

NATION AND STATE BUILDING IN ISRAEL (1948-1967) AND TURKEY  
(1923-1946): A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

### NATION AND STATE BUILDING IN ISRAEL (1948-1967) AND TURKEY (1923-1946): A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT

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The intention in this study is to make a comparison of the relationship between the state, religion and nationalism in the State of Israel and the Republic of Turkey during their state-building processes. Existing literature analyzing the relationship between the state and religion in Israel and Turkey reveals that both have been conceived as secular, democratic, modern states, and Israel can be put forward as exceptional case in the Middle East. That said, there is a need to include the issue of secularism in the national, historical contexts of both states to gain a better understanding of the issue. To this end, this study delineates the similar and different paths followed by the State of Israel and the Republic of Turkey concerning their experiences with secularism, and argues that, contrary to general assumptions that emphasize their uniqueness in the region; the two share various similarities and indeed are not unique. It has been argued further that religion was neglected by the state elite during the construction of a national identity in both countries. This study seeks to challenge this bias by making a comparative historical, constitutional and institutional analysis of the relationship between the state and religion in the State of Israel and the Republic of Turkey, and argues that although the state elite in both countries started out as secular, relied on religion to define the boundaries of the national identity during the state-building period.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Secularism, Religion, Turkey, Israel

## ÖZ

### TÜRKİYE VE İSRAİL’DE ULUS VE DEVLET İNŞASI: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR DEĞERLENDİRME

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Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye ve İsrail’in devlet inşa süreçlerinin din, devlet ve milliyetçilik ilişkileri ekseninde karşılaştırılmasıdır. Bu iki devlet konuya ilişkin literatürde demokratik, seküler ve modern olarak tanımlanmakta ve İsrail’in bu bağlamda Orta Doğu bölgesinde istisnai olduğu öne sürülmektedir. Ancak konuya dair sağlıklı bir analiz yapabilmek için bu iki devleti temel alan sekülerizm tartışmalarının her iki ülkenin de kendine özgü milli ve tarihsel bağamlarından koparılmaması gerekmektedir. Bu amaçla bu çalışmada, bu iki ülkenin sekülerleşme süreçlerinde benimsedikleri benzer ve farklı yollar irdelenince, İsrail devletinin bölgede istisnai bir örnek teşkil etmediği ve bu iki devletin sekülerlik süreçlerinin düşünülenden daha fazla bir paralellikte seyrettiği ve ortak yönleri olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, iki devletin kuruluşunu müteakip gerçekleştirilen milli kimlik inşası sürecinde dinin göz ardı edildiğine dair fikirler öne sürülmüştür. Bu çalışma bu tartışmalar çerçevesinde din-devlet ilişkilerinin tarihsel, kurumsal ve anayasal ekseninde karşılaştırılması yolu ile iki devletin kurucu ideolojisinin seküler bir temele dayanmasına rağmen, milli kimlik ve ulus inşası sürecinde dine dayalı bir kimlik tanımı yapıldığını ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Buna göre, her iki ülkede, kuruluş sürecinde belirgin olan dinin rolünü azaltmaya yönelik çabanın yerini dinin kıstas olduğu bir milli kimlik inşasına bıraktığı görülecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Milliyetçilik, Sekülerizm, Din, İsrail, Türkiye

To my family and

To Kıvanç

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Introducing the Study

In the early stages of the formation of the State of Israel, first prime minister and founder of the state of Israel David Ben-Gurion entered into a debate with prominent scholar and Orthodox Jew Prof. Yeshayu Leibowitz. Discussing whether Israel should follow the example of secular states and separate the state and religion, Leibowitz claimed that religion would be spoiled if it was dependent on the state, and also that religion would spoil the state itself. Surprisingly, Ben-Gurion, a secular socialist, disagreed, and stating that he would never separate state and religion, which Leibowitz claimed was aimed at keeping religion under the control of the state.<sup>1</sup> Leibowitz's concerns were echoed by many other scholars, who argued that Ben-Gurion's aim was not to separate religion and state, but rather to control religion by incorporating religious institutions and authorities into the state.<sup>2</sup>

As in the case of Israel, debates on the secularism issue were common in Turkey from the earliest stages in the establishment of the Republic. Toprak claims that the secular reforms put in place by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, were actually designed to establish state control over religion

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<sup>1</sup> Alberto Spektorowski, "Nationalism, land and religion in Israel," in *Politics of Religion and Nationalism: Federalism, Consociationalism and Secession*, in F.Requejo and K.J.Nage (eds.), (New York, US: Routledge, 2015), pp. 66-80.

<sup>2</sup> See Tom Segev, *The First Israelis*, (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 261; Avi-Hai, Avraham, *Ben Gurion State-Builder: Principles and Pragmatism 1948-1963* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974); Moshe Pearlman and David Ben-Gurion, *Ben Gurion Looks Back in Talks with Moshe Perlman* (London: Schocken Books, 1988); Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power and National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Tsevi Tsameret and Moshe Tlamim, "Judaism in Israel: Ben-Gurion's Private Beliefs and Public Policy", *Israel Studies* , Vol. 4, No. 2, 1999, pp. 64-89. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed August 31, 2015).

rather than to separate the two spheres.<sup>3</sup> The scholarly debates surrounding secularism in Turkey mostly regarded state as hostile to religion, and furthermore, the aim of modernization reforms implemented by the founders of the Republic in the aftermath of Turkish independence have been interpreted by various scholars as a means of excluding religion or bringing it under state control.<sup>4</sup> That said, there are claims that such interpretations oversimplify the relationship between the state and religion.

This study will discuss the different interpretations presented above in a comprehensive analysis of the nature of secularism in both Israel and Turkey. The objectives of this thesis are twofold:

- 1) To examine the role of religion in the construction of a national identity during state-building efforts in Israel and Turkey, arguing that the state elite in Israel and Turkey did not take control of religion by integrating it into state apparatus, but rather used religion by reinterpreting it to serve their nationalist claims. In this regard, it is argued that although the state elite in both countries started out as secularists, they used religion to create a unified nation rather than totally excluding or integrating it into the state. Religion was used to some degree by the founders of both countries to serve the construction of a national identity, aiming to build a homogeneous state and strengthen national identity. The state and the founding elite in Turkey and Israel adopted neither a fully religious nor secular posture, but rather redefined and reinterpreted religion in line with the new context. This was achieved by adopting particular components of Judaism and Islam and giving them new nationalist

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<sup>3</sup> Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> See Ahmet Kuru, "Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion", *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No.4, 2007, pp.568–94; M.Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, "Islam in Turkey: Retreat from the Secular Path", in M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (eds), *Turkish Islam and the secular state: The Gulen Movement*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003); pp.xiii-1; Talip Kucukcan, "Sacralization of the State and Secular Nationalism: Foundations of Civil Religion in Turkey", *George Washington International Law Review*, Vol.41, No. 4, 2010, pp. 963-983; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, (New York: Routledge, 1998); Fred Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East*, (London: Saqi, 2000); Umut Özkırımlı and Spyros A. Sofos, *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey*, (London: Hurst and Co, 2008), p. 75.

meanings to fit their nationalist ideology, with the objective being to establish a nation state that assumed the superiority of nationalist interest above all others.

- 2) To question whether a relationship exists between the definitions of national identity, such as ethnic or civic, by the founders of the state and the success or failure of secularism in their respective countries. In other words, the question of whether a relationship exists between the definitions of Jewishness and Turkishness made by, respectively, the founders of Israel and Turkey and the implementation of secularism in both countries or not is examined. Such a comparison of Israel and Turkey will allow a better understanding of the issue of secularism.

### **1.1.1. Brief Political History of Turkey**

The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed in 1923 after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, and the declaration of the Republic took place after the War of Liberation against the entente powers. The Ottoman Empire had lost power, although its dissolution can be said to have begun in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as its territorial expansion came to an end and it began to lose territories to other states. Although the Ottoman Empire had been the first state to become significantly involved in the affairs of Europe, this situation had changed. Hanioglu argues that after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Ottoman Empire became completely involved in the struggle for power in Europe.<sup>5</sup> However, there had been an obvious decline in the power of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, which also saw the rise of nationalist movements. As a result of various historical, ideological, political and economic developments, the power of the Ottoman Empire was challenged in the 19th century and its non-Muslim subjects, including Serbians, Greek and Bulgarians, gained independence on the wave of growing nationalism.

The acceleration in the decline of power of the Ottoman Empire led the state elite to attempt to preserve the unity of the empire by reinforcing its military, economic, and political power. For them, the main reason for the decline stemmed from its failure to keep up with Westernization and modernization, and in this period, great efforts were taken to reinforce the state and make the state more powerful, as

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<sup>5</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 4.

had been the case in previous centuries. The Ottoman Empire began to implement reforms in its administration, military and economy, and the state elite advocated a policy of Ottomanism as an essential base of the state and society in a bid to preserve the unity of the empire.

After the failure of the reforms and the changing demographical circumstances of the empire after military defeats, nationalist rebellions, wars and migrations, a shift was seen from Ottomanism to Pan-Islamism. Once the empire realized that it was not possible to keep people of different religious and national identities together by means of Ottomanism, a shift occurred. The Young Turks, an intellectual movement that opposed the rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II, established a constitutional regime and became the major ruling power in the Ottoman Empire, with aiming to synthesize modernization with Islam and reemphasize the role of religion. However, the empire was unable to survive after its defeat in World War I. Although there were various debates taking place about nationalism and religion among prominent intellectuals during the 20th century, discussions related to the issue of identity had to wait till to the declaration of the Republic.

After the foundation of the Republic, many reforms were implemented in the areas of education, economy, politics and language aimed at building a secular and a modern nation state that was compatible with the “modernization project” in the minds of the Western-oriented political elite. The transition from the empire to the Republic of Turkey necessitated a process of state building, which was followed by nation building, and the issue of the place of religion in the state constituted a milestone in the nation building process of the new Republic. This thesis examines the relationship between the state and religion with a particular focus on the period from 1923 to 1946 in the case of Turkey, which was ruled by a single party, the Republican People’s Party (RPP), until the advent of the multi-party politics with the Democrat Party (DP) in 1946.

### **1.1.2. Brief Political History of the State of Israel**

The establishment of the State of Israel took place under similar circumstances to Turkey in terms of its coinciding with the emergence and rise of nation-state systems in Europe and in some other parts of the world. Following the



dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the territories on which Israel was founded became a mandate of Britain, although it would withdraw from the geography after a number of political and militaristic struggles. The efforts of the Zionist movement led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The Zionist movement – the National Liberation Movement– had been attempting to establish a Jewish state since the rise of Zionism in 1896, and fulfilled its goal on May 14, 1948 when David Ben-Gurion, as the first prime minister of the State of Israel and one of the founders of the state, read the Proclamation. The Zionist movement had been launched in Eastern Europe and headed by Theodor Herzl, who emphasized the need to create a state for Jewish people who had long suffered from discrimination. Herzl feared that Jewish people would eventually assimilate into the non-Jewish cultures they inhabited, and like many other Zionist leaders, he argued that the state should be superior to the religion, and that the rabbis should be confined to their synagogues. Liebman and Yehiya argue that the relationship between religion and Zionism as those of rejection since Zionist leaders saw religion as consequence of diasporic life and as an impediment to the Zionist ideology.<sup>6</sup> Paradoxically, the Orthodox and ultra-orthodox segments of the Jewish community also argued that, in the words of Ben-Yehuda, “Zionism itself constitutes a direct rebellion against the Almighty.”<sup>7</sup>

Although the most prominent leaders in the World Zionist Organization claimed that there was an urgent need for the establishment of a state for the Jewish people, there was no consensus on the territorial boundaries or nature of such a state. They managed eventually to agree upon a location for the state in the early 20th century – being the historical homeland of the Jewish people, which they claimed was appropriate for the ideological and political motives behind the movement itself – but could not agree upon the meaning of “Jewish state”. Did it imply a religious-theocratic state or a democratic state, as claimed in the Declaration of the Independence? This is a debate that continues still today.

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<sup>6</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 53-65.

<sup>7</sup> Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Theocratic democracy: The Social Construction of Religious and Secular Extremism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.13; Menachem Friedman, *Haredi Society*, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for the Study of Israel, 1991), p. 19.

Arguments about the nature of the state have, since the establishment of the state until the present day, been centered on the issue of the relationship between the state and religion. Independence brought with it concerted efforts to manage the state-building period and formulate the construction of a national identity, and as was the case in Turkey, religion constituted one of the most striking and crucial aspects of the nation-state building efforts. The state elite implemented various economic, political and social policies to strengthen the centrality of the state, in a bid to counteract the fact that Israeli society was an immigrant society from the very beginning. The population was never homogeneous, since the new citizens of the state were coming from different countries and had different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This demanded the urgent creation of a national identity, as had been the case in Turkey. To this end, religion was considered as playing a crucial role in the construction of a nation state, as a means of strengthening the national identity, providing legitimacy to the state and homogenizing the population of different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds.

### **1.1.3. Why Compare Israel and Turkey?**

Why compare Israel and Turkey? An analysis of existing literature and the field work carried out in both countries, make it clear that neither state is unique with regards to the secularism issue as supposed. Although there are views arguing that Israel's experience is not comparable with other countries, it is argued here that Israel bears significant similarities with Turkey. Both states have taken similar steps in accordance with global circumstances – such as the rise in the nation-state ideology and the decline in religion – that intensified during the first half of the 20th century. This is clearly apparent in how both countries saw a rise of secular parties in the early state-building years – the *Mapai* (*Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael*-Workers' Party of the Land of Israel) and the *RPP* (Republican People's Party), and a post-1980 remarkable rise of support for religious parties. As a result, the influence of religion has increased in the state apparatus in recent decades, and although each has different historical, political and socio-economic characteristics, as mentioned briefly above, there have been similar and intriguing parallels with regards to the relationship between the state and religion.

By examining this relationship, the revival of religious power that is taking place in both countries can be better understood, and a comparison of Israel and Turkey in this regard may reveal the numerous influences of policies implemented during the nation-building period on the contemporary politics. This thesis argues that if the issue of secularism in the context of Israel and Turkey is to be fully understood, it is necessary to take the advent of nationalism into consideration. In both cases, similar to most states, attempts to establish a secular state coincided with the desire to establish a nation state. To be able to homogenize the nation and strengthen national identity, the state had to define the meaning of “national identity” and deal with such questions as: Who is a Turk? Who is a Jew? What should be understood from the terms Jewishness and Turkishness?, as the contradictory situation of the secularism debate is related to the ambiguities of such definitions in both states.

This thesis focuses on the nature of secularism in Israel and the role of religion in the construction of a national identity in the period of the first Israeli Republic (1948-1967).<sup>8</sup> At that time and throughout the *yishuv* (period of settlement in the pre-state era), *Mapai* held political power, and its leadership implemented many policies with regards to the place of religion, making crucial agreements with the religious authorities that still define the nature of the state-religion relationship today. In short, the state attempted to create a modern, Westernized and secular state in accordance with the principles of Zionism during the given period. This study also focuses on the nature of secularism in the Republic of Turkey and the role of religion in the construction of national identity in the 1923-1946. Similar to Israel, the state founding elite in Turkey sought to create a modern, Westernized and secular state during that period, and implemented various reforms related to the place of religion in the newly established state.

An analysis of literature on secularism reveals that limited numbers of studies have been made focusing on the construction of national identity in newly founded

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<sup>8</sup> Terminology borrowed from Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel: The second Republic*, (Washington: CQ Pres, 2005); Eliezer Schweid ““Beyond” All That-Modernism, Zionism, Judaism”, *Israel Studies*, Vol.1, No. 1,1996, pp.224-46; Martin Edelman, “A Portion of Animosity: The Politics of the Disestablishment of Religion in Israel”, *Israel Studies*, Vol. 5, No.1, 2000, pp. 204-227. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed August 10, 2015).

states, in that although there are studies on the relationship between state and religion, the importance of nationalism in theoretical discussions of secularism are lacking. This can be attributed to the dominance of modernization approaches-theoretical biases, including those suggesting nationalism as a replacement for religion, although it would seem, however, that religion constituted an indispensable element of the composition of the national identity in Turkey and Israel. Moreover, the number of studies comparing the secular nature of Israel and Turkey are limited, and in this sense, this thesis aims to fill this void and contribute to the body of literature with a comparative research that considers the issues of nationalism and national identity.

When the policies of various states are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that various perceptions exist with regards to the relationship between state and religion due to their different political, cultural and social experiences. Some states define themselves as explicitly secular, others prefer to be defined as a religious state, however some can be defined differently, falling somewhere between, or even a long way beyond, secular and religious. Taking the different discussions and debates into consideration, there is a growing need for comparative analysis on how secularism works as a doctrine under different national contexts. Would a comparative study contribute to our understanding of secularism? As Asad suggests:

What is distinctive about modern anthropology is the comparison of embedded concepts (representations) between societies differently located in time or space. The important thing in this comparative analysis is not their origin (Western or non-Western), but the forms of life that articulate them, the powers they release or disable... Anthropology of secularism should thus start with a curiosity about the doctrine and practice of secularism regardless of where they have originated.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to Asad, the wisdom in Seymour Martin Lipset's idea that a nation can be understood only from a comparative perspective can provide appropriate answers to

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<sup>9</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular, Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (US: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 17.

this question.<sup>10</sup> In short, it could be argued that secularism may be better understood from a comparative perspective.

#### **1.1.4. Similarities and Differences between the State of Israel and Turkey**

Both Israel and Turkey were founded in the 20th century when the ideology of the nation state had reached its peak. The state elite in both Israel and Turkey sought to establish a secular and a modern state, and as in most states, in Israel and Turkey the relationship between religion and the state was shaped as a result of various struggles and negotiations. In this context, what makes them similar are the facts that even though state elite in both countries were willing to regulate the relationship between religion and the state through the lens of secularism, religion constituted a crucial aspect in the nation-building process and came to be incorporated into the state apparatus. In other words, the secularist agenda was not based on the separation of state and religion in either country.

Israel and Turkey are also similar with respect to the domestic elements of both countries. Both Israel and Turkey are dominated by a single group in terms of religious composition – Jewish and Muslim respectively, but in addition to the majority religion, there are also various ethnic and religious minorities in both states. It can be said that the multi-cultural nature of both Turkey and Israel has influenced the relationship between state and religion in either country.

Another similarity is related to the establishment of institutions responsible for overseeing religious affairs – the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyamet)<sup>11</sup> , in Turkey, and the Chief Rabbinate and Ministry of Religious Services in Israel.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, even though the meaning of secularism depended on and was shaped

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<sup>10</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. xiii.

<sup>11</sup> Throughout the thesis, Diyanet is also used, referring to this institution.

<sup>12</sup> These institutions will be examined in detail in the thesis. In brief, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel is recognized by law and has legal and administrative powers to deal with the religious affairs of Jewish people. It has jurisdiction over some significant issues such as personal status, conversion, immigration, etc. The Ministry of Religious Services is responsible for the appointment of religious councils, the allocation of money and budgets to religious groups and institutions, the financing of synagogues, and the organization of religious celebrations. In Turkey, the Presidency of Religious Affairs is an official institution that is responsible the provision of a wide range of religious services, such as the appointment of local religious representatives, the administration of mosques and religious schools, organization of pilgrimages, etc.

by each state's own historical and political experiences, the state elite in their efforts to establish a secular state came face-to-face with the same urgent challenge: preserving the unity of the nation. As it will be shown throughout this thesis, this urgency influenced the approach of the states to religion, in that in both countries, the incorporation of religious institutions into the state apparatus was based on the recognition of only one interpretation of a majority religion. In the case of Israel, the religious institutions and authorities who were given responsibility over some religious services and issues have carried out their works in accordance with the one interpretation of majority religion – the Orthodox version of Judaism. Likewise, in Turkey, the highest religious institution – the Presidency of Religious Affairs – implements policies based on the Sunni interpretation of Islam. As a result, the approach of the state to religion in which one interpretation is given priority creates difficulties even for the majority group members.

For another similarity between the two states, one can compare how the issue of secularism has been contested with in both states since their establishment, with both states witnessing long debates over whether they should head in the direction of a religious or a secular state. Finally, the two countries share the same Middle East geographical location, where they are both proclaimed as the only examples of democracy. As a final comparison, the two states were established following a long war of independence and two successful national projects with strong orientation towards Europe: Zionism and Kemalism.

## **1.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this thesis, the state is not defined as a homogenous or fixed entity, but rather a complex unit with respect to various institutions, arrangements and functions that operates through a set of political, administrative, and constitutional mechanisms. In the dominant discourse, secularism is conceived as the separation of state and religion through various arrangements within the state. In other words, secularism is treated as a political doctrine that reflects an appropriate relationship between the religious and state sphere. Bhargava states that the goal of secularism is to guarantee the existence of the social and political order, independent of religious domination, thus ensuring freedom of religion, freedom to exercise religion, and

equality between believers and non-believers.<sup>13</sup> That said it is crucial to note that the definition and meaning of secularism is not fixed and varies in different contexts, according to each polity's own historical and political experiences. As Berg-Sorensen argues, there have been multiple interpretations of secularism, conceivable as the protection of the freedom of religion, as an anti-religious position to achieve neutrality, or as the facilitation of visibility of religions in the public eye.<sup>14</sup>

Casanova's classification of "secularism as statecraft doctrine" and "secularism as ideology" and Brubaker's "nationalization process of religion" constitute a theoretical departure point in this thesis. Casanova makes a distinction between the terms "secular" as a central modern epistemic category, "secularization" as an analytical conceptualization of historical process and "secularism" as a worldview, and goes further to make another distinction between secularism as "statecraft principle" and secularism as "ideology".<sup>15</sup> In referring to secularism as statecraft principle, he infers a principle of separation of religious and political authority for the sake of the neutrality of the state for all religions, for the sake of protection of the freedom of conscience. In such a situation, the state assumes neither a positive nor a negative role in religion. On the contrary, when the state entails a view with regards to religion regardless of positive or negative, it enters the realm of ideology. In addition, Smith's clarification of ethnic and civil identity, in which he labels civic nationalism in terms of its inclusive and uniting features such as territory, community of laws and institutions, common civic culture and ideology will be applied to better grasp the relationship between religion, secularism and national identity in the context of Israel and Turkey. Taking another perspective, the most important features of ethnic nations are common descent, vernacular languages, religion, customs and traditions,<sup>16</sup> and as this thesis argues that religion constitutes a

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<sup>13</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, "Multiple Secularism" in Anders Berg-Sorensen (ed.), *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Anders Berg-Sorensen (ed.), *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> José Casanova, "The Secular and Secularisms", *Social Research: An International Quarterly* Vol. 76, No.4, 2009, pp. 1049-1066.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 13.

striking aspect of the nation-building process, the theoretical debate with regard to the relationship between religion and nationalism will be examined. As Smith stated, scholars of nationalism pay too much attention to language, and too little to religion.<sup>17</sup> He also underlined the fact that the nation-states are a mixture of ethnic and civic models.<sup>18</sup>

Numerous approaches to nation and nationalism have developed in literature since the first researches into the issue emerged in the 20th century. In order to gain an understanding of the different scopes of researches into religion and nationalism, some of the more significant theories related to nationalism will be presented in brief, with the main approaches classifiable as ethno symbolist and modernist approaches.<sup>19</sup> The first framework can be seen in the studies of Anthony Smith, Armstrong and Hutchinson, who regard the nation-formation process as being centered on ethnicity.<sup>20</sup> This perspective focuses on continuity with pre-modern roots, underlining the emergence of nation and nationalism as a historical community with pre-modern roots.<sup>21</sup> Ethnosymbolist approaches place emphasis on the symbols, myths and traditions attached to *ethnies* and consider them to be central to nation-forming processes. From this perspective, nationalism is not tied to modernity, but is rather part of a wider ethno-cultural family of collective identities and aspirations.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the modernist approach that can be seen in the works of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Michael Mann, considers nation and nationalism to be a modern phenomenon. The noted authors claim that nationalism is a result of the changes that take place during the process of modernization, such as industrialization, capitalism and secularization. Bayar argues that:

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1986), p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>19</sup> Yeşim Bayar, *Formation of the Turkish Nation- State 1920-1938*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 58 quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 7.



Although scholars who adhere to the modernist approach compose a heterogeneous group, they nevertheless agree upon seeing nations as modern creations. It is the actual mechanisms that underlie nation formation where one discerns variations between scholars. The rise of industrialism (Gellner 1983), the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state (Breuilly 1982; Hall 1993; Mann 1993), secularization and rise of print capitalism (Anderson 1992) are some of the mechanisms underlined by modernist scholars.<sup>23</sup>

The secularization thesis, which supposes the decline of religion in the process of modernization, also regards nationalism as a replacement for religion, and the significance of this modernist and secularist approach to religion increased in the studies of nationalism and maintained significance until recently. This secular bias is clearly evident in nationalism literature, and can be found quite notably in the works of such prominent scholars as Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm.<sup>24</sup> For example, Gellner argues that industrialism, as a significant part of the modernization process, accelerates the development of nationalism. For Anderson, on the other hand, nations are imagined communities, and he argues that the loss of religion from social life changes the perception of time, while capitalism gave impetus to the development of nationalism.<sup>25</sup> He argues that nationalism has filled the vacuum left by the decline of religion, and like Gellner, also places emphasis on the events that occur within the modernization process when explaining the development of nationalism. He considers nationalism to be an invention of tradition by the political elite to encourage national solidarity among the populace, and to create common sentiments. In addition, Hobsbawm claims that nationalism is a consequence of social engineering and does not consider religion to be a significant element of nation formation. He goes on to underline the use of the religious elements found within tradition to gain the support of the people. Most of the studies of these noted scholars focus on the development of nationalism, but neglect the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Blackwell, 2006), E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992). Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

issue of religion and so make no analysis of the relationship between religion and nationalism. In this regard, nationalism can be considered a consequence of the modernization process and so can be associated with secularism. Since the end of the 20th century there have been many promising developments in nationalism literature, with various scholars adopting a more pluralist approach to the issue and placing emphasis on the relationship between nationalism and religion. Instead of regarding nationalism as a replacement for religion, these scholars have underlined the complex relationship that exists between the two, and have also remarked upon the dynamism in the process of modernization.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Brubaker criticizes the understanding of nationalism as a distinctly secular phenomenon. He argues that a secular bias in the study of nationalization together with modernization arguments neglects religion, or sees it as the “replacement of religion by nationalization”. He says:

The paradigmatic instances on which the literature focused were European nationalism between the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century; this truncated range of cases marginalized other cases - from early Modern Europe, South Asia, or the Middle East, for example - in which religion was more obviously central.<sup>27</sup>

This study wishes to challenge this secularist bias by focusing on the connections between religion and nationalism in the establishment of the two modern nation states. Adding another perspective, Brubaker’s analysis of the relationship between nationalism and religion constitutes a crucial aspect in the discussion, suggesting four ways in which the issue may be studied. In his words:

The first is to treat religion and nationalism, along with ethnicity and race, as *analogous* phenomena. The second is to

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<sup>26</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1997, Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, (California: University of California Press, 1993), Fred Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), Barbara – ANN J.Rieffer, “Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship” *Ethnicities*, Vol.3, No.2, 2003, p.215-242, Roger Brubaker, “ Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches” *Nations and Nationalism*, 18, 1, 2012, p. 2-20.

<sup>27</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches”, *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 18, No. 1, January 2012, p. 22.

specify ways in which religion helps *explain* things about nationalism - its origin, its power, or its distinctive character in particular cases. The third is to treat religion as *part* of nationalism, and to specify modes of interpenetration and intertwining. The fourth is to posit a distinctively religious *form* of nationalism.<sup>28</sup>

The appropriate model for the relationship between religion and nationalism, according to Brubaker's theory, will be applied to understand the secularism debate in Turkey and Israel. Taking these theoretical discussions into consideration, this study aims at examining the role of religion in the state affairs and its relationship with nationalism in a comparative approach.

In summary, this thesis presents a comparative analysis of the relationship between the state and religion and the role of religion in the nation-building process through the lens of secularism. When one looks at the existing literature concerning this issue with particular focus on Israel and Turkey, it becomes clear that both were conceived as secular, democratic and modern, and represented exceptional cases in the Middle East. That said, there is a need to place the issue of secularism within the national and historical contexts of both states to obtain a more accurate picture.

