

SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS

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From the early time of human beings, religious thought or sense of belonging to a higher body has gotten an important role. In the time of crisis or deeper discussions, human beings tend to listen to their inner voice.

However, after the enlightenment in the west and rationalization of political thoughts, the separation of religion and politics has become a wider debate .In that sense, I'll focus on two major traditions on discussion of this issue. One of them is a more pragmatist way to define the relationship between religion and politics. The second way is more liberal understanding of relationship between religion and politics. In that sense, a literature survey was made by me in order to understand the general thought on this topic. Under the light of this survey, I'll try to discuss this issue around the tradition of Islam and events have taken place in Turkey. In that sense, there are examples to show the general approaches in Turkey about this debate. In other words, political events during republican time and multi party period in Turkey will be focused on by me. Lastly, I'll try to show you the alternative approaches by some elites in Turkey about this debate. Those examples which I'll explain might be helpful to me in order to show my position in discussion on debate. Lastly, there should be consent in Turkish politics to find a road map in order to achieve social welfare. In my opinion, finding a positive approach for social consent might be useful for the regimes in the Middle East and debates in the West.

A. WHAT ARE THE GENERAL THOUGHTS IN THE WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT?

As I explain in the introduction, there will be two major approaches in here. First of all, I want to talk about the classification of Brett G. Scharffs' classification on the separation of state and church. According to him, there is the autonomy of church and state. In their relations, there are three basic types of theories. They are the theories in order to explain to concept of autonomy. In that sense, independence, interdependence and inter-interdependence are three approaches to explain the concept of autonomy.

a) Independence:

According to the author, independent autonomy means being able to exercise autonomy is to be left alone, free from influence or interference of others. People should compose their own lives and be able to do so free from coercion in matters of fundamental importance.¹ In that sense, there is the metaphor of “wall of separation.”

About discussion of independent autonomy, I can give some examples from Rosalind Hackett to criticize the validity of this concept in the contemporary world. In this discussion there is the rethinking role of religion in sociological (or popular), academic and diplomatic bases within the public sphere.²

In academic bases, Huntington with “class of civilizations” argued the role of religion within the conflicts in the era of post-cold war period. Another example is about the publications by Jose Casanova. The work is titled “Public Religion in the Modern World.” This book considers the relationship between religion and modernity and argues that many religious traditions have been making their ways, sometimes forcefully out of the private sphere and into the public life at an increasingly traditional level.³

Additionally, Manuel Castells argues that we have passed from Giddens’s era of “late modernity” into the age of the “network society”. The formation of technology revolution and the restructuring of capitalist economics have generated this new form of society.⁴ Especially after 9/11, the production of works on Islam, religion and violence, peace and tolerance has escalated exponentially. In popular bases, Hackett argues that books promoting religion, more religion, or better religion are best sellers in many parts of the world. In diplomatic bases, he argues that a number of recently published works realistically address the religious dimensions of specific diplomatic efforts. Such as conflict transformation and peace building.⁵ There are also some new organizations which sprout up to encourage a place for religion in diplomacy. For instance, “the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy” in Washington D.C works to address identity based conflicts that exceed the reach of traditional diplomacy by incorporating religion as part of solution. Another example might be given from the Islamic world. For instance, “the Organization of Islamic Conference” is a body to find partnership between Islamic countries for political discussions. All of these examples and

¹ Brett G Scharffs, “The Autonomy of Church and State,” *Brigham Young University Law Review*, 2004, No:4; p.1248.

² Rosalind I J Hackett, “Rethinking The Role of Religion in Public Spheres: Some Comparative Perspectives,” *Brigham Young University Law Review*, 2005, No:3 p.659-660.

