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Introduction: Religion and the Quest for State Sovereignty

In an interview originally published in the Istanbul newspaper *Vakit* in 1922, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the war hero who would later found the Turkish Republic, recounted his first memory from childhood:

> My first childhood memory concerns the problem of my schooling. This caused a bitter dispute between my parents. My mother wanted me to go to the neighborhood [Quranic] school after initial prayers. My father, who was an official in the [customs and] excise department, was in favor of sending me to Şemsi Efendi's school, which had newly opened, and having me educated in the new manner. In the end, my father found a clever way out. First, I started at the neighborhood school with the usual ceremony. This satisfied my mother. A few days later, I left the neighborhood school and was entered in Şemsi Efendi's school.[1]

The disagreement between Mustafa Kemal's parents is indicative of the changing nature of everyday life and social organization across the Balkans and Middle East during the transition from the age of empires to the age of republics. For many individuals, the social forces of religion and the power of religious attachments remained pervasive. Public demonstrations of piety were still a prerequisite for being considered an upstanding member of the community, hence a mother's natural concerns about having her son participate in the religious ceremony that marked the beginning of the traditional Quranic school year. With the emergence of new "modern" institutions that functioned according to the so-called "new method" (*uṣūl-ı cedīd*),[2] however, alternative paths to upward mobility distinct from religious institutions became increasingly available. For people at the time, the grand sweep of modernization and state centralization manifested itself in the very type of decision that Kemal's family faced.

The anecdote above reflects a fundamental problem in all state consolidation projects, a problem that extends well beyond the confines of Mustafa Kemal's family and the borders of late Ottoman geography. Across the globe,

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the dawn of the modern era brought with it processes of contestation and interaction between state and religion that have gone on to determine how power is constituted through elite configurations, institutional arrangements and cultural practices. Whether in Europe, the Middle East or elsewhere, state-building typically occurred in an environment where populations had strong religious attachments, where religious authorities were present if not dominant and where many key bureaucratic institutions – to the extent that they existed at all – were partially if not predominately religious. The issue of how to "deal" with religion was thus a universal problem of state formation.

This book examines the strategies that state-builders use in their approach toward religion and, in doing so, asks a simple question: *How can we explain the power arrangements between state and religion that emerge during the state-building process?*

I find that religion–state power arrangements emerge as a byproduct of the strategic interaction that occurs between the reform-minded architects of the nation-state (hereafter "reformers") and the religious establishment. In particular, this power arrangement arose as reformers extended authority into two critical domains: education and law. My argument requires that we turn our gaze to historical forces that begin with the advent of what has been variably termed "modernization" or "centralization," depending on the specific literature. This is a phenomenon that first emerges in most Ottoman territories in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century and thus occurs *before* states are fully formed and autonomous political entities. In other words, the processes described and arguments made here unfolded during the early periods of state formation or expansion and *prior* to national independence.

I contend that in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, states made some of their most durable advances in sovereignty and hegemony in countries not where they excluded religious elites, but where they instead embedded them in nascent, state-centric structures of education and law. Conceding a role for religious leaders in education and law during this period – in exchange for their tacit compliance with centralization – set in motion a dynamic that weakened religious institutions. The gradual erosion of traditional religious institutions in turn meant that, during the period of national independence, reformers had little to no need to exert massive force against a collective religious resistance. In fact, joining forces with and instrumentalizing the religious establishment actually facilitated certain aspects of state centralization, providing otherwise scarce symbolic and institutional resources, as well as valuable social networks, for the expansion of state-centric influence. By either layering state institutions onto the religious edifice and/or initiating the piecemeal co-optation of religious elites into new state institutions, reformers slowly amassed authority, built a robust cultural machinery for the eventual dissemination of state ideology and gradually silenced religious competitors. In countries where there was a dominant majority religion, and where this layering and/or piecemeal co-optation process was successful, early state-makers could fuse the religious

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and the national, creating a synthesis that blended modern institutions and concepts of citizenship with religious identity markers. Under these conditions, the state could construct relatively legitimate, domesticated religious bureaucracies that promoted an official religion. Simultaneously the religious establishment gradually adopted a state-centric worldview, as the state targeted its leaders and the general citizenry alike for conversion into "disciples of the state."

