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How Secularism Engenders Citizenship: A Comparison of Secularism in France and Turkey

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How Secularism Engenders Citizenship: A Comparison of Secularism in France
and Turkey

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Abstract:

This paper explores the nature of secularism and how it is used and understood in France and Turkey. I argue that governments can reassert their authority over their citizens by controlling national identity and citizenship through the vessel of secularism. I assert that this process creates tensions between citizenship and identity that are sharply revealed when analyzing the discourse surrounding veiled women. This paper presents an overview of the relevant literature written about this topic, then moves on to compare France and Turkey by examining the history of secularism in both countries and how this term has changed over time. In my analysis, I highlight how the evolution of secularism suggests that the term has been shaped by domestic and global forces that have allowed both governments to redefine their national identity and citizenship criteria. I conclude that the flexibility of the term enables these processes to happen, paving the way for the debates about the Islamic headscarf to unfold.

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I. Introduction

In recent years both France and Turkey have seen several controversies surrounding the Islamic headscarf. France has since passed numerous laws, most notably the ban on headscarves in public schools (2004)¹ and the ban on the niqab in public (2010).² In Turkey, the question of the Islamic headscarves was reignited in the post-1983 period with students forming a political movement protesting the abolition of the Islamic headscarf from university³ culminating in a complaint brought by a student to the European Court of Human Rights which ultimately upheld the ban (2006).⁴ While the conversation about headscarves has been utterly exhausted by academics, politicians, and news outlets, this essay uses the headscarves as an outlet to explore how secularism penetrates the lives of French and Turkish citizens. How does secularism shape the lives of citizens, how does the government use secularism, what are the implications of imposing secularism on religious people? I answer these questions by demonstrating that secularism is a powerful source of governmental control which reveals tensions between citizenship and identity that are especially apparent when examining veiled women. I argue that secularism allows for governments to assert their authority over citizens by delineating the criteria citizens need to follow to belong to the state, enabling them to marginalize groups with legitimacy. France and Turkey present an interesting comparison because their populations are very different in terms of religiosity demographics, thus highlighting how secularism functions the same way regardless of how religious a population is.

¹ Law 2004-228 of 15 March 2004.

² Law 2010-1192 of 11 October 2010.

³ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 7 November 1982.

⁴ *Leyla Şahin v. Turkey*, no. 44774/98, § 44, ECHR, 2005.

It is worth first defining secularism and specifically, the type of secularism used in France and Turkey since the term itself lacks a universal definition. Generally speaking, secularism is the principle of separation of the state from religious institutions. Despite this understanding, the implementation of secularism is different depending on the country and the time period. For example, the United States is secular but the public expression of religion is tolerated: The president is sworn in on a bible and the phrase “In God We Trust” is inscribed on the currency and judicial institutions. This is sharply different from the kind of secularism discussed in this paper: ‘laïcité.’ This is a form of secularism specific to France but was then replicated in other places, most notably, Turkey. Laïcité emerged in Europe to obstruct the control of the religious establishment over the social and political spheres. It forbids public displays of religious affiliation, especially in government-run institutions like schools. Both France and Turkey employ the same form of laïcité (translated to ‘laiklik’ in Turkish), which institutes ‘freedom *from* religion’ rather than the American ‘freedom *of* religion.’ Ahmet T. Kuru characterizes this secularism as “assertive.”⁵ In distinguishing between the secular administrations of France, Turkey, and the United States, he remarks that France and Turkey display a more proactive approach to secularism compared to the United States’ passive stance. Indeed, France and Turkey aim to exclude religion from the public sphere to ensure equality. They believe that by relegating differences in religion, individuals can interact with “freedom of conscience.”⁶ They assert that only when this is achieved can a modern democratic republic be

⁵ Kuru, Ahmet T. "Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion." *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007): 568-94. Accessed December 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40060173>.

⁶ See 1958 CONST. art. 1 (Fr.)

established.⁷ Implicit in this concept of secularism is the guarantee of equality in public space which is crucial in understanding how secularism shapes governance and citizenship. However, it's worth noting that secularism was never defined in either the Turkish or French constitutions.

The results of my work suggest that *laïcité* serves governments in shaping society to meet an administration's vision of national identity by curating citizenship to what they see as true nationalism. The effects of this redefine people's everyday lives and, more specifically how they can express their identity. Tensions arise when individual identities clash with citizenship which is imposed in public spaces through secularism to assure neutrality and equality, thus casting non-conformers as 'others' or 'foreigners.'

This paper will first discuss the academic literature which analyzes secularism in France and Turkey, with some authors looking specifically at the headscarf debates. I will then move on to present my case studies which analyze the process of secularization in France and Turkey. This section will lay out the history of secularism in both places, then contrast this with how secularism is understood today, using specific examples like the headscarf debates in France or the LGBTQ struggles in Turkey to illustrate shifts in understanding. I argue that secularism has taken on connotations of modernity which both countries emphasize when defining citizenship through secularism. I highlight the edificatory role women play in maintaining their vision for a modern citizen, expanding on the consequences of their central position in a secular society. In the last section of my essay, I draw on the case studies to analyze how secularism functions as a governmental tool to shape society.

⁷ Gokariksel, Banu, and Katharyne Mitchell. "Veiling, Secularism, and the Neoliberal Subject: National Narratives and Supranational Desires in Turkey and France." *Global Networks* 5, no. 2 (2005): 147–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2005.00112.x>.

II. Review of Relevant Literature

A. What do the Headscarf Debates tell us?

The headscarf debates in France led many academics to question and analyze modern-day secularism, has it changed, how had it changed, and for what reason? The literature points to three key conclusions: for some, the revival of secularism during the headscarf debates was a matter of preserving something that France feared would be lost. Others suggested that the headscarf debates exemplified how secularism acted as a powerful mode of governance rather than a simple principle. Lastly, some have combined these two arguments by asserting that secularism, as a tool of governance and in the context of a nation plagued with anxieties, enables politicians to redefine their country's national identity, thereby categorizing certain citizens as 'foreign.' Most of these academics point to how the meaning of secularism is malleable and has been manipulated to address current challenges.