### **1.3. METHODOLOGY**

The data collection methods adopted in this research includes a documentary study and expert interviews. The documentary research included the study of various documents and texts as primary sources. As Scot argues, documentary research can be of particular use in studies of the history of sociology, and has been the main method, indeed "sometimes the only one for leading sociologists".<sup>29</sup>

In this research, primary sources include important legislation concerning the relationship between the state and religion, court rulings and state statistics, while secondary sources include professional academic literature, including articles, books, academic analyses, etc. Some of the primary sources were gathered during a visit to Israel during which the author undertook Hebrew language training in the summer of

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<sup>28</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches", p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> John Scott (ed.), *Documentary Research*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2006).

2014, and also during fieldwork carried out in Israel in the summer of 2015. The fieldwork was conducted in Turkey in March and April 2016.

In-depth interviews were conducted both in Turkey and Israel with various experts from the academia, in such Israeli universities as Haifa University, Bar-Ilan University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University in Israel, as well as in Sabancı University, Koç University and Middle East Technical University in Turkey. The interviews were conducted in English in Israel, while those in Turkey were conducted in Turkish and then translated into English. The interview questions were aimed at providing an understanding of a) the differences and similarities between the two countries with respect to the relationship between the state and religion, b) the importance of religion in the construction of the national identity during state formation period, c) the significance of such a comparative work, d) the debates on secularism based on an institutional and legal framework, e) the controversies surrounding the Jewishness and Turkishness issue, f) the reflection of such controversies over the relationship between the state and religion, and g) any intriguing parallels in terms of the failure or success of secularism in both countries. The interviews were carried out in Israel with five academicians in June and July 2015 and the interviews were carried out in Turkey with five academicians in March and April 2016.

#### **1.4. INTRODUCING CHAPTERS**

This thesis is compiled in five chapters. The study is introduced in Chapter One, while Chapter Two explores Israel's experiences in the relationship between the state and religion during the state-building period of Israel, underlining the main historical turnings points. The second chapter continues with a discussion of the Zionist ideology to gain a better understanding of the secularism issue in Israel. The main subjects analyzed in this chapter are the ideological environment under which the state was established, the evolution of the Status-Quo Agreement, and the ambiguities over the Jewish identity that shaped the state-building period, and which still have strong implications on Israeli politics with regards to the secularism debate. After exploring the historical background, the constitutional and institutional aspect of the issue is analyzed. Even though constitutional provisions do not grant certainty

with regards to implementation, constitutional texts are perceived as a valid source to illustrate the approaches taken by the state. In the case of Israel, secularism constituted a challenge to the codification of a formal constitution in the Jewish state due to the tremendous debates around the complexity of the national identity and its relationship with religion. In Chapter Three, the experience of Turkey is discussed using the same structure as in the case of Israel to ensure an effective comparison. An examination is made of the historical trajectory in Turkey, and followed by the constitutional and institutional aspects of the relationship between the state and religion. In Chapter Four, two countries are compared with referring to the expert interviews. Chapter Five will conclude the study, with a comprehensive analysis based on the views of Casanova and Brubaker.

## CHAPTER 2

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGION

“God does not exist, and he promised us this land”<sup>30</sup>

The controversy over the issue of the relationship between the state and religion has constituted one of the most striking aspects of Israeli polity since the foundation of the state in 1948. This chapter will first provide an analysis of Israel's secularism considering its historical development, after which the constitutional and institutional aspects of the relationship between the state and religion will be analyzed. In short, this chapter aims to explore the role of religion in the construction of the national identity by the state founding elites through an analysis of historical, institutional and constitutional frameworks.

#### 2.1. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

##### 2.1.1. Zionist movement

There is no doubt that the establishment of the State of Israel was made possible by the efforts of the representatives of the Zionist movement, which had emerged in Eastern Europe in the 19th century and led to a revolution in the Jewish community. As Rabkin argues “Zionists, and the State of Israel they created, represent a revolution in Jewish history, a revolution that began with the emancipation and secularization of the Jews of Europe.”<sup>31</sup> This secularization of Jewish life, which had already started before the establishment of a Jewish state, influenced and revolutionized the Jewish identity by transforming it from a once

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<sup>30</sup> Yakov M. Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism,” *Mediterranean Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2012, pp. 75-100, p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

“normative concept” into a “descriptive one”.<sup>32</sup> This new Jewish identity needed a home – a nation state – to spur into the Jewish community. As the founding father of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl, stated, “The world needs the Jewish State; therefore it will arise”<sup>33</sup> after witnessing the Dreyfus affair.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, some authors claim that Herzl was not the first person to call for a national home for Jewish people,<sup>35</sup> although he was the first Jew to attract the attention of international leaders, politicians and organizations to the idea of creating a national home for Jewish people. Faced with the Dreyfus Affair and the rise of anti-Semitism against Jews across Europe, Herzl, a Western educated journalist and author, launched the Jewish national movement.<sup>36</sup> Herzl was a non-orthodox Jew<sup>37</sup> and even an atheist, according to some scholars, who dreamed of a secular state. His motivation for the creation of a national home for Jews was based on national sentiments. Even though some scholars, such as Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnow contributed to the construction of Judaism as a nationality by applying national concepts of Europe in the 19th century, their definitions were based on the perception of Judaism as a civilization rather than a nationality. In addition, a number of Jewish Enlightenment scholars also contributed to the creation of a Jewish national consciousness, such as writer

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<sup>32</sup> Yakov Rabkin continues to state that “traditional Jews can be distinguished by what they do or should do; the new Jews by what they are. The split of identity, which has continued for almost two centuries, obliges us today to distinguish the adjective “Jewish” from “Judaic”. The term Judaic refers to a normative meaning of Judaism, i.e. a religion with its spiritual and ritual aspects, making a claim on continuity rather than rupture. Conversely, the much broader term Jewish relates to Jews, their actions and ideas, regardless of their connection with Judaism.” Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p .78.

<sup>33</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, *Houston Journal of International Law*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2010, pp. 1-42, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Lotta Levensohn, *Outline of Zionist History*, (New York: Scopus Publishing Company, 1941), p. 28. “As a correspondent he witnessed the degradation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus of French General Staff, who had been sentenced on a cooked-up charge of high treason and exiled to living death solely because he was a Jew.”

<sup>35</sup> This was discussed also by Moses Hess (a leading socialist) during the 1860s and also by Dr. Leo Pinsker (a prominent physician of Odessa) Lotta Levensohn, *Outline of Zionist History*, pp.20-21.

<sup>36</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup>For orthodox Jew, the Jewish Religion and nationality were in correspondence. This identity was formed after the second exile and continued until it was rejected by the Emancipation Movement in Western Europe. Cited in Lilly Weissbrod, “Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society”, *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1983, pp.188-205, p. 191.

Abraham Bahu.<sup>38</sup> For Herzl, the Jewish question was a national one whose solutions lay in efforts to make it a political question.<sup>39</sup> He believed that assimilation had not prevented the persecution of Jews, and called for their return to “Zion”, a biblical name for Jerusalem that refers to the ancient patrimony of the Jews, promised by Yahweh to Abraham and his descendants, the Children of Israel according to Jewish teachings.<sup>40</sup> In 1896, Herzl published a book entitled *Der Judenstaat* (The State of the Jews, According to Kimmerling, it was a conscious decision of Herzl not to call his book “The Jewish State”).<sup>41</sup> After the publication of that book, which emphasized the urgency for the creation of a national home for the Jewish people, he attempted to convince the international community to implement the necessary steps for the establishment of a state for the Jewish people. As a result, the first World Zionist Congress was convened on August 29, 1897 in Basel, and as a result of the efforts of the Congress, the Zionist organization was created to fulfill the necessary steps towards the creation of the state. The main steps to be taken included increasing agricultural and industrial settlement in Palestine, the gathering of Jews of all countries and the stimulating of a Jewish national consciousness.<sup>42</sup> During the sessions of Congress, the national flag of the Jews was determined as “two stripes of blue on a white ground, with a six-pointed Shield of David in the center”.<sup>43</sup> In addition, it was decided that the religious song *Hatikvah* (song of Hope) would be the Jewish national anthem.<sup>44</sup> However, Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, had different visions for the nation-state of Jewish people that might astonish witnesses of the current situation of Israel. Uri Ram states that:

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<sup>38</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 190.

<sup>39</sup> Lotta Levensohn, *Outline of Zionist History*, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Lotta Levensohn, *Outline of Zionist History*, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> The flag was designed by Wolffshon who held up a Prayer- shawl saying, “These are our National colors!” Lotta Levensohn, *Outline of Zionist History*, p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> It is said that Herzl wrote in his diary on the day of first congress, “This day I have created the Jewish state.” Lotta Levensohn, *Outline of Zionist History*, p. 35.



In his vision of the “New State,” no place of pride was allotted to the rabbinic tradition and its representatives. Quite the other way around, he famously ordained that the state will be supreme authority and that rabbis will be confined to their synagogues (just as generals will be confined to their barracks).<sup>45</sup>

When Herzl sought to solve the Jewish problem, the land on which Jews would settle was not clear, and even he accepted a British proposal to settle in Uganda, however; opposition in the Zionist congress saw the Uganda solution revoked.<sup>46</sup>

The main objectives of the Zionist ideology can be summarized as the transformation of the Jewish identity from the *Torah* based to the proper national identity, which resembles ethnic nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe; to create a new national vernacular based on biblical Hebrew; to gather all Jews from their countries to a national home – Palestine; and to establish political and economic control over this new land “if need be, by force”.<sup>47</sup> In the words of Elie Barnavi, “Zionism was an invention of intellectuals and assimilated Jews...who turned their back on the rabbis and aspired modernity, seeking desperately for a remedy for their existential anxiety.”<sup>48</sup> The movement devoted itself to sought the problem of Jews, who believed to be, could not overcome the difficulties among other nations even they assimilated in their living country. Accordingly, the movement consolidated in response to the pogroms against the Jews in Russia in the 19th century and the anti-Semitism that witnessed a rise especially in 20th century Europe. In the words of Hastings, “Zionists followed in the footsteps of their European predecessors, who also benefited from secularization to construct nationhoods.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 21 (2008) 57-73, p. 63.

<sup>46</sup> Lily Weissbrod, “Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society”, p. 192.

<sup>47</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> Elie Barnavi, “*Sionismes*” in *Les Juifs et le XXe siècle* (Paris: Calmann- Levy, 2000), cited in Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 77.

<sup>49</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), cited in Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 79.

In fact, the Zionist ideology was aimed at transforming Jewish society into a secular one, and classical Zionism attempted to minimize the role of religion in the collective national identity.<sup>50</sup> In other words, the Zionist movement was predominantly secular, and was grounded on the rejection of diaspora life. It aimed at relinquishing the fragile and pious views of diasporic Jews and emphasized a “new Jew” ought to be secular and self-assured.<sup>51</sup> Considering its development, the negation of the diaspora and the emphasis on the sufferings of Jews in diasporic life were used instrumentally by the Zionist political and cultural elite in a bid to legitimize the new state.<sup>52</sup>

Before the emergence of Zionism, Rabbinic Judaism had steered the Jewish community for nearly two millennia, grounded on the *Oral Torah*,<sup>53</sup> and Rabbinic Judaism interprets the exile from the Promised Land and the destruction of the temple as a divine punishment for the sins committed by Jews.<sup>54</sup> According to this belief, redemption of the land would be based only divine providence, not on human efforts or military or political action,<sup>55</sup> although tradition has been deemed irrelevant by the representatives of the Zionist ideology, since the persecution of Jews was a result of two millennia of diasporic life. Initially, Zionist discourse did not emphasize

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<sup>50</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “What a Jewish State Means to Israeli Jews”, in Sam Lehman-Wilzig and Bernard Susser (eds.), *Comparative Jewish Politics: Public Life in Israel and the Diaspora*, (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), p. 105.

<sup>51</sup> Uriel Abulof, “The Roles of Religion in National Legitimation: Judaism and Zionism’s Elusive Quest for Legitimacy”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2014, pp. 515-533.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523.

<sup>53</sup> “Which is consisted of Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud, and Responsa redacted since the second century. The legitimacy of the Oral Torah for pious Jews reflects the belief that it was given on Mount Sinai at the same time as the Written Torah. In jurisprudence the Oral Torah clearly takes precedence, interpreting biblical passages in what may be considered a very broad manner.” cited in Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 83.

<sup>54</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 83.

<sup>55</sup> Rabbinic Judaism clearly emphasis the principle lesson: the Temple was destroyed because of the sins of the Jews, and primarily because of gratuitous hatred among Jews themselves (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate “Yoma”, p.96), cited in Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 84.

the religious aspect of the “return to the holy land”, and in fact, the *Milhemet Ha-Shihzur*<sup>56</sup> (The War of Independence) was waged not for purely religious objections, but rather for territory in which they aimed to constitute a majority.<sup>57</sup> The War of Independence was fought mostly out of a desire to accomplish nationalist goals, while religion was evaluated by the Zionist founders as a necessary element for the drawing of the boundaries of the national identity and for the legitimization of the existence of the state, and this created an ambivalent relationship between Judaism as a religion and Jewish nationalism.<sup>58</sup> In other words, even though Herzl – the founder of Zionism – had a vision of secular state, Zionism did not detach from religion, but rather depended on religion and changed the codes of religion as a result of the ambivalent relationship between Judaism as a religion and Jewish nationalism.<sup>59</sup> This was a direct result of the fact that the people who came to Israel were from different ethnical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, for whom religion was a unifying element.

From the emergence of the Zionist movement, various factions existed among the supporters with the three main ones, according to Rael Jean Isaac, being the Religious, Socialist, and Zionism as refuge.<sup>60</sup> While the religious Zionists believed that the link between Jewish people and the land was the most significant aspect of the Jewish religion, the socialist faction of Zionism envisioned a secular and socialist state, and society that emphasized the historical and cultural elements of the Jewish identity. The members of the socialist faction of Zionism were the first to arrive in Palestine aiming to create a socialist society and emphasizing the power of man rather than the power of God, and saw the need to be pioneering in the creation of the

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<sup>56</sup> War of Independence (1947-1949) and Nakba (catastrophe in Palestinian vocabulary) Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 85.

<sup>57</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 85.

<sup>58</sup> Guy Ben Porat, “A State of Holiness: Rethinking Israeli Secularism”, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2000, pp. 223-245.

<sup>59</sup> Guy Ben Porat, *Between State and Synagogue: The Secularization of Contemporary Israel*, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Rael Jean Isaac, *Party and Politics in Israel: Three Visions of a Jewish State*, (United Kingdom: Longman Group, 1980), pp. 2-5.

society. The third faction within the Zionist organization envisioned “Zionism as a refuge”, and believed that the creation of a national home for Jewish people was a solution to the European problem of the Jews. The final faction was further divided into two main groups: “Revisionists”, who interested in the boundaries of the territory of Israel, and the “General Zionists”, whose aim was to promote free enterprise rather than a socialist system.<sup>61</sup>

The Political Zionism as initiated by Herzl prevailed among the various ideas of Zionism, emphasizing the oppression and humiliation of the Jewish people in Europe, and supporting the idea that the establishment of a nation state for Jewish people would end the persecution of Jewish people around the world. Various political, ideological and practical steps were followed by the Zionist leaders to ease the return of Jews to Palestine, where they could live like other nations. The new state was to be established in Palestine, since they believed that: “*Eretz Israel* (The Land of Israel) was the birthplace of the Jewish People. Here, their spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped.”<sup>62</sup>

As argued in the preceding text, the Zionist ideology set out to transform the Jewish society,<sup>63</sup> and as a result, the movement influenced the Jewish community in various ways. Uri Ram argues:

While up to that point being Jewish was widely conceived as belonging to a certain religious community, Zionism aspired to transmute the dispersed Jewish communities into a territorial sovereign nation, and eventually a nation-state, in *Eretz Israel* – Palestine.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, initially, the Zionist leaders made efforts to nationalize religion and to nationalize and secularize the Jewish national identity, seeking to establish a secular

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<sup>61</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel, 1 L.S.I. 3& n.1 (1949), cited in Lucy Y. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 76.

<sup>64</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 63.

national state for Jews in their historical homeland, Palestine. Most of the builders of the movement were secular, such as Leo Pinsker, Theodor Herzl, Max Nordau, Jacob Klatzkin, Micha Joseph Berditschevsky, etc. and so the movement was mainly secular, and for most of the immigrants, Jewishness was a reflection of the national principle.<sup>65</sup> To be a “normal nation” like all other nations constituted one of the basic aims of the Zionist movement,<sup>66</sup> and most of those that immigrated to Palestine to take economic, institutional and social steps towards the creation of a state were secular and socialist-oriented people. While the first wave of immigrants to Palestine (1882-1900) envisioned religious and traditional ideals, the second and the third waves (1904-1930) had very different agendas,<sup>67</sup> aggrandizing the Hebrew culture rather than diaspora Judaism. They were affiliated with the Hebrew culture in an attempt to distance themselves from diaspora Judaism.<sup>68</sup> The aim of these settlers and *the sabras* (the first generation of Jews born in Palestine) was not to create a religious state, but rather to create a new society built on secularist principles.<sup>69</sup> In fact, most of these, especially the second and third waves of immigrants to Palestine, were anti-religious and created a new ideology that was overtly secular,<sup>70</sup> and rejected “diaspora Judaism”.<sup>71</sup> They blamed Rabbinic Judaism, which includes prayers, rituals, etc. for the oppression of the Jewish people, and it was these new immigrants that emphasized and started to form a national and secular culture in Palestine. They referred to themselves as Hebrews rather than Jews, since it refers to Biblical ancestors of Jewish people. Rather than a religious tie between the land and

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<sup>65</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, “Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation- Building Ideology”, *International Journal Middle East Studies*, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 461-484, p. 465.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>67</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 193.

<sup>68</sup> Claudia Baumgart- Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, *Politics, Religion, and Ideology*, Vol. 15, No.3, 2014, pp. 401- 420, p. 410.

<sup>69</sup> Stephen Sharot, “Israel: Sociological Analyses of Religion in the Jewish State”, *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 51, No. 5, 1990, pp. S63-76, p. 64.

<sup>70</sup> Lily Weissbrod, “Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society”, p. 194.

<sup>71</sup> Claudia Baumgart-Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 410.

the people, they believed a cultural and a historical tie existed between the Hebrews and the land, and that Jews deserved this land since it was the historical homeland of Jews. These immigrants also neglected the *Talmud* and emphasized the Bible, not as a holy book, but rather as a narration of the origin of the nation and its “golden age”.<sup>72</sup> In the words of Netanel Fishner:

From the times of the early waves of immigration to Israel in the 1920s, the Bible became a source of inspiration to the newcomers. Jews in Israel believed that they were re-enacting their history by walking in the same places as had their ancestors, and by adopting the language of their ancestors as it appears in the Bible... In order to compensate for rejection of the exile and its culture, the Bible served as a source of identification embedded in Jewish history.<sup>73</sup>

They used Hebrew, the holy language and language of religious rituals, which had not been used for two millennia, instead of Yiddish, which had been the vernacular daily language spoken by Jews in Europe in diaspora times.<sup>74</sup> The negation of the diaspora reflected the preference for the term *galut* rather than diaspora.<sup>75</sup> *Galut* is a place where Jews do not belong.<sup>76</sup> In other words, the “New Jew” was emphasized on its dissociation from exilic past and its critical stance towards the diaspora in Zionist discourse.<sup>77</sup> They used religious symbols that had dominated the era before the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E, as the time when Jews lived on their own lands, prior to the diaspora times.<sup>78</sup> Dina Porat explains the negation of the

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<sup>72</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 63.

<sup>73</sup> Netanel Fisher, “A Jewish State: Controversial Conversions and the Dispute over Israel’s Jewish Character”, *Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 33, No.3, 2013, pp. 217-240, p. 225.

<sup>74</sup> Lilly Weissbrod, “Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society”, p. 194.

<sup>75</sup> “It’s significant to note that exile (*galuth*) means suffering and destruction, a divine punishment, whereas diaspora (*tefutsoth*) is positive connotation refers to dispersed communities.” cited in Dina Porat, “The Diaspora Museum and Israeli- Jewish Identity”, in Yosef Gorny, Thomas Gergely, and Eliezer Ben-Rafael (eds.), *Jewry between Tradition and Secularism: Europe and Israel Compared*, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 234.

<sup>76</sup> Almagor, “Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building Ideology”, p. 466.

<sup>77</sup> Yael Zerubavel, “The “Mythological Sabra” and Jewish Past: Trauma Memory and Contested Identities”, *Israel Studies*, Vol. 7, No.2, 2002, pp. 115-144, p. 116.

<sup>78</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don- Yehiya “The Symbol System of Zionism- Socialism: An Aspect of Israeli Civil Religion”, *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1981, pp. 121-148, p. 127.

diaspora in Zionist discourse as, "...Nor had any one the right to educate youngsters on the 'from the Tanach to the Palmach' notion, thus jumping from Biblical times to the struggle for the state of Israel".<sup>79</sup> However, the negation of the diaspora is not confounding when one is aware that the Zionist leaders were attempting to create a nation-state in which the citizens were to have national sentiments, rather than the diaspora's religious emphasis. This stemmed from the fact that the Jewish diaspora had only one focus in life: religion, and since they lived in different countries and had various citizenships, religion was the only common denominator for their community. Izhak Schell argues that the Zionist movement concentrated on the roots of the nation in its homeland and arguing that:

In fact, the Zionist leaders did stress the people's affinity with the golden eras in the country during the periods of the First and Second Temples. A dominant source of inspiration in this connection derived from the romantic nationalism that had developed in central Europe around the concept of *Heimat* or native land, which rationalizes nationalism in the tribe's roots in its homeland.<sup>80</sup>

They also gave up the Jewish names that reflected their *galut* connections, opting instead from Hebrew names, and as a result, Avraham became Avi; Yithak became Izik; Yossef became Yossi, etc.<sup>81</sup> The encouragement to change names came from above; Ben-Gurion (formerly Gryn), for instance, implemented a name-change policy in the military and in the political establishment.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, rather than emphasizing religious figures such as rabbis, national fighters were held up as role models. For example, Bar Kochva, as the leader of the rebellion of the Jewish community against Roman Empire, was used as one of the constitutive myths of Zionism,<sup>83</sup> and was emphasized as a national hero by the Zionist founders. The other

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<sup>79</sup> Dina Porat, "The Diaspora Museum and Israeli- Jewish Identity", p. 238.

<sup>80</sup> Izhak Schnell, "Transformation in Territorial Concepts: From Nation Building to Concessions" *Geo Journal*, Vol. 53, No.3, 2002, pp. 221-234, p. 226.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41147609>

<sup>81</sup> Uri Ram, "Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel", p. 63.

<sup>82</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, "Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building Ideology", p. 470.

<sup>83</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 18.

constitutive myth was the fall of *Masada*, which was reinterpreted and reemphasized by Zionists as a “Jewish fight for freedom”.<sup>84</sup> The *Masada* event had been ignored in religious tradition for centuries, however the Zionist founders created a *Masada* myth carrying the message that “everything must be done to ensure that *Masada* will not fall again”. Among the diaspora Judaism, such national heroes were mostly neglected, however the settlers were non-religious, and were rebelling against diasporic Judaism, and needed motivation and legitimization for their movement. In this regard, national heroes in the Bible offered an imperious opportunity for them to accomplish their goals in this respect. It is worth pointing out that religious festivals, rituals and symbols also were redefined and reinterpreted to fit in with national desires. The founders of the state adopted traditional religious symbols but reinterpreted the tradition to suit its own goals,<sup>85</sup> with some being deprived of their religious content and granted new nationalist meanings. The overwhelmingly religious festivals, such as *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, were ignored due to their purely religious backgrounds, whereas holidays of secondary importance among Jewish people such as *Hanukkah*, *Tu Bishvat*, etc. were attributed greater importance in Zionist discourse.<sup>86</sup> As an example, of the religious holidays that were reinterpreted to serve the Zionist nationalist aims, *Shavuot* (The Festival of Weeks) was traditionally celebrated as the time when the *Torah* was given at Mt. Sinai, was reinterpreted as a “holiday of nature and agriculture”.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, it is clear that some holidays that had been specifically religious in origin, such as *Hanukkah*, were transformed into purely secular celebrations under the Zionist ideology, and as a

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<sup>84</sup> “Masada was a Fortress in the Judean Desert built by Herod the Great (73-74 BC). During the great Jewish revolt of A.D. 66-73 against Romans, a group of Jewish rebels took over the Fortress. After the siege by Romans, 960 Jews at Masada committed suicide in order to avoid being enslaved by the Romans. The story is told by the Jewish- Roman historian Josephus Flavious. However, Nechman Ben Yehuda argues that the supposed group suicide was, in fact, a mass murder.” cited in Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 18.

<sup>85</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “The Symbol System of Zionism- Socialism: An Aspect of Israeli Civil Religion”, p. 121.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.



celebration of the “national revival”.<sup>88</sup> For instance, the Maccabean revolt, which was a purely religious event, was reinterpreted as a story of successful resistance for national freedom, recognizing the military power of the Maccabees.<sup>89</sup> Zionist mythology ignored the fact that the revolt had taken place due to religious, rather than national oppression.<sup>90</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don Yehiya argue that various religious festivals and holidays were deprived of their old Jewish content, and as a result, became purely national liberation celebrations, and colored with socialist values and features,<sup>91</sup> and give the example of usage of the *halutz* (pioneer) concept in Zionist vocabulary to demonstrate the reinterpretation of religious terms to create new meaning as:

The term *halutz* originated in the Bible. *Halutzim*, lead the Israelite camp. They were the first to heed the call to war. But, the biblical pioneer acted “before the Lord”, i.e., in God’s name. The Zionist-Socialist *halutz* undertook a purely national mission. His authority did not derive from any supernatural source and he relied exclusively on his own strength to realize his goals.<sup>92</sup>

The *halutz* refers to those who settle on the land, and who participate in a productive life and agricultural labor in the Zionist vocabulary. It is clear that although the Zionist movement is overtly secular, it was inspired by religious thought.<sup>93</sup> In other

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 138. Guy Ben Porat, “A State of Holiness: Rethinking Israeli Secularism”, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2000, pp. 223-245.

<sup>89</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya give details of the story: “The story of the Maccabean revolt in the second century B.C.E., which is commemorated in the holiday of Hanukkah. Religious tradition emphasizes the miracle of the flask of oil as the central motif of Hanukkah, and generally deemphasizes the heroic deeds of the Maccabees. (The special Hanukkah Prayer which does mention the Maccabees praises God for miracle he performed in giving the strong and many into the hands of the weak and the few.)” Charles S. Liebman Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “The Symbol System of Zionism-Socialism: An Aspect of Israeli Civil Religion”, p. 130.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>91</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), cited in Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 63.

<sup>92</sup> Charles Liebman and Eliezer-Don Yehiya, “The Symbol System of Zionism- Socialism: An Aspect of Israeli Civil Religion”, p. 122.

<sup>93</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 75.

words, despite the secular nature of Israel's national ideology from the beginning, it relied on a deep ambivalence towards religion.<sup>94</sup>

One of the main objectives in Zionist discourse was religious value, *geulat haaretz* (redemption of the land), although this was also transformed into a secular discourse, referring to the importance of land for national causes. Even though there were individuals who embraced religious reasons or motivations for the redemption of the land, the dominant "Labor Movement" embraced the new, secular identity – the Hebrew identity rather than the Jewish identity.<sup>95</sup> They referred themselves as Hebrews rather than Jews, and during the 1930s and 1940s they were calling for the creation of a Hebrew state rather than a Jewish one.<sup>96</sup> The acquisition of the land and immigration of Jews to that land constituted the main aim of these secular Zionists and settlers, and as a result, a significant gap grew between those who embraced the New Hebrew identity and those who maintained their diasporic Jewish identity. As Uri Ram states:

Two millennia of perceived Jewish history were to be shoved aside in order to "return" to the golden age of the perceived ancient Hebrews. This national secular ethos has shaped three or four generational cohorts of Israelis: the immigrant "pioneers", the Hebrew settlers, the "sabrá" natives and the Israelis of the state era.<sup>97</sup>

The new Hebrew culture was secular and national, and disregarded its adherent's ideological and political differences. However, this Hebrew identity, which emphasized the territorial aspect of their identity and which was secular-oriented, began to lose power in the 1940s and particularly after the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948.<sup>98</sup> Don Yehiya and Liebman referred to the new era between the 1950s and 1970s as a time when a civil religion was formed in a move away from the

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<sup>94</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, "Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict", p. 402.

<sup>95</sup> Uri Ram, "Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel", p. 64.

<sup>96</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, "Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building Ideology", p. 470.

