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## Further Reflections

The Metamorphosis of Secularization: Alternative Thinking for a  
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# Religiosity and Secularization in Changing Times: An Introduction

Mizrap Polat, Jasmin Donlic & Erol Yildiz

Generalising discourses about Islam and Muslims have been condensed over time into a homogeneous image, even a myth, in public debate. The reality, however, is more differentiated: there are a multiplicity of understandings of Islam and of Muslim groups. The heterogeneity of Muslim life, as it presents itself today in Europe or in the Turkish context, is thus not an aberration, but the result of a wide range of experiences and contradictory processes including globalization, digitalization, individualization and pluralization.

The continual warnings about the Islamization of the Occident are largely ideological. These generalizations refer not only to the segments of the population with a Muslim background in German-speaking countries, but also to the situation in Turkey, a country from which many people emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s, especially to Germany and Austria. Today these groups are in their fourth generation: the children and grandchildren of the original emigrants who were born and grew up in Germany and Austria and have been educated there.

In our opinion, lack of differentiation in this area creates an over-generalized view of the reality, steers public perception and thus has an impact on society. It also obscures the complexity of religiosity within the Muslim population, both in German-speaking countries and in Turkey, and of processes of secularization. The consequence of such generalization is that Islam is perceived as opposed to secularism, and that secularization and differentiation within Muslim populations are left largely unaddressed. The question of whether Islam is compatible with secularism has been the subject of heated debate in recent years, with widely divergent opinions being aired. There remain a multitude of views and ideas about what the two concepts might signify and how they relate to each other.

As recent studies and the contributions to this anthology show, people of Muslim faith are primarily religious. However, a progressive secularization also seems to be underway. In both Turkey and Germany, the proportion of young people from Muslim homes who have largely or completely distanced their internal landscape from Islam is around 10%.

Studies also make clear that the common assumption that Islam is the antithesis of secularisation does not really reflect the reality of people's lives and seems to be the result of ideologically-driven research. As examined and discussed in the individual contributions, the globalization and digitalization of the world are

driving secularization processes that are putting traditional religious ideas and authorities under pressure, requiring them to justify themselves to all believers and forcing individuals to confront religious tradition. This raises questions for Muslims both in Turkey and in German-speaking countries about the personal, ethical, social and political significance of religion in the context of globalization and digitalization. The responses to such questions can vary greatly from individual to individual and context to context, ranging from strong faith to unbelief, from a retreat to traditional values to political engagement. People may sometimes also join new religions or explore new philosophies, or try to understand their traditional religion in a new way. Islam is displaying great dynamism with regard to new understandings and interpretations.

Against this background, the present anthology aims to present a change of perspective, breaking away from mythical ideas about Islam and Muslims and instead using the transformation processes in globalized and digitalized societies as a starting point for an examination of how such processes change affect the secularization and religiosity of the people concerned. Contributions have been drawn from Germany, Austria and Turkey, and consider a range of perspectives and contexts, illustrating the dynamic relationship between secularization and religious orientation.

The texts gathered here are international and transdisciplinary in focus, undertaking empirical investigation of secularization and religiosity among Muslims in Turkey and in German-speaking countries. Turkey, Germany and Austria are – politically and legally – secular states. In what might be called this “post-secular“ age in European societies and in Turkey, secularization and religiosity are intertwined. This anthology therefore aims to describe the nature of the dynamic processes involved and to uncover the interactions between them and the new world views that are emerging. Since there are only a few comparative analyses in this area, it seems interesting to us, both epistemologically and practically, to work out how people are situating themselves in the globalized and digitalized world and what influence the transformation is having on religiosity (attitudes and actions that are motivated and conditioned by faith) and secularity (distancing oneself from religiously motivated positions and actions), both of which can lead to changes in the lives of individuals and groups. We aim to compare and discuss the social phenomena of secularity and religiosity among young people in Turkey and German-speaking countries in Europe. The volume includes theological, sociological and religious studies perspectives. In an increasingly globalized and digitalized context, the old distinction between “religious“ and “secular“ has largely lost its discriminatory power, and many people are searching for a spirituality that can hardly be defined in religious or theological terms.

Turkey is a promising case study for this exercise in many respects. First, it is the country of origin of very many migrants in Europe and has been engaged in accession negotiations with the EU for a number of years. Secondly, Turkey has

been westernised for a good 100 years. A comparison of developments in Turkey and developments in European countries is thus highly relevant to the present research question. An overview of the contributions to this book follows below.