When analyzing secularism in the context of the headscarf affairs, it has been noted how secularism has been emboldened to guarantee certain rights, namely gender equality in the public sphere. Both John Bowen and Joan Scott argue that secularism is seen as a guard against communalism and female oppression. In his book, "*Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, The State, and Public Space*,"⁸ John R Bowen questions why the 2004 law in France was passed and why it symbolizes such an important step in French society. His book tackles France's historical struggle between religious establishments and the state, public schools, citizens, and integration. He weighs in on its colonial history, the role of the media in shaping the public's understanding of the headscarves, and explains why the law was seen as a solution to

⁸ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. Princeton, N.J, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

deep-seated social issues. Bowen argues that the focus on headscarves is rooted in France still recovering from the trauma of the battle with the Catholic Church over public space, making France particularly sensitive to questions of religion in public schools. Bowen also highlights how the media catalyzed social anxieties about public expressions of Islamic identity and radical Islam, cementing support for a headscarf ban law. He suggests that while the law was justified as the protection of *laïcité* the rhetoric used by politicians, activists, and the media reimagined the headscarf as symbolizing “communalism,” political Islam, and the oppression of women. Joan Scott adds to the latter part of his argument about women, asserting that the veil debates in France place its history with women at the center of the debate. In her book, “*The Politics of the Veil*,”⁹ Scott explains the French understanding of gender equality as the ability to express femininity and masculinity. Consequently, the French perceive the veil as oppressive to women who are unable to publicly show their femininity. Sexual equality is then tied to *laïcité* as something that needs to be guaranteed. Scott underscores how the French believe that their insistence on sexual emancipation makes their culture inherently superior.¹⁰ She highlights how this principle of sexual equality sits uncomfortably alongside the notion that “abstract individualism is the basis for French republicanism.”¹¹ She retorts, “if we are all the same, why has sexual difference been such an obstacle to real equality?”¹² Consequently, the veil is emblematic of “Islam’s insistence on recognizing difficulties posed by sexuality revealed more than what republicans wanted to see about the limits of their own system.”¹³ Ultimately, the driving force of the headscarf debates was this desire to preserve the mythical ‘France.’ The

⁹ Scott, Joan Wallach. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

vehemence of the French population displayed in these debates against the headscarf was arguably less about islamophobic fears of terrorism than about defending ‘real’ French national identity-- and the relations between the sexes then became an explicit, symbolic and inviolable component of that identity.

B. Beyond the Headscarf: Secularism as a governmental policy

Moving beyond the headscarf debates, academics have sought to understand how secularism translates from an ideology into practice within society and what are the consequences of this within a Republic like France. In her book “*The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*”¹⁴ Mayanthi Fernando concludes that politicians use secularism as a form of control. She argues that the mix of secularism and republicanism is a mode of power and governance that is inherently contradictory and these tensions are deferred on the backs of French Muslims. Viewing republican secularism as a form of rule rather than a law that dictates which space religion is also to be expressed implies that secularism necessitates two imperatives: privatization and regulation. She asserts that “the confusions and conflations that secularization produces continue to figure the Muslim as a subject in need of secularization. That project is never finished, which is precisely what constitutes its regulatory force.”¹⁵ This regulatory force is in direct conflict with privatization since it disrupts Muslim’s lives. In doing so, it negates the first imperative, the one that french politicians claim secularism serves, that of privatization. By regulating Islam it is reducing it to a religion that needs to be fixed rather than simply relegated it to certain spaces. She suggests that

¹⁴ Fernando, Mayanthi L. *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

Islam is seen as inherently flawed and France, through the mode of secular-republican governance is able to redefine French boundaries so that Islam needs to redefine itself.

C. Secularism and Citizenship

Lastly, academics have built on the understanding that secularism is a powerful governmental tool and politicians have recognized this and have used this to redefine who is a citizen. Banu Gokariksel and Katharyne Mitchell argue that secularism is a powerful tool for governing a population and one that is rooted in historical practices but is also used to support neoliberal agendas in their article “*Veiling, secularism, and the neoliberal subject: national narratives and supranational desires in Turkey and France.*”¹⁶ They compare how France and Turkey differ in how secularism is implemented and highlight how these versions align with their history and current economic policies. In both countries, veils are cast as foreign to their national narrative; in the case of France, this is linked to immigrants’ refusal to assimilate into French culture while in Turkey it is seen as the rural migrants who fail to become ‘urban’ or ‘modern’ and are too attached to the pre-modern Ottoman past. By manipulating the rhetoric around the veil to present it as archaic and foreign, it aids politicians to redefine their national narrative as liberal, egalitarian, and democratic while justifying direct intervention into women and migrant’s lives. It is thus, only through the protection of the state that women can become autonomous individuals who can participate in political and economic life. The more historical reason behind the importance of secularism as a tool is because it serves both countries as a unifying tool and a way to bond the people to the state and each other. ¹⁷ They explain how there was a double movement of upward scaling of authority at the level of morality and certain parts

¹⁶ Gokariksel and Katharyne *op. cit.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 153.

of the populations but juxtaposed with this was a downward shift of responsibility onto individual citizens to ‘chose’ to assimilate and become a patriotic member of the french republic.

¹⁸ Secularism allows for the national government to take over local hubs that are relatively isolated and re-affirm their authority and those areas, demonstrating how the state is the ultimate actor for social control and the sole source of national identity. This tactic enables governments to off-set the hands-off role of the state during the neoliberal period. They also argue that galvanizing citizens around the issue of the headscarf or veils in public schools recenter the issues of national identity, integration, and unification in the debate, overshadowing the more complicated, globally implicated socio-economic issues affecting immigrants and nationalism. Lastly, the deflection of responsibility for assimilation to the individual, inscribed in the Pasqua laws of 1993, continues with the general trend towards the ‘neoliberal’ revival of the homoeconomicus, whose ambition to become a productive member of society is enough for them to ascend the job market without any need for state intervention or collectivism¹⁹ Similarly, in their book “*The Headscarf Debates: Conflicts of National Belonging*,”²⁰ Anna C. Korteweg and Gokce Yurdakul utilize Bowen’s works to explain the political impacts these debates have generated. They look at the headscarf debates on a more global scale with the comparison of the heated debate in France, Turkey, the Netherlands, and Germany. They conclude that the headscarf debates provide an opportunity to rearticulate the national narratives that delineate belonging in the contemporary era. The lens of national identity and belonging allows us to see how these debates run deeper than questions of secularism or women’s rights; they are rooted in

¹⁸ Ibid., 155.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Korteweg, Anna C., and Yurdakul Gökçe. *The Headscarf Debates: Conflicts of National Belonging*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.

how a population sees itself and recognizes itself and others. The debates provide an opportunity for politicians to reassert and redefine citizenship.

