Few categorical assertions can be made in the social sciences, but certainly one of them is that social thought never starts with a clean slate. The contributions of social innovators, therefore, become fully meaningful only when their proposals are set in the framework of their institutional and intellectual inheritance.

This also holds true for a series of reforms which were carried out in Turkey in the 1920s and the 1930s, due in large measure to the single-minded drive and determination of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the architect of the Turkish Republic and its first president. These reforms established the principle of laicism—or secularism—as the foundation stone of Turkish constitutional theory and political life. The principle has endured to our day despite changes in régimes and constitutional renovation.

Laicism was a concept which emerged from French constitutional practice in the nineteenth century and referred to the necessity that the state refrain from lending its positive support to any one religious denomination. It was considered to have been fully achieved in France in 1905 with the definitive separation of Church and State. In Turkey, laicism amounted to more than the official disestablishment of religion, since Muslims did not dispose of an autonomous religious institution such as the Catholic Church which could carry its religious functions independently of the state. In France, religion and the state already operated on two distinct institutional registers and were eventually separated in the law of the land. In Turkey a limb of the state was torn out of its body when laicism became the state policy. This is the reason why Turkish secularization is considered a momentous achievement.

To say that Atatürk’s policy is better understood when observed against his
own background does not minimize this achievement, but it enables us to
place this accomplishment in the frame of that celebrated meeting of East and
West about which so much has been written. The historical context also
brings out features which are crucial to an understanding of the future of
laicism in Turkey. 'Cultural background' or 'historical context' as used here
means not only the events of Atatürk’s lifetime but the long-standing traditions
and institutional arrangements in which he was rooted. It is these which
provide the latent guidelines for the structuring of social relations in any
society, even though they are also in constant flux.

Atatürk’s secularizing reforms show at least two facts which had antecedents
in Ottoman history, namely his opinions as to the functions of religion in
society and the methods which he used to translate his ideas into policy. His
ideas on religion bore the stamp of the empiricism of Ottoman secular official-
dom, and the method that he used to implement his ideas—legislation—was fore-
shadowed by the policies of the nineteenth-century Ottoman modernizing
statesmen.

OTTOMAN BUREAUCRACY AND MODERNIZATION

The Ottoman state, which emerged with its full outlines between the
fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, was an institutional achievement of
major dimensions. As builders of an empire, the Ottomans confronted a
number of obstacles which earlier Middle Eastern empires had only partly
surmounted. One major task they faced was to establish effective government
in a geographic setting which comprised a large variety of religious communi-
ties, ethnic groups and sub-cultures ensconced in ecological niches that were
difficult of access. The Ottomans had to make nomads and city-dwellers
contribute to a common purpose transcending their individual interests; they
had to reconcile the requirements of imperial taxation with the autonomy of
local magnates, who were often residual élites of earlier independent ter-
ritories incorporated into the empire; and they had to find the means of
integrating millions of Christians into a Muslim empire. In these tasks they
seem to have succeeded better than their predecessors, an achievement which
was, in great part, due to their ability to build a sultanic state. They created a
class of military and administrative officials whose unstinting allegiance went
to the Ottoman dynasty and sometimes even gave precedence to the state
over the dynasty. They established a network of judicial and administrative
positions staffed by district judges (kadıs) trained in Muslim law. They
devised means of mobilizing the land resources of the empire, which were
now integrated with a system of taxation and with military organization.
They elaborated complex sets of regulations for commerce, and established
control over a network of roads linking garrisoned cities. Subject populations
such as the Christians, which the Ottomans had incorporated during their drive through the Balkans, were classified by their religious affiliation. The settlement of their civil concerns was delegated to their own ecclesiastical authorities—which the government used in order to secure access to their non-Muslim subjects.

Having added the Arab lands and Mecca and Medina to the empire in the sixteenth century, the Ottomans began to see themselves as heirs to the Islamic Caliphate, and the Ottoman sultan assumed the role of protector of the entire Muslim world.1 In consequence, even though the Turks had been converted to Islam long before and had given a central place to Islamic institutions in their state, religion now acquired a new ‘imperial’ dimension. However, Islam was far from a unitary concern. A central Islamic tradition, which in its essentials showed great similarities, prevailed in cities throughout the Islamic world. But in the wider span of that world, as in many regions in the Ottoman empire proper, this unity disappeared, and heterodox doctrines, charismatic leaders and cults with deep local roots and only an Islamic veneer became items to reckon with. This religious heterogeneity was a source of deep worry for Ottoman statesmen—a pattern which, as I shall try to show, had changed very little even by the twentieth century.