<sup>97</sup> Uri Ram, "Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel", p. 64.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

rejection of religion and religious traditions towards a “selective adaptation of elements of the Jewish tradition”.<sup>99</sup> They gave importance to the religious festivals and holidays, although downplayed their religious content, choosing instead to emphasize the nationalist aspect.

The opposition to the Zionist movement within Jewish community evolved immediately after its emergence, led predominantly by the religious Jews since some of them believed that the movement was a false messianic movement.<sup>100</sup> The opponents responded harshly to the call for the creation of a national home for Jewish people, and declined to give their support to the establishment of a Jewish state, due to religious concerns. They argued that the redemption by the human effort intended to hasten the Coming of the Messiah.<sup>101</sup> According to Yosef Salmon, an Israeli authority on the history Zionism:

It was the Zionist threat that offered the gravest danger, for it sought to rob the traditional community of its very birthright, both in Diaspora and in Eretz Israel (The Land of Israel), the object of its messianic hopes. Zionism challenged all aspects of traditional Judaism: in its proposal of modern, national Jewish identity; in the subordination of traditional society to new life-styles; and in its attitude to the religious concepts of Diaspora and redemption. The Zionist threat reached every Jewish community. It was unrelenting and comprehensive, and therefore it met with uncompromising opposition.<sup>102</sup>

All in all, they believed that the creation of a national home for Jewish people would occur with the arrival of Messiah, not as a result of human effort or agencies, and they protested the national emphasis on identity that states Jews were a nation, and not solely a -“religious sect with an ethical mission to humanity”.<sup>103</sup> The human effort to establish a Jewish state in Palestine was indeed hostile to true Judaism for

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>100</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 410.

<sup>101</sup> Lilly Weissbrod, “Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society”, p. 191.

<sup>102</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 75.

<sup>103</sup> Lotta Levensohn, *Outline of Zionist History*, p. 30.

the religious Jews, who believe that redemption can be granted only by God.<sup>104</sup> Accordingly, these religious groups did not recognize the existence of Israel from the very beginning of the Zionist movement. Further opposition came from a number of assimilated Jewish people, who feared that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine would influence their life in Europe and lead to a drastic increase in anti-Semitism around the world. To illustrate, even though there was an initial plan to hold the first Zionist Congress in Berlin, the Jewish community in Berlin lobbied the government to prevent it from taking place.<sup>105</sup>

### **2.1.2. Establishment of the State of Israel**

No attempt to understand the issue of the relationship between the state and religion can be successful without a deeper analysis of the ideological and political environment in which the state of Israel evolved. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the strong appeal of the right to have self-determination that resulted in the rise of nation states in Europe, and the increasing anti-Semitism in Europe which will be examined in the following text, constituted the most important political shifts in the preparation of the ground for the establishment of the state.

Israel was established on May 14, 1948, and even though it announced itself as a “Jewish State”, the Declaration of Independence contained statements confirming the equality of its inhabitants, banning discrimination on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, gender, etc.<sup>106</sup> Since the establishment of the state, the democratic features and the emphasis on the Jewish character of the State of Israel have been highly debated not only in the domestic sphere, but also internationally. The compatibility between the Jewish character of the state and democracy has attracted incredible interest among scholars; however this perspective falls outside the scope

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<sup>104</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 410.

<sup>105</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 91.

<sup>106</sup> Oren Yiftachel, “‘Ethnocracy’: The Politics of Judaizing Israel/Palestine”, *Constellations: International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1998, pp. 364- 390.

of this thesis, in which the role of religion in the construction of national identity and its influence on the relationship between the state and religion will be prioritized.

The state embarked on its transition to an independent state with an already functioning political system and established institutions that had been created during the British Mandate (1920-1948) by the Jewish community in Palestine, the *HaYishuv Ha'Ivri*<sup>107</sup>(the Hebrew settlement).<sup>108</sup> After the establishment of the state, the debate shifted to the issue of which of the existing political and social orders should be incorporated into the newly established state and which should not and indeed the current debates related to the place of religion in the Israeli state dated back to the *Yishuv* period. In this regard, the analysis of the relationship between the state and religion in Israel requires the analysis of the *Yishuv* period.

During the *Yishuv* period, the Jewish community had no legitimate authority, but despite the lack of sovereignty, various political structures and organizations enjoyed remarkable power.<sup>109</sup> The main organization and the political structures of the *Yishuv* period had been launched by political parties whose power increased with the support and resources from both within the Jewish community and those from the overseas. These political parties took responsibility for the Jewish community and functioned according to the social and political needs of the people. While the parties did not always see eye-to-eye, they managed to unite under the common goal of national independence, and their political power contributed to their success in running the established institutions on a power-sharing basis.<sup>110</sup> During the *Yishuv* period, the *Histadrut*<sup>111</sup> (General Federation of Labor) was responsible for the wellbeing of the workers in such matters as health, cultural activities, education, etc., and since its inception in 1920, it managed to maintain its strong position among all

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<sup>107</sup> In Hebrew it refers pre-state period.

<sup>108</sup> Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy, 1948-1967*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> Israeli trade union was founded in December 1920 and responsible for management of economic activities of workers.

other constituting parties. In the 1930s, the *Mapai* started to take the majority of the vote and took the control of the *Histadrut*.<sup>112</sup> It should be noted that no single party gained a majority in the elections during the *Yishuv* period, and as a result, the leadership of the executive and quasi-legislative institutions was undertaken by a coalition of parties.<sup>113</sup> This feature of the *Yishuv* period continued even after the establishment of the state, and has facilitated the inclusion of religious parties in the government as a part of the necessary coalition. After the establishment of the state, some of the political structures of the *Yishuv* period were incorporated to the new state and contributed to the founding of the state due to the experiences of those institutions over the governance, capacity and authority during the Mandate period.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was another constitutive element in the establishment of state of Israel in Palestine. The Ottoman Empire had dissolved after WWI and Britain had acquired control of Palestine, legitimized by a decision of League of Nations, and the promise of a homeland for the Jewish people had already been given by Britain in the Balfour Declaration (1917). Britain's Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, promulgated a declaration in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild who was the president of the British Zionist Federation,<sup>114</sup> which included a statement related to the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people, "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."<sup>115</sup> This declaration was aimed at garnering Jewish support in Britain and to ensure control was maintained over Palestine in the event of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>116</sup> This constituted the first major victory of the Zionist movement.<sup>117</sup> After the beginning of the British mandate, a

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<sup>112</sup> Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy, 1948-1967*, p. 9.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>114</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, "The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years", p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> Howard M. Sachar, *A history of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, 1996.

<sup>116</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, "The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years", p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 29.

White Paper was drawn up reaffirming the need for a national home for Jews, although it included the provision that political authority would remain under the control of Britain.<sup>118</sup> A further White Paper published in 1939 limiting the number of Jews allowed to immigrate to Palestine to 75,000 Jews over the following five-year period.<sup>119</sup> Throughout WWII, extremist Jewish factions of the *Hagganah* launched terrorist attacks against the British military presence in Palestine, and Britain would eventually be forced to give up its mandate. Unable to continue to bear the expense of its military bases in Palestine, which were subjected to continued terrorist attacks, and weary of its role as mediator between the Arabs and Jews, Britain announced in 1947 that it would end its mandate and withdraw from Palestine on May 15, 1948. After the end of WWII and the termination of the British mandate, the issue that remained was “who would rule Palestine – the Arab majority or the Jewish minority?”, with the option of partition or a bi-national state being declined by all parties.<sup>120</sup>

The United Nations Partition Resolution of November 29, 1947 (Resolution 181) detailing the process of transition of the state and its political and constitutional structures, constituted the main legal basis for the establishment of the State of Israel,<sup>121</sup> however, the Arab side rejected the resolution since they did not accept the transfer of land to an independent Zionist state and Zionist Organization.<sup>122</sup> The United Nations Resolution stated that the state would be established before October 1, 1948 and specified the need for full cooperation with Britain and international supervision.<sup>123</sup> Subsequently, the Zionist General Council (*Hava'ad Hapo'el Hazioni*) announced that the declaration of the state would be made upon the

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<sup>118</sup> Solomon Grayzel, *A history of the Jews*, (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 722- 763, taken from Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>120</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 37.

<sup>121</sup> Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy*, p. 11.

<sup>122</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 38.

<sup>123</sup> Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy*, p. 13.

termination of the British Mandate, and the formal establishment of the State of Israel was made on May 14, 1948 at a meeting of *Moezet Ha'am*.

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed Israel as a Jewish state and included a statement about the functioning of the state in accordance with equality, freedom and other democratic principles. Peter Medding claims that even though the early draft of the declaration stated explicitly that, “the Jewish state will be democratic”, in the final version, the declaration lacked that explicit statement,<sup>124</sup> making a more general statement:

The State of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion, will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice, and peace taught by the Hebrew Prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture...and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>125</sup>

Following the formation of the State of Israel, it became clear that the Zionist movement had achieved its main goal – the creation of a national home for Jewish people. However, although the dominant view had been to create a democratic, western- oriented and secular state, the definition of the state as Jewish made it difficult for them to accomplish those dreams. As stated by Ben-Gurion in 1947:

When we say ‘Jewish independence’ or a ‘Jewish state’, we mean Jewish country, Jewish soil; we mean Jewish labour, we mean Jewish economy, Jewish agriculture, Jewish industry, and Jewish sea. We mean Jewish language, schools, culture. We mean Jewish safety, security, independence, complete independence as for any other free people.<sup>126</sup>

Thus, they founded a state, in which the state and public sphere would have a dominant Jewish character, with even national holidays, the official calendar and the

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>126</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 7.



national anthem being attached to Judaism. Therefore, while religious Jews could identify themselves with the national symbol of the state, the *menorah*, non-Jews could not. Furthermore, the Hebrew language was the official language, and all institutions, state symbols and official holidays were exclusively Jewish.<sup>127</sup> This ethno religious definition, together with the dominance of the Jewish religion created difficulties for the non-Jewish people and prevented the creation of a secular and democratic state. The representatives of the Zionist movement, however, were not interested in the religious elements of the Bible and the religious festivals being rather those elements were nationalized by the founders of the state and gained secular nationalist character.<sup>128</sup> It should be noted that the proclamation of the national holidays was one of the first tasks of the government, with the “Day of Rest” included *Shabbat* and the main festivals of Orthodox Judaism being assigned as official holidays, together with the New Year holiday (in accordance with Jewish Law). As Ralph Cohen argues:

In Israel, the reconstruction of Jewish tradition through the use of symbols served to maintain continuity and to define the collective...The common denominator of being Jewish was outlined by making the Shabbat the resting day and by making Jewish holidays public holidays.<sup>129</sup>

A cursory look at the history of Israel as a Jewish state will reveal the fact that it was the secular leaders of the Zionist movement who put the greatest efforts into the establishment of the state by attracting not only Jewish people, but also the international community, organizations and countries. They implemented numerous political, economic and social policies to promote the immigration of Jewish people to Palestine. In addition, even though a remarkable number of Jewish people believed that the Zionist movement was hostile to Judaism and did not recognize the State of Israel since it was created by human agents, rather than by messianic intervention, they still incorporated into the state after its establishment. Some of the religious people made accusations against the founders of the state, saying, they

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<sup>127</sup> Sammy Smooha, “Minority Status in an Ethnic Democracy: The Status of the Arab Minority in Israel” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol 13, No. 3, 1990, pp. 389-414, p. 393.

<sup>128</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 410.

<sup>129</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, “Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building”, p. 469.

claimed to be the chosen people of God, which they do not believe; indeed the irony can be followed even further, as the religious Jewish community, namely, the representatives of *Agudat Yisrael*, were incorporated into a state in which they did not believe.

After the establishment of the state, the founding elite entered into a significant conflict over the level of the relationship between the state and religion. Following political considerations and debates, the leaders agreed upon the incorporation of the Orthodox Rabbinate into the state apparatus – a decision in which the ideological and political considerations of Ben-Gurion and other Zionist leaders played an important role. The founding leaders believed that the majority party, the *Mapai*, would need to enter into a coalition with the religious blocks. In the first (1949), second (1951) and third (1955) parliamentary elections, it was clear that without a coalition, a government could not be established since although the *Mapai* was the largest party, it lacked a majority in the *Knesset*.<sup>130</sup> In short, obtaining a majority in Parliament would require gaining the support of religious parties and some scholars argue that Ben-Gurion made some concessions to the religious coalition partners in return for their support.<sup>131</sup> He predicted that after the incorporation of religious authorities into the state apparatus, the religious communities would no longer oppose the newly established state,<sup>132</sup> and that granting power to religious authorities regarding personal status issues – “low politics” – was an easy concession to make.<sup>133</sup> This institutionalization of religion by the state has been interpreted as an indication that Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, sought to hold religion within his hands.<sup>134</sup> However, rather than explanations based on a control paradigm, the role given by the founding leaders to

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<sup>130</sup> Joseph Badi, *Religion in Israel Today*, (New York: Bookman Associates, 1959), p.51; Weissbrod, “Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society”, p. 195.

<sup>131</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 10.

<sup>132</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power and National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel* (USA: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 61.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>134</sup> Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “What a Jewish state mean?”, p. 83-84.

religion in the construction of national identity should be emphasized to understand the institutionalization of religion within the state apparatus. In fact, the boundaries of the Jewish nation were imagined on religious grounds, even by the secular leaders due to such political considerations as the need for a coalition with the religious parties, and the unity of people of different cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. The boundaries of the national identity did not include non-Jews, and despite the secular character of the movement, the founding state elites used religious-nationalist ideologies for “maintaining the overall *raison d'état* of the state”.<sup>135</sup> The inclusion or exclusion of people within those boundaries was based on their religious affiliations, and so incredible power was granted to the religious authorities over the personal status affairs guarantees that the boundaries of Jewish nation would be protected by applying of religious laws to some issues which determine who belongs to the nation and who do not. In short, the exclusory definition of national identity and the inevitable role of religion within national identity, attributed by the secular founding elite, reflected the level of the relationship between the state and religion. As Uri Ram argues:

Jewish Israel cannot separate state and synagogue because under the prevailing form of Jewish ethnic nationalism, it is the synagogue that defines the “essence” and boundaries of the “nation” that dominates the state. If this is so, it follows that unless this quasi-ethnic domination over the state is abolished, nationalism and religion (ism) must remain functionally interlocked in Israel.<sup>136</sup>

It would be fair to say that although the Zionists dreamt of a secular state, there were a number of political and ideological considerations that stood in their way.

Jewish nationalism – the Zionist movement – embraced secular ideologies and was shaped by socialist ideologies; however, after the establishment of the state, the role of religion in Zionist discourse became much more apparent. One of the essential features of the new state was the idea of *mamlachtiyut*,<sup>137</sup> referring to

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<sup>135</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 402.

<sup>136</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 61.

<sup>137</sup> Kingdomship, in Hebrew.

statism, in which the state is given privileges over other ideologies and institutions, meaning that it is the state itself that constitutes the most important organ in the political and public spheres. The principle of *mamlachtiyut* was launched by Ben-Gurion, who put the state over almost all other ideologies, and as a result, the most significant policies implemented were those looking after the interests of the state.

Some of the priorities and ideas that had been dominant during the *Yishuv* Period continued after the establishment of the state, such as the emphasis on pioneerism, modernism and collectivism, however through the principle of *mamlachtiyut* following the establishment of the state,<sup>138</sup> Ben-Gurion sought to keep all institutions under the control of a strong centralized state.<sup>139</sup> One of the speeches of Ben-Gurion illustrates this concept very well:

Every service which is required by the citizen as a whole – the state must perform it... Everything that was essentially a general state need dealt with by *Histadrut* before the establishment of the state...should no longer be carried out by the *Histadrut*, but must be handed over to the authority of the state.<sup>140</sup>

After the establishment of the state, it could be said that the dominant and secular Hebrew identity lost significance in the collective sphere, to some degree, although this does not mean that the secular elite started to use only a religious discourse, but rather implemented various policies to make religion fit in with their statist and nationalist ideologies. When one looks at the policies of government during the state building period, one can understand that the secular founding elite made a concerted effort to nationalize religion, adopting various central elements of the Jewish religion that they contextualized and gave new meanings.<sup>141</sup> The religious ingredients of these efforts can be summarized as the definition of a collective identity based on religion; the target territory of Palestine and the holy city; religious

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<sup>138</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, “Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building”, p. 467.

<sup>139</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power & National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, p. 61.

<sup>140</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, “Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building”, p. 467.

<sup>141</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 191.

symbols of Judaism such as the use of the holy tongue Hebrew (and its transformation from a holy language to a modern and secular language); and an expropriation of the Bible, especially the books of Joshua, Isaiah and Amos.<sup>142</sup> Increasing emphasis was placed on the Bible by the secular elite to strengthen their argument,<sup>143</sup> and, they attempted to forge the new collective identity that was grounded on a revised interpretation of the content of Judaism and the Bible, which served as legitimization tool for the state.<sup>144</sup> The secular elite came to rely on religion as a result of the political, ideological and strategic considerations discussed throughout this chapter. Baruch Kimmerling explains the use of the Bible by the Zionist movement:

It is no wonder; therefore, that Zionism adopted the Bible, redefined it as a national historical text, and tried to transform it into the primary mythical infrastructure for a new historiography of Judaism as nationality.<sup>145</sup>

The Bible was used in both the public and political arena to emphasize the historical truth that the Jews had resided in the lands and that they deserved it. They made use of the religious stories, myths and symbols presented in the Bible, although not solely for religious purposes, reinterpreting them to suit their nationalist agenda. In some cases they even chose some religious components and attributed them with new nationalist meanings. The symbolic use of the Bible was related to the need to legitimize their situation and to gain international – especially Christian – support.<sup>146</sup> Ben-Gurion also used the Bible in a selective way to support his worldview,

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<sup>142</sup> “The book of Joshua provided the militaristic dimension of conquest and the annihilation of the Canaanites and other ancient peoples that populated Promised Land while the books of Isaiah and Amos were considered as preaching social justice equated with a kind of proto- socialism.” Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 191.

<sup>143</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 88.

<sup>144</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 410.

<sup>145</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 192.

<sup>146</sup> Yakov Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, p. 88.

concentrating on the nationalist element of Judaism.<sup>147</sup> His arguments were grounded on the Bible, but he tended to neglect its religious aspects or give them new meanings.<sup>148</sup> In his mind, the Jewish religion was related to “national and territorial themes”, and Zionism offered this as an alternative to traditional Orthodox Judaism.<sup>149</sup> Along with a number of other secular Zionists, he believed that after the establishment of the state, the religious elements of Jewishness would lose importance, and that “fully-fledged Jewish nationalism” would come to dominate.<sup>150</sup> National unity would be achieved and *Kulturkampf* would be avoided following the incorporation of religious authorities into the state, although he believed that the religious authorities would not be given priority over the state. To illustrate, he stated:

In our country the rabbis have no authority except for what the state has given them... If they abuse this rule, I fear that even this authority will be lost to them. We will not take upon ourselves the authority of the rabbis. According to Declaration of Independence, the State of Israel is a democracy and people rule it.<sup>151</sup>

However, rather than advocating on the separation of the state and religion, his arguments were based on a desire to preserve Jewish nationalism as an “authentic identity.”<sup>152</sup> As Fisher states:

Ben-Gurion’s secularism was not one that detached itself from all ties to Jewish religious tradition. On the contrary, Ben-Gurion attempted to establish a Jewish nation-state that

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<sup>147</sup> Tsevi Tsameret and Moshe Tlamim, “Judaism in Israel: Ben Gurion’s Private Beliefs and Public Policy”, p. 79.

<sup>148</sup> Netanel Fisher, “A Jewish State: Controversial Conversions and the Dispute over Israel’s Jewish Character”, p. 226.

<sup>149</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power & National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, p. 64.

<sup>150</sup> Gila Stopler, “National Identity and Religion-State Relations: Israel in Comparative Perspective”, in Gideon Sapir, Dafna Barak-Erez and Aharon Barak (eds.), *Israeli Constitutional Law in the Making*, (Hart Publishing, 2013), pp. 503-516, p. 514.

<sup>151</sup> Netanel Fisher, “A Jewish State: Controversial Conversions and the Dispute over Israel’s Jewish Character”, p. 226.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

retroactively reconstructed the Jewish past by interpreting it in accordance with his own modern- secular ideals.<sup>153</sup>

In his mind, there was no separation, although he aimed to give as much emphasis as possible to the nationalist elements of the national identity, and to use religion where needed to ensure national unity – “a unity under the umbrella of strong state, but also unity in face of the British, the United Nations, and the surrounding Arab states, which were not supportive of Zionist enterprise”.<sup>154</sup>

The state used the Bible and encouraged archeological studies in order to legitimize the existence of the state and to prove the historical right of the Jews to reside in Palestine, both for the Jewish people and the international community. In addition to these ideological considerations, the tremendous influence of the Holocaust and the massive wave of immigrants from Middle Eastern countries led to an increasing emphasis on Judaism in the definition of the Jewish national identity. First, the Holocaust made it difficult for secular leaders to maintain their previous position of maintaining a distance from the diaspora. The absorption of Holocaust survivors into the country together with the Eichmann Trial influenced and had also triggered a rise of religion in the national identity – indeed the “Jewishization” of Israeli identity – since the 1950s.<sup>155</sup> Second, the mass immigration of Jews from Muslim countries also contributed the rise of religious emphasis. The new immigrants did not fit in with the imagined secular and modern state, coming as they did from the Middle East and from North Africa, bringing their cultural, historical, ethnic and national diversity As Uri Ram argues:

They brought with them to the new country collective identities rich with variety of components, Jewish and others, but with very little component, if at all, of secular Zionism, let alone native Hebrewism.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>154</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power & National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, p. 65.

<sup>155</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 65.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

With the change in demography and the need to integrate the immigrants into the collective identity, Jewish tradition became more important in the construction of national identity.<sup>157</sup> In short, as a result of the need to integrate the new immigrants into the collective identity, which had various ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, the state founding elite needed a common denomination, for which religion served perfectly in the accomplishment of this urgent goal. Judaism was able to bring together people of different backgrounds under the same umbrella.

In addition to the internal features of the Jewish community, another significant external element – the Arab-Israeli conflict – contributed to the emphasis of religion in the definition of Jewishness, even among the secular individuals. The increasing importance of religion in the construction of a national identity in Israel will not be sufficiently grasped without an analysis of the issue in the greater Arab-Israeli conflict. Particularly after 1967, which some scholars refer to as the period of the second republic<sup>158</sup> – when the state imposed a military regime over the conquered territories of Arab people – the emphasis on Judaism in the Jewish identity increased. With the change in demography and the need for the integration of immigrants into a collective identity, Jewish tradition became more important for the construction of a national identity. The Palestinians constituted majority of the population in the new conquered lands especially in West Bank and Gaza, and so the Jewish identity began to be shaped vis-a-vis the Palestinian identity. As discussed previously, the Jewish national identity had not exclude religion prior to 1967, but after this time, the emphasis on religion increased and the identity became both more nationalist and at the same time more religious. Uri Ram explains need to increase both religious and nationalist components in the new identity in the framework of the Arab-Israel conflict:

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<sup>157</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 412.

<sup>158</sup> Baumgart continues to explain the transformation as: “It moved from the dominance of the secular-socialist concept of state to one which emphasized the ethno- religious boundaries of membership in the Nation. The process was driven by both Religion and secular Nationalism: Religious actors, the settlers in particular, underwent a process of politicization after the war; and the secular state began to use the Religious settlement movement as a tool for its mundane Politics in the occupied territories.”, *Ibid.*, p. 413.



The “Hebrews” could have never really relinquished Judaism in its entirety. Jewishness supplied them with two indispensable instruments: first, the legitimization needed for their project of colonization of Palestine, that is the argument that the land is theirs by right (and not by plight), and second, criteria with which to encircle the boundaries of the national exclusiveness vis a vis the local Arabs – or an instrument of exclusion...Given the new geographic – demographic realities, in Israel of the era of occupation, from 1967 onwards, being “Jewish” has acquired an entirely new meaning; being Jewish in Israel today means first and foremost not being an Arab, or being a “non- Arab”.<sup>159</sup>

Briefly, an analysis of the historical framework behind the establishment of the state and onwards reveals that reasons stemming from both the intra-Jewish and Arab-Israeli conflicts influenced the state’s approach to religion in the post-1967 period. The restoration of religion in Jewish national identity had already occurred due to the Holocaust and the mass immigration of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa to Israel together with the ideological and pragmatic considerations of the state-founding elite including attracting the support of religious authorities and parties for the creation of coalition government. It was after 1967, however, that religion increased its influence on national identity and “resort of Israeli identity to Jewishness” or “resort to Jewishness as their collective bedrock” occurred.<sup>160</sup> Scholars referred to this period as the era of national religion or civil religion in Israel,<sup>161</sup> and the reflection of this shift can be seen in various developments that took place after 1967, such as the changing policies of one of the religious parties, the *Maftal*, towards national religiosity; the settlement policies; the emergence of the *Gush Emunim* (Block of Faith); and the increasing contacts between and corporation of religious parties with the *Likud*, headed by Menachem Begin. While religious parties avoided participating in the so- called leftist Labor government that held power until 1977, they were warmer towards the *Likud* government, which embraced enthusiastically more religious and nationalist agendas.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 67.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>162</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 68.

## 2.2. CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGION

The writing of a Constitution is usually a priority task after the establishment of a state, and Israel was no exception in this regard, launching long debates into its composition. The UN Resolution anticipated the promulgation of a Constitution based on such liberal values equality, freedom of individuals, etc., however, Israel still has no written constitution.<sup>163</sup> This can be attributed to the general framework of the relationship between the state and religion, in which the definition of Jewishness, Jewish state and the appropriate role of religion in state affairs remain as controversial issues that have prevented the promulgation of the Constitution since the establishment of the state. The main priority of the state founding elite has been rather to achieve national unity among ethnically, linguistically, politically and ideologically different people, and so the promulgation of a constitution, which would make clear the relationship between the state and religion, was avoided. As one member of the *Mapai*, Y.S Shapira, argues, “It seemed to me and to others that while the state was still in the making, one had to be very careful in fixing a legislative framework; for fear that it might hamper free development.”<sup>164</sup>

A number of controversies were faced in efforts to define the state and the role of religion in the state affairs among the political parties. For instance, the religious Orthodox members of the Israeli Parliament argued that the state must be ruled in accordance with *Halacha* (Jewish religious law), and based on the *Torah* and *Talmud*.<sup>165</sup> A debate also occurred related to the reference to God in the Declaration of Independence between the religious and secular leaders upon the establishment of the state, with the religious sides demanding an explicit reference to God, while the secular Zionist leaders voiced their reluctance. A middle way between the religious

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<sup>163</sup> Joseph Badi, *Religion in Israel Today*, p. 24.

<sup>164</sup> Daphna Sharfman, *Living Without a Constitution: Civil Rights in Israel*, (New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1993), p. 44.

<sup>165</sup> “The Torah is the embodiment of all of Judaism’s Religious and ethical literature. The Talmud is a collection of scholar’s teachings of the oral Torah and transmission of ideas found within the Torah.” Cited in Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 11.

and secular parties was found by including a phrase of trust in the “Rock of Israel”<sup>166</sup>, although this compromise was not acceptable for some secular leaders.<sup>167</sup> Aharon Zisling argued that the inclusion of the phrase could be considered the imposition of religion over those who did not believe.<sup>168</sup>

The constitutional promulgation was postponed by the secular founding elite in a bid to quell the tensions that were building between the various parties. The government decided that the Constitution would be created step-by-step, and the *Knesset* decided that the adaptation of the Constitution would be by evolution on June 13, 1950.<sup>169</sup> This depended upon the enactment of a number of *Basic Laws* (Fundamental Laws) that would be included in the Constitution of the state in the future.

The “Status Quo Agreement” determined the official role of religion in the newly established state,<sup>170</sup> and took the form of the letter that asked for the support of the religious authorities for the Declaration of Independence by the representatives of the Zionist Executive, and was signed between the non-Zionist *Agudat Israel* and Ben-Gurion. The Status Quo Agreement gave power to the religious authorities in four main areas: *Shabbat*<sup>171</sup> observance, kosher foods, personal status laws and education. Ben Gurion put his signature to a letter to Rabbi Izhak Levine of the ultra-orthodox *Agudat Israel*, promising:

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<sup>166</sup> An accepted synonym for God.

<sup>167</sup> Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy*, p. 27.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>169</sup> Joseph Badi, *Religion in Israel Today*, p. 24.

<sup>170</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 65.