D. How a French Concept could be adapted to Turkey

This concept of redefining a foreign influence (which in this case was Islam or the headscarf specifically) which is seen as a threat to national identity is an argument that Elif Babül makes in “*Bureaucratic Intimacies: Translating Human Rights in Turkey*.”²¹ Babül examines how Turkey renegotiated universal human rights, branding it as a foreign intrusion into local life. She explains how nationalist reactionary discourse in Turkey has defined human rights as “a cover for treacherous activity against the indivisibility of the nation and the state.”²² Babül provides some context as to why people were receptive to this analysis of something so universal as human rights, explaining that the country’s history of political and economic instability evidenced by the 1980 coup d’etat allowed for suspicion of outside forces to prevail. Turkey has to implement human rights as it receives foreign aid and structural adjustment policies, and needs to enforce these standards to secure the necessary funding. Turkey has effectively redefined and rearticulated these universal standards to be more in line with the local environment and more specifically, the government’s agenda and interests. Babul states that, according to the Turkish government, these standards needed to function with the “sensitivities, moralities, and rationalities that shape the governmental field in Turkey.”²³ This literature further points to how governments digest foreign concepts that they feel are a threat to national integrity and by redefining them, reassert this national identity they feared they had lost.

²¹ Babül Elif M. *Bureaucratic Intimacies: Translating Human Rights in Turkey*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017.

²² Ibid., 128.

²³ Ibid., 7.

E. Concluding Remarks

This literature review has pointed to the centrality of secularism in national identity and because of its role, it has had a powerful influence over society and the governability of society. It has also been highlighted that secularism is a concept that has changed to adapt to various political agendas. I will add to this literature by asserting that secularism is implicit in creating a vision of society by controlling national identity and citizenship. This is seen by its changing meaning throughout history how it's increasingly placed as central to identity, thereby enabling the state to control everyday life. This argument will be highlighted when looking at veiled women in both France and Turkey.

III. Case Studies

A. France's Laïcité

1. The Struggle for Laïcité in France

The history of laïcité in France demonstrates how the politicization of secularism is a recent phenomenon that seeks to rearticulate the historical narrative about secularism to achieve the political goals of French Nationalism. The history of secularism in France is important to note because it demonstrates how secularism was not about the identity of the people but rather a battle of power. The French Revolution of 1789 created the modern ideals of the nation-state and citizenship, the foundations of which are rooted in the nations of liberty, equality, and fraternity.²⁴ It was after this event that two modes of thinking emerged: one emphasizes the need for a national, public religion and the other prioritizes the freedom of conscience for each individual.²⁵ These opposing ways of thinking paved the way for a constant battle between the religious establishment and those who opposed them, nourished by the thinking of Robespierre. Ultimately, the end of the Revolution led to the latter way of thinking to take hold.²⁶ However, in the following decades, Napoleon would swing the pendulum back in favor of the Church giving it limited power over society with his Concordat with the Pope, subsequently allowing for the religious establishment to have control over primary education.²⁷ Despite this attempt at compromise, France's society remained divided. Because of the role religion played in the Revolution, it could not easily be relegated into the private sphere; There were still vivid and bloody memories associated with the religious issue. The 19th century saw the government

²⁴ Brubaker, Rogers. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 1992

²⁵ Bowen *op. cit.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

swing violently between pro-Catholic and pro-republic rule.²⁸ Schools played a particularly central role in the debates with numerous laws being passed to settle who should have control over educational curriculums. Ultimately it was France's defeat by Prussia that led to the secularisation of schools since it was believed that "Prussian school teacher" won the war through his superior teaching. It became an issue of national security to make french curriculums secular.²⁹ This culminated in the renowned Jules Ferry laws which firmly prohibited the Church from infringing on education. It was only after this tug-of-war that the word laicity emerged in the minds of the French people, although not yet in the law. Laicite was about financial affairs more than anything else: how to finance religious building, schools, infrastructures, and employees in the period following the 1905 law which put an end to the system of "recognized religions." It proclaimed the freedom of conscience and guaranteed the freedom to practice religion. Yet this law still doesn't mention the word laïcité. Indeed, it didn't appear in French law until the 1946 Constitution which read "France is an indivisible, secular (laïc), democratic, and social Republic."³⁰ However, the term laïcité is never defined. It is undoubtedly because of its ambiguous meaning that it is still contested and used in various political ways today. Despite the assertion that laïcité is a unifying identity in French history, it is evidently more complicated than that. It was originally a matter of diverging beliefs about the role of the Catholic church and specifically the control over the young minds of french citizens. This historical understanding of laïcité is starkly different from the one espoused by politicians today which seek to overestimate its historical continuity. Bowen remarks that " Not only has there never been agreement on the role religion should play in public life—some in France hold laïcité to guarantee freedom of

²⁸ Ibid., 40.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 48.

public religious practice, while others think that it prevents such practice—there is no historical actor called “laïcité”: only a series of debates, laws, and multiple efforts to assert claims over public space.”³¹

2. A Shift in the Understanding of Sectarianism

While historically sectarianism was about delineating where the Church should exert power and defining the private space in which it should operate, current discussions of sectarianism identify it as the ultimate characteristic of being a French citizen. This change from focusing on religious quarrels to citizenship came about with the empowerment of the state to control public space. The state has gradually come to associate secularism with the guarantee of equality in the public sphere.³² In the public space, French citizens should uphold a collective identity instead of communalist expression (thereby relegating religion into the private sphere), to ensure freedom from pressures to join certain groups, and therefore creating a public space where everyone is assumed to be equal. These ideas pushed laïcité to the center of what it means to be a French citizen and a founding principle of French republicanism.³³ Indeed Cecile Laborde goes as far as to say that secularism “encompasses a comprehensive theory of republican citizenship.”³⁴ Instead of promoting equality through recognition and toleration of differences, French republicanism strives to create a unified population underpinned by secularism in a way that erases differences to protect equalities and freedoms. This citizenship mold enforced by the state unifies the French population under the republic instead of under smaller group-based identities.

³¹ Ibid., 52

³² Laborde, Cécile. *Critical Republicanism : The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy*. Oxford Political Theory. Oxford University, 2008.

³³ Korteweg and Yurdakul, *op. cit.*

³⁴ Laborde, *op. cit.*

The tensions and contradictions between ensuring equality while controlling private and public spaces are laid bare when looking at the headscarf affairs. In 1989, when the first veil affair occurred, the Conseil d'Etat ruled that the headscarf was "not by itself incompatible with the principle of secularism, insofar as it constitutes the exercise of freedom of expression and freedom of manifestation of religious beliefs."³⁵ It affirmed that these issues of conspicuous religious symbols should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but that ultimately the veil was compatible with the policy of *laïcité* in schools.³⁶ They did note, however, that expulsion could be justified if in addition to wearing the headscarf if the student has engaged in political activism or disturbed public order by distributing brochures,³⁷ circulating petitions or participating in public protests,³⁸ or didn't consistently attend classes or disobeyed teachers.³⁹ The court ruling failed to put an end to the controversy because of how inconclusive the ruling was in establishing a clear cut law, the veil affair was far from over. Education Minister Bayrou issued a ministerial circular titled 'Wearing of ostentatious signs in schools,' stating, "These signs are, in themselves, elements of proselytism, particularly when they accompany challenges to certain classes or certain subjects, when they involve the safety of students or when they lead to disruptions to the collective life of the school."⁴⁰ This opinion was strikingly different from that of the court, labeling the headscarf as ostentatious, dangerous, and most notably, political *in of itself*. However, the court effectively upheld its original ruling. The legal cases from 1995 to 1997

³⁵ Conseil d'Etat [Council of State], Nov. 27, 1989, Avis no . 346.893.