Is State-Building Secularization?

Any study of the distribution of power between state and religion immediately calls forth a now vast and mature literature on secularization. Modernist theories of secularization have an intellectual lineage that dates back to the nineteenth century.[3] Such theories not only gave rise to the idea that religion would eventually disappear from modern life, but also generated state-driven political movements that have attempted to hasten such a result. For this reason, in many parts of the world "secularization has been associated with the attempt to consolidate state power" and is reflected in the explicit desire of states to reduce or break alternative sources of authority.[4] Indeed, politically motivated secularization initiatives have been integral to state-centric plans to mold large groups of people into manageable societies.

For example, in Prussia in the 1870s, the conservative statesman Otto von Bismarck launched his *Kulturkampf*, which aimed to curtail the independent influence of the Catholic Church and accelerate national unification, though it was met with limited success. Several decades later, following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Soviets launched one of the world's most aggressive experiments in secularization, which was characterized by violent anti-religious campaigns to decimate the institutional power of the Russian Orthodox Church and other confessional communities. In the Middle East too, secularization drives were the hallmarks of numerous modernizing regimes. The republican nationalist regime of the aforementioned Mustafa Kemal in Turkey, Reza Shah Pahlavi's constitutional monarchy in Iran and radical Arab nationalist and socialist movements in places like Egypt, Syria and Iraq all adopted secularizing policies in their pursuit of modernization.[5]

Ideology matters, to be sure, yet this diversity of examples suggests that the perceived need to "secularize" relates more to an isomorphic conception of what it means to be a sovereign nation-state in the modern era than to any particular orientation on the left–right ideological spectrum. What all these secularizing movements had in common was their Jacobin orientation: that is, their belief in the possibility of transforming society through totalistic political action designed to reorient loyalties toward the state by controlling traditional influences and generating modern/civic identities.[6] On a certain level, state-building and secularization are inseparable: *state formation is secularization*, in so much as it involves the expansion of state-centric norms of sovereignty

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and institutional hegemony over specific "disciplinary" domains (in the Foucauldian sense) of human interaction.

Even if it is now widely accepted that master narratives about the linear rise of the nation-state and the subsequent demise of religion are overly simplistic and grossly inaccurate, the terms secularization and secularism, bound up as they are with our notion of the modern state, have somehow endured. In the words of Jose Casanova, secularism is now typically understood as a "prescriptive democratic norm or as a functionalist requirement of modern differentiated societies."[7]

Although I will draw upon some of the insights derived from past studies of secularization in this book, I am of the opinion that the term secularization carries so much conceptual baggage that it tends to obscure more than it illuminates about the state-formation process. Supposedly secular states should be loath to share sovereignty with religious actors, but in reality they often do. The many constitutional models for governing religion–state relations reveal a variety of amalgams that defy the conventional dichotomous classifications of secular vs. religious and traditional vs. modern. A handful of European countries, including Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Cyprus and England, embrace a weak form of religious establishment by designating a certain religion as "the religion of the state" – though most casual observers would qualify these states and societies as fully "secularized." Other European countries such as Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Italy have officially disestablished the majority religion (in this case Catholicism) and therefore in some sense have become "secular," and still the Church still wields sizable policy influence in these countries. In yet other places, the "secular" state provides for the accommodation of religion in certain legal domains through pronouncements of jurisdictional autonomy, especially for religious minorities. Ethiopia, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Lebanon, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Ghana, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Tanzania are all examples of such arrangements.[8]

In other words, it is well established that state–religion arrangements – both formal and informal – vary cross-nationally and have failed to converge onto any ideal type, as the term secularization might suggest.[9] These differences in state–religion arrangements have been deemed critically important to many other aspects of political development, from democratization and economic development to welfare provision and gender equality.[10] Still, crucial questions remain regarding *how* these arrangements should be conceptualized, not to mention about how they developed historically.