³ Ibid. p.661

⁴ Ibid. p.663

⁵ Ibid. p.664-666

explanations show us that there is no longer existence of “wall of separation” in public sphere between religion and politics.

b) Inter-dependence:

Autonomy is possible only when thickly contextualized social structures where each person or institution has significant obligations to others that must be met in order for others to have ability to exercise autonomy. Inter-dependence suggests that human potential or nature can be truly realized only within a thick communal context. Religious, nonreligious, and a variety of utopian conceptions of the good life often posit a single truth or set of truths about human nature, the human good, and universe that justify significantly directing the choices available to a person, all in service of his or her own best interests.⁶ In this view, there can be a belief that there is one good for human beings and a belief that a person can rationally what can be harmonized with a vision.

c) Inter-interdependence:

This is a type of autonomy between religion and politics that a somewhat initiative idea which on the one hand requires neither separation nor isolation, but which on the other hand reserves a larger place for independence than does a conception of autonomy based upon interdependence. This view takes independence as a false ideal: untrue because autonomy is only possible within social settings and unappealing because many of human beings’ greaten achievements are the result of collective, co-operative and coordinated interaction. A parallel thought was generated by pragmatist approach which takes religion as a tool in order to achieve political issues by Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and Hobbes. Inter-interdependence also views a conception of interdependence as a false ideal since autonomy can not be forced upon us and unappealing as on empirical matter because history is littered with corpses left by theocrats, idealists, tyrants, and other their views of a single, true vision of human nature, potential and destiny.⁷

A1. An Approach Which Takes Religion As An Instrument For Politics

For Maurice Barbier who is a French intellectual, there are two basic approaches to religion and politics relations. According to his classification, there are two basic types and one of them is the instrumental approach. In this manner, he talks about the thoughts of Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Thomas Hobbes, Spinoza and Rousseau.

I. Machiavelli; A Religion is Under the Service of State:

⁶ Brett G Scharffs, “The Autonomy of Church and State,” p.1251.

⁷ Ibid. 1255

Machiavelli looks politics as amoral tool. Because of this, it is not matter for him to get religion under the control of state. According to him, “end always justifies the means.”⁸ In that sense, he gives some examples about Romans who benefited from religion in order to consolidate their regimes and to eliminate the resistance against them. According to Machiavelli, religion is the foundation of state and society.⁹ Since a fear comes from a higher body gives some opportunities to continue the republic. In that sense, the approach of Machiavelli is not secular. The ruler uses religion according to available ways since religion is totally under the control of him.¹⁰

II. *Montesquieu; The Political and Social Function of Religion:*

According to him, religion serves to sustain social consolidation by supporting the idea of obeying the ruler and eliminating to idea of independence. In that sense, he prefers idolater idea rather than being an atheist. Since having a bad religious belief is more preferable than not having any belief. The benefit of religion for a society comes from its constant character and this factor creates social stability. Related to this manner, he gives an example about despotic regimes and says that changing a religion under despotic shocks the regime. According to Montesquieu, the social benefit of religion is not because of its own reality, but because of its usage. Since the religion provides unity, harmony, and social stability for the society.¹¹

III. *Hobbes; The Interconnectedness of Religion and Politics:*

The philosopher argues this issue in his two works. One of them is Leviathan and the other one is “the context of a religion and a world state.” Hobbes gives examples from the political struggles in the XVII. Century in England and he legitimize his argument about getting the religion under the control of state by giving an example about leaving religion independent creates chaos. Therefore; in order to keep the peace and eliminate the axis in the society, the religion should be taken under the control of state.¹² He argues that the religion is a necessity for the state as it is a need for human beings since religion is a part of social organization. Religion drives people to obedience, makes them tend to familiar with regulations, laws, peace, and civil society. Due to that reason, there might be a relationship between religion and state in which they contain the each other.¹³ Hobbes does not consider

⁸ Maurice Barbier, “Araçsal Yaklaşım, Dinin Siyasete Tabi Kılınması,” Translated by Özkan Gözel, *Modern Batı Düşüncesinde Din ve Siyaset*, (Istanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, Mart 1999), p.108

⁹ Ibid. P.112

¹⁰ Ibid. P.113

¹¹ Ibid. 118-121

¹² Ibid. 128

¹³ Ibid. 130-131

the church and the state as different bodies. For instance, the church is a civil body founded by Christians. It is a civil body since the source of its foundation is human beings. However, in this world, the ruling of state and religion is up to civil authority. There are only some exceptions about the kingdom of Hebrew tradition such as Moses and Judah.

A2. Liberal Approach To Relationship of Religion and Politics

According to this approach, there should be a separation between religion and politics. Since those two matters are totally different from each other and the fusion of them can create more controversial problems for human beings. In that sense, Locke suggests the independence of religion from the state. In the same way, Constant promotes the independence of religion and state from each other. Finally, Tocqueville explains the separation of state and religion with a more comparative approach between the USA and France.

I. Locke; The Separation of State and Religion:

In his explanation, the separation of these two facts is related to tolerance. In that sense, social debates come from the fusion of religion and politics gains momentum because of lack of toleration for others. According to Locke, state is a body which uses rational tools for civil affairs of the society. The state is to protect civil existence of humans and it is a body which was founded by humans for this rational aim. By civil existence, it is aimed to mean life, freedom, property of material goods, etc... According to Locke, the church is a free and it is a determined body since every person selects his/her religion freely.

In that sense, the state has not a power to consider in religious matters. The same is also relevant for the church. The big threat comes from the state if it became a part of religious discussions. However, the state should be considered about religious practices and dogmas whether they threat the public order.

II. Constant; The Independence of State and Religion From Each Other:

He focuses on the foundation of religion whether it is an internal matter for human beings or it is an external matter. In that sense, he argues that religion is about the spiritual feelings of humans. Therefore; it should not be related to politics. Since politics is about the management of civil affairs which related to world. However, religion is about the internal matters of individuals. Therefore; these two matters are totally different because of their nature. The religion should totally be free against the state since there is the notion of

resistance in human beings against any ideological obligations.¹⁴ Therefore; the separation of these two provides a solution to eliminate this threat for political order. Otherwise, religion might become as a tool in the hands of a despotic regimes.

III. Tocqueville; The Separation of State and Religion:

According to Tocqueville, if any religion depends on a political body, it would become a position where it can not be out of political discussions. Therefore; some of the threat against political elites goes through religious bodies. This makes religion weaker for human beings. Additionally, the political authority tends to be broken, changing and transitory. These factors of politics are totally threats the nature of religion.¹⁵

B. THE SITUATION IN MODERN TURKEY AND THE ROLE OF ISLAM

State and religion relation is more complex than the Christian tradition in Islam as Metin Heper explains. He promotes pluralism in one of his work and he defines pluralism as the rule by “many”. By many, he means groups rather than individuals. According to him, there is the notion of the distinction between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God. This is a fundamental tenet of Christian philosophy and theology.

In contrast, Islam enjoined the unity of the state and Muslim community. Islam posited universalism. Therefore; nationalism which among other things brings with the idea of nation as the source of public policies was fervently rejected. This was because secular nationalism called for the separation of the state from religion.

In other words, according to Heper, the state and bureaucracy notion of Islam is different from Western type. In the Muslim realms, the state, not unlike the community, could only be a moral enterprise.¹⁶ During the Ottoman time, even during declining period, the idea of a state power independent of religion never lost its salience.¹⁷

As similar to Heper, Hayrettin Karaman also shows the position of secularism in Islam. He says that, there is no place for laicism within Islam with any notion and practice.¹⁸ Since there is not a religious clergy as exist in the Western world. However, as parallel with the aim of secularism there is the freedom of religious belief and practices in Islam.

¹⁴ Ibid. P.214

¹⁵ Ibid. P.267

¹⁶ Metin Heper, “The State, Religion and Pluralism: The Turkish Case in Comparative Perspective,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.18, No.1. (1999), p.45

¹⁷ Ibid. P.46

¹⁸ Hayrettin Karaman, “Siyaset ve Din İlişkileri”, in Ö. Faruk Tuncer (ed.), *İslam ve Türkiye*, (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitapları, 2003), p.102.

In explanation of harmony of religion and politics in the Muslim world, Fred Halliday gives some examples from Iran and Pakistan. According to him, there is no difference between any revolutionary regime and Iran. Therefore; it is not only Islamist in her essence.¹⁹ Additionally, religion is used as a political tool in Pakistan in order to consolidate a military regime. As parallel to this notion, Cihan Tuğal calls Islamism in Turkey as a novel from a counter- hegemonic politics which he names it as religio-moral populism.²⁰ In that sense, religion might slowly become anti-systemic force, replacing socialism as an alternative social movement.

On the other hand, there is a crisis between moderate and radical wings of Islam over the contemporary issues according to Jay Tolson. There are three reasons for this crisis. First of all, the gradual marginalization sheiks and muftis in part because of their close links with authoritarian governments that control the purse strings of important mosques and other religious establishments. Secondly, the emergence of self-proclaimed authorities with little traditional learning but superior mastery of media generates this debate. Lastly, spread of literacy, which has created a huge and receptive audience for those new voices in the Islamic World.²¹

There is also a gender issue within the Islamic world. As Omaimo Abou Bakir defines, for many Muslim women, their defense of women's rights is part of the defense of Islam against the corruption of its own ideals.²²

For institutional matrices figure prominently in this meaning creation in Turkey: Islamic capital, religious communities the legal Islamist Party, radical Islamist Organizations. Islamic capital became a considerable force after 1990s. Religious communities influence Islamist Press. The example Islamist Party (Welfare Party) initiated as a party of the religiously conservative provinces and villages. The Turkish state could not tolerate even its restricted criticism of capitalism and secularist bureaucracy and party work closed down in 1998.²³

In order to understand the current events, we should look at the way how Turkey came here. In that sense, Talip Küçükcan defines the way of Turkey into three stages: The first one is symbolic secularization, the second one is institutional secularization and finally the third

¹⁹ Fred Halliday, "The Politics of Islam-A Second Look," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.25, No:3, (Jul., 1995), p.408

²⁰ Cihan Tuğal, "Islamism in Turkey: beyond instrument and meaning," *Economy and Society*, Vol.31, No:1, (Feb. 2002), p.85

²¹ Jay Tolson, "Fighting for the Soul of Islam," *U.S. News & World Report*, Vol. 142 Issue 13 (4.16.2007), p.38

²² Mervat Hatem, "Gender and Islamism in the 1990s," *Middle East Report*, No:222,(Spring 2002), p.46

²³ Cihan Tuğal, "Islamism in Turkey: beyond instrument and meaning," p.93

one is functional secularization. An example of symbolic secularization is the changing of alphabet. The institutional secularization aimed at reducing institutional strength of Islam and its influence on the political affairs of the country. Thus the first step for this goal was abolishing the caliphate on March 3, 1924. In 1925, the Sufi movements and their activities were outlawed.²⁴

Functional secularization is involved in two stages; legal and educational. Legal secularization was designed to firmly established modernization reform in Turkish Society. Secularization of courts, adoption of Westerns Codes was the first step. The second stage of functional secularization was implemented in the educational system to establish a program of functional differentiation of institutions. All educational establishments came under the control of state by 1924, by “the law for the unification of instruction.”²⁵

According to Küçükcan, the tension and controversy over the expression of Islam through a political front grew.²⁶ The role of Islam in political parties continued to be an area of particular concern. He defines the 1995 elections as a turning point for Turkey’s modern political history. The elections resulted in the reconfiguration of religion and politics in the public sphere. An Islamist Party had claimed a majority. Additionally, the parliamentary election in 1999 was a test for Turkish democracy because it set the limits of presence and expression of religious identity in the public sphere.²⁷ The revival of Islam in Turkey gathered momentum after 1980s because of the failure of the secular elites’ effort to replace religion with totally modern secular values. The same explanations were made by Metin Heper. He argues that, after Motherland Party, Islam started to provide a theme for political participation. In addition, the new form of political participation in question led the way to new debates on human rights and political liberties, and towards the end of 1980s, important movements were made both in those latter and related areas. In brief, during 1980s, Islam began to be rediscovered by the Turkish elites. Islam was also allowed to develop as a significant dimension of civil society.

In that sense, a new debate came into the picture as an issue about the distinction of religion and state. The headscarf issue became a big debate for Turkish democracy. For some intellectuals, for instance Nur Serter, it is the flag of Islamic Fundamentalism. However, according to some other intellectuals, for instance Nilüfer Göle, the headscarf is simply a

²⁴ Talip Küçükcan, “State, Islam, and Religious Liberty in Modern Turkey: Reconfiguration of Religion in the Public Sphere,” *Brigham Young University Law Review*, 2003, No:2, p.487

²⁵ *Ibid.* P.448

²⁶ *Ibid.* P.491

²⁷ *Ibid.* P498

reaction against Turkey's suppression of its Muslim heritage in building a modern state. This represents the normalization of Turkish Muslim identity because it was totally excluded from Turkish Modern Identity.

Again after the parliamentary election in 2002, Turkey faced another example of Islamic development. For some intellectuals, the victory of JDP was the victory of Islamic resistance. However, JDP elites are reluctant to take a stand on the state religion relationship and secularism. For instance, in Financial Times on Oct, 30 2002, Erdoğan defines himself as a Muslim, but he says that religion and politics should be kept separate. He also defines their political thought as Muslim Democrat which analogues to the Christian Democrats who dominated political life in Germany, Italy, and Benelux countries for much of the post war era. Additionally, another material figures that only a quarter of the forecast 30% votes of JDP came from religious constituency. The rest represents a political cross-section especially urban nationalists and conservatives.

B. AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO TURKISH CASE

According to Ahmet Yücekök, religion means a resistance for a population had been exploited by big capital owners. Thus he calls this movement as a “small bourgeoisie movement.”²⁸ As reverse to the DP period, Islamic groups began to lose their status during 1970s because of changing production factors. This created an obligation for them to become familiar with this changing.

On the other hand, Mustafa Erdoğan who is a professor of constitutional law at Ankara University generates a different way for Turkish case. He suggests that in order to understand the relationship between laicism and democracy, we should look at different matters of laicism. In that sense, there are philosophical, sociological and legislative and political sides of laicism. As a philosophical way to separation of religion and politics is laicism. It is not related to democracy whether you prefer laicism or not. Since laicism is an ideology. Therefore; legislative and political secularization of state can be related democracy. In other words, the individual position about laicism is not a matter for democracy. Sociologically, being laic is about the secularization of society. It means that social institutions should not be irrational, mystic in order to be secular. Those institutions should depend on rational decisions

²⁸ Ahmet Yücekök, “Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Sosyo-Ekonomik Düzen ve Din,” *Dinin Siyasallaşması*, (Istanbul: Tüses Yayınları, Mart 1997), p.46

of human beings and life practices.²⁹ Institutionally, as there can not be a religion of the state, there can not be also an ideology of state in order to call it as democratic state.³⁰

In legislative matters, laic position of state is related to foundations of its positive law. It means that, in a democratic state, the fundamental bases of positive law should depend on rational decisions of human beings. In that sense, the state and religion separation can be achieved in this way.³¹ Therefore; the fundamental bases of any democratic regime is related to position of religion in the society. In democratic regimes, religion is considered as a sociological fact and it is limited with public sphere and private sphere.

In conclusion, in order to find a position like John Rawl explains goes through the expectations of each side from each other. However, Hayrettin Karaman criticizes this idea because of foundations of Islam and laicism. He says that, a Muslim cannot consider a rule in religion as not existed in order to consent with laic block. Same problem is relevant with secular thought. For instance, a regulation which allows headscarf in public sphere can not be made because it is a religious obligation. Therefore, a solution which depends on giving concession from his/her thought can not be valid. In that sense, he suggests the “position of necessity” for Muslims. In this way, Muslims obey a regulation while it is not true for them in order to achieve a social welfare. As a result, this approach can be a solution for Muslim community in order to find a way.

²⁹ Mustafa Erdoğan, “Din, Siyaset, Laiklik,” *Demokrasi, Laiklik, Resmi İdeoloji*, (in II. Ed.), (Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2000), p.263

³⁰ Mustafa Erdoğan, “Demokrasi Kavramları,” pp.9-10

³¹ Mustafa Erdoğan, “Din, Siyaset, Laiklik,” p.264

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