One feature of Ottoman Islam was particularly galling to Ottoman officials. The Shiite form of Islam had been adopted in Iran in the sixteenth century by rulers who were engaged in a rivalry with the Ottomans for the mantle of leadership in West Asia. Ottoman Shiites were therefore considered by the Ottomans to be a dangerous fifth column working to undermine their hegemony. But quite apart from the dangers of Shiism, Ottoman officials evaluated the practice of Islam from a perspective which they shared as officials, namely the fear that the Ottoman empire, already made up of a mosaic of unwieldy components, would fragment. Faced, at the time when they were trying to consolidate the empire, by what amounted to a conglomeration of brotherhoods, sects and cults; confronted by a succession of millenarian movements; and, furthermore, pitted against potentially subversive magnates and what survived of erstwhile princely dynasties, Ottoman bureaucrats felt the need to get a grip over religion which would minimize the dangers that religious movements spelled out. To this end they used a number of policies. First, they tried to impose orthodox, Sunni Islam and were constantly on the lookout for traitorous Shiites. Second, they deported to the far corners of the empire heterodox groups which they considered dangerous. Thirdly, and most important, they engaged in building a religious élite and an educational system controlled by this élite, both of which were in turn controlled by the state. The higher religious functionaries, the doctors of Islamic law (išlema) were, in effect, transformed into officials, for their livelihood was granted them by the state, and the path they travelled in their career was fixed by the
Serif Mardin

state. The higher-ranking iikma also acquired an understanding of the conduct of Ottoman politics in positions which demanded that they participate in policy-making. For those at the top of the hierarchical pyramid, politics—as would be expected—was ubiquitous.

Because the rulers of Islamic societies had been designated heads of the community of believers, and because the law of the land in these societies was basically a law drawn from the Koran, the Muslim religious hierarchy did, theoretically, have an organic connection with what may be termed the constitutional law of Islamic states. In the Ottoman empire, iikma were much more clearly integrated with the apparatus of the state. Through their control of education, of the judiciary and of the administrative network, they acted as agents of the state and thus indirectly ensured the state's control of social life.

Ottoman government was therefore both 'Islamic' and 'bureaucratic'. It was Islamic in the sense that Islam was the religion of the state and that the Sultan's primordial role was that of the leader of the Islamic community; it was 'bureaucratic' in the sense that working for the preservation of the state coloured the practice of Ottoman officials. Endangering the state was what—by definition—made a movement heretical. At times, such as during the seventeenth century, the style of government was more 'Islamic', but by the middle of the eighteenth century the pendulum had swung to a more bureaucratic style.

What I have described as the 'bureaucratic style' of government was the product of a special attitude among a group of secular officials who concentrated on the power dimension of social relations as the most important aspect of life. They were hard-headed, empirically minded and pragmatic. Their ideology was that of the 'reason of state'. This stance was in great part the result of their training, which differed from that of the ha. The latter went through a three-tier cursus honorum in schools known as medrese. The preparatory classes of the medrese taught general subjects such as rhetoric and grammar, but as one proceeded to higher levels, religious studies predominated. Graduates of the medrese were expected to have specialized in one of the religious sciences. They were trained to draw out of religious texts knowledge that would be applicable to ritual, to the interpretation of legal problems, and—of primary interest for us—the conduct of social life. They showed considerable ingenuity in finding Islamic justification for many activities—such as the charging of interest—which were prohibited in the strict application of the law. There was, nevertheless, an idealistic aspect to their thinking, a feeling that the commands of religion came first and that human concerns had to be adapted to this pattern. Without letting the contrast run away with us, we may say that the reverse was true for the secular officials. The usual pattern here was that after elementary training at the tender age of eleven or twelve, the aspiring bureaucrat was apprenticed to
a government ‘bureau’. It was here that the real education of the bureaucrat would take place, and this feature becomes increasingly marked towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is this background which seems to have been the source of the primacy which the secular bureaucrat gave to realistic appraisals of power factors in society, relegating idealism to the background.

When the Ottoman empire began to decline, two divergent perceptions of the causes for this decline emerged among the bureaucrats and the ʿulama. For the doctors of Islamic law, the reason for the decline was religious: the Ottomans had neglected their duties as Muslims, and therefore they had lost the power they commanded when their faith had been strong. For the military and the central bureaucratic apparatus, the empire had declined because the machinery of the state had deteriorated: incompetents had been placed in positions of responsibility; prebends had been distributed to the undeserving; bribery had become common practice. Again, the contrast in attitudes does not appear with as clear an outline as I give it here, but in general such a dichotomy can be observed. It will be remembered that a third category of officials also existed: ʿulama who, by the very nature of the posts they occupied, had acquired a sophisticated knowledge of governmental affairs: these tended to give discreet support to the secular thesis.

To arrest the decline of the empire, the secular bureaucracy and the military officials undertook reforms which gave highest priority to military reorganization and the building of a new tax structure which would support it. At the beginning of the reform movement, some of the ʿulama sided with the reformists, and such an alliance was not unknown even in later years. Two reformist Sultans, Selim III (1789–1807) and Mahmud II (1807–39), were clearly out of the same mould that had established the tradition of realpolitik in the bureaucracy. They had little patience with arguments against the partial reform they were undertaking.

