

**TÜRKIYE AND THE TRANSFORMATION FROM OTTOMAN TO A MODERN
REPUBLIC: A SOCIAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**Ma'adul Yaqien Makkarateng¹, Andi Darna², Fauzan Samad³, Fahmi Yusuf⁴¹Ankara University, Türkiye²Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia³Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh⁴Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Syari'ah Nahdlatul Ulama Aceh, Indonesia*Corresponding Author: maadulyaqienmakkarateng@ankara.edu.tr**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to discuss Türkiye, an empire that emerged after the end of the Abbasid and Umayyad eras. This study uses a qualitative method with a social history approach. Social history theory attempts to systematize, categorize, and provide a social historical interpretation of the development of the Ottoman Empire until it became Modern Türkiye. This study concludes that the Ottomans emerged as one of the great Islamic empires with a vast territory, surpassing previous dynasties. The territory of power stretched from the continents of Asia, Africa, and even to Europe. In 1942, the Ottoman Caliphate changed from a kingdom to the Republic of Türkiye, spearheaded by Mustafa Kemal. During this phase, Turkey was swept by a wave of secularism and westernization that turned into a massive revolution. The next phase was the re-emergence of Islamic power, initiated by Erbakan with the founding of the Refah party. Moderate Islamic groups gained public sympathy, led by Erdoğan with the AKP party. Various political, social, economic achievements and influence continued to be achieved during his leadership. In the context of social history, Türkiye experienced a transformation starting from a monarchical caliphate, then becoming a secular republic and finally entering the phase of a modern Islamic republic.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Monarchy, Republic, Türkiye, Social History**ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini bertujuan membahas tentang Turki sebuah kekaisaran muncul setelah berakhir masa kekuasaan Abbasiyah dan Umayyah. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan sejarah sosial. Teori sejarah sosial berusaha mensistematisasi, mengkategorisasi dan memberikan interpretasi sejarah secara sosial terhadap perkembangan kekaisaran ottoman sampai menjadi Turki Modern. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Ottoman menjelma menjadi salah satu kekaisaran Islam besar dengan wilayah kekuasaan yang sangat besar mengalahkan dinasti sebelum. Wilayah kekuasaan terbentang mulai dari benua Asia, Afrika bahkan sampai ke Eropa. Pada tahun 1942 kekhalifahan Ottoman berubah dari kerajaan menuju Republik Turkiye yang dipelopori oleh Mustafa Kemal. Pada fase ini Turki dibawah kepada gelombang sekularisme dan westernisasi yang berubah menjadi revolusi besar-besaran. Fase selanjutnya adalah munculnya kembali kekuatan Islam yang dimulai oleh Erbakan dengan mendirikan partai Refah. Kelompok Islam yang moderat mendapat simpati masyarakat dipimpin oleh Erdoğan dengan partai AKP. Berbagai prestasi politik, sosial, ekonomi dan pengaruh terus diraih selama kepemimpinan tersebut. Pada konteks sejarah sosial Turki mengalami transformasi mulai dari kekhalifahan yang bersifat monarki, kemudian menjadi republic yang sekuler dan terakhir memasuki fase republik Islam yang modern.

Kata Kunci: Usmani, Monarki, Republik, Türkiye, Sejarah Sosial

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of Islamic civilization reflects the richness of the Islamic tradition across historical transitions. Throughout its long trajectory, Islamic civilization experienced periods of both ascent and decline, marked by remarkable achievements as well as significant setbacks. Periodically, history is conventionally divided into three broad phases: classical, medieval, and modern. History, as a discipline, is composed of diverse events that constitute the human record. It is not merely a chronicle of past occurrences, but also a critical inquiry into the veracity of those occurrences. Accordingly, the essential components of historical concreteness are addressed through the interrogative framework of who, when, where, and why questions that are deeply intertwined with the object, space, time, and the broader circumstances of an event (Syhabuddin and Kholil, 2024; Allamuratov, 2025).

