

## Muslims in Modern Turkey

### Kemalism, Modernism and the Revolt of the Islamic Intellectuals

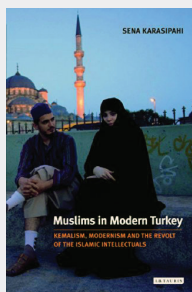
By Sena Karasipahi

London: I. B. Tauris, 2008, 256 pages, ISBN 9781780767703.

Reviewed by Shaimaa Magued

*MUSLIMS IN Modern Turkey: Kemalism, Modernism and the Revolt of the Islamic Intellectuals* presents a comprehensive overview of contemporary Turkish intellectuals' thoughts on Kemalist ideology. With a selection of six intellectuals, the first chapter gives an overview of the Kemalist ideology and its socio-cultural impact on both the private and public spheres in the newly-formed Turkish state. In the second, third and fourth chapters, more details are given about the lives and thoughts of the selected intellectuals, followed by a comparison with their counterparts in the Arab/Muslim world and the old Islamic intellectuals in Turkey. Overall, the book compiles the views of Islamic intellectuals regarding the secularization process in Turkey since the conception of the state; however, the book has weaknesses that prevent the ignition of the reader's curiosity and leaves one wondering what the author intended to contribute to existing literature.

First, the book lacks a defined research inquiry in its study of Islamic intellectuals in Turkey. There is an insufficient and seldom mobilization of theoretical tools in the study of the intellectuals' discourse. Despite mentioning various conceptual frameworks referring to Foucault, Gramsci and Bourdieu, the author dedicates a large part of the book to the various definitions of the term "intellectual," which does not offer anything consid-



erable to the study. Moreover, the author weaves together the works of several intellectuals without defining a specific question for her study or analyzing a determined point of contention among the intellectuals' stance towards Kemalism; instead, she broadly presents a succession of ideas regarding different issues derived from the Islamic-Secular antagonism.

Furthermore, it is not clear why the author chose these particular Turkish and Arab intellectuals, as there are many significant options whose addition would have rendered the study richer and more pertinent. As Karasipahi considers Kemalism to be a form of modernization on which many Turkish and Arab scholars had an intellectual stance, she failed to mention important Arab intellectuals with strong and influential options on secularism as a manifestation and prerequisite of modernization, such as Sheikh Gamal El Din El Afghani, Mohammad Abdu and Ali Abdel Razik. Both scholars were highly educated and religiously cultivated, and maintained a wide array of significant positions towards the historical contention between Islam and secularism and the possibility of a pragmatic conciliation.

Secondly, by outlining the intellectuals' position towards Kemalism, the author confronts a political ideology adopted by the state elite in the 1920s whose some political-cultural

thoughts have never been applicable. This imbalance brings back the question of the author choice of intellectuals. At this point, I think it would have been better if the author had utilized Islamic/conservative intellectuals, whose ideas have been adopted by the ruling elite and were hence partially concretized, such as like Davutoglu's thoughts. To my surprise, the author does not mention Davutoglu's book, *Alternative Paradigms: The impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* (1994), in which – in contrast to the chosen intellectuals' standpoint – he underlines that Islam can be normatively complementary to other worldviews, rather than being in conflict with them. Those ideas were implemented through international initiatives like The Alliance of Civilizations, which was launched in the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 in partnership with Spain.

This question brings us to another analytical deficiency in the book: the generalization fallacy that dominates the study by putting both Kemalism and Islamism in two antagonist and rigid categories that never intersect. It is well known how the secularization process led to an authoritarian and oppressive dynamic of socialization that suffocated diversity and even symbolic references to religion. However, Kemalism and Islamism are no longer antagonists as they both underwent a political metamorphosis, which the author completely overlooked. Even if the former repudiated religion in state governance and the latter despised tough modernization that destroyed authenticity, Kemalism advocated for a nation state based on the Muslim identity of its citizens and their affiliation with the Hanafite sect. In addition, an Islamic synthesis occurred in the 1980s, where religious identity and political affiliation became intertwined. Furthermore, the AKP's conservative/Islamic leadership accepted moderniza-

tion by adopting capitalism as its economic orientation, encouraging privatization and real estate projects that attracted a large number of businessmen, while pursuing Turkey's EU membership and its integration into the world order.