Although the body of Ottoman secular bureaucracy had shared the elaboration of policy with the higher ʿulama, they had long since disagreed with them on a number of issues. Now, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they seized the initiation of change and embarked on a program which had the aim of introducing into Turkey administrative institutions and economic incentives which European enlightened despotism had used for some time. The changes thus brought about were eventually to undermine completely the prestige and position of the ʿulama: progressively eased out of the central processes of decision-making after the middle of the nineteenth century, they were eventually to be denied all but marginal roles in administration, the judiciary and the educational system.

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, in theory, the law of the land in the Ottoman empire was the Şeriat, the religious law based on the Koran.
Verses from the Koran, the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad and the rationalistic expostulations of the great Muslim jurists were the sources of this law. In fact, bureaucratic practice had created a fund of secular legislation which even the circuit judges—trained as they were in the medrese—had to take into account. This practice predisposed the architects of the reform movement (Tanzimat) to visualize statutory regulations as the lever which would ensure that their reforms would become part of the law of the state. The Tanzimat was therefore characterized by a flood of statutes, regulations, ordinances and by-laws. The practice was inaugurated by the proclamation by Sultan Abdulmecid of a basic charter, the so-called Hatt-i Hümayun of Gülhane (1839). This document legitimized the entire enterprise of reform and outlined the direction it was to take. An already existing rift between statute law and religious law thus deepened during the Tanzimat.

The new regulations of the Tanzimat were, by their very nature, secular. They originated in the bureaux of the Porte and set very specific targets for the implementation of administrative, financial and educational policies. In the years which followed—known as the era of the Tanzimat (1839–76)—a new administrative law and a rationale for administration were gradually secreted in the interstices of change, a development Max Weber and Justice Holmes would have rightly appreciated. The religious underpinning of administrative practice was on its way out. Central to this transformation was the transfer of the functions of the circuit judge, trained in the medrese, to a new type of employee, the administrative official. A new school, the School of Administration (Mülkiye), was established in 1859 to train these cadres. Gradually, also, a system of secular courts came into being where the cases adjudicated were largely those which arose in relation to the new reform policy. A codification of commercial and criminal law was initiated. By the end of the nineteenth century, even religious law had been codified and systematized. But it was quite clear that the codification which had taken place was the product of a defensive move so that it could not be argued that the problems which could be solved under the Code Napoléon had no solution in Muslim law. This derived, mirror-image, nature of the new Muslim code, the Mecelle, did not show that Islamic law had triumphed but rather that it too had to bend to the exigencies of a Western European mode of posing legal problems.

The reform of public instruction followed the same course. It was placed in a new secular frame by the creation, in 1846, of a Ministry of Public Instruction. In 1847 the state extended its direct grip on the educational process by replacing the system of neighbourhood schools financed by private support or by charitable grants by a system of state-financed primary schools. In the 1850s and 1860s a system of post-primary education inaugurated by the state began to spread throughout Turkey. This major educational achieve-
Religion and Secularism in Turkey

353

ment of the Tanzimat was the Rüştüye, the corner-stone of its policy for training cadres. The graduates were required to master advanced arithmetic, to learn from their courses on Turkish composition to write a clear report, and to be able to draw on their knowledge of world geography and history. The speed in the propagation of the Rüştüye was not equalled by the next wave of educational development, the spread of lycées to the provinces; however, between 1882 and 1900 most provincial capitals acquired a lycée. Secularization had started even earlier at the higher levels of education with the founding of the School of Medicine (1827) and the Military Academy (1834, 1846). A new, secular law school began to function in 1880.