In his chapter, *Secularization in Turkey: Conceptual Framework and an Overview of the Secularization Process in Turkey*, Volkan Ertit analyses the link between political dynamics and religiosity. His study refutes the notion that Turkey is becoming more religious, noting a lack of empirical evidence. Turkey, he emphasises, is going through a process of secularization that corresponds to the patterns of modernization identified by traditional secularization theory. The study looks at six key categories: private intimacy, homosexuality, popular belief, dress codes, the role of Islamic personalities and the decline of religious rhetoric.

Nesrullah Okans, Muhammed Kızılgeçits, and Mustafa Kemal Şens phenomenological study, *Intergenerational Perspectives on the Relationship Between Secularization and Religion in Turkey*, summarizes the relationship between secularization and religion in Turkey. The aim of this study is to identify and compare the experiences and perceptions of three generations who witnessed the secularization of Turkey, particularly with regard to the relationship between secularization and religion. The authors examine the influence of significant events on three age groups (under 30, 30–50, over 50), recording and comparing the generations' experiences and perceptions.

Hamza Aktaş has conducted a quantitative study examining secular tendencies among Turkish university students from Gümüşhane and Düzce universities. Using a descriptive survey model, he surveyed 429 students via Google Docs using random sampling and measuring their attitudes on the "Secular Attitude Scale". SPSS t-tests and ANOVA were deployed for data analysis, and Bonferroni tests determined significant differences. The results showed students had moderately low secular attitude levels, with differences between genders, universities, university departments, and self-definitions.

Emine Çetiner Özyılmaz conducted a quantitative study of Quran-based religiosity among Atatürk University students. This focused on the Islamic, Quran-based religiosity of Atatürk University students, especially those in the Faculty of Literature and Theology. The study analyzed differences between faculties with regard to the structure of Islamic religiosity, showing a positive correlation between religious education, sentiment and action, and also looking at differences in these between academic disciplines.

In their article, *The Postmuslim generation: Between discrimination, digitalisation and secularization*, Jasmin Donlic and Erol Yildiz examine the influence of social media, media images of Islam and religious orientations on Muslim students in Austria. They show how the post-Muslim generation perceives negative images of Islam in public discourse, reacts to them and positions itself against them. Social media plays a crucial role in this. The study includes ten interviews in Carinthia and Tyrol, collecting the experiences and views of the postmuslim generation. It

shows that confrontation with negative images and the use of digital media can intensify religious orientation and lead to a more thorough examination of religious issues. The study thus contributes to consideration of individual perspectives and can be seen as a counter to hegemonic knowledge about Islam and Muslims.

Mizrap Polat's study, *Identity as Proximity to and Distance from Religion: Muslim Students' Perceptions of Religious Identity in Turkey and Germany*, examines Muslim students' perceptions of collective identity, and finds that the Muslims studied experienced similar processes of secularization and religiosity whether they were in the majority or the minority. The author recognizes that being a migrant in Germany requires students with a Muslim background to construct multiple and hybrid identities and life plans, and influences such construction.

*Secular, Religious, Muslim? The Orientations of Islamic Theology Students in Germany* by Lena Dreier and Constantin Wagner examines the attitudes of students of Islamic theology in Germany with regard to secular and/or religious descriptions. The authors' empirical analysis is based on interviews with students of Islamic theology. They show that, unlike Christians in Germany, Muslim students – a politicised minority – also have attributed to them the identity of Islamic religious affiliation, and this often makes it impossible for them to position themselves as secular. Moreover, students define their identity in very different ways, both in terms of what they understand by "Muslim" and in terms of the meaning of this part of their identity in relation to other identity categories.

Ayşe Uygun-Altunbaş's study, *The Religiousness of Muslim Families in Germany. Developments and tendencies: the example of Muslims of Turkish origin*, examines the extent to which religion plays a role in the migration and diaspora of Muslim families living in Germany and the religiosity of those families. The article also addresses the influence of globalization and digitalization on the religious life of Muslims.

Following the discussion by the individual contributors to this anthology of secularization in changing times, editors Jasmin Donlic and Erol Yildiz attempt in their concluding chapter to draw together the key findings, highlight essential connections and outline alternative ways of thinking that may be important for further discussion on topics including European identity, Islam, Muslims, (Muslim) religiosity and religious diversity. Since the texts that precede this section touch in only a rudimentary manner on democratic theory, it is given more prominence in this overarching text, which also draws out the implications for our understanding of democracy and education going forwards.