Barring a few notable exceptions, the literature on state formation does not shed much light on such questions, as it tends to treat religion and religious actors only tangentially.[11] Seminal works detailing how states consolidate have focused primarily on industrialization, urbanization, war, conscription and, to a lesser degree, education as means for successfully penetrating society and achieving state dominance. This literature is also heavily dominated by studies of Europe.[12] Tilly, in his introduction to *The Formation of Nation States in*

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Western Europe, acknowledges the importance of religion to modern state-building projects and laments the fact that his own volume did not address the question of religious authority adequately:

> Churches and religious organization should have received more direct attention from the start, for two reasons: (1) churches and churchmen were significant political actors at the national and international levels throughout most of the period we are examining; at times they comprised the most formidable rivals, allies, enemies, or instruments of the great state-makers; and (2) for several centuries of our era, nationalism and anti-nationalism alike customarily wore the mantel of religious faith; great states like France and the Netherlands were rent by struggles which inextricably combined religion and politics. For those reasons, control of belief and devotion should probably have been on our initial agenda.[13]

Beyond the issues that Tilly cites, excluding religion from the story of state formation is problematic because it deprives religious actors of agency, casting them as bystanders in the process of modernization, and thereby overlooks how the form and function of religion can change with time and circumstance as states consolidate.[14] Such exclusion also obscures the fact that the state itself often becomes a religious actor as it creates clearly demarcated spaces that it can regulate through the sponsorship of its "official religion" or "religions," and through the creation of state bureaucracies that oversee religious affairs. Theories of secularization and histories of state formation are particularly weak when it comes to explaining the emergence of these "official" or "state-sponsored" religions, the various forms that such officialdom takes and the degree to which people identify and associate with official religious institutions created by the state.

If we hope to understand the position of religion vis-à-vis the state in today's world, the narrative of modernization and state formation must be written to include religious elites and their institutions. One of the most prominent themes to emerge from this book is that state–religion power arrangements typically develop and congeal in ways that defy both *ex ante* assumptions of state hegemony/sovereignty and secularization's usefulness as a general explanatory category. I find that as states consolidate, they use tactics to engage, co-opt and redeploy religion just as often as they use tactics to sidestep, undermine and/or destroy it. The type of strategies that emerging states use toward religion, the responses that these strategies elicit from religious elites, the processes of institutional transformation that unfold and the power arrangements between religion and the state that emerge as a result are the subjects of this book.

Religion–State Power Arrangements

Religion–state power arrangements develop gradually through a protracted process of strategic interaction between the emergent machine of the centralized state and the traditional loci of religious authority. To study the incremental

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genesis of these power arrangements, I focus my analysis on how the state engaged three discrete aspects of religion: *religious elites, religious institutions and religious attachments*. Disaggregating religion in this way shows appreciation for the fact that religious authority – which can equally be a potential challenge or supplement to state authority – is embodied in the form of individual power brokers (elites), their organizational structures (institutions), and norms regarding identity and belonging (attachments).

Religion–state power arrangements describe how power is ordered between religion and the state. These power arrangements can range from complete *secular subordination* to *religious rule*. These of course are pure types, and should be thought of as abstract, hypothetical outcomes; perfect examples of secular subordination and religious rule are rarely, if ever, found in the real world. Still, it is not hard to imagine what a stylized version of these two ideal types would look like and there are actual cases that approximate such power arrangements.

Under secular subordination the state "wins" and it wins completely. Religious elites are defrocked, persecuted and/or eliminated; religious institutions and assets are appropriated or eradicated entirely; and the state enforces wholesale bans on religious activity and mandates official atheism in an effort to decimate sacred attachments. The conditions created by Soviet policies of state atheism (*gosateizm*) in Central Asia, Enver Hoxha's atheist drive in Albania and, to a lesser extent, the crackdown against religion that accompanied China's Cultural Revolution all produced outcomes that at least temporarily resembled secular subordination.

Religious rule, by contrast, represents the opposite extreme, where the state is fully subordinate to the religious establishment: religious elites govern, religious institutions structure political and social life, and religious attachments are cultivated and reinforced by the regime. The microstate of Vatican City where the Pope reigns as sovereign most closely approximates this ideal type. In the Muslim world, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which became a revolutionary theocratic state following the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, stands as another (imperfect) example.

Despite a popular press in the West that often unquestioningly glorifies secularism and issues screeching warnings about the dangers of theocratic regimes (especially "Islamic states"), these two ideal types do not capture the entire range of variation in religion–state power arrangements. Configurations that occur somewhere between these two poles, with religious authority and state authority converging and diverging through more complex and nuanced orderings of power, are much more common. To explore this middle ground between secular subordination, on the one hand, and religious rule, on the other, I introduce two additional categories: *sacred synthesis*[15] and *dualism*.

A sacred synthesis occurs when *states nationalize religious elites and attachments while subordinating religious institutions to state control*. Religious elites become civil servants, religious attachments are "domesticated" through

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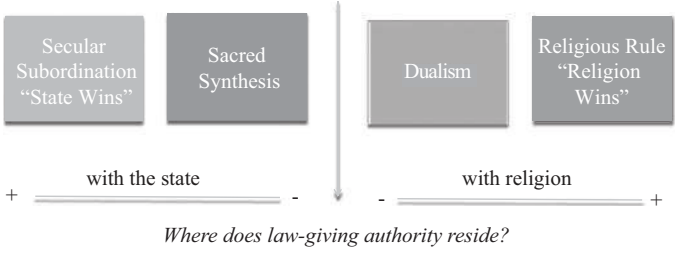

FIGURE 1 Religion–state power arrangements.

an ideological fusion of the religious and the national, and religious institutions are ingested by the state and denied autonomy, temporal authority and sovereign domains. Under dualism, by contrast, *states may attempt to leverage religious elites and attachments periodically and may even try to nationalize them, but religious institutions retain a degree of normative autonomy and authority through religious jurisdictional enclaves and/or institutional/constitutional arrangements that protect their independent status*. With dualism, religious authority and state authority exist side by side, with ambiguous boundaries that create potential for conflict. Such states often refrain from adopting a uniform civil code that applies equally to all citizens irrespective of religion.[16] The religious and the national are not fused successfully and, although religious elites certainly do not "rule," religious actors work to effectively circumscribe the scope of state sovereignty in critical domains, as opposed to adopting a statist worldview and working primarily through state organs of power to meet their goals.

Figure 1 simplistically depicts these four outcomes on a spectrum that roughly measures where hegemonic authority lies, with the state or with religion. This crude schematic is, of course, shorthand for parsing a vastly complex ecosystem of power, identification and belonging. As the following chapters will show, states can move across categories and often find themselves with arrangements that sit uneasily between these four ideal types.

Divergent Post-Ottoman Trajectories

Perhaps nowhere else are relations between religion and state more contentious and central to contemporary politics than in the former Ottoman world – that is, present-day Southeastern Europe and the Middle East.[17] From the religious dimensions of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, to issues including the emergence of a unique style of political Islam in Turkey and the spread of violence labeled as "sectarian" in places like Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, the position of religion relative to state power structures continues to make headlines.

Beyond the region's obvious relevance to contemporary debates about how religion can reinforce and/or undermine the stability of the nation-state model,

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I chose to focus my study on this geography because of the unique footprint left by Ottoman imperial rule and the interesting variation in religion–state power arrangements that emerged after the Ottoman collapse.

