

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATURK'S REFORMISM: THE EXPERIENCE OF TURKEY

oleh
Mohd. Noor bin Haji Manutty

In the name of Allah, the most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.
“... Do they seek, perchance, other than the religion of God, while
all creature in the heavens and on earth have, willingly or unwillingly,
surrendered to His will, since unto Him all must return?”
(al-Qur'an, 3:83)

Part I

For the student of Islam, modern Turkey is a most fascinating subject. In their attitude toward Islam, the Turks at all times displayed fundamentally contradictory views. The Ottoman Empire, which once had its glorious fame, eventually ended in the realm of modern history as the last great empire. After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908/1909 put an end to the reign of Sultan Abd al-Hamid II, Turkey has experienced perhaps the most thorough-going secular revolution of any state in the muslim world. Its leading theorist — Ziya Gokalp, elaborated a synthesis of the values of Turkism and modern civilization. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, went much further. It was he who declared Turkey as a 'Secularized State' and committed himself in making Turkey a total 'westernization'.

This paper is an attempt to reevaluate some reform ideas introduced by Ataturk. The discussion that I shall address myself to, is much more restricted, but one which at the same time has immediate importance to the present muslim world. I propose to talk about the issues of reformism or, rather, secularism and to try to give an overall assessment of how far Ataturk's reformism may be said to have had an impact on Turkey and the muslim world. My intention is simply to elucidate the possibilities for the future by attempting to identify what exactly has happened so far and what has not happened.

One of the goals that the new regime set forth itself was 'Laicism', or 'Secularism'. In contrast to the traditional Ottoman's Empire, Ataturk emphasised, instead, the pragmatic approach of problem solving. Ataturk

and his colleagues, in establishing the Turkish Republic in 1923, agreed that Islam and the religious hierarchy formed the paramount obstacle to modernization.¹ This judgment seemed confirmed by the uprising in 1925 against the abolition of the caliphate. Thus Atatürk moved not only to suppress the independent structure of Islamic *taşawwuf* — the *ṭariqat* order — but disestablished religion from the constitution in 1928, closed religious schools and greatly restricted outward expressions of the Muslim religion. The principle of secularism was enshrined in the constitution in 1937. “Turkey in the 1930s” in the opinion of George S. Harris, “appeared an avowedly secular society.”² Describing the radical nature of his secularism, Dankwart A. Rustow writes:

“The First movement that tried to transcend the limitations of the earlier modernization effort, it thus became the prologue to a further transformation, the completion of which still lies in the future. It proclaimed the ideals of popular sovereignty and civic participation by the masses, of concerted economic development and material progress, of science, not religion, as the guide to social actions.”³

Indeed, it is also to be observed that the Ottoman Empire was the Turkish expression of traditional Islam, and in that lay the secret of its growth and civilization. Some Ottoman writers of the past blamed the empire’s decline on failure to observe *İslām* adequately; they prescribed more enthusiastic observance as a sure cure. Atatürk’s diagnosis was precisely the opposite. He claimed that it was “Islam that had kept the Turks backward and ‘uncivilized’”, and that nothing less than total secularization of both the state and the people’s attitudes could bring the country to health. Fundamental to this outlook is the conviction that ‘*progress*’ rather than ‘*religion*’ is what matters.

To be consistent with his argument for the superiority of western civilization over *Religion*, Atatürk declared:

“You must know that the evil who guided us along wrong paths covered themselves often in religious garb. They deceived our pure and innocent people with the words of the *Seriat*. Read out history and enslaved our nation came out of the curse and evils that acted in the guise of religion.”⁴

¹George S. Harris, “Islam and the State in Modern Turkey”, *Middle East Review* (Summer 1979): 21

²*Ibid.*, p. 21

³For details, see, Dankwart Rustow, “Modernization of Turkey,” in Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), *Social Change and Politics in Turkey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), p. 118

⁴Quoted in Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), *Thought in the Contemporary Middle East* (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1968), p. 325

Kemal H. Karpat, a contemporary Turkish scholar summarizes secularism's purposes in Turkey — as part of the broader purposes of nationalism, as: “to help create a modern national state without the bias of religion; to liberate the society from the hold of Islām; and to bring about a new type of free individual. It was a rationalist, anti-traditionalist, and anti-clericalist secularism.”⁵ The vast majority of the civilian elite, who shared in the direction of the new Republic, solidly supported the substitution of nationalism as a sort of secular religion in place of Islām. And they collaborated in such ventures as the effort of the Turkish Historical Society to play up the pre-Islamic past of the Turks and to celebrate the Turkish people as the originator of the world's culture in the remotest antiquity. It was preoccupations with these matters that led Ataturk to confess:

“I admit that man cannot do without faith, but I believe that throughout history the Turks had respected all beliefs cherished as sacred, and that his religion is neither this nor that particular religion. All faiths are worthy of reverence to him.”⁶

Thus, while one direction of the intellectual stimulated by the problem of secularism was towards the philosophical discussion of religion and moral values, the other was towards the discussion of history and civilization. In brief, the main assertion of national history and culture, according to Niazi Berkes: “the new view took Islāmic period as only an episode in, and secondary to, the national and civilizational aspects of the Turk's history. Further, the national aspect, which was the central theme in Turkish national historiography, was seen relatively speaking, as secondary to the international character of Turkish history viewed within a vast area extending from China to Central Europe. In this framework, the Turkish people was portrayed as having been actively involved in the secular make up of history while passive followers within the context of religious history.”⁷ It is understood from this statement of Niazi Berkes that national existence would not be dependent upon any policy based upon religion, and that the secular regime should not view the citizen as a believer (mu'min), and should not attempt a religious indoctrination.

