

**Islam in the service of the national and pre-national state:  
The instrumentalisation of religion for political goals by Turkish regimes  
between 1880 and 1980**

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*The importance of being secular*

Both in political debates on the current state of affairs in Turkey and in the historiography of the country, the dichotomy of religion and secularism is without doubt the dominant paradigm within which analysis takes place. Observers and commentators (both from within Turkey and from abroad) are so preoccupied with the problem of secularism, or to be more exact: with that of laicism, the separation of religion and state, that one's position on the issue has come to be seen as the yardstick whereby any prominent Turkish public figure or intellectual should be judged. Author Orhan Pamuk published his novel *Benim Adim Kırmızı* ("My Name is Red") to such a degree of worldwide critical acclaim that he is now a serious Nobel Prize candidate, but the debate on this and subsequent novels of the author in Turkey itself was more about his stance on Islam and westernisation than on the literary merits of his work.

The value judgment plays as big a role where historical figures are concerned as when contemporary ones are discussed. Indeed, the contemporary debate on secularism is often structured around historical events and figures from the past: For a long time Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, executed by the military in 1961, was hated by Kemalists as the man who allowed Islam "back in", but in the Nineteen Eighties, Izmir international airport was officially named Adnan Menderes Airport, by people who regarded him as the second great architect of modern Turkey (after Atatürk) and who wanted to make a point about their own political stance. This use of historical figures is thus highly divisive and it is the issue of secularism that divides more than any other. The reappraisal of the once despised "tyrant" Sultan Abdülhamid II by Islamists (who, in this, tend to follow the lead established by right wing Nakşibendi poet/publicist Necip Fazıl Kısakürek in the Nineteen Forties and Fifties) is as much an illustration of this phenomenon as is the constant reference to figures like Derviş Vahdeti and Kubılay by hardcore Kemalists. The former was an islamist firebrand, who as one of the leaders of the "Muhammedan Union" (*İttihadi Muhammadi*) and editor of the paper *Volkan* in 1908-9 constantly called for the restoration of religious

law. He was accused of instigating the 1909 counterrevolution against the “secular” Young Turks in Istanbul and convicted and hanged once the Young Turks had regained control of the capital. The latter was the young teacher and reserve officer, who confronted a group of radical young mystics that came to the Aegean town of Menemen in 1930 and announced that they were the advance guard of an army of Islam that would bring down the “infidel” republic. Kubilay paid for his courage with his life when his head was sawn off while the populace of Menemen watched in silence. Both figures, like Menderes and Abdülhamid, thus serve as markers of the boundary between secularism and (political) Islam in contemporary Kemalist discourse.

The other issue, which has dominated the public debate in – and on – Turkey in recent years, is that on Turkey’s possible accession to the European Union. In this debate, too, the question whether Turkey is “truly secular” is constantly raised and the credentials in this field of leading politicians and other public figures are scrutinized. There is nothing on religion or secularism in the official criteria (the so-called “Copenhagen criteria”) that have to be met by candidate countries and, indeed, the issue of religion was never raised in the negotiations with the ten countries that acceded in 2004. In the Turkish case it is raised in the shape of concern about the depth and irreversibility of Turkey’s secular (*laik*) order. Ironically it is Europe, which regards itself as secular (although in fact that secularism is never absolute and that in every single European country formal links between state and religion can be demonstrated) that introduces the religious factor into the membership negotiations. This of course feeds into the already existing debate on the issue in Turkey, especially because there are inconsistencies in the European position on the issue that are caused by fundamentally different views on the nature of secularism.

After the 1978-9 revolution in Iran, governments in the West became gravely concerned that Turkey would go the same way. They tended to side with the classic Kemalist interpretation of secularism as a protective shield, guaranteeing (by less than democratic means if need be) the survival of freedom of conscience in the face of the threat of “Islamic reaction” (*irtica*). This tendency was strengthened when political Islam was identified as the main threat to the West after the end of the Cold War in the early Nineteen Nineties and, of course, became even more prominent after the

terrorist attacks on New York and Washington of 11 September 2001. Fear of a reversal of the Kemalist laicist order is a constant element in the debate on Turkey's accession to the EU. Does Europe risk the entry of a Trojan Horse from that animal's country of origin?

