Growing Against the Grain: Turkish and Iranian Youth on Religious-Secular Tensions

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GROWING AGAINST THE GRAIN:

TURKISH AND IRANIAN YOUTH ON RELIGIOUS-SECULAR TENSIONS

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment

of graduation requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the explicit societal and underlying political consequences of heavy-handed state measures to cultivate secularism and Islamism in Turkey and Iran respectively. The elites in each country have failed to indoctrinate the majority of the youth, who seek to change the status quo. A brief historical review of each country is provided in order to properly understand their sociopolitical environments. In Turkey, the majority of the educated youth demand the right to exercise their religious rights, including veiling in public spaces. In Iran, on the other hand, the young people refuse to abide by the various rules and government-imposed obligations. In both countries the boundaries between what is a private decision and public obligation is ever shifting. The youth, comprising the largest segment of its population in both countries, possess with enormous power and potential. The elitist status quo, whether supported by Kemalists in Turkey or Islamists in Iran, must ultimately bend to the will of the youth.
Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis will analyze the degree of secularization and Islamization amongst the youth of Turkey and Iran and how they articulate their values to their respective governments. I will argue that each youth group is pushing for an adaptation of its founding fathers’ ideologies (Kemalism and Khomeinism respectively). Looking to the United States as proof that religion and secularism do not need to be viewed in a Manichean fashion, both youth groups desire increased freedom of expression, whether that supports secular trends in Iran or Islamic practices in Turkey. They want to express their individuality, cultural hybridity, and private tastes and beliefs in public. Young Iranians and Turks are the seeds of new synthesized societies. The majority of young people express their dissent through individualized and passive cultural protest. Exerting great social, economic, and political stresses on each country’s system, the youth make it difficult and costly for the governments to ignore their demands.

In order to understand contemporary events in both Turkey and Iran, one must have a better understanding of the historical, political, and cultural background in each country. In Chapters 2 and 3 will present a brief review of the recent histories of Turkey and Iran to contextualize Kemalism and Khomeinism’s historical foundations and roles in contemporary politics and society. The modern history of Turkey is dominated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s rule in the mid-
twentieth century. Atatürk strove to expunge the influence of Islam in Turkish politics, society, and national culture. Championing radical political, cultural, religious, and economic reforms from the top, the founding father of the Republic of Turkey rewrote the course of modern Turkish history. Reconstructing the political landscape in Turkey, Atatürk redefined the boundaries between politics and religion, and between what is public and private. He never made a pretense of executing his will pursuant to popular sovereignty. In order to allow democracy to flourish, Atatürk believed Turkey needed to first modernize, westernize, and secularize. With heavy-handed legislation and executive measures, he strove to unfetter Turkey from its traditional, Islamic, and Ottoman past. This thesis will explore the various reforms dictated by Atatürk and how he managed to cement his hold on power and dislocate Islam from its traditional role in various echelons of Turkish society and politics. Of particular importance will be various speeches by Kemal, in which he extols the youth and populace as a whole to guard their sacred treasure: a secular Turkey.

After Atatürk’s death, the Kemalists were forced to accept a multi-party political system due to fomenting grass-roots antagonism. Social, economic and political realities forced the Kemalists to seek a safety valve—Islam. With even the military supporting a regulated reintroduction of religious education and Islam in the public sphere, in the 1980s, openly Islamic parties took the seats of many Kemalists in local, provincial, and national elections. What were the factors that contributed to the Islamists success? Did the people vote primarily because of their
Islamic identities, or did they merely seek change from the authoritarian status quo? The key components and material realities, such as economic stagnation, that gave momentum to the burgeoning Islamic movement will be identified and analyzed.

Ultimately, this historical study of the resurgence of Islam in Turkey culminates in the 2002 election that brought the Justice and Development Party (AKP) into power and the party’s subsequent 2007 victory. Despite claims by his staunchly secularist opponents, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan supports an Islamic and Kemalist synthesis. Unlike orthodox Kemalists, Erdoğan embraces Turkey’s Islamic past, present and future. With a population that is nearly completely Muslim, Islam certainly is inextricably tied to the young people’s collective Turkish identity. Yet, the AKP does not seek to uproot the secular and democratic order. They seek to work with the established system to gradually change the status quo, which they view as authoritarian and intolerant of the people’s private right to practice religion. Erdoğan’s policies foster more pervasive and true democratization, support a burgeoning economy, and work towards admission in the European Union. Despite the AKP being in power for more than a decade, there is mounting tension between Kemalists and the AKP. The military, which acts as a vanguard of a strict interpretation of Atatürk’s secular designs for Turkey, closely monitors the movements of the AKP, whom they consider to be Islamists. The legally grounded role of the armed forces as the guardians of secularism has led to the forced dissolution of several Islamic-leaning parties in the recent decades.
This thesis will study the complex blending of and delicate balancing between secularism and Islamism in Turkish society and politics. Growing up in a nation that lauds secularism and manipulates and subordinates Islam, the Turkish youth are truly a hybrid generation. To what degree do they support the manifestation of religious symbols in universities? Why do so many young women choose to veil? Are they religiously inspired, or do they seek only to safeguard the right to choose to do so? The effect of the secularist-Islamist tug-of-war on the Turkish youth, and how they choose to evidence their opinions is a main focus of this paper.

Iran’s political development before and since the revolution of 1979 will also be analyzed in this thesis. How did the theocracy establish itself and why has it lost nearly all support amongst liberal, educated young people? The review of Iran’s recent past will begin with the reign of the founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty, Reza Shah Pahlavi (1926-1941). It will continue with the rise and fall of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi and his failed modernization project as the backdrop for the rise of the theocratic regime. To provide context and a better understanding of Iran’s historic view of foreign machination, a brief introduction covering the early to mid-twentieth century is included. Post-1953 coup, Mohammed Reza Shah pledged to rule with moderation and to champion the interests of all Iranians without consideration for socio-economic standing. Deeply committed to modernization, like his father, he introduced a series of economic, political, and social reforms in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these reforms, however, created a popular backlash that
alienated the tradition-bound segments of society and marginalized the impoverished. His autocratic style of rule deprived the people of a legitimate channels to express their dissent without being targeted by the infamous State Security and Information Organization (SAVAK). Without opposition parties, unions and an uncensored media, young people turned to mosques, bazaars and universities as forums to express their protest.

The Shah and his father greatly admired Atatürk’s modernization and westernization of neighboring Turkey. Yet, the Pahlavi attempt to mirror Turkey’s development ultimately failed in a fiery revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini adroitly manipulated the youth’s fervor and directed it to a revolutionary movement. The high religious leaders, however, did not stand united behind Khomeini’s platform. How did he take a largely secular-minded revolution and turn it into a theocratic Islamic state? How did he manage to prevail over other revolutionary leaders and expunge disapproving clerics? Of particular importance will be how Khomeini successfully hijacked the Revolution in order to advance and institutionalize his ideology. The architect of the revolution’s end, Khomeini took revolutionary Shi’ism and transmuted it into theocratic state constitution.

One must have a clear perception of the foundation of the Iranian theocracy in order to understand its current legitimacy crisis. The Khomeinists, today, are unable to satisfy the youth of Iran by making claims about the “Great Satan” or by referencing the cruelty of the Pahlavi monarch. The young people have no personal memory of these injustices and are extremely distrustful of the state’s propaganda.
This thesis will present a review of the Iranian Constitution, bureaucratic agencies, and the role of the *faqih*. Khomeini disguised his personal political theory as God’s will in order to make claims to divine legitimacy. Yet, this thesis explores the stark shift of power and legitimacy after Khomeini’s death and the existential crisis that the Iranian people and government are currently experiencing in the wakes of the Green Movement and the contested presidential election of 2009. Responding to the youthful challenge primarily with ironclad propaganda and brute force, the Iranian regime is not heading down a viable path. This thesis will explore the degree to which Iranian youth are religious, Muslim, secularized, or Westernized. Their preferences and values, whether or not expressed in explicit political terms, will undoubtedly have grave ramifications for the future of the Iran. As one young person said, “Someday, the pot will boil over.”1 Is the Iranian theocracy facing indubitable insurrection and regime change, or will the political status quo in Iran persist?

In order to analyze the secular and Islamic trends in Turkey and Iran, it is necessary to define the terms at hand. How does one define secularism and Islamism? What pragmatic effect have secularism and Islamism had on public policy and opinion in Turkey and Iran? “How does our understanding of secularism [and Islamism] inform our conception of religion in general and of Islam in particular? What are the consequences of state-imposed secularism [or Islamism] in terms of

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widening the normative conflict in Turkey [and Iran]?” In addition to analyzing these ideologies’ core message and meaning, this thesis will elucidate how varying “antagonistic” political groups and individuals, like the AKP or the Green Movement, interpret and adapt the founding father’s ideology.

In the late nineteenth century, after the dreadful wars of religion and purges in Europe, logical positivism emerged as the reigning social, anthropological, and political philosophy. According to this doctrine, anything that is true must be empirically confirmed. Thus, “God” as a concept cannot be true as it is incapable of empirical proof. From this basis, a logical society should relegate religion to the role of an individualistic faith and marginalize it in the public sphere. Logical positivist philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes, therefore, created codes of ethics that were not based on religious beliefs, or Christian doctrine in particular. The dissociation of religion from the state became the foundation for the modern and European nation-state. With “secularism” as a constitutive element of modernity, it followed that the “more modern the society, the less it needed religion,” which positivists relegated to the intellectual level of a mere superstition.

In the Anglo-American history, the laws enshrine secularism in order to protect religions from state manipulation. The mainland European experience, on the other hand, employed secularism as an ideological justification and pragmatic

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4 Ibid., 178-179.
tool for the state to seek dominance over religion and to exploit it—as was first seen in Revolutionary France.⁵ France essentially elevated the state to the traditional religious role of fostering social change, progress, and providing a pathway to salvation for its people. Political scientists refer to this specific strain of secularism as Jacobin laicism, which is a progressive and radical ideology that seeks to accelerate modernization by means of the absolute power of the state and temporary suspension of civil liberties in order to safeguard those same liberties in the future.⁶ The motto “progress and order” by a highly centralized state agenda was laicists’s template for change.⁷ Secularism came to delineate “the boundaries of public reasoning.”⁸

Making use of secularism as an accelerant and requisite for modernity and progress, European powers justified their imperial rule in colonies throughout the “backward” and “primitive” world in the Orient. This laicist understanding of secularism assumes an “Other” which does not privilege modernization over religion. This prerequisite for progress is intricately related to Orientalist understandings of Europeans’ understandings of Eastern cultures and societies that looked at Islam and the Middle East as an incubator of backwardness. According to the Orientalist myth, Islamic texts called for a direct “association between religion

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⁵ Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*, xvi.
⁸ Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*, xvi.
and politics, between community and polity”

Secularists maintained that Islam sought to merge absolute religious and political authority.

The definition of “Islamism” within the Iranian context is extremely elusive. Although it may seem evident that religion shapes politics in Iran, truly politics have redefined Islam’s role in the public and private spheres. Cause and effect vis-à-vis Iranian politics and Islam are difficult to separate. Shi’ism alone, as a historic religious doctrine, cannot sufficiently explain the political developments in Iran. In order to provide a more accurate application of the term “Islamism” in Iran, one must first look Khomeinism as a political ideology and a distinct strain of political Islam.

Utilizing the label “Islamist” to describe movements, political parties, or individuals lends very little information about their “position on particular issues, strategy, tactics, or future trajectory. It is important to emphasize, “‘Muslim’ is not synonymous with ‘Islamist’.” Being Muslim does not inherently lend political consciousness or ambitions to an individual. The rise of Islamism in the twentieth and twenty-first century must be understood in its historical context.

As European powers could no longer afford to maintain their vast empires across the globe, and the model of the modern-day nation-state began to take form. Nationalism became a force to be reckoned with. Following many of these independence movements, Western educated nationalists seized power, such as in

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10 Ibid., 213-217.
Egypt, Iraq and Turkey. These authoritarian-style rulers for the most part did not fulfill many of their promises, like individual rights, economic growth, and liberalized politics. As the people became disillusioned with the western-style liberalism, the Cold War presented Islamists with an opportunity to build a popular base, and indeed in the 1960s the West embraced Islamism as a force to offset Communist threats in the Middle East. As Islamic scholars like Sayyid Qutb, the father of modern political Islam, gained prominence, they offered people “a strong moral force and source of identity” and Islamism functioned as a “mobilizing ideology.”¹²

Islamic-oriented politics must be understood as a relatively vague descriptor rather than as a specific and monolithic explanatory framework. Islamism is a modern-day phenomenon that has gained prominence as an ideological reaction to modernization and globalization.¹³ Yet, both historical and contemporary Islamic-oriented groups and individuals are extremely diversified both in their understanding of Islam as a religion and of Islam’s role in the public sphere. Its most fundamental sense, Islamism is a modern phenomenon that is guided by Islamic values or traditions, which have a varied affect on a political or social agenda. Islamic-oriented politics is manifested across a wide spectrum. Islam may be expressed in an extremely limited or comprehensive way. This wide range is partly a reflection of the heterogeneous nature of the Islamic faith throughout the Middle

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¹³ Ibid.
East and also demonstrative of the diverse motivations of the varying socio-economic, ethnic, and national groups that comprise an Islamic movement.\textsuperscript{14}

This ambiguous range of possibilities is expressed by Graham Fuller who defines an Islamist as one who looks to Islam as a religion that should inform “how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion.”\textsuperscript{15} Islamic rituals, notions, and ethics are incorporated into politics and society to varying degrees. Some view Islam as an inherently political body of faith. One scholar, Nzaih Ayubi, defines political Islam as “the doctrine and/or movements, which contend that Islam possesses a theory of politics and the State.” Mohammed Ayoob, on the other hand, draws a sharp distinction between the religion Islam and Islamic political theory, which he categorizes as “a political ideology rather than religion or theology.” Similarly, Salway Isamil points to those how make use of Islam to advance a particular political ideology. He says political Islam is composed of “activities of organizations and movements that mobilize and agitate in the political sphere while deploying signs and symbols from Islamic traditions.”\textsuperscript{16}

The analysis of each of these unique definitions is in stark contrast to the assumption that Islamism implies the ambition to create an Islamic state and revert to sharia. In order to propound a definition of Islamism or political Islam four key


\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change}, 2012, Edited by Samer Shehata, Abingdon, Oxon, Canada; New York, NY; Routledge, 2012, 7.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, 7-8.
facets to the movement must be taken into account: [1] The sheer diversity of the phenomenon which includes Sufism, Wahhabism, those who seek to overturn the modern-day nation-state in favor of sharia, reformists, revolutionists, “mass-based popular movements, small and covert non-state actors, those who are western-oriented, those who reject both East and West, pacifists, and those who seek to wage global jihad;”[2] Domestic politics—many Islamists accept the status quo of the nation-state and seek to work within, rather than overthrow, the system; [3] Islamists’ need for legitimacy—Islamic credentials can help bolster an otherwise impotent group of individuals, [4] Researchers’ need to remain neutral vis-à-vis Islamic-oriented politics. Islamism has had different effects and meanings for the politics and societies of Iran, manifested in Khomeinism, and in Turkey, manifested in the various Islamic political parties from the 1950s to the current AKP.

As is seen in Turkey and Iran, elitist and authoritarian states frequently foster secularism and Islamism against the public will. It is within this broadening tension between secular and Islamic values that the new synthetic identities of Iran and Turkey’s youth are being molded. In Iran and Turkey, there is a need to not only focus on the political ideology of secularism, but also on the phenomenon of Islamization and secularization vis-à-vis the people. To what degree do young people incorporate religion into their daily lives and perceive themselves to be secular or religious?

17 Islamist Politics in the Middle East, 8.
The top-down forced Kemalist and Khomeinist movements have created an unviable balance between what society deems secular or Islamic, respectively, and thereby ‘good.’ This disequilibrium has fomented a desire among many youths to question authority and rebel against the identity that the state has created for them. The Islamization and secularization of Turkey and Iran’s youth have engendered hybrid cultures. As Alev Çinar explicates, politics is “an ongoing activity of negotiation and confrontations in daily life through which hierarchies of power, political agency, and subjectivity are constructed . . . [P]olitics needs to be conceptualized as inseparably associated with a fluid understanding of culture.”18 In Chapter 4, the youth subcultures in Turkey and Iran will be explored, along with the unique amalgamation of Islamism and secularism that they advocate.

By relying on World Values Survey, Gallup polls, and other physical markers of values, I will analyze the voting patterns and lifestyles of the various groups in Turkey and Iran, with a focus on the youth (generally university-aged individuals). By looking to indicators of religiosity, birth rates, political activism, and other factors, I will be able to effectively measure to what degree Kemalism and Khomeinism remain a potent force in galvanizing the electorate and inspiring the successive generations. Additionally, this thesis will analyze the mechanisms used by the states to indoctrinate the youth and how the Turkish/Iranian political elite have responded to the youth’s will. The rhetoric of the current individuals and

parties in power will serve as one level of analysis. Does the AKP self-identify with Islam or Kemalism? Does Ayatollah Ali Khamenei or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad abide by Khomeini’s original doctrine?

My conclusion will synthesize the previous analyses to determine whether the Kemalist program or Khomeini’s political Islam effectively motivates the youth and positively shapes the youth’s ambitions and perceptions of their respective countries’ future. I reject any claims that the Turkish and Iranian youth can be defined by absolute categories. There are conservative Kemalist young people in Turkey and the youthful Basij force in Iran is extremely loyal to the theocracy. Yet, the majority of educated young people in both Turkey and Iran demand greater flexibility and accommodation from their governments and state ideologies. They see a need for new, hybrid and innovative approaches to religion’s role in contemporary society and politics. Through passive and active life-style choices and political acts explored in this thesis, young Turks and Iranians demand change. By failing to address the exigent demands of the youth, the Turkish and Iranian political elites will continue to lose favor and legitimacy among the youth.
CHAPTER 2: THE LEGACY OF ATATÜRK & LAÏCITÉ

“I do not want to be recorded in history as the man who bequeathed a tyranny.”
- Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Ottoman Reform and Collapse

Turkey’s history is “neatly divided into the pre-Atatürk and the post-Atatürk republican era.”¹ Before Atatürk, Turkey’s precursor, the Ottoman Empire experienced limited but secular-minded reforms. For example, Sultan Selim III seeing the extreme need for change, as early as 1792, asked his advisers and intellectuals how to curb the decay of the Empire. Some advised a stringent and retrogressive return to the Golden Age of orthodox Islam while others pointed to the West for inspiration. The Sultan gradually introduced western concepts. In 1826, he agreed to the Reform Edict of 1839 and, thereby, relinquished some of his powers. These reforms were a form of “defensive modernization” that safeguarded the Empire’s legitimacy.² In 1876, a new constitution created a Parliament, which among other things provided for the representation of non-Muslims in the Empire. However, Selim III’s successor, the more radical and traditional Sultan Abdulhamid truncated many of these reforms.

The Ottoman Empire, known as the “sick man of Europe,” collapsed following World War I, when it sided with the Axis Power states, which were defeated by the Allied states. On 10 August 1920, Sultan Vahdettin agreed to the Treaty of Sevres, which formally established peace between the Ottomans and the European Allies. Pursuant to the Treaty, Sultan Vahdettin yielded to the partitioning of the former empire. The Straits (of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), however, were demilitarized and designated an international zone, depriving Turkey of a historically key shield. Although the Ottoman Empire retained a sphere carved in Anatolia and remained formally seated in Constantinople, an international commission regulating the Straits also exercised authority in the city. Thus, the Treaty was an emblematic death certificate for Ottoman and Turkish power.

**The Rise of Atatürk**

In reaction to what was essentially a move by the Allied powers to marginalize the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, a nationalist movement split off from the Ottomans and formed the Turkish National Assembly on 23 April 1920. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a former Ottoman officer, joined the Turkish independence movement. Elected the chairman of the Assembly, Atatürk made clear his defiance of the Treaty, declaring, “It is known to all that the seat of the Caliphate and Government is under temporary occupation by foreign forces and that our independence is greatly restricted. Submitting to these conditions would mean
national acceptance of a slavery proposed to us by foreign powers.”3 The nationalist movement thus began the Turkish War of Independence from Anatolia to battle the Greek army, loyalists to the Sultanate, British forces at the sea of Marmora and on the Straits, and Russian and Armenian troops at the Caucasian front. The war gave birth to a national hero, Atatürk, who led the battles against the Russians to regain control over Constantinople, defeated the British and French fleets at the Dardanelles, and extinguished Greek ambitions along the river Sakarya.

Although the nationalist movement contained many factions, including “civil servants, religious leaders, dervishes, landowners, journalists, tribal chiefs,” with his undisputed claim to leading the war and realizing an astonishing victory, Atatürk prevailed over his political rivals. Aware that they were the minority in the Assembly, Atatürk and his followers disestablished the Assembly on 1 April 1923.4 To gain absolute control, Atatürk created the Republican People’s Party and his comrades elected him president. In order to gain legitimacy, the newly reorganized Assembly ratified the Treaty of Lausanne on 23 August 1923. This international agreement ended the war between Turkey and the European powers and created the formal borders of modern day Turkey. Given the implicit acknowledgement of their legitimacy on an international scale and explicit recognition of Turkey’s sovereignty, the Republic of Turkey was officially declared on 29 October 1923.5

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3 Pope and Pope, Turkey Unveiled, 56.
5 Ahmad, The Making of Modern Turkey, 53-57.
Atatürk wanted Turkey to “live as an advanced and civilized nation in the midst of contemporary civilization . . . secular and rational, emphasizing science and modern education in order to create a modern industrial economy.” It is important to note the difference between Selim III and Atatürk. Selim III’s solution to the Empire’s decline was an attempt to “[borrow] technology from the West” while simultaneously “preserving the tradition of Islam.” Atatürk, on the other hand, pioneered revolutionary reform to recreate the social and political landscape of the Republic of Turkey. He sought to end the dualism between secularism and religion in favor of the former. Atatürk did not feign to achieve power and to pursue his democratic model in a democratic way. He said to one foreign journalist, “I am dictating democracy to my people.” On 3 March 1924, the Grand National Assembly formally unseated the Caliphate and sent the relatives of the Sultan into exile.

