

The Dynamics Of Islamic Values And The Pressure Of Secularism Over Islamic Schools In Türkiye

Susilawati^{1*}, Eliana Siregar², Qasim Muhammadi³, Rio Trisasmita⁴

^{1,2} UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia

³ University of Qom, Iran

⁴ UIN Syarif Hidayatullah

*susilawatima@uinib.ac.id

Abstract

Foreign schools aimed at developing Christianity in Turkey emerged during the decline of the Ottoman Empire, which underwent reforms. These schools, comprising elementary schools and universities, were previously only accessible to foreign nationals or those considered foreign nationals in the Ottoman Empire. However, these schools continued to expand through Christian missions from various countries, including the United States. However, these changes did not produce significant progress, and on the contrary, they did not. By conducting a literature review, we adopted a historical approach, verifying sources and analyzing qualitative data, which were then thoroughly described. We found that Islamic education cannot be stopped because History cannot be simply erased. The identity of Turkish society is rooted in Islam. Missionaryism in education, disguised as modernization and secularism, has not led to significant progress. Changes were made during the Erdogan era, which overhauled the curriculum, shifting its focus toward technology and Islamic values.

Keywords: *Christian; Education, Islamic; Struggle; Secularism.*

Abstrak

Sekolah-sekolah asing yang bertujuan untuk mengembangkan agama Kristen di wilayah Turki terlihat pada masa kemunduran Kekaisaran Ottoman, yang telah mengalami reformasi. Sekolah-sekolah tersebut terdiri dari sekolah dasar dan universitas, yang sebelumnya hanya diperuntukkan bagi warga negara asing atau mereka yang dianggap sebagai warga negara asing di Kekaisaran Ottoman. Sekolah ini terus mengembangkan sayapnya melalui misi Kristen dari berbagai negara, termasuk Amerika Serikat. Pendidikan Barat yang seharusnya membawa kemajuan akan tetapi sebaliknya. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penyebab dinamika perubahan yang terjadi pada tiga institusi pendidikan di Turki pada masa peralihan sampai munculnya kembali pendidikan Islam. Dengan melakukan studi literatur, kami melakukan pendekatan historis dengan verifikasi sumber dan analisis data kualitatif, yang kemudian dijelaskan secara deskriptif. Kami menemukan bahwa pendidikan Islam tidak dapat dihentikan karena Sejarah tidak dapat dihapus begitu saja. Identitas masyarakat Turki berasal dari Islam. Misionarisme dalam pendidikan dibalut dengan modernisasi dan sekularisme tidak menghasilkan kemajuan yang signifikan karena tujuan pendidikan itu sendiri bukanlah kemajuan

Diserahkan: 05-07-2025 **Disetujui:** 14-09-2025. **Dipublikasikan:** 02-11-2025

Kutipan: Susilawati, S., Siregar, E., Muhammadi, Q., & Trisasmita, R. (2025). The Dynamics of Islamic values and the pressure of secularism over Islamic schools in Türkiye. *Ta'dibuna Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(5), 617–632. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.32832/tadibuna.v14i5.20952>

yang sebenarnya tetap misi yang diemban oleh kelompok politik dan negara asing. Perubahan dilakukan pada masa Erdogan yang perombakan kurikulum yang mengarah pada teknologi dan nilai-nilai ke Islaman.

Kata kunci : Kristen; Pendidikan; Islam; Perjuangan; Sekularisme.

I. Intorduction

The issue of foreign schools has recently returned to the forefront in Turkey after the Turkish Ministry of Education announced the suspension of Turkish students from some foreign schools in Istanbul for violating basic regulations and the escalation of the dispute, specifically over two French schools, which brings to mind the conflict of culture and identity between France and Turkey. Historically, foreign schools, which expanded to meet the needs of Western communities working in the Ottoman Empire, were not merely educational institutions, as they worked intensively alongside missionary activity aimed not only at spreading Christianity in areas where Western interests were concentrated. Their expansion coincided with the spread of foreign newspapers and magazines throughout the Sultanate. This article aims to provide an overview of the shift in the objectives of foreign countries, particularly France and the United States, in establishing schools and universities in Turkey. Initially intended for specific communities, these schools later evolved into tools for propaganda and missionary work. We limit the problem to the end of the Ottoman Empire until the death of Kemal Atatürk because significant developments in foreign education occurred during this time period.

In an article entitled "Freedom of Belief & Christian Mission" by Wolfgang Häde, the author explains the danger allegedly posed by Christian missionaries. The tiny Protestant minority is the most active community in spreading its faith. Therefore, public accusations in Turkey are very often directed at Protestants. However, the perception that Christians are instruments of hostile power is not limited to Protestant missionaries. However, it frequently shows a general distrust of Christians in the country.