Side by side with this concern about an Islamic revival, an increasingly fierce critique of the Kemalist interpretation of secularism is also part of the debate. The dominant Christian Democrat current in Europe in particular tends to see it as intolerant and unnecessarily restrictive of religious, and religiously inspired, political practice. In taking up this position (which was endorsed by the European Parliament in May 2003), these Europeans seem to side with the interpretation of secularism put forward by Turkish rightwing politicians from Menderes via Demirel and Özal to Erdogan; an interpretation that sees secularism as an order protecting freedom of conscience *and* religion and makes a distinction between a lay public arena and religiously inspired individuals who should be allowed to function in it and express their religiosity.

There can thus be little doubt that the nature of the relationship between state and religion in Turkey is an important one, but is also an issue on which misconceptions are widespread. Rather than trying to categorize actors along strict and somewhat artificial lines of secular versus Islamist, it is perhaps enlightening to look at the specific policies of successive late Ottoman and Republican Turkish regimes to get a better picture of the position they have taken with regard to the relationship between state and Islam and at the complex relationship between nationalism and religion. In this paper I intend to look in particular at four instances where the state faced acute challenges to its authority and even survival: Sultan Abdülhamid's use of religion to ward off the threats of nationalism and imperialism; The Young Turks' mobilization of Ottoman Muslims against the perceived threat of the Christian minorities; the use of religion by the Turkish nationalists in their struggle against the occupying forces after World War I and, finally, the attempt of the military rulers of 1980-83 to merge religion and Kemalist nationalism in an effort to break the hold of both socialism and fundamentalism over the Turkish youth. The paper is based on a reading of the recent monographic literature on the topic (by authors like Deringil, Toprak, Georgeon, Karpat, Yavuz, Poulton, Seuffert, Bora, Davison, Fortna and others).

### *Abdülhamid II and his new moral order*

It is now generally recognized that the long reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) in many ways laid the foundations of what became modern Turkey. This is true in the fields of administration (with the expansion of the state bureaucracy and the extension of state control), education and communications (telegraph and railways). It can be argued that it is also true where the management of religion is concerned. Abdülhamid was faced first and foremost with the necessity to rebuild a state and society shattered by the disastrous war against Russia of 1877-78. This war, caused ultimately by separatist Serbian and Bulgarian nationalism, had resulted in huge loss of land and income and a very serious refugee problem as well as a loss of prestige and credibility for the Ottoman ruler. Having lost all confidence in solutions on the basis of a “unity of the (ethnic) elements” (*ittihadi anasir*) that had been so close to the heart of the Young Ottoman constitutionalists, Abdülhamid started an ideological counteroffensive, which Poulton has likened to Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf*. The policy had two fundamental aims. One was to create a new basis for solidarity and national unity. The losses of 1878 had decreased the percentage of Christians in the population from forty to twenty percent, so it made sense to try to find this new basis of solidarity in the shared religious heritage of the Muslim majority. This way the embryonic national movements among the non-Turkish Muslim communities (Albanians, Arabs and Kurds) could also be countered. The millions of refugees from the Crimea, the Caucasus and the Balkans, who had after all been forced to flee their homes *because* they were Muslims, could be integrated more easily on the basis of Muslim solidarity. The other aim of Abdülhamid’s policies was to increase his authority and effect a degree of bonding with the population by sacralizing the institution of the monarchy.

In order to increase solidarity and unity on the basis of Islam, a single, standardized and controlled form of “national” or Ottoman Islam had to be promoted (although whether we can actually say, as Yavuz does, that the state promoted *Muslim nationalism* is debatable). This led to what Deringil in a happy phrase has called the “Ottomanization of the Seriat”. The Hanefi school, which had always been the preferred *mezhep* of the Ottomans, increasingly became the sole recognized authority, even in Arab provinces where the Shafii school had traditionally predominated. The Hanefi interpretation of the religious law was ultimately codified in Ahmed Cevdet Pasha’s monumental *Mecelle*, which meant that local judges and muftis to a large