# Religiosity and Secularization in Turkey



# Secularization in Turkey: Conceptual Framework and an Overview of the Secularization Process in Turkey

Volkan Ertit

**Abstract:** Many of those who believe that social change is intertwined with politics assert that Turkey's religiosity is growing more pronounced over time. Since the 2002 general elections in particular, the Justice and Development Party, which identifies as politically Islamist, has governed the nation and actively pursued policies to enhance religious adherence. This has fostered the notion both domestically and internationally that Turkey's religiosity has expanded. The present study, however, challenges the idea that Turkey is becoming more religious – and finds it lacking in empirical support. Turkey, it asserts, is undergoing a process of secularization in line with the patterns of modernization identified by traditional secularization theory. Given that secularization signifies a reduction in the influence of the supernatural in everyday life, the study examines Turkey's journey toward secularization through the lens of six key categories: private intimacy, homosexuality, folk beliefs, clothing norms, the role of Islamic figures, and the decline of religious rhetoric.

## 1. Introduction

The present study aims to briefly define the concept of secularization and outline the secularization process that Turkey has been experiencing since the 1950s within this framework. Although secularization is not a new field for Western academics, there is no ongoing history of such discussions in Turkey. Only 15–20 years ago, the concepts used to describe the transformation in Turkey did not include secularization. The social sciences were impacted by the political language used daily in Turkey and previous studies of social transformation had not included the concept of secularization. However, the small number of studies of the concept prior to 2010 began to increase in subsequent years. While religious and social change(s)/transformation(s) in Turkey used to be explained or discussed in terms of Islamization/Laicization/Conservatization/Iranization, secularization and desecularization began to be used more frequently in academic texts and traditional and social media after the 2010s. The present study forms part of that canon. It aims to define the concepts of secularization and desecularization and

describe the specifics of the secularization process in Turkey since the 1950s, focusing its analysis on the following six areas: Private life and intimacy; Homosexuality; Folk beliefs; Dress codes; Influence of Islamic figures and Decrease in religious rhetoric.

## 2. Concepts

There is no universal agreement on the definition of secularization. Researchers base their arguments on their own definitions, and the concept of secularization has thus become the servant of multiple masters. As long as ago as the 1960s, academics were arguing that the term's multiple definitions had made it impractical, and that it should not be used (Shiner, 1967: 207). It is therefore necessary to know how scholars who use the concept in their studies are defining it. For this reason, the concept of secularization is explained in detail below.

Secularization refers to the decrease in the prestige of the supernatural realm, i. e., religion, religious structures, folk beliefs and all other supernatural teachings, at the individual and social level, and the associated decrease in their influence over day-to-day life. A brief definition of the other concepts and terms associated with this definition will promote a better understanding of the conceptual framework and the rest of the text. The supernatural is at the center of the concept of secularization because it is concerned with the adoption of attitudes, the holding of beliefs and cause-and-effect relations that cannot be explained by the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology etc.) (Steup, 2011: pp. 21–22). The term religion, particularly in the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), has been used to denote a set of paradigms with supernatural references that influences the daily practices, moral values, aesthetic perception, ontological (existential) problems, and social norms of the mass it appeals to (Atay, 2012: 25). Folk beliefs are beliefs, sanctities and related rituals that coexist with the official and dominant religious doctrine in society (Yoder, 1974: 14). The concept of religion-like structures is used to refer to the structures that emerge as a result of the sacralization, divinization and glorification of the secular sphere. The expression “within a specific time period“ in the definition was used to point out that the social influence of the supernatural sphere has decreased in comparison with the past rather than having absolute value. A reference point in time and space is required in order to conduct a debate on secularization. Although studies of a single time period are helpful for the generation of descriptions, they do not assist the understanding of the secularization process (Bruce, 2011a: 546–547). The expression “in a certain society“ in the definition was used to forestall a methodological mistake that is common in secularization debates. Whether a society has secularized or not should be investigated by looking at that society's history. However, in

both English and Turkish literature, many works conduct secularization debates by comparing two different societies.

The following section presents the transformation experienced by Turkey in the light of qualitative and quantitative studies and in the context of the conceptual framework.

### 3. Secularizing Turkey

#### 3.1 Private Life and Intimacy

In a society with a Muslim majority, one of the areas affected by the secularization process is male–female relations.

Islamic rules not only prohibit premarital sexual intercourse, but also aim to preclude environments that would lead to such intimacy. Men and women therefore do not socialize. Great importance is placed on privacy, houses are designed with separate spaces for men and women, men and women live and engage in recreation separately (Amman, 2010: 50).