⁵Kemal H. Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multiparty System* (Princeton: 1959), p. 271

⁶Quoted in Niazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), P. 502

⁷*Ibid.*, P. 501

Members of the Turkish nationality were mu'mins only as far as they themselves were concerned; they were merely citizens as far as the state was concerned.⁸

To elaborate more on Atatürk's westernism, extremely convinced with developing nations — the western world, to reach that stage of civilization, would imply nothing but a total revolution — the adoption of western civilization. A recurrent theme of his speeches in 1924 was the absolute determination to achieve an unconditional transformation to western civilization and to destroy all forces of reaction. In a speech commemorating the anniversary of the war of Independence, Atatürk declares:

“Surviving in the world of modern civilization depends upon changing ourselves. This is the sole law of any progress in the social, economic and scientific sphere of life. Changing the rules of life in accordance with the times is an absolute necessity. In an age when inventions and the wonders of science are bringing change in the conditions of life, nations cannot maintain their existence by age old rotten mentalities and by tradition worshipping . . . superstitions and nonsense have to be thrown out of our heads.”⁹

Realizing the fact that no Turks in modern times has been so highly regarded as Atatürk both inside or outside the country, secularization, however, being one of the most sensitive points in Atatürk's thesis of reformation has not won the approval of all Muslim nations or of most Muslims who shared the feeling that reformation in the true spirit of Islām is necessary, but they were taken aback especially by Atatürk's cavalier use of terms — secularization, westernization, modernization, liberalism, anti-tradition, etc., which carried connotations too radical to be tolerated. To put aside the question of sensitive terminology, the intent and substantive content of Kemalism ideas was, on the whole, sharp and critical. A renowned contemporary muslim ʿulamā/scholar of India — Maulāna Abdul Hassan ʿAlī al-Nadawī correctly observes: “The success achieved by Kemal Atatürk in the expulsion of Arab and Islamic attributes from the Turkish national life remarkable.”¹⁰

Yet, there is another common agreement in relation to that Nadawī's remark. While observing that modern Turkish movement had a double content in its revolution, that of *de-Islamizing society* and that of *Europeanizing*, it Professor Ismāʿil R. al-Fārūqī, another eminent Muslim scholar of U.S.A., criticizes the impact of Atatürk's secularization:

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 502

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 464

¹⁰Abdul Hassan ʿAlī al-Nadawī, *Western Civilization: Islām and Muslims* (Lucknow: Academy of Islam Research and Publications, 1969), p. 54.

“It succeeded in making its people ignorant of their own legacy — namely the heritage of Islām and removed from the currents of modern Islamic thinking, while it gave a small portion of its urban population a superficial facade of westernism.”¹¹

Historically, the development of secularism in the Muslim world presents several instances in which foreign ideas have intruded within the framework of Muslim civilization. The most devastating attack of secularism upon Islām did not begin until the nineteenth century, and then by a civilization which, unlike the defunct Greeks, was more powerful than the Islamic world, and politically and economically interested in overcoming it. This attack, facilitated by internal weakness within much of the territory of Islām which had begun to set in during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and the partial destruction of some of the sufi brotherhoods by new forms of puritinal rationalism like Wahhabism in Arabic and Ahl-i hadith in India, began to affect nearly every realm of Muslim life including law, government and administration, education, and even religion itself.¹² Thus, the division of Muslim society against itself together with secularism — the seeking of person and social values elsewhere than in the Qur’ān and Sunnah, has created a problem of massive dimension.

To come to the subject, the most serious, the foremost and perhaps the most dangerous problem that confronts the Muslim of the world today is that of secularism. Secularization is not merely confined to the Western world, but it must be viewed, that their experience of it and their attitude towards it is most instructive for Muslim. Here I shall only make a few observations and try to examine the problem from the Islamic viewpoint. Professor Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-^cAttās, a well known Muslim Philosopher and scholar of Islamic studies in his recent book — *Islam and Secularism*, describes “the Muslim community is generally unaware of what the secularizing process implies.”¹³ In contrast to the opinion of many western scholars and some Muslim modernists as well, he goes on to say:

“The secularization that describes its true nature clearly when applied to describe western man and his culture and civilization cannot be accepted as true if it is intended to be a discription of *what is going on in* and to

¹¹See in detail, Ismā’īl R. al-Faruqī, “Islamic Renaissance In Contemporary Society,” *al-Ittihad*, vol. 15, (October, 1978) p. 21