³⁶ Jones N. "Beneath the Veil: Muslim Girls and Islamic Headscarves in Secular France," *Macquarie Law Journal*, 2009

³⁷ Cour administrative d'appel de Lyon, No 96LY02608, 19 December 1997

³⁸ Conseil d'État No 170207 170208, 27 November 1996.

³⁹ Conseil d'État No 159981, 10 March 1995

⁴⁰ Jones, *op. cit.*

resulted in approximately 60% of the girls' expulsions being overturned while 40% were upheld.

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The controversy was reignited on February 3rd, 2004 when parliament enacted a law that prohibited the wearing of any conspicuous religious signs in public schools. This undid the efforts made by the court to try and find a compromise. Another notable shift that occurred in 2011 when the ban on full-face covering in public was deemed constitutional by the Conseil D'état. This is significant because it moves the suppression of the headscarf from a private space to a public space. Not only that but polls show that 80% of France's population supported the bill.⁴² This demonstrates how the topic of the headscarf moved from something that divided the nation to something that most people agreed went against the principle of *laïcité*. In addition, France's public watchdog group on discrimination, the High Authority for the Fight against Discrimination and for Equality (HALDE), asserted that "The burqa carries the meaning of the submission of women which goes beyond its religious scope and could be considered as undermining republican values presiding over the process of integration and organization of these lessons."⁴³ The rhetoric of female oppression and gender equality increasingly began to be used by those opposed to the veil. Additionally, the veil was seen as going against the grain of modernity in the West. André Gerin, who headed the commission to study the burqa, stated in an interview with *The Economist*, "We will not accept that a particular religion: Islam or anything else, occupying the public space and dictating its rules over civil society. That's what's happening

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Jones, *op. cit.*

⁴³ Diallo, R.. "Coronavirus exposed the real reasons behind France's 'burqa ban'." *Aljazeera*, 2020, May 15.

Retrieved December 04, 2020, from

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/5/15/coronavirus-exposed-the-real-reasons-behind-frances-burqa-ban/>

with the fundamentalists...It goes against the entire history of Western Civilization."⁴⁴ Just five years later, the issue of face-covering was brought up again, in the context of burkinis. The Riviera town of Cannes banned the full-body swimsuit on its public beaches. The then Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, expressed his support for the bans, saying the swimsuit represents what he calls a "provocation" and "an archaic vision."⁴⁵

While French politicians claim it is a question of equality in public space, secularism has effectively become a way of ruling over people and acts as a guard to proper french citizenship in the sense of being able to operate in public spaces. Indeed, veiled women face increasing amounts of discrimination in employment, education, and in general.⁴⁶ The idea that wearing a headscarf is contradictory to secularism or even french identity doesn't imply that the French believe there is something wrong with Islam itself, but the expression of Muslim identity goes against France's strategy of uniting people under the banner of nationalism which is at the core of its ability to govern. It is effectively secularizing Islam itself and reasserting sovereignty over a foreign population.⁴⁷ Indeed with regards to its foreign population, France evaluates how 'French' immigrants have become, and only if they have fully assimilated can they be granted citizenship. Every year, the government will reject one-third of applicants who are applying to become a citizen, even when they meet the formal criteria for naturalization. The candidate must demonstrate that they have "good morals," but they can be still refused based on 'insufficient assimilation,' if they don't conform with french identity in how they dress, what language they speak or how frequently they travel outside of the country, or in some cases, the position they

⁴⁴ "Burqas in France." *The Economist*. September 30, 2009.

⁴⁵ Diallo, Rokhaya. "Hijab: a Very French Obsession." Islamophobia News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, April 4, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/4/4/hijab-a-very-french-obsession>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Mayanthi, *op. cit.* 140

have taken on Islam.⁴⁸ The police check whether a candidate for citizenship via naturalization has sufficiently ‘assimilated,’ and in their investigation can sometimes inquire into private manners and habits. A Tunisian was asked why he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca twice. A lawyer from Morocco was asked about the ethnicity of her friend group, how frequently she traveled to Morocco and how many times a week she ate couscous.⁴⁹

3. Who can be Considered a French Woman Under Secularism?

The veil has come to symbolize women’s oppression, embroiling gender in secularism, pointing to how gender equality became central to France’s national narrative. This is seen by how the conversation about head scarfs changed between the 2004 law and the 2011 ban. The rhetoric surrounding the veil in school focused on women’s lack of agency while the discourse about the burka underscored women’s lack of dignity. In the context of the veil, those who opposed the garment suggested that even if women voluntarily wore it, it was an objective symbol of submission. Feminist activist Zelensky, president of the Ligue du Droit de la femme, asserted that: “Young girls or women wear it, invoking their freedom of religion. Wearing the veil isn’t a sign of religious belonging. It symbolizes women’s place in Islam as it is understood by Islam itself: shrouded in shadow, relegated to submission to men. The fact that women choose to wear it does nothing to change its meaning.... There is no surer oppression than self-oppression.”⁵⁰ The veil seemingly takes its own agency, preventing women from participating in the public sphere. It places the values of gender equality at the center of the

⁴⁸ Bowen, *op. cit.*, 196.

⁴⁹ Maschino, Maurice T. “Si vous mangez du couscous ...” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2002.