For this reason, until recently, flirting and sex could be punishable by death in Anatolian towns (Yıldız, 2008: 221). It was believed that virginity was important not only for a woman's own chastity, but also for that of her family (Kalav, 2012: 154). Again, until recently, it was not possible for young women to publicly take a boyfriend in Anatolian towns, and they were not allowed to go out alone, even with their fiancée. The following paragraph (recorded in fieldwork for a doctorate) is the transcription of a statement by the daughter of a secular family, born in 1948, regarding her fiancée.

“We were engaged for a year, we would never meet. We went out to the movies once with his uncle, aunt, sister and me. We sat next to each other but never touched. We did not hold hands throughout our engagement. Evening by evening, two or three times a week. In those days, you could not be alone together. My parents would not allow it, they would kill me [for sitting alone together], it would not be halal without marriage“ (Ertit, 2017).

Life is expected to continue along these lines or become stricter in a conservatized/religionized society. However, studies from the 2000s reveal that the frequency of extramarital affairs and the privacy boundaries between partners differ.

For example, a longitudinal study conducted prior to the emergence of social media (the first study was conducted in 1996, the second was conducted in 2004) revealed that increased numbers of high-school teenagers were having sexual ex-

periences. 19.9% of the students had had full sexual intercourse in 1996, and the rate increased to 34.4% in 2004. Similarly, 29.7% of students were flirting in 1996 compared with 42.3% in 2004 (Çetin et al., 2008: 390, 393). Again, in a study conducted in the early 2000s with 2217 1st year and 4th year students at Ege University, it was found that 4.5% of 1st-grade students had had sexual experiences, while there was an approximately 15-fold increase for 4th year students, 73.3% of whom had had sexual experiences (Gökengin et al., 2003: 260). Another study, this time of nine students at the Eylül University Faculty of Medicine, obtained similar results: 65.2% of 1st-year female students and 73.5% of 4th-year students indicated that they had experienced relationships that went beyond friendship (Ozan, Aras, Semin & Orçin, 2005). The findings of a thesis titled *Examination of Generation Y Perceptions of Sexuality*, completed at Hacettepe University in 2018, are consistent with the aforementioned results:

First, according to Generation Y, the view that marriage is the only legitimate way for adults to engage in sexual activity is losing ground. The large majority of male and female members of Generation Y in the study had experienced premarital sex, while the rate of individual or premarital civil partnership is increasing and intentions to marry are decreasing. It was noted that, on average, the sample participants experience sexual relations at an earlier age than their parents, and that the age at marriage is increasing day by day (Bahar, 2018: 77).

Comparing studies conducted in 2006 and 2012, Özer Sencar and Sıtkı Yıldız emphasized that there was an increase in “the views that virginity is not imperative, and it is possible for opposite sexes to live together without being married” (Sencar & Yıldız, cited in Bayhan, 2013: 153). Even in the Göynük district of Bolu, where religious belief, fasting and prayer rates are as high as 90%, around half of the sample group saw no problem with young people flirting before marriage (Usta, 2017: 102). Even in small Anatolian towns, therefore, it would not be inaccurate to say that flirting is being normalized.

Despite the fact that the only form of sexual intercourse countenanced by Islam is within marriage, studies have shown that premarital sex, which Islam strictly prohibits, is increasing in Turkey compared with previous years (Akalpler & Eroğlu, 2015; Aras, Semin, Günay, Orçin & Özcan, 2005: 74; Civil & Yıldız, 2010; Evcili, Cesur, Altun, Güçtaş & Sümer, 2013: 488). The mean age at marriage has increased to 27 in males and 24 in females; the mean age of first premarital sex was 19 in males and 20 in females (Sexual Education Treatment and Research Association, 2007; Population Association of Turkey, 2007).

The state has also become aware of these developments. The Family Structure Study conducted by BASAGM (the General Directorate of Family and Social Research) in 2006 (Bayer, 2013: 112) and the report published by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (2011: 34) in 2011 reveal that the state is aware of the ongoing transformation of family structures in Turkey. Politicians have started to recognize factors such as the proliferation of single-parent households, the facilitation

of – and rapid increase in – divorce, the increase in common-law partnerships, the increase in the number of children born outside of marriage, opposition to marriage and/or postponement of marriage and the decreasing desire to have children as new risks to the family as an institution in Turkey. Studies have been published suggesting the provision of training programs to families in order to halt the increase in common-law partnerships (Gür & Kurt, 2011: 34) and there have been reports in the Turkish media such as 'Are common-law partnerships being encouraged?' (Haber Türk, 2011).