Islamic civilization appears to have reached its apogee during the Abbasid Caliphate, a period characterized by the rapid expansion of knowledge, catalyzed initially by the translation of foreign manuscripts—particularly those in Greek—into Arabic. This intellectual activity laid the groundwork for the formation of religious schools of thought that became the foundation of free scholarly inquiry. The Abbasid dynasty attained its zenith under the reign of Harun al-Rashid (786–809 CE). This era, known as the Golden Age of Islam, was marked by the rise of influential thinkers and prominent scholars, including al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina. Concurrently, the Bayt al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom) was founded, which fostered rapid development in fields such as philosophy, mathematics, and literature (Ravhsanbekovna, 2024; Mansour, 2018; As'adurrofik, 2017).

Following the political decline that accompanied the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate, three major kingdoms emerged as new pillars of Islamic political power: the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires. Each of these polities possessed distinct and unique origins. The Ottoman Empire traced its roots to the Turkic peoples, specifically the Oghuz tribe, who originally inhabited territories bordering Mongolia and China before migrating to Turkestan. The Safavid Kingdom, by contrast, emerged from a small Sufi order with no aristocratic lineage. Meanwhile, the Mughal Empire developed on the Indian subcontinent, constituting a formidable power that brought significant transformations to that region. Each empire played a vital role in reconstituting Islamic political authority and left behind cultural legacies that continue to enrich the history of the Islamic world (Ma'rifah, 2024).

The Ottoman Empire was an Islamic caliphate that occupied the Anatolian region of present-day Türkiye, with Constantinople (Istanbul) as its capital. The empire was established in the late thirteenth century and achieved its zenith of power in the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries. The Ottoman Empire is also regarded as the caliphate that succeeded the Abbasid Caliphate, which had been dismantled in the thirteenth century, thereby positioning the Ottomans as the guardians and protectors of Muslims across the world. The social and political history of the Ottoman Empire spans from its founding in the early fourteenth century (c. 1300 CE) to its dissolution in the early twentieth century (1924 CE). The empire made substantial contributions to both political and social domains, particularly during the first two centuries of its existence (from the late thirteenth century) through to the close of the sixteenth century (Haris, 2020), and its influence continues to be felt in regions such as the Balkans and former Soviet states in Europe and Asia.

The highly strategic geographical position of Türkiye rendered the region an object of contention among successive civilizations, including the Greeks, Romans, Persians, and Arabs. History has been instrumentalized to 'demonstrate' the thesis that the Turkish people were, from their earliest history, an integral part of 'Western civilization.' A pivotal period for the institutionalization of this historiography was the regime of the Committee of Union and Progress from 1908 to 1918, which enabled historians to foreground the role of 'the people' in history alongside the grand structures of geography and 'civilization' (Ergut, 2015).

Turkish society treated religion as the foundational bedrock of social life, making it a decisive factor in social and political transformation. Social stratification was organized along religious lines, and the sultanate itself was profoundly bound to Islamic law (*shari'a*), such that the legal opinions (*fatawa*) of religious scholars (*ulama*) carried the force of law. Consequently, religious scholars occupied a privileged position within the sultanate and functioned as political advisors to the sultan. Turkish culture as a whole constituted a synthesis of diverse elements. From the Persian tradition—with which the Turks had been in contact even prior to their migration to Western Asia—artistic sensibilities, elegant patterns, and political ideas that exalted royal majesty were adopted. By assimilating Islamic and Arab characteristics, thousands of religious, scientific, legal, and literary terms were borrowed from Arabic and Persian, many of which remain in use in Türkiye to this day despite recent language nationalization movements. The Ottoman Sultanate made original and significant contributions in three principal domains: statecraft, architecture, and poetry (Hanifah, 2017).

The military domain was arguably the most consequential and developed aspect of Ottoman civilization, which accounts for the vast territorial reach of the Ottoman Sultanate across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Ottoman socio-cultural and political influence extended as far as Southeast Asia, particularly to the Acehnese polity in Indonesia and to Malaysia (Ozay and

Saltik, 2015; Mehmet Özay and Nia Deliana, 2025; Machmudi and Supratman, 2023). This was facilitated by the Janissary program (Inkisyariyah)—etymologically meaning 'new troops'—which was established through the devshirme system, a form of compulsory military education instituted under the reign of Orkhan. The Inkisyariyah comprised soldiers drawn from newly converted Georgian and Armenian Muslims, and constituted the most formidable military force within the Ottoman Sultanate (Hanifah, 2017).