⁵⁰ Vigerie, Anne, and Anne Zelensky. “‘Laïcades’, Puisque Féministes, Par Anne Vigerie Et Anne Zelensky,” *Le Monde*, May 29, 2003. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2003/05/29/laicades-puisque-feministes-par-anne-vigerie-et-anne-zelensky_321962_1819218.html.

debate and hence the center of France's national identity. The concept of lost agency is transformed into lost dignity when discussing the burka and niqab. Shortly after the Stassi commission was proposed to look into the burka, the president, Nicolas Sarkozy, stated "We cannot, in our country, accept women imprisoned behind a screen, cut off from all social life, deprived of all identity. This does not conform to our idea of a woman's dignity."⁵¹ Through this lens, veiled women are void of agency and dignity, and can only be saved by the state. Scott comments on this discourse, highlighting how the French understandings of gender equality emphasize difference, particularly when it comes to physical embodiment.⁵² Women's lack of agency comes from their inability to act in the public sphere, but the veil doesn't prevent them from acting or speaking, it just prevents their body from being exposed. Therefore, debates about the headscarf, and particularly the burka or niqab, which hide certain parts of the feminine body, reveal the emphasis on gender difference and its tense relationship with republican "sameness" in the French national narrative.⁵³ In this way, the headscarf and burka debates exposed contradictions within the heart of the French narrative of belonging even as they reaffirmed the centrality of republicanism, *laïcité*, and gender equality.

B. Turkey's laiklik

1. The Legacy of the Ottoman System

In contrast to France's long and bloody battle over secularism, Turkey's secular model of governance was not rooted in local debates but rather out of a desire to become a Western nation. Even before the establishment of a secular Turkish Republic, the weakened Ottoman Empire

⁵¹ Gabizon, Cécilia. "Sarkozy : 'La Burqa n'est Pas La Bienvenue.'" *Le Figaro*, June 23, 2009. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2009/06/23/01002-20090623ARTFIG00055-sarkozy-la-burqa-n-est-pas-la-bienvenue-.php>.

⁵² Scott, 2005, *op. cit.*

⁵³ Scott, 2007, *op. cit.*

wanted to replicate certain European practices. In the eighteenth century, they underwent what was dubbed the ‘Tulip period’ where they planted tulips to emulate those in Versailles and tried to start an industrial revolution in Istanbul like the one in France.⁵⁴ This desire to ‘catch up’ with Europe only emerged when the Ottomans began to lose against them militarily. Before then, they had treated Europeans as political inferiors. For example in 1536, French king Francois wrote to sultan Suleyman I asking for help to fight the Habsburgs. Suleyman wrote back to Francois, addressing him as “Francis, king of the province of France,”⁵⁵ while introducing himself as

the sultan of sultans, the sovereign of sovereigns, the dispenser of crowns to the monarchs on the face of the earth, shadow of god on earth, the sultan and sovereign lord of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, of Rumelia and Anatolia, of Karamania and the land of Rum, of Zulkadria, Diyarbakir, of Kurdistan, of Azerbai-jan, Persia, Damascus, Cairo, Aleppo, of the Mecca and Medina, of Jerusalem, of all Arabia, of the Yemen and many other lands, which my noble forefathers and my glorious ancestors— may God light up their tombs— conquered by the force of their arms and which my august majesty has made subject to my flaming sword and victorious blade, I, Sultan Süleyman Han.⁵⁶

Following the Ottoman defeat in Vienna in 1683, and the loss of territories the Ottomans gradually began to do things the European way. They decided to change their military to make it more like the armies that defeated them. Thus the first secular school in Turkey was a military school, the Imperial School of Naval Engineering. Gradually, the entire Ottoman army was made up of secular-minded and Western-trained officers.⁵⁷ When Ataturk emerged as the leader of the Young Turks who liberated Turkey and made it into the secular Republic it is today, he was

⁵⁴ Cagaptay, S. *The Rise of Turkey: The Twenty-First Century’s First Muslim Power*. Omaha, NE. University of Nebraska Press, 2014. 3-4

⁵⁵ Zarakol A., *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Jenkins, G. “Continuity and Change: Prospects for Civil-Military Relations in Turkey.” *International Affairs* 83, no. 2 (2007): 399-55.

following a trend that had been implemented during the Ottoman Empire, and one that was supported by Turkey's most powerful sector, the military.

There were several reasons for deciding to borrow from France specifically. For one, Atatürk was from the army so he had been trained and educated in a secular institution. He also spoke French and was heavily influenced by mainstream positivists literature circulating at the time.⁵⁸ Partially due to the countless number of famous intellectuals, France had garnered a reasonable amount of international clout, being viewed as a modern 'civilized' state. For Turkey, France epitomized all the Western qualities it sought to bring home, and thus, both the Ottoman Empire and Atatürk's Turkey established many institutions in accordance with the French model.

There is arguably a difference between the Ottoman vision of utilizing secularism and the Young Turks vision. While the Ottomans wanted to incorporate some of the European practices to make their empire stronger, the Young Turks wanted to become European. The decision to enshrine their new constitution on the principles of French *laïcité*, was emblematic of this desire to move away from their Ottoman and Muslim identity. Like France, Turkey became a highly centralized country, with a strong national identity. Another unsurprising similarity between them was their secular model. Atatürk also used the freedom *from* religion approach and relegated Islam to the private sphere. With this framework, *laïcité* set up a state-controlled firewall between religion and politics banning religious symbols, such as the Islamic-style headscarf, in certain public spaces. In addition to this, the Turks also put their own spin on *laïcité* by codifying state-control over religious institutions by creating the Presidency of Religious Affairs, *Diyanet*.⁵⁹ This seemed like a natural course of action for the Turkish Republic, given

⁵⁸ Cagaptay, 2014. *op. cit.*, 78.

⁵⁹ Cagaptay, Soner. *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006. 14

that during the Ottoman era the Sultan was empowered to dismiss, and even execute, the highest Muslim clergyman at his pleasure.⁶⁰

2. Who is Turkish Under Secularism?

This rather abrupt shift towards secularism created contradictory tensions between the Turkish sense of nationality and citizenship. Turkish identity was arguably constructed during the Ottoman era. The Ottoman Empire was a multiethnic and multi-religious state which organized its citizens into religious compartments, known as millets. This system was highly successful in providing relative religious freedoms and stability in the region for over half a millennium. This produced a stable social system that lasted around half a millennium. This left an indelible religious marker in Turkish minds. This is further entrenched when in the nineteenth century the empire faltered during the rise of nationalism. Particularly, when the Balkan Christians turned to the nationalism which was shaped by the millet system hence centered around religious identity rather than ethnicity. Indeed, these Christian Ottoman millets did not see the Balkan Muslims as their nationals even though the two communities shared languages. Therefore, as the Christian states emerged in the Balkans during the territorial decline of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish and non-Turkish Muslims in southeastern Europe fled persecution in these newly emerging states, taking refuge in what is now modern Turkey.⁶¹ Once in Anatolia, having been persecuted due to their religion, the surviving Ottoman Turkish Muslims unified around a common Turkish-Islamic identity. Moreover, the immigration of Ottoman Muslims to Anatolia enhanced the peninsula's Muslim and Turkish demographic base at the expense of its Christian communities. While Christians made up one-third of the population in the 19th

⁶⁰ Cagaptay, 2014, *op. cit.*, 45.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

century, the large influx of eastern European immigrants shifted their demographic down to one-fourth of the population by 1913.