Another article we have reviewed is the writing entitled 'American Missionaries in Turkey' by Everett P. Wheeler, which states that in 1830, the United States signed an agreement with Turkey regarding the permission for United States citizens to conduct business, trade, and travel, protected by law. They have the right to perform religious rituals. Churches in the United States were once mandated to spread Christian beliefs and faith through elementary and secondary schools. This practice later extended to universities throughout the Middle East, including Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, as this is part of the principle of religious freedom. Is this stated in the agreement between the two parties, as reflected in their practice? Do schools established in contemporary times have the same function as schools that existed in the past? In the discussion of this article, we conduct an analysis using a theory of the challenges of religious ethics.

As victims of life in materialist modernization, the consequence is a shift in society's will from a natural to a rational will. This results in a cycle of change; human emotional

life experiences erosion and continues to spiritual degradation. In developed countries, a gap exists between humans and their concept of God. There is a gap between religious orientation and worldly demands in developing countries. Spiritual life becomes illusory and grey, characterized by unclear colours and blurred boundaries. This is no exception for Muslims, but the living and developing values will survive. Cultural and religious resistance to new teachings is explained through various sociological and anthropological theories by James C. Scott, which focus on the maintenance of established identities, traditions, and power structures that are revived under certain circumstances. In the educational context of Turkey, one of the failures experienced by the renewal of missionary schools and secular schools during the Atatürk era was that it did not bring significant progress. This is often carried out by groups that are the object of domination (Scott 1990). The discussion that has been carried out is based on the gap between spiritual education in the secular world, especially in the Western world. However, our article provides an overview of other reasons for the survival of spiritual education, combining it with science, after Christian and secular missionary education did not produce significant results.

II. Research Method

In writing this article, we conducted a literature study by collecting sources from relevant literature related to the History of the Ottoman Empire during its transition to a republic, which has long been an object of Christian missionary interest. In addition to books, we also conducted a review of journals. The available sources were then verified and analyzed using a qualitative approach. The qualitative method was employed because the focus is on gaining an in-depth understanding of the development of education in Turkey, specifically examining the dynamics of Christian, secular, and Islamic education, as well as the problems that arise due to cultural friction. Content analysis was also conducted on a book written during the transition of the Ottoman Empire, namely Daulah al-Ilyah by Farid Beik (1868-1919), which was reprinted in 1990 in Beirut. This book was selected from Google because it contains quite comprehensive educational information.

III. Result and Discussion

A. Foreign Schools in Turkey: The Beginning of The Ottoman Empire

Foreign schools appeared in Turkey in parallel with the granting of religious rights to non-Muslim minorities. They were part of the religious freedom of these minorities, so we see that they were initially opened around places of worship to teach minorities their religious matters and train them to become clergy members (Ágoston and Masters 2009). Thanks to the privileges granted by the Ottoman Empire following the signing of the friendship agreement with France during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1535,

Latin Catholics in Istanbul were able to bring priests to teach their children, as the first mission arrived in 1583, settled in the Monastery of Saint Benoit, and opened the first foreign school in the Ottoman lands, and education in it was not limited to religious education, as it taught various subjects such as mathematics, French, Latin, and Greek in addition to the arts (Meirison 2020).

Then, the number of these schools increased with the deepening of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Europe, so that the number of Catholic schools reached 40 schools by 1839, as there was no law regulating the work of foreign schools in the Ottoman Empire, until the issuance of the General Education Regulations of 1869 (Atçıl 2017). However, these schools exceeded the goal of their establishment due to the economic and political weakness of the Ottoman state (Alparslan 2021). They began to spread their missionary activities, which played a role in stirring up ethnic and religious minorities and were a tool of external pressure that contributed to many other reasons, leading to the dismantling of the political and social structure of Ottoman society. It can be said that these schools turned into a problem in the period known as the "Tanzimat" during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid (ترجمها عن النص الأصلي وكتب مقدمتها وحواشيها وقابلها بمذكرات) (، سلطان الترك، 1842-1918 II عبد الحميد and للمعاصرين محمد حرب).

The Tanzimat period begins with the reign of Sultan Abdul Majid I and is known as the Constitutional period during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid, during which the sultans tried to modernize the empire in line with the new global balance of power and modern ideas of the state and citizenship, and included broad aspects related to governance, state administration, education, and minority rights. Some of these modernizations were a response to the agreements signed by the Ottoman Empire after its defeat on multiple fronts, an attempt to prevent the state's dismantling and collapse (Atçıl 2017).

B. American Colleges and The Ottoman Empire

The first American penetration into the Middle East was achieved through Protestant missionary schools. American schools, which began operating in the early 19th century, were active in Ottoman lands, supported by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), one of the first American Christian missionary organizations. This apparatus intensified its activities in Anatolia in 1815 and expanded to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt. American missionaries selected Armenians and Eastern Catholics as target groups and focused their activities on non-Muslim minorities (REED 1988). The number of schools in Ottoman lands increased to approximately 400 between 1824 and 1886. A missionary report dated 1880 indicates the importance of the Ottoman state to them, stating that "Türkiye is the key to Asia for missionary activities." The missionaries continued their activities during the reign of Abdul Hamid II (Baltaru and Soysal 2018). However, this period was not easy for them because Sultan Abdul Hamid wanted to keep these missionary schools under control due to the separatist actions they

carried out among the eastern communities. The smear campaigns against Sultan Abdul Hamid began in the West in 1890, primarily due to his efforts to counter the influence of missionary colleges. The missionaries were keen to seize opportunities to pressure the Ottoman government in events that concerned them. They did not hesitate to provoke American officials against the Ottoman state.