The Ottoman Empire thus rose to become the dominant power from the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries, constructing a vast empire and cultivating a rich cultural heritage that continues to enrich global civilization to this day. A defining feature of its socio-political structure was the devshirme practice—a form of social engineering—designed to maintain control over conquered territories in Europe. This distinctive policy facilitated new forms of social mobility by transforming young Balkan Christian men into Muslim elites serving the sultan. This strategy significantly enhanced Ottoman capacity to incorporate European territories over several centuries. Furthermore, the social mobility fostered by this policy transformed the lives of working-class Christian children into elite status, with some ascending to become the ruler's most trusted advisors (Muttaqin, 2025).

Throughout the history of Islamic civilization, distinctive characteristics have always defined its various periods. In this regard, the medieval period of Islamic history is closely identified with the three great empires: the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal. Demographically and geographically, the Ottoman Empire was located in present-day Türkiye, the Safavid in Persia, and the Mughal in India. The present study, however, focuses specifically on the Ottoman dynasty, highlighting the civilizational cycle including its rise, decline, and eventual transformation from a sultanate into the modern Republic of Türkiye through the lens of political sociology.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative methodology informed by a social history approach, also known as the 'new social history', which derives from historicist methods. Social history, including the innovative use of sources in a more analytical manner, has been widely applied in the study of religion, women's history, family life, labor, and the history of the European Reformation (Jurgens, 2021; Lloyd, 1991). The social-historical approach serves to classify and provide sociological direction and discourse, as well as to interpret historical events. It seeks to establish periodizations and thematic frameworks within history and society, thereby illuminating and offering interpretation of issues pertaining to specific ideas and events (Knöbl,

2013). In relation to the study of Türkiye's transformation from a sultanate to a modern republic, this study analyzes the subject through the lens of social history by constructing classifications, thematic frameworks, and sociological-political interpretations. The social history approach is deemed particularly appropriate for revealing the transformation of Türkiye as a state entity and as a civilization situated at the confluence of Asia and Europe, one that evolved from a monarchical empire into a modern republican state.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

History of The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire emerged as one of the great Islamic empires following its displacement of several predecessor dynasties, including the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Seljuk, Ayyubid, and Mamluk. It provided the foundational context for the emergence of subsequent empires such as the Safavid and Mughal. This civilization consolidated its prestige through distinctive characteristics that persisted into the thirteenth century, including the institutionalization of the Arabic language, even as the Turkic community did not follow the cultural trajectory of Arab civilization. The Ottoman Dynasty stands as one of the longest-reigning empires in recorded history, with a duration of approximately 625 years (1299–1924 CE) and approximately thirty to forty sultans across its history (Muttaqin, 2025). The appellation 'Ottoman Turks' derives from the name of their ancestor, Sultan Osman ibn Sauji ibn Ertugrul ibn Suleyman Shah ibn Kia Alp. The Ottoman demonstrated its authority through military offensives and territorial expansions, most notably through the conquest of Constantinople. The dynasty is further credited with revitalizing the Islamic community following a period of intellectual and political decline (Syihabuddin and Kholil, 2024).

The advancement of Ottoman civilization was powerfully propelled by influential figures who shaped its military and maritime governance. The empire prioritized military capacity, and its proven strength enabled it to control prominent territories across Asia, Africa, and Europe. Territorial expansion reached its apex under Sultan Suleiman I (1520–1566 CE), known as Suleiman the Magnificent or al-Qanuni. During this period, the Ottoman territories encompassed North Africa, Egypt, the Hijaz, Iraq, Armenia, Asia Minor, the Balkans, Greece, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, extending to the Danube River, and bordered three seas: the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Black Sea. The Ottoman Empire was thus regarded as the dominant nexus connecting major interregional trade and political routes. Similarly, Ottoman advancement in the religious domain involved scholars (ulama) who played

significant roles in governance and politics, alongside the widespread development of Islamic brotherhoods (*tariqah*) among both civilian and military populations (Rahman, 2018).