Therefore, when the rump Ottoman Muslim millet coalesced into the modern Turkish nation, Turkish nationalism embraced all Muslims in Turkey as Turks, while Christians were left outside of the body of the Turkish nation. Since Turkish ethnicity was seen as conterminous with Ottoman Muslim ethnicity, Ottoman Christians and other non-Muslim inhabitants have been excluded from the Turkish nation, even when they spoke Turkish.⁶² The task of imposing secularism on a nation in which identity is seen purely in religious terms becomes complicated.

3. Kemalism: the creation of Turkish citizenship

In the 1920s Ataturk moved to discard religion in order to focus on a voluntaristic, territorial, and political understanding of nationalism. He based nationalism and citizenship on three shared factors. Kemalism first dictated that Turkish citizenship is grounded in territory, voluntarism, and a shared language: He emphasized the importance of a shared geographical territory, stating “the people of Turkey, who have established the Turkish state, are called the Turkish nation.”⁶³ Secondly, he highlighted Turkish people have a shared history and a focus on their common desire to be a nation. His party, the CHP, enshrined this in their constitution, declaring that “the strongest links” among citizens was “united in feelings and united in ideas.”⁶⁴ Lastly, he underscored their “unity in language.”⁶⁵ This was despite the fact that only 86.42 percent of the population actually spoke Turkish.⁶⁶ Indeed, while part of Ataturk’s fabricated

⁶² Ibid., 71

⁶³ Cagaptay, 2006. *op. cit.*, 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

sense of nationalism rang true for some citizens, it was ultimately a superficial image of Turkey and one modeled after Ataturk's personal ideals.

These efforts were made to create Turkish citizenship and nationalism; a distinct category from the imagined Turkish identity that was rooted in Islam. Indeed, even though Ataturk was trying to create a secular national identity, he acknowledged in not-so-subtle ways, who Turkish nationals were. He gave special privileges to "Turks" over "Turkish Citizens." For example, in February 1924, parliament adopted a law exempting companies that belonged to Turkish citizens from paying customs duties for ships and boats that they purchased as imports. When discussing the law, it became clear that parliament had Turks, rather than Turkish citizens in mind: When MP Wsmail Kemal inquired who parliament meant by Turkish: "Are we calling the Armenians and the Greeks, Turkish?" MP Zeki responded, "They have never been Turkish."⁶⁷ This privilege extended to Turkish people also applied to who is allowed to govern, publish opinions in the media, or even be employed.⁶⁸

When looking at the differences between Turkish who are largely ethnoreligious Turkish and Turkish citizens who are non-Muslims Turks, secularism can more easily be understood as not a way of removing religion from society or even Turkish identity but rather as an ideology of how to organize and shape society. In November 1925, Ataturk carried out perhaps the most symbolic of his secular reforms, banning all Turkish males from wearing the Ottoman fez, this is a way for him to mold Turkish society to become more Western not less religious. Underlining the "universal" characteristics and "international" recognition of Western clothes, Kemal suggested that the clothing habits of the Ottomans, including the fez and the robe, actually

⁶⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 70

originated in the cultures of non-Muslim and even "hostile" nations, testing their possible rejection by society: "If it is permissible to wear the Greek head-covering, the fez, why should not the hat be allowed? Once again I want to ask them and the whole nation how and why they wore the special clothing of the Byzantine priests and Jewish rabbis, the robe?"⁶⁹ Kemal ended the identification of the Turks with the Ottomans through his implementation of the hat reform. As Ernest Jackh stated "Ataturk uprooted the Turks from Ottomanhood with the abandonment of ordinary caps and fezzes."⁷⁰ Thus, while it might be understandable for "poor and ignorant" villagers to live in an "uncultured" manner, because they might still be under the influence of "tradition," it would be completely unacceptable for an urbanized and upwardly mobile individual to have non-modern tastes and to pursue a traditional lifestyle, including the overt display of Islamic identity whether in clothing or in the public performance of religious rituals.⁷¹ Ataturk was able to achieve these reforms with minor resistance thanks to the weight of his persona. After all, Ataturk -- who had just liberated Turkey from a massive Allied occupation -- was considered nothing less than a father to all Turks.

4. Women's edificatory role in the construction of 'modern' Turkey

Women's issue is at the core of Turkey's modernization. Because Ataturk sought to transplant a model of western society, for the purpose of appealing to Europe, and what Europe values. Elias Norbert outlines how at the time, there were certain imagined characteristics associated with the West, stating "The concept of "civilization came to symbolize the

⁶⁹ Göle, Nilüfer. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013. <https://hdl-handle-net.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/2027/heb.04703>. EPUB. 61.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 61.

⁷¹ Gulalp, H. "Whatever Happened to Secularization? The Multiple Islams in Turkey." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2003. 102(2-3), 381-395. doi:10.1215/00382876-102-2-3-381. 389

phenomena that make the West distinct from other contemporary yet “primitive” societies.⁷² It emphasized the opinion that the West was superior and assumed the universality of its Western attributes in relation to its cultural values. It highlighted what is believed to be common among ‘civilized nations’.⁷³ More specifically, it asserted the lifestyle of the European upper-class, who saw themselves as the “standard-bearers of expanding civilization,” hence serving as a counterpart to the other tendency in society, that of barbarism.⁷⁴ In seeking to change Turkey’s image and national identity, Ataturk employed a top-down social engineering approach, by modifying what people wear and interfering in their everyday religious practices to appeal to these values which buttressed ‘civilized’ in the eyes of European. His modernization was an imitation of this and relied on the compliance of Turkish citizens to appear European. His project of ‘modernizing’ society faced some resistance in rural areas, especially with veiled women. The veil, like the Fez, was cast as archaic and therefore, Ataturk’s vision for a Western Turkey rested heavily on the shoulders of women. Weiling the power of the state, Ataturk liberated women from ‘religious and cultural constraints’ but simultaneously forced them to choose between being culturally Muslim or Western. Nilüfer Göle, a Turkish sociologist who specializes in the study of educated, urban, religious women asserts that the “Kemalist revolution celebrated an “ideal woman.” Within the emerging Kemalist paradigm, women became bearers of Westernization and carriers of secularism [...]. More than the construction of citizenship and human rights, it is the construction of women as public citizens and women’s rights that are the backbone of Kemalist reforms.”⁷⁵

⁷² Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners: The Civilizing Process*, vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon, 1970)

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁵ Göle, *op. cit.*, 14.

