analysis and discussion of all the facets and problems of Turkey's economic and social development, *Uneven Centuries* surely deserves to be read not only by economists and historians, but also by anyone who wants to understand Ottoman and Turkish realities.

Barış Alp Özden

doi:10.1017/npt.2020.10

Murat Akan, *The Politics of Secularism: Religion, Diversity, and Institutional Change in France and Turkey*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, xiv + 357 pages.

The Politics of Secularism is a comparative historical analysis of political struggles over religion–state relations in France and Turkey, two countries that until recently were seen as representatives of a particularly assertive form of secularism. The book focuses on the French Third Republic, contemporary France, the first six decades of the Turkish Republic, and Turkey under the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government, thus allowing for "diachronic and synchronic comparisons" (p. 4) across the four cases. Murat Akan closely examines commission reports, constituent assembly and parliamentary debates, and a variety of other sources to identify the arguments, political goals, and institutional preferences of actors differentially situated in their political fields. Through this analysis, the study seeks to explain the institutional trajectory and outcome of secularism in each case.

The first empirical chapter focuses on political debates leading to the 1882 law on compulsory laic education and the 1905 law on the separation of church and state in the French Third Republic. The author shows that arguments emphasizing liberty of conscience and diversity led to the institutionalization of state neutrality at both junctures. An alternative stance, advanced by *Union des droites* in the former and *Action libérale populaire* in the latter debate, opposed the institutional neutrality of the state on the grounds that an overwhelming majority of French citizens were Catholic.

The following chapter underlines the pitfalls of focusing exclusively on the headscarf affair to make sense of *laïcité* in contemporary France. Akan emphasizes that the law of 2004 banning the wearing of religious symbols in public schools coincided with the establishment of Muslim high schools, the formation of the French Council of the Muslim Faith, and the campaign to teach "religious

facts" in public schools. These initiatives were consistent with Sarkozy's advocacy for "laïcité positive," which promoted the state mobilization of religion as a moral and cohesive force in society.

Akan's analysis of Turkish parliamentary debates in the 1920s and 1930s shows that the Kemalist one-party state installed the system of state-salaried imams in order to pre-empt religion-based counter-mobilizations against the young republic. During the transition to the multiparty regime around the mid-century, political competition from the Democrat Party created incentives for a "return to religion by the CHP [Republican People's Party]" (p. 145), which in turn led to the introduction of an optional religion course in primary schools after class hours. The Democrat Party government of the 1950s increased the state's financial support for Sunni Islam on the grounds that religion significantly contributed to the fight against communism. While the 1961 constitution (written in the aftermath of the military coup of 1960) turned the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) into a constitutional institution, the 1982 constitution (written in the aftermath of the coup of 1980) made religion and morality courses mandatory in primary and secondary schools. Akan thus stresses that Kemalists have generally favored state support for religion as a measure against leftist movements. The book does not cover the period from the mid-1990s to the rise of the AKP, however, when Kemalist actors sought to contain public Islam as a regime threat once again.

The final empirical chapter discusses religion–state relations in Turkey after 2002. A substantial part of this chapter focuses on the seven workshops the AKP government organized in 2009–10 to address the demands of the Alevis, the largest non-Sunni Muslim minority in Turkey. Akan's detailed analysis of the workshop minutes shows that government officials sought to co-opt the leaders of Alevi organizations rather than accommodate their demands for equal treatment by the state. A 2010 law restructuring the DRA expanded the agency's functions and ignored all Alevi, non-Muslim, and Kurdish demands, while a 2012 law added optional courses on the life of Muhammad and the Quran to secondary school curricula.