### 3.2 Homosexuality

In countries that, like Turkey, have a Muslim majority, it is obvious that society's view of homosexuality cannot be independent of the statements on the topic in the Qur'an. Verses 28 and 29 of Surah Al-'Ankabut, Verse 80 of Surah Al-Araf and Verse 160 of Surah Ash-Shu'ara regard intimacy between males as "unacceptable" and state that such behavior would incur the wrath of Allah. The verses also emphasize that homosexuality was one of the reasons the people of Lut were ruined by Allah. In parallel with this, many member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference impose the death penalty, imprisonment, fining, flagellation or bludgeoning as punishments for homosexuals (The Economist, 2002). Traditional religious and moral structures regard homosexuality as "sinful" and "wicked" (Yapıcı, 2016: 87). In a society in which Islam is increasingly dominant, it is to be expected that the visibility of homosexuals – and tolerance towards them – would decline. However, events in Turkey relating to homosexuality have not paralleled the country's Islamization, particularly in the 21st century.

The 2013 and 2014 Pride Marches in Istanbul attracted approximately 100 thousand participants, in contrast to the first Pride March in 2003, which had just ten participants. In addition to Istanbul, Pride Marches have been held in cities such as Ankara, İzmir, Mersin, Antalya and Bursa, and even more closed Anatolian cities such as Malatya and Samsun (Haber55, 2016; Kaos GL, 2014). Further concrete indicators of the expansion and diversification of the LGBTI movement are the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) organizations that have been set up in twelve different cities, the establishment of homosexual student groups (which were previously prohibited) in 19 universities, and the organization of anti-homophobia events in 35 cities over the past 25 years by the Kaos GL Association (established in 1994) (Yılmaz, 2014: 174–175). The increasing normalization and acceptance of homosexuality have altered families' perceptions of their homosexual children and LISTAG (Families and Friends of LGBTIs in Turkey) has been founded.

Homosexuals began to arrange unofficial marriage ceremonies and share them with the public through social media. Pictures of the first gay marriage in

Turkey, which emerged on news sites in September 2014, and the engagement ceremony conducted in 2016, reflect current attitudes to homosexuality in Turkey.

In 2017, the first homosexual couple YouTube channel in Turkey was established, attracting nationwide media coverage (Kaos GL, 2017). YouTube videos by homosexuals who were open about their sexual orientation have received millions of views. In October 2018, the first gay wedding took place in a wedding hall (Ege Haber, 2018). In parallel with these developments, the percentage of individuals stating that they were not disturbed by homosexual lifestyles increased to 29.1% in 2012 compared with 25.7% in 2006 (Yılmaz, 2012). None of this means that homosexuals have a happy or easy life in Turkey: On the contrary, news sites frequently report human rights violations with regard to homosexual and trans individuals. The fact that homosexuals are hesitant to bring legal challenges against the problems they encounter makes them more defenseless and open targets. Homosexuals have limited rights in Turkey compared with European and North American countries. However, as previously stated, in secularization debates, conclusions are reached by making comparisons with the past, not on the basis of absolute values. Therefore, in the context of secularization debates, the relevant question is this: Which era is more livable for homosexuals in Turkey, the 21st century or the 20th?

### 3.3 Modernization and the Decline of Folk Beliefs

Secularization debates in Turkey center not on the Abrahamic religions, but rather on the supernatural sphere. Whether or not they are part of Islam, the increase/decrease in the influence of folk beliefs in the supernatural sphere is relevant to secularization. Previous studies on the loss of power, prestige and popularity by folk beliefs have presented this phenomenon as an example of the secularization of the society; such beliefs are deemed not to be part of Islam, and therefore their decline, it is claimed, is not an example of secularization. The approach is theological rather than sociological.

Prior to encountering Islam, the people of Anatolia had their own folk beliefs, some of which they continue to maintain (Şener, 2001: 103–109). Particularly in rural areas where the main sources of income are agriculture and livestock, such beliefs occupy a significant place in daily life. A 2017 field study noted the following beliefs and practices relating to animals in the Central Anatolia Region, for example: Burning a snake alive for to promote rainfall; writing verses on a dry horse skull and throwing it to the riverside to promote rainfall; the belief that the winter would come early and be harsh when flocks of birds land on the trees; writing verses on an egg, breaking the egg under horses or cows and making the animals eat it in order to protect them from the evil eye; hanging dogs' or horses' skulls on barn doors to protect against the evil eye; and distributing the colostrum of

animals who have just given birth to neighbors in order to protect them from the evil eye (Sinmez & Aslim, 2017: 208–211). On the other hand, although folk beliefs do not form part of official Islamic discourse, some are legitimized through Islam and affect daily life (Demir, 2016: 121). These include consulting religious functionaries instead of doctors when sick; not cutting the hair of male children until the age of six to protect against the evil eye; pouring molten lead into a plate on a person's head in the belief that psychological diseases are caused by demons; believing that holding money up to the full moon will make you rich; believing that it is a sin to throw nails, onions and eggshells into the fire.

Folk beliefs also play a role in explaining unknowns that are faced in daily life. Interviews with elderly interviewees in particular about their lives in the context of the author's doctoral study present examples of this (Ertit, 2017: 240). Both interviewees came from Tunceli:

**Interviewee 1:** If someone was pale, it was said to be caused by the devil. In those days, no one knew what a heart attack was. For example, say a woman died of blood loss while giving birth, it was believed that a jinn called "heleke" had taken her liver. To prevent this, someone would wait by the woman's side for three days and three nights after the birth.

**Interviewee 2:** In the old days, people could not diagnose diseases. The diseases were unknown. For example, we believed that heart attacks were possession by a demon.

Since later generations are more familiar with modern medicine, they consult it more often than earlier generations when it comes to the diagnosis and treatment of disease. It is thus no coincidence that in the context of the same study, the older generation were much more likely to report beliefs, for instance, that death was due to evil angels, that headaches could be remedied by receiving a blow, that saliva would kill bacteria, that going to the doctor was a sin and that a clergyman should be consulted about tooth infection (Ertit, 2017).

In times when modern medicine and technology were not as advanced as they are today, education levels were low and 80% of the country's population lived in rural areas, it is not surprising that such beliefs permeated individuals' daily lives, in other countries as well as Turkey. However, urban life, the increasing number of hospitals and healthcare workers, dissemination of science and technology, half of individuals aged 18 attending university and tools such as the internet have diluted these beliefs and caused them to have less influence, particularly on the lives of generations Y and Z.



### 3.4 Dress Codes

In Turkey, clothing, in particular as worn by women, has been at the center of debate for many years (Baban, 2014: 644–646). Conservatives accuse those who wear revealing clothing, both women and men, of being sinners (ATV, 2017) and as the source of social immorality and corruption. In a society where Islam has become more dominant, women (veiled or non-veiled) are expected to dress in baggier clothes.

However, if the country in question is Turkey, it can be argued that the transformation of dress codes does not parallel the advance of Islamization. In the early 21st century, a decline was observed in certain sensitivities regarding the use and presentation of hijab. The fact that the new generation of women who wear the veil dress wear clothes that show more of the outline of their bodies compared with the previous generation has been the subject of academic studies. Many veiled women today dress more colorfully and assertively than the women of the 1990s who wore abayas and long coats. With the exception of the hijab, many of their clothes and accessories are similar to those of non-veiled woman (Atay, 2018; Eke, 2013: 119–120; Köse, 2006: 16). According to Selda Karaaslan, who wrote her thesis on the changes in the dress codes of veiled women, the most striking transformation occurred after 2003.

Starting from 2003, clothes began to be presented in modern and luxurious outlets and models began to be selected for their blonde hair and eye color (European appearance). The clothes were bright and attracted attention, and the designs were cut to skim the body and even highlight a different area each year (Karaaslan, 2010: 184).

In parallel with this study, Gökarıksel and Seco (2015: 2581) claim that leading veil firms are taking the image of the ideal Muslim woman beyond Islamic moral codes, depicting her as cosmopolitan, fashionable, attractive and having a certain status. Veiling fashion can therefore be said to have moved the boundaries that are acceptable to religion.

The transformation of veiling into a fashion statement in the 1990s continued into the 2000s with the emergence of fashion magazines with no Islamic agenda that targeted women wearing the veil. Studies of these magazines reveal that they encourage consumption and luxury and do not carry any religious message (Meşe, 2016: 108). Describing the transformation in veiling clothes commercials, Fatma Barbarosoğlu first discusses the faceless, hand-drawn illustrations in women's magazines in the 1980s. She describes the 1990s as a period in which catalogue models wore make-up but had conservative body language. Like Karaaslan, she notes that the catalogues of the early 2000s are full of photographs and convey the message, "I am here" through make-up and the emphasis of body lines (Barbarosoğlu, 2006: 126–129). In his doctoral thesis, Erol Sungur summarizes religious opposition to the transformation that occurred in veiling:



New looks have meant veiling has taken on new meanings that go beyond its previous significance, which was to denote religious observance and an untainted nature, to hide the appeal of the feminine, to avoid the attention of the opposite sex, to conceal rather than provoke, and to emphasize of a religious lifestyle. Today veiling has become intertwined with image and fashion, overhauling the values and symbols it expressed in the past. In the process, veiling is thought by religious individuals (in the sample group) to have lost its association with religious observance and the Qur'an, lost its religious meaning and symbolism, become a commercial commodity, and reduced to an exploitative product. The new form of veiling communicates luxury, branding and aspiration instead of simplicity and humility. Additionally, the new veil styles have led to the emergence of new concepts such as "clothed nudity" (Sungur, 2016: 450–51)

This transformation in women's clothing was not confined to the religious sphere. Secular women also acquired a more "feminine" understanding of fashion than their parents. Mini shorts, suspenders and low-cut tops have become the new street fashion of the 21st century.

Alongside women, young males have also begun to emphasize masculine appearance more than previous generations. The male body was idealized, then sexualized and displayed just like the female body. Topless males began to star in commercials, give interviews to major newspapers, display their bodies to the screams of young women in shopping malls and give out autographs. The idealized male image in men's magazines, involving abdominal muscles, the Adonis belt, broad shoulders, and an interest in cosmetics and style (Erdoğan, 2013: 184–185) has been celebrated in both traditional and social media, the bodies of male TV actors are presented as success stories on news sites (Sabah, 2014), and male singers who do not appear fit are subjected to sporadic criticism of their sagging chests and bellies (Hürriyet, 2016). The number of gyms (fitness centers) has increased in small Anatolian cities as well as large cities, and an intensely competitive environment has emerged (Yıldız & Tüfekçi, 2010: 2).

**Gym Manager of 22 Years, Çorum:** "I have been in the bodybuilding sector for over 20 years. In the past, some people used to take care of themselves, but today people give more importance to it. There were 3–4 gyms in Çorum at the beginning of the 2000s, now there are over 10. Especially in cities with universities, the number of gyms has increased" (Personal Interview, 2014, September 2)

This social transformation in both women's and men's clothing does not parallel the alleged Islamization of Turkey. The fact that women (veiled or non-veiled) are adopting dress codes that are much more feminine compared with the previous generation, and that the male body is being idealized and sexualized just as much as the female body, is far from being proof of a society in which Islam has become more dominant.

## 3.5 Decreasing Influence of Islamic Figures

### 3.5.1 From Opinion Leaders to State Officers and Imams

Before the advent of structural and social differentiation, when the majority of the population lived in rural areas, imams had prestige and power over many aspects of life. However, with urbanization, this declined. Imams, who were referred to in the 1970s for matters as diverse as birth, education, weddings, marriage, moral issues, disease, death, disputes among villagers and even the official or unofficial business of village associations, began to provide only the services officially ascribed to them (Ozan, 2013: 76; Yavuz, 2015: 175). Since the hospitals, courthouses and schools in cities had their own experts, many fields that had previously concerned imams began to be dealt with by experts. Imams thus ceased to be respected authorities on all aspects of life, and have become state officials conducting prayers at mosques, whom the members of the new generation do not know personally.

### 3.5.2 Representatives of the Old, Alevi Dedes

In addition to Sunni Imams, Alevi dedes also appear to have been affected by this process. Dedes, who are regarded as the earthly representatives of the Caliph Ali, act as religious leaders, problem-solvers, peacemakers, judges, prosecutors, and instructors for Alevi society (Tanrıverdi, 2018: 154). In the past, their commands used to be regarded as above the laws of the state and their decisions would be obeyed without question. In Cem rituals, dedes would hear the problems of the public and sentence those who committed crimes (Yıldırım, 2012: 171). Dedes also had (have) the authority to excommunicate, just like the Catholic Church. However, the advance of urban life and jurisprudence resulted in Alevi dedes losing their power and respectability (Alperen, 2009: 81; Bodur, 2016: 26; Çetin, 2014: 95–95). “Today, particularly in urbanized regions, the mediating tasks of dedes seem to have disappeared, this role that came to life in the socio-economic conditions of traditional Alevism had to largely dissolve due to urbanization and secularization” (Dressler, 2008: 295). “The urban environment has fragmented the togetherness specific to Alevis as well as their common practices in daily life” (Subaşı, 2010: 230).

Another example of the lost influence of Alevi dedes with the rise of urban living is the suing of a dede by one of his followers: “An Alevi from Burdur has filed a libel suit against the Alevi dede who declared him “düşkün” (shunned) for adultery. The court ruled in favor of the citizen” (Haber Türk, 2010). An Alevi follower suing his own Alevi dede would not have been conceivable in the Alevi villages of the 1970s. The follower himself and/or his close relatives would have had to move away from the village. Today, on the other hand, the previous “determinative” power of

dedes has diminished. Studies show that urban life has weakened the religious ties of young Alevi and they are less interested in “what dedes say” (Deniz, 2014: 279; Telimen, 2012: 189). In addition to this loss of prestige, Fuat Bozkurt (2003: 86) has pointed out that with increased job opportunities providing a better quality of life, new generations who have the right to become dedes seem less eager to replace the older generations.

### 3.6 The Increase in Secular Discourse

When describing the secularization of the United States, Steve Bruce states that right-wing Christian groups use very secular language with no religious resonance, in order to influence and convince the public.

They cannot say that Creation should be taught in schools because God requires it. They have to accept the primacy of secular science and argue that the Genesis account of the origins of species is as consistent with the scientific evidence as any other explanation. They cannot assert that their God dislikes divorce. They have to argue that divorce is socially dysfunctional (Bruce, 2011b: 171).

The language used by religious groups in Turkey is undergoing a similar transformation. In a society where Islam has become more dominant, it would not be surprising if the language of social debate language were affected: It would be more meaningful to use arguments that reference religion in order to convince a society with increasing religious sensitivities. However, the language used in debates on matters such as abortion, adultery, alcohol and homosexuality in early 21<sup>st</sup>-century Turkey is secular and has no religious resonance.

For example, the current Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is known for his conservatism, has made the following statements in debates on abortion: “I consider abortion to be murder. No one should have the right to allow this to happen. There is no difference between killing a baby in its mother’s stomach and killing a baby after birth” (NTVMSNBC, 2012). The then President of Religious Affairs, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez, opined, “Just as neither the mother nor the father has any proprietary right over their child, nor do they have the authority to abandon or terminate its life” (Sabah, 2012). The former Deputy Prime Minister, Bülent Arınç, another well-known conservative, said, “Therefore, abortion is a matter related to both the endangerment of the mother’s health and the destruction of the baby’s future” (Milliyet, 2012).

Both religious politicians and religious opinion leaders could have cited verses from the Qur’an to argue against abortion. However, instead they emphasize the individual’s right to life. In parallel, those who advocate a ban on alcohol attempt to influence the public by highlighting the adverse health effects of alcohol rather than stating that it should be banned because it is prohibited by Islam. With regard to homosexuality, they argue for a ban and the rehabilitation of homosexuals

because the current situation could lead to a childless world in the future. They do not point out that homosexuality is forbidden in Islam. Further examples include the following statements:

- Pork should not be consumed as pigs eat their own feces and pork stimulates hormones that could negatively impact on sexual activity (Hürriyet, 2007).
- There should be no divorce, family is the keystone of society (Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2011).
- People should pray because prayer is physical activity and promotes cleanliness (Yeni Şafak, 2017).
- Fasting should be practiced because experts say it has health benefits (Yalova Governorship Office of Provincial Mufti, n. d.).
- There is no such thing as evolution, there is creation; according to science, there are no transitional forms as claimed by the theory of evolution (Milliyet, 2012).
- The headscarf issue is a human rights issue (Yeni Asya, 2013).

A similar transformation is evident in the discourse of the Nakşibendi order. Ural Manço (2010: 479), who analyzed 140 speeches given between 1984 and 2001 by Mahmut Esat Coşan, a well-known scholar and the leader of the order, demonstrated that the order leader's speeches became more rational and secular over the period. Abdullah Özbolat discussed a similar transformation in the sermons of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. By way of example, the Directorate stated in 1994 that domestic problems should be resolved by following the commandments of Islam and Allah, while in 2007, it emphasized “mutual love and understanding” instead (Özbolat, 2014: 676).

This transformation of discourse does not parallel the assertion that Islam has become more dominant in the society. The moving away from Islam as a source of reference in public debates and the rise of non-religious discourse provide important clues to the secularization process being experienced in the country.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is no secret that governments in Turkey assign themselves the right to interfere in society's relationship with religion. Governments who aim to distance society from religion or to create religious generations are part of the political history of Turkey. It is not easy to assert that this situation may change in the near future. However, neither is it easy to argue that the efforts of the dominant political power to secularize or desecularize society have had the desired results. Just as the early governments of the Republic failed to create a “non-religious” society, likewise, it cannot be claimed that the “religious generation” desired by the AK Party governments who came to power in the early 2000s has been achieved as planned. As