The Armenians, especially the Protestant Armenians, joined the American missionary schools (Alizar and Muhammadi 2019). In 1898, former US President Roosevelt said, "The two powers that I want to crush before anyone else in the world are Spain and Turkey." He meant the Ottoman state here. Despite the pressures exerted by Roosevelt, Sultan Abdul Hamid's views remained unchanged regarding the involvement of American missionary schools in harmful activities. Sultan Abdul Hamid was furious when he heard that Ahmed Tevfik Pasha had sold the land of Robert College – today called Boğaziçi University in Istanbul – to American missionaries, so when asked where he would be buried, he replied: "A place where he can hear the sound of church bells until the Day of Judgment." Sultan Abdul Hamid was a person who was fully aware of the purposes and activities for which American missionary schools were established in Istanbul, Anatolia, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, and how they could influence the minds of both the non-Muslim minority in the Ottoman lands and the Muslim boys and girls. He was deeply concerned that attending these schools would weaken the national and religious feelings of those who did so. Indeed, subsequent developments have been the leading cause of the unrest that has broken out in this region to this day (Wheeler 1922).

The seeds of discord that missionary schools sowed among the Ottoman peoples, who had lived together for thousands of years, remain present and have not yet been eradicated. The West portrays Sultan Abdul Hamid as a "tyrant and dictator." However, today, Western countries do not show even one-thousandth of the tolerance towards Muslims that Abdul Hamid II showed towards hundreds of American schools in Ottoman lands. There is no doubt that the seeds of discord sown by these missionary schools among the Ottoman peoples, who had lived together for thousands of years, are still present and have not yet been eradicated. In short, these American missionary schools relied on positivism and liberalism in teaching. They gave great importance to teaching English, Turkish, and Armenian. Additionally, when implementing educational activities, these schools considered the social and economic context and the specific needs of their region. The students who grew up in these schools disseminated separatist ideas within Ottoman lands, aiming to undermine the nationalist sentiments that fostered political loyalty to the Ottoman state (Alghamdi and Achour 2020).

By reviewing the reports received during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid on the status of foreign education and public schools, we find that foreign and minority schools have become a problem, in addition to the lack of legal controls and necessary studies in

the field of education regarding the conditions for their establishment and supervision. Although this issue was taken seriously during the reign of Abdul Hamid, the neglect in the previous period made solving the problem more complex, in addition to external political pressures, internal financial and administrative difficulties, and the weakness of the infrastructure of the state's educational institutions, from school buildings to teacher training, prevented the implementation or even initiation of the proposed solutions (Ozgur 2012).

C. Foreign Education in The Era of Atatürk (1923-1938)

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's stance towards foreign schools was firm from the outset, with the abolition of the privileges previously granted and the requirement that non-Islamic schools continue to be subject to the same laws and regulations as Turkish schools. Turkey recognized, as per the letters exchanged in the Treaty of Lausanne, only the religious, educational, health, and charitable institutions of France, Italy, and Britain that existed prior to October 30, 1914 (REED 1988)

A distinction must be made between foreign schools and international schools in Turkey. International schools offer global curricula designed for the children of diplomats and foreign nationals. Foreign entities or embassies operate foreign schools and are affiliated with them, in accordance with the legislation of the country of origin (Altinyelken and Sözeri 2019).

In its efforts to secularise education since 1924, the Turkish government obliged foreign and local schools to conform to the principles of modern education, as all schools came under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. Despite resistance from some foreign schools, the government issued circulars to ban religious symbols. It strictly imposed Turkish language lessons in foreign schools while monitoring teachers' performance. The government was serious about its pursuit of control over the education sector. It is noteworthy that in 1928, it closed the American School in Bursa because two of its Muslim students converted to Christianity, international schools, and the problem of Turkish students' enrollment (Kiliç 2012).

It is necessary to differentiate between foreign and international schools in Turkey, as international schools offer global educational curricula for the children of diplomats and foreigners. They are not obligated to teach the Turkish national curriculum. However, the Ministry of Education encourages teaching the Turkish language as part of the curriculum to enhance students' integration into the social environment. They are not subject to strict government supervision, as Turkish students are not allowed to enrol in them, except in rare cases, such as when the student has lived abroad for a long time or when one of the parents holds dual citizenship or works in an embassy (Ozgur 2012).