All these developments were the consequence of the characteristic attitude of the Ottoman secular bureaucracy in matters which concerned the restoration of the power of the state: if Western institutions could rejuvenate the state, they would be adopted. It would be difficult otherwise to explain the ease with which Ottomans slid into westernizing reform. Again, it is in this light that we understand how, already in the 1880s, the Ottoman statesman Saffet Paşa (1814–83) could urge Turkey to adopt 'the civilization of Europe in its entirety, in short, to prove itself a civilized state'. This statement was made privately, but Saffet Paşa also put himself on record publicly with similarly strong statements on the subject and his statement is a fair summary of the thoughts of many of his colleagues. The distance travelled by Saffet Paşa in relation to his educational background should be noted since he had received a medrese education. But the reason for his eagerness to model the empire on Europe becomes clear when we isolate the formative influence of his youth; he acquired his values and world-view when, as a very young man, he was apprenticed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A more colourful picture of the way in which Ottoman bureaucrats of the Tanzimat could step out of what they considered to be the 'backwardness' of some Islamic practices may be found in a number of reports about Ahmad Vefik Paşa, an outstanding statesman of the era. Among his achievements Vefik Paşa could count the translation of Molière into Turkish. At one time he was the governor of Bursa province, the capital of which, the town of Bursa, was deeply imbued with religious traditions; undeterred, Vefik Paşa established a theatre in the town for the production of his translations of Molière and demanded that his employees buy season tickets. The local recorder of the Descendants of the Prophet, the Nakib ul Eşraf Asim Bey, claimed that he could not attend such lighthearted entertainment because of his exalted status as an Islamic official. Vefik Paşa thereupon had Asim Bey's stables walled in by the municipality. On another occasion, during a tour of inspection, hearing that the lodge of a mystic order (tekke) was used as a refuge for brigands, he had the building torn down on the spot. During his renovation of Bursa he found that to implement his plans he had to demolish
the tomb of a saint known as the ‘walking saint’. Vefik Paşa went to the tomb, called three times, ‘O Saint, walk away!’ and then had the sanctuary demolished, remarking, ‘He must have walked away by now.’

The institutional secularization achieved by the men of the Tanzimat was paralleled by their favourable attitude towards the practical applications of modern science. This was one of the reasons why military medicine had such an early start in the empire. Medicine for civilian purposes was also placed at the head of their priorities, and when ‘positivism’ and ‘materialism’ began to influence Ottoman intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century, it was through the channel of medicine and biology. Students of Claude Bernard brought back ideas derived from his *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, and in the 1890s Büchner’s *Kraft und Stoff* became an influential source of ‘materialistic’ ideas. A Turkish journalist, who was associated with the growth of a periodical publication which acted as a channel for the transmission of late nineteenth-century bourgeois optimism to Turkish audiences, recounts how his own scientific world-view was shaped in the years when he was a student at the School of Public Administration; the course on botany given by the imperial physician Salih Efendi ‘cleansed’ his mind and the minds of the other students of ‘superstitions’ through crystal-clear explanations of the life of plants. I shall try to show below that this new pattern for learning, which had to emphasize clarity and internal consistency, was to have a striking effect in changing the attitudes of the new generation of bureaucrats which graduated from higher schools in the 1890s.

Secular as they would be, the architects of the Tanzimat could not escape the impingement upon their policies of an aspect of the religious structure of the Ottoman empire. They still were not taken in by the religion-oriented theory of the decline of the Ottoman empire. This in itself may be considered an achievement, since the old theory emerged in a much more sophisticated version, one which seemed much more reasonable than the earlier explanation. This new viewpoint, which took shape in the 1860s, stated that every society was kept from disintegrating by the strength of its moral fibre; what kept moral fibre strong was a society’s culture. Islam was the culture of the Ottoman empire and Ottomans only neglected this culture at their peril. This theory, which was stolen from the arsenal of Western romanticism, did not meet with much approval on the part of the Tanzimat statesmen, even though it was beginning to find supporters among constitutional liberals. With one exception, leading to the codification of Muslim ‘civil’ law, the statesmen dismissed such arguments. What the statesmen of the Tanzimat could not dismiss so easily was the old Ottoman classification of populations on the basis of religious affiliation.

Like a number of Middle Eastern empires before them, the Ottomans had a system of administration which was two-headed. In one respect it was
territorial—the Ottoman empire was divided into provinces—but in another respect the system was based on religious distinctions. According to this classification non-Muslims were dealt with on the basis not of ethnicity or language but of their religious affiliation. Thus, for instance, one basic Ottoman administrative unit was the Orthodox church through which Ottomans had access to a large number of their Christian subjects. The state left the internal administration of persons belonging to the Orthodox church to the Orthodox patriarchate. Armenian Gregorians and Jews were also governed in their civil affairs by their highest religious dignitaries. In this sense, the Muslim community too was conceptualized as one unit, even though it incorporated Arabs, Turks, Albanians, Kurds and Circassians.

During the nineteenth century, the European great powers increased their influence in a role they had assumed for some time, that of the protectors of the various Christian populations of the Ottoman empire. This was a political manoeuvre aimed at gaining a foothold on the territory of the 'sick man of Europe'. The states which actively participated in this policy were seeking a share in the division of spoils which would follow the sick man's demise. Beginning with the middle of the nineteenth century, internal developments in the religious communities in the empire changed the structure of their internal administration. The laity increased its power, and lay assemblies took over many of the functions which till then had devolved upon the ecclesiastical hierarchy. One by one, also, the communities obtained the recognition of their new 'civil constitutions' by the Ottoman state. These communities were granted corporate personality in the law of the Tanzimat. The underlining of community boundaries in this fashion gave a new relief to the religious heterogeneity of the Ottoman empire. The Tanzimat statesmen were hoping that they could arrest this process, which set religious communities in a harder mould and which became the source of ideas demanding separation of these communities from the Ottoman empire. Indeed some of the states carved from Ottoman territory at the beginning of the nineteenth century such as Greece and Serbia had such antecedents.