Aware of the entrenched popular appeal of Islam and the threat it posed to the nascent secular order, the Kemalists bolstered their hold on power through the Law for the Maintenance of Order, which gave the Kemalist government effectively absolute authority until 1929. The special courts set up to administer “justice,” known as the Independence Tribunals, sentenced over 500 people to death in the first two years of the Republic’s existence. One Kemalist spokesman, Yakub Kadri justified the Kemalists’ authoritarian response by saying it was a mere “symptom” of

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6 Ahmad, The Making of Modern Turkey, 53.
8 Kili, “Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey,” 384.
9 Ahmad, The Making of Modern Turkey, 54.
10 Ibid., 58.
deeper troubles in Turkey.\textsuperscript{11} With the opposition silenced, killed and marginalized, Kemalists seized the opportunity to usher in radical and immediate change. Atatürk sought to modernize, thereby westernize, Turkey.

Inspired by logical positivism, Atatürk subscribed to an aggressive political, economic, and social regimen to create and mold a state that dominated religion. The principle of democracy was secondary to that of state secularism.\textsuperscript{12} A key goal of Atatürk was to redefine and make “Turkishness” the framework for the identity in the young republic rather than Islam. The “authoritarian, elitist, and ideological” agenda of Kemalism, thus, systematically aimed to mold a Turkish, secular national identity through the state—not civil society—which was the only legitimate agent of change.\textsuperscript{13}

The six principles of Kemalism, upon which Atatürk founded the Turkish Republic, are: nationalism, republicanism, revolutionism, populism, statism, and secularism. As demonstrated by the reforms he spearheaded, Atatürk looked to ferment pride in being a Turk, which was not intended to be an ethnically, racially, or religiously exclusive term. His famous motto that is today omnipresent in Turkey is “Happy is he or she who calls themselves a Turk.”\textsuperscript{14} Nationalism is significantly

tied to the concept of republicanism. True Turkish patriots would be committed to
the Republic of Turkey and its secular and modern ideals.

By revolutionism, Kemalists sought to open the people’s eyes to their former
backwardness under the Ottoman Empire and to educate and enlighten them
through top-down leadership and state-mandated education. Populism stressed that
Kemalists were acting for the people despite using heavy-handed techniques.
Statism further explicates the need for a powerful and effective central government.
In the 1920s, the Great Depression plagued even the strongest economies at the
time. There was a dire and pragmatic need in Turkey for economic regulation, and
infrastructure. Due to the private sector’s economic weakness, the Kemalist
government took control of economic restructuring in order to foster industry and
address related social needs. ¹⁵

Kemalism assumes three things about Islam and secularism. First, the only
form of Islam that is truly apolitical and benign to the state’s welfare is that which is
defined and sanctioned by the Directorate of Religious Affairs. All other religious
rhetoric, symbols, and principles cannot enter the public sphere without
endangering the secular status quo. Thus, Kemalists make claims that their ideology
does not violate freedom of religion, but merely pushes religion to the private realm,
where it rightly belongs. Second, the essence of religion is its theological beliefs.
Religious practices and traditions, therefore, do not constitute religion per se, but
rather, merely feature one’s belief/faith. Due to the nonessential nature of religious

¹⁵ Shankland. The Turkish Republic At Seventy-Five Years. 17-22.
works, one does not need to veil oneself, wear a fez, or pray five times a day facing Mecca to remain a pious and true Muslim. Thereby, it logically follows that Kemalism is not harming Islam or the believer by “imprison[ing religion] in the conscience of the individual and in places of worship in society and [where it] is not allowed to mix with and interfere in public life.”16 Third, by eliminating religion’s presence in public, secularism provides “a neutral or objective arena.”17

### Secularizing Turkey

Atatürk said, “One will be able to imagine, how necessary the carrying through of these measures was in order to prove that our nation, as a whole, was no primitive nation, filled with superstitions and prejudices. Could a civilized nation tolerate a mass of people who let themselves be led by the nose of a horde of sheikhs, Dedes, Seids, tschelebis, babas and emirs . . . Would one not therewith have committed the greatest, most irreparable harm to the cause of progress and reawakening?”18 The clear answer to Atatürk was yes. Thus, he spearheaded a direct and iconoclastic assault against Islam’s powerful position in politics and society and, simultaneously, appealed to the need to “cleanse and elevate the Islamic faith, by rescuing it from the position of a political instrument, to which it has been accustomed for centuries.”19 The Kemalist principle of nationalism and secularism

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“managed to nationalize religions”\textsuperscript{20} through functional secularization, institutional secularization, and symbolic secularization.\textsuperscript{21}

Functional secularization aimed to reduce Islam’s legal and community foundations. The Law for the Unification of Instruction (1924) brought all education under direct state control in order to erode Islam’s hold on the public.\textsuperscript{22} The Ministry of Education’s strict curriculum propounds the national, secular Turkish identity by using the state-sanctioned interpretation of Islam.\textsuperscript{23} In 1926, Western codes replaced Sharia law. The Swiss Civil Code, the Code of Civil Procedure of the Swiss canton Neuchatel, the Italian Penal Code, and the German Commercial Code came to define and dominate the Turkish state’s policies. Attempting to “‘cleanse and elevate the Islamic faith’” Islam lost its place as the official state religion, Sharia courts were dissolved, and Sufi brotherhoods were closed.\textsuperscript{24}

Despite the abolition of the caliphate, Islam’s prestige was largely vested in custom and in the power of the ulama and brotherhoods. Thus, dervish orders, which held popular and folk appeal for the masses, were closed. The slogan of some radical Kemalists during this time was “‘Let’s smash the Idols’.”\textsuperscript{25} Ultimately, Atatürk sought to have Turkish nationalism supplant the people’s pervasive Islamic identity and attachment to the old Islamic regime. His innovation of national identity is evidenced by the name that self-appropriated: “Atatürk” (Father of the Turks).

\textsuperscript{20} Esposito. \textit{Turkish Islam and the Secular State}. xviii.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, 488.
\textsuperscript{24} Ahmad, \textit{The Making of Modern Turkey}. 80.
\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Ibid.}, 80.
Institutional secularization sought to diminish the practical influence Islam had on political affairs. Istanbul had been the capital of the Ottoman Empire governed in concert with Islam. The Kemalists, therefore, renounced Istanbul as the capital of the Republic and instead established the seat of government in Ankara, then a small town of only 25,000 residents in the heart of Anatolia, which held no particular religious significance.26 Unlike Istanbul, where the skyline glitters with minarets, Ankara was originally known as a city without minarets. Rapidly Ankara transformed into the heart of politics and Western learning under Atatürk.

Soon, rather than the state abiding by the principles of Islam, Islam ironically became a tool for Atatürk to “promote the ideas and policies of the secular state.”27 Thus, Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi or DBI) replaced the caliphate and the office of Seyhulislam.28 As one of the most powerful agencies in the Turkish bureaucracy, the state effectively expropriated all key functions of religion, such as training mosque personnel and releasing religious publications.29 The DBI “administer[ed] and regulate[d]” a utilitarian version of Islam that Atatürk did not find inimical to the Republic.30 Secularism in Turkey came to mean “state control of all aspects of religious life” and the frame of analysis for public matters.31 Atatürk successfully created “an official version [and limited role] of Islam and sought to

26 Ahmad, The Making of Modern Turkey. 92.
30 Esposito. Turkish Islam and the Secular State. xxiii.
31 Lee, Religion and Politics in the Middle East, 167.
outlaw or discredit every other version.”32 Umit Cizre, a Turkish scholar, said, “Atatürk set in motion the republican tradition of employing Islam to promote the ideas and policies of the secular state.”33

Symbolic secularization redefined what was public and private, and secular and religious in Turkey. Atatürk pursued a vigorous “didactic secularism,” which sought to save the backward Turkish people and lead them, forcibly if necessary, to a modern, and thereby Western, way of life.34 Education, dress, language, and other traditionally private aspects of society soon became “secularized” under state pressure. In November 1925, the fez was abolished and men were encouraged to adopt a western style of dress, such as suits.35 Atatürk said, “The fez sat on our heads as a sign of ignorance, of fanaticism, of hatred against progress and civilization. It was necessary to abolish it and to adopt in its place the hat, the customary headdress of the whole civilized world, thus showing . . . that no difference existed in the manner of thought between the Turkish nation and the whole family of civilized mankind.”36 These statements revealed Atatürk’s extreme concern for the West’s attitude regarding Turkey and his direct association with westernization, secularization and modernization. Furthermore, in referencing cultural aspects of the West, such as “laced boots, trousers, jackets, collars, [and]

32 Lee, Religion and Politics in the Middle East., 188.
33 Ibid., 173.
35 Ahmad. The Making of Modern Turkey. 80.
36 Macfie. The End of the Ottoman Empire, 174.
ties,” Atatürk evinced that he deemed the West to be the only “world” worthy of belonging to.

Atatürk sought to influence women’s roles in Turkish society and their style of dress in a more indirect way with a retained conscious of the importance of the veil in Islamic society. The women he surrounded himself with, including his family, embodied the ideal Kemalist westernized and accomplished woman. Atatürk, however, did not outlaw the veil. Keenly aware of the important significance that the veil held in Islamic societies, Atatürk predicted the fall of King Amanullah when he learned that the Afghan monarch banished the veil. Instead, Atatürk waged an indirect, yet still subversive, war on the veil’s prevalence and role in Turkey. For example, a politically supported “Miss Turkey” contest, which featured scantily clad women in swimsuits, ran in 1929. Reforms in regard to women did not only affect social freedoms, but also extended to the economic and political realms.

Symbolic secularism also necessitated changes like the new Turkish alphabet. By public fete, in 1928, Atatürk replaced the script used in the former Ottoman Empire from one that used Arabic script with modern Turkish script based on the Latin alphabet. As one of the most dramatic reforms, Atatürk effectively cut off the literate Turkish people from their Ottoman and Islamic past. Addressing the intelligentsia, Atatürk said, “With its own script and its native intelligence, our

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37 Macfie, The End of the Ottoman Empire. 174.  
38 Ahmad. The Making of Modern Turkey. 87.  
39 Ibid. 87.  
40 Ibid. 89.  
41 Ibid. 81.
nation will take its place by the side of the civilized world.”42 This strategic reform also deprived the imams of their traditional role of translating and interpreting the Koran for the people.43 Rendering most of the country illiterate, this change forcibly oriented the Turkish people westward rather than eastward. These symbolic, western-looking reforms were also meant to act as fraternal overtures to Europe.

Amongst these physical changes, Atatürk worked to ensure that his legacy of westernization and secularization would not be ephemeral and dependent upon his physical presence. He understood the importance of connecting Kemalism with the ambitions, norms, and traditions of the Turkish youth, who would then act as the vanguard of his tenets. Addressing the youth, he emphasized the immediate need to protect the Kemalist Republic then and in the future by saying, “Your primary duty is ever to preserve and defend the national independence, the Turkish Republic. That is the only basis of your existence and your future . . . In this future too there will be ill-will, both in the country itself and abroad, which will try to tear this treasure from you.”44 He inextricably tied Kemalist principles to the future of the youth and made every attempt to embed within the next generation of Turks a reflexive identification with his reforms.

The Islamic Resurgence in Politics

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42 Ahmad. The Making of Modern Turkey. 81.
44 Macfie. The End of the Ottoman Empire, 201.
This laicist strategy ultimately politicized religion and fomented conflict between Islamists and secularists. Notwithstanding Atatürk’s efforts to purge the influence of Islam on the state, it did re-emerge as a force in Turkish politics and society. In order to understand this phenomenon, through the mechanism of politics, one must analyze the [1] Democratic Party of the 1950s, [2] the National Order, National Salvation and Motherland Parties of the 1970s, [3] the Welfare Party of the 1980s, [4] the Virtue Party of the 1990s, and, lastly, [5] the Justice and Development Party, which is currently in power.

Despite Kemalists’ attempts to extinguish opposition through indoctrination and imposed reforms, there remained a counter-culture amongst the masses. At the end of World War II, after Atatürk’s death, Mustafa İsmet İnönü was elected to the presidency and he introduced multi-party politics for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic.45 The Democratic Party was organized as an oppositional group to the Kemalist Republican People’s Party.46 Despite the Republicans’ attempts to superficially liberalize, the Democrats came to power in the next general elections. They embraced Kemalism as an adaptable ideology that could and would be understood in view of the shifting political and social conditions.47 Although Democrats recognized that at the establishment of the Republic in the 1930s statism was necessary to sustain the country, they believed that an overly patriarchal

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45 Ahmad. The Making of Modern Turkey. 104.
46 Esposito. Turkish Islam and the Secular State. xxiii.
government was no longer needed. Furthermore, the government reinstated Arabic calls to prayer, permitted the distribution of religious journals and magazines, and created imam-hatip schools in 1951 to provide for more Islamic-oriented education.

The Democrats were not Islamists, but they did not continue the Republican goal of “catching up” with the West. Instead, they championed “Turkey the Great” and yearned for the former Ottoman (and Islamic) greatness. In the 1950s, Islamist-leaning officials made symbolic attacks on the secular status quo. In the capital city, officials commissioned the Kocatepe Mosque in 1954. In 1960, the Turkish military dissolved the Democrat-led government in a bloody coup. The Turkish military has and continues to view itself as the vanguard of Kemalism, which they interpret as a “national security ideology.” Thus, the generals sought to protect the state and “its purity against societal penetrations.” In the 1960s, in light of the rising threat that communism posed to the entire world, but especially in the Middle East, new right-wing groups, such as the Association to Combat Communism, championed Islam “as the antidote the communism.” These generals, as “representatives of Atatürk’s memory and policies,” turned to Islam in

51 Id., 73.
52 Esposito. Turkish Islam and the Secular State, xxiv.
53 Ahmad. The Making of Modern Turkey. 142.
the fight against communism, which had the effect of lending legitimacy to Islam in public.\textsuperscript{54}

The generals distinguished, however, between the officially sanctioned Islam and rogue Islam. One military official at the time said, “Those who blame religion for our backwardness are wrong. No the cause of our backwardness is not our religion but those who have misrepresented our religion to us.”\textsuperscript{55} Thus, the regulated and “correct” version of Islam was used as an ideological tool to counter the influence of extreme leftism. Other evolving societal and political realities also became forces for change that moved Turkey to embrace Islam as a safety valve.\textsuperscript{56}

Turkish youth began making demands for social justice and an end to the worsening gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots.”\textsuperscript{57} Thus, the military passed laws to foster a “religious culture’ to replace the one which had ‘poisoned the minds of [Turkey’s] youth.’”\textsuperscript{58} They used the military junta to introduce compulsory religious instruction in primary and middle schools to “mold a more obedient generation.”\textsuperscript{59} In 1982, religious education became mandatory in every primary and secondary school.\textsuperscript{60} Before the three-year-long junta there were “2,160 lower-grade Quranic schools” whereas in 1989 that number jumps to 4,715. The number of

\textsuperscript{54} Lee, \textit{Religion and Politics in the Middle East}, 174.
\textsuperscript{56} Esposito, \textit{Turkish Islam and the Secular State}, xxiv.
\textsuperscript{57} Ahmad, \textit{The Making of Modern Turkey}. 219.
\textsuperscript{58} Id. 219.
\textsuperscript{59} Esposito. \textit{Turkish Islam and the Secular State}. xxvi.
attending students rose from 68,486 to 155,403 in the same time period. The number of people completed the pilgrimage to Mecca increased from 10,805 in 1979 to 92,006 in 1988.\textsuperscript{61}

The generals viewed Islam as “a factor of unity,” which could be exploited to mend “the many divisions in Turkish society.”\textsuperscript{62} The cornerstones of the new Turkish identity were the “family, the mosque, and the military barracks.”\textsuperscript{63} The official ideology of the military junta was to create a Turkish-Islam synthesis and to repress the leftist tendencies of the youth in the name of Kemalism. The military sponsored “religious culture” allowed Islamists like Necmettin Erbakan to form the National Order Party in 1968. The Constitutional Court, however, banned this party pursuant to a military ultimatum for violating the principle of secularism (Articles 2, 19, and 57 of the Constitution).\textsuperscript{64} Erbakan and his followers soon regrouped into the National Salvation Party (MSP) in 1972. In 1973, the MSP grossed 12 per cent of the vote in the elections that year. Although only briefly successful in the general elections and later forced to disperse in the 1980 military coup, the Islamists’ support from the masses would significantly grow in the next decade.

Following the military junta, in 1983, the Motherland Party (\textit{Anavatan Partisi}) formed a center-right government under Turgut Ozal and continued the junta’s favorable view towards Islam.\textsuperscript{65} Ozal pursued an intense policy of liberalization and

\textsuperscript{61} Ahmad. \textit{The Making of Modern Turkey}. 221.

\textsuperscript{62} Shankland. \textit{The Turkish Republic At Seventy-Five Years}. 220.

\textsuperscript{63} Tank. “Political Islam in Turkey” 11.

\textsuperscript{64} Kucukcan. “State, Islam, and Religious Liberty in Modern Turkey” 491.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid}, 493.
democratization. Significantly, in the United States he “learned that religion and progress could go together.”66 His calls for greater freedoms “facilitated the expression of Islam in the public sphere.”67 He said, “[The Turkish] state is secular. But what holds our nation together, what serves in a most powerful way in our national cohesiveness and what plays the essential role is Islam.”68 Ozal did not fight an Islamic revival. Indeed, he said, “If Islam one day plays the role in Turkey that the Catholic Church plays in Italy, I will be very happy.”69 Kenan Evren, a Kemalist and Turkish commander during Ozal’s governance, said, “[Ozal] is always optimistic. He never thinks that with each little concession he offers he opens the way to larger dangers.”70 Indeed, the utilitarian approach to Islam, advocated by the Kemalists, viewed religion to be a tool that can either fortify or threaten the state.

In a far-reaching privatization campaign, the government began the process of opening Turkey’s economy to global competition and reducing the statist and paternalistic government economic regulation. In 1990, Turkey earned the International Monetary Fund’s Article VIII status, under which the Turkish lira became an officially convertible currency.71 In April 1987, Ozal applied for membership to the European Union.72 The outcome of this Islamic resurgence coupled with economic growth in the 1980s was the rise of a new class that found

66 Pope. Turkey Unveiled. 167.
68 Lee, Religion and Politics in the Middle East.174.
69 Pope. Turkey Unveiled. 354.
70 Ibid. 167.
71 Ibid. 174.
72 Ibid. 176.
an affinity toward with Hollywood/western consumerism, as well as with Islamic culture. The emerging “Islamic bourgeoisie” consisted of entrepreneurs, western-educated intellectuals, and women. This “synthetic culture of the new bourgeoisie” is evident in a survey on the public attitude vis-à-vis Islam found in Milliyet in 1986. In that survey, 60.5 percent of participants described themselves as religious; and yet, only 26.3 percent prayed regularly. After an analysis of the results, the survey authors concluded, “We [Turks] are religious but not fanatical.”

In the 1980s, expressly Islamic-oriented parties succeeded in both local and national elections. The burgeoning Islamist movement gained momentum from three key factors: [1] Ozal’s dedication to increased civil liberties and democracy, [2] ties with the Anatolian bourgeoisie and Muslim entrepreneurs, and [3] tactful discourse to shape a Turkish identity that blended national and religious symbols.