Former Ottoman states all emerged from under the tutelage of an imperial system that enshrined collective privileges for religious groups through the *millet system*. Over the centuries, this system engendered deeply ingrained patterns of local-level rule and social organization that revolved around religious identity and institutionalized a tradition of administration by religious elites. (Chapter 3 describes this system in more detail.) As the empire crumbled, however, despite these similar histories of past rule, the countries carved out of the empire embarked on divergent trajectories and exhibited a striking range of variation in how power became allocated between state and religion. Some states have – with the aid of totalizing and revolutionary ideologies – verged temporarily toward the extremes of secular subordination and religious rule, though they are the exception. Most of the interesting variation occurs in the middle range, with less well-understood, hybrid-style outcomes of sacred synthesis and dualism. Given that some former Ottoman states were more ethnically and religiously diverse than others, and because some states fell under European colonial rule temporarily after the Ottoman collapse, these cases also make it possible to examine how ethno-religious heterogeneity and colonialism affected processes of state formation and thereby shaped the evolution of religion–state power arrangements.

Exactly how have religion–state power arrangements diverged in the region? To begin, take Egypt and Turkey. Both share many key features – they are large Sunni Muslim majority states highly influenced by Sufism and dominated (at least until recently in the case of Turkey) by a powerful military class – but the differences in religion–state power arrangements in these two countries are notable, as well as impossible to describe as simply "religious" or "secular."

The power arrangement between religion and state in Egypt is *dualistic*, characterized by an unstable blend of secular constitutionalism and religious law that has conditioned the political development of the state. After independence, Gamal Nasser (Gamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir Ḥusayn) launched aggressive reforms that have been characterized as modernization and "secularization" policies. Nasser's regime quickly "abolished" the Sharia and minority customary (*milliyya*) courts with Law No. 462, and soon thereafter declared his control over Egypt's al-Azhar system (the country's preeminent center for religion and religious learning) through a series of decrees. These moves, however, created only a "temporary and superficial submission" of religion.[18] For one, the 1956 Egyptian constitution specified Islam as the official state religion.[19] Furthermore, although Law No. 462 ostensibly eradicated the institutional plurality of communal courts, Egyptian leaders "never planned or attempted to take their unification project to the next level by enacting a uniform civil code that would be applicable to all Egyptians regardless of religion."[20] As a result, as many as fifteen different religion-based family laws exist in Egypt,

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including one for Muslims, two for Jews and twelve for different Christian groups.[21]

Thus, despite issuing decrees and attempting to curb autonomous religious authority, Nasser eventually had to answer to the demands of religious elites. So too have Nasser's successors (as will be elaborated in Chapter 7). Indeed, many members of the ulema (also written as ulama, sing. alim), men trained in the religious sciences of Islam (e.g. Quran, hadith and *fiqh*), emerged on the other side of Nasser's reforms as powerful political brokers who sought, first and foremost, to enlarge "their own sphere of intervention as well as their independence vis-à-vis the state," as opposed to foster national unity or honor state sovereignty.[22] What is more, religiously inspired groups that emerged initially in the 1920s and 1930s continued to challenge the hegemonic role of the Egyptian state, spurring unofficial organizations explicitly hostile to the state's asserted role as *the* hegemonic source of bureaucratic and moral authority.[23] Most notable in this respect is of course the Muslim Brotherhood, which was initially aligned with the Free Officers movement but then broke ties and began voicing direct opposition when Nasser failed to convince it that he intended to establish an "Islamic state."[24] Instead of supporting state sovereignty, the Brotherhood trumpeted slogans that signaled the growth of a politicized religious resistance to state authority: "The Quran is our constitution, Arabic our language, and death in the way of God our greatest hope." This, in turn, inspired the creation of Egyptian Christian organizations, including Jamāʿa al-Umma al-Qibtiyya, which hung their hopes on a similar motto: "God is our King, Egypt our country, the Gospels our law and the Cross our badge, and death for the sake of Christ our greatest hope."[25]