The reader may be perplexed by the author's generalizations and the study's neglect of conciliatory Islamic intellectuals in modern Turkey, which would have been an important addition to the book. It should be noted that the author discussed the absence of political action by Turkish intellectuals, which seems erroneous especially given the case of Erbakan and Davutoglu. Although the former did not complete his political mandate as a prime minister, he concretized his Islamic political intellect between 1996 and 1997 not only on the national level, but also through international forums like the OIC and initiatives such as the D8. As for Davutoglu, many of his academic contributions were from the perspective of an Islamic intellect and were translated later into political stances and initiatives.

Thirdly, the decision to compare Turkish and Arab intellectuals based on contextual differences seems a bit problematic as the definition of the contextual framework manifests some problems in the study. Unlike what is advocated by the author, both Arabs and Turks were confronted with the risk of territorial disintegration by Western countries (through colonialism for the former and territorial repartition for the latter); the sentiment of defeat and inferiority from the West; and the launch of a tough and oppressive modernization process by the national army and secular elites, who came to power thanks to alliances with Islamic forces and the formulation of an opportunistic foreign policy based on vibrant alliances to secure national independence and integrity.

These were the main common aspects of both the Arab and Turkish nation-building context at the beginning and middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In reaction, both Arab and Turkish intellectuals published a wide array of opinions, ranging from the repudiation of modernization and secularization to conciliation.

The book makes an effort to compile the thoughts of six Turkish intellectuals in comparison to their older nationals and Arab counterparts, but lacks the development of an academic inquiry and an original research question, which would add more insightful analysis to the existing literature.

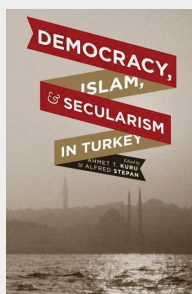
## Democracy, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey

*Edited by* Ahmet T. Kuru *and* Alfred Stepan

New York: Columbia University Press, 2012, 216 pages, ISBN 9780231159333.

*Reviewed by* Mauricio Jaramillo Jassir

*DEMOCRACY, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, edited by Ahmet Kuru and Alfred Stepan, describes the so-called “Turkish model” in detail, while trying to avoid unfounded criticism. The book is divided into eight chapters, written mainly by Turkish authors, with the exception of Karen Barney, Stathis Kalyvas, Alfred Stepan and Joost Lagendijk.



boundaries between religious communities, regulating the transactions between categories. Moreover, the state as communities into organizational units arranged administered by intermediaries with a true stake in the maintenance of the status quo, it ensured that top-down and bottom-up interests in ethnic and religious peace were maintained (p. 22).

In the first chapter, entitled “Rethinking Ottoman Management of Diversity: What can we learn for Modern Turkey?” (p. 12), Karen Barkey explores three fundamental features of Ottomanism: the acceptance of diversity, a marked religious sense and the idea of millet as a form of government that accepts multiple confessions amongst several communities. Throughout the chapter, the reader gains a general view of how certain Ottoman ideas were maintained in the Turkish model:

[...] With the simultaneous division and integration of communities into the state, it became a normative as well as practical instrument of rule, one based on the notion of social

In the second chapter (p. 32), Sukru Hanioglu clarifies that Kemalism cannot be defined as a single ideology; instead, there are several versions of Kemalism from both the left and the right. The author states that Atatürk was not a scholar like Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin because he did not produce political philosophy or social theory. Rather, Atatürk’s thinking can be summarized as pragmatic and even the Republican Party’s five arrows – republicanism, nationalism, étatism, laïcité and revolutionary character – are subject to interpretation.

In the third chapter, Ergun Ozbudun reflects on the pluralistic nature of the Turkish politi-