The Islamists’ message of “communal solidarity and mobility to those newly educated classes and businesses” disseminated largely due to Prime Minister Ozal’s campaign of “freedom of association, speech, and assembly.” Utilizing new technology, communication networks, and mass media, Islamism reached the

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74 Ahmad. The Making of Modern Turkey. 222.
75 Ibid.
76 Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change 2012. 59.
77 Esposito. Turkish Islam and the Secular State: xxvi.
78 Ibid., xxv.
masses. The new Muslim bourgeoisie, which was born from high earning export industries in Ozal’s neoliberal economic program, lent key material support.\textsuperscript{79}

The Islamists’ message, which was critical of social inequality, resonated with the Turkish, Muslim masses. In the 1980s, the Islamists adopted an “activist consciousness” that would be their platform for gaining popular support and reshaping “the sociopolitical landscape of Turkey.”\textsuperscript{80} Many of the Islamists claimed that Kemalists failed to create a realistic equilibrium between Islam and reform. The reintegration of Islam into society and politics, they said, was consistent with democratic principles of majority rule, which in Turkey meant recognizing the desires of the Muslim populace.\textsuperscript{81} Additionally, it seemed that the only reasonable and viable way to counterbalance the severe identity crisis created by the abrupt divorce from Islam. Formed in 1983, the Welfare Party, led by Erbakan, drew support from a broad voter base by advocating social welfare and appealing to the “urban poor, growing Islamic business community, young professionals with a consciously Islamic identity, and women.”\textsuperscript{82}

Notwithstanding the Muslim majority, however, in a 1986 survey, only 7 percent of the national sample agreed that the country should be ruled by sharia.\textsuperscript{83} Similarly, in 1994, only one third of voters of the Welfare Party (\textit{Refah Partisi} or RP), led by Erbakan, identified the fact that is was an Islamic party as a key reason for

\textsuperscript{79} Esposito. \textit{Turkish Islam and the Secular State}. xxvi.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid}, xxv.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change}. 65.
\textsuperscript{83} Metin Heper. “Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Reconciliation?” \textit{Middle East Journal} 51 (1): 35.
their support.\textsuperscript{84} The Welfare Party, however, earned 19 percent of the vote in local elections in that year, lending the Islamists control over Ankara and Istanbul, 28 other cities, and 327 smaller municipalities.\textsuperscript{85} In the 1995 general elections, the Welfare Party claimed a majority, the first Islamist party to do so.\textsuperscript{86} One poll found, however, that 41 percent of people who voted for the Welfare Party identified themselves as secular.\textsuperscript{87}

A Turkish scholar, Mehmet Gevikdag, explains these results by saying, “If a relatively secularist party looks more promising in the economic sphere, the majority of voters are likely to vote for it rather than the less secularist party . . .”\textsuperscript{88}

The masses perceived main secularist parties to either be corrupt, such as the Motherland Party, or as “engaged in endless squabbles,” such as the Republican People’s Party. Additionally, the mainstream secularist parties remained splintered. In fact, in the 1994 elections, the Motherland Party earned 19%, the True Path Party earned 19%, the Democratic Left earned 14.7%, and the Republican People’s Party earned 10.7%. Thus, nearly 80% of the population voted for secular parties making clear that it was not an Islamist landslide victory.\textsuperscript{89}

The new Prime Minister, Erbakan, made clear his desire to associate with Islamic governments. He even proposed a pan-Islamic dinar to unite the Islamic

\textsuperscript{84} Heper. "Islam and Democracy in Turkey." 36.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change} 60.
\textsuperscript{88} Heper. "Islam and Democracy in Turkey." 35.
\textsuperscript{89} Howe. \textit{Turkey Today} 28.
governments’ currencies. Isolating the Turkish generals, Erbakan made radical and fiery speeches against Kemalists and their affinity for the West. Erbakan claimed, “Our next aim is the World Islamic Unity. Istanbul is the political capital of the Muslim world.” On February 28, 1997, Turkey’s National Security Council, dominated by generals, “recommended’ to Erbakan in ultimatum form a number of stern measures to guard the secular nature of the state.” Ultimately, citing violations of the Kemalist principle “secularism,” the Turkish Constitutional Court dissolved the Welfare Party and temporally banned Erbakan from engaging in political activity. The Islamists regrouped into the Virtue Party, which had a political ideology and mission that was identical to that of the Welfare Party, and was later banned in June 2001 “on charges of being a center of Islamic fundamentalism.”

The Rise of the AKP

In the decline of the Welfare and Virtue Parties, two key leaders gained prominence: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gul. Erdoğan and Gul mobilized supporters through grass-root endeavors. Erdoğan, in particular, relied on “local solidarities . . .networks and horizontal relations” and people perceived his party to be more of a “social movement rather than a [political] party.” These methods

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91 Kucukcan. “State, Islam, and Religious Liberty in Modern Turkey” 496.
94 Ibid. 499.
95 *Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change*, 61.
permitted Erdoğan, the former mayor of Istanbul, to garner support even during his brief ban from politics following the closure of the Welfare Party.

The dissolution of the Welfare Party caused a split between conservative Islamists and moderate Islamic-oriented politicians. In June 2001, Erdoğan, along with his fellow moderates, formed the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the conservatives created the Felicity Party (Saadet). In 2002, based on a fusion of secularist and Islamist principles, the AKP rose to power in an election in which an impressive percentage of the populace participated—79 percent. Led by Erdoğan, the AKP won 34.28 percent of the vote, 363 of the 550 seats in parliament and, thus, a majority. The AKP blends and treads carefully between Kemalism and Islamism. The very fact that the AKP was the phoenix that arose from Erbakan’s ashes evidences that the Turkish people wanted a political party that not only championed Islamic morality, but also liberal democracy. Had they wanted more conservative and Spartan Islamic rule, they would have elected the Felicity Party. Yet, with 17 competing parties in the 2002 elections, other than the AKP, only the CHP managed to pass the 10 percent threshold. The CHP gained 178 seats in parliament with 19.4 percent of the votes.

Championing the “American system” over laicism, Erdoğan’s moderate policies transcend class and ideology and are widely supported by the conservative

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Muslims, economically insecure youth, and intellectuals. Erdogan expresses moderate views on issues such as women working outside the home, which he supports, and sharia law, which he interprets to be a metaphor for a just, but not Islamic, society. He said, “There are four kinds of sharia. There is the definition of sharia you find in the dictionary—sharia as a kind of order. This could apply to all countries. Then there is sharia as law . . . Thirdly, there is sharia as a person applies it to his or her own life . . . And fourthly, sharia as a metaphor.”

Retaining popular appeal, the AKP serves as a beacon of true democracy and economic growth to the masses. “It seems reasonable to wonder whether it might be the prospect of democracy rather than the appeal of Islam and Islamic political solutions” that has allowed AKP to rule since 2002. Erdogan’s political party has made good on its promise to undertake measures to work towards Turkish membership in the EU and to foster democracy while supporting Islamic values. Indeed, since 2002, the Turkish economy has stabilized, the inflation rate has been reduced, and the Copenhagen Criteria have been fulfilled. The EU Commissioner, Gunter Verheugen described the steps taken by the AKP as “the second revolution after the establishment of the Republic by Ataturk.” When a measure appears to be taken too far in its religious orientation, the AKP tends to back down. For example, in 2004, the party proposed to make adultery a criminal offense. Following

100 White, Islamist Mobilization in Turkey, 139.
101 Cinar, “Turkey’s Transformation Under the AKP Rule,” 224.
a chorus of outcries from Kemalists and the international community, the AKP dropped the suggestion.\textsuperscript{104}

The AKP appears to be a definitive end to black and white categorizations of secularists and Islamists in present-day Turkey. Gül said that the AKP espoused “new politics,” which were founded upon a “more universally understood democracy.”\textsuperscript{105} Erdoğan and the AKP seek to achieve their religiously informed goals in a more piecemeal and gradualist way responding to the people’s wants. Indeed, moving away from Erbakan’s blatant Islamist platform, Erdoğan’s policies appeared to be the manifestation of an Islamic and Kemalist synthesis—identifying Islam with the Turkish national identity and recognizing its key role in the past, present and future of Turkey. Instead of preaching Islamism from the pulpit, Erdoğan focused on Turkey’s admission to the European Union, supporting democratization, and cultivating economic growth.\textsuperscript{106} In the July 2007 election, the AKP won a second five-year term with an overwhelming 47 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{107}

**Understanding the AKP’s Political Orientation**

To fully understand the historical development of Islamic-oriented political parties in Turkey, one must compare the Welfare Party (RP) to the AKP. The RP essentially agreed with the concept of the “clash of the civilizations.” According to Huntington’s argument, Turkey’s political landscape should be an arena in which

\textsuperscript{104} Shankland. "Islam and Politics in Turkey" 361.
\textsuperscript{105} Takeyh and Gvosdev. "Radical Islam." 93.
\textsuperscript{106} Kucukcan. "State, Islam, and Religious Liberty in Modern Turkey" 500.
\textsuperscript{107} Shankland. "Islam and Politics in Turkey" 361.
the religious and secular orders would battle each other. Seeking a regeneration of an Islamic civilization in Turkey, the RP staunchly pursued a top-down Islamization policy. The AKP, on the other hand, does not equate its policy goals with Islam.

The leaders of the AKP claim that the RP was a religious party; whereas the AKP is a political party comprised of Muslim individuals. Erdoğan expounds this point by saying, “My reference is to Islam at a personal level,” but, “politically speaking, my reference is the constitution and democratic principles.”

Furthermore, the AKP points to parties like the RP as a consequence of the bi-polar Cold War order, which was defined by ideology politics. Such a party is no longer viable in post-Cold War world and the age of globalization. The members of the AKP consider their party to be “a non-ideological, non-Islamist, political party aiming to serve the people.” In a country whose population is nearly completely Muslim, the AKP bears in mind Islamic morality when considering what the people want, but religion is not the sole factor that informs their rule.

Some look to Erdoğan and the AKP as a foreboding sign of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey, but at most it is a sign of the vernacularization of politics. Though there is a clear religious aspect of the AKP’s message, this is largely because it is grounded in popular appeal and as a political party “it reflects and expresses the experiences of ordinary people.” The majority of Turkish citizens identifies as Muslim and actively practices religion. Thus, the AKP’s religious

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110 Ibid., 475.
consciousness should not be understood as an ambition to make religion the predominant political and social force.

Some political analysts look to AKP as “Muslim Democrats,” akin to the German Christian Democrats, based on orthodox secularism. As mayor of Istanbul since 1994, Erdoğan had evidenced his ability to live and operate within the Kemalist system. Some analysts have labeled him a yenilikciler (innovator), “liberal Muslim,” and “republican Muslim.” Reconciling his personal Muslim faith with his role as Prime Minister, Erdoğan emphasizes the difference between the individual and the political party. He said, “A political party cannot be a person, [it] cannot have a religion. But if we as a person are trying to be religious [and] taking our personal beliefs and putting them in front of this organization, we ought not to . . . this would be taking advantage of religion.” In reference to Erbakan’s harsh definition of a ‘bad Muslim’, Erdoğan said that “[o]nly Allah is entitled to bring a verdict on the matter.”

Rather than the Kemalist secularism, which is effectively the “imposition of a non-belief” and the forced belief of an innocuous Islam, Erdoğan interprets secularism to mean the separation of personal religion from “the collective institutions of political life.” Further explicating his position grounded in popular appeal, Erdoğan said, “As Turkey we are a democratic secular state . . . We are never

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115 Jones, Negotiating Change. 225.
going to make any party politics because of religion. But we will be respectful of religious values.” He supports true democracy, which includes freedom of religion.

The Secular Elite Today

Other than the military junta’s attempt to counter communist penetration in Turkish society and political life, the overall trend throughout recent Turkish history has been one of placing the military in the role of the primary vanguard of Kemalism. This role has its legal basis in Article 35 of the Internal Service Law No. 211 of 1961, which delineates the role of the armed forces to protect “the Turkish homeland and the Turkish Republic as determined by the Constitution.” Additionally, Article 85/1 of the Internal Service Regulations empowers the military to “defend the country against internal as well as external threats, if necessary by force.”116 Islamic-leaning parties are scrutinized by the Turkish generals and are vulnerable to forced closure. The “Holy Trinity” of the secular establishment consists of the Turkish armed forces, the People’s Republic Party (CHP) and the Kemalist elite. The elite include the “military top brass, upper echelons of the bureaucracy and judiciary, some figures of the intelligentsia, [and] establish parties [like the CHP].”117 In 2007, this coalition drafted an indictment accusing the AKP of violating the constitutional principle of secularism and brought its case to the Constitutional Court (Anayasa Mahkemesi). Kemalist leaders led debates in the

117 Cinar, "Turkey’s Transformation Under the AKP Rule." 469.
national media discussing the possibility of Turkey devolving into a “‘second Iran’ or ‘another Malaysia’ within 10 years.” Yet, in July 2008, the Court ruled that there was not enough evidence to close the AKP or to ban its leaders from politics.

The AKP’s Islamist ancestor, the Welfare Party, and its political ambitions serve as a pretext for the Kemalist vanguard to distrust the AKP itself. Although imam hatip schools tailor their curriculum, with state approval, to train future religious officials, only a small percentage of their graduates actually join the clergy. Instead, “to the growing horror of the secular establishment, in time many found their way into the bureaucracy, and finally, with [Erdoğan] to the prime minister’s post.”

Despite the Kemalist claim that Islamic activism as a “religio-political force” is a “recent and alarming development,” the AKP is a successor to the many past Islamic-oriented parties. This may come as a surprise to many, given Turkey’s global reputation as a beacon of secularism and modernization in the Middle East. Similarly, the claim that any Islamic-oriented politician is dedicated to “the decisive overthrow of Turkey’s secular advances” and that they will “enforce sharia law . . . to bring about the creation of an Islamic Republic,” is largely unfounded.

In response to Kemalists’ fears, Abdullah Gul, the current President of Turkey, said, “[The AKP is] a democratic party. We will get legitimacy from the people’s support. Of course we give democratic guarantees . . . you cannot force

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119 Pope. Turkey Unveiled. 309.
120 Jones, Negotiating Change. 216.
121 Ibid., 216.
people [to practice Islam] against their will. We are not going to impose limitations.”
On the contrary, he highlighted Turkey’s undemocratic lack of religious freedom due
to the government’s stringent regulation of personal practice and expression of
faith. “He point[ed] out, there is a mosque in the Pentagon, where officers can pray
in uniform.”122

As Istanbul’s major, Erdoğan has certainly made Islamic oriented gestures,
such as a ban on alcohol at municipal functions, the introduction of Islamic
procedures in Istanbul’s slaughterhouses, and painting road signs green, the color of
Islam.123 Yet, “Turkey’s AKP is simply not caught up in the rhetoric of the umma, the
reactive politics of identity, or reflexive anti-Westernism of the kind that can . . .
characterize . . . Islamist leaders elsewhere.”124 Though there are indeed distinct
connections and similarities between the Islamic movements in Turkey and other
parts of the Middle East, these continuities “have nothing to do with a supranational,
religiously motivated mass movement in favour of the Islamization of the region’s
politics, and nothing whatsoever to do with fantasies such as the export of the
Islamic revolution.”125 Erdoğan has successfully tweaked the Islamist message
pioneered by Erbakan in Turkey in such a way to remain in power after ten years of
rule without any major military interference.

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Turkey’s political history since the collapse of the Welfare Party and the rise of the AKP is deeply related to the challenges that arise when a political theory must adapt itself to changing circumstances. Although the political elite may claim otherwise, the tensions in Turkey are not the manifestations of an exclusively ideological conflagration, as will be evidenced by the youth in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
CHAPTER 3: IRAN: SECULARISM, THEOCRACY’S RISE, AND FALL FROM GRACE

“Iran is following a program, and that program is Islam”
- Ayatollah Khomeini

The Establishment of the Peacock Throne

The contemporary history of the Iranian theocracy is deeply related to the rise and fall of the Pahlavi monarchy. In 1921, a coup d’état established one of the coup’s leaders, Reza Khan as the ruler of Iran, who became Shah in 1925 after successfully suppressing several rebellions.¹ The “warrior-king” Reza Shah Pahlavi’s two decades of rule over Iran were marked by enormous political, economic, and social transformations, which set the foundations for the modern Iranian state.² Reza Shah Pahlavi ruled Iran until 1941 transforming the country into an industrialized, urban-based society.³ Under his rule, the name of the country was changed in 1935 from Persia to Iran.⁴ Intent on modernizing Iran, the Shah established a state policy of secularization designed to diminish the influence of the powerful Shi’a clergy and remove them as the mediators between the state and the people.⁵ Holding Atatürk in very high regard, Reza Shah implemented secular

policies and authored significant changes “in the political, legal, educational, and administrative system of Iran that served to undermine the active role of Shi’i clerics in legal and educational practices.”\(^6\) He successfully instituted a system of secularized public education and opened Iran’s first westernized institution of higher education, the University of Tehran, in 1935.\(^7\) In 1928, he instituted a civil code and, thereby, marginalized the clergy’s role in administering justice. A new secular judicial system was established to enforce and interpret secular laws enacted by the state to further centralize power and control and remove the ulama from its historic role in dispute resolution. Clerics were forbidden to act as judges in the new court system and were relieved of their lucrative role in acting as notaries public.\(^8\) Shi’a clergy, all public religious festivals were banned and the clergy was forbidden to preach in public. The state further regulated activities in mosques and the education of future clerics in seminars.

In an effort to westernize and harmonize Iran’s heterogeneous population, the Shah imposed European dress codes on the nation and made it illegal to express religious faith in public life, by forcibly banning the hijab, chador, and all facial hair on men, except mustaches.\(^9\) Moreover, women were incorporated into the workforce in an effort to achieve emancipation, which the Shah viewed as crucial to


\(^7\) Cronin. *The Making of Modern Iran*. 133.


\(^9\) Ibid., 2.
the emergence of Iran as a modern state. Early marriage, polygamy, and seclusion of women were banned, along with the veils, which were viewed as backward signs of an uneducated nation by the Shah. The new state of Iran developed under Reza Shah Pahlavi became an agent of change for its social and cultural institutions to the present day. Mohammed Reza Pahlavi continued the secularization of Iran, which Reza Shah began.

After Great Britain and the Soviet Union became allies in World War II, the two powers, each with significant political and economic interests in the country, invaded Iran, which had refused to expel German workers. Through Operation Countenance, the Allied Powers sought to secure strategic oil fields and the “Persian Corridor,” lines that supplied the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front. With Reza Shah arrested and expelled from the country, the British and Soviets took control over Iranian communications and transportation. Towards the end of World War II, the British and Soviets allowed Reza Shah Pahlavi’s western educated son, Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi to succeed to the throne in 1941. In 1942, the British and Soviets agreed to recognize and respect Iran’s independence and to withdraw their

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11 *Id.*, 8.
troops within six months after the war ended, a commitment later reaffirmed in the 1943 Tehran Conference.\(^{15}\)

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi promised to govern in a moderate manner and to advance the interests of the Iranian population as a whole. Like his father, he was committed to modernization, which necessarily involved transforming the economic and social orders that had come to dominate Iranian life. The shah implemented numerous development plans focused on land reform, economic restructuring and the strengthening of the military. By late 1950 “the Shah had laid the necessary political-economic infrastructure for rapid economic development under state-dominated capitalism.”\(^{16}\) Increased oil revenues, however, resulted in public corruption and the recognition that many of Iran's elections were invalid.\(^{17}\) Furthermore, the Shah reduced the Majlis and Cabinet to rubber stamps and suppressed political activism.

**The Shah’s Faltering Legitimacy**

The Shah issued a directive in 1955 intended to eradicate public corruption and curry favor with the Iranian people.\(^{18}\) Yet, the Shah also formed a political police force in 1955 utilizing the military, which became the precursor for the now

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\(^{17}\) Ibid., 97.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 97.
infamous State Security and Information Organization (SAVAK), a brutal organization that gathered intelligence.\textsuperscript{19} SAVAK had ties to the United States CIA and the Israeli security force Mossad.\textsuperscript{20} In 1963, the Shah initiated a six point “White Revolution” aimed at land reform, the nationalization of the forests, the sale of public factories to compensate landlords, giving women the right to vote, instituting profit-sharing in industry, and massive educational reform designed to eliminate illiteracy.\textsuperscript{21} The Shah continued his father’s interest in promoting the education, professionalism and political involvement of women.\textsuperscript{22} Among the upper class, women were not segregated from men, generally did not wear a chador, and were educated with the opposite sex.\textsuperscript{23} The role of the Pahlavi monarchy in bringing about social change continued to bring it into conflict with the conservative Shia clerics and a minority of the population, particularly in the lower classes.\textsuperscript{24} A “theology of dissent” blossomed. His plan was met with opposition, particularly from the landed Islamic clergy and, notably, one cleric Ruhollah Khomeini, who organized protests against the Shah.\textsuperscript{25} When Khomeini was arrested in 1963, flocks of his supporters assembled in order to riot. These supporters were met by the Iranian police force, armed with American made weaponry.\textsuperscript{26} This

\textsuperscript{19} Hiro, \textit{The Iranian Labyrinth}, 98.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 113
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{26} Summitt, “For a White Revolution: John F. Kennedy and the Shah of Iran,” 561-571.
incident resulted in scores of deaths and a government backlash that included the arrest of 28 ayatollahs, or religious clerics.\textsuperscript{27}

The lower classes depended upon shops and individual farms or were salaried employees. During the Shah’s industrialization project, many illiterate rural peasants who had worked the land of a landowner were suddenly without work or homes under the Shah’s land reforms. For example, the imposition of price restrictions on crops and import of foreign food, created a wave of rural farmers who abandoned their now unprofitable farms for the industrial jobs in the cities.\textsuperscript{28} These peasants flooded the cities and towns causing a significant redistribution of Iran’s population centers.\textsuperscript{29} In 1940, the urban population of Iran was 2.3 million. In 1970, that number increases to 15.7 million.\textsuperscript{30} The “traditional upper and middle classes, the feudal lords, tribal chiefs, mullahs, bazaar merchants and craftsmen [were replaced by] white-collar professionals and mercantile and industrial bourgeoisie.”\textsuperscript{31} One Iranian political scientist, Farhad Kazemi, said that these working migrants “experienced social isolation, and developed a sense of anomie,” which refers to the dissolution of values and ties between an individual and his/her community.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{27} Hiro, The Iranian Labyrinth, 100.
\textsuperscript{28} Curtis and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 46.
\textsuperscript{31} Hiro, The Iranian Labyrinth, 97-98.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 97-98.
The rapid urbanization had the unintended effect of empowering the Shah’s greatest critics, the traditional clerics. The estrangement felt by migrants in urban centers was exacerbated by the lack of community and dislocation from extended family. Devoid of traditional sources of moral support, the people looked to religion for comfort. One poor worker said, “Nothing brings us together more than the love for Imam Hossein. My personal view is that these hay’ats [religious institutions] have a positive aspect in uniting us and keeping us informed about each other’s affairs.”33 These farmers had always looked to Muslim clerics for guidance and the power of the clerics grew exponentially in these rapidly changing and potentially combustible urban settings.34 The changes in the 1960s and 1970s dislocated the traditional forum for dissent—political parties, unions, and the media. Opponents of the Shah were pushed to express their dissent in safe spaces such as mosques, seminary schools, bazaars, universities, underground organizations, and exile communities. By creating a vacuum in the public forum, the Shah gave the clerics an opportunity to fill these “social and cultural spaces.”35 Thus, the Shah’s authoritarian methods de-secularized public life in Iran.

In order to marginalize the religious establishment, the Shah established the Department of Religious Corps and Religious Affairs, which he authorized under Article 39 of the 1906-07 Constitution that required the monarch to promote Jaafari

34 Curtis and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 46.
Shi’ism. The Shah educated clerics and posted them in rural areas in an effort to weaken the influence of tradition and radical clerics. In 1971, the Religious Corps was formed, which sent 39 Tehran and Mashhad educated mullahs into the countryside. These efforts were intended to promote a more moderate understanding of Islam throughout the country.

The Shah also encouraged foreign and, in particular Western, investment in Iran, which led to a marked increase in the number of Americans in Tehran and other cities. By 1978, of the 60,000 foreigners in Iran, 45,000 were Americans who were involved in business, the military and advisory positions within the government. Western culture accompanied the Western presence in Iran, which included styles of dress, culture, television programming, music, and pop culture in general. The “westernization” of Iran was seen by traditional clerics as an affront to their power and influence. Moreover, the economic influence of this phenomenon had a deleterious impact on the powerful merchants of the bazaar who viewed western technology and culture to be a direct threat to Iran’s proud cultural heritage.

Iran's economy in the 1970s was also a significant factor in the gathering storm that led to the 1979 Revolution. Iran was “one of the most inegalitarian

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36 Hiro, The Iranian Labyrinth, 104.
37 Ibid. 104.
38 Curtis and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 46.
39 Ibid., 46.
40 Mackey, The Iranians, 240-241.
societies in the whole world." New divisions in cities like Tehran emphasized the inequitable capitalist development and the polarity between the haves and have-nots. Words like shomal-e shahri (wealthy people who live north of the city) and jonub-e shahri (impoverished people who live south of city) came into usage. The economic and social dislocation of the Shah's Fifth Development Plan not only created political unrest, but it also resulted in rapid inflation, income inequality, and the growth of widespread corruption.

The extreme disparity between western liberalist ideals and the autocratic reality in Iran, a society of haves and have-nots, engendered a popular disillusionment and hostility towards the Pahlavi monarchy. The mid-twentieth century saw a marked shift in “the Iranian intellectual paradigm from secular modernist to Islamic romanticist.” Concepts like gharbzadegi (Westoxification) gained popularity among clerics and the people. In a search for answers to their problems, many people developed nostalgia for Islamic values and traditions. The urban poor’s hostility towards disappointing western ideals promoted a romanticized view of the pre-Pahlavi, Islamic era.

By late 1976 and early 1977, the Shah’s efforts to ameliorate the effects of an overheated economy were obviously failing. Moreover, his history of suppressing opponents using the SAVAK, arbitrary arrest, exile, and torture, was coming under

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42 Ibid.
43 Curtis and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 46.
44 Ibid., 58.
45 Ibid., 46.
international scrutiny by organizations such as the International Council of Jurists and Amnesty International.46 Even the United States, the Shah’s most important ally, was beginning to level criticism over the Shah’s heavy-handed tactics.47 The Shah, therefore, began releasing political prisoners and relaxed measures that had previously stifled political opposition.48

The Opposition Movement Mobilizes

The opposition movement capitalized on the Shah’s perceived weakness and organized letter writing campaigns against the Shah. In 1977, 53 lawyers sent a telegram protesting the demotion of the Iranian Supreme Court to an ordinary court with less power.49 This initiative was later supported by a coalition of 54 judges and 110 retired judges and reaffirmed by another group of lawyers who additionally demanded freedom of speech, free elections and the independence of the judiciary.50 Bazaaris, a guild of writers and finally underground political parties began making demands on the government of the Shah.51

In November 1977, Khomeini’s son died mysteriously, and funeral services were held throughout Iran. At one service in Tehran, police clashed with Khomeini

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46 Curtis and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 47.
47 Hiro, The Iranian Labyrinth, 108.
48 Curtis and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 47.
50 Ibid., 192.
51 Ibid., 192.
supporters. In early 1978, the government banned commemoration of the 40th day after Khomeini’s son’s death and attempted to portray Khomeini himself as a “medieval reactionary.” Senior clerics, including Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari, seminary students in the city of Qom, and the bazaaris protested the affront to Khomeini’s piety. The 1978 protests, unlike the 1977 protests, were primarily led by the religious sector and supported by the bazaar and urban working class.

Despite efforts by the Shah to ease government controls and satisfy the clerics by closing nightclubs and recalling the secular calendar that had replaced the religious calendar, on September 8, 1978, on a day known as “Black Friday,” a large number of protesters were killed by government troops in Jaleh Square. Further significant strikes, demonstrations, and protests led the Shah to broker a deal with the leader of the oppositional government group, Shapour Bakhtiar, who agreed to form a government only on the condition that the Shah leave the country. While in exile, Khomeini became an inspirational figure around which the people rallied.

Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran on February 1, 1979 to a jubilant reception. He promptly announced that he would “smash the mouth of the Bakhtiar government” reasoning that the Bakhtiar government was inextricably and unacceptably related to the Shah as it was formed during the Shah’s reign. Thus,

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52 Fischer, Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution, 193.
53 Ibid., 194; Curtis, and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 47.
54 Curtis and Hooglund, Iran: A Country Study, 46.
55 Fischer, Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution, 199.
56 Mackey, The Iranians, 271.
Khomeini named Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister of a provisional government.\textsuperscript{58} Ultimately, the military decided not to support Bakhtiar, which essentially permitted Khomeini and his revolutionaries to seize power and put an end to the monarchy in Iran.\textsuperscript{59}

**Khomeini Hijacks the Revolution**

The Iranian Revolution cannot be considered merely an Islamic revival. Khomeini exploited Shi’ism as a liberation ideology to garner support from varied segments of society. The people had grown disillusioned with the secular monarchy and its attempts to modernize Iran. Khomeini’s ideology employed Islamic and populist symbols and rhetoric. Before and during the Revolution, he focused on building a grassroots foundation by emphasizing the importance “community, authenticity, social justice, and sociopolitical participation.”\textsuperscript{60} It was only after the Revolution and after he had secured his hold on power that Khomeini truly revealed his Islamic designs for Iran.

How did Khomeini become the architect of a revolution? He used three principles as the foundation of his legitimacy as ruler: *marja-e taqlid, velayat-e faqih*, and populism. *Marja* means a “source to imitate” and is often used in Shi’ism to refer to a religious authority. A *marja* is accorded the title ‘Grand Ayatollah’. As a *marja*, Khomeini had a great influence on the Shi’a community. He allowed his

\textsuperscript{58} Curtis, and Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study*, 50.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Mirsepassi-Ashtiani, "The Crisis of Secular Politics and the Rise of Political Islam in Iran," 52.
followers to refer to him as ‘Imam’ to demonstrate his intimate connection with the Twelfth Imam. From exile in Paris, he broadened the coalition of his supporters with his charisma and populist rhetoric. The radicalization of the far left saw its heyday in the late 1960s until the mid-1970s, and advocating Third Worldism and the demise of western imperialism. After this mostly secular movement died down, dissenters turned to the radicalized right to voice its frustrations with the status quo. Religion became the language of politics, of dissent, and of revolution. By making fiery speeches with Islamic undertones and by railing against the Shah, characterized as the west’s puppet, Khomeini sustained support from diverse groups and individuals, not only the Islamists.

After he successfully toppled the Shah in the revolution that he commandeered, Khomeini emerged victorious over the other factions that had temporarily united in the revolution. Khomeini quickly began to reveal his true ideological design for Iran. Disregarding the quietist tradition of Shi’ism, Khomeini predicated the Islamic Republic upon Islam by “(1) establishing norms of dress and behavior (2) establishing religious criteria for holding political office (3) revising school criteria and devising new education programs (4) restricting the flow of information in the name of protecting morality (5) encouraging religious groups, religious celebrations, [and] religious language.”

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61 Jones, Negotiating Change, 231.
62 Ibid., 252.
Between his return to Iran in 1979 and his death in June 1989, Khomeini ruled Iran “with an iron fist, a fiery will, a steely determination, and a brutal matter-of-factness to his purpose.”\textsuperscript{63} Khomeini immediately refused to create a promised constitutional assembly and instead appointed an Assembly of Experts (Majlis Khobregan) filled with his loyalists and others who would support an Islamic constitution.\textsuperscript{64} Revolutionary courts were established to mete out death sentences to those who were viewed as the Shah’s loyalists.\textsuperscript{65} These courts became the focus of intense controversy between those anxious for justice and the very human rights’ groups that had supported the overthrow of the Shah.\textsuperscript{66} Revolutionary committees began patrolling neighborhoods and making unauthorized arrests and seized private property. By November 1979, at least 550 people had been executed under these procedures.\textsuperscript{67} In May 1979, the Pasdaran Revolutionary Guards were established by Khomeini to quell unrest and deal with those who opposed him.\textsuperscript{68} In the end, Khomeini managed to achieve the objective of “running the time machine backwards for well over sixty years.

The architect of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini succeeded in transforming Shi’ism into a nationalistic, revolutionary doctrine. By manipulating sociological and historic factors in Iran, such as Iran’s historic victimization by

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}, 165.
\textsuperscript{65} Curtis, and Hooglund, \textit{Iran: A Country Study}, 53.
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, 54.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, 53-54.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}, 54.
foreign intruders, Iranian people’s affinity for charismatic leaders, and the culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom for a greater cause, Khomeini crafted a new Iranian identity predicated on Islam.\textsuperscript{69} The polar opposite of the path Atatürk created to uniting his secular Turkey, Khomeini privileged religion as the main determinant of nationality—rather than ethnicity or language.\textsuperscript{70}

It is not Islam, however, that explains the ideology of the new Iranian constitution and the Khomeini regime. Khomeini presented his personal political theory of governance as God’s will in order to attain divine legitimacy and to, ultimately, exploit the enthusiasm for revolution of the masses. “The dominant religious discourse [in Iran], based on [Khomeini’s] ideological understanding of Islam, is by its very nature militant, exclusive, and populist; it demands unquestioning obedience and conformity to its ideological elite—the clergy.”\textsuperscript{71}

Iran’s theocracy is not “Islamic by virtue of the ideology. The ideology is Islamic by decision of the state. [Islam] is secondary to [the state].”\textsuperscript{72} Political philosopher Abdolkarim Soroosh points the predicament the state has put the religion Islam in. Ostensibly held responsible for guiding the decisions of the theocracy, “Islam,” Soroosh said, “is in a straitjacket. I don’t think its scriptures are enough for

\textsuperscript{69} Jones, \textit{Negotiating Change}, 222.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Id.}, 223.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}, 226.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Id.}, 237.
addressing the current problems . . . The danger to Islam is that the revolution will give it a perpetual bad name.”

Pursuant to Khomeini’s vision for a theocracy, the Iranian constitution is founded upon “‘Islamic principles’”. Khomeini argued that although true legislative power is vested in God alone, his representatives on earth needed to guide the people in the application of God’s laws. God did not intend to leave Shiites without a guide during the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam. While the Shi‘i community awaits the return of the Hidden Imam, the people will become dependent on the legal experts, the *fuqaha*, in order to live in accordance with divine law. Khomeini propounded the concept of an exceptionally qualified jurist, the *faqih*, to head all the *fuqaha*, to lead the people, and to act as a placeholder for the Twelfth Imam. According to the constitution, the *faqih* is a “‘just and pious faqih [a legal expert qualified to rule on matters pertaining to Islamic law] who is acquainted with the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability; and recognized and accepted as leader by the majority of the people.”

Khomeini underscores his belief that justice requires a lawful society, a lawful society requires a government, and a government requires direct leadership.

In his pre-Revolution book *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist*, Khomeini said, “This slogan of the separation of religion from politics and the

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demand that Islamic scholars should not intervene in social and political affairs have
been formulated and propagated by the imperialists . . . Were religion and politics
separate in the time of the Prophet?” 78 According to Khomeini, “The duty of [the
Iranian government] . . . is to conform to [God’s] legitimate government by making
the laws passed by the Majlis a kind of commentary on the divine law.” By
successfully applying Islamic law, the faqih and the fuqaha would establish the
foundation “of the Virtuous City.” 79

The faqih and the clerics, vested with the power to define God’s law in Iran,
prescribe and proscribe certain behaviors and personal choices as good and lawful
or as bad and illegal. They are required to protect the theocracy, a sign of God’s law
on earth, and, thereby, maintain the purity of the Islamic Republic. These religious
leaders have the ability to decide who is a ‘good’ and who is ‘bad’ Muslim, with the
main determinant being actions rather than true belief. 80 Khomeini transformed
Shi’ism, the religion, into a political ideology: Khomeinism. According to Article 4 of
the constitution, Islam not only defines an individual’s personal religion, but also
“[a]ll civil, penal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and
other laws and regulations.” 81 Unlike mere religion and theory, true political
ideologies use value systems and philosophy to accomplish real-world and tangible

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78 Ruhollah Khomeini, trans. by Hamid Algar. *Islamic Government: Government of the Jurist.* Tehran:
Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Work, 2002. 16
79 Khomeini, Islam and Revolution, 169.
goals. Khomeinism as an ideology has engendered political, economic, and social change under the banner of Islam, which lends legitimacy to his theory and justifies his hold on power.

Khomeini’s ideology is hegemonic because “supporters [and] critics . . . who do not openly seek to overthrow the regime must formulate their arguments in the language of Islam.”82 Thus, Islamic rhetoric must not only used to propagate the regime’s ideology, but also to challenge it. During Khomeini’s rule and especially since his death, dissidents within the theocracy’s echelons of power have emerged. With the need to adapt Khomeini’s vision to contemporary issues, there are competing ideas and ambitions. People who call themselves “Islamists” put forth these disparate proposals in the name of Islam. When evaluating Khomeini, Khamenei, Khatami, Ahmadinejad or the civilian dissidents, one cannot group all these “Islamists” under one uniform ideological umbrella.

The concept of the omnipotent jurisprudent is highly debated among Islamic scholars. Khomeini himself in 1943 argued that the proper role of the clergy “excludes the government and includes only simple matters such as legal rulings, religious judgments, and intervention to protect the property of minors and the weak.”83 It would not only be extremely reductive to say that Shi’ism alone can explain Iran’s political system, but it would also be inaccurate. Khomeini espoused a

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82 Jones, Negotiating Change, 236.
revolution in 1979 to bring an end to the Pahlavi dynasty in the name of Islam. It is necessary to appreciate, however, that he also pioneered a radical shift in Islamic political thought, a transformation that some call an abuse of Islam’s popular hold.

Even at the time of the Revolution, eleven of the twelve Grand Ayatollahs refused to support Khomeini’s concept of the jurisprudent. When the newly formed Assembly of Experts met to radically alter the 1906 secular Iranian constitution, Grand Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari backed a “pluralistic political system . . . where elected officials, not the ulama would wield power, and where the clergy would interfere in politics only when the state grossly violated the Sharia.” Grand Ayatollah Ghomi said that Khomeini had “[made] a mockery of Islam and encouraged corruption.” Khomeini swiftly responded to these critics, who held far superior Islamic credentials. The regime accused Shariatmadari of working with SAVAK, the Shah’s infamous security agency, and the American government to subvert the Revolution. He was forced to live under house arrest until his death in 1985. Grand Ayatollahs Ghomi, Zanjani, Shirazi, Montazeri, and Rohani were also placed under house arrest due to their refusal to endorse the notion of the jurisprudent. Furthermore, Grand Ayatollah Rastegari was imprisoned after being accused of “misinformation and [engaging] in activities against the security and public order of the country.” These religious experts in Islamic studies and the

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85 Abramanian. Radical Islam. 45.
86 Zahedi. The Iranian Revolution Then and Now,” 80.
faith itself did not back Khomeini, who not only hijacked the revolution but also lacked a true popular or clerical mandate to rule.

Aware of the force that the youth present in Iran, Khomeini sought to perpetuate their revolutionary fervor and to reorient society in accordance with his Islamic political philosophy. Khomeini spearheaded a campaign to re-Islamize the youth. Islam, defined by Khomeini, would direct the content of textbooks, gender relations, family hierarchy, dress codes for men and women, gender segregation in sports and schools, and public morality. Young people were encouraged to join Islamic societies, such as *Anjoman Eslami*, which worked to purify the work place and universities. Khomeini mobilized groups such as the Basij-e-Mostaz’afin (Mobilized Force for the Disinherited) and Jihad-e-Sazandegi (Reconstruction Struggle) as the “‘promoters of good and forbidders of evil’” to purify the public sphere and to nurture “‘public chastity’”.

Key institutions such as the Supreme Judicial Council and the Council of Guardians are also legally mandated to be composed of ulama and to maintain the Islamic character that Khomeini intended for Iran. He sought to designate a bureaucratic institution as “a pro-clergy army.” This vanguard is the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. The preamble to the constitution asserts that the Army

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88 *Global Youth?* 112.
91 *Global Youth?* 112.
and the Revolutionary Guard "will be responsible not only for guarding and preserving the frontiers of the country, but also for fulfilling the ideological mission of jihad in God's way . . ."92 Article 91 created the Guardian Council “in order to examine the compatibility of the legislation passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly with Islam.”93 It is to be composed of six fuqaha, who are selected by the faqih, and six jurists elected by the Islamic Consultative Assembly from a pool of Muslim candidates vetted by the head of the judiciary, who is turn appointed by the faqih. The Guardian Council is vested with the power to interpret legislation (Article 98).94

Khomeini “was determined not simply to overthrow the monarchy but to replace it with a new society that derived its values from Islam.”95 In 1980 Khomeini instituted a Cultural Revolutionary Committee that was charged with ending the cultural imperialism of the west in Iran’s universities and to reintroduce traditional Islamic values.96 By 1983, over 3000 new textbooks were introduced at Iran’s universities to further this goal.97 Basij units were established in the universities, ostensibly to police the interpretation of the Islamic faith that was being taught. The units, however, also collected information concerning the reading material and

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93 Ibid., Article 91.
94 Ibid., Article 98.
96 Ibid., 279.
97 Ibid., 279.
other information being made available to the students in an effort to eliminate the universities as breeding grounds for opposition to Khomeini.\textsuperscript{98}

**A Festering Legitimacy Crisis**

In 1989, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini ended the intertwined religious and political legitimacy in Iran with the rise of Ayatollah Khamenei. Khamenei held the title of hojatoleslam, which is bestowed upon graduates of seminaries.\textsuperscript{99} Not even an ayatollah when he took office, Khamenei’s appointment as \textit{faqih} demonstrates the rift between religious and political institutions in Iran. Islam is not the sole factor at play in the Iranian theocracy. After his political appointment, Khamenei swiftly became an ayatollah, a blatant violation of the traditional Shi’a requirement of distinguished religious credentials. Khamenei himself has acknowledged that he could not truly serve as a source of religious emulation for the country when he became \textit{faqih}. Thus, despite his title of \textit{faqih} and ayatollah, Khamenei’s appointment partially divorced religious and political authority.\textsuperscript{100}

The Iranian regime is undergoing a conceptual and legitimacy crisis. Since the Revolution, bureaucratic religious authorities refer to divine and popular will as the sources of their right to rule. Chapter 1 of the constitution asserts that the Islamic Republic is “endorsed by the people of Iran” and that “the affairs of the country should be administered on the basis of public opinion expressed by means

\textsuperscript{98} Hiro, \textit{The Iranian Labyrinth}, 303-304.
\textsuperscript{99} Jones, \textit{Negotiating Change}, 247.
\textsuperscript{100} Zahedi, \textit{The Iranian Revolution Then and Now},” 82.
of election.” Yet, Article 5 states that, “the just and pious faqih’ should exercise the ‘velayat’ during the occultation of the Hidden Imam.”101 One student explained the opposition to Ayatollah Khamenei in stating, “When Imam Khomeini was alive, because of his special characteristics, no one asked if he was supreme or not. But afterward, people believed that the Leader should operate according to the constitution – where the duty and position are clear. He is subject to it, like everyone else.”102 Thus, the omnipotence of the Ayatollah as supreme leader by reason of his religious supremacy began to be questioned.103

This legitimacy crisis did not truly become a menacing or existential problem for the regime until the people elected Mohammad Khatami, in 1997, as President against the wishes of the faqih. If the Supreme Leader not only lacks religious credentials, but also lost his grip on his political command, what legitimizes his leadership and position? In this crisis of religious and political legitimacy, the regime seems to emphasize its hold on power over resolute loyalty to pure Khomeinist and Islamic values.104 Grand Ayatollah Montazeri said that Khatami’s popular victory was a revolution “against the existing conditions . . . and a clear message to all the authorities and officials of the country.”105 Khamenei subsequently encouraged Hezbollahi radicals to attack the homes and offices of dissident Grand Ayatollahs. He threatened to prosecute Montazeri as a “politically

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102 Hiro, The Iranian Labyrinth, 316.
103 Ibid. 316-317.
105 Zahedi. The Iranian Revolution Then and Now." 81.
bankrupt, pathetic and naïve cleric [who] has acted against the security of the
country and committed treason.”

Khatami pursued a program of reform and liberalization. Khatami, unlike
other self-proclaimed Islamists within Iran, sought to foster civil society, “an
intermediate zone between the spiritual life of the individual and the realm of
government.” He wanted the government to be responsible to the people, as is
ostensibly demanded by the constitution, and to formally champion constitutional
and positive law over religious doctrine. Khamenei repeatedly rebuffed and
subverted his efforts. Nonetheless, Khatami’s election rallied politically apathetic
youth to politics. The pragmatic effects on the youth of Khatami’s tenure will be
further discussed in Chapter 4 of this paper.

The conservatives in Iran continue to consolidate their power, quashing any
reform movements that have sprung up among the young or reform minded
politicians. By 2004 conservatives had regained control of the Majlis by using the
Guardian Council to disqualify most reform candidates for election. Despite
student protests, the combined clerical and economical concentration of power in
the conservative party brought to power a new highly conservative, Mahmoud
Ahmadinejad, in 2005, who is President of Iran to date. Ahmadinejad has pursued a

106 Ibid., 82.
107 Jones, Negotiating Change, 249.
108 Ibid., 249.
109 Gheissari and Nasr, Democracy in Iran, 136.
110 Hiro, The Iranian Labyrinth, 316.
111 Gheissari and Nasr, Democracy in Iran, 140-141.
112 Ibid. 141.
hard line both domestically and internationally, rejecting the west and imposing new social restrictions in keeping with the desires of the traditional religious clerics in Iran.\textsuperscript{113} Iran is in a political and normative crisis that is only made worse by Ahmadinejad’s heedless fiscal and monetary policies, international economic sanctions and isolation.

Despite the “successful” election for regime-supporters, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei must look to the pervasive culture of discontent and feel anxious. Iran’s government claims political legitimacy on both a divine and popular level, but in reality is not only losing the support of the people but also that of the clerics. Non-bureaucratic clerics resent the regime. Hojatoleslam Mohsen Kadivar, who headed the Howzeh Islamic Center, a preeminent seminary in Iran, said, “[N]intety-eight percent of more than 100,000 clerics in Iran who [are] not involved in running the state [are] now losing legitimacy among the masses because of the ruling clergy’s unpopularity.”\textsuperscript{114} Khomeini managed to exploit the revolutionary fervor of the 1970s, which he used as a means to advance his own religiously tinged brand of regime change. Essentially, Khomeini employed populist rhetoric and supported the 1979 “leftist, third-worldist and anti-imperialist revolution” in order to privilege his own ideology, which he guised with “an Islamic cloak.”\textsuperscript{115} This “cloak” is now being questioned.

\textsuperscript{113} “Brief History of Modern Iran,” 7.
Kadivar, who vehemently opposed the Shah, believes that power ought to be truly vested in the people. He says, “One of the incentives of the revolution was to give power to the people . . . it is not fair to have a revolution in the name of religion and to promise a people-oriented government and then gradually change directions.”\(^{116}\) For this statement, the government sentenced Kadivar to eighteen months imprisonment. Yazdi, a cleric whose father instructed Khomeini, believes that the regime ought to follow the path of the Prophet, who did not coerce people to follow or believe. Furthermore, he propounds that a government whose true foundation of power is intimidation, propaganda, and force is illegitimate and not truly Islamic.\(^{117}\)

The majority of Iranian youth today scrutinize the Iranian regime and its founding ideology, Khomeinism. With their commanding percentage of the population, the youth have immense power in Iran. In chapter 4, this thesis will analyze the degree of secularization amongst the Iranian youth. Of particular interest to my study are the 2009 presidential election and the Green Movement. Though some point to Ahmadinejad’s election as a public mandate for a fundamentalist strain of Islamism, the number of requests for visas to Europe and the United States soared after his victory.\(^{118}\)

\(^{116}\) Zahedi. *The Iranian Revolution Then and Now*, 84.


In addition to the dissidence of distinguished clerics, the secularization of the youth, and their areligiosity, Iran’s current leadership occasionally ignores its own calls for a truly Islamic government in order to survive. The regime is pragmatic. Islam is not the sole or even the main factor that determines Iran’s political culture. When confronted with precarious and exigent social realities, the government must either compromise or exert force, as is evidenced by the regime’s attempt to neutralize the political and social threats posed by the youth. For example, after Khomeini’s pro-natalist calls, Iran was confronted with an extremely high birth rate while lacking the necessary economic and social institutions to compensate for the population surge. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Iran’s leaders began to realize the “costs of this burgeoning population were going to far exceed its capacity to provide adequate food, education, housing and employment.” Iran’s Ministry of Health implemented a pervasive family planning campaign and introduced birth control pills, condoms, and vasectomies.119 Iran supplanted its devotion to Islam with its devotion to overcome social realities.

Thus, Iran’s Islamic Revolution has not launched the Iranian government into a distinguished category of religiosity. One scholar argued that the supremacy of politics over religion is a *de facto* secularization.120 With a virtual monopoly on a strained economy and little international aid, the Iranian government must address

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its youthful population and domestic exigencies with methods other than denial and brute force, as will be analyzed in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4: TURKISH AND IRANIAN YOUTH: COMPARATIVE STATUS QUOS

TURKISH CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

Introduction to the Youth’s Call for Change

Emphasizing that his secular ends justified his authoritarian and pedagogical means, the textbooks laud Atatürk and place him on a pedestal in an attempt to instill Kemalist feeling in the youth of Turkey. Every morning in Turkish schools, children shout, “I am a Turk! I am honest! I am industrious!”¹ Classrooms are adorned with pictures of a fatherly Atatürk. Immortalized in the textbooks, Atatürk’s personal life and political ideology have become almost legendary.² Immortality describes not only a living creature that lives forever, but also the “survival of a particular social, economic, political organization in perpetuity.”³ Thus, immortality can be achieved through a union of the individual and a social revolution or ideology, which lives on after the physical demise of said individual. Reminders of Atatürk’s legacy are found everywhere in Turkey. Omnipresent, he is even known as Ededy Sef or Eternal Leader.⁴

Though it is undisputed that Atatürk’s memory lives on in Turkey, there is a broad spectrum of interpretations of the forefather of Kemalism and the Turkish Republic. “Like any politician, Atatürk said many things at many times” and, thus, a

² Ibid., 51.
⁴ Volkan and Itzkowitz. The Immortal Atatürk, 346.
broad spectrum of actors interpret Kemalism for varied purposes. For instance, one Kemalist, Şahin Alpay, argued that Atatürk was “above all secular, he want[ed] to banish religion, he believe[d] in progress [and] he worship[ed] reason.” Others point to a pan-Turkish side of Atatürk. Even the Communists are said to have provided him with gold for many years in sincere belief that he would prove to be a Turkish Lenin. Every understanding of Kemalism “can be used to convey multiple meanings or to support multiple narrations” of national identity and the role of Islam.

As stated by the anthropologist Richard Tapper, the attitudes of Turkish society “have never been characterized by stark, simple oppositions between materialist and religious values, or between Islamic and republican nationalist ideologies.” The blurring of Kemalist-Islamic divide is reflected in the attitudes of the Turkish youth. The youth evidence that black and white categorizations of public/private and secular/Islamic “are social constructs, not natural categories.” There is no single degree of secularization/Islamization, but young people who wear both jeans and headscarves visibly challenge any pretense of clear-cut Kemalist and Islamic classifications. “Atatürkism is not a static concept.”

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5 Pope, *Turkey Unveiled*, 67.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 71.
9 Ibid., 67.
Population and Religiosity Statistics

With a population nearing 80 million, by 2025 it is estimated that Turkey will be the second most populous country in Europe.12 With 25 percent of the population aged between 10-24 and 50 percent under the age of 25, Turkey’s youth have a commanding presence in the country.13 The Turkish populace remains quite Muslim. With a population of approximately 80 million, nearly 400,000 are Greek Orthodox Christians, 65,000 are Armenian Christians, and 20,000 are Jews. Thus, non-Muslims account for 0.2 percent of the Turkish population,14 while 99.8 percent of Turkish citizens hold identity cards that proclaim their Muslim status.15

Yet, does holding a Muslim identity card necessarily imply an individual’s Islamist leanings? A recent national survey evidences the ambiguous line between secularists and Islamic-oriented individuals in Turkey. In the survey, 80 percent of respondents agreed that God is “very important” in their lives.16 In the another national survey, 25 percent of respondents considered themselves quite religious, 12.5 percent consider themselves marginally or not at all religious, 46 percent pray five times a day, 91 percent fast during the month of Ramadan, and 60 percent give alms.

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13 Ibid.
14 Lee, Religion and Politics in the Middle East, 204.
15 Ibid. 175.
Despite these markers of a high degree of religiosity, 60 percent of respondents believed female civil servants and students ought to have the right to cover their heads in public institutions, 91 percent affirmed, “tolerance and protection of differences of belief were important for social harmony.”17 Kemalism has failed to truly expunge the Turkish populace’s Islamic feelings, just as the French Revolution never managed to absolutely gain control over the Catholic Church in France or to form a truly secular French identity.18 The Turkish private and public spheres exhibit a gradual synthesis within the secular framework espoused by Atatürk.19

The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), a prestigious think tank, found in a recent report that though Turkish people are relatively pious Muslims, they are attached to the concept of secularism. In the survey, 46 percent of the respondents said that they prayed five times a day and only 3.7 percent have never fasted on Ramadan. At the same time 80 percent of respondents thought that Muslims who drink are still Muslim. The majority was also antagonistic to Saudi Arabia’s rigid and Islamic penal laws. Ultimately, the report highlighted the majority of the Turkish population’s desire to accommodate Islam to modernity and secularism without debasing the democratic order.20

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18 Lee, *Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, 175.
Political Aspirations and Involvement

As diverse individuals, Turkish young people hold varied opinions. Yet, an overwhelming majority express, to some degree, a desire for stability, increased education, and communication between polarized groups. Though the Turkish youth have statistically low levels of direct participation, active networks, such as GencNet, foster informal political involvement. One student from Izmir underscored the dangers that arise from marginalizing Islamists, “The only way to curb extremism is through communication.” If diehard Kemalists deprive citizens of an outlet of dissent and of freedom of religion, they will be pushed to radicalism.

The challenge presented by the youth to the status quo is an amalgamation of modernity, religion and secularism. A majority of the Turkish people, accept and champion many of Atatürk’s principles. A recent poll evidenced that 84 percent of Turks “respect and love Atatürk” and 84 percent also “attach importance to religion.” While practicing religion, Turkish society continues to enshrine the inviolability of the nation, an orientation towards Europe, and populism. Anthropologist Jenny White looks to the rise of the AKP in Turkey as a “hybrid ‘modern urban-, community- and value-based political process that has managed to ‘draw large numbers of people of diverse backgrounds into national politics.’”

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Contemporary exigencies require political ideologies to change and adapt. For instance, in the 1920s and 1930s, heavy-handed state control of the economy was indubitably needed in Turkey in order to protect the fledgling industries. The time, however, came later in the twentieth century when the Turkish economy could flourish without such a patriarchal government. Similarly, secularism can change with the demands of the Turkish populace, who are keeping the AKP in power and supporting their agenda to champion religious freedom. The mutual exclusion of secularism and Islamism in Turkey appears to be diminishing with each generation. One professor at Ankara University, Ahmet Taner Kislali, says, “People have come to realize that Kemalism is relevant today because it is nationalism based on shared culture, not religion or ethnicity, and can be adapted to present conditions.”

In order to understand the youth’s stance on this shifting and merging of ideological lines, one must question what aspects of Islamism and Kemalism are compromised, valued, or rejected in Turkish society. As many of Turkey’s youth reject “heavy-handed laicism in favor of a more tolerant secularist” political party, are they then also rejecting Kemalism as a whole? The victory of the AKP in the 2002 elections marks the public’s tolerance, if not support, of “the construction of a Turkish style of Islam and the Islamization of the Turkish national ideology.” And in practice, the AKP has not sought to radically alter the status quo and continues to work within the secularist framework. The Turkish youth and populace do not

\[26\] White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, 56.
\[27\] Lee, *Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, 203.
consider the AKP to be in violation of the principle of secularism, irrevocably enshrined in Article 2 of the Constitution, or of the preamble’s requirement that “there shall be no interference whatsoever by sacred religious feelings in state affairs and politics.”

Though, in a recent poll, 45 percent of those who claimed they would support an Islamist-led government were between the ages of 14 and 30, young people will not blindly support an Islamic agenda and do not seek the implementation of Islamic law in Turkey. In May 2011, tens of thousands of young people, organized by social media, gathered in central Istanbul to protest what they considered to be overly conservative Internet censorship by the AKP. The youth with higher education, a limited but important subsection of Turkey’s population, crave an open forum for intellectual and political debate. The AKP not only represents the mutual accommodation between Islam and secularism, but also supports open dialogue to educate Islamists and secularists about their respective “antagonists.” The AKP has hosted inclusive dialogues on many of the most contentious cultural issues, including Islam in society. Rather than attacking the secular establishment “head-on,” the youth seek to work to build a democratic “national consensus” around these issues.

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28 Ibid., 203.
29 White, Islamist Mobilization in Turkey, 132.
30 Pope. Turkey Unveiled, 353.
Ideological Orientation

One Turkish scholar propounds that there are three essential meanings to secularization: [1] a complete separation of religion from the public sphere, [2] a natural diminishing of religious belief and practice, [3] an exploitation of religion to the benefit of the secular state. The Turkish youth seem, however, to be forging a new conception of secularization. Unlike their Iranian counterparts, the Turkish young people from birth have secularism engrained in their national identities by the state’s heavy-handed measures. Yet, they seek to accommodate their Islamic piety to democratic ideals and secularism. Their loyalty to Islam and to Atatürk and the Turkish Republic are compatible.

Students in Turkey have a rather unique understanding of secularism. One survey found that students recognized a great dichotomy between the definition of “secularism” in their textbooks and the implementation of that principle. The secular model assumes neutrality in the public sphere, yet the respondents felt that the principle “gets shaped and reshaped according to the ideals and views of political parties in Turkey.” The students themselves expressed varying interpretations of secularism. One student expressed her fear of the Islamic threat, “If there were no secularism, Islam might have been used as a propaganda tool on campuses and a lot of extreme religious activities might have taken place.” Yet,

another student expressed the view that secularism endows her with the personal right to express her religion publicly. She said, “Islam is a religion between the individual and Allah. So why does it become so politicized?”\(^{34}\)

The youth point to the Kemalist principle of revolutionism to justify their position. Revolutionism stressed that Turkey needed to abandon the Ottoman customs and the Islamic foundation. This principle lends Kemalism the ability to grow and adapt to present-day exigencies. Revolutionism “gives [the ideology the] flexibility and power of growth without sacrificing basic tenets.”\(^{35}\) It was Atatürk himself who famously said, “Concepts of well-being for countries, for peoples and for individuals are changing. In such a world, to argue for rules that never change would be to deny the reality found in scientific knowledge and reasoned judgment.”\(^{36}\)

This particular interpretation of the Kemalist principles of secularism and revolutionism put several contentious articles in the Turkish penal code in the spotlight. Article 301 censures any speech that insults Turkishness, “an overarching concept that defines Turkey’s identity, history, institutions, and culture.”\(^{37}\) In a recent Gallup poll, 93 percent of respondents said that they would support the

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\(^{34}\) Ibid. 164.  
inclusion of a freedom of speech clause. Similarly, 91 percent of respondents agreed with the inclusion of a freedom of religion provision. In the same Gallup poll, 25 percent of respondents say that religion is not important in their daily lives and 73 percent say that it is important. To elucidate what these respondents meant by “important in their daily lives” the Gallup poll included a question about the role of Sharia. Only 7 percent agreed that Sharia should be the sole source of the law in Turkey, 26 percent acquiesced that it should be one of the sources, and 41 percent agreed that it should not be a source of law. Almost 25 percent of respondents refused to or did not know how to respond.

The political environment in Turkey is experiencing a clash between new and old theories vis-à-vis modernization. Kemalism, as originally implemented by Atatürk himself, has its foundations in the old theory that equates westernization with modernization and makes use of statist policies to shift the cultural orientation of a society. The new theory champions the political exigencies of liberalism, like democracy and liberalization. Adherents to the new theory, like the majority of the educated youth, do not consider Islam and modernization to be irreconcilable paradigms. The new theory rejects the old as “illiberal secularism,” calls for political transparency and accountability.

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38 Crabtree. “Turks at Odds Over Islamic Law” 1.
39 Ibid.
Many young people believe that Turkey would benefit from the gradual separation of “the force of government” and “the rule of Heaven.”\(^42\) One student worries that by stringently suppressing the youth’s basic rights to religious self-expression, “They’ll turn moderates into radicals and radicals into fanatics.”\(^43\) In order to safeguard secularism, religious freedom must be able to flourish. “To prevent the rise of extremism and fundamentalism, sufficient importance must be given to people’s democratic and basic freedoms.”\(^44\) Can a state that pays the salaries of imams and directs their weekly sermons truly be considered secular, as in the American understanding?\(^45\)

**The Question of the Headscarf**

What has come to be known as the “Headscarf War” epitomizes the shifting boundaries between Islamism and secularism, and the public and private amongst Turkey’s youth. Although many religions have a tradition of veiling, in the post-9/11 world it has come to almost exclusively signify the Islamic threat to the secular status quo. Since the 1920s, the Kemalist vanguard has represented the veil as a symbol of backwardness, underdevelopment, and the omnipresent threat of political Islam. The veil has remains a highly politicized object. Kemalists see Islamic practice as a threat to progress in Turkey. They believe that veiling is a backwards symbol that relegates women to a traditional, oppressed role. Unlike turbans and

\(^42\) Howe, *Turkey Today*, 43.
\(^43\) Ibid., 112.
\(^44\) Ibid., 38.
\(^45\) Pope, *Turkey Unveiled*, 309.
fezzes, Atatürk did not ban the veil outright, but he highly encouraged the unveiling of Turkish women. It “became a convenient instrument for signifying many issues at once” such as the newly formed Turkish identity, modernization, and the constriction of religion in society.46

In the 1980s, the visible re-emergence of the veil amongst western-educated, urban, middle-class women contradicted the government’s association of the veil with ignorance and submission. The Council of High Education of Turkey has banned the veil/headscarf from any “places of enlightenment.”47 Thus, the Turkish government prevents veiled women from entering many schools and universities. In February 2008, loyal to their democratization and liberalization agenda, the AKP put through Parliament two constitutional amendments to remove the ban on the headscarf in public places of higher education. The AKP sought to amend Article 10 of the 1982 constitution, which enshrines equality before the law, in order to emphasize all citizens’ right to equal access to public services, such as education. Similarly, the AKP aimed to include in Article 42 of the constitution, which delineates the right to education, a provision that prevents the denial of access to education except for “a reason openly stated in law.”48 Though president, at the

time, Abdullah Gul ratified the amendments, the Republican People’s Party applied to the Constitutional Court for an annulment, which was approved in June 2008.49

Advocates for the ban of the headscarf in the public sphere include the judiciary, some major university Presidents, the Republican People’s Party, certain civil society organizations, and leftist groups.50 The president of Istanbul University, Bulent Berkarda, argued that the presence of veils in public institutions is a step down a slippery slope to an “Iranian-style revolution that would bring down the secular government.”51 Similarly, another Turkish intellectual claimed, “the inclusion of signs and symbols associated with Islamic cultural tradition means Islamization of society par excellence.”52 Many staunch Kemalists, view the veil as a highly charged and politicized, symbol rather than a personal and private choice. Yet, they assume that Western-style clothing is “‘neutral’ and devoid of political meaning.”53

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49 Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu, “Veiling and Headscarf-Skepticism in Turkey,” 515.
50 Ibid., 516.
52 Ibid. 694.
53 Ibid. 695.
Many young women do not view their decision to veil themselves or to wear jeans, however, as ideologically based, Kemalist or Islamist. Instead these women feel that they are struggling to reclaim their right to personal lifestyle choice. One young Turk said, “People are always asking me about the supposed paradox of girls in headscarves happily walking alongside girls all made up . . . [Turkey] is a coming together of things. People are comfortable with that.”\textsuperscript{54} Some young women place a decorative and thin scarf on the back of their heads, allowing their hair to be seen. More religious women choose to more fully cover themselves in a dark blue or black cloak (carsaf). It is common to see veiled young woman wearing tight-fitting skirts and other western fashions.

\begin{table}[h]
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\hline
\textit{Gross Enrollment in Tertiary Education} & \textit{Ratio of female rate to male rate} \\
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Qatar & 3.45 \\
United Arab Emirates & 3.24 \\
Kuwait & 2.66 \\
Bahrain & 2.23 \\
Saudi Arabia & 1.47 \\
Tunisia & 1.40 \\
Algeria & 1.37 \\
Lebanon & 1.15 \\
Libya & 1.09 \\
Oman & 1.09 \\
Iran & 1.09 \\
Jordan & 1.06 \\
Palestinian Territories & 1.04 \\
Morocco & 0.85 \\
Turkey & 0.74 \\
Yemen & 0.37 \\
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\textsuperscript{54} Pope, \textit{Turkey Unveiled}, 178.
while holding hands with a young man. Islamic and western values, such as capitalism, are blending in Turkey. For example, “Muslim rap, ‘family’ television and religious ‘lifestyle’ shows, Muslim comedians, Islamist yuppies, . . . [and] high-fashion Islamic women’s couture.”

Young Muslim women demand civil liberties under the constitution. The choice to wear the veil symbolizes their democratic civil right to freedom from the state in private matters and lifestyle choices. According to many young women, even those who choose a more westernized form of the headscarf, the state’s heavy-handed machinations to expunge the veil from public space while encouraging western styles “has political significance for them” as they are denied access to many places of higher education. Mainly due to the ruling that prohibits veiled women from universities, Turkey has an extremely low ratio of females in tertiary education to males. As evidenced by the UNDP Human Develop Report, most Gulf States have a ratio above 1.40, while in Turkey it is a meager 0.74.

The “Headscarf War” in Turkey underscores the lack of consensus among young Muslims, socio-economic classes, women, and the population as a whole. Beyond the fact that the veil is a religious symbol, it represents many concepts and ideas to many different people. There is a plethora of opinions towards veiling and justifications for choosing to veil or not to veil. Surprisingly, some Western-educated

55 White, Islamist Mobilization in Turkey, 51.
56 Smith, “Between Allah and Atatürk.” 319.
57 Shively, “Taming Islam” 695.
women are leading this struggle, which they see to be a feminist and civil rights movement. Thus, 38 percent of respondents agreed that the veil embodies “freedom”, 31 percent identified the veil with “respectability” and a comparable 26 percent associated the veil with “oppression.” Other westernized Turkish women and the military continue to perceive the headscarf as a politicized symbol of radical Islam, which they call “the uniform of Islamic extremism.” Yet, it is important to note that only 14 percent of respondents associated the veil with “fanaticism” and 12 percent with “backwardness.”