Foreign schools are run by foreign entities or embassies affiliated with them and operate according to the legislation of the founding country, so they are subject to strict

supervision by the Turkish Ministry of Education. They are regularly inspected to ensure that they meet the regulations and requirements set by the Ministry of National Education, as Turkish students are allowed to enrol in them after obtaining approval from the Ministry of Education. These schools must offer mandatory subjects such as the Turkish language, Turkish History, and Turkish geography to ensure that students are connected to their Turkish identity and culture. A few months before the start of the 2024-2025 academic year in Turkey, Education Minister Yusuf Tekin said: "There are several foreign schools that do not adhere to the regulations set by the ministry, which are a condition for the continued study of Turkish students in them. Although there are German and Pakistani schools among them, the controversy has escalated over two French schools: Charles de Gaulle and Pierre Loti." He added, "These schools were opened for the children of diplomatic mission employees, but they have also begun to receive Turkish students, which is against the law," noting that they have asked the French ambassador to work on dissolving these schools more than once. However, the French were procrastinating (Gökarıksel and Secor 2015).

The press release issued by the Turkish Ministry of National Education recently before the start of the current academic year after several rounds of negotiations with the management of the two schools indicated that these schools operate without legal status and accept the registration of "Turkish students," then announced reaching an agreement that includes working on a comprehensive cooperation agreement between France and Turkey, allowing the teaching of the Turkish language to Turkish students in France, and stopping the registration of any new Turkish students (including dual nationals) in the two schools until an agreement is concluded that provides an appropriate legal status for the two schools. (Athanassopoulou 2024) The ministry will also hand over a list of the names of Turkish students in these schools, along with all information related to the schools affiliated with the French Agency for Education Abroad (AEFE). Pending the completion of the final agreement and the legal authorization of these schools, Turkish teachers will teach the basic Turkish curriculum appointed by the ministry. The educational processes will be monitored and inspected by officials working in offices inside these schools (Altinyelken and Sözeri 2019).

D. Military and Civil Education in Türkiye

The adoption of the Turkish Constitution, which declared state secularism in 1924, marked the final stage in a long, cumulative process of secularisation in Turkey, which began with the modernization efforts undertaken by the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s. Among all the tools that contributed to this development, military and civilian education—which replaced Islamic education in the kuttabs and madrasas—played a decisive role in instilling the idea of secularism within at least four generations of Turkish intellectual elites. Their positions varied regarding the form of the new state established

in post-modern Turkey. However, their visions remained nearly unified around the necessity of separating Religion and state, removing Religion from the public sphere, and even restricting it to the confines of personal faith to eliminate it (Ateş 2023). In this, they were loyal to French *laïcité*, whose extreme exclusionary character served as the ideological precursor to Turkish secularism. Prominent figures such as Selim III, Mahmud II, Ishak Efendi, Mustafa Rashid Pasha, Imam Asad Efendi, Kemal Pasha, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, Ali Pasha, Emin Pasha, Abdul Hamid II, Ahmed Riza Bey, Abdullah Cevdet, and finally Mustafa Kemal Atatürk—along with other lesser-known figures—played key roles in transforming education in Turkey from its old perspective, based on the limits, ethics, and directives of Islamic law, to compulsory education, one of the innovations of the modern state in Europe. Although these figures, polemically referred to in contemporary academia as "reformists," sought to capitalize on the potential of compulsory education to create "obedient" and "useful" societies, as had been the case in Europe, the results of Ottoman modernization policies—particularly during the Tanzimat era—had the exact opposite effect, as this study demonstrates (Altınay 2004). Instead of integrating the various ethnic and religious elements of the Ottoman Empire into a single classroom, offering secular curricula that transcended religions and ethnicities, the religious minority schools that these organizations allowed to exist contributed to the strengthening of nationalist ideas within the Ottoman world. This led to the unrest and bloody events that characterized the late Ottoman era, continuing into the aftermath of the Great War (Atçıl 2017). This, in turn, instilled in the Armenian, Greek, and Arab peoples a hostility that sometimes reached the point of estrangement from Turkey, after centuries in which these nationalities had all coexisted and worked together under the shadow of the old ruling regimes (Bryce et al. 2000).

These counterproductive results of modern education highlight the need to return to the element of "effectiveness," that is, the extent to which the Ottomans were able to launch the modernization of their state based on their internal motivations, as well as the importance of their freedom to borrow from the "other" to the extent that their circumstances, which naturally differed from those of this "other," permitted them. This research has demonstrated, to the best of its ability, that since the end of the eighteenth century, the Ottomans had accepted the reality that their empire had become a second-class state, behind the technologically superior powers of Western Europe. To preserve this empire, under constant threat from Tsarist Russia, Ottoman elites accepted the adoption of modern institutions and the elimination of old ones that stemmed from the functioning of Islamic law in society (Makanat al-Mar'a fi al-Mujtama' al-'Uthmani, 2016).