degree lost their freedom of interpretation and were expected to refer to a written authoritative text. An officially sanctioned brand of Islam was disseminated through Abdülhamid's fast growing educational network (Fortna's "Imperial classrooms"), with textbooks on religion and morality being written for the different levels in primary and secondary education and through the distribution of popular and simply written publications such as catechisms (*ilmi hal*). The standardized religious message emphasized loyalty to the state and obedience to the authorities. Its central notion, as Georgeon has pointed out, was that of *ahlak* (morality). The order that the sultan wanted to impose on society was presented as a moral order in which modernization was encouraged but what was seen as the libertarian excesses of the Tanzimat era were rejected. This moral order clearly appealed to the Sunni Muslim townspeople of Anatolia, but of course Anatolia was far from uniformly Sunni. In its effort to unify the population, the state undertook campaigns to convert the many dissident Muslim communities of Anatolia and Kurdistan to respectable Sunni Islam. Taking his cue from Western missionaries, the sultan sent preachers to the Alevi areas and even had mosques and schools built in Alevi villages.

The efforts to increase the authority of the monarchy were based on the sultan's position as caliph. Abdülhamid not only used the spurious claim to the caliphate so brilliantly exploited by the Ottoman negotiating team at the Peace of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 to implicitly threaten the imperialist powers of his day, he also used the caliphate effectively to buttress his regime internally. By emphasizing the sacral nature of his office, he could demand not only the loyalty of his subjects, but also the obedience due to the successors of the prophet. Loyalty to the throne thus became a religious duty.

The sultan actively sought the cooperation of religious leaders (primarily dervish sheikhs) as intermediaries, who could connect with the Muslim community and spread the message. Most famous among these was Abdülhamid's long time favourite Ebulhuda from Aleppo, who was considered to be the "eminence grise" of the Yildiz palace at the time, but there were many others.

Several authors have pointed out that Abdülhamid was far from unique in his attempts to strengthen his throne by sacralizing it. The emperor Francis-Joseph II of Austria

and Tsars Alexander III and Nicolas II also tried to effect a bonding with the large majority of their subjects by emphasizing their role as defender of the faith and even in Queen Victoria's Britain the monarchy projected a far more Christian and virtuous image than it had under the Georges.

*The Young Turks: "National" means "Muslim"*

The rule of the Committee of Union and Progress after 1908, and especially after the dethronement of Abdülhamid, is usually contrasted sharply with the preceding era in the historiography of Turkey. There are good reasons for this. The atmosphere of public debate and openness after the revolution contrasted sharply with the suffocating atmosphere of Abdülhamid's final years. Nevertheless, the contrast can be overdone. The paradigm of the Young Turks themselves was that of "Freedom" (*Hürriyet* – the usual description of the 1908 constitutional revolution) and "Oppression" (*Istibdad* – Abdülhamid's reign) and this is reflected in later history writing. This is especially true for the issues of religion and nationalism.

It is true, of course, that on the ideological level there is a world of difference between Abdülhamid and the Young Turks. The latter were deeply influenced by a popularised version of positivism as well as by Büchnerian materialism. Their political outlook was elitist and authoritarian, but that still contrasted sharply with the autocracy of the former sultan. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that there is an underlying ideological relationship. Abdülhamid consciously tried to shape Ottoman Muslim solidarity into the fulcrum of a reinvigorated Ottoman state and while one can argue whether this constituted the fostering of an Ottoman-Muslim nationalism or rather of a kind of proto-nationalism, there is no doubt that over the years he mobilized Ottoman-Muslim sentiment. In doing so, the sultan was in tune with underlying developments in society, where, as Keyder has argued, a religiously over-determined division of labour between a fast-growing non-Muslim bourgeoisie and an equally fast growing Muslim-dominated state bureaucracy created increasing and ultimately unbearable tensions. The roots of the Committee of Union and Progress were to be found in the resentment felt by young Muslim bureaucrats and officers at the change in the balance of power between on the one hand the Christian bourgeoisie and the European powers who were perceived as being hand in glove with them and the Ottoman state and its servants on the other. The main grievance of the Young Turks

against the sultan was that his regime weakened the state and failed to protect the Ottoman nation. Their solution, endlessly repeated in their pamphlets and émigré journals, was to create a modern state (with all the trimmings such as a parliament and a constitution) with a rational, “scientific” system of administration. They were not, however, anti-Islamic, far from it. As Hanioglu has shown, it was an unquestioning belief in science and education rather than any democratic sentiment that dominated their thinking. Inspired by positivism, they were vehemently anti-clerical, but with the possible exception of Abdullah Cevdet, the “atheist philosopher” (*dinsiz mutefekkir*) every one of them saw in a “true” or “purified” Islam; a “rational” religion, which was open to science, a valuable building block of Ottoman reconstruction and a social cement.