The very process of community cohesion led a number of Ottomans to think of their own future in terms of a more cohesive Muslim community. We now encounter a third variant of the Muslim attitude towards the decline of the Ottoman empire. This was the idea that Ottoman Muslims should begin to look after their own interests qua Muslims. Such a policy might provide the 'cement' that would at least keep the Muslims of the empire unified; together, Muslims might keep the empire from further disintegration. By the year 1871, and the death of the Grand Vizier Ali Paşa, two factions had already formed among statesmen, one supporting the continuation of the institutional modernization of the Ottoman empire as a means of providing
the allegiance of all Ottomans towards an Ottoman state, the second ready to use Islam as a new political formula.

From then on—and this is crucial for an understanding of Atatürk's attitude towards Islam—Islam was to be judged by men belonging to either faction as viable to the extent that it provided an effective political formula, a means of rallying the population of the empire. Atatürk rejected this option in the second decade of the twentieth century because he believed that attempts to implement it had proved a mirage. Part of his reaction had to do with the dissonance between his own conception of time span and that of the Islamists. He thought in terms of decades—Muslim propagandists were thinking in terms of millennia. This sensitivity to a time dimension is one of the aspects of the thinking of his generation which places it in a different category from the reformism of the early Tanzimat. I shall have more to offer on this subject below. What could and what could not be done with Islam as a political formula was demonstrated during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecit II (1876–1909).

By the time the Treaty of Berlin had been signed in 1878, more territory had been whittled away from the Ottoman empire. In the remaining territories, the Muslims constituted a clearer majority than before. Faced with this demographic pattern and the growing antagonism of the Muslim and Christian populations, the Sultan decided to steer a middle course among the contending formulas for the empire's salvation. He continued the work of the Tanzimat statesmen for the rationalization and the modernization of the state apparatus. He lent his support to the expansion of the system of secular courts and secular education. He left the medrese to stagnate: by the end of his reign they were poorly staffed, poorly financed institutions which served as a refuge for draft-dodgers.

Abdülhamid also believed in science and its practical applications, but he opted for the use of Islam as a lever which would instil some consciousness of a collective goal into his subjects. He realized that a modern state could not function with the tacit allegiance which had been sufficient to get the machinery of the state to function in the time of his predecessors. To raise agricultural productivity—to provide only one example—was one of his targets, but he realized that this could only be achieved by a series of measures comprising railroad expansion, agricultural training and the participation of the peasant in the scheme. But more important even than participation was to forge some identity among the rural masses which would enable them to give meaning to their own allegiance to the distant figure of the Caliph. To this end the Sultan implemented an extremely intelligent policy, establishing contacts with sheikhs and dervishes, using propaganda to mobilize the town populations—here the building of a railroad to the Hidjaz occupied a strategic place—and trying to reconcile the Arab population to an Ottoman
identity. At least in the Anatolian peninsula, the policy did have some results, as is attested by a number of contemporary observers. What the Sultan was grappling with were two characteristics of the rural personality of his realm: the lack of autonomy of individuals and the absence of a conception of a unit transcending the village or the hamlet. Millions of Ottomans fell into this category, and the extent to which they were bereft of collective identity was to be observed much later, during the First World War, by a young officer. This is the way he describes his first experiences in training Anatolian recruits:

At that time, as far as I was able to understand, our soldiers rather than being persons whom one could deal with as individuals, were better conceptualized as cogs in a community, as components of a group. In a community and in a group they could easily follow everything that was required of them. But whenever one of them would stray from the group and become isolated, he would be unable to determine an independent course of action for himself, of his own volition. Also, in collective undertakings, he would always look for someone to become dependent on or to follow. This often affected the conduct of war by my unit. A group of soldiers which had lost its sergeant or officer or directing agent would quite easily come apart. In moments of danger, a unit, instead of dispersing carefully at a moment's notice, would tend on the contrary to bunch up, to fall upon each other, and always in the direction of the centre of command.

As for danger, its resonance was for them non-existent. They did not need any preparation to go to sleep. They could go to sleep within a minute, possibly within a second. They would even be asleep at the time we thought them to be awake. At a time when you thought everything was perfectly ordered, a sentinel you trusted, standing in his trench, with his weapon at the ready, his eyes looking ahead, could have fallen into a deep sleep. That a person from whom you could demand everything at a time when he was subject to a unified command and in a group could become so remote from any form of social responsibility was something which left one gasping.