As this adoption deepened, it became clear to everyone that replacing one system with another under pressure and without consideration benefited only the European powers. In the mixed and foreign courts, modern schools, joint-stock companies, and new land laws enacted by the Ottomans, victory always went to the Europeans, who obtained

rulings that satisfied them alone, disseminated their ideas that reduced the Islamic world to a pale version of itself, and single-handedly seized the raw materials that the vast lands of this world promised. This deteriorating situation in the post-modern Ottoman world led to the emergence of Turkish elites who were more in tune with the new reality and less contradictory. Abandoning the illogical Ottoman ideology—since the nineteenth-century world, especially in its second half, was leaning toward national isolation—these elites embraced "extreme Turkish nationalism," aiming to establish a centralized state whose territorial mass was almost exclusively Turkish-speaking. Because secularism in Turkey had remained elitist for decades, and the Islamic/Ottoman past was still alive in people's minds, the campaign led by the emerging Turkish Republic to erase this past was very broad. It relied, above all, on education, the ideal tool for crafting individuals and creating ideas within them with surprising calm and skilful fluidity (Hasan Najar 2020).

E. The Conflict of Cultural Identity and Politics between Türkiye and The West

Through the General Education Regulations of 1869, the Ottoman Empire attempted to close the gaps related to foreign and non-Islamic schools, making them subject to inspection. Their opening depended entirely on the Sultan's permission (Farid Bek Al-Muhami 2009). However, the collapse of the Sultanate and the connection of these schools to the consulates made them fall outside the state's control. Their directors dared to remove the Ottoman inspectors (Role of Islam in Turkish education fuels secularist fears | Reuters n.d.). Due to the high-quality foreign language education offered by these schools, the Ottoman elite preferred to send their children to them, seeking a better education on a European level, which is a crucial, distinctive factor in securing employment, even at the expense of distancing themselves from the values of their society. They received various incentives, including access to high prosperity and a prominent societal position. This explains the position of some Turkish intellectuals who grew up in American schools and defended the American mandate during the War of Independence (Baltaru and Soysal 2018).

In his research on the Atatürk Encyclopedia, published on a government website, Sezen Kiliç quotes a statement by Rafiq Rizk Saloum, one of the leaders of the Arab movement, that the children of the Muslim elite who attended these foreign schools grew up as haters of Turks and Arab nationalists (Kiliç 2012). Since the failed coup attempt in 2016, Turkey has been seeking to open schools and educational institutions affiliated with it in Western countries through the "Maarif" Foundation and to close all institutions affiliated with the "Gülen" group, which largely controlled Turkish education in the West. Turkey believes that the problem of foreign schools in Turkey is related to the obstacles placed by Western governments on opening schools under Turkish law on French and German territory, similar to the five French and German schools in Turkey. This issue constantly poisons relations between the two countries (Turkey and France) (Kiliç 2012). In his interview with Haber Turk, following the statements about French schools, Tekin

condemned France's "arrogance," saying: "We are not like the countries it colonized; we are a sovereign state, and if you want to teach here, you have to act according to our conditions (Role of Islam in Turkish education fuels secularist fears | Reuters n.d.)."

In 2019, news circulated about the intention of an official Turkish delegation to visit France and observe foreign schools in operation, in preparation for opening Turkish educational institutions, sparking a wave of French rejection and hostile statements towards Turkey. The then French Minister of National Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, came out and said: "I think that today there are a lot of unfriendly Turkish moves, and we are very concerned about what the Turkish authorities are doing towards the Turkish communities in France. Everyone knows that Türkiye has abandoned the secularism that has characterized its History for decades, and I am, of course, very vigilant about this issue." In recent decades, Turkey has undergone a significant period of transition in its quest to reduce its dependence on the West. We have seen this in its attempts to return to its Islamic incubator and work to build a defence system independent of the major powers. It recognizes the importance of education in preserving its internal unity and fostering a positive view of the Turks towards their nation, History, and culture. At the same time, many view foreign education as fostering dependence on the West and a sense of "inferiority" in the face of foreign culture and language (Anderson and Pollak 1997).

F. The Role of Religious Schools in Preventing Shifts in Belief and Cultural Values

Since the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey, the form of education has begun to change to take a new direction that allows the teaching of the Qur'an and Islamic sciences so that the new Turkish generation has the opportunity to obtain this type of education from a young age with absolute freedom, unlike previous generations who were deprived of it due to the decisions of successive secular governments (Elsie 2019). After the Turkish parliament approved the reform of the education system and the introduction of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's biography as optional subjects in the middle and secondary stages, the Turkish Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs took over the management of the Qur'an education centers after their management was in the hands of Ministry of National Education (Şa'idi 2012). These centers will not only teach the Holy Quran. However, they will also teach a comprehensive religious curriculum throughout the year, not just during the summer. The decision of the Turkish National Security Council after the coup of February 28, 1997, prevented many Turkish families from sending their children under the age of 15 to receive religious education in Quran education centres (Fathurrohman and Marhumah 2022)(Fathurrohman and Marhumah 2022)(Fathurrohman and Marhumah 2022)(Fathurrohman & Marhumah, 2022). It is known that Turkey's secular policy prohibits religious education in schools. However, the Justice and Development government licensed the teaching of the Quran to children in its centres in September of last year, without restriction to any specific age or stage (Altinyelken and Sözeri 2019).

Some have described radical amendments to the same law, as the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs will also allow the opening of Quran-teaching centers in mosques and places it deems appropriate to provide religious education, which will not be limited to teaching and memorizing the Quran, but will include the honorable biography of the Prophet, hadiths, interpretation of the meanings of surahs and verses, supplications, and Islamic morals, in addition to Islamic social and cultural activities. Foreigners residing in Turkey can join these centers (Role of Islam in Turkish education fuels secularist fears | Reuters n.d.). At the same time, non-residents must obtain permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nur Serter, a deputy from the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), who is known for her opposition to all manifestations of Religion in educational institutions, commented in the Turkish media on these amendments, calling them "brainwashing" and "propaganda for political Islam (Gökarıksel and Secor 2015). "She quoted one of the phrases used by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a statement on the subject, "We want to raise a pious generation," to wonder if he was aiming to "raise a generation of hardline mullahs," as she put it. She criticized the teaching of the Holy Quran and the Prophet's biography in schools, wondering about the benefit, as long as these subjects will be taught in religious centers throughout the year (Ozgur 2012)." As for Jamal Demir, the deputy director of Imam Hatip High School in the Uskudar district of Istanbul, he expressed his great satisfaction with these new amendments because, in his opinion, they will increase the enrollment of students in these schools, in addition to the fact that they "will restore the rights of graduates of Imam Hatip religious schools to enroll in any major they want in universities," after a different grading system was applied to them than the system used with the grades of students in other schools, "which always made their grades low, and thus they were forced to enroll in specific majors that were not actually what they wanted,"

According to his expression. Hanifa Gokdemir, a graduate of Imam Hatip schools, agrees with him, stating that she is now grateful for the Turkish government's decision, which is in line with the desires of a large segment of the Turkish people, "who have suffered from being deprived of practicing their religious rituals for decades (Bishku 2024)." She confirms that since their children reached the age of five, she and her husband have been keen to send them to learn the Holy Quran in the homes of some families in secret. She said they also make sure to "sit with them every evening to review what they have learned from the Wise Remembrance" as a daily ritual for the family (Ozgur 2012). When Al Jazeera Net asked Muhammad Ali, the eldest son, who is nine years old, why he wanted to learn the Holy Quran, he replied, "The Holy Quran is the book of Muslims, and God loves those who read it. To deserve to enter Paradise, we must read it." The mother pointed out that the two children are close to completing the reading of the Holy Quran and that they have memorized most of the short surah.

G. Government Support for Islamic Religious Education and Concern of Secular Groups

Turkey's moves to promote traditional moral values among students, increase Islamic religious studies, and open prayer rooms in schools are raising concerns among the country's secularists and highlighting differences over the role religion should play in education. These latest moves also raise tensions over an already highly charged issue as Turkey marks the centenary of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's founding of the secular republic. In 20 years in power, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) have reshaped Turkey in his conservative vein, opening a string of Islamic "Imam Hatip" schools in line with his goal of raising a "devout generation (Aşlamacı and Kaymakcan 2017)."

Secularist opposition parties, unions, and many parents say an Islamist approach is now creeping into schools more generally. Illustrating the growing tensions, around 2,000 people protested in Istanbul on Sunday, chanting slogans against the latest religious policies in a march backed by the main opposition parties and leftist groups (Role of Islam in Turkish education fuels secularist fears | Reuters n.d.). The number of Imam Khatib schools increased to approximately 1,700 from 450 schools in 2002, and the number of students also rose sixfold. "The AKP government has taken Turkey backward," said Duzgun Ugur. He stood beneath a statue of Atatürk, teaching children to write in the Latin alphabet, which replaced the Persian-Arabic script used in the Ottoman Empire as part of the modernizing and secularising reforms he introduced a century ago (Ágoston and Masters 2009)(Ágoston and Masters 2009)(Ágoston and Masters 2009)(Ágoston & Masters, 2009). "We want to abolish compulsory religious lessons. It should be up to us to give religious lessons to children at home and raise them as we want – secular, democratic, and free," Ugur said. The demonstration was organized by groups representing Alevis, who make up about 15 to 20 percent of Turkey's 85 million people and many of whom are sceptical of the AKP's aims. Imam Hatip schools, established to educate preachers and orators, have grown from approximately 450 in 2002, when the AKP first came to power, to around 1,700. Their student population has grown sixfold to more than half a million (Bayir, Dilek, and Bugra 2023).