In its reconstituted form (from 1906 onwards) the C.U.P. was an organisation of Muslim civil servants and army officers and in its early days it was not even open to non-Muslims. It was, in other words, a political movement of Ottoman Muslims for Ottoman Muslims. After the period of compromise, inter-party strife and political turmoil between the constitutional revolution of 1908 and the outbreak of the Balkan War in 1912, the policies of the C.U.P. were a – sometimes awkward – compromise between its professed adherence to the ideal of the “Unity of the (Ethnic) Elements” (*Ittihadî anasir*), the underlying principle of the Ottoman constitution and its Ottoman-Muslim nationalism. From 1912 onwards, and certainly after the Unionist coup d’état of January 1913, Ottoman Muslim nationalism held sway. The Christian communities were now defined as the “others” and a whole range of “national” (*millî*) societies, clubs, firms, cooperatives and periodicals was founded in quick succession. Looking at the aims and the membership of these, it is immediately apparent that “national” now meant “Ottoman Muslim” only. From 1914 onwards this identification of the C.U.P. with the Muslim majority leads both to the nationalist economic policies of the *Millî iktisat*, through which the committee tried to create a level playing field for Muslim entrepreneurs through state interference in the economy and to the oppressive and ultimately genocidal ethnic policies of the War years. As in Abdülhamid’s days, the politics of Muslim solidarity held a special attraction for the large immigrant communities from the Balkans and the Caucasus, who had themselves been victims of religiously inspired persecution. The shared Muslim identity was a perfect path towards integration and it should thus cause no

surprise that immigrants, especially Circassians, were so prominent among the C.U.P. militants (especially in the so-called “Special Organisation”, the *Teskilati Mahsusa*).

Of course, the turn to Muslim nationalism was not due solely to the social make-up of the C.U.P. or to the ideological preferences of its leaders. Just as Abdülhamid’s “Islamic turn” had in part been a rational answer to the changed territorial and demographic realities of the empire, so the appeal to Muslim solidarity of the Young Turks was caused in part by the need to mobilize the population in times of war. Anatolia being the “soldier’s mine” of the empire, appealing to the religious worldview of the peasant population of Anatolia made good sense.

Both elements – religious nationalism (with a strong anti-Greek and anti-Armenian bias) and military necessity – continued to play a role in the post war era, when, during the “National Struggle” (*Millî Mücadele*) Ottoman Muslim nationalism reached its apogee. From the Congress of Erzurum in July 1919, through the Congress of Sivas in September of the same year and the final sessions of the Ottoman parliament in early 1920; in the rhetoric of Mustafa Kemal Pasha and others in the National Assembly after April 1920: the struggle was always defined as one of Ottoman Muslims for self determination and against the unjust claims of Armenians and Greeks and their European supporters. The definition of “us” and “them” in religious terms of course persisted until the exchange of populations agreed upon in Lausanne. It was after all Muslims from Greece who were exchanged with Orthodox from Anatolia, without other factors (for instance linguistic ones) playing any role at all.

### *Sacralisation*

Sultan Abdülhamid had made strong efforts to further sacralise his rule by using religious imagery and most of all through the exaltation of the institution of the caliphate. The Young Turks, minor civil servants and officers, were in a totally different position and any sacralisation of their persons was out of the question. They did, however try to sacralise both the committee itself, which was often referred to as a “Holy Society” (*cemiyeti mukaddes*) and its mission. This came out most clearly with the outbreak of World War I, which was officially declared a Jihad, but it is also visible in the way the person of the sultan-caliph, Mehmet V Resad, was presented to



the public. Even before the war, during his public visits to Bursa, Edirne and Macedonia in 1910-11, the sultan emphasized the importance of solidarity between the ethnic communities, but he also visited shrines, mosques and dervish convents and surrounded himself with relics.