During the Ottoman period, education was advanced through the promotion of madrasas as centers for the study of diverse sciences. The first Ottoman madrasa was established in Izmir in 1331 CE, with numerous scholars imported from Iran and Egypt to develop Islamic learning in newly acquired territories. Under Sultan al-Fatih, intellectual endeavors received extensive government patronage, and schools and academies proliferated in cities and remote villages alike. Ancient classical texts were also translated from Greek, Latin, Persian, and Arabic into Turkish during this period. Several sultans established universities in Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul, differentiated according to educational function. Lower-level madrasas taught Arabic grammar and morphology, logic, theology, astronomy, geometry, and rhetoric, while higher-level institutions concentrated on jurisprudence and theology (Syihabuddin and Kholil, 2024).

Like other medieval sultanates, the Ottoman Empire was founded by a single ruling family, establishing a hereditary monarchy that generally transmitted the throne to the eldest male heir. In cases of succession disputes, the throne could pass to the second son or another male relative, thereby introducing complex dynastic politics that frequently affected imperial stability. The empire was firmly grounded in the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, which provided a framework for legal and social norms. Within this context, the sultan occupied a unique position of authority, embodying both political and religious power. His responsibilities transcended mere administration; he was regarded as the final arbiter of justice and governance, with no authority considered superior to his own. This concentration of power fostered a distinctive dynamic in which the sultan's choices were determinative of the empire's trajectory (Muttaqin, 2025).

Under the reign of Suleiman al-Qanuni (1520–1566 CE), the Ottoman Sultanate demonstrated a serious commitment to the implementation of Islamic law, earning its sultan the epithet 'al-Qanuni' in recognition of his dedication to constitutional governance and Islamic legislation. The laws developed under al-Qanuni were not limited to *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) but also encompassed sultanic decrees pertaining to disputes arising in society. In addition, there were decrees issued through the legislative assembly in its capacity as *al-sultah al-tashri'iyyah* (the legislative authority) and ratified by the sultan. The first category was designated *idarah saniyyah*, and the second *qanun*. The apogee of this legal tradition occurred under Sultan Suleiman, who commissioned Ibrahim al-Halabi (d. 1549 CE) to compile a legal compendium entitled *Multaqa al-Abhur* (Confluence of Seas), which remained the standard

reference on Ottoman Turkish law until the reforms of the nineteenth century (Hitti, 2006). The position of Shaykh al-Islam (Qadhi) or the mufti as a mujtahid consequently carried considerable authority as a governmental advisor. Ibrahim al-Halabi (d. 1549) and Ebu al-Su'ud (1490–1574 CE), who served as Shaykh al-Islam from 1545 to 1574, and Ahmad Judad Pasha as Minister of Justice, subsequently produced the *Majallat Ahkam Adliyyah* (the Ottoman Civil Code).

The zenith of Ottoman caliphal power was attained during the reign of Sultan Suleiman al-Qanuni. Al-Qanuni was a leader of exceptional fortitude, particularly in his efforts to construct the grandeur of the Ottoman Sultanate. He was accordingly bestowed the title 'Solomon the Magnificent.' The most significant policies introduced by Sultan Suleiman al-Qanuni pertained to legislative regulation, which rendered the governance of the Ottoman Sultanate markedly more systematic. The implications of these policies exerted a profound influence on society at large, and indeed across the entirety of the European continent. It was during the reign of Sultan Suleiman that the Ottoman Sultanate reached the peak of its power. He successfully extended Ottoman territorial control to several strategically significant regions in Europe, Asia, and Africa. During his rule, the greater part of Hungary, Vienna, and Rhodes came under Ottoman control (Hanifa, 2017).

From Empire To The Republic of Türkiye

In 1924, the culmination of a long process of accumulated change materialized when the caliphal system was transformed into a republican order by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Mustafa Kemal, widely known as “Atatürk” (Father of the Turks), ushered in secularism and a wave of sweeping revolution throughout the country's history. This transformation was massive in scope, encompassing Westernization, secularization, and the categorical separation of religious affairs from the state. This transition, regarded by some historians as a form of political authoritarianism, nonetheless marked the end of the last great Islamic empire in the world. Mustafa Kemal's secularism also represented a decisive turning point in the social and political history of Türkiye to this day (Musthafa and Purwati, 2022).