<sup>171</sup> *Shabbat* is the Hebrew Word for Sabbath. The Jewish day of rest is on Saturdays, beginning at sundown on Friday evening through sundown on Saturday night. Because it is a day of rest Jews were not allowed to perform any kind of work. The various observance levels of Judaism have different meanings of the definition of “work” and ways to get around it if needed. The strictest observers do not do anything on *Shabbat* except read the bible and attend services at synagogue. Electricity cannot be used, because according to the Torah, fire cannot be burned on *Shabbat*. So the strictly Orthodox do not drive, cook or perform any other activity that results in something being created or produced. Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 14.

- 1) The establishment of the *Shabbat* (Saturday) as the legal day of rest for Jews and for state institutions
- 2) The observance of Jewish dietary laws (*kashrut*) in all state institutions
- 3) The continuation of rabbinical control over matters of personal status for Jews
- 4) The establishment of a religious school network, subject to minimal secular requirements set by the state.<sup>172</sup>

That agreement proposed that the official day of rest would be *Shabbat* and the food served in all state institutions would be *kosher*. Moreover, autonomy in the sphere of education would be given to the religious authorities that were recognized by the state, in exchange for their support of the State of Israel. In addition to these obligations, issues of personal status – in particular, marriage and divorce – would be in accordance with Orthodox Judaism. In Israel there is no provision for civil marriages or divorce; couples must marry under the supervision of an Orthodox Rabbi. There are also a number of restrictions related to marriage, even among Jews.<sup>173</sup> Although a significant number of Jewish people circumvent these simply by marrying abroad, and then having the marriage recognized by the state, they still, however, face difficulties in matters of divorce, since the Rabbinate does not recognize their marriage. Furthermore, by granting power in the matters of personal status to the religious authorities, not only is the freedom of religion being violated, but also the freedom from religion. The state has given this authority to only one branch of Judaism: Orthodox Judaism, although Judaism has different interpretations, with also Reform Judaism and Conservative Judaism being the choice of a significant number of adherents. Marriages, divorces or conversions

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<sup>172</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power & National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, p. 63.

<sup>173</sup> “Marriages between Jewish male who bears a name such as Cohen (ancient noble tribe) and divorced women and also a marriage between any Jew and a person suspected of being a “bastard” (born following a women’s adultery) are forbidden.” Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 177.

It should be noted even though various scholars note Ben-Gurion’s emphasis on “high politics” rather than such “low politics” as personal status issues, Ben Gurion did not overlook family issue. To illustrate, he offered a special monetary award on the occasion of the birth of a 13<sup>th</sup> in the early 1950s.

conducted by Reform or Conservative Rabbis are not recognized in Israel,<sup>174</sup> and each sect makes different interpretations of religious texts, observance, commandments, etc. Indeed the dominant sect in Israel, Orthodox Judaism, which emphasizes strict adherence to the *Torah*, also has some sub-communities, including an ultra-Orthodox segment.

*Agudat Israel* was founded in 1912 with the aim of denouncing Zionism as a secular and nationalist enemy of Orthodox Judaism.<sup>175</sup> The party was against any kind of cooperation with the Zionist movement and did not recognize its authority, even boycotting the political elections of the institutions that existed during the *Yishuv* period. According to *Agudat Israel*, Zionism would damage Jewish religion, since redemption was a decision that could be taken only by God. In contrast, the secular founding elite, and even the religious Zionists among them, believed that the new state should be secular, and that the state should have no established religion. *Agudat Israel* was strongly against the existence of the State of Israel. Although the state founding elite aimed to establish a secular state, they made an agreement with *Agudat Israel* related to the role of religion in the state and the level of involvement of religious authorities in state affairs. Most of debates related to the relationship between the state and religion concentrate around the Status Quo Agreement, which defined the place of religion in the Jewish state.<sup>176</sup> Since the inception of the State of Israel, political parties have used the Status Quo Agreement in their political maneuvers, and have interpreted it in line with their own ideologies and interests. Religious and secular parties alike emphasize the Status Quo Agreement when discussing legislation related to religion in Parliament, which brings to mind a significant point: Despite the strong opposition and contradictory ideas of the two groups regarding the relationship between the state and religion, namely the members of anti-Zionist *Agudat Israel* and Zionist leaders, how were they able to reach such an argument that would constitute a cornerstone in the relationship

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<sup>174</sup> Michael Langer, "Democracy, Religion and the Zionist Future of Israel", *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 1987, pp. 400-415, p. 406.

<sup>175</sup> Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy*, p. 22.

<sup>176</sup> Martin Edelman, "A Portion of Animosity: The Politics of the Disestablishment of Religion in Israel", *Israel Studies*, Vol.5, No. 1, 2000, pp. 204-227, p. 206.

between the state and religion. The answers may change, this thesis argues that the secular and religious sides are not in total opposition, in that they are able to interact, reinforce each other and share common goals. As said before, even though state founding elite had secular aims, they did not exclude religion during the construction of the national identity, but chose rather to emphasize religious elements of the national identity, given that the various ethnic populations who immigrate to Israel could be united under the umbrella of religion. In addition, the new state claimed to be the state of Jewish people, disregarding the fact that Jewish people are not homogenous, as is clearly apparent in the ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences of Ashkenazis and Mizrahis. The state founders realized that the homogenization of the various groups would only be possible by emphasizing religion, but what was the motivation for the strictly religious *Agudat Israel* to reach an agreement with the “enemy of Jewish people”, namely, the representatives of the Zionist ideology. In short, it was the implications of the Holocaust, the interests of the party and the goal of the representatives of *Agudat Israel* to impose their true Orthodox Judaism on Jewish society that contributed to the shift in stance, from boycotting the *Yishuv* elections to corporation with the Zionist leaders.

As has been explained earlier, some of the political and institutional structures of the *Yishuv* period which that existed under the British mandate were incorporated into the new state. However, the power of religious authority in the state following the establishment of the state was beyond the supposed. Meddling claims that the leaders of the Zionist parties granted significant powers to the Orthodox authorities that exceeded their previous level of involvement.<sup>177</sup> With the Status Quo Agreement, the State of Israel institutionalized religion and incorporated it into state affairs in this way in a number of different spheres, and a number of motivations in this regard have been identified, ranging from political considerations, the influence of the Holocaust and strategic decisions. Furthermore, there was a need to avoid *Kulturkampf* between the different Jewish communities,<sup>178</sup> which had the potential to

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<sup>177</sup> Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy*, p. 24.

<sup>178</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power & National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, p. 60.

thrive on the basis of ethnicity, religious ideology, language, etc. Tsevi Tsameret and Moshe Tlamim claimed that Ben Gurion's status as a pragmatic political leader facilitated this:

Ben-Gurion was aware that nothing would be more dangerous and self-destructive to the Jewish people than the outbreak of a full scale cultural war between secular and religious segments of the population. Ben-Gurion, the dry-eyed, no-nonsense national leader was absolutely convinced that, if the goal of absorbing multifarious strands of a globally dispersed nation were to succeed, then arguments over religious questions and disputes with the religious Orthodoxy should be postponed for future generations.<sup>179</sup>

It is apparent that a combination of ideological and political considerations determined the decision-making process, although this thesis argues that after the transition to an independent state, the secular Zionist leaders faced an urgent need to establish national unity and to define "Jewishness". Even though some of Ben-Gurion's statements show his intentions in the creation of a civic identity, such as: "A Jew is someone who thinks himself a Jew, and sees himself as part of the Jewish people and Jewish history,"<sup>180</sup> his pragmatic considerations never neglected religion. That said, the same Ben-Gurion, in the assembly of 50 "Sages of Israel", declared that "A Jew could be anyone who desired in purify of heart to be a Jew, providing that they are not of another religion".<sup>181</sup> A duality in the civic and ethnic definitions of national identity can be seen in these quotes of Ben-Gurion, and this had a marked influence on the construction of national identity by the state elite. In this regard, religion served as a key to the desired homogeneity, as the common denominator among the different ethnicities, languages and ideologies. Given the importance of religion in the construction of national identity, the state had to provide certain privileges to the religious authorities, who were well aware that the state needed them if they were to succeed in creating national unity gaining support. The Religious authorities also sought to create their own version of society, functioning in accordance with the *Torah*, and also to promote their own religious interests.

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<sup>179</sup> Tsevi Tsameret and Moshe Tlamim, "Judaism in Israel: Ben-Gurion's Private Beliefs and Public Policy", p. 65.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

The Israeli government had been formed by coalition parties since the establishment of the state, and this dependence of the Israeli government on coalitions is well expressed by Birnbaum:

Government in Israel is by coalition, hence by mutual concession and compromise among the participating parties. Political parties play a vital role in Israel politics. They determine the composition and functioning of the government.<sup>182</sup>

When the political debates that have taken place in the *Knesset* are taken into consideration throughout the history of the state, it becomes apparent that the need for a coalition to obtain majority has led to the granting of concessions by representatives of the secular parties to the religious authority in the return for political support from the establishment of the state. So what motivation do the ultra-Orthodox religious parties have to become involved in politics, despite their lack of recognition of the state? The answer to this question lies in their religious ideologies. They have aimed to impose their own religious lifestyles and ideas on Jewish society by playing a significant role in the enacting of legislations in the *Knesset*, and to promote their own interests, which include obtaining funding for their communities and their religious schools, which operate independently of the state. In the formative years of the state, the *Mizrachi*, *HaPoel Mizrachi*, *Agudat Israel*, and *Poalei Agudat Israel* were the main religious parties.<sup>183</sup> Of these, the *Mizrachi* and *HaPoel Mizrachi* were not against Zionism, and united to form the *National Religious Party* in 1956. The last two parties, which opposed the Zionist ideology, also united under the name *Agudat*. The rise of another religious party – *Shah* – has occurred more recently (1984), and has attracted the interest of various segments of the society, including a segment of Jewish society that was subject to discrimination – Sephardim Jews.

The enactment of the Law of Return by the *Knesset* is crucial in terms of the constitutional aspect of the relationship between the state and religion in the State of Israel. The Law of Return was passed on July 5, 1950 and constituted the main legal

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<sup>182</sup> Ervin Birnbaum, *The Politics of Compromise: State and Religion in Israel*, (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1970), p. 23.

<sup>183</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 27.



expression of the Zionist ideology: the ingathering Jews to their homeland. Indeed, it defined the boundaries of the nation state and determined who belonged to that imagined nation and who did not. It was no accident that the Jewish religion played a determining role in the establishment of a homogenous nation state. While adherents to the Jewish religion not only in Israel, but from all around the world, have been integrated into the nation state, as the clear desire of the state elite, the non-Orthodox Jews and Arab people, even they live in the country, were excluded from that imagined boundaries of nation. As Smootha argues:

The major law of immigration allows Jews to enter freely, excludes Palestinian Arabs, and admits other non-Jews only under certain uneasy conditions...In many other ways the state extends preferential treatment to Jews who wish to preserve this embedded Jewishness and Zionism of the state.<sup>184</sup>

The Law of Return demonstrates clearly that although the secular founding leaders aimed to create a secular state and to emphasize the cultural and historical ties between the people and the land rather than religion, they still relied on religion for the construction of the national identity, and thus a homogenous nation state. Along with the Nationality Law, the Law of Return guarantees every Jew a right to immigrate and to become a citizen of Israel.<sup>185</sup> Although every Jew who determined to make *aliya* (immigrate) was given automatic citizenship,<sup>186</sup> the promulgation of these laws brought about an intensification of the conflict surrounding the definition of Jewishness. The secular definition of Jewishness claimed by the secular founding leaders, and *Halakhic* definition of the term supported by the religious authorities were contradictory, and the resulting debates of the question “Who is a Jew” have attracted scholars and politicians alike, both from within Israel and from the outside world. The conflict over the definition of “Jew” also stemmed from the duality of the existence of the religious authorities who determine issues related to the personal

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<sup>184</sup> Sammy Smootha, “Minority Status in an Ethnic Democracy: The Status of the Arab Minority in Israel”, p. 393.

<sup>185</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 31; Martin Edelman, “A Portion of Animosity: The Politics of the Disestablishment of Religion in Israel”, p. 217.

<sup>186</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, “Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building”, p. 468.

status of the people in the country, and the secular institutions who determine nationality issues.<sup>187</sup> To illustrate, according to *Halakhic* – religious law –, a Jew is someone born to a Jewish mother; however this definition was not included to the Law of Return. This meant that many immigrants who were relatives of Jews were accepted under the Law of Return, but their Jewishness was not recognized by the Rabbinat, which was responsible for issues of personal status.

The controversy over the definition of Jewishness, i.e. the lack of a clear answer to the question “Who’s a Jew”, led to various conflicts in the state and public sphere. Indeed, the ethnic definition set out by the state and the national identity established clear boundaries for the nation, and rejected any other national identity in Israel. The emphasis on Jewish nationality was related to the state founders’ political and ideological considerations, and it became evident that this was one of the reasons for the failure of secularism in Israel. Uri Ram explains the dilemma of Jewish/Israeli Identity:

It is not understood enough by observers of Israel that *Jewish* nationality in Israel is held as a bulk against the emergence of an alternative potential nationality there – an Israeli nationality. The difference is that “Jewish” nationality is held to be an inherent- ascription (belonging is by family of birth), while Israeli nationality is potentially universal and equal to all –Jews, Arabs and other citizens. The state of Israel, in fact, does not recognize officially “Israeli nationality” because such nationality may potentially include Arabs as well as Jews (belonging by country of birth). In order to avert such a potential “mix” and to secure the boundaries of membership of a “pure” Jewish nationality, the state leans on Jewish religion (ism).<sup>188</sup>

Some 10 years after the promulgation of the Law of Return, a conflict arose in the country related to the definition of Jewishness. A Jewish-born Polish man, Brother Daniel, applied for Israeli citizenship based on the Law of Return. Even though he requested his nationality to be under the Jewish category, his application was rejected due to the fact that he had converted to Christianity. He made an appeal

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<sup>187</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 31.

<sup>188</sup> Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel”, p. 61.

to the Supreme Court, which ultimately made a distinction between the secular definition of Jewishness for purposes of nationality and the religious definition of Jewishness, in line with the *Halakhic* definition, for personal status issues. The Court further determined that Brother Daniel was a Jew according to *Halachka*, since he had been born to a Jewish mother and, and made the ruling “once a Jew always a Jew”.<sup>189</sup> To address the growing number of conflicts related to the lack of a clear definition, the Ministry of Interior issued a statement ruling that those who claim to be Jews are to be registered as Jewish in the nationality category, along with their children, unless they are adherents of another faith. This brought immediate pressure from the religious members of Parliament, and as had occurred in the case of the Status Quo Agreement; Ben-Gurion had to make a deal with the religious stream. Subsequently, the Minister of Interior made a statement recognizing people as Jews according to the *Halakhic* definition. Another well-known conflict over the definition of Jewishness occurred in the case of Shalit who was married to non-Jewish woman and who requested their children be registered as Jews<sup>190</sup>, however their application had been rejected since the children were not born of a Jewish mother. After applying to the Supreme Court, his plea was accepted after the Court made a distinction between the secular and religious definition. They decided that nationality was a civic issue, and so there was no need for *Halakhic* rule in determining the civic issue- nationality section. Once again, members of the religious parties put pressure on the government and looked to the *Knesset* for ratification of the decision of the Supreme Court. As a result of the imposed pressure, the Registration of Inhabitants Law was changed to state that the nationality section also must be based on the

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<sup>189</sup> “Although one may convert to another faith, Halakhic Law regards the convert as a Jew as long that person was born to a Jewish mother; basically there is just one requirement to being Jewish under Halakah.” Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 32.

<sup>190</sup> “The ruling in the Shalit matter brought about a change in Law of Return (Amendment No.2, 1970). Until January 1960, the practice was that the declaration of anyone who came to Ministry of Interior for the purpose of registration to obtain an identity card of passport and who declared his Jewishness would be accepted. On January 10, 1960 ,however, Interior Minister H. M. Shapiro issued guidelines that “in the matter of registering religious and National details in the population registry “ a person would be registered as a Jew who had been either: (a) born of a Jewish mother and did not belong another religion, or (b)converted according to Halacha. This brought about Shalit’s petition, resulting in a change in the Law of Return in the spirit of the guidelines established by the new interior minister. The demand that conversion be ‘according to Halacha’ was dropped.” Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 200.

*Halakhic* definition of Jewishness. In other words, people who requested to be registered as Jewish under the category of nationality had to be born of a Jewish mother or to have converted to Judaism. Furthermore, the Law of Return was amended in 1970 to give automatic citizenship to the non-Jewish spouses of Jews, their children and their grandchildren. During the 1970s, as a result of the amendment to the Law of Return, it was also determined that non-Jews could change their status only through religious conversion to Judaism.<sup>191</sup> That said, those who immigrated to Israel after the changes made to the Law of Return encountered various difficulties with regards to the identity issue.

### **2.2.1. The Arabs, the Ultra-Orthodox Community and Controversy over Military Service**

Upon the establishment of the State of Israel, the Arab population, which had constituted the majority before the War of Independence, decreased to around 160,000<sup>192</sup> – approximately 15 percent of the total population. The decision to integrate of the Arab people into the country was stated in the Declaration of the Independence as, “The Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to return to the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the State, with full and equal citizenship and representation in all its bodies and institution, provisional or permanent,”<sup>193</sup> although, in reality they were subjected to various political, institutional, social and economic restrictions. Indeed, the state made no attempt to assimilate, but rather excluded them since they were not part of the imagined Jewish community. The State of Israel recognized them not as a national community, but only they as a religious community, and as a result, they had only minor authority in matters related to religious affairs. This recognition was related to the state decision to retain the *millet* system that was in force during the Ottoman era, and which had been maintained under the British mandate. Raphael Cohen Almagor’s emphasis the

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<sup>191</sup> Netanel Fisher, “A Jewish State? Controversial Conversions and the Dispute over Israel’s Jewish Character”, p. 227.

<sup>192</sup> Compared with some 750,000 in 1947, Peter Y. Medding, *Founding an Independent State in the Founding of Israeli Democracy*, p. 24.

<sup>193</sup> Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel, online available at: <http://www.mideastweb.org>

difference between “formal citizenship” and “full citizenship” in Israel is worthy of note in this regard:

Israeli Jews can be said to enjoy full citizenship: they enjoy equal respect as individuals, and they are entitled to equal treatment by law and in its administration.<sup>194</sup> The situation is different with regard to the Israeli Palestinians. Although they are formally considered to enjoy liberties equally with the Jewish community, in practice they do not share and enjoy the same rights and burdens.<sup>195</sup>

In contrast to the situation for Arabs, members of the ultra-Orthodox community enjoy privileges granted by the state. In the State of Israel, citizens must undertake mandatory military service, with three years demanded of men and two years for women,<sup>196</sup> however the ultra-Orthodox Jews are exempted from this duty. The state and the ultra-orthodox community justify this exemption with the claim that ultra-Orthodox Jews must study the *Torah* in the *yeshivas*.<sup>197</sup> The controversial military exemption of ultra-orthodox Jews has been one of the most hotly debated topics in Israeli politics since the establishment of the state. In September 1949, Israeli Parliament enacted the Defense Service Law, which obliged all women and men to undertake national service, with the exception of mothers and pregnant women.<sup>198</sup> Religious parties opposed the adaption to the law, and the government agreed eventually to exempt orthodox women from military service.<sup>199</sup> Although the Israeli Supreme Court decided that the exemption of the ultra-Orthodox *Yeshiva*

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<sup>194</sup> In that sense I do not agree with the author since even among Jews, there have been various inequalities among Ashkenazi-Sephardi or Orthodox - and members of other affiliations and also especially in contemporary times, Ethiopian Jews do not have equal conditions with others.

<sup>195</sup> Raphael Cohen Almagor, “Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building”, p. 462.

<sup>196</sup> Muslim and Christian Arabs have never been drafted. Bedouins are allowed to volunteer. Druzes are drafted compulsorily. Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 178.

<sup>197</sup> A *yeshiva* is an institution in which Jewish students devote their time to the study of the Talmud and rabbinical literature. The Talmud is the oral recitation of Jewish subjects that were not available in writing at the time when they developed. The word *Yeshiva* is actually used in the Talmud to describe the oldest institutions of Jewish learning. Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 19.

<sup>198</sup> Joseph Badi, *Religion in Israel Today*, p. 27.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

students from military service was illegal,<sup>200</sup> the issue has still not been resolved, at the expense of public will, due to the pressure of the ultra-Orthodox parties in the *Knesset*.

### 2.3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Despite the efforts of the secular Zionist founding leaders, religious authorities managed to have themselves integrated into the state, and official religions have now been recognized by the state with separate legal jurisdictions and religious courts. The decision of the founding leaders to allow this to happen was based on several motivations, including strategic decisions, a desire to increase the legitimacy of the new state among the Jewish community and international sphere, and to avoid *Kulturkampf*.<sup>201</sup>

As stated previously, the state carried many of the political structures that had existed before independence into the modern institutions,<sup>202</sup> incorporating not only some of *Yishuv* social and legislative structures, but also some significant political traditions dating back to the Ottoman Empire, including the *millet* system. Within this system, the definition of the community was based on religion, and each religion maintained its own independent legal authorities, including religious courts. In other words, it relied on a principle of community. To some extent, the Israeli state followed this tradition and recognized four religious communities – Jewish, Muslims, Christians and Druzes<sup>203</sup> who are allowed jurisdiction in the religious

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<sup>200</sup> Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 20.

<sup>201</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power & National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, p. 91; Avi Sagi, “On Religious Secular Tensions”, in Gorni Yosef, Gergerly Thomas, and Ben Rafael Eliezer (eds.), *Jewry Between Tradition and Secularism: Europe and Israel Compared* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>202</sup> Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Conflict Management of Religious Issues: The Israeli Case in a Comparative Perspective” in R.Y Hazan and M. Maor (eds.), *Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 89.

<sup>203</sup> Since 1948, the Israeli government has recognized certain established religious groups, whose leaders are granted special status, even when they are tiny minorities. These communities are entitled to state financial support and tax exemptions. Under Israeli Law, all residents must belong to a religious denomination, whose rules they are obliged to follow with regard to marriage, divorce, and burial. British colonial rule recognized Islam, Judaism, and nine Christian denominations as *millet*. The Israeli state recognized the Druse in 1957, the Evangelical Episcopal Church in 1970, and Baha’is in 1971. Muslims have not been officially recognized, but their religious courts de facto have similar

issues and issues related to personal status with their own independent polities. This means that in Israel there are no civil marriages or burials.<sup>204</sup> In addition, each community has their own department in the Ministry of Religion to manage the religious courts and the financial issues of communities. Even though such religious minorities as Muslims, Christians and Druzes community are recognized and are allowed to manage the personal status of their adherents through their own councils, the dominant religion is Orthodox Judaism, which have the benefit of a significant degree of economic and political privilege. To put it differently, while the state grants religious autonomy to various communities; non-Jewish religious institutions are discriminated against especially with regards to the allocation of financial resources.<sup>205</sup> In addition, despite Judaism is not the official religion of the state, its influence and dominance on state symbols, politics and the public sphere are readily apparent.<sup>206</sup>

With the Law and Administration Ordinance of 1948, Rabbinical Courts were granted significant power and control over issues related to marriage and divorce.<sup>207</sup> The Rabbinical Courts Jurisdiction (Marriage and Divorce) Law, passed by the *Knesset* in 1953, gave complete jurisdiction to the Rabbinate with regards to marriage and divorce.<sup>208</sup> The Chief Rabbinate comprises several Orthodox Rabbis who have the authority to control the religious activities of the Jewish community. The decisions of the Chief Rabbinate are authoritative, and it is recognized as the official religious spokesman by the Israeli State.<sup>209</sup> The state has given a huge power

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authority to a *millet* institution. All other groups from Conservative and Reform Jews to new sects are not recognized. Quoted from Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 182.

<sup>204</sup> Lilly Weissbrod, "Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society", p. 195.

<sup>205</sup> Yossi Yonah, "Israel As a Multicultural Democracy: Challenges and Obstacles", *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2005, pp. 95-116, p. 105.

<sup>206</sup> Stephen Sharot, "Israel: Sociological Analyses of Religion in the Jewish State", p. 65.

<sup>207</sup> Law and Administration Ordinance, 1948, L.S.I 7, 9 (1948), cited in Lucy E. Bassli, "The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years".

<sup>208</sup> Joseph Badi, *Religion in Israel Today*, p. 42.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

to the Chief Rabbinate to control issues related to Orthodox Judaism, and it is granted large budgets for the management of religious services for Jewish people.<sup>210</sup> In Israel, even though there are two choices in the state education system – state-financed secular and Orthodox systems – there is also a state-financed ultra-Orthodox education system.

After the establishment of the state, the existing power of the Orthodox stream was strengthened with the enactment several important laws and Orthodox Judaism was assigned as sole and state-recognized religion.<sup>211</sup> To illustrate, the Marriage and Divorce Law, which passed a few years after independence, gave incredible power to the Orthodox Rabbinate in the control of Israeli citizens. The law defined the boundaries of the nation and aimed to distinguish the real Jews from non-real Jews and unity of Jewish community or to determine who is and who not part of the community is.<sup>212</sup> The law states that couples who marry without the approval of Rabbinate cannot be recognized legally as married. Giving power to the religious authority means that Jews who are not adherents of Orthodox Judaism, even if religious, still have no opportunity to marry in Israel under Rabbis from the Conservative or Reform Judaism sects.<sup>213</sup> It is evident, in this regard, that not only non-religious and secular individuals, but also religious people may face difficulties if they are not adherents to the dominant and recognized version of Judaism: Orthodoxy. In summary, civil marriage does not exist in Israel, which refers to itself as a democracy, and this can only be circumvented by marrying in another country,

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<sup>210</sup> Gila Stopler, “National Identity and Religion-State Relations: Israel in Comparative Perspective”, p. 511.

<sup>211</sup> Martin Edelman, “A Portion of Animosity: The Politics of the Disestablishment of Religion in Israel”, p. 204.

<sup>212</sup> Patricia J. Woods, *Judicial Power & National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, p. 65.

<sup>213</sup> Reform and conservative rabbis are not licensed to conduct marriage ceremonies in Israel and do not sit on rabbinical court benches. Therefore, Jews affiliated with these movements (as well as non-believers) are forced to submit their personal affairs to Orthodox courts and judges that are not acceptable to them... they have been prevented – despite repeated decisions by the High Court of Justice – from serving on Religious Councils. Their rabbis do not receive salaries from the state and the state does not finance the establishment of synagogues for their congregations. Quoted from Benyamin Neuberger, “Religion and State in Europe and Israel”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1999, pp. 65-84, p. 80.



and only after the Supreme Court of Israel pressured the Ministry of Interior to recognize civil marriages conducted in foreign countries in 1963. In addition to marriages, the issue of divorce also causes various problems especially for women. Since the Rabbinat controls the divorce issue, it is the *Halakhic Law* that is applied, which privileges men over women and includes strict divorce requirements. Indeed, granting power to the religious authorities lead also to discrimination against women, as argued by Kimmerling who claims that women were exposed to explicit legal discrimination since the personal status law falls under the control of Rabbinical Courts, who rule in accordance with the patriarchal *Halacha* code and its interpretations by Orthodox Rabbinical court judges (*dayanim*).<sup>214</sup> On this issue Bassli argues, “If the wife wants a divorce, there is no guarantee that the husband will grant her a *get*, without which she is not permitted by Halakhic law to remarry.”<sup>215</sup> The men do not have such difficulties in *Halakhic Law*, so the situation violates the human rights of women.

Universal equality and freedom of religion were granted in the Declaration of Independence, however, the incorporation of religious institutions gave religious authorities remarkable power in the control of personal status issues and religious activities, in direct contradiction to those principles. Since each individual must be affiliated with a recognized religious group if they are to have any control over personal status issues, it is evident that freedom from religion, as the basic premise of secularism, does not exist in Israel. Rubinstein points out that the Rabbinical Courts have exclusive jurisdiction over the personal status issue, regardless of the individuals’ religious affiliations, referring to the situation as a kind of forced religion, which has been a source of several controversies and disputes in Israeli society.<sup>216</sup> The lack of respect for or recognition of other streams of Judaism by the Orthodox establishment can be understood even more from one of the inter-Jewish conflicts that was raged in 1956. Dr. Nelson Gluek, the famous architect and

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<sup>214</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 176.

