

4-1-2015

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Recommended Citation

Sisman, Cengiz Ph.D. (2015) "Ardıç, Nurullah. Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early 20th Century (SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East). London: Routledge, 2013.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 6: No. 2, Article 6.
DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1243
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol6/iss2/6>

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Ardıç, Nurullah. *Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early 20th Century* (SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East). London: Routledge, 2013.

Dealing with two contested issues—secularization and the caliphate—in modern Islamic history in his engaging and stimulating book, Nurullah Ardıç argues that Islam was the single most important source of legitimation and the main force shaping political and cultural developments in the modernization process in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. Challenging the oft-repeated argument that there is a fundamental incompatibility between Islam and modernity by scholars such as Niyazi Berke, Feroz Ahmad, Bernard Lewis, and Tarik Zafer Tunaya (p. 2), the author maintains that the relationship between Islam and secularism has been one marked by accommodation, thus supporting the work of Sabri Ulgener, Serif Mardin, and Erik Yan Zürcher. Inspired by the arguments of Ahmet Davutoglu and Ismail Kara, the author asserts that modernization actually increased the significance and power of Islam in early twentieth century Turkey (p. 21). To lay out his main theoretical framework, Ardıç examines the origins, development, and demise of the Caliphate in Islamic history, with particular attention to the legal and political aspects of its demise.

Ardıç organizes his book into seven chapters, within which he investigates the interplay among Islam, secularization, the Ottomans, and the Caliphate (pp.1-141) in the modern period and then dissects the debates surrounding the (in)temporality of the Caliphate in three periods: secularization in the caliphal center (1908–1916); colonization in the caliphal periphery (1916–1920); and the abolition of the Caliphate (1919–1924) (pp. 143-309). In each chapter, the author provides a historical and discursive context, successfully demonstrating the significance of these topics in the larger milieu of the “world of Islam,” ranging from Morocco to India.

After deeply engaging with a plethora of primary and secondary sources, Ardıç sees the empire divided between an Ottoman “center” (Istanbul) and a “periphery” (North Africa and India), two regions dominated by three primary groups of actors: traditionalists, who believed the caliphate held both spiritual and political authority worth preserving; Muslim modernists, who emphasized the temporal-political value of the caliphate; and secularists, who, considering the caliphate a purely spiritual institution, wanted to “destroy” it. He claims that all of these “elite” (p.95) actors employed similar “meta-discursive” strategies and “tactics” in their battles with each other, all of them deriving the legitimacy of their claims from Islam.

Employing a sociological methodology, Ardıç employs discourse analysis and socio-historical methods because he believes that discourses both affect and are affected by social developments, which means he thinks discourses are indicators of social change (p.33). This important and ambitious project, however, is not free of problems. The monograph is obviously based on the author’s doctoral dissertation, which was supervised by two eminent UCLA sociologists, Michael Mann and Gail Kligman, whose expertise lies outside of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. The book retains many marks of its origins as a dissertation—constant repetition of some of the main arguments (e.g. “the traditionalists” emphasize the temporal-spiritual; “the modernists” emphasize the temporal-political; and “the secularists” emphasize the spiritual dimension of the Caliphate), long, technical footnotes, extended indented quotes, and repetitive conclusions at the end of each chapter—all of which weakens the readability of the text. Especially dreary is a long and detailed literature review (pp. 3-39) of sociological theory that covers almost all of the prominent names in the modern and post-modern eras such as Marx,

Weber, Comte, Durkheim, Parsons, Berger, Taylor, Foucault, Bourdieu, Bakhtin, Barthes, and de Certeau. Despite this tedium, his review on the growing literature related to the sociology of religion and secularization is impressive. After wading through this theoretical morass, the reader anticipates that the author will engage directly with the analytical concepts and theoretical frameworks presented in the literature review. Except for Foucault's vaguely articulated concept of "discourse" and "discursive techniques," however, the author does not utilize these concepts or frameworks in the rest of the work.