5. Replacing Secularism with Social Conservatism

To a large extent, Kemalism is now dead. Turkey has embraced its Ottoman past and Muslim identity. Symbolically, Atif Hoca, a cleric who protested the hat reform under Ataturk and was sentenced to death was honored in February 2012 by having a hospital built after him, who was one of the few symbols of resistance towards Kemalism. However, one aspect of Kemalism which still lives on is top-down social engineering. In the same way that Ataturk wanted to shape modern Turkey in his own image, his successor now wanted to do the same, imposing his own worldview on Turkish society. Indeed, the transition to the AKP represents a shift in power relations and encounters between the institutions and actors who have been positioned as 'others' for almost a century-long. Ataturk's principles represented the ideals of the wealthy urban dwellers but not of the rest of the population, notably the rural population. He created a sense of elitism by labeling the rural villages as "poor and ignorant" villagers to live in an "uncultured"⁷⁶ manner while he and his supporters were wealthy and urban. This split is still deeply entrenched and can be observed in the recent 2011 elections where the CHP is still favored in wealthier urban areas and the conservative Islamist party, the AKP, is favored in rural lower-class areas. To take one example, in Turkey's capital Ankara, the CHP securing 55 percent of the vote in Cankaya, the wealthy upper-middle-class borough while the AKP received 55 percent of the vote in Ankara's Kecioren borough, a district made up of mostly lower-class and less wealthy citizens.⁷⁷ This divide and silencing of the predominantly rural conservative population paved the way for the later emergence of religious political groups that appealed to the ostracized groups, a tension that still plays out under Turkey's current president Erdogan.

⁷⁶ Cagaptay, 2014. *Op. cit.*, 80.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

This party led by Erdogan gained 46.5% of votes in the 2007 general election and 49.8% in 2011. The AKP rearticulated secularism and democracy to demonstrate that secularism, democracy, and Islam were compatible. Indeed they came to power when Turkey's society was highly divided between the pro-secular and pro-Islam and the urban elite and rural peasants. The AKP redefined its national narrative to create a sense of community and solidarity that is inclusive of all religious and non-religious citizens, intolerance and discrimination, however, were still perpetuated.⁷⁸

6. How Erdogan played off of the Religious- Secular divide

When the AKP came to power, it first advocated getting rid of the *Diyanet* arguing that it was an institution that allowed the state to control belief, going against the principles of democracy.⁷⁹ Yet despite this stance, the AKP now holds a lot of sway over matters of family, women, children which have become the center of their policies.⁸⁰ Since then, the Diyanet has also become an extremely gendered political institution of the 'yeni milli'⁸¹ and influential in the implementation of the AKP's values and policies that the AKP. This incident highlights how Erdogan utilizes the politics prompted by the secular-religious divide to appeal to people but then use secular institutions for his own agenda. Another example of this is how he uses the political connotations that erupted out of this divide which associates conservatism with religion. This is seen when European countries test to see whether immigrants have assimilated into 'secular' culture by showing them photos of two men kissing to see how they react. If they approve the

⁷⁸ Cagaptay, 2014, *op. cit.* 34-35.

⁷⁹ Mutluer, N. 2016. Kemalist feminists in the era of AK party. In *Political criticism against Turkey's AK party: Criticism, opposition and dissent*, ed. Ü. Cizre, 40–74. London: Routledge.

⁸⁰ Öztürk, A.E. 2016. Turkey's diyanet under AKP rule: From protector to imposer of state ideology? *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 4: 619–35.

⁸¹ 'yerli' (homegrown) and 'milli (national)' is a policy

act, they are considered as secular, liberal, open-minded; if not, they are categorized as religious, conservative, and backward.⁸² Hence, sexuality, like gender in the case of France has become embroiled in secularism. The AKP has similarly used this tactic. When they first came to power in 2002, they rearticulated secularism so it would be in line with their conservative platform. Erdoğan stated that the AKP ‘see secularism as a guarantee for democracy and as the basic principle for social peace.’⁸³ By doing this Erdoğan bridged the conflict between secularism and religion, presenting his party as an advocate for secularism based on the rule of law. However, when it came to implementing legal changes for the LGTBQ community, the AKP did very little. Quite the opposite in fact, as during the overhaul of the Turkish Penal Code in fact, in 2004, during the overhaul of the Turkish Penal Code, when LGBTI activists demanded to include the term ‘sexual orientation’ in the provisions about prohibiting discrimination, the Minister of Justice at the time, Cemil Çiçek, blocked this motion by arguing that the word ‘gender’ is inclusive enough to imply LGBTI rights as well. Subsequently, the AKP took a much more conservative stance on LGTBQ issues, repeatedly expressed their opposition to sex marriage placing emphasis on ‘Muslim’ family values and norms. This change in stance again reflects how the administration recognized the political connotations of both secularism and Islam, reinforcing them and conflating Islam with social conservatism, placing nationalism and ‘Muslim’ identity at the center of their agenda.

⁸² Butler, J. 2008. Sexual politics, torture, and secular time. *The British Journal of Sociology* 59: 1–23.

⁸³ Akdoğan, Y. 2004. The justice and development party. *Political thinking in modern Turkey: Nationalism*, Y. Aktay. ed., Vol. 6. 620–31.

IV. Analysis

The long and complicated history of how secularism came to be implemented in France, and to a lesser extent Turkey, demonstrates how secularism is not a self-evident term with a linear history. The nature of how it was ultimately implemented in both these countries after military defeats are significant. In the case of France, this came after a long and bloody struggle with the Catholic Church which finally came to an end with the military defeat by Prussia which was the straw that broke the camel's back, finalizing the switch to secular education. For the Ottoman Empire, the defeat in Vienna in 1683, prompted them to secularize their army. And while Ataturk implemented secularism for a multitude of reasons, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire undoubtedly added to the notion of 'European superiority' that was being articulated at the time. It is not to say that religion was insignificant in the discussion of implementing secularism, but suggesting that secularism does not necessarily have a history of being at the core of national identity for either country. Indeed, the lack of definition of what secularism implied is perhaps its more important quality. The implications of removing religion from education because of a military defeat highlight how secularism was seen as a way of moving forward in the trend of civilization. The connotations of societal superiority ensnared in military victories have stuck with secularism. This way of thinking presents a very black and white vision of secularism, with the supporters of it being viewed as progressive and liberal and those against it being viewed as archaic and stuck in the past. By creating this dichotomy, politicians were able to cover up political issues with secular language, painting themselves as inherently right. It's associated with founding a nation based on modernity, this language veils deeper more complex issues, often relegating them to the sphere of traditional or religious problems. This is why it is

important to look at the history of secularism in both countries: to highlight how this narrative was constructed and secularism is in no way linear but emerged out of a set of military and ideological constraints.