¹²See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Religion and Secularism, Their Meaning and Manifestation in Islamic History;” *The Islamic Quarterly*, vol. VI, No. 3,4, (July - October, 1961), p. 119

¹³For a critical analysis on the concept of secularism, see, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-^cAttas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978), p. 14

the world and man is which it is also meant to be applicable to the religion of Islām and Muslims, and even perhaps to the other Eastern religions and their respective adherents. Islām totally rejects any application to itself of the concepts secular, or secularization, or secularism as they do not belong and are alien to it in every respect; and they belong and are natural only to the intellectual history of western Christian religious experience and consciousness.”¹⁴

In a similar vein, Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr regards “Secularism, as everything whose origin is only human and therefore non divine and whose metaphysical basis lies in this ontological separation between man and god. Considered from this point of view, religion in Islām means all the Islamic revelation (al-Wahy) and all the truth, both exoteric and esoteric, revealed in the Qur’ān and interpreted by the Prophet in his sayings and traditions. Secondly, religion means all the teachings and institutions of Divine Origin revealed through other prophets before Islām, many of which Islamic, through the universality and synthetic power which its *raison de’tre* integrated into its own perspective. Likewise, secularism implies ideas and institutions of purely human origin not derived from an inspired source no matter what the origin might be. If this is the essence of Islām, secularism represents its complete antithesis.”¹⁵

Concerning the process of secularism in Turkey, we find that some scholars have been at pains to bring about some reconciliation between religion and secularism. A staunch defender of the Kemalist revolution — Niazi Berkes has had to concede that the reforms were not secularist: “These measures were not meant to separate religion from secular institutions or to reform the former: they merely removed institutions that were incompatible with the basic principle of secular states to put it in a nutshell Kemalist secularism was nothing but rejections, of the ideology of an Islamic polity.”¹⁶ Pertaining to this matter, Bernard Lewis is of the same stand. He defended the truth of Atatürk’s laicism, and his purpose was not to destroy Islām, but to disestablish it, to end the religion and its exponents in political, social, and cultural affairs, and limit it to matters of belief and worship. In this reducing Islam to the role of religion in modern, western, and nation state the Kemalists also made some attempt to give their religion a more modern and more national form.¹⁷

¹⁴Ibid., p. 23

¹⁵Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *op.cit.*, p. 22

¹⁶Niazi Berkes, *op.cit.*, p. 49

¹⁷Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 412

To put the argument in another manner, some Ataturkism's ideologues claims that Ataturk did not engage in any anti-religious propaganda of the soviet type, though in his days the authorities frowned upon an excessive demonstration of traditional religiosity, especially in the army, the civil service and among the intellectuals. On this point, Wilfred Cantwell Smith puts it clearly: "Manifestly, these Turks have taken great liberties with their religion. Yet they have not, one may believe, abandoned it. And, in this view, it is precisely because they have been willing and able to take liberties with it, but have not abandoned it, that one may insist that they are a significant group for the modern interpretation of Islām. The reformulation of religious truth so as to be meaningful and persuasive in the modern world is a serious business. It might well seem, in any faith; impossible without substantial liberties. Believers among the other Muslims may feel that the Turks have gone too far. There are signs that many Turks have begun to feel so. But that is a different matter. For the moment, our contention is only that Turkish vitality is evident also in the religious field." ¹⁸

Professor Hamid Algar looks at the matter critically in a different perspective. In his objection to the process of secularization in present Turkey, says Professor Hamid Algar:

"While secularism implies non interference by the state in matters of religion no less than it does the freeing of the political realm for religious concern, in Turkey secularism has been interpreted in a consistently anti-religious sense. Not only was the law of Islām abolished as the law of the state, but the state took upon itself the regulation of matters of a purely religious nature. Hence the substitution of the Turkish for the Arabic ezan (repealed in 1950), the dissolution of the tariqat, and the institution of Diyanet Isleri Reisligi (The Religious Affairs Directorate), a government affiliated body to supervise the religions life of the country. The aim, it might be said, has been to remove *Islām* not only from the life of the state, but also — more gradually — from the life of society, ultimately imprisoning religion in the mosque in the hope that it might there die of neglect and attrition." ¹⁹

To sum up, there is a fundamental incompatibility between religion and secularism, despite the numerous attempts to reconcile them, being about some sort of synthesis, or contain the one within the other in practical

¹⁸Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islamic In Modern History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 174

¹⁹Hamid Algar, "An Aspect of Islām In Contemporary Turkey," in Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (eds.) *Islamic Perspectives — Studies in Honour of Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi* (London: The Islamic Foundation, UK, 1979), p. 328

form. Islam will not succeed in re-establishing itself by compromise with, or wholesale grafting of, secular ways and institutions. The inevitable result will be a dilution of Islam in all fields of activity. Any attempt at regeneration demands that Islām look forward not back — but forward in full consciousness of her own traditions, values and beliefs. Only from this basis can Islām hope to construct a society relevant to this needs, and free from the dangerous infiltration of secular and alien influence.²⁰ It seems worthwhile to stress that the process of secularization in Turkey, to quote Robert N. Bellah's term 'the transition from prescriptive to principle society,'²¹ definitely, means that, 'Religion' disappears in its true meaning as 'Al-Din' from Quranic perspective. In any event, there seems little question that the elite remains basically secular in orientation. The observance of religion has become a matter of personal, rather than societal importance.²²

remove the dichotomy of religious and secular education systems that of them, in fact have been displaying a growing Islamic consciousness - 'al-