Although 45 percent of Turkish women said they wear a headscarf in public, only 29 percent of those aged 15 to 29 do. 74 percent of women, who were only educated through primary school or less, cover their heads. This statistic is in sharp contrast to 27 percent of more educated women who cover. Gallup explored women’s motivations for wearing a veil in public. The results make it clear that the majority of women who are veiled in public choose to do this to express their personal beliefs—they are not forced. Furthermore, Gallup analyzed women’s reasons for not veiling in public, 59 percent of respondents expressed that wearing a veil is not a necessary religious practice.

In 1998, the Ministry of Education ruled that instructors, officials, and students may not wear Islamic dress in any public school or university. This decision was followed by mass protests and student demonstrations, which

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60 Rheault. “Headscarves and Secularism,” 2.
successfully postponed the implementation of the ruling. Ultimately, both groups of women view this argument in a right to personal liberties framework, rather than as a matter of ideology. One young woman claimed that no matter which side of the Headscarf War one is on, “in essence it’s the same; it’s [a fear of] the male authority deciding what women should wear.”

Another student expressed her concern about the polarized debate between secularists and Islamists and highlights the need to compromise as Turkey emerges as a hybrid of East and West, “We’re a synthesis; secularists have to know their grandmothers wore the hijab and Islamists must remember part of Turkey is in Europe and the country has been Westernized…” The majority of the youth believe the universities ought to represent a “safe space where [students] can fully explore, learn and exchange ideas freely with their peers.” Instead, the university represents a battleground where students must sacrifice part of their identity to access higher education. The divisive ban creates tension between students, their peers, and faculty. Another students laments, “I wish a girl with a mini and a girl wearing a headscarf could be in the same classroom.” The repression of headscarves has come to be seen by many youths as an attempt by the government

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64 Ibid., 113
65 Ibid., 113
66 Mabokela and Seggie, “Mini Skirts and Headscarves,” 165.
67 Ibid.
to coerce them to abandon their personal faith in order to attain economic mobility and security. Socioeconomics underlie what appears to be a strictly religious issue.68

**Cultural Fusion**

As a commodity, the veil has become a medium for Muslim women to express their personal fashion tastes. One Islamist said, “What are those tags of Pierre Cardin, Hermes, Burberry, and Gucci supposed to mean displayed like flags on the veils on these young women? . . . [T]his is not how a conscientious Muslim would behave.”69 Indeed, the veiling issue in Turkey highlights the conflict that has arisen over Turkey’s emerging synthetic culture. The headscarf debate is a symbolic cornerstone marking the controversial reintegration of Islam into Turkey’s public order. Likewise, Turkish pop music now frequently incorporates both Western rhythms and Arabesque/Turkish overtones.70 “Commercialized Islamist fashion, leftists writing for Islamic magazines, Islamists supporting the introduction of Valentine’s Day into Turkish society” all promoted by globalization, represent the hybridization of the Turkish youth.71

**IRAN: AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS**

**Introduction to Youth’s The Call for Change**

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68 White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, 120.
70 White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, 63
71 Ibid., 30.
Iran has a history of restive youth affecting great change in the political sphere. In the early 1900s, young Iranians took part in the Constitutional Revolution demanding reform from the ruling Qajar dynasty. The young intelligentsia acted as champions of the 1979 Revolution that deposed Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. A 1980s baby boom and falling infant mortality rates have given rise to a “Third Generation” in Iran that is unburdened by memories of the Shah’s regime, disconnected from the ruling theocracy’s stringent Islamic ideology, and influenced by western cultural freedoms via globalization. Due to economic, infrastructural, and social tensions that the regime has failed to effectively address, the youth, endowed with the right to vote at the age of eighteen, may pose a great danger to the ruling order in Iran. Whether these nationalistic youngsters participate in the 2013 elections and whom they vote for may have great ramifications for Iran and the current Iranian regime’s ability to retain its political power.

Population Statistics

After the 1979 Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini mandated that post-revolutionary Iran procreate “an army of 20 million.”72 He supported early marriage, banned contraceptives and closed family planning clinics. The resulting birth rate nearing 4.0 and baby boom drastically augmented the Iranian population.73 Today, Iran boasts one of the youngest populations in the world. Out

73 Suzanne Maloney, *Iran’s Long Reach: Iran as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*, Washington, D.C.:
of more than 70 million people, more than 50 percent of the population is under the age of 25. 70 percent of Iran’s population is under 30. Concurrently, due to urbanization, the urban adolescent population has increased by 72 percent since 1986 and 147 percent since 1976.

Compounding the stress of a high birth rate, Khomeini championed a highly educated population. Primary school enrollment and literacy is nearly universal for both boys and girls. The number of young people, especially women, attaining university degrees has drastically increased, with more than three million students in 2009—producing a very young and highly educated population. 84 percent of young Tehranis are enrolled in universities or graduate programs, and 65 percent of these students are female. It is estimated that the student population will grow by 5 percent every year. Universities have spread beyond Tehran to other provinces such as Isfahan, Khorasan, East Azerbaijan, Khuzestan, and Mazandaran. Thus, the student population is not only growing numerically, but also extending geographically. Despite an extremely high literacy rate of nearly 80 percent and

76 Maloney, Iran’s Long Reach, 84.
78 Mahdavi. "Passionate Uprisings," 446.
80 Ibid.
rate of 70 percent for enrollment in secondary schooling, more than a million
Iranian university graduates become unemployed.\textsuperscript{81}

Economists have estimated that in order to keep pace with the baby-
boomers, who are now in their twenties, Iran’s government must create one million
new jobs annually. The mechanisms in place, however, generate only 300,000 new
jobs annually.\textsuperscript{82} Thus, a highly educated population is essentially left with no hope
for employment or economic security. Although in 2003 the official unemployment
rate was 13 percent, economists estimate that it was and is closer to 20 percent
among the youth and 30 percent among women.\textsuperscript{83} Young people, consequently, do
not have the means to realistically fulfill many of their goals, like starting a family.
Slightly less than 50 percent of young men aged 20-29 lived with their parents in
1984. In 2005, this statistic jumped to 75 percent.\textsuperscript{84} Thus, with bleak economic
prospects, Iranian youth are increasingly underutilized and dissatisfied. The
theocracy’s economic, literacy, and fertility policies have created a restive, youthful
population.

\textbf{Religiosity}

The Middle East is comprised of countries whose populations who are, for
the majority, Muslim. Yet, each distinct national group does not identify in the same

\textsuperscript{82} Basmenji, \textit{Tehran Blues}, 46.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid.} 46.
\textsuperscript{84} Djavad Salehi-Isfahani and David Egel, "Youth Exclusion in Iran: The State of Education,
Employment and Family Formation" (Brookings Institution, Middle East Youth Initiative Working
Paper no. 3, September 2007), 33
manner. A recent survey comparing the Muslim publics in Iran, Jordan and Egypt found that of a national polling, 97 percent of Iranians identified as Muslim and 79 percent agreed that religion is very important in their lives. (Fig. 2) Furthermore, 61 percent claimed to be above all Muslim, while 34 percent claimed to be above all nationalist. (Fig. 1)\textsuperscript{85} Despite this relatively high figure of 97 percent, a high percentage of older Iranians and people with lower education were likely to identify as “Muslim” and express religion’s importance in their daily lives. There is a direct relationship between age and trust in the mosque, and an inverse relationship between level of education and trust in the mosque.\textsuperscript{86} Younger and more educated respondents, tended to express more nationalistic and secular values while deemphasizing religion.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Religion versus Nationalism- From "The Worldviews of Islamic Publics" p. 301}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{86} Azadarmaki. "The Worldviews of Islamic Publics" 311-312.
Figure 2 - Religion versus Spirituality - From "The Worldviews of Islam Publics p. 301

In Jordan and Egypt, the level of education and age did not have nearly as prominent an influence on the level of trust in the mosque or government. In a comparison of Egyptian, Jordanian, and Iranian youth’s attitude vis-à-vis religious institutions, it is clear that this attitude is directly related to the degree of secularization of the government. In Egypt, where the public considered the regime to be relatively secular, 79 percent agreed “religious authorities adequately responded to the country’s social problems.” That figure is only 47 percent for the Iranian public (Fig. 3). Similarly, the degree to which the public considers Western cultural invasion to be a serious problem is influenced by the regime’s association with western states. In Jordan, a relatively close ally of the United States, 85 percent of the public feared this cultural threat. This same figure was 64 percent in Egypt,
whose regime had ties with western states, and only 55 percent in Iran, whose regime rejects the West.\textsuperscript{87} Thus, it is evident that the majority of Iranians polled do not have adequate confidence in the theocrat’s response to political, social, and economic exigencies.

Figure 3- Religious Authorities Sufficiently Respond to Country’s Problems From "The Worldviews of Islamic Publics" p. 303

Spirituality and religiosity are not inherently related concepts. Religion is in many ways an external “social phenomenon” while spirituality is a more internal, private belief. The younger generation in Iran tends to individualize religion. This internalization of spirituality and renouncement of religion as a public social construct “means choosing one’s own way of following [and not that of] the religious authority.”\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Din-i khodiman} refers to “my own

\textsuperscript{87} Azadarmaki. "The Worldviews of Islamic Publics," 303.
personal religion” and is used by many young people to differentiate an individual’s faith from the state-imposed norms.89

In Kazemipur and Goodarzi’s study, it is evident that to a degree comparable to the youth in Egypt and Turkey, Iranian youth believe in relatively abstract religious principles like God’s existence and Heaven. The Iranians, however, scored significantly less religious than their Turkish and Egyptian counterparts when asked about religious practice. The Iranian youth’s score in this manner is very comparable to the youth in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.90 Many young Iranians have adopted more liberal attitudes vis-à-vis their lifestyles and accommodating religion to their personal wants and needs as individuals.

Young Iranians’ opinions concerning what constitutes being a devout Muslim are in stark contrast to the regime’s ideals. In 2000, the head of Tehran’s Cultural and Artistic Affairs published a report that “acknowledged the growth of a-religiosity among the young people.” Eighty-six percent of students were reported as not practicing Islam and 46 percent never or rarely went to the mosque. When asked who their model for behavior was, 61 percent cited western artists and a meager 17 percent cited Iranian officials.91 The Third Generation has supplanted the revolutionary vision of the 1970s and early 1980s that was predicated on the ideological concept of the “Self versus the Other” and a politicized understanding of religion.

89 Id., 918.  
In Iran, there is great disparity between public and private life. One survey of nearly 390 high school students in Tehran found that they are religious, but in faith rather than practice. Finding similar conclusions, in another study conducted from 2006 until 2009, a group of researchers interviewed and collected data from 73 individuals aged 15-28 from Shiraz, a metropolitan city in Iran. 54 percent of participants were in high school and 46 percent in university. All the students were Shiite Muslims with 68.5 percent from the middle class, 19.17 percent from the upper class, and 12.33 percent from the lower class. 39.7 percent were male and 60.27 percent were female. Many of the interviews revealed that these youth found a conceptual difference between their individual conception of Allah and the regime's social construction of Allah. They believed that the regime's Allah was “cold, dry, rough and unfriendly.” This understanding of God had “expanded the circle of sin.” What many of these young people considered to be right and a private life decision is deemed sinful by the regime. One youth says, “Whatever we do ‘the society God’ considers as sin . . . The society says if you act against the law it’s a sin, but God hasn’t said [that] in the Qur’an.”

These youths expressed that society exploited the concept of sin to constrict their behavior, but their private conception of God did not align with society's proscriptions. The following quotes from the interviews make frustration with the

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95 Ibid., 10-11.
regime’s norms and laws clear: “They say if you don’t do these things that God has said, you will burn in hell and you are pagan . . . He will hang you by your hair in hell,” “I have been forced to fear God . . . Adults have created a frightening image of God for [the] youth.” “The society's God is a God who has imprisoned everyone . . . Everything is sinful in his eyes.”96 This duality has inspired young people to move away from religious practice all together. Society is undergoing secularization from the inside. A promoter of underground music in Tehran said, “People are pushing from the inside. [The shell] is getting thinner and thinner.”97

Aggravated by the social restrictions made in the name of God and Islam, the youth have turned away from Islam. One interviewee says, “In our society many people don’t actually know God, we have lost out faith . . . In Iran’s present society, God is rarely seen.”98 In the initial years following the revolution, Iranians flocked to mosques to listen to their liberators, the clerics, who threw off the shackles of the Shah and the influence of the western powers. The regime’s dictation of morality and theology has had grave consequences. One 23-year old man from Tehran said, “They tell us “go pray, five times a day, go visit the shrine of the prophets, observe your fasts’ but they don’t tell us why.”99 One survey conducted in Tehran in 2003 found that 40 percent of the 412 respondents had never been to Friday prayers and

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96 Id.
only 16 percent attend prayers at least once a month. The majority of the youth views Friday prayers “as a forum that has been hijacked by the conservatives, and they have no interest in endorsing the regime with their attendance.” World Value Surveys have shown that Iranians who participate in Friday prayers evidence lower levels of religiosity than those who do not attend at all. Furthermore, Iranian citizens participate in public displays of religion less any other Muslim-majority country without a communist past.

The government reads this disobedience as proof of the extreme need to defend Islamic morality in the country. The hardliners that currently command the regime refer to today's youth as biarman (without ideology). The dogmatic regime’s rhetoric describes them as frivolous, idle, and careless. They blame the young's mimicry of Western culture on a demoralizing ploy by the Great Satan and the youth's primitive naf (ego) that leads them to exclusively pursue passion and ignore Islamic reason. As sin became synonymous with crime during the Islamic Revolution, the regime embraced the concept of gharbzadegi (cultural disease), a term introduced in the 1960s by Jalal Al-e Admad. Although this concept of “cultural invasion” has been in the arsenal of revolutionary and Khomeinist discourse since the early 1980s, only in the 1990s did the conservatives utilize this concept as a

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103Khosravi, Young and Defiant in Tehran, 128.
104Ibid., 128-130.
political tool. At the end of the Iran-Iraq War, with a shattered economy and an exhausted populace, the regime needed a new enemy—the Great Satan. Thus, the regime devotes great resources and energy against this threat, which is synonymous with the US, to preserve and protect the “purity” of the Iranian Republic. According to Khomeinists, these youth are easily manipulated by the west, indulgent, and in need of tough love. Iranian youth have come under scrutiny for their western and, therefore, immoral, tendencies.

**Political Aspirations and Involvement**

The Third Generation is one that has inherited a system of intrusive cultural constraints based on traditional precepts that are not viewed as relevant or true to the younger generation. One young man said, “The former generations have ruined the country with their Revolution and we must pay the costs.” The youth are faced with “innumerable questions and no [true] answers” to explain why they must act pursuant to the regime’s regulations. Ultimately, the Third Generation considers the legitimacy of traditional institutions of authority to be tainted. By challenging the theocracy’s restrictions, however, the youth are engaging in a political battle.

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106 Ibid. 20.
Although Iran’s youth explicitly express their aspirations for social freedom, many of these ambitions have implicit political implications. Young people played fundamental roles in Mohammed Khatami’s campaign in 1997. Khatami ran on a platform that featured “political pluralism, freedom, and a civil society.” Ultimately, Khatami shocked conservatives by defeating their favored candidate with 77 percent of the votes. As one conservative journalist said, “20 million punks voted for Khatami.” Khatami’s election marked the first time the public will and that of the youth subjugated the will of the Supreme Leader in the presidential elections. Many young people, hungry for social relaxation, viewed their votes for Khatami “as a big ‘No’ to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the conservatives.”

After the conservatives roused from the shock and humiliation of Khatami’s victory, they utilized their control over key levers of power to undermine the youth’s will. The Judiciary closed down many nascent, liberal newspapers and the police force brutally suppressed student demonstrations in order to create a sense of disillusionment and to manifest Khatami’s impotence. In July 1999, students at the University of Tehran gathered to peacefully protest the closure of a reformist newspaper, Salaam. Later, plainclothes Basijis and members of Ansar-e Hezbollah entered the dorms and viciously attacked the students. Due to the threat of a coup by the Iranian Revolution Guards Corps, Khatami was powerless to defend the students.

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110 Basmenji, Tehran Blues., 225.
111 Ibid, 231.
112 Ibid. 231.
113 Jahanbegloo, Civil Society and Democracy in Iran 48.
Thus, the regime temporarily succeeded in creating a sense of disillusionment and discouraged future student protests. After Khatami’s failure one dissident writer described the Iranian youth as “sheep without a shepherd.”\textsuperscript{114} Not only did the conservatives squash Khatami’s presidency, but they also succeeded in deterring young people from taking part in politics. One young Iranian said, “I’m still kicking myself for [voting for Khatami] to this day. [He] offered us only superficial freedom . . . I’ll never vote again.”\textsuperscript{115} Indeed, many young people began to either turn away from politics as a potential panacea or to boycott the elections because “voting for president just shows . . . support [for] this discriminatory regime”\textsuperscript{116} and for Khomeini’s political ideology. In the municipal and parliamentary elections in 2003 and 2004, the conservatives easily won seats due to low turnouts.\textsuperscript{117}

Even while turning away from politics, Iranian young people express great interest in inherently politicized issues and, thus, continue to antagonize the regime. One political monthly, \textit{Gozaresh}, asserted that the “Third Generation” is the “most Americanized generation in the whole region.”\textsuperscript{118} The young Iranians not only consume American goods and adopt aspects of western culture, but also favor dialogue with the U.S. government. In 1998, students marched to the former American Embassy on November 4, the anniversary of the takeover. They rallied behind Ibrahim Asgharzadeh, one of the former hostage takers, as he offered an

\textsuperscript{117}Dhillon and Yousef, \textit{Generation in Waiting}, 231.
\textsuperscript{118}Khosravi, \textit{Young and Defiant in Tehran}, 127.
olive branch to the United States and invited the former hostages to return to Iran.\textsuperscript{119} After the 9/11 attacks, young Iranians flooded Mosheni Square in Tehran to hold spontaneous candlelight vigils and express their support for the American people. In 2002, one opinion poll conducted by the National Society of Public Opinion Studies reported that 74.4 percent of young Iranians today favor restored relations with the U.S.\textsuperscript{120}

Cosmopolitan, young Iranians hold relatively favorable opinions of the democratic ideals that the United States represents. A recent World Values Survey revealed that 69 percent of Iranians agree with the statement, “democracy may have its own problems but it is better than its alternatives.”\textsuperscript{121} Few young Iranians truly care about international rapprochement itself, they care about solving their issues at home. Young Iranians want what America represents—domestic social and political freedom and opportunity. The survey also revealed that 45 percent of respondents felt the Iranian state failed to address any of the citizens’ demands and 70 percent believed they had been mistreated by the state.\textsuperscript{122} One must question the relationship between support for Islamic rule and the current authorities’ responsiveness to popular demands. It may not necessarily be Islamic rule \textit{per se} that the youth oppose, but the lack of freedom that the Iranian regime has engendered.

\textsuperscript{119} Suzanne Maloney, \textit{Iran’s Long Reach}, 89.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Tezcü, and Azadarmak. “Religiosity and Islamic Rule in Iran.” 218.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
Seventy percent of Iranians today were born after the overthrow of the Shah in 1979 and, consequently, they have a romanticized view of the monarch. One young man, Hossein, says, “Those days people were free . . . Those days, Iranians could go anywhere in the world.”

Even some young people from more conservative areas, like Isfahan, yearn for the freedom of the individual to make life choices for him/herself under the Shah. A young, devout Muslim, Golam Hussein said, “Under the Shah, if you wanted to drink or to go to a place to dance you would have done so, and if you wanted to go to a mosque and to pray you would have done so . . . Today, everything is out of place.”

Thus, the disaffection of Iranian youth for politics per se does not supply the regime with security. Rising unemployment, a stagnant economy, drug abuse, prostitution, and a brain drain would present a problem to any nation, let alone a state that faces external criticism and an internal legitimacy crisis. The regime’s response has been inefficient, repressive, and largely predicated on a theory of “protective parental tyranny exercised over the younger generation.”

Many hardliners view the attitudes of Iran’s youth as puberty and hormonal-inspired volatility for which they prescribe greater coercion and indoctrination. For example, in 2003, seventy schoolchildren were arrested for secretly arranging dates

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124 Id. 2.


126 Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran* 129.

on the Internet.\textsuperscript{128} In Qom, theology students learn how to use computers and the Internet in order to further Islam and condemn the U.S. for exporting western vices such as AIDS, drug addiction and prostitution to Iran.\textsuperscript{129} The Third Generation, however, largely does not give credence to the propaganda. One young Iranian says, “They want to drag us to heaven by chains. I don’t want to go to their heaven. I’d rather go to my own hell.”\textsuperscript{130} Escalated repression serves only to heighten the youth’s discontent and encourage social dissidence.

Vested with the power to vote, Iranian youth potentially pose a serious threat to authorities. During elections, the harsh rhetoric of conservatives is supplanting with superficial efforts to “win the potentially multi-million strong votes of the youth.”\textsuperscript{131} In the 2005 presidential elections, even the hardliners evaded the issue of the youth’s personal appearance and violations of the moral code. Candidate Mehdi Karrubi asserted, “Most Iranian youth did not have a problem with the essence of the hejab.”\textsuperscript{132} Former police chief Muhammad Bager Qalibaf, known for harsh crackdowns on girls, abandoned his typical revolutionary appearance of a long beard, shabby clothes, and pistol holder for fashionable sunglasses.\textsuperscript{133} Rafsanjani’s campaign featured a “carnival of youth in jeans riding fancy cars with headbands with his name on them in Latin letters.”\textsuperscript{134} These trivial efforts, while

\textsuperscript{128} Basmenji, \textit{Tehran Blues}, p. 55.  
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Ibid}, 56.  
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid}, 323.  
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid}, 303  
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Ibid}, 303.  
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid}, 303.  
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid}, 303-304.
blatantly calculated pandering, highlight the youth’s tangible threat to the conservatives in Iran.