<sup>215</sup> A *get* is a bill of divorce mentioned in the Torah.” Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 36.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

president of Hebrew Union College, made a request to the municipality of Jerusalem to obtain a building permit for an archaeology school. The committee approved the request, but the ratification of the permit came from the municipal council since the project included a room within the building that would be used for Reform religious services. The Mayor of Jerusalem was put under pressure to cancel the project, but after the bid failed, Orthodox resigned from municipal council.<sup>217</sup> This took place during the period of foundation of state, and offers a clear illustration of the lack of recognition and tolerance of other religious communities, even within Judaism, in the dominant Orthodox authority.

Jewish society has been unable to secure a homogenous character since the establishment of the state. The ultra-Orthodox Jews, as strict adherents of the *Torah* and *Talmud*, constituted a minority; however their role in both the public and state sphere has seen a marked increase in recent decades. They have also established their own schools and isolated neighborhoods, and have been making huge efforts to impose their own ideological and religious positions over the entire Jewish society. Their political parties in the *Knesset* seek to pass legislation that stems from their strict interpretation of their religion, such as the closing of all shops for *Shabbat* and the application of *Kashrut* rules in the institutions, state kitchens, etc.,<sup>218</sup> and they envision a society that is governed in accordance with *Halakhic Law*. Another group in society comprises non-religious Jews who envision a modern way of life and lifestyle, and between the two, are *masortim* (traditional Jews), who follow some of the religious observance and traditions. This non-homogeneous nature of society makes the dominance of one interpretation of Judaism a completely unsuitable goal.

Ben-Gurion, when asked about the place of religion in state and to define “who is a Jew” in a youth movement in 1958, is quoted by Langer as replying:

If you wish to know what is the legal status of religion in the state then I advise you to refer the question to a lawyer. I will

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>218</sup> Yair Sheleg, Old- New Battles in An Old City; In the Three Years Since Modi'in Was established, Relations between Secular and Religious Jews Have Soured. But Unlike in Other Place, this Time It is The Religious Who Feel Under Attack, *Haaretz*, December 17 ,1999, cited in Lucy E. Bassli, “The Future of Combining Synagogue and State in Israel: What Have We Learned in the First 50 Years”, p. 14.

summarize what the relationship should be 1) The possibility for every religious Jew to live according to his belief and to educate his children in that spirit 2) Freedom of conscience for every individual to act as he wishes in his private life 3) The bequeathing of the Hebrew cultural legacy, especially Bible and Legends (Aggadah) to the younger generation 4) The celebration (hagigat shabatot) of the Sabbath and the festivals of Israel (moadei Israel).<sup>219</sup>

The fact that personal status issues fall under the control of a specific religious authority - Orthodox Judaism - and the public and state milieus are dominated by Judaism are a clear indicator that even those minimum points have not been realized. In spite of the promises given in the Declaration of Independence, and the public statements made by the founding elite, among others, with regards to freedom of conscience, the presented cases demonstrated throughout this thesis reveal that the principle of secularism has not been realized in Israel, even by its secular founding leaders. Due to attitudes of the founding leaders while creating a national identity and the role given to religion in that identity as a common denominator, the principle of neutrality of the state has not been fully realized. In this regard, Israel fits well into the statement of Greek Historian E. Skopeta, who claims that the nation has been the “guardian of religion” and religion has been the “guardian of the nation”.<sup>220</sup>

To conclude, an analysis of the historical, constitutional and institutional aspects of the relationship between the state and religion in Israel during the 1948-1967 period demonstrates that from the very outset, religion played a significant role in state affairs. Religion constituted an important element of Jewishness, and Orthodox Judaism maintained a privileged position at the expense of other religious communities in Israel. After the establishment of the state, the founding leaders relied on religion during the construction of the national identity, aiming to achieve national unity and a homogenous nation state. In short, an examination of the historical framework behind the establishment of the state and in the ensuing period make it clear that reasons stemming from both the intra-Jewish and Arab-Israeli

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<sup>219</sup> Michael Langer, “Democracy, Religion and the Zionist Future of Israel”, p. 410.

<sup>220</sup> The quotation of Skopeta is taken from Michael Langer, “Democracy, Religion and the Zionist Future of Israel”, p. 67.

conflicts impacted on the approach of the state to religion in the given period. Despite the secular desire of the founding elite, the restoration of religion in the Jewish national identity had already secured its place due to the Holocaust and the mass immigration of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa to Israel, together with the ideological and pragmatic efforts of the founding elite to attract the support of religious authorities and parties for the creation of a coalition government.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE AND RELIGION**

This chapter presents an analysis of the Republic of Turkey and the relationship between the state and religion, which will allow us to better grasp the role of religion in the construction of national identity. The role of religion in the construction of a national identity during the state-building period of the Turkish Republic is rooted in the Ottoman era. In this sense, a full comprehension of the dynamics of the relationship between the state and religion in the Republic requires a deeper analysis of the emergence of the Turkish identity prior to the establishment of the Republic. To this end, after briefly explaining the relationship between the state and religion in the Ottoman Empire, the building of the Turkish identity and the process of its evolution during the Young Turks period will be explained. The chapter continues with an explanation of a constitutional formation and secular reforms that were implemented during the formative period of Turkish Republic. This section further intends to explain the transformation of national identity from “Ottoman Muslim” to “Turkish nation”. The issue of the construction of a national identity is significant for the arguments put forward in this thesis, since this process influenced the state’s approach to religion during its state-building efforts. In the final section of the chapter, the institutional aspect of the relationship between the state and religion will be analyzed, with particular attention paid to the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

Attempts to assess the relationship between state and religion during the early years of the Turkish Republic necessitate a deep analysis of the ideological and political discussions that evolved in the latter years of the Ottoman regime. The establishment of the Republic was made possible following the collapse of the

Ottoman Empire, and there were at least two distinctive components of the ideological environment on which the Republic was established: The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and the escalating ideology of nation-states that was emerging in Europe, and it can be said that the ideological and political structures of the new state were shaped to certain extent by these two components.

### **3.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Turkish state was established out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. A number of scholars have contributed to the body of literature on the ruptures that occurred between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, although there are a growing number of studies, such as that of Eric Zürcher, emphasizing the continuities that were maintained in institutions, ideologies, nationalist secularist policies, etc.<sup>221</sup> The many ruptures that occurred between the Turkish Republic and the Ottoman Empire in terms of the economic, institutional and political structures are all too apparent; but when it comes to the place of religion in the national identity, one can argue that there were more continuities than ruptures, especially in the formative years of the Republic. Moreover, the new state's nationalist ideology cannot be thought of as independent from the Young Turks nationalist discourse, and in this context, the establishment of the Republic in 1923 can be regarded as a culmination of the previous modernization and Westernization efforts that were launched as part of Sultan Selim I's reforms in the late 18th century.<sup>222</sup> For the purpose of this study, it is crucial to present a brief summary of the relationship between the state and religion in the Ottoman context. Briefly, a comparison of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic reveals that despite the many radical changes made to the state and political structure, the new state inherited several of the traditions of the Ottoman state, such as the dominance of the Sunni identity in the Ottoman Empire. To grasp this issue better, the Sunni dominance, the *millet system* of the Ottoman Empire, first secularization reforms during Ottoman Empire, The

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<sup>221</sup> Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923-1945*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), p. 4.

<sup>222</sup> Recep Boztemur, "Nationalism and Religion in the Formation of Modern State in Turkey and Egypt Until World War I", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 4, No. 12, 2005, pp. 27-40, p. 33.

Young Turks and the emergence of ideological movements such as Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism will be covered. The intention here is not to make a detailed analysis of Pan-Islamism, Ottomanism or Pan-Turkism, although brief information will be presented aimed at providing a clearer understanding of the issue of national identity.

### **3.1.1 Sunni Identity and the Concept of Millet System in the Ottoman Empire**

The most striking feature of the Ottoman Empire was its strong centralized state. In this multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire, the state implemented a *millet system* for the management of this diversity. Furthermore, in addition to the incorporation of such strong Islamic tradition as Sharia Law into the state apparatus, the Ottoman Empire adopted also non-religious laws, known as *kanun*, or administrative laws.<sup>223</sup> In the words of Yavuz, “The Ottoman political system was notable for its attempt to create independent sources of legitimacy outside the strict framework of religion.”<sup>224</sup> Some historians, such as Halil İnalcık and Ömer Lütfi Barkan, believe that the secular traditions of the Ottoman Empire were based on the adoption of *kanunnames*, although others have rejected this argument, claiming that *kanunnames* were part of the Islamic tradition.<sup>225</sup>

After the defeat of the Mamluks in Egypt in 1517, Sultan Selim I (1470-1520) established Sunni Islam as the official religion of the empire,<sup>226</sup> and with the victory, the title of Caliph passed from the Mamluks to the Ottoman Sultan. The Ottoman Empire used the Sunni identity and this Caliphate title as a means of maintaining legitimacy, opposed to the Shia Safavid threats, which was the rival dynasty of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Şerif Mardin emphasizes that the Ottoman

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<sup>223</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Religion in Modern Turkey”, *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1977, pp. 279-297, p. 232.

<sup>224</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 38.

<sup>225</sup> Recep Şentürk, “State and Religion in Turkey: Which Secularism?” in Michael Heng Siam-Heng and Ten Chin Liew (eds.), *State and Secularism: Perspectives from Asia*, (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd, 2010), p. 332.

<sup>226</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism & Islamism*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2010), p. 11.

Empire established state control over religion, and says Sultan Selim and his successors used various strategies to prevent threats that stemmed from the Ulama.<sup>227</sup> In the Ottoman Empire, the Ulama as the “guardians of high Islamic tradition”, functioned as an intermediary between the state and society, but were also integrated into the state system.<sup>228</sup>

In the Ottoman Empire, the population was not divided based on nationalities with contemporary meanings or ethnicities, in that it was religion that played a prominent role in determining community members. This was known as the *millet system*, in which the issue of identity depended on religion. That is, the definition of the subjects of the Ottoman Empire based on their religion as Muslims or non-Muslims, and under this system, each religious community referred to as *millet*, and recognized as a legal community.<sup>229</sup> Greek Orthodox Christians, Armenian Apostolic Christians, Syriac Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims,<sup>230</sup> were recognized and each *millet* had the right to implement its own religious law in matters of personal status and had the autonomy to maintain its internal affairs with regards to the community.<sup>231</sup> All Muslims who lived in the Ottoman Empire were part of the Muslim community, regardless of their ethnicity, and were ruled according to Sharia rules.<sup>232</sup> Even though Muslims referred to themselves as the *Millet-i Hakime*,<sup>233</sup> other religious groups were also integrated into the state and their religious leaders managed the administration of their affairs.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Religion in Modern Turkey”, p. 282.

<sup>228</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p. 40.

<sup>229</sup> Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 38.

<sup>230</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism & Islamism*, p. 11.

<sup>231</sup> Binnaz Toprak, “Secularism and Islam: The Building of *Modern Turkey*” *Macalester International*, Vol. 15, No. 9, 2005, pp. 27-43, p. 27.

<sup>232</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism & Islamism*, p. 11.

<sup>233</sup> That notion or ideology referred to the Muslims which were dominant community in the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>234</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Religion in Modern Turkey”, p. 284.



The *millet* system dates back to the reign of Mehmet II (1432-1481), when the ethnically diverse population of the empire regarded themselves as Ottoman, but in addition to this Ottoman identity, they also utilized sub-identities such as Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Bulgars, etc.<sup>235</sup> Indeed the term “Turk” was used originally to refer to Anatolian peasants, but after the rise of nationalist movements from the mid-18th century onwards, being Turk gained importance in nationalist discourses.

### 3.1.2. Tanzimat Reforms

At some point in the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire started to lose its centrality to a significant degree, and after losing most of its territories, the state elite implemented a number of reforms in various fields, especially in the military, to curb the destruction of the empire. The defeat of the empire by Russia in the Crimean War (1854-1856) highlighted an urgent need for the modernization of the army. It can be said that the main motivation behind the decision of the state elite to activate reforms was not to westernize the state, but rather to prevent the decay of the empire; and indeed the most important reforms to be implemented by the Ottoman elite were aimed at weakening the influence of internal and external forces over state affairs.<sup>236</sup>

In 1839, the empire promulgated an Imperial Rescript that gave equality to all Ottoman citizens. During the Tanzimat Period, the Ottoman Empire implemented a series of changes in issues related to identity. With the increase in independent movement, the state aimed to protect its territorial integrity by creating various inclusive identities. The state elite believed that different nationalities could be united under the umbrella of the Ottoman Empire, and so Ottomanism was regarded as an effective policy for the prevention of the disintegration of the empire. The main of Ottomanism was to maintain the unity of the Ottoman Empire by giving equal political rights to Muslims and non- Muslims subject of the empire.<sup>237</sup> In addition, by giving equal rights to non-Muslims, the state elite aimed also to prevent the

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<sup>235</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism & Islamism*, p. 10.

<sup>236</sup> Recep Boztemur, “Nationalism and Religion in the Formation of Modern State in Turkey and Egypt Until World War I”, p. 29.

<sup>237</sup> Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*, p. 39.

interference of foreign powers across the Ottoman Empire in the name of protecting its non-Muslims. The Ottoman Empire was thus compelled to launch a new order in which the equality of all Ottoman people was guaranteed before the law, regardless of their ethnic or religious identity.<sup>238</sup> Moreover, the reform edict of 1856 eliminated inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims by declaring equality in the areas of taxation, military service and public employment.<sup>239</sup> The Tanzimat Reforms would contribute to the secularization and Westernization of the empire. The modernization reforms implemented in the army and bureaucracy during the 18th and the 19th century contributed to the secularization of the bureaucracy, administration, judiciary and education systems through the establishment of a secular judiciary, and also by educating schoolteachers in normal schools rather than religious ones.<sup>240</sup> The promulgation of the first Ottoman Constitution took place in 1876, and was based on the implication of the doctrine of Ottomanism, with the main aim being to discourage the secessionist movements and provide equality to all subjects, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. According to the Constitution, all subjects of the empire were to be referred to as “Ottoman Subjects”, and “All Ottomans are equal in the eyes of the law. They have same rights, and owe the same duties towards their country, without prejudice to religion.”<sup>241</sup>

That said, the reform movements led to increasing resentment among the Muslim population, since the non-Muslim community had already been economically dominant, and the Muslim community was unhappy that they gained equal rights after the reforms.<sup>242</sup> They believed that the Christian minorities were privileged at the expense of the economic well-being of Muslims, and this

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<sup>238</sup> Haldun Gülalp, “Using Islam as Political Ideology: Turkey in Historical Perspective”, *Cultural Dynamics*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (London: Sage publications, 2002), pp. 21-39, p. 23.

<sup>239</sup> Carter Vaughn Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>240</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Religion in Modern Turkey”, p. 283.

<sup>241</sup> Article 17 of the Kanun-i Esasi, available online at <http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Ottomanconstitution1876.htm>

<sup>242</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism & Islamism*, p. 19.

resentment led to an increasing national awakening.<sup>243</sup> As a result, and in an ironic turn, they did not prevent secessionist movements among non-Muslims but rather led to increasing resentment among the Muslim population.<sup>244</sup> With the empire's significant territorial losses during the Balkan Wars, further losses to the European states following World War I, and the subsequent migration and exit of many peoples, the Ottoman territories became confined mainly to Anatolia. During the First and Second Balkan wars (1912, 1912-1913) 83 percent of Ottoman lands in Europe, together with 69 percent of the population, was lost,<sup>245</sup> and in addition to the territorial loss, the mass migration of Muslims to Anatolia from former territories of the Ottoman Empire led to a dramatic increase in the Muslim population in Anatolia. By 1918, Muslims constituted 80 percent of the population in the region, rising to 98 percent following the War of Independence.<sup>246</sup>

### **3.1.3. Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism**

In this political and demographical situation, by the time of the establishment of the Republic, various ideologies related to national identity had emerged, the most important of which were sources of identity were Ottomanism, Islamism and Pan-Turkism.<sup>247</sup> After the establishment of the state, political discussions continued to focus on those different ideologies, with most discussions aimed at determining the ideological boundaries related to identity during the latter years of the Ottoman Empire. Although there were differences between those ideas, the point of focus was the question of how to secure the survival of the empire, with all ideologies designed by intellectuals and the state elite in the name of the survival of the empire.

The Ottoman state was homogenous neither in language, ethnicity or religion, and the empire was home to many different ethnic groups, including Arabs, Kurds,

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>244</sup> Şener Akturk, "Religion and Nationalism: Contradictions of Islamic Origins and Secular Nation-Building in Turkey, Algeria, and Pakistan", *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 96, No. 3, 2015, pp. 788-806, p. 788.

<sup>245</sup> Elisabeth Özdalga, *The Veiling Issue, Official Secularism and Popular Islam in Modern Turkey*, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>246</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 171-173.

<sup>247</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p. 44.

Laz, Vlachs, Greeks, Albanians, Cherkess and Bulgarians.<sup>248</sup> In all of these cases, religion constituted a crucial component, and the Ottoman reformers, hoping to maintain the integrity of the Empire, attempted to bolster the concept of Ottomanism, based on the acceptance of all religious and ethnic groups as Ottoman citizens.<sup>249</sup> However, with the demographic changes that resulted from the loss of the Christian-populated territories in the wars of the 19th century and the rising independence movements, Sultan Abdulhamid II (1842-1918) turned to Islamist ideologies to keep society together.<sup>250</sup> After the wars and the loss of territories, Anatolia became mostly Muslim, leading Abdulhamid II to emphasize the rule of the Ottoman Dynasty as protector of all Islamic populations. For him, pan-Islamism was necessary to unite all Muslims under his caliphate, however the ideology failed to bring unity to all Muslims around the Sultan-Caliph, and his inability to achieve his aim resulted in the further decay of the empire. The failure of Pan-Islamism,<sup>251</sup> led the Young Turks and other intellectuals to emphasize the Turkish identity to overcome the failure of Ottomanism and Islamism to prevent the dissolution of the empire.<sup>252</sup> The movement especially gained impetus from the Constitutional Revolution of 1908,<sup>253</sup> and they started to emphasize the Turkish identity and Turkishness, bringing the Turks and Muslims of Anatolia under their wing.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Religion in Modern Turkey”, p. 284.

<sup>249</sup> David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908*, (Routledge, 1977) see also, Roderic Davison, “Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem and the Ottoman Response”, in William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald (eds.), *A Non-National State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979).

<sup>250</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, “Turkism and Young Turks: 1889-1908”, in Hans Lukas Kieser (ed.), *Turkey beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, (New York: I. B Tauris, 1988), p. 7.

<sup>251</sup> Haldun Gülalp, “Using Islam as Political Ideology: Turkey in Historical Perspective”, p. 27.

<sup>252</sup> Levent Ürer, “Nationalism in Turkey, *International Journal of Turcologia*, Vol. 4, No. 7, 2009, pp. 48-59, p. 51.

<sup>253</sup> Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is Turk?* (USA& Canada: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

To conclude, the emergence of Turkish nationalism occurred well before the establishment of the Republic,<sup>255</sup> and can be traced back to two specific developments. In the words of Ergil:

On the one hand, battles with insurgent nationalities encouraged a sense of cohesion among the remaining peoples and territories. On the other hand, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ottoman Empire was reduced to mainly Turks and other Muslims.<sup>256</sup>

Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) and Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935), both of whom are regarded as prominent intellectuals, worked towards Turkish nationalism, and saw religion as a unifying factor for society. To illustrate, Gökalp considered religion to be a key element in the national identity, but his understanding of Islam was “modernist”.<sup>257</sup> Similarly, Akçura also did not see nationalism as a replacement for religion, but believed that Islam and Turkish nationalism could enhance one another.<sup>258</sup> Akçura and Gökalp interpreted the necessity of the religious component in the Turkish national identity for various reasons, including social cohesion. Abdullah Cevdet, Ali Ağaoğlu, Yusuf Akçura, Ziya Gökalp and many other intellectuals believed that nationalism was compatible with Islam, and thought that nationalism and Islam could strengthen each other. In this regard, they believed that Islam should be used to promote the interests of the nation state.<sup>259</sup> The discussion with regards to the place of religion in national identity were not unique to the Turkish Republic, as similar debates had been common in the latter years of the Ottoman Empire as state was confronted with defeats, territorial loses and demographic changes.

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<sup>255</sup> Gabe Ignatow, “National Identity and the Informational State: Turkey and Malaysia compared”, *The Information Society*, Vol. 27, No. 158, 2011, p. 163.

<sup>256</sup> Doğu Ergil, “Identity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2000, pp. 43-62, p. 54.

<sup>257</sup> Gökhan Çetinsaya, “Rethinking Nationalism and Islam: Some Preliminary Notes on the Roots of ‘Turkish-Islamic Synthesis’ in Modern Turkish Political Thought”, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 89, No. 3-4, 1999, pp. 350-376, p. 354.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>259</sup> Tamer Balcı, “From Nationalization of Islam to Privatization of Nationalism: Islam and Turkish National Identity”, *History Studies: International Journal of History*, Vol. 1, No.1 2009, pp. 82-107, p. 84.

### 3.1.4. The War of Independence

The War of Independence was waged in response to the Western forces' occupation and dismemberment of Anatolia following the Sevres Treaty of 1920, which had proposed the division of Anatolia among a number of European powers. The war was fought under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1919, and the victory in the War of Independence resulted in the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, and the legitimization of the new state in 1923, with recognition of its sovereignty and national self-determination.

During the War of Independence (1919-1922), Islam continued to be a component of Turkishness for the political elite and intellectual circles. Prominent nationalist intellectuals used Islamist discourse to bolster its legitimacy and to unify religious leaders, the peasantry and Anatolian notables.<sup>260</sup> The 1920 *Misak-Milli*, which was the first national pact, was a significant document since in its explanation of the aims of the War of Independence and its definition of the boundaries of the state. In this pact, the definition of the nation was based on a religious, cultural and geographical unit, and the pact even referenced Ottoman Muslims rather than Turkish people.<sup>261</sup> The prominent political elite, working with Atatürk, gave importance to religion in mobilizing the people for the War of Independence. Furthermore, Muslims who form one nation or "all Islamic elements of the population" were referred to in the founding charters of the Erzurum and Sivas Conferences, together with references to Kurds alongside Turks.<sup>262</sup> One can argue that most of the people who had fought against the foreign powers did not think that they had been fighting for a secular nation state, believing rather that they fought for the sake of the empire, and even the Caliphate. Atatürk claims that the mobilization

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<sup>260</sup> Dow Waxman, "Islam and Turkish National Identity: A Reappraisal", *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, Vol. 30, 2000, pp. 1-22, p. 9.

<sup>261</sup> Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey* (California: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 91.

<sup>262</sup> Yavuz, 45. Erik J. Zürcher, *Savaş, Devrim ve Uluslaşma: Türkiye Tarihinde Geçiş Dönemi (1908-1928) (War, Revolution, and Nationalization: Period of Transition in the History of Turkey (1908-1928))* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005), 231 in Sinem Gurbey, "Islam, Nation-State, and Military: A Discussion of Secularism in Turkey," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Volume 29, Number 3, (2009), 371-380, p. 374.

for independence was Islamic in the case of Turkey, and went on to claim that the cadres that brought independence were entirely Muslim, and that the discourse used to legitimize the independence movement was overwhelmingly Islamic.<sup>263</sup> Moreover, Aktürk paid attention to the composition of the new Parliament, which had been opened in April in 1920 in Ankara.<sup>264</sup> At that time when non-Muslims constituted one-tenth of the population, there were no non-Muslim among the 337 members of the Parliament, and 77 of the deputies were religious notables.<sup>265</sup> In the words of Yavuz, “It was not a ‘Turkish’ war of liberation, as claimed in the official historiography, but rather a war of ‘Muslim elements’ to free the caliphate from the occupation.”<sup>266</sup> Even people with nationalist consciences emphasized religion during the War of Independence. To illustrate, following the fatwa issued by *Şeyhülislam*, who labeled nationalists as rebels, the nationalist side reacted with a fatwa of its own *muftis* in Ankara against the fatwa issued by Seyhülislam. Furthermore, it is also said that the secular founders of the Republic cooperated with religious leaders in the name of protecting the Caliphate during the War of Independence.<sup>267</sup> As Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said during the opening speech of the Grand National Assembly in April 1920:

It should not be assumed that there is only one kind of nation from communities of Islam inside these borders. Within these borders, there are Turks. There are the Çerkes; as well as other Muslim communities.<sup>268</sup>

Atatürk’s statement here demonstrates that religion was not disregarded by the secular founders of the Republic of Turkey from the beginning. He recognized the

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<sup>263</sup> Şener Aktürk, “Religion and Nationalism: Contradictions of Islamic Origins and Secular Nation-Building in Turkey, Algeria, and Pakistan”, p. 789.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 789.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 789.

<sup>266</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p. 45.

<sup>267</sup> Metin Toprak, Nasuh Uslu, and Murat Yılmaz, “Public Perceptions of Radical Islam: Democratic Consolidation vs Secular Fundamentalism”, *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2011, p. 204.

<sup>268</sup> Mustafa Kemal, “Mütarekeden Meclisin Açılışına Kadar Geçen Olaylar”, in *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1945), p. 28, cited in M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 45.

existence of Muslim people in the country, and this emphasis on religion can be seen in his various speeches at that time.

### **3.2. THE STATE FORMATIVE YEARS AND SECULAR REFORMS OF EARLY REPUBLIC**

The newly established Turkish Republic, as in the case of other nation states that evolved from empires, attempted to distance itself from the Ottoman legacy, implementing various reforms to release itself from the economic, political and social burdens of the Ottoman Empire in an attempt to create a modern and secular nation state. The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed in 1923 and a number of economic, political and cultural changes were made. From the formation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 to the beginning of the multi-party politics in 1945, Turkey was ruled by a single party regime – the RPP (Republican People’s Party) <sup>269</sup>, which was led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk until his death in 1938. One of the aims of the new state was to launch a Westernization project that brought changes both at a state level and societal level, and the state subsequently reconstructed the existing political and ideological structures through various reforms. In his role as president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk attempted to create a secular nation state and a Westernized society, and the development of the country and the transformation of society were planned in accordance with the model of developed Western nations. In this sense, the founders incorporated new ideas adopted from the West into the existing political and ideological structures, and as a result of the perceptions and the ideological environment from which the new state was born, a national identity was formed, transforming the Ottoman Muslims into the Turkish nation. Kasaba and Bozdoğan argue that one of the main motivations of the leaders of new regime was to implement a comprehensive program aimed at creating an ethnically homogenous population.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923-1945*, p. 1.

<sup>270</sup> Reşat Kasaba and Sibel Bozdoğan, “Turkey at a Crossroad”, *Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 54, No. 1, p. 2.



Debates related to the place of religion in the national identity and also in the public sphere, continued during the state-building period, and the results were twofold. First, as Saygın and Önal argue, the founding elite of the Republic regarded Islam as a cause for a backward society and state;<sup>271</sup> and the founders of the Republic, who embraced this view, believed that the Ottoman Empire had collapsed because of the dominance of the religion, both in the political sphere and also in society. Second, religion was regarded as necessary for the creation of a united homogenous society and social cohesion.

A number of reforms were implemented after the establishment of the Republic. The Sultanate (November 1, 1922) was abolished, together with the Caliphate (March 3, 1924), and the Sharia personal status law was replaced with the European civil code.<sup>272</sup> In addition, Sharia courts and religious madrasas were abolished, and secular models from Europe were adopted by the state. The Arabic alphabet was replaced with the Latin alphabet, and in schools, education reforms played a crucial role in construction of national identity. The authority of the *Ulama* was abolished and religious education was brought under the umbrella of the state. In addition to these changes, the Presidency of Religious Affairs was established following the abolition of *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* (Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations) in 1924, and the training and appointment of religious officials such as *imams* were brought under the control of the state on March 3, 1924.

Sun Language Theory and Turkish Historical Thesis conferences were held to educate people about the history of the Turkish people. The project of Turkish History Thesis was extensive and was implemented to reveal “scientifically” the origins of the Turkish people,<sup>273</sup> emphasizing the connection between Turkish people and the ancient Sumerians and Hittites. Turkish Sun Language Theory, on the other

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<sup>271</sup> Tuncay Saygın and Mehmet Önal, “Secularism From the last Years of the Ottoman Empire to the Early Turkish Republic”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 20, No. 7, 2008, p. 29.

<sup>272</sup> Ahmet Kuru, “Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion”, *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No.4, 2007, pp.568-94.