Part II

After a random scrutiny of contemporary literature on the issue of separation between religion and state, E.I.J. Rosenthal observes the political development in Turkey after a successful Atatürk's Revolution as follows:

"Contemporary Turkey has not yet succeeded in solving the problem of Islām which although Islam is the private affair of Turkish citizen, is today still a political issue of vital importance. But, since Islām is not only an internal Turkish problem, it is worth remembering that the very fact of the existence of a Muslim lay state successor to the Ottoman Empire and Caliphate, keeps the question of separation of religion and politics in Islām continually to the fore. One compares other modern Muslim states with Turkey which is an example either to be followed with or to be shunned, or at least a certain irritant."²³

Turkey, which was the bulwark of Islām for so long, is an instructive example. The state began a mild process of Europeanization with the enactment of the Tanzimat of 1839 — 76. The Young Ottoman of the time were critical of them. In the words of Ziya Pasha: "They can only be

²⁰Altaf Gauhar, "Islam and Secularism," in Altaf Gauhar (ed.), *The Challenge of Islam* (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1978), p. 298

²¹Robert N. Bellah, "Religious Aspects of Modernization in Turkey and Japan," *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. IXIV, (July, 1958), No. 1, p. 5

²²*Ibid.*, p. 5

²³E.I.J. Rosenthal, "Some Reflections on the Separation of Religion and Politics in Modern Islam," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. III, No. 3, (September, 1964), p. 250

interpreted as an attempt to abrogate the whole of shari'at, and in so doing to cut a fine figure in European eyes."²⁴ Ziya Gokalp, the young Turk, was in favour of synthesis between modernity and tradition. The third trend, which carries on today, recommended a break with the past and an European identification.

We can see the critical discussion of the views of several leading Muslim jurists and Muslim thinkers of the past and the present generation in proper perspective. Muhammad Rashid Rida, a well known reformer of Egypt, summarized his thought and program in his famous book: *'Al-Khilāfa wa al-Imāma al-uzmā'* which was written in response to the action of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1922 in stripping the Ottoman Caliphate of all temporal authority and leaving in its place an entirely ceremonial office. In reaction to this step his concern was to reassert the temporal as well as religious significance of the true office, to show the fitness of the institution for the political requirements of the modern age, and to give coherent form to his appeals for the rejuvenation and reintegration of Muslim society.²⁵

In the view of Muhammad Rashid Rida, precisely, the separation of religion and politics is alien to the teachings of Islām. It is a fatal imitation of a moribund west and the principle obstacle to a fresh flowering of Islam as the saviour of mankind from materialism and atheism.²⁶ These proposals of Muhammad Rashid Rida, which were addressed to the Turks, appealed to them to save the world from 'Muslim ignorance and European materialism' by establishing the divine law (shari'a) and the caliphate of Islām. Unlike Atatürk, Muhammad Rashid Rida regards the Caliph as the head of community in the temporal as well as the religious sense.²⁷

Muhammad Rashid Rida, refers to the caliphate in the traditional phrase, "Successorship to the Prophecy." Likewise he criticized Atatürk for declaring that "Sovereignty belongs to the Nation represented by the Grand National Assembly, that this sovereignty is unlimited, and that no one, whatever his title, be the caliph or sultan, can claim to exercise the

²⁴Quoted by Sādiq al-Mehdi in Altaf Gauhar (ed.,) *The Challenge of Islam* (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1978), p. 158

²⁵Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad Rashid Rida* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 158

²⁶Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt — A critique of Al-Afghani, Abduh and Rida* (London: The Open Press, N.d), p. 59

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 60

least influence on this assembly.”²⁸ In part his criticism appears to be directed against Atatürk’s substitution of the Turkish ummah for the Muslim ummah. It is the caliph’s function to protect Islām from innovation (bid‘ah) and promote its laws (sharī‘a) and beliefs (Imān), with the aid of the community given through the process of consultation (shūra). Ridā maintains that:

“This duty consists in effect of conserving the religious principles that the early Muslims agreed upon, while leaving the community at liberty in individual matters of devotional practice to follow their own ijtihād. In political and judicial matters pertaining to government, the caliph may give preference to certain conclusions of ijtihād over others, after consulting the ‘ulamā’ among the ahl al-hall wa al-‘aqd, particularly if he is not himself a qualified mujtahid.”²⁹