Despite a boycott of elections and an increase in social dissidence, the opinions and aspirations of Iran’s youth remain inextricably related to politics. The Third Generation’s members vary in what they hope for Iran’s political future. Some express a desire to find “a common point between Islam and liberalism” manifested in a “religious government, not a governmental religion.”135 Many others do not believe that the hardliners’ concept of velavat-e faqih or Khatami’s “Islamic democracy”136 will be a vehicle to a better future. Despite lacking both the ideological motivation that pulsed through Iran’s revolutionary youth in 1979 and, any “resolute leadership and a specific platform,” the Third Generation is undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with—united by a shared goal of improving their prospects and a hope for an “independent, free, and prosperous Iran blessed by the rule of law.”137

Many people who worked on Khatami’s campaign are still not even 35. The 2009 Green Movement evidenced the threat that a re-politicized, active, and angry Third Generation poses to the status quo in Iran. Fueled by fury against the regime and hope for increased individual autonomy, this Third Generation crusade138 attempted to oust the incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in the presidential election. Millions rallied behind the candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi, who advocated

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138 Jahanbegloo, *Civil Society and Democracy in Iran*, 50.
for increased personal freedoms, especially for women, social justice, and increased privatization. Mousavi, garnered mass support across a large spectrum of Iranians. The young and the elderly, women without headscarves and women in full chadors, bazaaris and students gathered in the largest numbers since the 1979 revolution to demonstrate their support. On June 12, the day of the election, authorities claimed that many polling stations lacked the number of ballot slips, closed them before everyone had voted, and attacked Mousavi’s campaign headquarters. Later, the government agencies Raja News and Fars News announced that Ahmadinejad won the election with a clear mandate from the people: 63 percent of the vote. Later, Mousavi rebuffed these claims and said, “[I] am . . . the definitive winner . . . [The people’s] choice and freedom were the principal goals of our sacred revolution.”

As Mousavi predicted, this move by the authorities was a “dangerous charade” and the movement entered a second stage. Soon after the announcement of Mousavi’s loss, an unprecedented three million people took to the streets in Tehran and accused the government of fraud and corruption. Similar protests took place in other cities such as Shiraz, Mashad and Isfahan. Mirroring the 1999 raids, the security forces and Basijis fought back by entering Tehran University’s dormitories to attack and, ultimately, kill students. Many prominent reformists that supported Mousavi were arrested and some were brought to the

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139 Arefi, and Oseman, Green Ribbons and Turbans. 63.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid., 76.
142 Ibid., 71.
143 Ibid., 68-69

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infamous Evin Prison, including one former organizer of the hostage crisis and many former members of Khatami’s administration. Ahmadinejad referred to the protesters, especially the young, as “dirt and dust” and boldly claimed that Iran’s elections were the “cleanest” in the world and blamed the West’s “psychological war[fare]” for the disturbances.

Nevertheless, demonstrations spread to champion the principle of vox populi. On June 15, 2009, millions marched peacefully from Revolution Square to Freedom Square, the route taken in 1979 by the revolutionaries to protest the Shah, and shouted “Liar, liar, where is your 63 percent?” For the first time, the office of Supreme Leader was openly discredited with shouts of “Death to the Dictator.” Robert Malley of the International Crisis Group says, “[T]he supreme leader rather than being above the fray—the person who balance various political factions—[was] viewed as an actor in an internal regime struggle.” The role of supreme leader, traditionally thought of as unassailable, is now coming under fire. The Green Movement espoused the concept of a “citizen journalist.” Photographs taken on mobile phones and video clips uploaded to YouTube became the medium to disseminate information and mobilize the opposition. On June 20, a Basiji shot a

144 Ibid., 65.
145 Ibid., 72-73.
146 Jahanbegloo, Civil Society and Democracy in Iran, 52.
147 Arefi, and Oseman, Green Ribbons and Turbans, 71.
148 Jahanbegloo, Civil Society and Democracy in Iran, 56.
149 Elizabeth Dickinson. "Watch List: Four Countries in Big Trouble.(The Original Failed State) (Guatemala, Honduras, Nigeria and Iran).” Foreign Policy (180): 85.
young Iranian named Neda Agha-Soltan, a bystander, and her death was captured and broadcasted to the entire world on YouTube.\textsuperscript{151} The video became viral and Neda became the symbol for the Iranian youth’s struggle against a corrupt and murderous regime.

**Youth Factions**

The current legitimization crisis in Iran does not exclusively manifest itself on an inter-generational level. Thus, an informed study of the viability of the status quo in Iran, must address the various youth factions that exist in Iran. Young people in Iran do not act or think as a monolith. One scholar points to three major behavioral trends amongst Iranian youth: [1] “Locally-oriented conventional youth” [2] “Politically radical or activist youth (basijis)” [3] “Cosmopolitan or subcultural youth.”\textsuperscript{152} The locally oriented youth tend to live in more traditional areas of Iran. Deeply trusting of religious authorities, these young people embrace lifestyles consistent with the regime’s propaganda.

The radical youth are politicized and view themselves as the guardians of morality. Primarily from the lower-middle class, these young people seek to re-Islamize society and combat the western cultural invasion. The regime utilizes the Basij who, in civilian dress, essentially act as moral police and endeavor to preserve Islamic rule of law. This creates a society that is marked by “rumor, insecurity, self-

\textsuperscript{151} Elson, *Using Social Media to Gauge Iranian Public Opinion and Mood*, 18.

\textsuperscript{152} Global Youth?, 113.
deception and vast, intricate, underground lives.”153 The Basijis represent the ideal Iranian youth, the “mobilized ones,” who fully embrace Khomeini’s ideology and share the regime’s abhorrence of the moral laxness and corrupt practices of many young Iranians. One young Basiji portrayed her work as a “‘[c]alling to the Light and [b]anishing the Darkness.’”154 Lacking precise definitions of cultural crimes, however, action and punishment are largely left to the discretion of the moral police—enabling stringent crackdowns, a system of bribery, and the use of brute force.155 Threats of incarceration, lashes, and, at one time, even execution are commonplace for the youth.156 The Iranian theocracy uses brute force, ominous threats, and propaganda to inculcate or, if necessary, coerce the youth to submit to its will. Yet, one fourteen year old directly confronts the disinformation of the regime and the Basij and says, “‘Everything in the West is bad; everyone in America is going to hell when they die.’ They know it’s not true, so why do they say [that]?”157

There are pronounced class tensions in the youth versus youth, Basiji versus westernized youth clashes. A young Basiji girl says, “‘Most rich people are careless. The rich are proud—they can’t understand Islam or the revolution and its importance to us.’” The Basij had attacked Yousef and Laila, a young pair of siblings. Laila says, “‘I yelled, ‘You don’t have money to buy shoes’—he was wearing cheap plastic sandals . . . Blue jeans like Yousef’s cost half a Government worker’s monthly

155 Khosravi, Young and Defiant in Tehran, 29.
pay. . . They only harass us because they’re jealous.” Basiji forces do in fact present impoverished youth with an opportunity to wield power over their peers and inspire fear.

Members of the Basij gain preferential treatment in the highly competitive Iranian university system. Admission committees are legally bound to reserve approximately 30 percent of each incoming class for “war veterans, children of revolutionary ‘martyrs’ or baseej whose grades otherwise wouldn’t merit admission.” The Basijis enjoy a position in society that they otherwise would not enjoy. Many of the more educated and westernized youth resent this and consider stridently religious youths to be uncultured, blind followers of the regime’s doctrines. The educated youth consider morality police, whether Basij, Ansar-e Hezbollah, or the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, to be ignorant “parrots of regime ideology.” When asked about engaging the religious youth in debates, a young photographer said, “You can’t talk to them . . . It’s like trying to play chess with a gorilla. In the middle of the game, he picks up your horse and eats it.” In particular, members of the Ansar-e Hezbollah, one of the most fundamentalist and unofficial groups in Iran, act as a primitive gang of thugs. Thus, much like Khomeini guising his personal ideology as God’s will, this clash of socio-economic classes employs Islamic and religious rhetoric.

160 Ibid., 99.
The cosmopolitan youth, the primary focus of this thesis, on the other hand, directly attempt to subvert the law. Hailing from relatively wealthy families in urban centers, these young people are for the most part disinterested in political activism. They embrace foreign study and travel, and feverishly consume western products and popular culture. Using sources such as MTV for behavior guidelines, these young people look up to western figures rather than Iranian or religious authorities. These young people see no contradiction in embracing the West’s culture and simultaneously retaining their Iranian/Muslim identity. Dissident journalist Akbar Ganji has written of the Third Generation: “Jalal Al-e Ahmad [and] Dr. Shariati are no longer their heroes; essentially their heroes are not political figures or ideologues at all . . . [This] generation knows movie stars, pop stars, sportsmen, and Western thinkers much better than its own cultural and religious heritage.”

Cultural Dissidence

Since the creation of the Islamic Republic, there has been a sense of dichotomy between public and private life. In the private sphere, the ironclad rule of the Islamic social order falters. The Third Generation, however, evinces an exhausted tolerance toward leading two distinct and, at times, contradictory lives. Abbas Kiarostami, a well-known Iranian film producer, said, “We live in two worlds, internal and external, which do not fit together; this is a schizophrenic situation

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whose effects I dread, especially the effects on the young.” In 1996, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance conducted a survey of young Tehranis and discovered that 95 percent of them asserted that “hypocrisy, deceitfulness, and falsehood” described the rule of law in Iran. Thus, Iranian youth view dissidence from seemingly hypocritical Islamic constructs as a noble pursuit.

The youth are trying to create new public spaces to gain freedom from the rhetoric of the regime, which does not resonate with them. The young people desire to end the regime’s monopoly on defining and controlling the public space, “both actual and virtual, real and discursive.” “Spaces of deviation” in modern day Iran include private parties conducted by young and relatively wealthy Iranians in Tehran that feature forbidden western music, illegally imported vodka, drugs, and dating. Girls do not wear veils and dress in the latest western fashions. Many youngsters travel to the northern, mountainous edge of Tehran where they can indulge, in complete privacy, in contraband. During the winter, ski resorts present a similar opportunity. Many young Iranians challenge Khomeini who proclaimed, “The Islamic Revolution is not about fun, it is about morality, in fact there is no fun to be had in the Islamic Republic.”

168 Khosravi, Young and Defiant in Tehran, 146.
They resent the need to live an “underground existence” and use any formal occasion for open defiance.\textsuperscript{170} Major Persian and Islamic holidays are times to subvert the moral police. A traditional Persian holiday that occurs before the Persian New Year, Chahārshanbe Suri derives its importance from Zoroastrianism, which was the primary religion in Iran before the Arab Muslim invasion.\textsuperscript{171} In 2004, evincing the traditionalist suspicion of pre-Islamic traditions, one high-ranking, conservative cleric claimed that this holiday “[does] not befit the dignity of the Muslim people of Iran.”\textsuperscript{172} As the Basijis and other representatives of the regime try to suppress the celebration, the youth taunt the authorities. Young people create fires throughout Tehran and use the temporary chaos to meet secretly with members of the opposite sex in public, finding “temporary relief” from their frustrations.\textsuperscript{173}

Similarly, young people utilize Islamic times of mourning to manifest their discontent. On the tenth day of Muharram, Ashura, Shi’ites mourn the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, the prophet’s grandson and the third Imam.\textsuperscript{174} Khomeini vested this day with political significance during the 1970 revolution by saying “[Iran is a] nation of political weeping.”\textsuperscript{175} For the young, however, “the religious side of it is

\textsuperscript{170} *Global Youth?*, 114.
\textsuperscript{171} Mahdavi. “Passionate Uprisings,” 21.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 22.
much less important to them than the social aspect.”

In Tehran, large groups gather in the Mosheni Square and seize the opportunity to flout social restrictions. In addition to the generational disconnect and lack of opportunity for the Third Generation to advance socio-economically in Iran, globalization has also played an irrefutable role in stoking the frustrations of Iranian youth. Iran simply cannot control the information available to its youth, as it could with past generations. Black-market merchants bring satellite dishes from the United Arab Emirates across the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. The Internet and satellite TV bring western culture and social norms, or the Great Satan, into Iran on a 24/7 basis. Iranian youth eagerly consume illicit Hollywood films and songs from the Iranian community in Los Angeles. One survey indicated that more than 50 percent of the audience of BBC, Voice of America, and Radio Farda was between the ages of 15 and 25 and that programs for western music, fashion and sports are the most watched.

Coffee shops also manifest the covert threat posed by the youth. Recently, in a single district of Tehran, the police raided 87 cafes and coffee shops. These places are used by the youth for illicit activities like dating. Artists, poets, bloggers, and political activists have access to the Internet and tend to develop trusting relationships with the shops’ owners. These young people have no interest in

getting their news and information from the regime. Article 24 of the constitution values freedom of expression for the press and individuals, “except when it is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam.”

The specifics of what is “detrimental” to Islam are purposelessly left undefined and the moral police and bureaucrats loyal to the regime ubiquitously abuse this provision.

The government cannot sustain its ironclad grip on information. In 2000 nearly 250,000 Iranians used the Internet. In 2009, the figure increased exponentially to 27.9 million—34 percent of the Iranian population. Today the Iranian government is threatened by one of the region’s “highest proportion of Internet users” (38.6 percent). The Internet has enabled a blogging sensation in Iran. In 2001, a young Iranian in Canada introduced a free blogging service, Blogging.com, in Iran. Today, there are more than 700,000 blogs in Persian—making Persian the fourth most employed language by bloggers worldwide. The socially liberal content of the blogs reveals the wide gulf between young Iranians and the older generations that rule the theocracy. “It is not less than a revolution within the revolution.” The Internet and cultural fusion present grave challenges


182 Basmenji, Tehran Blues 315.


184 Afshari and Underwood. "The Student Movement’s Struggle." 83

185 Basmenji, Tehran Blues 54-55.

186 Khosravi, Young and Defiant in Tehran, 157.

to a regime that bases its authority in significant part on maintaining the purity of Khomeini’s doctrine.

Globalization also has led rebellious young people to use their bodies to voice their dissent. In response to the state-enforced status quo in Iran, the youth are leading a cultural revolution. Despite punishments of 70 lashes for drinking and death by stoning for pre-marital or extra-marital sex, the youth continue to rebel. One young woman referred to this behavior as lai, “a word that in English can be loosely translated to ‘rebellion out of frustration’.” Lai has inspired a “sexual revolution” in Iran. The young woman elaborated, “It’s sort of an F-you to the system . . . [I]t’s our way of protesting.”

Unable to legally educate themselves about Great Satan’s culture and guided merely by illegal satellite television, Iranian youth have formed an image of the west by watching MTV and programs like Sex in the City. In this struggle between the young and the Iranian regime to define public/private spaces, the body has emerged as a major arena. One young man, said, “In Iran, all things related to sex had doors, closed ones. Now we, this generation, are opening them one by one. Pregnancy outside of marriage? Open it. Teenage sexual feelings? Open that door. Masturbation? Open it.”

A 22-year old woman expresses her motivation behind engaging in this risky behavior, “I feel like I am getting revenge.” Sexuality represents a “potential realm of freedom” for young

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188 Mahdavi. "Passionate Uprisings" 450.
189 Ibid., 445.
190 Ibid., 452.
people and a way to subvert the government’s restrictions that are overly concerned with their bodies.\(^{191}\)

According to an anthropological study conducted at Tehran University, the average age of marriage in Tehran is 26 for a woman and 29 for a man. Yet, the average age of first intercourse amongst this same group is 16 for a woman and 15 for a man.\(^{192}\) These findings not only serve to highlight the youth’s conscious cultural deviance, but also inherent flaws in this morality-police state. One 19-year old girl identified this systemic flaw, “We are not supposed to be seen in public with a man . . . That means no dinner dates, no walks in the park and no movie theaters. So what do we do? We go straight to his house.”\(^{193}\) Iranian youth are not free to control their personal lives and are left with polarized and desperate options. Even when young people decide to become sexually active, they are unable to do so safely. They cannot go to the pharmacy and purchase contraceptives. When a pregnancy does occur, many young women feel like they must purchase black-market animal abortion pills. Schools and universities are not legally allowed to provide young people with sexual education, but instead provide prenuptial courses to prepare young people for marriage and, more importantly, prepare women to be proper Muslim wives.\(^{194}\) Young people want to dissolve the moral fabric of the regime, which futilely pursues increasingly forceful measures to coerce compliance and submission.

\(^{192}\) Ibid. 451.
\(^{193}\) Ibid., 452.
\(^{194}\) Ibid., 454.
Substance consumption trends among Iran’s youth also reveals a significant social and cultural shift among the young. With unemployment rates in the double digits and smothering social restrictions, many turn to drugs and alcohol as a form of rebellion and respite. Although official statistics estimate that there are two million drug addicts in Iran, one AIDS-focus group reported that the real number is over three and a half million, including 260,000 school children.\(^{195}\) Furthermore, many girls turn to prostitution in order to provide for themselves and their families. Many leave Iran for the neighboring states like Turkey, Pakistan and the U.A.E., where there is high demand for prostitutes.\(^{196}\) There are no official government reports analyzing this trend, but it is estimated by outside sources that there are 300,000 Iranian prostitutes between the ages of 14 and 25.\(^{197}\) Drug abuse and prostitution have created an environment for an AIDS outbreak in Iran.

Further compounding the situation, young Iranians with wealth and skills emigrate from Iran. According to the International Monetary Fund, Iran has the highest brain drain rate in the entire world.\(^{198}\) The competitive American Green Card Lottery Program in Iran offers some Iranians a chance to leave. One young Iranian said, “If [the regime says that] America is awful, maybe that means it’s a great place to live.”\(^{199}\) Nearly 150,000 highly educated Iranians emigrate from the country every year, which creates an annual loss of at least $50 billion for the

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196 Ibid., 43.
197 Afshari and Underwood. “The Student Movement’s Struggle.” 84.
199 Ibid., 49.
Iranian economy. Nearly four million Iranians live abroad, many in the United States, and younger Iranians mainly cite economic and social reasons for leaving their homeland.\textsuperscript{200} Though these expatriates do not explicitly reject Islamic politics, they do not support Khomeini’s ideology. In response to the construction of the giant and costly Imam Khomeini Grand Mosque in Tehran, one young software engineer said, “We would have preferred to have had the biggest library in the world or the biggest computer center. There is no honor in having a mosque four hundred years from now. We would have preferred having a company like Microsoft.”\textsuperscript{201}

**The Question of the Headscarf**

The refusal of women to wear headwear, deemed necessary by the theocrats to protect society from moral flaccidity, represents the tension between the Third Generation and the theocracy. Ideally, women are expected to wear dark colored chadors. Dark colors in Iran have come to symbolize revolutionary values, while bright colors are emblematic of Western depravity and a “lack of respect for the blood of the martyrs.”\textsuperscript{202} Today in Iran, many young women wear brightly colored headscarves that are decorated with floral designs. While wearing short coats, they also allow the headscarves to slip down their head in order to reveal an indecent


\textsuperscript{201} Maloney, *Iran’s Long Reach*, 86.

\textsuperscript{202} Adelkhah, *Being Modern in Iran*. 172. 53.
amount of hair.\textsuperscript{203} Many young people frame the headscarf issue in political and social, rather than religious, terms. Wearing the hejab or chador communicates approval of the regime, rather than religious adherence.\textsuperscript{204} While wearing form-fitting overcoats, open-toed shoes, ankle-revealing skirts, loose headscarves, t-shirts without collars, and shorts, the youth vandalize posters of Khomeini. This seemingly insignificant wardrobe choice is, in fact, a strong sign of disaffection with and lack of support for the Iranian regime.

**Turkey and Iran: Similarities and Differences**

The situations in Turkey and Iran may appear to be opposite side of the same coin. Both states have restive and highly educated youthful populations that champion civil liberties. Turkish and Iranian political elites continue to attempt to tighten their grip on politics and society. The orthodox generals in Turkey and the mullahs in Iran cling to a stringently conservative interpretation of each state’s founding father’s ideology: Kemalism and Khomeinism respectively. Yet, there are key differences that have been revealed throughout this comparative analysis.

In both states, there is an extreme dichotomy between what the political elites deemed public or private and what the young people demand as individual civil liberties. The Kemalists in Turkey reference the need to safeguard the purity of secularism and, thereby, the Turkish republic. The Kemalists in Turkey treat all faith

\textsuperscript{203} Basmenji, *Tehran Blues*, 18.  
\textsuperscript{204} Cohen, *Children of Jihad*, 39.
and religious practice as suspect. The young people consider the elites’ political
machinations and grandiose speeches as buttressing an illiberal status quo. They
demand transparency, liberalization, and true religious freedom. In Iran, on the
other hand, the young people reject all propaganda of the theocracy outright and do
not consider their stringent Islamism to be redeemable. Living in a state where sin is
tantamount to crime, they are forced to live an underground existence and to
subvert the ideology of the state. In Iran, religiosity is judged merely by practice.
Young people do not necessarily need to have faith, but they must act like perfect
Muslims in the public sphere.