In his theoretical discussion, Akan critiques the "ideational" and "sociocultural" approaches to secularism. The former, embodied in Charles Taylor's work, fails to acknowledge that "the relation between ideas and institutions of secularism [is] open-ended" (p. 5). The latter, on the other hand, suffers from "sociological determinism," which assumes that developments in society and culture directly translate into institutional outcomes. Akan argues that both strands fail to pay attention to the political field where actors with different political ends and institutional preferences advance arguments against each other.

https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2020.10 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Yet, this choice in theoretical framing is rather perplexing. Many studies with which Akan engages at length in the book—Taylor's hermeneutical investigations of Western secularism, Nilüfer Göle's work on modernity and Islam in Turkey, Brian Barry's normative discussion of the French headscarf affair—do not seek to explain institutional trajectories and outcomes in the first place. There is, on the other hand, a well-developed comparative historical literature, advanced by David Martin, Philip Gorski, Christian Smith, and others, which focuses on political struggles over religion and secularism in critical junctures and the resulting "secular settlements."[1] This line of investigation has recently been developed further by a younger generation of sociologists including Damon Mayrl and David Buckley,[2] who pay closer attention to the structure of political institutions in explaining the outcomes in their cases. Akan virtually ignores this highly relevant literature and thus overstates the *sui generis* nature of his approach. As a result, how the author's work contributes to the existing comparative historical literature on secularism with a political focus remains undiscussed in the book.

Based on his rich case studies, Akan arrives at a number of important general insights. One is that "comparison itself is a significant part of the comparative politics of secularism and modernity" (p. 215), as demonstrated in the recurrent references political actors make to secular arrangements in other countries (especially to France, Europe, and the US in Turkey; to the US in the French Third Republic; and to Turkey in contemporary France). In order to account for the multidirectional "travel" of secularity, Akan argues, we need to replace the framework of multiple modernities with that of "mutually interactive modernities." Yet the concept of multiple modernities does not simply denote political actors' references to other settings in their claims-making—it refers to the selective and creative appropriation of a whole range of institutions, practices, and discourses in different contexts. While the references to the Turkish state's headscarf policy in the Stasi Report are striking, they do not seem consequential enough to invalidate Eisenstadt's observation that "Western patterns of modernity … enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others."[3] In other words,

1 Philip S. Gorski, and Ateş Altınordu. "After Secularization?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (2008): 55–85.

2 Damon Mayrl. *Secular Conversions: Political Institutions and Religious Education in the United States and Australia, 1800–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); David T. Buckley, *Faithful to Secularism: The Religious Politics of Democracy in Ireland, Senegal, and the Philippines* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

3 Eisenstadt, S.N. "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29, 3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2020.10 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the travel of secularism and modernity, while not always unidirectional, has historically been and continues to be asymmetrical.

Another central concept developed in the book is "state-civil religionism." With this term the author refers to state projects to utilize religion as "the cement of society as an end in itself or as a means to various ends of governance" (p. 8). Akan demonstrates that a variety of actors from different political camps in France and Turkey have used this rationale to support the mobilization of religion. This emphasis helps account for historical facts that have been either neglected or explained away as "anomalous" in many studies of Turkish and French secularism (e.g. the introduction of the mandatory religion course by the Kemalist military junta in 1982 or some political actors' simultaneous advocacy for the headscarf ban and for the teaching of "religious facts" in public schools in contemporary France). At the same time, the somehow awkward term state-civil religionism might conflate two phenomena that have distinctive political effects: religious nationalism, which seeks to couple national identity with a specific religion and is by definition exclusionary toward religious minorities (e.g. Mun's argument that France is a nation "brought up in the arms of the Catholic Church" (p. 64) or Menderes's reference to Turkish Muslims as the "fundamental part" of the country (p. 170)) on the one hand, and civil religion which sees religion as a source of civic virtue and espouses pluralism (e.g. Sarkozy's *laïcité positive*) on the other.

The Politics of Secularism, with its original insights on political struggles over secular institutions, is a significant contribution to the comparative historical social science literature on secularism. Given its meticulous analysis of a wide range of debates in critical periods, it will become a central reference for students of French and Turkish secularism.

Ateş Altınordu
Sabancı University

References

Buckley, David T. *Faithful to Secularism: The Religious Politics of Democracy in Ireland, Senegal, and the Philippines*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

Eisenstadt, S. N. "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29.

Gorski, Philip S. and Ateş Altınordu. "After Secularization?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (2008): 55–85.

Mayrl, Damon. *Secular Conversions: Political Institutions and Religious Education in the United States and Australia, 1800–2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2020.10 Published online by Cambridge University Press