The same author describes the responses he received when he began asking his men questions relating to their religion:

When I asked the question 'What is our religion?' 'What is the religion which we follow?' I thought the answer I would receive would be 'Praised be the Lord, we are Muslims.' But this was not the responses I received. Some said 'We are of the religion of the Great Imam.' Others said 'We are the followers of the Prophet Ali.' Some could not solve this problem. Some did, indeed, say 'We are Muslims' but when the question was asked 'Who is our prophet?', they too became confused. Names of prophets that would never come to one's mind were mentioned. One said 'Our prophet is Enver Pasha.' Again when the question was asked of the few who had identified the Prophet, 'Is our Prophet alive or dead?', the matter once more became insoluble. Some said he was alive, some that he was dead . . .

The young officer who could not disguise the anguish he felt at the quality of the human material with which he was asked to conduct a war knew one
thing: despite their crass ignorance of Islam, religion was still one of the ways by which they could acquire an 'internal gyroscope', a conception of the self which at the same time could be used to relate their selves to a national purpose. In contemporary Latin American usage, we would refer to what both the Sultan and the officer were seeking as conscientización or consciousness-building. What the Sultan did not realize was that the political message of Islam was not sufficiently focused to keep the many Muslims who made up his empire united around a common purpose, even though he did succeed in building some sense of Muslim identity and even of Ottoman identity among some of his subjects. Islam had thus been found to have a diffuse effect in building a social identity of sorts, and a solidarity of sorts, among the more isolated areas of the Ottoman empire. But even today the nature of the Islamic bond as a form of proto-nationalism is not understood. Nevertheless, it is a sign of the hardiness of the idea of consciousness-building through Islamization that the Young Turks who dethroned Sultan Abdülhamid did not entirely abandon experimentation with this formula, although their scepticism as to its effectiveness was growing.

Neither did the Sultan realize that the second part of his program, his continued support for institutional modernization and the upgrading of institutions for professional training, would run into trouble. In the end these educational reforms gave rise to new, unanticipated attitudes which encouraged the radicalization of persons trained in these institutions. These new tendencies were to take Turkey into laicism, for the new generation which emerged from the educational structure sponsored by the Sultan were marked by an uncompromising opposition to what they saw as the useless remnants of the ancien régime. The hardening of attitudes appeared both in the demand that reality should be made to fit an abstract plan or theory, and in the view that the time-span for a project was 'now'. This attitude differed fundamentally from that of the officials of the Tanzimat, ready as the latter were to live with compromises, half-measures, hybrid systems and conflicting values. From now on the word 'fossil' (or 'residue'—müstabase) was to appear with increasing frequency in the vocabulary of Ottoman progressive intellectuals. It is this sense of unease in operating with a system which was a mixture of the old and the new which appears most clearly in the ideas of Kemal Atatürk.

THE REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND SULTAN ABDÜLHAMID II

It may come as a surprise to discover that the first years of Sultan Abdülhamid's reign were marked by outstanding achievements in education. In particular, beginning with the 1880s a system of military schools which
Religion and Secularism in Turkey

Religion and Secularism in Turkey

took in boarding students immediately after primary education was inaugurated. These schools, the military Rüşdiye, could lead all the way to the military academy for those who had decided on a military career. The system had been promoted by one of the Sultan's greatest enemies, his director of military education, Süleyman Paşa, who had engineered the deposition of Sultan Abdülaziz in 1876. Sultan Abdülhamid, who succeeded to the throne shortly afterwards, had Süleyman Paşa court-martialed but this did not prevent him from implementing the system of education devised by the general. In 1895 there were twenty-eight of these military middle schools functioning in the empire, eight in the capital and twenty in the provinces. The total number of students in these schools was 6,000 and by 1898 it had reached 8,000. There also existed seven military preparatory schools of lycée level which prepared students for entrance into the military academy or the military medical school. The same pattern of preparatory school was available for students who desired to enter the school of administration.

The educational standards of the military Rüşdiye were high. Many of the students who opted for a military career came from families of low socio-economic background and their profession was necessarily the focus for their self-image. As they moved upward in the system of military education they acquired a view of the world which stressed the positive sciences. The students were also constantly reminded that the fate of the empire depended on their own contributions to its salvation. It was through an understanding of the forces that had made the Western states powerful that they would save the empire. There was therefore a continuity between the student's worldview and that of the bureaucrats who a few generations back had started reform. But there was also an outstanding difference: the new generation not only knew more geography, more modern history and more mathematics than their predecessors, but they also acquired a new vision of reality from their knowledge. The most talented among them developed a conception of the ways in which one could shape society which made the action of the Tanzimat statesmen appear dated and over-hesitant.

The new impatience of the graduates of the Ottoman grandes écoles—both military and civilian—becomes apparent when one contrasts the type of pedagogy prevailing in the traditional system with the new system of book learning and classroom studies. If the term 'apprenticeship' provides the key to the old education, the conception of 'utopian mentality' explains the hidden spring of the new system and the stamp with which it marked the graduates.