Both groups of young people are passively and actively subverting the
political elites conservative ideologies that ostensibly prioritize national security.
Turkish young people and population as a whole are relatively politically involved
and work to keep the AKP in power. They look to the United States as a paradigm in
which public displays of religion and democracy both flourish. The educated, young
people, however, lack consensus vis-à-vis cultural issues like veiling in the public
sphere. In Iran, the young people also look to the “Great Satan” for inspiration.
Unlike their counterparts, the Iranians eagerly consume American culture subvert
the legally enforced morality and social norms. Though they lost faith in politics
after Khatami’s failure and the brutal repression of the Green Movement, these
young people present a threat to the theocracy that is much more serious than that
faced by the Turkish system.
The AKP is both willing and able to work within the establish system in Turkey. Its broad and youthful voter base seeks to redefine secularism with Kemalism as a framework for analysis. The democratic and fair elections in Turkey, notwithstanding the threat of a military coup d’état, enable the AKP to implement a gradualist reform agenda. In Iran, facing extreme corruption and insurmountable constitutional hurdles, Khatami and Mousavi proved impotent to champion the will of the youth. Furthermore, Iran is an international pariah that on a reckless and unviable economic strategy. Though its youth’s collective attitude has proven to be the historical harbinger of revolution, the theocratic regime has a bloody history of repressing peaceful, dissenting youth movements and relying on ineffective propaganda. The youth’s gradual and peaceful cultural hybridity in Turkey presents a viable challenge to Samuel Huntington’s class of civilizations thesis. In Iran, the young people’s dissidence reveals the extreme legitimacy crisis that will eventually force the regime to reform.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

**Turkey: Challenging the “Clash of Civilizations” Thesis**

As Turkey emerges as a global political and economic power, its population, with a median age of 28,\(^{205}\) is continuously forging a new path, a unique equilibrium between East and West. The majority of the Turkish population and the youth do not consider secularism and Islam to be mutually exclusive concepts. One can be

\(^{205}\) Pope, *Turkey Unveiled*, 352.
Muslim while simultaneously supporting secularism and freedom of religion in the public sphere. These aspects of one’s individual identity are compatible. Kemalism needs to reflect this compatibility in order to remain relevant and viable.

Historical revisionist Mehmet Altan said, “‘Kemalism is dead but nobody knows how to dispose of the corpse.’”\(^{206}\) In Turkey, any ideology, like conservative Kemalism, that polarizes secularism and Islamism is not only myopic, but also nonviable. For younger and more urban Turks, religion has become a sort of “Euro-Islam.” With 99 percent of the population adhering to Islam, religion does play an indisputable role in the identity of the majority of the Turkish population. Yet, as Erdoğan said, “‘Islam is a religion, democracy is a way of ruling. You can’t compare the two.’”\(^{207}\) Most young Turks seek the right to express their religious belief in public, but do not want to expunge secularism from the Republic.

The Kemalists have attempted to redefine what is public and private in Turkey in order to push Islam to the margins of society. Islam, however, remains entrenched in the identities and values of the Turkish people, including the youth. Kemalism could not supplant religion in the public sphere as it endeavored to do. Kemalism never attained the mass, popular appeal of Islam. While allowing democracy to flourish in the Middle East, Atatürk’s ideology does not satisfy the majority of the young population’s desire for true religious freedom. Although one writer predicted Turkey’s transformation into a “semi-secular state,”\(^{208}\) educated

\(^{206}\) *Ibid.*, 68.
\(^{207}\) *Ibid.*, 323.
\(^{208}\) Lee, *Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, 170.
young people truly want Turkey to progress and to put an end to the preservation of
the “authoritarian elite’s domination [which] uses secularism to rationalize its”
power. Contemporary Kemalists must be flexible and adapt and acknowledge that
the rise of the AKP is not a sign of Islam’s foreboding threat to the secular order, but
instead one that manifests the young people’s call for individual rights. Portraying
and persecuting all Islamic-oriented politicians as a united Islamist front, Kemalists
run the risk of fomenting sympathy for a more radical Islamist message.

The emerging political culture among the Turkish youth is characterized by a
relatively high degree of religiosity and champions a democratic and liberalizing
agenda. Neither secularists nor Islam-informed individuals represent a monolithic
front. Many young advocates of liberal Islam openly respect Atatürk and his
principles and, yet, seek to more fully support religious freedom within the existing
secular system. Similarly, some young Kemalists recognize the authoritarian nature
of secularism in Turkey and acknowledge a need to liberalize society for true
democracy. They oppose using Kemalism as a “proverbial hammer” to flatten “any
nails be they ethnic or religious.” Many Kemalists now acknowledge the
instability of any government in Turkey that attempts to completely expunge Islam
from the public sphere, which is and has been done at the expense of the freedom of
expression and of religion.

210 White, Islamist Mobilization in Turkey, 57.
Unlike Iran and Saudi Arabia, Turkey’s economy does not derive its strength from an unlimited and vast oil income, which can then be used to buttress an Islamic and unpopular regime. The Turkish government is responsible to the populace’s preferences because it relies on taxes, borrowing domestically, and selling bonds to western countries.\textsuperscript{211} Thus, true popular sovereignty and the youth’s will, rather than heavy-handed measures, have sustained the AKP’s rise to power. With an arguably clear mandate from the people, the AKP has prioritized liberal reform. The constitution needs to reflect the true democracy and liberalism that the youthful population demands. Indeed, Turkey’s youth-driven “experiment in synthesizing Islam, secularism, and liberal democracy presents a formidable challenge to the ‘clash of civilizations’ argument” espoused by Samuel Huntington.\textsuperscript{212}

Unlike in Turkey, the youth’s will in Iran has yet to fully overcome voter fraud that is a symptom of the extreme corruption throughout the theocracy. Although the Iranian officials successfully managed to quell and weaken this movement,\textsuperscript{213} the Green Movement delegitimized the regime by attacking two key pillars of the Republic: the President and the Supreme Leader.\textsuperscript{214} The questions presented by the Green Movement have become a part of the national narrative in Iran, especially among its youth. Ultimately, only time will tell if the Third Generation, which spearheaded the Green Movement, will prove to be a “dormant

\textsuperscript{211} Pope, \textit{Turkey Unveiled}, 354.
\textsuperscript{212} Taspinar, “The Old Turks’ Revolt,” 130.
\textsuperscript{214} Jahanbegloo, \textit{Civil Society and Democracy in Iran}, 56-7.
volcano smoldering with unfilled demands that will... erupt in... revolutionary rage."\textsuperscript{215} Iran’s theocracy has become a pariah in the global community for its aggression and nuclear aspirations, and internally, it is unlikely that Iran’s youth will remain dormant for long and will not yield to the regime. One young person made the augmenting tensions clear: "Don’t think that our patience is unlimited. Someday, the pot will boil over."\textsuperscript{216} It appears that the will of the Third Generation has only just begun to assert itself and may usher in a new era in Iran when it reaches its full expression.

\textbf{Iran: A Faltering Regime}

A German sociologist known for his theory vis-à-vis the rule of law, the public sphere, and social evolution, Jürgen Habermas said that, “Crisis tendencies pregnant with the future are no longer located immediately in the economic sphere but in the sociocultural sphere.”\textsuperscript{217} For Habermas, tensions in the economic sphere lead to a true crisis when these problems jeopardize ‘social integration,’ or the “consensual foundations of social institutions.”\textsuperscript{218} Thus, what began as an economic problem has progressed into a "legitimation crisis, not an economic crisis."\textsuperscript{219} An existential threat occurs when “the organizational principle of a society does not permit the

\textsuperscript{215} Khosravi, \textit{Young and Defiant in Tehran}, 16.
\textsuperscript{219} McCarthy. \textit{The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas}. 358-359.
resolution of problems that are critical for its continued existence.”²²⁰ Indeed, one of the greatest examples of Islam, Iran’s organizational principle, failing to address a pressing problem is Iran’s unemployment rate for young graduates and the youth’s demands for increased personal freedom. In a World Values Survey, 69 percent of a national polling listed a stable economy as their top priority, this percentage was higher than that in Turkey, Egypt or Israel.²²¹

Instead of effectively addressing the employment prospects of its extremely young population, the regime largely places the blame on the “Great Satan.” Similarly, rather than engaging the youth in dialogue, President Ahmadinejad has pursued a policy of a “second Cultural Revolution” in order to “reassert the values of 1979.”²²² Student movements are forcefully put down. Liberal newspapers are banned. Human rights advocates, intellectuals, student leaders, and trade unionists are imprisoned, threatened and closely monitored. Iran’s government cannot viably continue these ‘solutions’ to its economic and social exigencies. Thomas McCarthy continues, “The seeds of the new society are being formed in the womb of the old.”²²³

The young Iranians are the seeds of a new society that has yet to fully blossom. Lacking legitimate channels of opposition, the Iranian subversive youth manifest their dissent through more individualized and passive cultural

²²⁰ Ibid. 358-359.
²²³ McCarthy. The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, 358-359.
resistance. Whether by engaging in open political opposition or by quietly subverting Khomeini’s Islamic cultural revolution, they are highlighting Tehran’s legitimization crisis. While studying Iranian youth vis-à-vis society, one must not only ask how does religion affect the youth, but also how will the youth affect the political Islamic status quo in Iran. Massoumeh Ebtekar, the only female to become vice president in Iran, said, “We have to recognize the fact that young people’s understanding, their interpretation of the revolution, might be quite different from ours.” Exerting great social, economic, and political stresses on the political system, the youth make it exigent for the regime to closely monitor this precarious situation.

Though it is reductionist to say that youth are merely motivated by political intentions, it is clear that no matter what form the cultural resistance takes it has political consequences in Iran. Will the Iranian system continue to be dominated by a Supreme Leader, who is essentially above the law? Or will the social realities in Iran force the regime to align its views with Ayatollah Ali Montazeri and subject even the faqih to the people’s demands? Many underestimate the theocracy’s ability to survive. Political scientists have predicted its fall in the early years after the Revolution, during the prolonged Iran-Iraq War, after Khomeini’s death, and during the reign of the reformists. The regime has proven itself to be relatively resilient. The youth’s dissidence is not necessarily a clear symptom of the demise of

224 Global Youth?, 120.
226 Global Youth?, 120-121.
Khomeini’s ideology. And though many point to the events that occurred in the wakes of the 2009 election as signs of the quickly degenerating conditions in Iran, it would be inaccurate to say the situation is ripe for revolution or regime change. Instead, this cultural and political subversion evidences the exigencies that devalue the regime in the eyes of the extremely youthful, educated, and frustrated population.

Despite successfully dismissing a reformist two-term president and parliament, the regime faces a more unwavering challenge today: a youth-authored democratic movement. The regime underestimates the potency of youth movement because it lacks a clear leader and an explicit political stance. The fact that the dissenting movement lacks organization and has penetrated the culture of the majority of the young people ought to be seen as more troublesome to the political elites, who are struggling to hide behind a veil of legitimacy. Ahmadinejad’s “erratic, ad hoc fiscal and monetary policies” have served to augment inflation, exacerbate rates of unemployment, and mismanage the Iranian economy.227 This situation is compounded by severe international economic sanctions and isolation, brain drain, diminished capital flow, and strangling of civil disobedience.

It may be possible, however, to reform the Iranian regime without necessarily expunging religion systematically. The youth are not, for the most part, demanding the removal of religion from the public sphere. Rather, they are calling

for freedoms and, ultimately, the liberation of Islam “from its servitude to politics.” Iranians, however, are purposefully attempting to subvert Khomeini’s doctrine in its purest form. The Turkish youth group, on the other hand, seek to unfetter Turkey from a very conservative interpretation of Kemalism. By acting in the name of Islam, the Iranian regime burdens Islam with the responsibility “for everything from the price of gasoline to foreign policy.” Religiosity is essentially a form of social and political capital to curry favor with the Khomeinists. Desiring economic security, social mobility and freedom, it is natural then for the youth to push against political Islam, which the clerics use to buttress the regime, legitimate their stringent policies, and ignore the economic demoralization of the education and youth. The outcome of this cultural, socio-economic, religious, and political struggle in Iran will not only determine “who holds power, but how people live.”

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

On both domestic and international scales, the youth is a colossal demographic group. The leaders of tomorrow, they are vested with enormous strength. This is certainly the case in Turkey, where the democratic forces have brought an Islamic-oriented party to power that is working within the secular system to liberalize the nation’s laws, answer the calls of the youth, and, ultimately, unfetter Turkey from orthodox Kemalism. Likewise, in Iran where the youth’s attitude historically has been the harbinger of revolution, where young people are vested with the right to vote at 16, where a fragile economy is faltering, and where support for the regime has floundered. The present thesis has sought to demonstrate the explicit societal and underlying political consequences of heavy-handed state measures to cultivate secularism and Islamism in Turkey and Iran, respectively. The elites in each country have failed to indoctrinate the majority of the youth and refuse to yield to their demands.

The relationship between secularism and Islam in the Middle East is extremely elusive. The ideological divisions between what can be considered religious and secular, public and private are constantly shifting. The boundaries between these concepts are extremely porous. The Iranian youth’s secular movement and the Turkish youth’s “Islamic social movement” aim to redefine the
status quo.\(^1\) Political parties and officials in Turkey all act and speak in the name of Kemalism. Yet, each party holds quite varied views and supports conflicting policies. Similarly, in Iran, within the context of a theocracy, the language of politics is Islam. By contrast, the majority of young people in Turkey and Iran do not subscribe to a single ideology. They have no personal memories of the struggles Atatürk endured to establish the secular order or of the Shah’s cruelty. Their generation is a product of globalization and a continuously changing world. Championing pluralism and individual rights, the Turkish and Iranian youth seem to turn away from an unyielding interpretation of their respective founding fathers’ ideology, Kemalism and Khomeinism.

With a commanding youthful population under the age of 25, Turkey will have to accommodate its future to the youth’s opinions. The decisions and values of this extremely youthful population have consequences beyond the Turkish borders. Many scholars look to the “Turkish model” as proof that secularism and democracy can flourish in an Islamic country. Yet, young people in Turkey express contrasting opinions on contentious issues like the role of Islam in society, Kurdish nationalism, Turkey’s potential accession to the European Union, and relations with western and Middle Eastern states. As many participants in the Arab Spring looked to Turkey as a beacon of hope, it is important to acknowledge the Turkish system’s potential for flexibility. Atatürk’s ideology and his words lend themselves to competing

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narratives and selective readings. Orthodox Kemalists tend "to base their policy more on an authoritarian interpretation of these principles than on a liberal democratic one."²

The majority of the Turkish population is not Kemalist or Islamist. They seek to vernacularize politics and society. Atatürk tactfully engineered the modernization of Turkey in a top-down method. The people of Turkey, similarly, are calling for a progressive state ideology and are expressing these demands in a bottom-up manner. The youth reject a static interpretation of Kemalism. Similarly, they reject specious calls to protect secularism by consolidating Kemalists’ power. Any attempt by either Kemalists or Islamists to radically polarize society is flaccid. The supposed deep, irreconcilable divisions between secularism and Islamism are social constructs, not eternal facts, as evidenced by the popular support for the AKP. The young people, as a whole, support Islamic-oriented rather than Islamist politics.

The AKP addresses the pragmatic needs of the people and simultaneously offers an alternative to a stringent Kemalist ideology. This party’s particular interpretation of Atatürk’s doctrine attempts to reconcile secularism, religious freedom, and Islamic values. By making use of a gradualist approach towards the integration of secular and Islamic values, the AKP’s rule reveals that the accommodation of Islam to democracy and vice versa is much more possible than is often maintained by hardliners on both sides of the issue. Unlike Necmettin

Erbakan’s political parties and other vehement Islamic-oriented political
movements, the AKP employs populist rhetoric and practices and, simultaneously,
avoids direct and senseless conflict with the Kemalist elite.

In Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini’s Islamic revolution is experiencing a serious
internal and external legitimacy crisis. Despite obstructions by the regime, Iran’s
young people are affected by globalization, the west and liberalism. They are
attempting to reconcile their Iranian, Muslim, and modern identities. The state’s
rigid ideology is quickly becoming a “façade behind which religious and political
authorities” are separating and failing to reform.3 History books in Iran laud
Khomeini and his ideology, but many young people are pushing against the
established theocratic status quo that denounces secular values, personal freedoms
and democracy. One young person says, “In Iran, this is not a real education. We
learn the war that the mullahs want us to learn . . . What happens one day if this
regime is not here anymore? We will have learned the wrong things.”4

Although it is important to understand the fractures in Iran’s youth
movement, such as the Basij forces who support the regime, dissenting young
people command a majority that may prove dangerous to the political and
ideological status quo. Armed with its tools for a virtual society, the Internet, the
youth challenge the regime with various subversive cultural activities. The youth
seek economic reform, political transparency, and personal/civic freedoms. Passive

3 Houchang E. Chehabi. “Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic is the Islamic Republic?”
Daedalus 120 (3) (Summer 1991): 84.
4 Jared Cohen. Children of Jihad: A Young American’s Travels Among the Youth of the Middle East. New
resistance is key to understanding the threat that young people in Iran pose to the regime. Though the regime can manipulate election results, and it successfully kept Ahmadinejad in office in the 2009 presidential election, it cannot perpetually suppress the youthful subculture, which is increasingly embedded in their personal identities. Active and passive resistance to Khomeinism cuts across socioeconomic boundaries. It is slowly, but surely, eroding the political and religious legitimacy of the government.

The youthful generation does not personally remember the injustices committed by the Shah or the United States that Khomeini denounced. Instead they spent their formative years experiencing the rise of Khatami and enjoying the burgeoning civil rights. Unfortunately for the regime, young people no longer consider these freedoms to be circumstantial or temporary privileges as was Khatami’s rule. Indeed, the reforms enacted under Khatami legitimized their inviolable rights. Though the youth in Iran may not want to or be able to successfully foster a total transformation of Iranian politics or the overthrow of the theocracy, Iran must adapt. One young woman said, “I am so sick and tired of this meddling in our personal lives.” Many young people express similar apolitical sentiments. The young people may not necessarily have political intentions. Yet, in a country whose government is founded upon and prides itself on the “morality” and “culture” of its people, the youth’s subversive culture deprives the theocracy of true

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legitimacy. The theocracy’s responses to this crisis have been inadequate if not counterproductive. Confiscating satellite dishes, cutting the Internet bandwidth to maintain censorship, and employing a morality police are actions that serve to merely exacerbate the youth’s contempt for the regime.

The Turkish and Iranian youth yearn for individual rights. In Turkey, the guards of Kemalism safeguard “secularism” by ultimately creating an anti-Islamic environment. Young people are not free to express their individual and personal beliefs in public spaces, like universities. In Iran, power-hungry, Islamic fundamentalists proscribe any behavior that is deemed “un-Islamic.” Traditional private spaces do not exist. The ubiquitous moral police ensure that Iranian citizens act as good citizens and, thereby, good Muslims. Both the Kemalists and Khomeinists must adapt and expand their narrowly defined ideals. Support for leaders like Erdoğan and Khatami evidences the youth’s demands for politics that are more responsive to the demands of globalization, human rights and democracy. The youth in both countries demand progress in explicit and implicit ways. If the state ideologies fail to compromise and to respond to these demands, they will continue to lose legitimacy and political efficacy.

Young people are a political force and pose a potential threat to the status quo. They are redefining with simple life-style choices and with political action how Islam and secularism “can blend to produce new models for state and society to
follow.”\textsuperscript{6} Ultimately, the majority of young Turks seek “modern state and social institutions that are secular in nature [but] also reflect Islamic values.”\textsuperscript{7} They do not see a contradiction between supporting secularism and manifesting their personal beliefs in public. Likewise, most Iranian youth do not outright reject the concept of a theocracy, but demand the enshrinement of secular, human, and individual rights. They do not see a contradiction between believing in Allah and having pre-marital sex. This synthesis and mutual accommodation between Islamism and liberalism has been propounded by renowned thinkers like Abdolkarim Soroush, in Iran, and Hassan Hanfi, in Egypt. Such a political theory would recognize the need for a delicate equilibrium between Islamic morality and the right to individual and private self-expression. Soroush explains, “Even though an Islamic democracy will resist certain elements of post-Enlightenment liberalism, it will still be a system that features regular elections, accept dissent and opposition parties, and condones a free press and division of power between branches of the state.”\textsuperscript{8}

The entire Middle East is undergoing volatile, exciting, and youth-driven change. Though Turkey and Iran are not experiencing movements of the “Arab Spring,” these governments cannot evade the demands of the youth. There are exogenous and endogenous factors that act as cornerstones of Turkey and Iran’s legitimacy crises. Both the Kemalist and Khomeinist vanguard seek to protect a stringent interpretation of each state’s founding father’s ideology through top-down

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
and heavy-handed machinations. Political elites through the world must lend primacy to their obligations to the people rather than a static conception of the state. Due to globalization, which has spread the ideals of freedom of religion and individualism, young people throughout the world seek to adapt their societies to the contemporary age and protect their individualistic freedom. The majority of young Turks and Iranians do not look exclusively to Atatürk or Khomeini’s ideology to define their personal identities. Instead they seek to integrate modernity, their personal preferences, secularism, and Islam.

Militant secularism in Turkey and militant Islam in Iran are fracturing. Yet, the current Kemalist and Khomeinist paradigms seem to refuse to accept any reconciliation between the youth’s secular and Islamic identities. Yet many young people view secularism in Iran and the public expression of religion in Turkey as matters of democracy and inviolable liberties. Within this framework, to maintain legitimacy and political efficacy, the Turkish and Iranian governments need to adapt their state ideologies. Despite the concerns of the Kemalists and Khomeinists, the social and political situations in Turkey and Iran are not examples of the “clash of civilization.” Religion and secularism present both competing and complementary ideas. Whether or not the governments actually take the youth’s power seriously, in the near future “nation-states [will] strike a very different balance between religion and secularism.” In order to self-appropriate the term “modern,” which both governments do, Turkey and Iran need to adapt. The legitimacy crises in Turkey and

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Iran reflect opposite sides of the same coin. It is exigent for both nations’ political elite to seek out and embrace a viable balance between state ideology and the demands of the youth and society as a whole.
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