The leading jurists, he continues, have in the past obeyed the caliph in matters pertaining to government even when this was opposed to their own ijtihād, so long as this did not contradict explicit texts of the Qur’ān and Sunnah. Naturally, this, is considered as nothing to do with Atatürk’s vision of political utopia. Instead, he committed himself extremely to the view: “The caliph and the office of the caliphate which we have maintained and safeguarded have, in reality, no *raison de’tre*, neither in a political nor in a religious sense.”³⁰ At this point, it is appropriate to mention that this statement of Atatürk is too radical to be accepted. The reason is obvious. For, we have to remember, that Ottomans embraced Islām with *loyalty* and *sincerity*. However, it is unfortunate that they failed to grasp the principal and philosophy of Islam which require of its believers to be open minded. The Ottomans could not establish a balance between military expansion and the enhancement of civilization.³¹ It seems as if the Ottoman were not open and receptive to new ideas which were not contradicted with Islām. Indeed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire came as a result of their behaviour which not only aided the foes of Islām, but justified their claims for new reforms within the empire.³² The downfall of sultān ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II in 1909 marked a new era where rulers propogated Turkish nationalism. Difference and clashes developed between

²⁸Malcolm H. Kerr, *op.cit.*, p. 456

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 165

³⁰Quoted in Niazi Berkes, *op.cit.*, p. 456

³¹Muslim Student Association of North America and Canada (MSA), *The Ottoman Era: 1299-1909* (MSA) Leadership Training Report), 1976, p. 8

³²*Ibid.*, p. 9

Arabs and Turks, as well as other Muslims. Both Crusaders and Zionists took advantage of the differences among Muslims and they made all necessary preparations to the fatal blow to come.³³

Al-Sheikh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī — a staunch defender of the unity of religion and state in modern times had given us the clearest statement of the concept. In describing Muhammad al-Ghazālī's opinions on these issues, E.I.J. Rosenthal observes:

“Muḥammad al-Ghazālī is not only against the actual separation of state and religion but is opposed to its acceptance in the minds of present day Muslims who distinguish between temporal power and spiritual forces. This, he holds, is the result of western imperialists' influences out to destroy Islām by isolating it from legislation.”³⁴

According to Muhammad al-Ghazālī, religion without power would be powerless. He explained further the impact of nationalism in Turkey and other Muslim countries. Muhammad al-Ghazālī condemned nationalism for the loss of Islamic unity. The nationalist attitude is the most important thing Muslims copied from the west and formed the cornerstone in establishing the modern state. As a result the lost of Turkish empire in the opinion of Muhammad al-Ghazālī, was due to the separation of state and religion. In other words, nationalists inflict but losses on Islām. In order that the above unislamic political concept may be avoided, Ṣādiq al-Madhi, ex-prime minister of Sudan, appeals to his fellow Muslim countries to follow this: “However various the Islamic political movements and their states may be, they should be committed to Islām in the sense that their systems of government represent particular methods of abiding by the general constitutional principles of Islām in a traditional, a modernizing or a revolutionary setting, their legal system must be based on shari'ca in a traditional or modern formulation.”³⁵

Part III

Atatürk and his colleagues, in replacing the Ottoman state with a secular republic, regarded the educational system as the most effective institution to break the restraints of Islamic institutions, beliefs and outlook.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 9

³⁴E.I.J. Rosenthal, *op.cit.*, pp. 219-281

³⁵Ṣādiq al-Mahdi, “The concept of an Islamic State,” in Altaf Gauhar, *op.cit.*, pp. 113

The choice of formal educational institutions as the agency to transform the inherited Islamic Ottoman structures seems to have been derived from the definition of Turkish nationalism (Turkculuk). In his message to the Turkish youth, he placed the future of the Republic in the hands of the school and the younger generation, whom he advised 'ever to preserve and defend the national independence of the Turkish Republic.' With the passage of the Law of Unification of Education on 3rd March, 1924, the medresses were abolished and other religious schools as well as funds used by the Awkaf (Pious Foundation) for educational purpose were taken over by the Ministry of Education. Mustafa Kemal's choice of a unified secular educational system was 'ultimately political and philosophical in character.'³⁶

After the second world war, the rigid practice of laicism was considered to be against the values of the Turkish people, and consequently, a new series of institutions for religious teaching were established by the state itself. Dr. Şalih Tug in his analysis on 'Revivification of Islamic Teaching and Education in Turkey' explains at length that "this new tolerant interpretation of laicism, whereby religion and religious teaching are not considered to be outside the state, started in the fifties and has continued up to this day." He, then, justifies that statement by saying: "the Turkish Republic is secular, but it is one of the rare countries where the religious teaching and activities are financed through the State Budget. This could be considered, an interpretation of laicism different from that of the west and could be described as *sui generis* "Turkishlaicism — an evidence of the Turkish people and its Government's loyalty to the ideals and faith of Islam."³⁷

Professor Ismā'īl R. al-Fārūqī says that the present set up of Muslim education "may not be described except as a tragedy in every sense of the term, afflicting the ummah in the gravest and most consequential ways."³⁸ Therefore, it demands the most serious concern from all Muslims; and the measure of their concern is the measure of their ultimate worth in the eye of history as well as in that of God. Today, Muslims

