of constructing the state sytem in Turkey.

It is notable that the most of the crucial and radical modifications in the domains of religion, law and culture were instituted during as little period as just several years. As Toynbee remarked, that process was of a violent character, and its goal was to be much more European. The six-hundred-years-old Ottoman tradition which assumed the intimate union between the state and religion was scrapped in a revolutionary way. Graham E. Fuller, an American politologue and expert on Islam, described the period of Atatürk in power as a divorce from the Muslim world (Fuller, 2008: 25-31). The model of relations between religion and state that Atatürk adopted and implemented was following the French *laïcité*, which in fact meant hostile separating the church from the state (Szymański, 2008: 33-39).

The period of rapid and violent changes within Turkey came to a halt with the death of Atatürk in 1938. Those several years of reforms initiated at the beginning of 1920s and lasting until the end of 1930s of the last century determined the Turks' political social and economic life into the following decades (Bülent, 2005: 70-86). By no means, however, the end to the revolutionary changes meant the close to strong tensions within the state and the society in Turkey. Although their sense of togetherness, and partic-

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[13]   That law remained in force after 1935. Atatürk bowed to the Assembly and assumed his last name to be Atatürk (meaning the Father of the Turks), simultaneously he dropped the too-much-Arabic-sounding first name, Mustafa.

ipation in their communities on the one hand, and their national identity on the other were based in extremely strong way on Turkish nationalism, nevertheless the tensions between Islamists and Kemalists as the latter represent and continue pursuit of the secular vision of the Turkish state have continued until the present time (Çolak, 2005: 242-266). Democratization of Turkey after World War II was to large extent defined by their secular model of the state. Four times the army intervened in the second half of 20th century – in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997; the Turkish Constitutional Tribunal acted and worked also, and those factors influenced the proportions of power between the factions in the Parliament. Islam which was almost entirely eradicated from politics in 1920s and 1930s, marked its slow but steady comeback to the political sphere. Even in the periods of the State's harshest repressions against leaders and institutions of the Islamic life in Turkey, Islam never ceased to play crucial role in the Turks' lives. Hence, some scholars refrain from pronouncing the return of Islam into the Turkish public life as re-Islamization, but think of the phenomenon as of "the liberalization of strict laicity" (Szymański, 2008: 244). Secularization of Turkey in large proportion refers to the model of separation of state and religion and to lesser degree to the decreasing of Islamic religion's role in peoples' lives. From that angle, Islam is indeed the state religion (Szymański, 2008: 290). In 2006, as much as 44.6 % of Turks defined and presented themselves as Muslims (as opposed to 35.7 % in 1999), but only 19.4 % defined and presented as the Turks (20.8 % in 1999)[14]. At the same moment, almost 60 % (31 % in 1999) defined themselves as being either extremely or very religious, and only 0.8 % of people stated that they were not religious at all (2.7 % in 1999). Almost 70 % of the respondents taking part in the research would object if their daughter was to marry a non-Muslim, and two-thirds of the respondents would object and oppose if that model of a marriage was to be adopted by their son (marrying a non-Muslim woman) (Çarkoğlu, Toprak, 2007: 57).

In 1960s, Patrick Kinross, a British historian of Islam wrote that "God still ruled over the minds and the souls and directed the lives of the bulk of the Turkish people, and would continue to do so" (Kinross, 2001: 387). That claim is still a valid one. As Peter Berger, the father of the theory of secularization, who recently came to revise his views on the subject once stated, "most of the world is bubbling with religious passions. And where secular political and cultural elites have been established, they find themselves on the defensive against the resurgent religious movements – for example, in Turkey, in Israel and in India - and, last but not least, in the United States!" (Berger, 2001: 445). Laicity basing on the French model, the one which Atatürk attempted to implant in Turkey, if clearly deprived of a firm protection by the military, being a non-democratic force and factor, is at present in Turkey strongly contested and, quite a lot points to the fact, that it is presently being rejected as something that is incompatible with Islam.

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[14]  29.9 % of the respondents defined themselves as the citizens of the Turkish republic; see: (Çarkoğlu, Toprak, 2007: 44).

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**Abstract:** Mustafa Kemal Atatürk continues to stand firm as a major symbol of the Turkish republicanism, though there is little doubt that Turkey today undergoes deep transformation in the sphere of the relations between politics and religion. As Bernard Lewis explains, the Ottoman Turks identified with Islam so profoundly that they in fact submerged their identity in Islam. It is, therefore, only right and proper to inquire and pursue the theoretical foundations and origins of the Turkish laicism. Although Turkey constitutes a rare example of a Muslim country where laicism was instituted by its own authorities and not imposed on the country by the Western colonial powers, still, it is beyond doubt that the very idea of laicism is of the European origin and that it drew its inspirations from the range of ideas of the French Enlightment. It is the perspective that enables to understand fully the scope and depth of the reforms implemented in Turkey; it also elucidates the contemporary attempts to overcome the secularism and enforce the political re-Islamization of the state. The contemporary question on the place of religion in the political community is at the same time a question on the identity of Turkey.

**Keywords:** Turkey, laicism, islamization, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk