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MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND TURKISH SECULARISM

Abstract

The study and analysis of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the issues of Turkish secularism/laicism arose because Georgian historiography did not pay sufficient attention to this problem, and there are no fundamental scientific works on the subject.

In our previous work, we analyzed Turkish secularism in a continuous chain, enabling us to visualize both its historical aspects and contemporary reality to some extent. In the study, we aimed to identify and clarify the problems that arose in their relationship.

The work concerns the attitude of M.K. Atatürk, the study of the issue of Turkish secularism/laicism using the method of critical analysis. The study and analysis of the above issues enabled us to clearly understand the problem's main issues and its historical aspects. The work clearly presents the issues of secularism and presents modern approaches to Turkish secularism in a new way.

Keywords: *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, secularism, Islam, Turkey.*

Throughout modern Turkish history, secularism and laïcité have been central and often contentious issues in Turkish ideology and politics. In the Turkish context, its concept is closely linked to the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, and his vision for the country's political order.

The Turkish approach to secularism differs in several important respects from the Western concept of laïcité. While secularism in the West generally means the separation of religion from the state, in Turkey it is often interpreted as state control over religion. This interpretation is more in line with the French concept of “laïcité”, where the state actively manages and regulates religious matters.

In the Turkish context, the concepts of “Turkish laïcité” and “secularism” represent two different approaches to the relationship between religion and the state. These concepts have played a significant role in shaping the country's society and politics. Here is a comparison of Turkish laïcité and secularism:

Turkish laïcité, often called “laiklik” in Turkish, is inspired by the French concept of laïcité. It was introduced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, as part of his broad reforms to transform Turkey into a modern, secular nation-state.

Turkish laïcité implies strong state control over religion. This includes: supervision of religious (Islamic) institutions, religious education, and regulation of religious practices in public spaces.

According to Turkish *laïcité*, religious education is strictly controlled by the state. Religious courses in schools are supervised by the government, while religious institutions are supervised by the state.

In Turkey, *Laïcité* has historically been associated with restrictions on religious symbols in public spaces. For example, the wearing of religious clothing such as the hijab, the fez, etc., was prohibited in some government offices and schools.

In Turkey, religious institutions, including mosques and religious leaders, have been subject to state control and supervision. For example, imams are civil servants.

“*Laïcité*” is a French concept that is similar to secularism, but with a more empowering role for the state in the management of religious affairs. It is often called “strict secularism.”

In *laïcité*, the state actively governs and regulates religious matters. It is not merely neutral; it actively seeks to minimize religious influence in public life. For example, it can restrict the display of religious symbols in public spaces, such as educational and government buildings.

The official doctrine of the state structure of the Republic of Turkey is based on the principles of its founder, the great reformer Kemal Atatürk, and is known as Kemalism (republicanism, nationalism, popularism, statism, secularism, and revolutionism).

The historical development of modern Turkey is inconceivable without Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938). He came to power during the most difficult period in the country's history (1918-1923) and is rightly considered the founder of Republican Turkey. Atatürk's phenomenon lies in the fact that he was simultaneously a military man, an initiator of measures to limit the influence of religion in the state, a statesman, and a revolutionary.

All six provisions of Kemalism are equally important for Republican Turkey, each of them is completely independent and concerns the economic and political life of the country. At the same time, all six provisions are closely related to each other.

According to the Kemalists, the principle of "secularism" in Republican Turkey ensures the spiritual, physical and religious freedom of the individual, the inviolability of religious and secular institutions, the development of science and technology, the protection of religious rights and, in particular, the separation of religion from the state.

In this regard, Atatürk stated in his speeches: “People cannot be influenced by God, religion and faith, faith and politics are mutually exclusive concepts, therefore the use of religious doctrines in political life is unthinkable. Faith exists, it is obligatory and necessary, without which the continuation and survival of society is impossible, our faith is the worthiest and most natural”.

In Turkish reality, for years, clergymen have participated in the management and administration of the state, which has hindered the country's progress and left it in a monotonous environment (at one level). That is why Atatürk declared the principle of secularism as one of the fundamental principles of the Republic of Turkey and, more generally, of modern Turkish society. But this does not mean that secularism is a principle of non-religion, contrary to faith. Atatürk said: "Our faith is the owner of the strength and power of our nation, these two main virtues. Therefore, in the conscience of our nation.