In the traditional system, knowledge was a limited thing: the basic outlines of Islamic knowledge had been established once and for all. This fund of knowledge was transmitted, like that of a form of artisanship, through a mastery of known techniques. The new knowledge—geography, physics,
chemistry, biology—was an expanding body with its own momentum which one had to keep up with in order to be well informed. Techniques for its use were constantly changing. Thus, change came in at the beginning as a datum of Western positive science. In this light, the islemah who had not kept up with the expansion of the intellectual horizons came increasingly to be seen as ignorant charlatans rather than as repositories of ancient wisdom. This was one of the factors which propelled the students into a clear confrontation with religion. In the future, references to the need for change and to the way that religion was an obstruction to progress was to become a leitmotif in Atatürk's writings.

In the traditional system, initiation into the world of knowledge through the guidance of a mentor was central. In the bureau, the mentor had been the sponsor of the new employee, or the experienced official who took an interest in his career. In the medrese, the mentor was the tutor to whom the student was assigned for the duration of his studies. Personalities, thus established, together with the idea that knowledge was a limited fund which could only be approached through known techniques, limited the extent to which the initiate could go off at a tangent and dare to make new interpretations of matters already explored by his predecessors. In the new system, books which were distributed to the entire class were the foundation of knowledge; they became the reference-points for learning, and those published in France allowed one to be in advance even of one's teachers, who had gone to France only at an earlier stage.

Another, possibly more important, feature of the new learning was that the book, the classroom and the school now operated as what Erving Goffman terms a 'total institution'. Each school was a self-contained universe in which students were segregated from Ottoman everyday life. In the training system of the bureau, students had culled their knowledge from actual official transactions. They were immersed in a complex skein of knowledge, practice, intrigue and planning. The new generation of officials was cut off from all this; they were studying principles and laws which were abstractions from reality, and had an artificial internal consistency. It was as if the generation of the 1890s thought that life as described in books was more real than life itself.

Here again, we get a better sense of what was involved in the change if we go back to the textbooks the students were using. The textbooks of geography, physics, mathematics and military science represented the systematization of knowledge as applied to a given field. This systematization proceeded by abstracting certain phenomena from the undifferentiated mass of impressions which made up the 'stuff' of everyday life. A model of the interaction between certain of these phenomena, selected as 'significant', was built and finally the model was made to run faster than reality. Science then appeared to the students in the form of abstract models of reality, a characteristic also
Religion and Secularism in Turkey

emphasized by the lack of experimentation and the parlous state of laboratories. It was through an assimilation of theory that science was gaining a foothold among them.

By means of a similarly schematic presentation, students acquired their image of Western societies. Internally consistent systems, neat models and blueprints thus acquired a great importance in the minds of the generation of the 1890s. Thus it is no surprise to find out that the earliest protests of the Young Turks were concerned with what they considered the lack of consistency of their own system of education. For the most talented and idealistic, an interlocking of smoothly integrated parts became an obsession. What did not fit this interlocking pattern could be thrown out as irrelevant or harmful.

Ottoman society with its trams operating in the midst of crumbling houses, newspapers which had to heed strange rules imposed by an ignorant censorship and regiments where graduates of the military academy took orders from officers promoted from the ranks, exemplified the type of dissonance that was most galling to the students. The ideal slowly began to emerge that it was either one or the other of the systems which had to emerge, not a mixture or a rickety compromise.

To ‘run’ a model of social reality faster than reality itself, one had to project oneself into a hypothetical future. The model of social reality constructed from the school vision of the world had, therefore, an additional element: that of a hypothetical future which could be shaped at will. This was also new compared to the ideas of the Tanzimat statesmen. The reformist of the Tanzimat was an activist, but he saw himself primarily as shaping the present, albeit for future use. The idea of a structured historical future developing out of the present with new features due to human intervention was not a datum of Tanzimat thinking. By contrast, the generation of the 1890s began to think of society in terms of both an abstract model and a blueprint for the future, albeit in the direction of ‘progress’. Social ‘projects’ now became an intellectual exercise. A striking example of the centrality of hypothetical situations and of projects may be seen in a prefiguration of modern Turkey by the Young Turk, Abdullah Cevdet, entitled ‘A Very Wakeful Sleep’.16

While the outline of a new type of social thinking began to emerge with the generation of the 1890s, the generation of the Young Turks, it does not become effective until the Young Turk revolution of 1908. Even then we see the Young Turks impelled to work with the familiar pieces of the Ottoman mosaic: various ethnic and religious groups, and Islam as the thin thread keeping the populations of the Ottoman empire together. As to the second use of the Islamic formula, its role as a ‘raiser of consciousness’, we see them become increasingly sceptical of this approach. It is because of this scepticism that the Young Turks—in keeping with their ‘scientific-utopian’ worldview—entrusted one of their colleagues, Ziya Gökalp, with research carried
out to find an alternative formula to Islam. The Young Turks were thereby doing something the Tanzimat statesmen had never dreamed of: they had initiated a search for a systematic, internally consistent theory of reform.