In addition to the clunky nature of the text, a variety of other shortcomings additionally weaken the rigor of the work. First, the uses and definitions of the concepts of "secularism," "secularization," "secularist," "modernity," "modernization," and "Westernization" in the book require more rigorous treatment. For example, "the secularists" are portrayed most of the time as anti-religious or irreligious people who "tried to destroy the caliphate" (p. 9). In another instance, he argues, "[Turkish] secularization has remained limited, as indicated by the fact that over 70 percent of women in Turkey still wear the headscarf, and masses of people keep voting for the so-called 'Islamist' parties" (p. 25). In both cases, he merely assumes that all "secularists" are anti-religious and that all "traditionalists" are anti-secular. Although these arguments might work for some "secularists" like Beşir Fuat, Tefvik Fikret, Abdullah Cevdet, and even Yahya Kemal, whose names are almost never mentioned in the book, the author fails altogether to present the beliefs of other "secularists" such as Ziya Gökalp or Seyid Bey (chapter 2), who simply wanted to separate religion from politics and religion from law. Can we lump all these "secularists" or "traditionalists" together in ill-defined groups? Might some members of either group have changed their minds over the course of the intense debates around religion and politics in the 1910s and 1920s? From cultural studies literature, we know that many people's identities and ideas undergo drastic change during times of social and personal crises.

A second shortcoming of the work involves the author's tendency to omit that which simply does not fit (or appears to weaken) his intended argument. For example, one of the author's boldest arguments concerns the radical inseparability of religion and politics in Islam, since both are contained in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) under the categories of theology and law (p. 6-7). Historically speaking, however, we know that there were times when Muslims indeed separated the institution of the caliphate from the sultanate, as was the case during the rule of Buwayhis (945-1055), Seljuk Turks (1055-1258), and Mamluks (1261-1517). Additionally, some Ottomanists would argue that the existence of *sharia* (religious law) and *kanun* (sultanic law) in the Ottoman Empire is also a form of separation of religion from law—an important discussion missing in the book.

Finally, despite his best intentions, the author has a tendency to oversimplify both Islam itself and the actors involved in the modernization process. The author carefully tries to avoid Orientalist, teleological, and essentialist assumptions, but he has a tendency to refer to Islam as an unchanging meta-historical phenomenon. Islam, or members of the Islamic communities, similar to those of other religious traditions, would have had to address the challenges of modernity in the nineteenth century, when it was refashioned by "modern" and "rational" arguments. In other words, religions (including Islam) functioned not as independent variable or causal agent, but as dependent variable. As the author himself points out, the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal was a secular/modern one, which partly secularized the traditionalists' discourse (p. 176). It is true that all actors (traditionalist, modernist, and secularist) used Islam for instrumental and tactical reasons when they resorted to the meta-discursive strategy of deriving justification from Islam in their battles with each other (p. 241).

However, it is also true that members of the religious communities (later religious orthodoxies) had to prove that their religious beliefs and ways of life were compatible with modernity as well. Therefore, it would perhaps be safer to argue that both religion (read: Islam) and modernity, in a dialectical fashion, have been the most important sources of legitimation in all manner of global social, political, and cultural change since the nineteenth century. As one of the famous nineteenth century Ottoman legal dicta indicates: *Ezmânun tağayyürü ahkâmun tağayyürünü ilzam eder* (“Changes of the times entail changes of the law”).

The author’s second oversimplification involves his overlooking factors (apart from the ideological) that may have played a part in the ultimate abolition of the Ottoman monarchy. Specifically, in addition to religious and rationalist justifications, the secularists had other sources of justification and power as well. For example, the historical context of the post-World War I era was conducive to the abolition of the monarchy, as the collapse of the Russian, German, Hapsburg, and Persian monarchies between 1917-1921 created favorable condition for the Republican regime (p. 254). Towards the end of the book, the author himself admits that the secularists did not achieve the abolition of the Ottoman monarchy and caliphate through ideological (read: Islamic) struggle alone but that secularist theological engineering was bolstered by powerful resources beyond Islamic discourse (p. 308). Therefore, it would perhaps be better to categorize the actors involved in the discussions around the caliphate not in categories such as traditionalist/Islamists/secularists but rather as occupying pro-and anti-caliphate camps, motivated by various religious, social, and political factors.

None of the above criticisms, however, should lessen the value of the book. It is a comprehensive and well-documented text, which sets high standards for future scholars working on secularism in the Middle Eastern and the significance of the caliphate in Islamic history. Needless to say, it is also a relevant book for understanding the complex relationship between religion and politics in modern Turkey and for contemporary debates on the caliphate in the Islamic world, including the one based on ISIL’s claim. As such, the book will be of great interest to scholars in Middle Eastern studies, Ottoman studies, secularization and modernization studies, and the sociology of religion.

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