During the national struggle after war, sacralisation also took place. In Mustafa Kemal's speeches, the earth of Anatolia is not only sacred in the sense that for any nationalist the national territory is sacred "because it is drenched in the blood of those who gave their lives for the country". There is that, to be sure, but he also describes Anatolia as the "heartland of Islam" (*Islamin harîmi ismeti*). What is at stake, is the rescuing of the *mukaddesat*, the holy traditions. The flavour of the times and the degree to which the struggle was sacralised is perhaps most visible in the text of the Turkish national anthem, the *Istiklal Marsi* (Independence March), written in 1921 by Mehmet Akif. If it were not anachronistic to say so, one would be tempted to say that it describes the struggle entirely in terms of a clash of civilisations, witness verse four:

"Even if a wall of steel surrounds the western horizon  
My heart full of belief is a mighty bulwark.  
You are full of power, don't be afraid! How can the toothless monster  
You call civilisation strangle a religion that is so great?"

### *Bureaucratizing Islam*

Another important element of continuity between the Hamidian and Young Turk periods is in the efforts to modernize the state apparatus and extend its hold over the country. As in Abdülhamid's days, integrating Sunni Islam into the state bureaucracy (politicizing it in the process) was part of these efforts and a matter of priority for the C.U.P. after the counterrevolution of April 1909 in the capital had shown up the vulnerability of the Young Turk regime. First the Sheikhulislam was given a seat in the cabinet and a Sheikhulislam like Musa Kazim played an important role in legitimizing the policies of the Committee. Then, from 1916 onwards, the Sheikhulislam was removed from the cabinet and subordinated to it, with the jurisdiction over Islamic family law, charitable foundations and religious education being transferred to secular ministries. On the face of it these measures contrast sharply with those of the Hamidian era: where Abdülhamid empowered his preferred

Islamic authorities and used them as props to his rule, the Young Turks reduced the status and independence of the Islamic authorities. The underlying aim, however, remained much the same: to fully control the Islamic establishment and to use it to strengthen the state. Both regimes, Sultan Abdülhamid as much as the C.U.P., were extremely suspicious of manifestations of Islam that were outside government control.

This tradition of state control of course reached its apogee during the republic. The image of the Kemalist republic, right from the start was that of a regime that radically broke with the past and introduced a secular, or laicist, order. It is true that the republic took radical measures to limit the influence of Islam on the state within months of its founding. The functions of Caliph and of SheikhuIslam were both abolished by the republic's national assembly in March 1924. At the same time, however, the republic actually *increased* the state's hold over religion. The Presidium for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi*) that replaced the SheikhuIslamate was given sole responsibility for religious guidance. All imams and muftis were now civil servants. As the central state increased its hold over the country, so did its religious arm: the presidium centrally determined the contents of Friday sermons and instructed muftis on the correct advice to be given to the believers. Over time, the *Diyanet* was turned into a centralized and hierarchical bureaucracy to an extent that had never been achieved by Abdülhamid II. As Davison has pointed out recently, the state not only restricted religious education – it also fostered it if it could fully control it.

As in the empire, in the republic, too, the state exclusively looked after the religious needs of the Sunni majority, leaving all Muslim dissenters, such as the Alevi, to their own devices. In this respect, the nation-state turned out to be as much a Sunni state as the late empire had been.

### *Morality*

If there is one aspect in which there is a clear discontinuity between the late empire on the one hand and the Young Turk and Kemalist eras on the other, it is that of morality. Abdülhamid had sought to base his revived empire on a reinvigorated public morality, the *ahlak* propagated in his school textbooks and in the sermons of the *hatips*. The Young Turks and Kemalists did nothing of the sort. The Unionist policies after 1913

definitely had a secularizing character in the social and cultural sphere even when the Unionists were appealing to a sentiment of Muslim nationalism at the same time. The Young Turks and the Kemalists wanted an Islam that was compatible with science and that supported their understanding of the national interest. In the republic this meant that the message was a double one: on the one hand religion was depicted as nothing but the private affair of the believer, on the other the believer was addressed as citizen of the republic with, as İlder Turan has pointed out, a religious duty to pay taxes and serve in the army. Efforts to strengthen the cohesion of society through the strengthening of a morality based in Islam there were, but they were made by Islamist revivalist movements such as that of Sait Nursi and Süleyman Tunahan. The state only became involved in moral rearmament in the late Nineteen Seventies.