<sup>273</sup> Yeşim Bayar, “The Dynamic Nature of Educational Policies and Turkish Nation- Building: Where Does Religion Fit in?”, in Berna Turam (ed.), *Secular State and Religious Society: Two Forces in Play in Turkey*, (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 30.

hand, suggested that all languages in the world derived from the original Turkish that had been spoken in Central Asia.<sup>274</sup> Those efforts were supported to legitimize the existence of the new state and the rights of the Turkish People as the historical inhabitants of Anatolia. According to these theories, Anatolia was the historical homeland of the Turkish people, and the suggestions they put forward were integrated into school books.<sup>275</sup>

The founding elite chose not to exclude religion, since they knew that it played a crucial role in the unification of various ethnicities and national communities as a common denominator. Indeed, the state elite sought to eliminate the political use of religion. The Sheik Said Rebellion<sup>276</sup> in Turkey represented a crucial turning point in government policy. After the Sheik Said Rebellion and the *Menemen* Incident, the political elite became determined to prevent any legacy of religion aside from the official ideology with regards to religion. To achieve this aim, the state abolished all *Tarikats* and enacted a new law in 1925 called *Takrir- i Sükun Kanunu* (The Law for the Maintenance of Order), and indeed, the state attempted to promote a true version of religion rather than an elimination of Islam. For this reason, Article 163 of the Turkish Penal code in the Constitution declared that Islam couldn't be used against state interests, aiming to prevent religious challenges to the existing secular structure of the state, and this served as the legal backbone for the prevention of any political use of religion.<sup>277</sup>

A series of reforms were launched to distance the new state from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, although policies related to religion resembled those in place in the Ottoman era. For instance, *Şeyhülislam* was the head of clergy in the Ottoman Empire – a position that was incorporated to the state administration and appointed

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<sup>274</sup> Haldun Gülalp, “Using Islam as Political Ideology: Turkey in Historical Perspective”, p. 29.

<sup>275</sup> Etienne Copeaux, *Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk İslam Sentezine*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), pp. 39-53.

<sup>276</sup> The revolt was led by *Şeyh Said* in *Diyarbakır* in 1925. The nature of this revolt is contested since the scholars did not agree on the source of the motivation behind the rebellion of *Şeyh Said*. Some scholars claim that the revolt was carried out because of religious motivations and some scholars state that it was Kurdish nationalist revolt.

<sup>277</sup> Binnaz Toprak, “The Religious Right,” in Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury, and Mary C. Wilson (eds.), *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, (California: University of California Press, 1993), p. 632.

by the head of the state; while in the new Republic, the Presidency of Religious Affairs is attached to the state bureaucracy, and its head is appointed by the President.<sup>278</sup>

In 1924, one year after the establishment of the Republic, the Turkish Constitution was promulgated by the General National Assembly. In the second article, the official religion of the state was declared to be Islam, however the article, which declares “the religion of Turkish state is Islam”, was abolished in 1928. Even though the principle of secularism was first adopted by the RPP in 1931 as one of its six guiding principles, and was incorporated into the constitution in 1937, a year prior to the death of Atatürk. The principle of secularism was also incorporated into the later Constitutions such as those of 1961 and 1982, and it was in the latter constitution that *laicite* became an unchangeable principle of the Constitution.<sup>279</sup> As mentioned above, these reforms were not aimed at excluding religion. Even though the new state elite sought to destroy the Ottoman legacy by eliminating traditional laws and institutions, they still incorporated religion into the state apparatus.

The issue of secularism has been much a contested issue in the case of Turkey,<sup>280</sup> having been used by the state to create a modern nation state, and in some sense it functioned as a means of eliminating the Ottoman legacy.<sup>281</sup> The aim of Turkish secularism was not to eliminate or exclude religion, but rather to reform it and make it compatible with the idea of the modern nation state.<sup>282</sup> Mustafa Kemal

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<sup>278</sup> Recep Şentürk, “State and Religion in Turkey: Which Secularism?”, p. 333.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>280</sup> In literature concerning the relationship between the state and religion in the Republic of Turkey, secularism and laicism are two terms that are used interchangeably. Niyazi Berkes, however, made a separation between them. For Berkes, secularism is more explanatory for non-Christian societies than the term laicism and the conflict in secularism is between the forces of tradition and change. However, laicism has narrower meaning, referring mostly to a strict separation between the state and religion. This study argues that there is no strict separation between the state and religion in Turkey. Therefore, the term secularism is used throughout this study. Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p.6.

<sup>281</sup> Sena Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey: Kemalism, Modernism, and the Revolt of the Islamist Intellectuals*, (New York & London: I.B Tauris, 2009), pp. 10-39.

<sup>282</sup> Bülent Daver, “Secularism in Turkey,” *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, Vol. 43, No. 1 1988, p. 29.

himself was not against religion per se, seeking instead to construct a progressive Islam for the interest of the nation state and its economic development.<sup>283</sup> The policies of the state elite reveal that they far from excluded religion, emphasizing rather that religion was to be a part of the private conscience rather than something to be used for political benefit. For instance, during his speech in 1927, Atatürk stated: “The faith of Islam should be *purified* and *raised* from the political situation in which it has been put for centuries.”<sup>284</sup> It should be noted that until 1928, Islam served as the state religion, but even after it lost that official status, the principle of secularism was only integrated into the Constitution in 1937. All of the deputies, a total of 321, voted openly for the enactment of the principle of secularism in the Constitution,<sup>285</sup> and İsmet İnönü explained the motivation behind the adoption of the principle of secularism as the need to prevent the abuse of religion by political powers in the speech he made in 1937.<sup>286</sup> Article 2 of the current Constitution (Constitution of 1980) states in the state’s founding principles: “The Republic of Turkey is ... secular state”, and Article 4 bans any proposal for its revision.

During the early years of the Republic, the need to reform Islam was also being discussed among intellectuals,<sup>287</sup> and a committee of experts from Istanbul University Theological Faculty gathered to discuss the reform of Islam under the leadership of historian Mehmet Fuat Köprülü and educator İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu.<sup>288</sup> The reform proposal included the nationalization of religion, and the final section of the report of the committee included proposals such as the need to use the Turkish language in religious rituals, the use of musical instruments and

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<sup>283</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p. 49.

<sup>284</sup> Andrew Davison and Taha Parla, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 14, cited in Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and Nation State*, (New York& London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

<sup>285</sup> Turkey, T.B.M.M. Deb., 16 (5 Nov. 1937): 61, cited in Tolga Köker, “The Establishment of Kemalist Secularism in Turkey”, *Middle East Law and Governance*, Vol. 2, 2010, pp. 17-42, p. 38.

<sup>286</sup> İştâr Gözaydın, *Religion, Politics and the Politics of Religion in Turkey*, (Berlin: The Liberal Institute, 2013), p. 19.

<sup>287</sup> Elisabeth Özdalga, *The Veiling Issue, Official Secularism and Popular Islam in Modern Turkey*, p. 21.

<sup>288</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p. 50.

having desks in mosques.<sup>289</sup> Even though the report of the committee did not become official, it is still significant, since it reflects the discussions that took place in regards to the reform or nationalization of Islam.

Even though the new state aimed to eliminate the Ottoman legacy, many policies of the state founding elite still relied on the Ottoman state tradition. As stated above, the Ottoman Empire overcame the diversity of its population by dividing them into *millets* – a system based on the religious affiliations of communities rather than ethnicity or culture. The population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey that was launched in 1924 is evidence of this continuity,<sup>290</sup> being based on the religious identity of the population rather than their ethnic or national identity. In fact, religion played a prominent role in the process of decision making with respect to the question of ‘who should go or who should stay’.

In the case of Turkey, religion was not seen as a rival to the ideology of nationalism, but was regarded rather as a contributor to the development of Turkish nationalism. Various reforms were implemented aimed at to purifying Islam and making it compatible with the Westernization efforts of state. Speaking in İzmir in 1923, Atatürk said:

Our religion is most reasonable and most natural religion, and it is precisely for this reason that it has been the last religion. In order for a religion to be natural, it should conform to reason, technology, science, and logic. Our religion is totally compatible with these.<sup>291</sup>

In fact, nationalism was not free of religious elements, and the founders of the Republic attempted to create a Turkified version of Islam, influenced especially by the ideas of Ziya Gökalp who emphasized the pivotal role of religion in contributing

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<sup>289</sup> İsmail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi II*, (İstanbul: Risale Yayınları, 1987), pp. 495-499 cited in Tamer Balcı, “Nationalization of Islam to Privatization of Nationalism”, *History Studies: International Journal of History*, Vol. 1, No.1, 2009, pp. 82- 107, p. 89.

<sup>291</sup> Andrew Davison and Taha Parla, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 10, cited in Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and Nation State*, (New York& London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 14.

to social cohesion.<sup>292</sup> The idea of a Turkified version of Islam grew in popularity with the support of many other prominent intellectuals, such as Yusuf Akçura and Ali Ağaoğlu. For them, religion was an inevitable component that would strengthen Turkishness in Turkey among the various ethnic populations. In this context, in order to strengthen the arguments of this thesis, the reform of Islam, the Turkified Friday Sermons and the *ezan* in Turkish, as well as the population exchange between Turkey and Greece, will be discussed. The study will show that as those cases suggest, Islam did not lose importance, even during the state-building period, in that the status of religion in the newly emergent nation state was crucial. Rather than being eliminated or excluded, it continued to be part of Turkishness. In other words, through various policies, religion was legitimized to define the boundaries of national identity.

### **3.2.1. Call to Prayer in Turkish**

In 1932, the Turkish state promulgated a law that demanded the *ezan* call to prayer be recited in Turkish rather than Arabic, as announced in the *Cumhuriyet*, daily newspaper, in March 1933.<sup>293</sup> The *ezan* was recited in Turkish for the first time by Hafız Fırat in the Fatih Mosque on January 30, 1932, after which the Presidency of Religious Affairs sent an edict to all mosques on July 18, 1932, stating that the Turkish *ezan* was obligatory. In 1941, an amendment was made to Enactment Law no: 4055, stating that those who recited the *ezan* in Arabic would be punished,<sup>294</sup> and this law remained in place until the RPP was replaced by the DP (Democrat Party), who lifted the ban. The *ezan* continued to be recited in Turkish until June 16, 1950 when an assembly modified the law that had abolished the *ezan* in Turkish.

For most scholars, the reason behind this important reform was part of efforts to eliminate all Arabic elements from Turkish culture. In their efforts to create national unity, the political elites gave significant importance to language reform. Various campaigns were launched by the state to achieve this goal, such as the

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<sup>292</sup> Paul Dumont, "The Origins of Kemalist Ideology," in Jacob M. Landau (ed.), *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, (Boulder: Co. Westview Press, 1984), p. 29.

<sup>293</sup> Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and Nation State*, p. 167.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş* campaign (Citizen, Speak Turkish!), although interpreting this reform only as an issue of language policy prevents a clear understanding the complexity of the matter. The political elite aimed to promote Turkish and eradicate the public visibility of non-Turkish languages within the public sphere, as one of the key initiatives of the Turkification efforts.<sup>295</sup> Senem Aslan remarked upon the dilemma related to this campaign:

Why did the “Citizen Speak Turkish” campaign turn mainly against non-Muslims, and specifically against the Jews, even though the Turkish language was not the native language of 1.6 million Muslims at the time? The national newspapers did not report any violent events between Turkish speaking and non-Turkish speaking Muslim groups. This is surprising since a considerable number of non-Turkish speaking Muslims lived in the cities where the campaign was effective. This finding supports a well-known paradox within the definition of “Turkishness”. As many studies on Turkish nationalism indicate, “Turkishness” came to be determined first and foremost by Muslim identity despite the fact that one of the main pillars of Kemalist ideology was secularism.<sup>296</sup>

It would be fair to say that the main motivation in this regard was the elimination of Arabic influence and tradition, clearing the way for the expansion of national Islam all over the country, reflecting the desire of the state-building elite to nationalize Islam.<sup>297</sup> In short, the nationalist agenda was not created at the expense of Islam, and the nationalist discourse even incorporated religious words into the nationalist lexicon, including *millet*, *vatan* (homeland), *gazi* (the title of Mustafa Kemal, referring to those who fought for Islam) and *şehit* (martyrs who died while protecting Islam), all of which contributed to the nationalization of Islamic identity.<sup>298</sup> The

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<sup>295</sup> Senem Aslan, “Citizen Speak Turkish!:A Nation in the Making,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 13, No.2, 2007, pp. 245-272, p. 258.

<sup>296</sup>Ibid., p. 258. Senem Aslan also remarked upon the impacts of economic advancement, social status and political power on the language movement, arguing that the campaign was an important attempt to mobilize for the emergence of a Muslim-Turkish bourgeoisie by curbing the economic power of non-Muslims.

<sup>297</sup> For discussions of Nationalism of Islam see Bülent Aras and Kemal Kirişçi, “Four Questions on Recent Turkish Politics and Foreign Policy”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1998.

<sup>298</sup> M.Hakan Yavuz, “Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2000, pp. 21-42, p. 23.

reform of the *ezan* reveals the intention of the founding elite to nationalize religion and make it compatible with the nationalism and the principle of secularism. Turkish nationalism did not grow out of a need to fill the vacuum that stemmed from the disappearance of religion; rather the reciting of the *ezan* in Turkish serves as a clear indication of the motivation of the state elite to have Islam contribute to nationalism.

The first mention of the reform to the language of the *ezan* dates back to the Tanzimat era, when a Turkish writer, Ali Suavi (1839-1878), defended the use of Turkish in the call to prayer.<sup>299</sup> Suavi claimed that the Friday sermons and *ezan* should be recited in Turkish, and other national intellectual figures, such as Ziya Gökalp, supported the use of Turkish in religious rituals. In his book *Principles of Turkism*, he proposed a nationalized version of Islam, claiming that the use of Arabic in religious rituals prevented people from understanding the “real” Islam. He drew attention to *Imam-ı Azam* who mentions the possibility of using national languages during worship. Before the establishment of the Republic, the Young Turks attempted to nationalize and reform Islam, and they were followed by the state building elite.

During the War of Independence, while the Friday sermon, which mentioned the Prophet and caliphs, was in Arabic, Turkish was used in sermons for national propaganda. Prior to the ban on the call to prayer in Arabic, a number of changes were made with regards to the content of the sermons. To illustrate, the part of the sermon, referring to the Caliph was abolished in 1924, while the Turkish parts of the sermon spoke about the “exultation of the new government, the Grand Assembly and the principle of integral sovereignty of the nation”.<sup>300</sup> In this way, the national movement was legitimized in the eyes of the people.<sup>301</sup> In 1923, Mustafa Kemal stated the requirement or significance of the Turkish language in religious rituals:

The style of current sermons does not fit our nation’s feelings, ideas and language as well as the needs of the

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<sup>299</sup> Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and Nation State*, (New York & London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, p. 47.

<sup>300</sup> Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and Nation State*, p. 166.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.



civilization. In case you read the sermons of our Prophet and rightly guided caliphs, you will see that all these are about daily matters related with military, administrative, fiscal and political issues...Sermons were recited in a language which was not understood by the people...Therefore Sermons should be and will be totally in Turkish and suitable to the requirements of the day.<sup>302</sup>

To conclude, the reciting of the *ezan* and the Friday Sermons in Turkish and the Turkified Friday sermons support the argument put forward in this thesis that claims that the state elite attempted to redefine and reform Islam as part of their nation state-building efforts. Yavuz states: “Islam has been reinterpreted and reincorporated gradually and subtly into official Turkish nationalism. This process can be seen as Islamization of Turkish nationalism, but also as the Turkification of the Islamic tradition”.<sup>303</sup>

### **3.2.2. Immigration and Population Exchange**

As mentioned above, despite the state’s secularist reforms and strict ideas about the place of religion in the new Republic in the formative years of the state, the status of religion was still important, and Islam played a crucial role in defining Turkishness. With the multi- religious and multi-cultural population inherited from the Ottoman Empire, the elite in the Turkish Republic had an urgent need to define and construct a national identity, and in this sense, the boundaries of national identity were critical for the Republican elite. Even though the official interpretation claims that the founding elite were attempting to create a civic definition of identity, the ethno-religious component of the Turkish identity was obvious in the policies of the state. The underlying issue in these migration debates was indeed related to the proper status of religion and the place of Islamic symbols and identification in the formulation of the boundaries to national identity and unity.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>303</sup> M.Hakan Yavuz, “Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo- Ottomanism”, *Critique: Journal for Critical Studies of the Middle East*, Vol. 7, No. 12, pp. 19-41, Spring 1998, p. 30.

<sup>304</sup> Lejla Voloder, “Secular Citizenship and Muslim Belonging in Turkey: Migrant Perspective”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 5, 2013, pp. 838-856, p. 838.

To construct homogenous populations, states use various strategies, and as a result, minorities were confronted with fearful conditions, as Hannah Arendt claims that minorities were considered as “excess” or as residues of nationalism and the nation states.<sup>305</sup> After the world war, the strategies to overcome the problems related with minorities increased dramatically because of the rise of nation states.

A 1924 agreement between Turkey and Greece known as the Population Exchange was a clear illustration of the persistence of religion in the efforts of the founding elite to define a national identity.<sup>306</sup> In this context, the creation of a unified national identity did not depend upon shared ideological virtues, but rather on cultural and religious belonging.<sup>307</sup> The government gave priority to people who were able to assimilate culturally and linguistically into the Turkish culture, further alienating the non-Muslims whose citizenship was regarded as problematic.<sup>308</sup> Religion was taken as the main criterion in the population exchange, which was finalized with a Convention signed at the Lausanne Conference on January 30, 1923. The 1923 Lausanne Treaty played a crucial role in the construction of a homogenous population in both states by identifying the ethnic minorities in each country.<sup>309</sup> The treaty proposed that “there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of

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<sup>305</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966) cited in Biray Kolluoğlu, “Excess of Nationalism: Greco-Turkish Population Exchange,” *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 19, No.3, 2013, pp. 532-534, p. 534.

<sup>306</sup> Erik Jan- Zürcher states that: “The idea of exchanging the Greeks of Asia Minor against Muslims living in Greece was first broached by the Norwegian Fritjof Nansen( 1861-1930), who had been the League of Nations’ High Commissioner for refugees since 1919. It was quickly taken up by the Greek government.” Erik-Jan Zürcher, “Greek and Turkish Refugees and Deportees 1912-1924”, *Turkology Update Leiden Project Working Papers Archive*, (Department of Turkish Studies: Universiteit Leiden, 2003), pp. 3-4.

It is worth to saying that both Turkey and Greece agreed upon the population exchange agreement, although while it would be fair to say that it was a demand of Greece, the Republic of Turkey used the agreement for its own benefit.

<sup>307</sup> Ahmet İçduygu, Yılmaz Çolak and Nalan Soyarık, “What’s the matter with Citizenship? A Turkish Debate”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1999, pp. 187-208, p. 195.

<sup>308</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2000, pp. 1-22.

<sup>309</sup> Bryan S. Tuner and Berna Zengin Aslan, “Legal Pluralism and the Shari’a: A Comparison of Greece and Turkey”, *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 62, No. 3, 2014, pp. 439-456, p. 446.

Greek nationals of the Muslim religion established in Greek territory”.<sup>310</sup> Prior to the population exchange, the immigration policies that were adopted by the state also revealed the importance of religion in the national identity. As Voloder argues, the Turkish government gave preference to Muslim immigrants who could be easily assimilated into the Turkish culture over Non- Muslims.<sup>311</sup>

In the population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey, the decision making process to determine the future of national identities was based on religious affiliations rather than ethnicity or language.<sup>312</sup> To illustrate, Karamanlis spoke Turkish, but were Greek Orthodox Christians. The question was raised as to whether they should migrate to Greece under the population exchange agreement by virtue of their religious affiliation, or if should they remain in Turkey due to their language affiliation. Not surprisingly, such cases were forced to immigrate to Greece.<sup>313</sup> Or what would be destiny of the Cham Albanians who spoke Greek but were Muslims? What happened in practice shows that it was religious identity that played the determining role rather than ethnic or linguistic affiliation. In other words, the significance of religion was clearly apparent in this agreement, in that Turkish speaking Christians were not welcomed in Turkey, while Greek-speaking Muslims were. Article 4 of the Law of Settlement stated that “only those who belong to Turkish ethnicity and culture” would be permitted to settle, which included Albanians, Bosnians and Pomaks Muslims; however the Gagauz Turks of Moldova were not permitted to settle, being Orthodox Christians.<sup>314</sup> Ali Haydar, a prominent

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<sup>310</sup> Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact upon Greece*, (Paris: Mouton, 1964), cited in appendix I in Kristin Fabbe, “Historical Legacies, Modern Conflicts: State Consolidation and Religious Pluralism in Greece and Turkey”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2013, pp. 435-453, p. 437.

<sup>311</sup>Lejla Voloder, “Secular Citizenship and Muslim Belonging in Turkey: Migrant Perspective”, p. 842.

<sup>312</sup> Dow Waxman, “Islam and Turkish National Identity: A Reappraisal”, p. 10

<sup>313</sup> Tanıl Bora, “Ekalliyet Yılanları: Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Azınlıklar,” in Tanıl Bora (ed.), *Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2002), pp. 911-918.

<sup>314</sup> Dow Waxman, “Islam and Turkish National Identity: A Reappraisal”, p. 10.

adherent of Turkish nationalism, wrote in 1926: "...it's impossible to make non-Muslims sincere Turkish citizens".<sup>315</sup>

At that time, one particular boundary of national identity was clear: being Muslim was a crucial component of Turkishness. The state engaged in a nation-building process aimed at the creation of a homogenized Western-oriented society. The elimination of non-Muslims and their exclusion from the boundaries of the imagined national community was clearly reflected in the population exchanges, and in the end, approximately 2 million Greek Orthodox and Muslim people were forced to migrate as a result of the Lausanne Convention.

Some of the applied economic policies in Turkey also discriminated against non-Muslim minorities during the state-building period. For instance, a capital tax (*varlık vergisi*) that was imposed by the Turkish government in 1942 was also discriminatory, with non-Muslims in Istanbul having to pay 10 times more than Muslims.<sup>316</sup> In short, religion was main the criterion in determining how much tax a person had to pay.<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, the collecting of capital tax is further evidence of the fact that religion constituted an important component of the Turkish identity, even after the formation of the Republic.

Understanding the population exchange in 1924 necessitates an understanding also of the Ottoman context. The Ottoman Empire had started to address the immigration problem as far back as the 18th and 19th centuries. After losing such territories as Crimea and others in the Balkans, many Muslims took the decision to migrate to Anatolia, and with the policies adopted by the Young Turks, resulted in the Muslimization of Anatolia.<sup>318</sup> Prior to the establishment of the Republic, there had been many agreements signed between the Ottoman Empire and Greece and Bulgaria, although as a result of the outbreak of the war, the agreements never

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid., p.10, cited in M. Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism", p. 26.

<sup>316</sup> See Faik Ökte, *The Tragedy of the Turkish Capital Tax*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

<sup>317</sup> Dow Waxman, "Islam and Turkish National Identity: A Reappraisal", p. 11.

<sup>318</sup> Biray Kolluoğlu, "Excess of Nationalism: Greco-Turkish Population Exchange," *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2013, pp. 532-550, p. 536.

implemented. That said, many Greeks had already left the country before 1924, and so any evaluation of the population exchange should be made from a historical perspective. The agreement between Greece and Turkey constituted another step in the creation of a homogenous population.<sup>319</sup> In 1906, Muslims constituted over 80 percent of the population (15 million at that time), but by 1927, only 2.6 percent of the 13.6 million people were non-Muslims.<sup>320</sup> Although there are different estimations regarding the number of people involved, it can be said that between 400,000 and 500,000 Muslims migrated to Turkey and around 1,500,000 Greeks migrated to Greece.<sup>321</sup>

In 1936, the Turkish Republic signed an immigration agreement with Romania, giving the Muslim-Turkish population residing in Dobrudja permission to come to Turkey. The agreement excluded Greek- Orthodox Gagauz Turks. It can thus be said that 12 years after the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange agreement, Turkey once again saw Islam as a prerequisite for Turkishness.<sup>322</sup>

### **3.3. INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT OF STATE-RELIGION RELATIONSHIP: THE CASE OF THE PRESIDENCY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

Understanding the issue of Turkish secularism demands an analysis of a particular governmental organization – the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), which was established by law in 1924, and attached to the office of the Prime Ministry. The law dated March 3, 1924 No: 429 brought all religious representatives under the authority of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, and abolished the Ministries of *Şer'iyye* (Religious Affairs) and *Evkaf* (Pious

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., p. 536.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., p. 539.

<sup>321</sup> See R. Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); K. Arı, "1923 Türk Rum Mübadele Anlaşması Sonrasında İzmir'de Emval-i Metruke ve Mübadil Göçmenler", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, Vol. 1, No. 18, 1990, pp. 627-657, cited in Biray Kolluoğlu, "Excess of Nationalism: Greco- Turkish Population Exchange," p. 539.

<sup>322</sup> Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is Turk?*, p. 83.

Foundations).<sup>323</sup> The main responsibility of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, as specified in the 1924 Constitution, was “to direct all requirements and implications concerning beliefs and prayers of the religion of Islam and was to run religious establishments.”<sup>324</sup> In the Republic of Turkey, the organizational link between the state and religious institutions maintained with the creation of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which was brought directly under the prime minister.<sup>325</sup> Today, the institution has a broad range of duties, such as implementing a wide range of services related to the religious sphere; appointing *imams* and *muftis*; organizing of pilgrimages; the administration of mosques; and the issuing *fatwas* related to religious subjects.<sup>326</sup> The institution also organizes Quranic schools and implements *fatwa* services based on the Sunni interpretation of Islam, providing references to the *Quran* and *Hadiths*. While the institution has undergone changes in its history, the scope of its responsibilities and also the budget provided by state has increased over time. By being attached directly to the office of the Prime Minister, the state’s preference for Sunni Islam over other religions and sects is all too apparent, although this choice of the state was much reflected in the policies of the state-founding elite with regards to the construction of a national identity. The founding elite implemented several reforms that were compatible with the principles of secularism, although religion was still perceived as a crucial component of the new Turkish identity that saw citizens as Turkish, rational, progressive and also Sunni Muslim. It can thus be concluded that the state policies with regards to the construction of national identity, in which religion given a significant place determined, the approach of the state to religion and the integration of religion rather than its exclusion.

The main objective behind the establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs was not only to control religion, but also to use it as a tool for the construction and expansion of an official version of Islam in the country. To

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<sup>323</sup> İřtar Gözaydın, *Religion, Politics and the Politics of Religion in Turkey* (Berlin: The Liberal Institute, 2013), p. 13.

<sup>324</sup> İřtar B. Tarhanlı, *Müslüman Toplum, “laik” Devlet: Türkiye’de Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (İstanbul, Alfa Yayınları, 1993), p. 41.

<sup>325</sup> Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*, p. 37.

<sup>326</sup> Ahmet Hadi Adanalı, *The Presidency of Religious Affairs and Principle of Secularism in Turkey*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), p. 229.

illustrate, from the beginning, the official *imams* of Presidency of Religious Affairs conveyed religious messages to the public explaining the significance of military service as a “holy duty”.<sup>327</sup> This conception of martyrdom well illustrates the role of religion in the nationalist rhetoric. The function of martyrdom was disseminated in 1922 by the Presidency of Religious Affairs through the Book on Religion for Soldiers (*Askere Din Kitabı*),<sup>328</sup> which stated that the secular state should be protected by pious soldiers.<sup>329</sup> The book was written with the aim of increasing religious feelings among soldiers. In the words of Gürbey:

The book recurrently represents Islam as the religion of Turkish nation, military service as a religious duty and a form of worship, and martyrdom as highest status that guarantees access to heaven and It contains phrases such as, Thank God we are Turkish and Muslim”.<sup>330</sup>

According to Gürbey, Islam has a sixth pillar which is jihad, military service. A martyr is a soldier who dies while defending the homeland from enemy assault in the name of Allah,<sup>331</sup> and so it can be concluded that the state elite aimed to create a Turkified or nationalized Islam by freeing it from Arabic and Ottoman influence, and making it serve the national interest. It became clear that state saw this institution as a way of expanding the state’s own approach to Islam through reform, enlightenment, and nationalization.

The establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs had a marked influence on the main minority religious group in Turkey – the Alevis. While the Greek Orthodox, Armenians and Jewish communities were recognized as a minority in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty,<sup>332</sup> Alevis were not. This created many ambiguities for

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<sup>327</sup> Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State* (I.B Tauris: 2010), p. 51.