The ambiguity and flexibility of the term made it more susceptible to embodying certain values. During the era of Turkish modernization, secularism was necessary because it was considered to be more than just a non-religious government, but integral to modern and civil society. It was shaped by broader global forces like those at play in the aftermath of World War One, and those international understanding immensely affected how secularism was understood locally. In the case of Turkey, it was these additional connotations that allowed for Ataturk to label certain groups as ‘backward’ or even ‘foreign.’ It was also these same connotations that allowed Erdogan to garner support for his policies and to create a new nationalism and was able to conflict Islam with social conservatism because secularism had been conflated with ‘non-traditionalism.’ In the case of France, these preconceived notions of modernity allowed for French people to frame the veil as oppressive. Over the course of the debate, as the discourse shifted away from veils inhibiting women’s agency towards its discounting women’s dignity also demonstrates how the meaning of secularism is molded by domestic politics. Additionally, in both countries, we have seen entities take on the responsibility of guaranteeing equality in the public sphere under the umbrella of secularism. In Turkey, this would be the military who was very closely associated with Ataturk himself and thereby secularism and Kemalism. Throughout the years the military took on the role of guaranteeing and protecting secularism evidenced by the numerous coups in the name of secularism affected over the years.⁸⁴ In this case, secularism

⁸⁴ Cagaptay, 2014. *Op.cit.* 42

has evolved into a way of governing and an ideology that needs protecting. Similarly, in France the state has taken on that role of guaranteeing freedom from religion in the public sphere which also implies that secularism is seen as something in peril and in need of a security team, thus placing the state at the center of people's everyday lives.

The connotations that secularism has absorbed has allowed the government to mold society and intervene in daily life. Not only does secularism dictate where religion is allowed to exist and allowed to be expressed but since it is also an ideology seen as integral to a vision of society as modern and civilized. The complicated history of rejecting the veil in education and the burqa in the public sphere, allows us to demonstrate how secularism and the associated with it has allowed the government to reassert itself over its citizens. In the case of France, it came to signify gender equality thereby reaffirming 'national' ideas about femininity. By delineating femininity, France hindered women's ability to act as citizens in their own country: their reduced ability to act in the public sphere but it also struck the core of their identity and how they must express it. Through secularism, the state is able to penetrate women's everyday lives. This penetration is a contradiction to the state's other obligation: to protect and guarantee certain freedoms. Veiled women lay bare these tensions and highlight how the state prioritizes control over its citizens to match their ideology of civilized society over guaranteeing freedoms promised to their citizens. Similarly in Turkey, ideas about femininity were transplanted into the country, forcing women to choose between their identity and citizenship.

Secularism aims to eliminate people's ability to identify and rally behind an ideology other than the national ideology. In France, Bowen concludes that secularism is seen as the antithesis to what he calls 'communalism' which he explains is forbidden on French territory.

For Turkey, Ataturk used secularism to create an archetype of Turkish citizenship, even if Turkish identity was defined by religion. At the heart of secularism is its ability to govern citizens that would otherwise identify with another ideology than nationalism. In both cases -- Turkey more so than France emerging from a system where people's identities were rooted in religious differences -- was a desire to unite citizens of different backgrounds by suppressing differences in the public sphere. For those who continued to identify with these groups, secularism provided a clear delineation between the 'other' and the nationals. This concept of foreignness is seen when discussing the veil. In Turkey, when the western-style dress was first implemented, religious clothing such as the veil or The Fez was labeled as a foreign expression. Likewise in France when people failed to assimilate to French ideologies they were seen as failing to assimilate to French ideals and therefore, still foreign. Therein lies a conflict between citizenship, which is governmentally monitored and created, and identity. This tension is revealed when examining veiled women whose identity conflicts with their own citizenship.

When observing Turkey's Kemalism and the transition to social conservatism, it highlights how Turkish society did not become less religious, but rather how it acted as a mold for Ataturk's vision for modern Turkish society. Indeed, despite Ataturk's secular administration, we had seen that true Turks were Muslims, and secularism was created to govern a different class of citizens namely the non-Turks who were the Turkish citizens. This demonstrates how secularism was a mode of governance aimed at a certain proportion of nationals. The category of people who needed to be governed increasingly came to encompass other categories of people namely veiled Turkish women living in rural areas. Similarly in France secularism increasingly came to govern certain kinds of people namely veiled women. The ideology of secularism allows

both countries to argue that they are governing everybody. The CHP successor, Erdogan, provides an interesting example of how secularism is an efficient authoritarian tool and an ideological tool, arguably removed from religion. Erdogan's ideological vision for Turkey was very different: he did not discard their Ottoman past and try and distance Turkey from the Muslim identity; he did not wish to become European or Western although he did wish to have a seat at their table. His view of Turkey's potential and of Turkish citizens was based on social conservatism but he was able to easily manipulate secular institutions and the secular-religious divide to implement his vision of society. He employed the same top-down way of governing the everyday life of Turkish citizens and transformed their practices, their patterns, and the way they dress. Under both Ataturk and Erdogan, religion among Turkish citizens as part of their identity. What changed was how the leader's view of what Turkish society should look like and who could be part of it.

V Conclusion

Secularism is a multi-faceted and regenerative term that has changed throughout history, and will probably continue to change in the future. It contorts itself with domestic and international pressure, burrowing itself into nationalism, identity, and citizenship. It is unrelenting in its influence over how people understand their country and themselves; Because of its complex yet powerful nature, it is important to understand how it functions and what it really means. This essay sought to answer those questions.

The history of secularism in France and Turkey highlights how much the term has evolved and how this change was not as linear or self-evident as leaders postulate when they speak of secularism as the cornerstone of society. Indeed, secularism has mutated, absorbing different meanings on the way, as a result of broader political conflicts happening globally and domestically. Because of its ambiguity and flexibility, governments have hijacked the term to promote their political agendas, reshaping society to their vision: Secularism became embedded in citizenship, and controlling its understanding, meant controlling their populations. They guarded citizenship, only allowing those who abided by their ideals to be considered proper citizens. However, as highlighted in the discussion of veiled women, this created tensions between identity and citizenship. The debates in France reveal the implications and associations of oppression and lack of agency and dignity that are contrasted with a secular modern society. Similarly, in Turkey, women's ability to appear western reinforced the values associated with secularism which was European's view of modernity. Women were placed at the center of secular versus religious because of the visibility of the veil, but how this piece of cloth came to

symbolize various meanings -- backwardness, foreignness, oppression -- was a result of a long history of reshaping both countries' understanding of secularism.

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