*Kenan Evren: Islam as an antidote*

When the Turkish general staff took over power on 12 September 1980, combating the hold of “foreign” ideologies such as socialism, communism or Islamic fundamentalism over the Turkish youth was at the top of its agenda. Even in their first proclamation after the coup the generals talked about the need to combat “perverse” (*sapik*) ideologies. Although the military suppressed the leftist and Islamist movements mercilessly, they also realised that an ideological alternative was needed and that traditional secularist Kemalism had too limited an appeal to be able to do the job. Under the personal guidance of coup leader General Evren (himself the son of an imam), they turned to the ideas of the “Hearths of the Enlightened” (*Aydinlar Ocaklari*). This was an organization of conservative nationalist academics, politicians and businessmen, founded in 1970 to break the hold of Leftwing intellectuals over the political debate. The central element in its ideology, which was developed by its first president, Ibrahim Kafesoglu and called the “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis”, was the idea that Islam and the pre-Islamic culture of the Turks showed up a great number of similarities. Turks were therefore naturally attracted to Islam and destined to be its soldiers. Turkish culture and national identity were shaped by a 2500 year old Turkic tradition and a 1000 year old religion, Islam and therefore Islam was not only compatible with Turkish nationalism, but an integral part of it.

The Hearths of the Enlightened had been gaining influence in government circles since Demirel’s “National Front” coalitions in the late seventies, but after the 1980

coup they achieved complete control in the fields of culture and education. The organs of the state were given the task of spreading the message of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. Poulton has remarked (without further elaborating the theme) that the ideological policies of Kenan Evren bear a certain resemblance to those of Abdülhamid and indeed, the resemblance is striking, both in the medium and in the message.

Religious education was enshrined in the constitution the military had adopted in 1982. It stated that the state – and the state alone – was charged with religious education and that instruction in religious culture and moral education was to be compulsory in both primary and secondary education. In the textbooks teaching on Islam was directly linked to values such as nationalism, the unity and indivisibility of the nation, respect for authority and militarism. The Presidium for Religious Affairs was given a constitutional position as well. Its functions were now more than ever completely subservient to the interests of the state and what Yavuz has to say about Hamidian Islam (“in practice religion was subordinate and acted primarily as a shield for the preservation of the state”) is true for the Islam of Evren’s *Diyanet* as well. The message put out by the presidium in publications such as its *Cep Ilmihali* (Pocket Catechism) is unashamedly nationalist, authoritarian and militarist. National unity was depicted as a religious duty. A special missionary department was set up in 1981 to combat Kurdish separatist agitation in the Southeast and Sunni mosques were built in Alevi villages in considerable numbers. The *Diyanet* benefited enormously from the central role it played in the ideological campaign of the military and of their successors. The number of its employees grew from slightly over 50.000 to nearly 85.000 between 1979 and 1989.

So: all the elements that were prominent in Abdülhamid’s era are there: the establishment of state control, the use of the mosque and the school, the emphasis on morality (*ahlak*), missionary activity and mosque-building to combat diversity and unify the nation and above all of course the attempt to monopolize religious instruction and use it to support the state. The intermediaries were there as well: Fethullah Gülen, who was to become the most prominent religious figure of the Nineteen Nineties, owed his meteoric rise in part to his support for the coup d’etat of 1980 and his support for the policies of the *Diyanet* afterwards. Throughout the

Eighties and early Nineties Gülen had privileged access to the seat of political power in Ankara. At the same time, the policies of Kenan Evren also showed up continuities with the Kemalist era in that political activities (or activities that could be interpreted as political in the widest sense) of Islamic movements that were not under state control continued to be regarded as illegal.

### *Conclusion*

What a comparison of these case studies of instances where the Ottoman/Turkish state instrumentalized Islam to achieve political goals seems to show, is an underlying continuity between the late Ottoman Empire and the republic where their “islamic” policies are concerned.