The sociopolitical climate, condemned and fraught with tension due to disputes between the Allied Powers and the Ottoman Turks, grew increasingly volatile. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk appointed K. Karabekir as a Turkish military commander to revitalize national identity and patriotic spirit in the face of Allied military threats. Ultimately, both leaders succeeded in unifying diverse segments of society to mobilize around the axis of independence, grounded in

the ideology of nationalism. Through this complex dynamic, a momentous transformation occurred in 1922: the Ottoman government under the sultan was abolished, and the Ottoman Caliphate was dissolved two years later. In that same year, the Turkish Constitution was formally promulgated, with Article 1 explicitly stating that the Turkish state is a Republic, Nationalist, Populist, Statist, Secular, and Revolutionary. Article 3 further stipulated that sovereignty, without conditions, belongs to the nation (Sjadali, 1993).

The emergence and development of Turkish nationalism appears to have been mediated by a series of socio-political and historically dialectical events occurring within the consciousness of rational modernity. This points to the objective characteristics of national identity—including language, genealogical origins, and history—such that individuals, as units of the national community, could provide a rational basis for justifying claims to self-determination and national consciousness. However, as Turkish history evolved, the concept of nationhood within the Turkish state model became increasingly contradictory under authoritarian leadership. As Guia Nordia has argued, the nation is another name for 'We the People'; consequently, nationalism must be synergized with democracy, not with the application of authoritarianism in governance (Syihabuddin and Kholil, 2024).

The transformation of the Ottoman Caliphate into a republic constitutes an integral component of the broader history of modernization and political transformation in the Islamic world during the twentieth century. Initially, the Ottoman Empire served as the center of political and spiritual authority in the Islamic world, guiding Muslim peoples for centuries. However, following the Ottoman defeat in World War I, the empire faced pressure from victorious powers and internal reformist movements that championed modernization. In 1922, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk—a general who had become the leader of Turkish resistance against foreign powers—the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed and the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished. Atatürk's aim was to transform Türkiye into a secular and modern state, replacing Islamic political and legal systems with secular principles and civil law. In 1924, it was formally announced that the caliphate—the spiritual and political symbol of Islam—had been abolished, thereby bringing to an end a long era of caliphal leadership in Islamic history (Syihabuddin and Kholil, 2024).

This transformation marked the beginning of profound changes in Turkish politics and social life. Atatürk and his successors continued to implement wide-ranging reforms, including the adoption of the Latin alphabet and the modernization of legal, educational, and economic systems. In the subsequent decades, Türkiye underwent significant urbanization, industrialization, and infrastructural development, positioning it as a more modern state

integrated into the global mainstream. Although these transformations yielded positive outcomes—such as improvements in educational attainment and economic development—they also generated debate and resistance, particularly from groups committed to traditional values and Islamic identity. Despite Türkiye's formal status as a secular state, debates regarding the role of religion in politics have continued to the present day, reflecting the complexity of the country's historical heritage and national identity (Mu'ammam, 2016).

The constitution established by Mustafa Kemal gradually evolved in response to the demands of the times, steering Türkiye through successive periods of significant transformation. The wave of democratization that swept the world—particularly from the 1980s onward—accompanied by growing political consciousness among civil society, inevitably 'compelled' Türkiye to embrace a more complete form of secularism. This imperative was further reinforced by Türkiye's aspiration to join the European Union. Türkiye came to recognize that Mustafa Kemal's secularism had lost its political orientation, and the necessity of cultivating a 'healthy' political climate became a defining feature of Turkish politics in the preceding years evidenced, for instance, by Türkiye's gradual political opening through the establishment of multiple political parties and participation in constitutional elections (Musthafa and Hanik Purwati, 2022).

This wave of 'democratization' also provided an opportunity for various groups to revive political Islam, leading to the establishment of Islam-based political parties. Despite the fact that, in the early stages of their formation, Islamist groups were frequently repressed by nationalist-secularist parties, loyal adherents of Mustafa Kemal's ideology backed by military power. However, the Islamists did not capitulate. Prominently among these figures was Necmettin Erbakan, known to his followers as Mücahit Erbakan (Erbakan the Holy Fighter). He assertively promoted the values of political Islam within Turkey's powerful, secular establishment. (Musthafa and Hanik Purwati, 2022).

In 1996, the Refah (Welfare) Party, led by Erbakan, won the national elections. Erbakan subsequently formed a coalition government with the Motherland Party under Tansu Çiller, and became Prime Minister of Türkiye. However, his administration was short-lived; after barely a year in office, Erbakan's government was dissolved by the military in 1997, as he was deemed a threat to Turkish secularism due to his Islamist platform. This politically orchestrated obstruction in 1997 emblemized the ongoing tension between the nationalist-secularist and nationalist-religious factions that continues to characterize Turkish politics. Nevertheless, the struggle of Turkish Islamists did not cease. Erbakan's protégé, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, together

with Abdullah Gül, carried the movement forward. Their perseverance in advancing Islamic influence in Türkiye was demonstrated through the growing strength of the Justice and Development Party (AKP—Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), which they founded on August 14, 2001. The party firmly consolidated its dominance by winning the parliamentary elections in 2002, receiving popular acclaim and securing 367 seats out of a total of 550 in the Grand National Assembly (Musthafa and Hanik Purwati, 2022).

AKP's dominance in Turkish politics was reaffirmed in 2007 when the party again won the elections. Erdoğan's party secured strategic offices: Abdullah Gül assumed the presidency, while Erdoğan himself served as Prime Minister and the party commanded a majority of parliamentary seats. In 2011, the AKP again prevailed, and Erdoğan was re-elected as Prime Minister. Upon completing his term as Prime Minister in 2014, Erdoğan's political career did not conclude; he subsequently put himself forward as a presidential candidate with the support of the AKP, and on August 10, 2014, he was elected President, succeeding the previous incumbent for a five-year term.

Erdoğan's significance is not limited to his democratization efforts; his efforts to re-embed Islamic values within Turkish society have been among the most impressive features of his public image. One of the most transformative policy shifts under Erdoğan, marking a turning point in the social and political transformation of Türkiye, was his protection of religious rights and freedom. Whereas the headscarf (*hijab*) had previously been prohibited as a legacy of Mustafa Kemal's secularism, under Erdoğan it was protected as an expression of religious freedom. Nevertheless, some extreme secularist circles continued to scrutinize Erdoğan's policies, which they perceived as threatening to dismantle Turkish secularism. This was evidenced, for example, by the controversial policy banning alcoholic beverages and a foreign policy that openly promoted Islamic populism (Haryanto et al., 2019).

Contemporary Türkiye: From Secularism To Modern Islamism

The most distinctive characteristic of the Ottoman governance system was the integration of *qanun* (sultanic law) into *shari'a* (Islamic law). In certain respects, the two were merged into a single legal system—a phenomenon unique in Islamic history. The *qadhi*'s (judge's) responsibilities extended beyond hearing cases involving *shari'a*; he was also appointed and directed to adjudicate various disputes and to bring to conclusion judicial proceedings related to both *shar'an* (*shari'a*) and *'urf* (customary law). Thus, as a court registrar noted in the early seventeenth century, a *qadhi* must consult *fiqh* in matters involving *shari'a*

and study the sultanic legal codification (*qanun*) in matters pertaining to 'urf. *Shaykhs* of Islam even employed *qanun* as the basis for issuing certain fatwas on criminal matters (Black, 2001).

Furthermore, religious plurality manifested itself in Ottoman social life. The Ottoman Sultanate acknowledged the existence of diverse religions and cultivated a degree of religious tolerance unprecedented in Christian Europe. In the commercial and industrial spheres, cultural assimilation took place: skilled Muslim and non-Muslim traders and artisans formed part of the same social class and were accorded equal rights, while wealthy Jewish, Greek, and Armenian merchants adopted the dress and conduct of Muslims. The Ottoman Sultanate developed a traditional management system for non-Muslim monotheistic communities through the millet system, which granted non-Muslim communities autonomy in religious life within their own communal structures. Jewish and Christian religious leaders, akin to tribal leaders, exercised jurisdiction over their own congregants. Millets 'maintained their own institutions, overseeing education, religious justice, and social welfare; and possessed separate schools, hospitals, hotels, and shelters for the poor and elderly.'

Minority communities were governed by their own religious laws and were not subject to Islamic scholars and qadis (unless they chose to appeal to a qadi's court). The authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople was even augmented, with his authority over Orthodox Slavic and Greek communities elevated and granted special civil authority. European merchants were incorporated into the millet system, and some were appointed as consuls representing their commercial interests. This recognition of ethnic and religious diversity represented a continuation of the policy of the early Ottoman dynasty (and indeed early Muslim precedent) of acknowledging the existence of outsiders and extending to them citizenship rights and their attendant privileges. Tolerance toward other monotheistic faiths was deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition. Sultan Mahmud II was, in a certain sense, a scholar, markedly different from the Western court tradition, and appears to have been more tolerant than other rulers in Ottoman Türkiye (Black, 2001).

The foregoing analysis reveals that the Ottoman Sultanate was profoundly influenced by external traditions, particularly from Europe and the West. This influence was most evident in the legal domain, which throughout its history engaged in ongoing dialectical interaction with the Hanafi school, officially recognized as the Ottoman legal reference. Ultimately, when the Ottoman Sultanate entered the modern period, the influence of Islam was systematically dismantled by Mustafa Kemal, including the dissolution of the shaykh al-Islam institution, the abolition of the Shari'a courts, and their replacement with European secular law.

It may be further argued that, according to A. Qadri Azizy, from the perspective of legal thought, the codification of Islamic law as undertaken in Türkiye through the *Majallat Ahkam Adliyyah* is analogous to the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) in Indonesia, both being products of law formally created by the state (Azizy, 2002). In Ottoman Türkiye, where the majority adhered to the Hanafi school, this engaged in dialectical interaction with Western secular law as an external element. In Indonesia, by contrast, the KHI continues to be shaped by two legal systems: Western law and customary (*adat*) law.

The Islamist movement, represented by the growing popularity of the AKP, has found its stage not merely through Erdoğan's 'populist politics' but also through Turkish historical tradition and the romantic nostalgia for past Islamic glory. On the other hand, the AKP has skillfully deployed a narrative that, in essence, resonates with leftist 'revolutionary' discourse—centering on anti-poverty, anti-unemployment rhetoric—while simultaneously asserting that although Islamist in orientation, the party is also pro-democracy. The victory of the AKP and Erdoğan's rise in Turkish politics has been regarded by segments of the Turkish public as a 'new hope,' while also exerting a significant impact on support for Kemalism. This reinforces the thesis that Islamic religiosity has, in fact, become deeply ingrained in Turkish society. The secular aspects of Mustafa Kemal's vision in the early history of Türkiye are viewed as merely political-structural features, particularly given that Kemalist secularism was enforced through authoritarianism (Mustafa and Hanik Purwati, 2022).

With regard to the reinterpretation of secularism, the victory of the AKP as a political force signals the importance of reflecting anew on the substantive values of secularism. Although the AKP identifies itself as an Islamist party, it rejects the anti-democratic label, which itself indicates that interpretations of secularism are inherently plural. Kemalism, characterized by its militaristic orientation, was merely a formative ideology that has left its imprint on the nation. As argued at the outset of this paper, the secularism championed by Mustafa Kemal must be situated within its historical context. His contribution to laying the foundations of Turkish politics must not be overlooked; however, Kemalist secularism manifestly perpetuated civic discrimination, the prohibition of religious symbols, and various forms of religious expression that are fundamentally at odds with democratic values and the true meaning of secularism itself.

In the course of its historical development as the first majority-Muslim country to adopt secularism, Türkiye has not succeeded in eradicating its religious identity as a state deeply imbued with Islamic values—irrespective of how political Islam has been instrumentalized in Turkish politics in recent years. The secularism introduced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk appears

'incomplete,' constrained by the authoritarianism through which it was implemented. Erdoğan's Islamism and the AKP, by contrast, have emerged as a new democratic alternative for Türkiye. The political transformation of Türkiye has been driven by historical necessity: Kemal's secularism resisted Islamic orthodoxy and political dominance, while Erdoğan's Islamism resisted discrimination perpetrated in the name of secularism. Türkiye is a nation with substantial democratic experience, and the political transformations that have occurred across successive periods must be understood as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Musthafa and Hanik Purwati, 2022).