Secularists are now criticizing the regular school system, where students receive two mandatory religious lessons a week and now have to take additional classes in Religion and ethics. Separately, all schools must provide prayer rooms under a regulation enacted last October. "State schools are being turned into religious schools by making the curricula of other schools similar to those of Imam Hatips," said Kazim Ozbay, head of the Education Sector Union (Korkmaz and Osmanoğlu 2019). The secular concern centres on a program called "Gedis," which the education ministry claims aims to encourage children to adopt "national, moral, human, spiritual and cultural values." However, opponents say these values are fundamentally Islamic. Eğitim Eş has filed a lawsuit to have Gedis, a joint project between the Ministries of Education, Sports, Youth, and the Religious Affairs

Directorate, annulled because it is deemed unconstitutional and anti-secular. They complain that under this scheme, hundreds of Islamic preachers, imams, and other religious officials are being sent to schools. During his 20 years in power, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has re-established Islamist roots and opened several Islamic "Imam Hatip" schools in line with his goal of raising a "pious generation (Baqutayan et al. 2018)." The Education Ministry states that no 'spiritual advisors' have been appointed to schools, and they only engage in activities outside of school. National Education Minister Yusuf Tekin and his ministry have denied any Islamist agenda in response to several parliamentary questions from lawmakers who have expressed concerns about the scheme (Ozgur 2012).

"The Geddes project is not religious education or training," Tekin said, adding that it aligns with the Constitution and has received positive feedback from parents, students, and teachers in its pilot phase. "The project is a club activity that focuses on experiencing and applying universal values and our national values," he continued, stressing that such "values clubs" are voluntary and are conducted with parental consent. However, Nurten Yüntar, a lawmaker from the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party, highlighted an event in her constituency in the northwestern province of Tekirdag where children cleaned a mosque. The local Islamic official's office posted photos of smiling children cleaning, polishing, and dusting the mosque, one of a series of social media posts about such visits to mosques under the scheme. "The AKP government is trying to shape our country's education system in line with ideological goals based on religious principles," Yuntar said. Erdogan acknowledged a political divide over the issue in a speech last year, where he greeted a young boy in the audience and described him as part of the "pious generation (Athanassopoulou 2024)." Turkish universities employ a sophisticated scientific methodology in teaching Islamic sciences, emphasizing scientific research and internationally accredited academic curricula, particularly in their faculties of Theology. The integration of scientific and religious education is evident in the offering of comprehensive programs that include jurisprudence (fiqh), hadith, and exegesis (tafsir), alongside contemporary sciences. These programs are available in Turkish, Arabic, or English.

Areas of Curriculum Integration The curriculum integrates traditional Islamic sciences, such as jurisprudence, exegesis, and the Prophet's biography (sirah), with modern sciences necessary for understanding and applying the Religion in the present era. Students are trained in scientific research skills within the field of Islamic sciences, enabling them to contribute to the dissemination of sound knowledge.

Turkish universities offer students specializing in Theology broad horizons for research and in-depth study. Theology faculties boast professors and scholars specializing in various Islamic fields. Turkish universities are characterized by their

continuous development and adherence to the Bologna Process standards, ensuring high-quality education and international recognition of degrees, while incorporating Islamic teaching.

IV. Conclusion

Since the total Reformation in all fields during the Ottoman period, foreign schools have been established in Turkey for a long time. However, they are communal because of the foreign capitulation agreements made with various countries such as France, England, and other Western countries. This continued until the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey turned into a secular state that separated Religion and state, not only that. This new secular state eliminated Islamic teachings, such as changing Arabic script to Latin script and the call to prayer in Turkish. Foreign Schools developed by Christian Missionaries are much more prevalent in modern Turkey. Modernization has made religious schools become pressured and disbanded because they are not aligned with the principles of secularism and nationalism; religious schools are oriented to the Arab Lands, while Secular Turkey is oriented to the West. There was an attempt by the ruler who succeeded Atatürk to revive religious schools, but a military coup ultimately ended this effort. After Christian missionary education, which was not aimed at the progress of Turkey, and secular education did not show significant results, during the Erdogan era, a merger between Islamic education and science was carried out, which has shown significant results.

Bibliography

- Ágoston, Gábor, and Bruce Alan Masters, eds. 2009. *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*. Facts on File Library of World History. New York, NY: Facts On File.
- Alghamdi, Hasnah, and Meguellati Achour. 2020. "STUDYING HISTORY IN AN ISLAMIC CONTEXT AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENT AWARENESS: A CASE STUDY OF MUSLIM STUDENTS AT SAUDI UNIVERSITIES." *JAT* 15(2):1–13. doi:10.22452/JAT.vol15no2.1.
- Alizar, Meirison, and Qasim Muhammadi. 2019. "Islamic Sharia and Non-Muslim Citizens in Kanunname During Sultan Abdul Hamid II of the Ottoman Empire." *WS* 27(1):37–68. doi:10.21580/ws.27.1.3543.
- Alparslan, Abbas. 2021. "العثماني العهد في الاوقاف إدارة." *Akademik Tarih ve Araştırmalar Dergisi* 4(5):4–17.
- Altınay, A. 2004. *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*. 1st ed. 2004. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Altinyelken, Hülya Kosar, and Semiha Sözeri. 2019. "Importing Mosque Pedagogy from Turkey: An Analysis of Contextual Factors Shaping Re-Contextualization Processes in the Netherlands." *Comparative Education* 55(1):47–65. doi:10.1080/03050068.2018.1541666.
- Anderson, Stanford, and Martha D. Pollak. 1997. *The Education of the Architect: Historiography, Urbanism, and the Growth of Architectural Knowledge: Essays*

Presented to Stanford Anderson.