Abdülhamid’s policies of establishing far-reaching state control over the contents of religious education and instruction; his standardization of the Seriat and his attempts to use the religious message to increase the loyalty to the throne in a sense presage the Young Turk measures aimed at a further subjugation of Islam to the state. What the Young Turks did during World War I, removing the SheikhuIslam from the cabinet and bringing all forms of education, the administration of Islamic law and the charitable foundations (*evkaf*) under the control of secular ministries, was on the face of it different from what the sultan had done. Where he strengthened the Islamic institutions, the Young Turks weakened them. But both limited the freedom of action of the religious authorities, integrated them further into the state machinery and politicised them. This continued in the Kemalist republic, when all responsibility for religious care and for the charitable foundations was devolved onto a new Presidium for Religious Affairs, directly under the prime minister, which was given extensive powers to centrally determine the message spread in mosques and by muftis.

The early republic clearly broke with the policies of the Hamidian and Young Turk era in the field of education. Both previous regimes had set great store by religious education, centrally determining the curriculum to suit their ideological programme. The Kemalists, by contrast, eliminated religious education altogether. In this area continuity was restored by the neo-Kemalist regime of Kenan Evren after 1980: again determining the content of religious education and using it to buttress loyalty to the state became a priority for the regime.

If there is a strong continuity between the successive regimes in their quest for control over and instrumentalization of religion, the same is true for the type of argument employed. The debate never was one for or against religion. It was, as Andrews has pointed out, about the *interpretation* of religion. The Hamidian regime, the Young Turks, the Kemalists and the Neo-Kemalists all employed the means at their disposal to argue the case for *true* Islam: loyal to the Caliph in Abdülhamid's case, open to science in that of the Young Turks, private and non-political in that of the Kemalists and nationalist with Evren. This Islam was always opposed by an unacceptable Islam: liberal in the case of Abdülhamid, obscurantist for the Young Turks, political for the Kemalists or fundamentalist in the eyes of Evren's junta.

What the investigation of the four particular case studies has taught us, in addition to further illustrate the above-mentioned continuities, is, I think, the following: In times of crisis successive Ottoman and Turkish republican regimes have recognized that the Muslim component was so central to the identity of the vast majority of their citizen, that they had no option but to appeal to religion when trying to master the crisis. At the same time we have seen that different types of crisis demand a different kind of appeal to Islam. Abdülhamid II and General Evren were faced by ideological challenges that were felt to be life threatening to their regimes and even to the survival of the state. In the first case, the challenge lay in the centrifugal forces of minority nationalism and in that of political liberalism, in the second case the challenge came from different brands of socialism, from Islamic fundamentalism and – to a lesser extent at the time – from Kurdish separatism. To counter these ideological challenges the rulers had recourse to an appeal to Islamic norms and values, explicitly linked to the political message of dynastic loyalty in the first case and state-centred Turkish nationalism and militarism in the second.

The Young Turks during World War I and the Turkish nationalists of the post-World War I era appealed to religion in a very different manner. Faced with armed conflict, with a life and death battle for the survival of their state, they had to mobilize the largest possible majority on the basis of an appeal to a shared identity. What they were concerned with in the years 1912-22 was (to use Bernard Lewis' terminology) to find a fulcrum on which to build their state. This they found in the Ottoman Muslim

identity. Against the background of the rising tensions between Muslims and Non-Muslims in the last decades on the Nineteenth Century and the Balkan Wars of 1912-3 identities had been shaped primarily on the basis of religious affiliation. The loyalty of the Christian minorities was in serious doubt after the Balkan Wars and there was really no other option but to appeal to the core Muslim population of Anatolia, where most of the Ottoman soldiery was recruited. The same problem presented itself to the resistance movement after World War I. Between 1914 and 1922, sacralization of the struggle, in the shape of *cihad* or a “holy ideal” and of the national territory (as earth drenched in the blood of martyrs) certainly took place, but, as the policies of the Young Turk during the war and those of the Kemalists after 1922 showed, islamization of state and society was not part of the Young Turk/Kemalist agenda, quite the opposite. The element of “moral rearmament” was completely lacking and this makes the policies of the Young Turks and early Kemalists during the large-scale armed struggles of their time very different from those either of the preceding Hamidian regime and of the junta of 1980-83, who were faced primarily with ideological competition. It was the nature of the challenge, which ultimately determined the way in which Islam was instrumentalized, as a basis for a national identity or as a defensive ideology.