³⁶M.Y. Ozelli, "The Evolution of the Formal Educational System and Its Relation to Economic Growth Policies in the First Turkish Republic," *Int. J. Middle East Stud.* 5(1975), p. 79

³⁷Şalih Tug, "Revivification of Islamic Teaching and Education in Turkey," *al-Ittihad*, vol. 18, (Jan-March, 1981), No. 1 pp. 11-12

³⁸Professor Ismā'īl R. al-Fārūqī, "The Muslim University Problem and Promise, (paper presented to the International Conference - The Role of Universities in Developing Nations, held at National University of Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia, November 18-24, 1980), pp. 1-2

throughout the world are currently passing through a stage of self criticism and evaluation. They are aware that the Muslim majority countries have consciously adopted the western system of education in order to acquire modern knowledge and technology so that they may advance materially. To this point, Dr. A. K. Brohi — a prominent Pakistani intellectual explains:

“The education system that the Muslim countries have imported from the west for the sake of improving their own instrument of civilization is serving their material aim. It is giving the Muslims the knowledge that is helping them to achieve technological progress. But it is at the same time creating in the minds the same doubts and confusion, the same disintegration of human personality and hence of values which the west is suffering from.”³⁹

I fully endorse the conclusion of Dr. A. K. Brohi. As a matter of fact, there is, thus, some tension and conflict between the secular and the religious groups. This conflict has already expressed itself openly in Turkey, Egypt, Indoneia, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and led to internal disunity and even bloodshed. In the case of Turkey, Ataturk and his government, by deciding to superimpose a secular educational system to pave the way for a politically independent modern nation imposed upon an agrarian Islamic populace, seem to have subordinated the economic objectives of the educational policies of the new nation to the political goals of the new Republic. Considered that action from Islamic perspective, Professor Muhammad Qutb objects the present aims of secular education. “As for Islām,” says Professor Muhammad Quth, “it does not confine itself to that narrow limit (education for citizenship), nor does it strive only to prepare ‘the virtuous citizen’ (al-mutāwin al-ṣālih);⁴⁰ For precisely this reason, Islamic education takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in anyway, but in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it in accordance with the true ideals of man’s nature.

In practice, for the first time in 1977 Muslim scholars from different parts of the world met at the First World Conference on Muslim Education organized by King Abdul Aziz university, Jeddah, and held at

³⁹A.K. Brohi, “Role of National Education in an Ideological State,” in S.S. Hussein & S.S. Ashraf (eds.) *Crisis in Muslim Education* (London and Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton, King Abdul Aziz University, 1979), p. 12

⁴⁰Muhammad Qutb, *Manhaj al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah* (n.p. 3rd printing, 1967), p. 12

Mecca from March 31, to April 8, tried to study and analyse basic problems, state the aims and objectives of education and recommend the methods of implementating them. This is the first attempt of its kind to remove the diachotomy of religious and secular education systems that are at present operative in Muslim countries. The scholars did not want this to be achieved by a superficial mixture of secularized and religious oriental courses. That was why they had to restate the nature of man, the purpose and goal of his existence and the central role of education in helping man to achieve this end.

The next step in the reform programme of Ataturk was the replacement of the Arabic script in use with a national alphabet. The literacy movement to change the Arabic alphabet had actually started in the 19th century with the purification of the Ottoman language. Ottoman was a mixture of Turkish, Arabic and Persian. It was the language of the palace and the ^ḥulamā, hence of the ruling classes. But as the new middle strata of Turkish origin rose in the state structure and in modern free professions, Turkish became a symbol of Turkish nationalism against the cosmopolitanism of the Ottoman state and language. In this sense the literary orientation toward the replacement of the Arabic script with a new alphabet was a part of the Turkish national movement.⁴¹

Another reason for the abolition of the Arabic script was the world view of the ruling military/bureaucratic class which always saw itself as the most western group in the Turkish society. For them the whole aim of the Turkish modernization movement was to be like the west. The Arabic script was a symbolic tie to the East and its traditions. Like other cultural reforms, the romanization of the alphabet would bring the Turkish people closer to the European civilization. On June 26, 1928, a special commission met in Istanbul to examine the problems involved in the adoption of Latin letters. Ataturk personally directed the studies. In six weeks the commission completed the "Turkish alphabet" which was a modified form of the Latin alphabet.⁴² The change of the alphabet was enough to bring a revolution in the life of the Turkish nation by giving birth to a new and rootless generations, ignorant of its own cultural inheritance. The idea was rejected on the several grounds that the change would turn the world of Islām against Turkey. Considering this issue from Islamic point of view, Professor Syed Muhammad Naqūib al-^ḥAttās emphasised the essence of Arabic language as part and parcel of Islamic culture:

⁴¹ Henry Elisha Allen, *The Turkish Transformation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 97-99

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 97-99

"The Islamization of Arabic by being charge with Divine inspiration in the form of Revelation transformed the place of Arabic among the languages of mankind to become the only divinely inspired living language"⁴³