<sup>328</sup> Sinem Gürbey, “Islam- Nation- State and Military: A Discussion of Secularism in Turkey”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol.29, No. 3, 2009, pp. 371-380, p. 377.

<sup>329</sup> Sinem Gürbey, “Islam, Nation-State and Military: A Discussion of Secularism in Turkey”, cited in Iulia Alexandra Oprea, “Defining and Redefining Secularism Alla Turca,” 505-515, p. 510.

<sup>330</sup> Sinem Gürbey, “Islam- Nation- State and Military: A Discussion of Secularism in Turkey”, p. 11.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>332</sup> Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne Arts 38-45, July 24 1923 28 L.N.T.S 11.

the Alevi community, being neither recognized as a minority group, nor represented by the Presidency of Religious Affairs. In short, their existence is denied, and they are denied the state support for the establishment of their own places of worship. For them, the Presidency of Religious Affairs is dominated by Sunni Muslims, and failed to meet their needs and demands.<sup>333</sup> In addition to the lack of recognition by the state, they were obliged to take obligatory religious courses that taught only the Sunni aspect of Islam. It is also very interesting to note that while Orthodox, Armenians and Jewish people were exempt from these obligatory courses, Alevi children were not. Supporting this decision, the institution of the Presidency of Religious Affairs claims that Alevis are not discriminated against, since no differences exist between the Alevi and Sunni sects of Islam aside for certain customs and beliefs. In addition because they are seen as a sub-group of Islam, the indication of Islam on their identity cards was regarded as correct by the state, even though some Alevis asked to be referred to as “Alevi” rather than “Islam” on their official documents.<sup>334</sup>

In summary, there are some crucial conclusions that can be derived from an analysis of the relationship between the state and religion during the formative years of the Turkish Republic. As previously mentioned, the issue of religion and its place in state affairs constituted one of the striking aspects of the state-building period of the Turkish Republic. The founding elite played a key role in shaping the relationship between the state and religion, establishing an official state institution to oversee all religious affairs, was perceived by many as a challenge to the principle of secularism. It’s also ironic that the Constitution of the Turkish Republic includes the statement:

The Presidency of Religious Affairs, which is within the  
general administration, shall exercise its duties prescribed in

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<sup>333</sup> Elizabeth Özdalga, “The Alevis: A New Religious Minority? Identity Politics in Turkey and Its Relation to the EU Integration Process”, in Dietrich Jung and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Religion, Politics, and Turkey’s EU Accession*, 2008, pp. 190-94 cited in Talip Küçükcan, “Sacralization of the State and Secular Nationalism: Foundations of Civil Religion in Turkey”, *George Washington International Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2010, pp. 963-983, p. 975.

<sup>334</sup> Kristin Fabbe, “Historical Legacies, Modern Conflicts: State Consolidation and Religious Pluralism in Greece and Turkey”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2013, pp. 435-453, p. 447.



its particular law, in accordance with the principle of secularism, removed from all political views and ideas, and aiming at national solidarity and integrity.<sup>335</sup>

Official religious institutions would not be expected to exist within the principle of secularism. As Powell states, the Presidency of Religious Affairs is the successor of *Şeyhülislam* in some sense, and is the highest Islamic religious authority in Turkey.<sup>336</sup> Furthermore, its establishment was much related to the aim of Republican elite to construct a nationalized version of Islam. For the founding elite, the institution was necessary to keep society informed about the correct form of Islam, as any other religious activities outside of this official ideology could be easily perceived as a threat to the state.<sup>337</sup>

During the single party rule of the RPP between 1923 and 1946, the founding elite made a distinction between “pure Islam” and “impure Islam”,<sup>338</sup> and the approach of the state to religion was based firmly on that distinction. For the state, pure Islam was a nationalized, rationalized and privatized religion, and in this sense, the Presidency of Religious Affairs was a tool for disseminating the officially correct and “pure Islam” throughout society. In this context, Sunni Islam, an important component of Turkishness, was privileged and protected by the state. On the agenda of the political elite, a nationalized Islam did not constitute a threat for the state, but rather contributed to the homogenized and united nation state. In the minds of the ruling elite, a nationalized Islam from which the Arabic and Ottoman elements had been eliminated was compatible with the principle of secularism and their idea of a nation state.

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<sup>335</sup> Russell Powell, “Evolving Views of Islamic Law in Turkey”, *Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol.28, No. 2, 2013, pp. 467-487, p.480; M.Hakan Yavuz, “Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere”, p. 29.

<sup>336</sup> Russell Powell, “Evolving Views of Islamic Law in Turkey”, p. 480

<sup>337</sup> Markus Dressler, “Making Religion through Secularist Legal Discourse: The Case of Turkish Alevism”, in M. Dressler and A.S. Mandair (eds.), *Secularism & Religion-Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 191.

<sup>338</sup> Umut Azak, “Secularists as the Saviors of Islam: Rearticulation of Secularism and the Freedom of Conscience in Turkey”, in Berna Turam (ed.), *Secular State and Religious Society: Two Forces in Play in Turkey*, (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 60.

To conclude, an examination of the historical, constitutional and institutional aspects of the relationship between the state and religion in Turkey during the 1923-1946 period shows that the agenda of the state elite of the Turkish Republic included Islam. Analyzing the relationship between religion and Turkish nationalism reveals that Islam constituted an important part of Turkishness, and religion was incorporated into the state with the establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which supported and prioritized Sunni Islam. Although the new identity relied on the idea of a Turkish nation, being civil or ethnic, or mixture of both definitions, it is nonetheless reasonable to claim that religion did not lose its significance within the process of the construction of a national identity. An analysis of government policies related to minorities reveals that even though the state was committed to the principle of secularism, together with the territorial-voluntaristic-linguistic forms of citizenship, Kemalist nationalism was still shaped by Islam to a large extent.<sup>339</sup> In other words, even though being Muslim was not a prerequisite to obtaining Turkish citizenship, it was perceived as a crucial component of Turkishness.

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<sup>339</sup> Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is Turk?*, p. 15.

## CHAPTER 4

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGION IN ISRAEL AND TURKEY

This chapter makes a comparative analysis of the relationship between the state and religion in Israel and Turkey, with emphasis on the formation of a national identity during the formative years of each state that were already examined in the previous chapters. The comparison based on the findings of interviews conducted with academics both in Turkey and Israel. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the state elites choose different models to define the status of religion in their countries, and give various roles to religion in state affairs, stemming from each state's own historical, ideological and political history. In other words, there are a number of factors influencing a state's adaption or exclusion of religion from state affairs.

Although Israel and Turkey differ from each other in various aspects, including size, economic and political structures, power-sharing methods in governance, composition of population, historical experiences and state traditions, there are striking similarities regarding the level that how the state and religion is related, especially pertaining to their respective formative years. The aim in this chapter is to explore the similarities and differences between Israel and Turkey in this regard, and to make a comparative review of the influence of the role given to religion in the construction of a national identity and the relationship between the state and religion. One political science academician interviewed in Turkey argued that although Turkey was established in 1923 and Israel in 1948, they share striking similarities, in that both evolved out of a nation-state mentality.<sup>340</sup> In other words, although Turkey and Israel were established in different periods of the 20th century, there is no limitation on a comparative study in that the policies of the state-founding elite in both countries were driven by the global rise of the nation-state ideology.

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<sup>340</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 14 March, 2016.

#### 4.1. Nationalization of Religion in Israel and Turkey

A careful look at the historical trajectories of Israel and Turkey reveals an important similarity with respect to their approach to religion. It can be said that the state founders in Turkey and Israel relied on religion and reinterpreted existing religious features, redefining them to serve their nationalist ends. In other words, the founding state elite in both countries attempted to nationalize religion to some extent rather than only to integrate or to exclude it from the public and state spheres. Aware of the significance of religion in the definition of national identity, they attempted to make religion compatible with their nationalist goals. The academicians in Israel and Turkey interviewed for this study provided in-depth explanations for the nationalization of religion in both countries during the state and nation building efforts.

In the case of Israel, religious symbols and stories were reinterpreted to suit the nationalist agenda to legitimize the existence of the state. As Liebman and Yadgar stated: “Zionist enterprise, Zionist ideology, and Zionist commitment, were inextricably tied to Jewish ethnicity and sensitivity to Jewish history and Jewish symbols. It is fair to say that Zionism sought to nationalize Judaism.”<sup>341</sup> During an interview in Israel, a professor of history remarked:

It is very difficult to separate religion from nationalism in Judaism. Over the years, the role of religious parties has increased as a result of demographic changes, although nationalist parties have also become more extreme. Nationalism is fine to some degree, but chauvinism is not, as in the event of this, the rights of others are denied.<sup>342</sup>

The professor spoke about the extreme situation of nationalism in Israel and remarked on the intertwinement of religion and nationalism in the country. During another interview, an Israeli expert on law, speaking about the relationship between religion and nationalism, said:

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<sup>341</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Yaacov Yadgar, “Secular-Jewish Identity and the Condition of Secular Judaism in Israel”, in Zvi Gitelman (ed.), *Religion or Ethnicity? Jewish Identities in Evolution*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), pp. 149-170.

<sup>342</sup> Jerusalem, Israel, 2 July, 2015.

The founding fathers of Israel were mostly secular, but used religious symbols and borrowed the language of rituals for national causes and motivations. Moreover, the increasing emphasis on the Bible by Ben Gurion and other political leaders is very interesting. It was used as a justification of the claim that “we deserved this territory and we are here”. They said they had right to live here since God gave us this land. Discussions related to the references to God in the Declaration of Independence led to various disputes among political leaders, but it was not mentioned in the declaration.<sup>343</sup>

As an expert explained, the Bible gained an important place in the rhetoric of the nationalist leaders, and served as a powerful tool for the construction of the myth of a new collectivity.<sup>344</sup> The preference for the Bible over the Talmud was not a haphazard choice, being rather a reflection of the priority values in the creation of a *new Jew* in the minds of the founders. While the Talmud represents diasporic Judaism, the Bible represents the Jews in their national home in the glorious times of the Jewish people. The Bible includes various stories that promote or intensify the nationalist sentiment among Jewish people, and creating national unity constituted the main priority for the founding leaders. They blamed diasporic Judaism for the 2.000 years of suffering of the Jewish people, and rather than referring to those humiliating elements, they emphasized the Bible, due especially to its stories about national Jewish heroes. This provided a significant opportunity to the state elite, even though they were mostly secular. The religious myths, sacrifices for land, national heroes and religious stories were all used as hallmarks in the state-building period, and many religious stories were reinterpreted with nationalist emphasis. Judaism is also apparent in many national symbols, such in the flag and in the national anthem. The Bible served also as an important tool for mobilizing of people and for garnering the support of Jewish communities. The use of the Bible was also related to the aim to legitimize the state in the international sphere, since many Christian leaders and individuals around the world sympathized with the Zionist movement. This phenomenon led secular leaders to concentrate on religion to determine the boundaries of the Jewish national identity.

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<sup>343</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>344</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, p. 117.

As in the case of the founding state elite of Israel during the state building era, the secular leaders of the Turkish Republic also used religious rhetoric. A number of public statements by the state elite in Turkey referred to the importance of Islam and the features of prophets. During the War of Independence, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk also used religious rhetoric. An academic in Turkey pointed to the use of religion by the founders:

The references to religion during the state-building period are illustrative of the importance of religion for both Israel and Turkey. The attempts to return to Palestine, the celebrations in Jerusalem in the year following establishment, and so on, represent just some of these references. In the case of Turkey, we can say that without references to religion, the mobilization of people may not have been achievable. In fact, the use of religion in the rhetoric of political leaders gained favour in both countries from the beginning.<sup>345</sup>

Even the religious discourse related to aim of the state-founding elites to appeal to the people and to mobilize them for the War of Independence illustrates that the nationalist desires were not deprived of religion in Turkey. Most scholars claim that the secular reforms and the policies of the founding elite related to the relationship between the state and religion are indicative of the state's desire to exclude religion in the Republic of Turkey. "State against religion" discourse has been very common in literature with regards to the secularism issue in Turkey, although a careful look at the implementation of these reforms reveals that the state attempted to destroy the Ottoman legacy to some extent by means of abolishing the traditional, political, institutional, economic and ideological structures, but not religion itself. In fact, religion was regarded as making a positive contribution to the development of Turkish nationalism. The political elites that served during the state-building era attempted to reform Islam to make it compatible with the modern and secular nation state.<sup>346</sup> For instance, Atatürk, speaking in İzmir in 1923, said:

Our religion is the most reasonable and most natural religion, and it is precisely for this reason that it has been the last religion. In order for a religion to be natural, it should

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<sup>345</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

<sup>346</sup> Tamer Balcı, "From Nationalization of Islam to Privatization of Nationalism: Islam and Turkish National Identity, p. 83.

conform to reason, technology, science, and logic. Our religion is totally compatible with these.<sup>347</sup>

In this sense, a number of reforms were launched to create a Turkified form of Islam.<sup>348</sup> Sencer Ayata argues that the aim was to reform Islam in to make it congruent with the goals of the modern nation state.<sup>349</sup> In the case of Turkey, the national anthem also emphasized religion, and intellectuals and academicians at the time were encouraged to reform Islam to make it compatible with the modern nation state. As mentioned above, several committees were given responsibilities in the reform of Islam, and made suggestions such as offering desks, musical instruments in mosques and so on. The call to prayer, which had been recited in Arabic for centuries in the Muslim world, began to be recited in Turkish, along with the Turkish Friday sermons. As discussed in the previous chapters, the cases of the *ezan* and Friday sermon in the Turkish language illustrates the desire of the state-founding elite to nationalize Islam, and are a clear illustration of the argument put forward in this thesis that the state elite sought to redefine and reform Islam for the sake of the nation state. The abolition of the call to prayer in the Arabic language shows that the state-religion relationship in Turkey cannot be explained efficiently with a control approach, in that such approach suggests that the state-founding elite implemented various policies and reforms as a part of an official secularism effort to control religion. The reforms were related rather to the attempts of founders to nationalize religion in the case of the Republic of Turkey. In this way, the state promoted a nationalized Islam to serve the nation state. For the founding elite, a national, rational and privatized religion would get in the way of state interests. Although one can find suggestions in literature that the nationalization of Islam or Turkified Islam occurred after the emergence of the multi-party system, and especially after the 1980s, this study reveals that the roots of the efforts to nationalize Islam actually date back to the state-building era.

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<sup>347</sup> Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State*, p. 14.

<sup>348</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism & Islamism*, p. 24.

<sup>349</sup> Sencer Ayata, "Patronage, Party, and State: The Politicization of Islam in Turkey", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1996, p. 41.

In an interview, conducted in Israel, one academician explained the role of religion in nationalism in Israel and Turkey, remarking upon the differences between Israel and Turkey:

The desire of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was to separate these two – the state and religion – and to marginalize religion in the definition of Turkishness. In contrast, in the understanding of Zionists, without corporation with the Jewish religion in the Zionist project, they would never be able to recruit or mobilize the people into this national project. What Zionism did is to fuse the two.<sup>350</sup>

Indeed, the representatives of Zionism and Kemalism were not different in the sense that the founders of both states found a place for religion in their nationalist projects, and they also resemble one another in the sense that the founding elite of both countries were influenced by positivism and European ideas. Both Jewish nationalism and Turkish nationalism sought to bring modernity to the new nation state, aiming to transform the society that they believed as backward. Initially, they believed in that a modern and secular state would be established in those lands, and in both cases the formation of a nation state took place under similar conditions, albeit in different periods of the 20th century, with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of nationalist ideology and the appeal of the right to self-determinacy. The nationalist movements – Zionism, led by Theodor Herzl; and Turkish nationalism, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – both aimed to create a secular state and a modern and Western oriented society, and both nationalist ideologies developed under some similar conditions, as mentioned above, and had some similar results. For instance, both attempted to minimize the role of religion in the new state and sought to create a homogeneous nation. One of the academicians interviewed for the study explained during the interview:

The founders of Israel and Turkey believed that Islam and Judaism should be learned, believing that religions that are not learned are dogmatic. In fact, their ideas were related to their perceptions of modernization and positivism. They

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<sup>350</sup> Haifa, Israel, June 29, 2015.



believed that the more state and society modernized, the less religion would have power.<sup>351</sup>

#### **4.2. The Role of Religion in Construction of National Identity**

As discussed throughout the thesis, Israel and Turkey bear similarities in the sense that the state elite in two countries sought to construct of a national identity that emphasized more ethno religious elements than civic elements. While some of their supporters preferred and attempted to construct a national identity that relied more on secular elements and nationality, others concentrated more on religious elements.

Although a number of leaders preferred the dominance of nationalism in the definition of Jewishness, the emphasized tie between the land and the people prevented the realization of this dream. Political considerations and security issues, together with the urgent need to unite people of different languages and cultures in Israel and Turkey led the state-founding elite to emphasize religion. Initially, some of the founders attempted to force through a linguistic and territorial definition of national identity, both in Israel and Turkey, however they still turned to religion to exclude or integrate people into their imagined nation. An academician in Turkey underlined this during the interview:

Most of the founders of Israel attempted to forge a national identity based on mainly cultural, historical and linguistic elements, but religion permeated into that identity. The term “Jewish” tried to be defined in cultural terms during the construction of a national identity, but they created a Jewish state. Since religion is an inevitable part of this identity, the national identity was not constructed at the expense of religion – Judaism. In this regard, it is no surprise that discussions of the national identity issue, together with the question of “who is a Jew and who is an Israeli” have still maintained their ambiguity.<sup>352</sup>

Regarding the role of religion in the construction of national identity, another academician in Israel approached the issue in a similar way:

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<sup>351</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

<sup>352</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

If Zionism is the national movement of the Jews, can we say in all seriousness that it has been entirely separated from the Jewish religion? We cannot separate Judaism from the Jewish identity. Zionism, which presented itself as a secular modern European ideology, was very similar to Kemalism.<sup>353</sup>

The academician argued further that religion had a significant place in the national movement of Jewish people, and in this sense, resembled to Kemalism. He claimed that religion was not separate from Judaism and that nationalism and religion actually reinforced each other from the beginning. The Law of Return also turned to religion to determine the boundaries of the nation in Israel. Whereas non-Jews who were living in the same territory as Jews were not integrated into the definition of Jewishness, Jews from all over world were granted the right to immigrate to Israel and to take automatic citizenship, regardless of their country of origin. During an interview, an academician in Turkey commented on this duality:

In Israel, especially Ashkenazis were perceived as real citizens. Some Arab people have been accepted as citizens of Israel, although this acceptance does not reflect the principle of equality, since they are not adherents of the Jewish religion. On the other hand, a Jew who lives in America can come to Israel and can be accepted as a citizen automatically. In this regard, the tensions that were raised at the beginning have not disappeared.<sup>354</sup>

The academician underlined the significance of the role of religion in the Jewish national identity giving an example of the situation of non-Jews in Israel. In another interview, related to the Jewish national identity, it was stated:

In Israel you have a differentiation between Jewish and Israeli. You have citizenship and nationality. Nationality has implications on those who do not belong to the dominant nation. In Israel, being an Israeli automatically means being Jew. They try to give it a meaning that is civic to Israeli. The Israeli High Court about a year ago said that there is no Israeli nationality. Some people go to court wanting to be registered as Israeli and but not as Jewish, however this is not

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<sup>353</sup> Haifa, Israel, 29 June, 2015.

<sup>354</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

possible. They can register themselves as Arab or Jewish, but not as Israeli.<sup>355</sup>

Religion became important in the national identity of Jewish people from the inception of the state. Although the founding elite used a secular discourse, religion functioned as a common denominator in the determination of the boundaries of the imagined national community. In addition, because of the enormous heterogeneity of the population; the Zionist movement had to integrate religion in its ideology which was the “least common denominator.”<sup>356</sup> In this sense, the use of religion led to the integration of religious institutions into the state, in that the dominant religion was attributed to the national identity. Furthermore, religion was also used to determine who belonged to that national community and who did not. Related to this issue, an expert on political science in Israel said:

In Israel, the state is defined as a Jewish state, and this means that the constitutional framework is exclusive. It excludes non-Jewish minorities, and the definition of the state as Jewish is not only symbolic, but also political. The allocation of resources gives priority to the needs and interests of the Jewish majority, which means discrimination against minorities exists when it comes to resources, symbols and so on. In fact, religion and nationality are the same in Israel, but are also exclusive. This means there is no civil identity in Israel.<sup>357</sup>

Another academician spoke about the discrimination against minorities in Israel:

There is discrimination against Arabs and also Ethiopians even if the latter are Jews. The treatment of Arabs is terrible, especially in practice. Confiscation of land, cutting of olive trees, etc. Jews were minorities, and so they should understand the other minorities instead of discriminating against them. Even if they have no sympathy, at least they should have empathy.<sup>358</sup>

The professor, explaining discrimination in Israel, argues that it is not only against non-Jewish people, in that Jews who are not Orthodox are also discriminated against.

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<sup>355</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>356</sup> Claudia Baumgart Ochse, “Opposed or Intertwined? Religious and Secular Conceptions of National Identity in Israel and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict”, p. 410.

<sup>357</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>358</sup> Jerusalem, Israel, 1 July, 2015

The Jews who are the adherent to Reform or Conservative Judaism are not treated the same as Orthodox Jews in the country. As a result, the approach of state to religion, adhering to one interpretation, creates difficulties even for some majority group members. A professor of law in Israel remarked during our interview:

As a result of the relationship model between the Jewish religion and the state, various demarcations have occurred in Israel that have implication on other religious minorities, such as Muslims, Christians, and Jews. For Jews, civil marriage is not allowed, and they are forbidden also for Muslims, Christians, etc. The form of the relationship between religion and the nation has implications on the personal status of non-Jews.<sup>359</sup>

The example put forward by this academician in Israel demonstrates clearly the role and importance of religion in the State of Israel and its huge impact on social and political life. During one of the interviews in Israel, it was also stated that:

The fact is that many men do not work in the ultra-Orthodox community. The women work a lot. They do not pay taxes and they also do not go to the army, which is a very large political issue. The Supreme Court has actually dealt with this problem several times; however, the government keeps passing laws to enforce the policy.<sup>360</sup>

The professor argues that the ultra-Orthodox community dominated various areas of Israeli polity, and that various ultra-orthodox interventions can be seen in Israeli life. The irony of this is that despite their strong opposition to the Israeli government, they somehow manage to intervene in government policies and use their power to push policies for their own interest. A professor of history in Israel also remarked the issue in a similar way:

In Israel, the Rabbinical Courts deal with personal matters and they are very powerful. You can also go to secular courts, but the Rabbinical Courts offer greater advantages. The exemption from military service of young religious people who learn in the *yeshiva* is a significant aspect of this issue, having started with Ben Gurion in 1948-9. He exempted 400 people, but now maybe it's 400,000. Not all of them are exempt, but many of them are, and this has had an influence on the economy. They don't work. They go to the *yeshiva*

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<sup>359</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>360</sup> Ramat Gan, Israel, 28 June, 2015.

and study there and do not join the workforce, and are even backed by the state. They don't study secular classes, so they cannot work. They do not study English or mathematics; they take only religious classes. It is not true for all, but it is for the majority. This is the influence of religion in Israel. There is also the Chief Rabbinate in the army who want to influence the soldiers. To illustrate, in the army, the food must be kosher.<sup>361</sup>

Regarding the ultra-Orthodox community in Israel, the professor said that its members go to schools that are independent from the state, although they rely on government funding. Furthermore, students who go to *yeshivas* take a monthly stipend from the Israeli government and only attend religious courses. They see the secular way of life as a threat to Judaism, and as explained in this study, they see Zionism as the destruction of Judaism. Accordingly, they avoided the secular Jewish way of life in Israel from the outset. Another academician added to the discussion of the ultra-Orthodox community in Israel:

I must say that demographically the number of religious people in Israel is crazy, because they are big families. They have more and more children, and this influences Israeli society and also the economy. It is going to become very serious problem. I know some families who have 20 children among the ultra-Orthodox.<sup>362</sup>

When one considers the orthodox domination of political and social life in Israel, it is possible to come to the conclusion that state neutrality has not been achieved in Israel. This lack of neutrality not only violates the non-Jewish segments of society, but also individuals belonging to the majority religion, but not to the privileged interpretation of religion that is recognized by the state.

This study maintains that the attempts made by some adherents of Zionism to forge a civic national identity by emphasizing Israeli rather than Jewish have not come to fruition. The decision to grant power over personal status issues to religious authority is related to the desire of the founding elite to mark clear boundaries for the nation. The recognition of one religion, Orthodox Judaism, by the state and the granting of privileges has resulted in the dominance of one religion over religious

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<sup>361</sup> Jerusalem, Israel, 2 July, 2015.

<sup>362</sup> Jerusalem, Israel, 2 July, 2015.

issues, and has led to exclusion of those not affiliated with that majority religion or the majority sect of that religion. This can be seen in several governments policies and laws enacted by the state, such as the Law of Return, which excludes non-Jews from the nation. An analysis of the views of the experts in Israel illustrates that religion was conceived as an indispensable element of the national identity, even for the secular founding elite in Israel, from the very outset of the state. Indeed, reflections of religion can be seen in politics, and religion is somehow integrated into the state and has maintained its crucial role in the national identity in Israel.

In Turkey, even during the heyday of Kemalism, Islam was an important element in the formation of the Turkish national identity, as is apparent in immigration and naturalization issues, which reflect the close relationship between Islam and Republican national identity.<sup>363</sup> It was important to foster a national identity among people of different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds under the same umbrella. As stated by a professor of international relations in Ankara related to the issue of the population exchange between Turkey and Greece:

During the state building era, several practices illustrated that religion did not lose its importance in the Republic of Turkey. One of the most prominent reflections of the importance of religion can be seen in the Agreement of Population Exchange between Turkey and Greece that took place in the state formation period. For instance, despite being Turks, members of Gagauz Community were not accepted as Turks, while people who were not Turks in various parts of the Balkans were accepted, based on their adherence to Sunni Islam. The agreement proves that the state-founding elite engaged in the construction of a national identity that was not secular, as was generally accepted. It is clear that Sunni Islam was integrated into Turkishness.<sup>364</sup>

Another expert on international relations who was interviewed in Ankara argued similarly during the interview: “From the beginning, preferred citizens were considered to be Turks who are Muslims and also loyal to the Turkish state.”<sup>365</sup> The compulsory population exchange between Turkey and Greece shows that the Turkish

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<sup>363</sup> Dow Waxman, “Islam and Turkish National Identity: A Reappraisal”, p. 10.

<sup>364</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

<sup>365</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

government engaged in various policies to define national identity at the expense of the existence of non- Muslims in the country.<sup>366</sup> It could be said that since they were not regarded as easily assimilated into the Turkish culture, they were eliminated to some degree. At the time, the boundaries of the national identity were clear: being Muslim was a crucial component of Turkishness. There are significant numbers of studies emphasizing the fact that the state-founding elite tried to marginalize religion. To illustrate, an academician in Israel stated:

We know that Mustafa Kemal was almost obsessive about imitating not only the technical parts – the legal code and institutions but– also the state of mind of the West. He made a very famous speech in Kastamonu in which he said that our mentality should be civilized. We will be proud of these civilizations. The obsession with Westernization and Enlightenment made Kemalism to marginalize religion, since it was seen as anti-modern and as the reason for the failure of the Ottoman Empire. If you are progressive, you are secular; if you are backward, you are religious.<sup>367</sup>

The expert stated that one of the common arguments in literature related to the approach of Kemalism to religion, although it is argued here that Kemalism did not attempt to marginalize religion, but considered it rather religion as a significant element for the enhancement of the nationalist sentiments in society. Related to this debate on secularism, a professor of political science in Turkey approached this issue differently, and remarking upon the dominance of the Sunni identity in Turkishness:

Most studies of Turkish secularism emphasize its strict character during the state-building era. Even though various policies and practices of the government were actually strict, different scholarly studies revealed that the Sunni identity permeated into the national identity and Turkishness.<sup>368</sup>

The state engaged in nation-building process aiming to create a homogenous Western- oriented society. It is clear that the elimination of non-Muslims and their exclusion from the boundaries of the imagined national community was reflected in the population exchange. In other words, the population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey underlined the significance of religion in the national

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<sup>367</sup> Haifa, Israel, 29 June, 2015.

<sup>368</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

identity that was constructed by state elite.<sup>369</sup> They relied on religion to define who should be integrated into the nation and who should not.