Ziya Gökalp’s investigations made him focus on two ideas, that of the ‘nation’ and that of ‘civilization’. According to him, ‘civilization’ consisted of the technological and cultural implements which a number of societies could share. Modern western civilization, for instance, marked by industrialization and a number of new social institutions, was shared by many Western nations. Nationality was another component of the Western system of states, and this Ziya Gökalp linked to the concept of ‘culture’. A ‘culture’ was the latent pattern of values, beliefs and institutions, which defined a people. Whenever such a people had been incorporated within a multi-ethnic, plural state, its values had remained in the background. A modern state was a state which coalesced around one of these peoples and boldly made use of its characteristic institutions. Turks were such a group whose specific cultural values had receded into the background when they had established the Ottoman empire. As to Islam, Gökalp indicated that a number of items which were accepted as integral aspects of religion—particularly the commands associated with the proper Islamic organisation of society—were in fact aspects of Arabic culture which had nothing to do with ‘pristine’ Islam.17 Islam, therefore, was a religion that demanded of its followers ‘faith’, and it did not confine its followers to any form of social organization. Ziya Gökalp’s blueprint for the future—which never emerged as a completed proposal—was to draw out the latent Turkish culture of the Turkish nation, to establish a Turkish state based on it, to accept Western civilization and to make Islam a matter of conscience, a private belief. A memorandum Ziya Gökalp had written for the Young Turks in 1916 concerning the role of Islam in Turkey was implemented by the Young Turks.18 It led to the exclusion of the Şeyhülislam—the highest religious functionary in the Ottoman empire—from the cabinet, the separation of the religious courts from the Şeyhülislamate and their attachment to the ministry of justice; the placing of the administration of pious foundations under the authority of a member of the Cabinet; and the separation of the medrese from the Şeyhülislamate and their administration by the ministry of education.

With the defeat of the Ottoman empire in the First World War and the loss of the Arab lands a new situation arose. For all practical purposes Turkey now consisted of the Anatolian peninsula. Part one of the Islamic formula—its function as a link between Turks and Arabs—could now be jettisoned. It is remarkable, however, that Mustafa Kemal did not immediately dispose of this formula when he was organizing resistance against the terms of the treaty that were about to be imposed on Turkey. During the years when he was leading this resistance movement, between 1919 and 1922,
he was dependent on the sympathies of Muslims outside Turkey, and often used the theme of the unity of Islam. He also made use of it to mobilize the feelings of Anatolian religious notables against an Ottoman administration which continued to function in the capital as a virtual prisoner of the Allies. He took advantage of the prestige of the Caliphate at the time when, paradoxically, he was about to suppress it. But in both cases he had made up his mind very early concerning the Turkey he visualized in the future.

THE TURKISH REPUBLIC AND THE NEW NATION

Atatürk's contributions are usually analysed in terms of his unique ability to bring about needed reforms. In this appraisal, he figures as the instrument of a great wave of progress leading to some predestined point. This image is thoroughly teleological, for it depicts him as outstanding not only in having been able to negotiate successfully a number of difficult passages to his own consciously set goals, but also because he 'fulfilled the requirements' of enlightenment thought. I believe this particular judgement to be somewhat simplistic but the appraisal also hinders us from placing Atatürk in a more 'sociological' context. The view which characterizes Atatürk as a servant of progress is derived from a primitive picture of the inevitability of progress. It does not help us to locate him in the major social upheavals which have shaken the world in the last four centuries and which continue to do so with increasing violence. The full meaning of Atatürk's contribution emerges only when we relate his work to that of two key processes which subsume the momentous changes which marked post-feudal society, namely the multifarious new patterns of collective integration and the changing dimensions of the individual's personal integrative systems.

A NEW INTEGRATIVE SYSTEM FOR THE COLLECTIVE

Most Turkish and foreign scholars see the foundation of the Turkish Republic as the reorganization—albeit a radical reorganization—of a remnant of the Ottoman empire. In fact, the watershed appears not only in the radicalization of the attitudes of the founding fathers of the Republic but also in the very conception of the Turkish Republic as a nation-state. What happened was that Mustafa Kemal took up a non-existent, hypothetical entity, the Turkish nation, and breathed life into it. It is this ability to work for something which did not exist as if it existed, and to make it exist, which gives us the true dimensions of the project on which he had set out and which brings out the utopian quality of his thinking. Neither the 'Turkish nation' as the fountainhead of a 'general will' nor the Turkish nation as a source of national identity existed at the time he set out on this task. He was distinguished from his