The Qur'ān made Arabic the figurization of Islamic thought. In it, embedded its own categories of the spirituality and morality, so that to Qur'anize a mind is to Arabize it, and to Arabize it is necessarily to Islamize it. This comprehension of the Qur'ān cannot be open to people without their being fully conversant with the language in which it was revealed. To preserve the Arabic language in its authentic form is an absolute necessity if we mean to keep the Qur'ān whole, uncontaminated and within admissible interpretations; or in other words, fully alive and pregnant with its great legal and moral content.⁴⁴

Part IV

In this final part of the paper, there is an important aspect which I want to address myself in connection with the foregoing discussion. Today, the phenomenon that we are dealing with, namely, "Islamic Resurgence" in contemporary times, is so conspicuous and evident that hardly anyone can deny it. One can of course, take different positions about it. One can be sympathetic to it. But there can be no denying the fact that it is as much as observable, demonstrable a reality as any physical, tangible thing can be. In an elaboration on the genesis of Islamic Revival, Dr. Anis Ahmad — a Muslim scholar of Pakistan gives this important background:

"Since the fall of Badhdad in 158, no single fact has enjoyed that much importance for a historian of Islām as the creation of Pakistan in 1947 as a Islamic State. This realization of Islām as a viable political, social, economic and liberating force in modern age has not only led to Muslim mind to hold high expectations, but also the non Muslim critics of Islam to confess that "If Islamic history is significant at all, than the history the Pakistanis are now creating is of serious moment both temporal and religions."⁴⁵

With the creation of Pakistan in 1947, and lately the establishment of Islamic Republic in Iran, 1979, western researchers had to reckon that Islam was on the march. Not only at political level, but also at intellectual plane. Islam caused curiosity in the minds of many western scholars

⁴³Syed Muḥammad Naquīb al-Attās, *op.cit.*, p. 43

⁴⁴Ismā'il R. al-Fāruqī, *Islam and Culture* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1980), p. 9

⁴⁵Anis Ahmad, "On the Genesis of Islamic Revival," *al-Ittihad*, vol. 15, (October, 1978), No. 4, pp. 3-4

and their students. Specific studies dealing with the changing mode in the Muslim world were produced. "Several problems of major importance still face the new Government of Turkey", ⁴⁶ says Professor Benard Lewis "one of these is the religious revival," He continued to say that "the first signs of a religious reaction against secularism — the cloud no bigger than a man's hand — appeared soon after the death of Ataturk. The growing freedom of debate in post-war Turkey inevitably made religion once more a subject of political discussion, and gave the clerical and other religious elements a new opportunity to lay down their challenge to the secularist basis of the Kemalist state."⁴⁷ A further interesting critique is Professor Uriel Heid. He opines:

"True, the modernization of Turkish society is making progress and left wing tendencies are becoming more conspicuous, especially among young intellectuals. But, as so often in Turkish society, a counter current is gathering strength. This survival and if my interpretation is correct, revival of Islam in Turkey, the most secular of all Muslim countries, are obviously a fact of great significance for the future of Islam in the modern world."⁴⁸

A number of reasons could be explained. First, Ataturk's secular reforms had not penetrated very deeply into the religious masses of the urban and particularly the rural population. To prove what has been said is correct, G.H. Jansen the author 'Militant Islam' states:

"The vast mass of the Turks, the peasants of the bare uplands of Anatolis and the icy mountains of the east, simply turned their backs on Ataturk's anti-Islamic reforms and took their religion underground into the mysticism of tassawwuf, and into what was left of the closed brotherhood of the tarigah: and, when they could get away with it, they smashed busts of Ataturk. The Tijani brought its opposition to Kemalism out into the open in 1949. Islam will out: that, quite simple, was the final result of all Ataturk's anti Islamic reforms. . . ."⁴⁹

Secondly, another major factor which is attributed to present development of Islamic revival, Turkish nationalism and western civilization, has proved incapable of filling, even for many educated Turks, the spiritual

⁴⁶Bernard Lewis, "Recent Developments in Turkey." *International Affairs*, vol. XXVII, No. 5, (July, 1951), pp. 329-330

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 329-330

⁴⁸Uriel Heid, *Revival of Islam In Modern Turkey* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1968), p. 24

⁴⁹G.H. Jansen *Militant Islam* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), p. 116

vacuum created by the elimination of Islām. The remains of the pre-Islamic Turkish civilization are too scanty or, as in the case of the splendid Hittite antiquities excavated in Anatolia, too remote to serve as a major source of national pride, cultural inspiration and the feeling of historical continuity.⁵⁰ Thirdly, in terms of modernization. Turkey has been in the past, trying very hard to integrate completely with western world — politically, militarily, economically and even culturally. With the emergence of the newly independent and non-aligned countries, the warning of the cold war, Cyprus problems, Nato, and others, all of these, it seems to prove, the present crisis in Turkish relations with the West goes deeper.⁵¹ Fourthly, during their process of modernization over 150 years and more, the Turks had on several occasions paused and drawn an interim balance only to find that their strenuous efforts to become a fully pledged European nation had not yet achieved the progress desired.⁵² Today, inspite of considerable advance, it still is a so-called 'developing country,' largely dependent on western aid, so she may feel that she has not yet been fully accepted into, and on a par with what the nineteenth century Ottoman reformers appreciatively called *milel-i mutemeddine*, the nations of modern Western civilization.⁵³