Rather than solidifying a sacred synthesis between the religious and the national, the trajectory of state formation in Egypt institutionalized ambiguity and potential for contestation between religion and the state, as well as limiting state sovereignty, perpetuating instability and inhibiting national consolidation. As Tamir Moustafa remarks, "Egyptian government policy towards religious institutions appears to be schizophrenic," for it has continually "shifted back and forth between strategies of domination and cooperation" without ever reaching a stable equilibrium.[26] This dualism has exacerbated conflict over who can legitimately claim to be society's ultimate hegemonic moral authority. Do representatives of the Egyptian state or representatives of Sunni Islam (or another religious group) possess the right "to have the final word"?

Turkey, by contrast, largely succeeded in securing a stable official religious bureaucratic apparatus, forging mass compliance with new state institutions, constructing a largely homogeneous (if extremely repressive) nation of Muslims and thereby consolidating state-centric sovereignty and hegemony post-independence. Kemalist reforms made secularism/*laïcité* (Turkish: *lâiklik*) a key principle of the country's constitutional framework, subdued the ulema and quelled popular religious dissent to the expansion of state authority. As it turns out, in Turkey, unlike in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world, opposition

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to the state has rarely taken a strong religious form in subsequent decades; political Islam emerged and is prominent in Turkey, but it is distinctively statist. Furthermore, Turkey, until relatively recently, has also been largely immune to the influence of Salafist-style religious ideologies. Levels of popular religiosity in Turkey remain high, but support for making Sharia (Şerīʿat, the holy law of Islam) the law of the state remains negligible, especially when compared to Egypt and other Muslim majority countries.

For these reasons, Turkey is often labeled as a quintessential or even an "aggressively" secular state. Ahmet T. Kuru, for instance, argues that Turkey is secular, because secular states have two main characteristics: "(1) their legislative and judicial processes are secular in the sense of being out of institutional religious control, and (2) they constitutionally declare neutrality toward religions; they establish neither an official religion nor atheism." Turkey is also "assertively secular" according to Kuru because it has endeavored to remove religion from the public sphere and confine it to the private domain.[27] It is also true, however, that the Turkish state officially put dominant Sunni religious institutions under state control without granting similar status to minority religions. Moreover, the Turkish state deployed religious categories as criteria for exclusionary state policies in an attempt to fuse religious and national identities, and it has mandated Islamic education for Muslims in public schools at various junctures in the last century. Referring to the Turkish state as "secular," even at the level of formal institutional arrangements, is a big stretch and perhaps even misleading.

Turkey actually has a sacred synthesis, at the center of which lies a peculiar form of religious establishment as embodied in its Directorate for Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), a now sprawling bureaucracy that serves as the official voice of Turkish-style Sunni Islam. The Diyanet has maintained a firm grip on the production of an officially sanctioned version of Sunni Islam since the birth of the Turkish nation. The directorate supervises the appointment and payment of religious functionaries to all mosques and closely monitors the production of religious knowledge through state-sanctioned channels.[28] The Turkish case is therefore puzzling: The state forged institutional and ideational links between the pious and the national, drawing on religious resources to help create state-centric loyalties, at the same time that it was instituting what are often labeled as "secularizing" Kemalist reforms. As Deniz Kandiyoti has argued, the secular credentials of the modern Turkish state therefore "appear fairly thin."[29]

Turkey is not the only former Ottoman country to have fused religion and state in curious ways. In Greece, a country that ostensibly has little in common with its Muslim Turkish neighbor, the institutions of the Orthodox Church have been successfully tethered to the national bureaucracy; the Church officially occupies a branch of the state and civil service under the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Church personnel are paid from the state budget payroll and, while education is officially "secular," representatives of

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