- Aşlamacı, İbrahim, and Recep Kaymakcan. 2017. "A Model for Islamic Education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip Schools." *British Journal of Religious Education* 39(3):279–92. doi:10.1080/01416200.2015.1128390.
- Atçıl, Abdurrahman. 2017. *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*.
- Ateş, Barış, ed. 2023. *Military Innovation in Türkiye: An Overview of the Post-Cold War Era*. Routledge Military and Strategic Studies on the Middle East and North Africa. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Athanassopoulou, Ekavi. 2024. *Turkey's Relations with Israel: The First Sixty Two Years, 1948-2010*. Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics. New York: Routledge.
- Baltaru, Roxana-Diana, and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal. 2018. "Administrators in Higher Education: Organizational Expansion in a Transforming Institution." *High Educ* 76(2):213–29. doi:10.1007/s10734-017-0204-3.
- Baqtayan, Shadiya Mohamed S., Aini Suzana Ariffin, Magda Ismail A. Mohsin, and Akbariah Mohd Mahdzir. 2018. "Waqf Between the Past and Present." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 9(4):149–55. doi:10.2478/mjss-2018-0124.
- Bayir, Husyein, Yucel Dilek, and Ahmet Bugra. 2023. "DEVELOPING A FITRAH-BASED LEARNING MODEL IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL." *EDUSOSHUM: Journal of Islamic Education and Social Humanities* 3(1):20–28. doi:10.52366/edusoshum.v3i1.65.
- Bishku, Michael B. 2024. "Turkey and the Palestinian and Jerusalem Issues." *Israel Affairs* 30(1):83–104. doi:10.1080/13537121.2024.2295614.
- Bryce, James, Arnold Toynbee, Ara Sarafian, and Gomidas Institute, eds. 2000. *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915 - 1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce*. Uncensored ed. Gomidas Institute Books. Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Inst.
- Elsie, Robert. 2019. *The Albanian Bektashi: History and Culture of a Dervish Order in the Balkans*. I.B. Tauris.
- Farid Bek Al-Muhami, Muhammad. 2009. *Tarij al-dawla al-'aliyya al-'utmaniyya*. Beirut: Dar al-Nafa' is.
- Fathurrohman, Rizal, and Marhumah Marhumah. 2022. "Fred M. Donner's Views on Orientalist Thought about the Distinction between the Qur'an and Hadith." *Mashdar: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 4(2):219–30. doi:10.15548/mashdar.v4i2.5398.
- Gökarıksel, Banu, and Anna Secor. 2015. "Post-Secular Geographies and the Problem of Pluralism: {Religion} and Everyday Life in {Istanbul}, {Turkey}." *Political Geography* 46:21–30. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.10.006.
- Hasan Najar, Ahmad Nabil. 2020. *الانحطاط لعوامل جديدة قراءة: العثمانية الدولة*.
- Kiliç, Sezen. 2012. "ATATÜRK'S ERA IN THE NAZI PRESS (1933-1938)." *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies* Volume 5 Issue 4(5):145–60. doi:10.9761/jasss_166.
- Korkmaz, Mehmet, and Cemil Osmanoğlu. 2019. "Küreselleşmenin Birey ve Toplum Hayatına Etkileri ve Din Eğitimi." *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*. doi:10.33206/mjss.483914.
- Meirison, Meirison. 2020. "Westernization of the Ottoman Empire, Zionism and the Resistance of the Palestinian Society." *Altahrir* 20(1):1–22.

doi:10.21154/altahrir.v20i1.1922.

- Ozgur, Iren. 2012. *Islamic Schools in Modern Turkey: Faith, Politics, and Education*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press.
- REED, HOWARD A. 1988. "Islam and Education in Turkey: Their Roles in National Development." *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 12(1):1-5.
- Role of Islam in Turkish education fuels secularist fears | Reuters. n.d. Retrieved February 28, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/role-islam-turkish-education-fuels-secularist-fears-2023-12-14/>.
- Şa'īdī, 'Abd al-Muta'al. 2012. *Al-Ḥurriyah al-Dīniyah Fī al-Islām =: Religious Freedom in Islam. Fī Al-Fikr al-Nahdawī al-Islāmī. al-Qāhirah : Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī ; Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī*.
- Scott, James C., ed. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wheeler, Everett P. 1922. "AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN TURKEY." *Current History* (1916-1940) 17(2):300-302.
- سلطان II، الحميد عبد. حرب محمد للمعاصرين بمذكرات وقابلها وحواشيها مقدمتها وكتب الأصلي النص عن ترجمها القلم دار. al-Ṭab'ah al-sādisah. Dimashq: 1918-1842. 2018. الحميد عبد السلطان مذكرات. العثماني المجتمع في المرأة مكانة. 2016. <https://www.turkpress.co/node/19331>.