The emergence of the Milli Nizami Party (NP) under the leadership of Nicmettin Erbakan, ex - Professor at the Technical University of Istanbul, was seriously considered as major political force in contemporary Turkey. Upon the foundation of the party, NP proclaimed its basic aims as realizing the potential of the Turkish nation for morals and virtue, bringing order, freedom from anxiety and social justice to society, and happiness and peace to all Turks; standing for moral recovery based on the positive sciences and technology. Further, the party was legally prevented from inscribing Islam in its programme, the constant repetition in this programme of "Morals and virtue," *ahlak ve fezilet* was a clear indication of its general orientation."⁵⁴ Furthermore, it is stated, too, that while it could not legally show antagonism to secularism, it affirmed that the party opposed any interpretation of secularism in a way that might be hostile to religion. This leads to another important aspect to be men-

⁵⁰Uriel Heid, *op.cit.*, p. 25

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 25

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 25

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 25

⁵⁴Kuny L. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic* (Visby and Stockholm. 1972), p. 70

tioned. Apparently the development of strong desire for an Islamization in total has led inevitably to activities by a number of groups. A lot of people especially from the young generation have been influenced by and involved in these Islamic activities. Their meetings and gatherings have been under various covers and the idea of Shari'a state instilled in their minds and hearts, not openly but in a covert way.⁵⁵

Apart from a widespread network of Islamic cells which exist in Turkey today, beside the controversial Nicmettin Erbakan's group, "it needs to be admitted," says Professor Hamid Algar, "that Sa'id Nursi and his followers, together with all Islamically oriented circles in Turkey, do indeed profoundly reject the whole secularist structure imposed by Mustafa Kemal, and that this strong sentiment, although not expressed in the Risāla-i Nūr or journals printed by Sa' Nursi's followers, is nonetheless felt and bitterly resented by the matter, there can be no doubt that there is an fundamental antagonism between the loyalty to Islām proclaimed the Risāla-i Nūr and the ideology of the Turkish Republic."⁵⁶

The revivalist movements in Turkey and in other Muslim states proclaim that the ills of the *ummah* cannot be remedied except by reference back to Islām in its purity as represented by al-Qurān and Ḥadīth. In contrast with the reformists, the westernizers and the secularists, the revivalists are confident in the Divine source of its belief and certain of the final victory of its faith. In Turkey, although the movement of NP under the leadership of Nicmaten Arbakan and Bediuzzaman al-Nursi, to a certain extent, sought to stem the tide of westernization, they have not in the process gained the confidence of the support of the conservative 'ulamā. Thus, while there is undeniably more visible signs of religious revivalism in Turkey than in the past, it does not mean the secularized Turkey can easily change from its present system to the totalistic Islām. Indeed, it must take sometime to undergo such process of Islamization.

Conclusion

A few observation can be made in the light of the above facts and discussion. We may arrive at some conclusion and form some hypotheses. Due to the defects in the earlier centuries, the Ottoman Empire's response of looking into their own weaknesses in the light of victor's strength and adopting the western ways, open a gate for through westernization. Ataturk not only inherited this massive trend, but the very question of the survival of the nation state compelled him to accelerate the westernization

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 68

⁵⁶Hamid Algar, *op.cit.*, p. 328

programme without any check. He had the image, the will and the means to launch this reformation, but, he went too far from Islamic guidelines. Thus, he proceeded too ruthlessly!. It seems true that reformation of Ataturk was carried out with highly emotional overtones rather than a rational basis.

After Ataturk's death, his party had grown not only more authoritarian, but certain classes had developed vested interests in the Ataturk's ideology at the expense of other sections of the people. For the uneducated, the aims of modernization was too difficult to be comprehended and too remote; or even too liberal from the Islamic point of view. This reaction was facilitated by the establishment of multiparty system and the democratisation of the electoral process.

The development of modern Turkey, indeed, raises many crucial questions. Can Islām exist without its shari^ca? In the Turkish Republic the shari^c has been almost completely abrogated. In spite of this, the Turks not only say that they have remained Muslims, but in recent years, many of them, infact have been displaying a growing Islamic consciousness - '*al-wa^cy al-Islāmi*', namely Islam as a way of life, besides an increased attachment to religious practices. Closely connected with this: will a non-christian nation such as Turkey be able to integrate fully into modern western civilization without renouncing its Islamic historical identification? Western civilization is in an undoubted state of disarray, political, social, cultural, as well as moral. Indeed, the time is ripe. All the Muslim populations of the world are under going a resurgence. This is some kind of spirit, some kind of energy which is stirring the consciences of men and women everywhere; as if some one was seeking to energize the Islamic world. This general quickening is an indication of human readiness to consider the relevance of religion and hence, to the call of Islām as "*Dīn al-Ḥaqq*." The Turkish experience in the past, present and future may give a significant reply to this '*Rising Tide of Islām*.'