The political recognition of religion through modern governmental policy in Türkiye, from the Erbakan era through to the Erdoğan administration, underscores the significance of this issue. The recognition of religion is a fundamental aspect of modern governance, directly linked to state legitimacy and socio-political stability. As a majority-Muslim state, Türkiye allocates substantial budgetary resources to religious development despite adhering formally to secularism. In this context, it may be argued that Türkiye is undergoing a transformation from secularism toward a controlled form of religious governance, dominated by the modern Islamist movement under the stewardship of the AKP under Erdoğan's leadership (Maulana, 2025).

The emergence of the AKP with its conservative democratic platform has tended to expand the space for greater freedoms, including the freedom to practice religion freely. On the whole, the 2010 institutional reforms in governance and politics clearly contributed to the democratization process in Türkiye. This process has had implications for the protection of fundamental human rights, alongside the military and judicial institutions which had previously been endowed with broad authority. As a secular state, the democratization process has constituted an effective mechanism in Türkiye for opening space to the freedom of religious practice among its citizenry (Ibrahim and Halim, 2020).

In this context, the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan deserves recognition as the most powerful and influential figure in the modern socio-political history of Türkiye, not only in domestic politics but also in foreign policy, in which he is regarded as remarkably adept. Domestically, Erdoğan has effectively consolidated power by weakening most internal oversight mechanisms, while steering Türkiye closer to Islamic values. Erdoğan provides a compelling illustration of the importance of taking individual-level variables seriously in foreign policy analysis (Görener and Ucal, 2011; Kesgin, 2020). Furthermore, Türkiye's foreign policy and international standing have enabled it to stand on an equal footing with other NATO

member states, while its economic and military capabilities are accorded significant international weight.

In tandem with these developments, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) has emerged as a significant socio-political alliance, established through a high-level summit process. Its objective is to strengthen ties among Turkic-speaking states that gained independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Turkic-speaking states of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan are currently working to advance cooperation across multiple domains. One of the most important aspects of this cooperation is the development of intra-member trade. The organization is bound together by several factors, including geographical proximity, levels of income, population size, shared borders, and cultural and identity affinities (Çetinkaya and Demirel, 2024; Grosse, 2025). This organization will clearly exert a significant influence on global geopolitics, particularly in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia.

This historical reality constitutes one of many pieces of evidence that the relationship between Islam, modernization, democratization, and transformation toward an advanced modern state is not intrinsically antagonistic, contrary to the claims of certain Western scholars such as Edward Schneier (2016). Social, political, and economic transformation, underpinned by the power of democratic and inclusive Islamism, has enabled Türkiye to emerge as a significant new force in the geopolitics of Europe, Western Asia, and the world at large. The democratic political system and leadership exemplified by Erdoğan has brought Türkiye close to approximating the power of the Ottoman Empire of the past, albeit within a transformed era and a fundamentally altered world order.

CONCLUSION

Türkiye represents a mirror of social history, having traversed a remarkably long and complex series of historical phases. The Ottoman Empire emerged following the decline of the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Seljuk, Ayyubid, and Mamluk dynasties, and consolidated itself as one of the great Islamic empires with vast territorial dominion surpassing its predecessors, extending from Asia and Africa into Europe. In 1924, the Ottoman Caliphate was transformed from a monarchical sultanate into the Republic of Türkiye, a transformation pioneered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk—widely regarded as the 'Father of the Turkish Republic.' This phase brought Türkiye under a powerful wave of secularism and Westernization that evolved into a sweeping revolution, premised upon the categorical separation of religious and state affairs. The subsequent phase witnessed the resurgence of Islamic political power, initiated by

Necmettin Erbakan through the founding of the Refah Party. Despite being overshadowed by powerful military institutions, the Islamist movement garnered considerable public sympathy. In the present era, the modern Islamist movement continues to command broad popular support under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP party. Numerous achievements in the political, social, economic, and international arenas have been registered under this leadership. Domestic political stability regarding the Kurdish issue has improved, alongside broader socio-political stability across the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

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