Even though Atatürk and other prominent political figures attempted to eliminate the role of religion, or give it only limited role in political sphere, the significance of religion in the national identity of Turkishness was not eliminated, and indeed played a crucial role during the nation-construction period. To create a homogenous nation, which is a key part of the nation state systems, the political elite relied on religion in various issues, even when implementing secular reforms. The detailed discussions presented in the previous chapters reveals that Turkey did not establish a wall between religion and state, as generally accepted, in that the founding elite attempted to create new values, ideas and lifestyles to create a Western-oriented society. The founders sought to create a new secular nation state that was free of ethnic and religious differences,<sup>370</sup> although the new state was not based solely on the secular definition of citizenship, in that religion remained as a defining factor of Turkishness during the early years of the Republic. As Çağaptay argues, the ideal Turk was a Muslim Turk for the Republic,<sup>371</sup> and Kirişçi also emphasizes the importance of the Sunni Islam in the Turkish national identity, stating that a Turk should preferably speak Turkish and be a Sunni Muslim.<sup>372</sup> As Shievely argues, even though the Turkish government made efforts to focus on territorial, civic and cultural elements when shaping the national identity and citizenship, religious identification existed as a prevailing element for communal identification.<sup>373</sup> In other words, being Muslim was not a prerequisite for Turkish citizenship, however it was still perceived as a crucial component of Turkishness. An

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<sup>369</sup> Similar practices were implemented by Greece in population agreement. The state founding elite in Greece also used religion to define the borders of their national identity.

<sup>370</sup> Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism& Islamism*, p. 9.

<sup>371</sup> Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is Turk?* , p. 39.

<sup>372</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Disaggregating Turkish citizenship and Immigration Practices", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No.3, 2000, pp. 1-22.

<sup>373</sup> Kim Shievely, "Taming Islam: Studying Religion in Secular Turkey", *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No.3, 2008, pp. 683-711. Cited in Lejla Voloder, "Secular Citizenship and Muslim Belonging in Turkey: Migrant Perspective", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 5, 2013, pp. 838-856, p. 849.



analysis of government policies related to minorities shows that even though the state committed to the principle of secularism, together with a territorial, voluntaristic and linguistic form of citizenship, Kemalist nationalism was still shaped by Islam to some extent.<sup>374</sup>

Many of the academicians interviewed in both Israel and Turkey made significant comments about the similarities and differences between Israel and Turkey related to the place of religion in the construction of a national identity. In an interview with academician in Turkey, the role of religion in national identity in Israel and Turkey came up:

The most striking similarity between Israel and Turkey is related to the place attributed to religion within the national identity by the founding elite. Both Israel and Turkey were established according to the nation-state ideology, and the founders aimed to establish a state and society grounded on secularism. However, the founding elite of both countries were pragmatist in some sense, and implemented various policies based on religion. Decisions related to the members of the nation were based on religion. In fact, they took religion into consideration when they deciding who belonged and who did not belong to each national community. Turks are defined as Muslims. When we answer the question of who belongs to the Israeli nation, the answer will be Jews. The answer to the questions of who is a Jew and who is a Turk were based on religion.<sup>375</sup>

So why the founders of the two states rely on religion in the formation of a national movement, despite their secular goals? The state elite in both countries encountered the same urgent issue after declaring independence – the formation of a national unity. The countries were similar in the sense that they did not have a homogenous population, containing elements of different religions, ethnicities, languages and cultures. National unity and the homogenization of the population constituted key tasks in the creation of a nation state in both Turkey and Israel, as in many nation-state formations, and religion served as a significant tool to this end. In other words, the cases of Turkey and Israel highlight the significance of religion in the construction of a national identity. An expert in political science explained the

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<sup>374</sup> Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is Turk?*, p. 15.

<sup>375</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 19 April, 2016.

role of religion in the construction of a national identity during the interview in Turkey:

In fact, religion played a significant role during the construction of a national identity, not only as a practical instrument, but also as a normative one. When use the term *şehit* (martyr) to refer to soldiers, who die, we are using a religious term. There are many citizens who are not Jewish in Israel, and they are not regarded as equal to Jews. In fact, Sunni Islam and Orthodox Judaism constituted the dominant element from the beginning in the two countries, and in both countries, one interpretation of religion was considered over the rest. Those falling outside of this categorization were discriminated against. Not only Alevis and non- Orthodox Jews, but also people who interpreted religion differently from the mainstream understanding in both countries were treated as unequal.<sup>376</sup>

As the academician explained, religion has been crucial from the very beginning. It did not disappear, as assumed by various scholars, but rather retained its great importance in the collective national identity defined by even the secular founding elite in both countries. Jewishness and Turkishness were demarcated by religious attributes, symbols and concepts from the inception of the two countries, and although the founding elite in Israel and Turkey attempted to lessen the role of religion, they came to rely on it to accomplish their nationalist interests. Religion was adopted as a common denominator in the creation of a heterogeneous society and utilized the reinforcement of nationalist sentiments, mobilizations, pragmatic and strategic considerations, etc. Both cases demonstrate that the secular aims could not be fulfilled by emphasizing the religious elements of the national identity that led to the exclusion of those who did not fit the boundaries. This fundamental aim of the state founding leaders shaped and influenced the nature of the relationship between religion and the state. Is any state able to separate religious affairs from state affairs while giving religion a substantial place in the definition of the boundaries of its community? In this regard, the emphasis on religion in Jewishness and Turkishness in the attempts to construct a national identity reflected the nature of the relationship between religion and the state. Kemalism and Zionism were secular in various respects, however representatives of both national projects had to make compromises

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<sup>376</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 19 April, 2016.

and integrate religion into the state sphere. An academician interviewed in Israel argued:

National movements are always modern phenomena. In general, I think neither Kemalism nor Zionism were able to escape the religious aspect of national identity. For example, Turks, even they do not admit it, have elements of a religious identity within the Turkish nation. The way Turks see themselves is not so different to how Jews see themselves. Sunni Islam is an integral part of pure Turks, and Zionists say, “Well I understand that religion is important part of my national movement so let’s celebrate.”<sup>377</sup>

The comparative study of Israel and Turkey demonstrates that despite the state-building elite in both countries had secular beginnings, subsequently relied on religion for the integration and mobilization of people. Both Kemalists and Zionists engaged in nation-building projects, and shared some similar aspects. A professor of political science in Israel stated:

When we focus on national movements, we should pay attention to the fact that Kemalism is a state theory; it defines how sovereignty should be, and in whose hands should be. The two national movements have some similarities. In Zionism, you have the word *mamlachtiyut* which is Ben Gurion’s theory that refers to state control in certain things, like in Kemalism. Kemalism has some implication on religion, and the same thing exists here in Israel.<sup>378</sup>

In addition to the similarities, a number of differences were highlighted by the academicians in Israel and Turkey. A professor of international relations in Turkey argued that:

They are different in the context that even though Israel emerged as a kind of colonial effort, Turkey was established on the territories of the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the aim to create a homogenous nation out of the various ethnically and culturally different people led to similar results in both countries. The state-founding elite in Israel and Turkey were also not homogenous; there were different ideological differences among them. Even though the Zionist ideology and Kemalist ideology were not homogenous, there being a number of factions among the Zionist and Kemalist

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<sup>377</sup> Haifa, Israel, 2 June, 2015.

<sup>378</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

ideologies, the mainstream wished to establish a secular state.<sup>379</sup>

As the academician explained, the founding state elite in Israel and Turkey were not homogenous; there were various differences among the state-founding elites with respect to religion and national identity issues. That said, as the differences were not severe, policies related to the relationship between the state and religion, were able to be implemented as a result of cooperation between the leaders. An academician interviewed in Turkey explained this issue in the following way:

In addition to those secular intellectuals, there were other intellectuals who emphasized religion during the construction of national identity in Turkey and Israel. Another similarity is that the two were established as a result of cooperation between secular and religious intellectuals. In this context, the difference is that while the religious intellectuals were eliminated in the years following the establishment in Turkey; the coexistence was maintained in Israel after establishment.<sup>380</sup>

The difference between the two regarding the religious actors stems from their own historical experiences before and during the establishment of the state, in that they used somewhat different policies towards religious actors. The state founders in Israel negotiated with religious actors and created a base for the participation of religious groups in politics, while the Turkish state implemented various measures to prevent the participation of religious actors in politics and prohibited the political use of religion.

An analysis of the interviews conducted in Turkey and Israel illustrates that religion was conceived as an indispensable element of the national identity, even for the secular founding elite, in both Israel and Turkey from the earliest days of the state. The opinions of the experts in social sciences in both countries point to the fact that both Israel and Turkey gave priority to religion and ethnicity rather than civic elements when defining the boundaries of the national identity during the state-building period. Even though citizenship was defined by secular means in official discourse, what occurred in practices was far removed from this.

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<sup>379</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

<sup>380</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 19 April, 2016.

This thesis aims to answer the question of why the state founders of Israel and the Turkish Republic, despite being mostly secular and looking initially to create a secular state, chose to integrate religion into the state sphere by incorporating religious institutions into the state apparatus. Part of the answer relates to the objective of achieving national homogeneity, as one of the striking similarities between the two countries. In Israel, the state-founding elite were faced with a massive immigration of Jews of different ethnicities, languages, and cultural backgrounds, especially during the 1950s, changing significantly the composition of Jewish society. Indeed religion itself served the state-founding elite as an important common denominator when bringing people with diverse backgrounds under the same umbrella. As a result, in the final stage they had to negotiate with religious institutions and grant them significant powers. They had to rely on religion for various political, demographic and ideological reasons, and could not ignore the tremendous influence of the Holocaust on the Jewish national identity.

In this context, the case of Turkey is very similar to the State of Israel. As discussed throughout the thesis, a significant number of the state-founding elite and intellectuals who shaped Turkish nationalism did not want to give religion an important place in either the state or public spheres, and instead tried to emphasize a civic definition of the national identity. However, as in the case of Israel, they finally started to use religious rhetoric and came to rely on religion to determine the boundaries of the nation. The reasons for this were very similar to Israel. The new state had not inherited a homogenous population, and the creation of a homogenous national identity was one of the main aims of the state-building elite. Even though some pre-emptive steps were taken to make the people more homogenous, the various ethnically, culturally and linguistically different minorities led the state elites to rely on religion as a common denominator. As a result, it is reasonable to say that the secular project was successful neither for Turkey nor Israel, to some degree. How can any state claim to be secular when it privileges one religion over others, and grants power not only to one religion, but to one interpretation of that religion (Sunni Islam and Orthodox Judaism, in Turkey and Israel respectively) while also creating national boundaries that embrace only people who are Muslim or Jewish. It is somewhat hypocritical when a state claiming to be secular, defines the boundaries of

its national identity based on religious factors, like the Population Exchange Agreement, and the Law of Return for Turkey and Israel respectively. Both countries defined their national boundaries on the grounds of religion to some extent during the state building period, and these policies continue to affect the way of life still today.

### **4.3. Return to History and Language Reform**

The two states are also similar in sense that the nationalist movements and their secular leaders emphasized the rights of Jewish and Turkish people to territorial sovereignty by concentrating on their historical right over the land. An expert in Israel said during our interview that the motivation behind the archaeological efforts and claims made by the founding elite during the state-building period were different:

It is also interesting that archaeologists and sociologists carried out researches to prove that Turkish nationalism was based on a civilization that was more ancient than Islam. They argued that we had values that were not connected to Islam. Kemalism formed an emerging relationship between the state and religion and set Islam aside, while in Israel, the founders believed that it would be good if we bring religion back. This difference created, or certainly had a huge impact, on social and political life in Israel and Turkey.<sup>381</sup>

In other words, the academician claimed that the motivation behind the claims were religious in the case of Israel, while in Turkey, it was different. That said these policies may have stemmed from the fact that in both cases, the motivation was political and was reinforced by nationalist ideas, that is, related the countries' legitimization targets. It can be said that the state-founding elite in both Israel and Turkey turned to history to legitimize the state, however, there was a difference in the approach. The State of Israel was established as a result of settlement on the land under a British mandate, in which Palestinians resided, where the need for legitimization was strong, being a form of colonization; while Turkey was formed on the territories left over the Ottoman Empire.

In the case of Israel, although the Zionist leaders' emphasis on the bond between the land and the people was not driven solely by religious motivations or the

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<sup>381</sup> Haifa, Israel, 29 June, 2015.

ideologies of the leaders, they used this as a legitimization tool both within the Jewish community and the international sphere. They put explicit emphasis on the rights of Jews to establish a state in Palestine, claiming it as their historical homeland. As stated previously, the Zionist movement was not homogenous, and while some members of the Zionist movement sought to legitimize Israel as a historical homeland for Jews due to their historical ties, others also sought to legitimize their ownership of the territory on religious grounds, claiming that God had promised the land to his chosen people. Similarly, the state founders of the Turkish Republic also emphasized the historical right of Turkish people to Anatolia through emphasis on the historical ties of the Turkish people to the land. To serve this aim, several committees were granted responsibility to prove this historical tie, and as a result, the Turkish History Thesis and the Turkish Sun Language Theory were developed.

Another similarity between the two is that language constituted an important tool in the creation of a homogenous nation in both countries. As stated before, the population was not homogenous in terms of language, ethnicity or religion in Turkey, and so the use of Turkish was encouraged over such existing languages as Kurdish, Arabic, etc. The government took an intolerant and authoritarian stance against the usage of any language other than Turkish. The speaking of Turkish was encouraged by several official companies, such as *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş* (Citizens speaks Turkish), and the reform also included the banning of the Arabic alphabet. Turkish was adapted into the Latin alphabet with the Language Reform Act, ratified in 1924.

Language reform was another important indication of the Zionist movement's efforts to nationalize religion. The Hebrew language, which was not in use in the Jewish community, was reformed and improved by various organizations as a result of the efforts of the Zionist Movement. The Jews in Russia and in Eastern Europe used Yiddish, while Hebrew was used only for religious ritual and prayer, in that most Jews saw Hebrew as a holy language. Aware of the significance of a national language, the state-founding elite looked to Hebrew in their efforts to create national unity. The Hebrew language was improved and its use was encouraged among various Jewish communities. This represents another example of how the state

founders, while attempting to create a secular state, benefited from religion. In short, they took the holy language of Jewish people that had been used previously only in religious rituals and for prayer, and brought it into daily use.

#### **4.4. The Issue of Secularism and Institutional Aspect of the Relationship between the State and Religion in Israel and Turkey**

Throughout this thesis, it is argued that the Republic of Turkey and the State of Israel are similar in the sense that they failed in their secular approach to remain neutral in their approach to all religions that exist in the country. That said, it should be noted that throughout this thesis, the failure of secularism refers to the failure in the collective arena, not that individuals have not embraced secularism in both countries. In the private sphere, both in Turkey and Israel, a significant majority of the population claim to be secular and believe in a secular way of life, but while an analysis of the private domain falls outside the scope of this thesis, it should be noted that while 44 percent of Israeli Jews define themselves as secular, 56 percent of the population identify themselves as having different degrees of religiosity (i.e. 9% define themselves as religious, 8% as Orthodox, 39% as *masortim* (traditional)).<sup>382</sup> In this thesis, the failure of secularism in Israel and Turkey is discussed in the collective sphere, i.e., related to the construction of a national identity by the state founders. Uri Ram refers to Steven Sharon's concept of the private secular lifestyle not being fully backed or supported by an explicit collective ideological position as "secularization without secularism" when examining the case of the State of Israel. It is clear this concept fits very well the case of Israel, and also to some degree, to Turkey.

The Orthodox interpretation of Judaism embraced by the state and the religious authority of the Orthodox stream were incorporated into the state, while other interpretations of Judaism, namely Reform Judaism and Conservative Judaism, were not officially recognized, and the Orthodox religious authority remained intolerant of them. In Turkey, the Presidency of Religious Affairs favours Sunni Islam over the other denominations in the country. In the case of Turkey, being Muslim was perceived as a prerequisite for being Turkish, although the demands of some sects of Islam, such as the Alevi, are not taken officially into consideration.

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<sup>382</sup> Uri Ram, "Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel", p. 61.



During the interviews with academicians in Israel and Turkey, various discussions were raised regarding the issue of secularism in Israel. A professor of international relations in Ankara stated that, “Zionism was an overtly secular movement and the founders aimed to establish a secular country,”<sup>383</sup> and remarked upon the secular nature of the Zionist movement, arguing that the founders mostly envisioned a secular state and society. The academician further argued that the visions of the Zionist founders did not become a reality, emphasizing the religious nature of the State of Israel.<sup>384</sup> An expert interviewed in Israel approached the issue similarly, emphasizing the religious character of the state in the following way:

Israel is not a secular state, because it’s a Jewish state. There is an official religion, and you can prove that by showing the differences in the support of religious education. The allocation of resources for Jewish organizations is much higher than the allocation for resources for non- Jewish organizations. This means that although the state does not define itself as a religious state, it acts as such. For instance, it promotes *kosher* food; it promotes religious education, forbids public transformation during *Shabbat*, and so on.<sup>385</sup>

Another academician interviewed in Israel responded to the question related to the relationship between the state and religion in Israel as follows:

Officially, Israel is a secular state, but in practice it is not. I mean, for example, Israeli law is not based on Jewish law. Jewish law makes some contributions to Israeli law, but when it comes to the practice, it has been influenced very much by religion. I would like to explain a case that took place two weeks ago. Some soldiers had sandwiches containing pork. One of the soldiers gave it to one of his friends, and he was arrested. Can you imagine? Like in medieval times, he was apologized and then released. So, the influence of religion is very strong in the army and in Israeli society. Another example is related to the public transportation issue, since on the *Shabbat*, public transport does not run. Who suffers? The poor people, because they cannot afford other means of transportation. I have a car, and so we can get about. All of these examples show that although Israel is a secular country, and despite the Charter of Independence speaking about

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<sup>383</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

<sup>384</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

<sup>385</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

equality, not discrimination among people, in practice, it is different. There is a major impact from Judaism. Religious parties in particular use religion for political influence in some fields. Religious leaders and religious parties try to push it all the time to increase the influence of religion in the courts and also in society. We even do yet not have a Constitution. We only have some basic laws.<sup>386</sup>

The professor claimed that Israel is a secular country in the sense that state has no official religion, but stated that religion plays a significant role in many areas, such as in the military, government and public areas, and in practice . Another professor of political science in Israel spoke on the same topic, remarking upon the domination of the ultra-Orthodox in the state:

In some way the state is corrupted by religion and in some way religion is corrupted by the state. The ultra-Orthodox takes over most of the religious institutions and use them that as a base to push government policies. Politicians push back a little bit, but not so much because they need religious parties in the government. We also have the courts where the more secular view is pushing back against the ultra-Orthodox view. The ultra-Orthodox hate the courts because the religious courts system is technically part of state court system, and this means you can appeal any decision in the Israeli Supreme Court and, the Court has overturned a number of decisions made by the religious courts, and that has greatly upset them. The ultra-Orthodox parties use their political power to control religious institutions, and have started to using these institutions to push their agenda, defining the “who is a Jewish” issue and “what is considered *Kosher*”.<sup>387</sup>

The establishment of the State of Israel has been interpreted as one of the successes of the Zionist movement. As stated throughout this study, the representatives of the Zionist movement embraced the secular way of life and aimed to establish a secular state and society, aiming to create a state that was free of religious influence. There have been many scholars who, when discussing the nature of the State of Israel, describe it as a democratic and secular state, although most of the academicians interviewed for this study in Israel and Turkey argued that Israel is not secular, given strong emphasis on Jewish culture and religion in the state. The

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<sup>386</sup> Jerusalem, Israel, 2 July, 2015.

<sup>387</sup> Ramat Gan, Israel, 28 June, 2015.

reflection of religion can be seen in state symbols, education, the military, politics and society, and religion is taken into consideration when various decisions related to the public space are made by the state elite. The academicians stated that despite the existence of secular state institutions, religion plays a significant role in state affairs. The ultra-Orthodox community in Israel intervenes in politics aiming to impose their religious beliefs on Jews in Israel. Although they are a minority in Israel, they have strong positions in state institutions, and because of their presence in coalitions, in the absence of majority party, they exert influence over Israeli politics and society. The interviews revealed that the secular nature of the state in Israel is a contested issue, with most of the experts arguing that Israel is not secular, given the influence of Judaism in both the public and political spheres, although the respondents did underline the fact that there is no official religion. Despite this, it is clear that religion is institutionalized and plays a crucial role in Israeli state and society. As highlighted throughout this study, in Israel, reflections of religion can be seen in politics, and religion is integrated into the state at many levels.

The academicians made several significant comments related to the relationship between the state and religion in Republic of Turkey during the interviews. They claimed mostly that Israel is not a secular country, but when it comes to Turkey, some emphasized the secular character of the state, suggesting, in other words, that Turkey is more secular than Israel. A comparison of the explanations related to the secularism issue of Israel and Turkey reveals that most of the academicians in Israel believe that Turkey is more secular than Israel, although the academicians in both countries commented on the importance attributed to religion in state affairs from the beginning of the Republic of Turkey. A professor of political science in Turkey explained the case in Turkey:

In Turkey, there is authoritarian secularism, but the existence of the *Diyanet* and its strong emphasis on the Sunni identity- just one interpretation of the majority religion- has blurred the secularism debate in the country. In Turkey, there are significant numbers of mosques, more than in other countries that are identified as theocratic states, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 14 March, 2016.

The professor argued that there is a duality with regards to the secularism issue in Turkey. Some academicians stated that there is authoritarian secularism, but that Sunni Islam was promoted by the state elite from the very beginning. Likewise, a professor in Israel emphasized the dominance of Sunni Islam in the state when explaining the case of Turkey:

When it comes to the relationship between the state and religion, Turkey has a dominant religion, although in Turkey, religion is not institutionalized. There is no official religion in Turkey, although it is controlled by state. For example, religious education is controlled by the state and the state supports Sunni Islam in Turkey.<sup>389</sup>

A professor in Israel argued that the state controls religion in Turkey, but does not consider the existence of *Diyanet* as an institutionalization of religion, while emphasizing state's support of Sunni Islam. In addition, an academician interviewed in Istanbul also emphasized the importance of Sunni Islam and evaluated the issue with a control paradigm as follows:

The approach of state to religion in Turkey is content-dependent. Religion is supported in various areas, but is excluded from others, areas such as the public realm. For example, religion is supported in Turkish education, and one sect of Islam, Sunni Islam, is supported and promoted by the state elite. That said, it is clear that the state has been intervening in religion since the establishment of the Republic, aiming to control religion. No country is totally secular, and despite its secular constitution, in practice, there are many problems with regards to secularism in Turkey. In this context, Turkey is not secular.<sup>390</sup>

The support of religion by the state and the integration of religion into the state were emphasized by academicians in both Israel and Turkey. In addition, an academician in Israel claimed that Turkey was previously secular, but following a number of changes, it is no longer secular:

Turkey regulates Islam and supports religion to keep it under the state control. Turkey also restricts the rights of religious

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<sup>389</sup> Tel Aviv, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>390</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 19 April, 2016.

minorities. Turkey was secular but now the situation has changed with the rise of the AKP.<sup>391</sup>

An expert in Ankara approached to this issue from a similar perspective:

Although Turkey was established to be a secular state by the founding elite of the Republic, various changes took place, and as a result it became more religious. Religion has been integrated into the state from the beginning in the country. The state was secular until the 1980s. That said I should underline that Turkey does not have an official religion.<sup>392</sup>

When the Republic of Turkey was established, the idea was that it would be a secular state, with most of the founders of Kemalism envisioning a secular state and society. However, religion did not lose importance in the minds of the founders, being seen as an important element in the construction of a national identity. The role given to religion by the founders of the state in the national identity influenced the level of the relationship between the state and religion. In other words, the emphasis on Sunni Islam in Turkishness reflected the promotion of Sunni Islam in the Presidency of Religious Affairs, although this led to a duality in the state system, while the state was established and dreamed of as secular state by the founders, the existence of religious institutions blurred the relationship between the state and religion. The academicians spoke about the importance of the Sunni identity and state's support of religion in Turkey, although some argued that Turkey was secular until the 1980s or until the rise of AKP, but all agreed that the role of religion had increased and the state had become less secular.

Comparing Israel and Turkey with regards to the issue of secularism, the academicians made different arguments, with two main viewpoints coming to light. On the basis of arguments stated by the academicians during the interviews, the following can be concluded: While some claim that Turkey is a secular state and Israel is not, others attest that neither is secular. It is also apparent from the interviews that that most academicians believe that while both started out as secular, they can no longer be described as such. A professor of political science in Turkey stated:

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<sup>391</sup> Ramat Gan, Israel, 28 June, 2016.

<sup>392</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

Basically, Turkey is a secular state, but the same cannot be said for Israel. Israel is not exactly a secular state. However, there is one striking similarity between the two with regards to the institutional aspect of the issue. In Turkey there is a religious institution, the *Diyanet*, which embraces the Sunni identity. This is also valid for Israel, since the institutions that are responsible for dealing with religious issues recognize and support only one religion- Judaism. Furthermore, in Israel, since the establishment of state, the national identity issue has been grounded on religion. In fact both Israel and Turkey have a problematic relationship with secularism. From a perspective of society, in Turkey, people identify themselves as mainly Muslim, and in Israel, people identify themselves as Jewish.<sup>393</sup>

The professor emphasized the Sunni character of the state and the existence of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, and argued that they are similar in terms of their institutional influence, as in both countries, religion was institutionalized and supported one interpretation of the majority religion. Related to the issue of the integration of religion by means of the establishment of official religious institutions, another academician in Israel approached the issue in a similar way:

Turkey is secular, both institutionally and officially. But socially, it has never been secular. Israel is not secular in either dimension, being a state that opposes the idea of secularism. Israel integrated religion into politics, and the state gave money to religious authorities and institutions. In this way they integrated religion into politics and acknowledged and gave authority to religious institutions, such as the Rabbinical Courts, the educational system and political parties. They provided a base for them, and gave money to religious groups. There is much political and economic integration. Religion is also very visible in politics. It is secular in the sense that we do not have *Halacha* or *Sharia* like in Iran or Saudi Arabia. They are not religious states like Iran or Saudi Arabia.<sup>394</sup>

The academician remarked that even though Turkey is officially and institutionally secular, socially, it is not. In contrast, Israel is secular neither institutionally, officially nor socially. The academician went on to state that neither state can be considered religious when compared with states such Saudi Arabia or Iran. The

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<sup>393</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 14 March, 2016.

<sup>394</sup> Haifa, Israel, 29 June, 2015.

academician placed emphasis on the religious institutions in Israel, although in Turkey as well, the existence of Presidency of Religious Affairs shows also that the state gives authority to a religious institution in religious matters. One of the academicians interviewed in Israel argued, “Israel is not a secular state, since there is no freedom of religion and also no freedom from religion in Israel. However, when it comes to Turkey, it is a secular state.”<sup>395</sup> An important difference between Turkey and Israel related to the issue of freedom from religion. In Israel, citizens are exposed to religious authority in issues of personal status and there is no civil marriage in the country. In Turkey, civil marriage exists, and this distinction reflects that freedom from religion exists in Turkey to some extent. Jews in Israel are forced to deal with personal status issues through Orthodox authorities, even though they may be affiliated with Reform or Conservative Judaism or non-believers. In Turkey, people have the option of civil marriage.

An academician in Turkey argued that neither state is neutral, in the sense that the two promote a religious rather than civic identity:

In case of *Diyanet*, it seems that there is a duality. Even though it was seen as an instrument for the control and management of the religious sphere, it also promotes religion, specifically, the Sunni identity, and does not recognize the rights and freedoms of non-Muslims. *Diyanet* is strong in a financial and ideological sense, and emphasizes the Sunni identity, and this fact leads us to think that the state may not have been neutral to other identities from the very outset. If the neutrality of the state is a prerequisite of secularism, then it is clear that Turkey is not secular. In Israel, people who are not adherents to Orthodox Judaism are also not being treated equal, given that the state promotes Orthodox Judaism.<sup>396</sup>

As the professor stated, the existence of the institution of the Presidency of Religious Affairs clearly illustrates the lack of secularism in Turkey, since the institution obviously supports the dominance of one sect of the majority religion – Sunni Islam. In contrast, Alevis, the major religious minority group in the country, have not been recognized officially by the Presidency of Religious Affairs since the establishment of the state. The state’s offering of official Islam to the public and the education of

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<sup>395</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>396</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 14 March, 2016.

all religious officials by the state are obvious state interventions into religion, which is not compatible with the separation paradigm.<sup>397</sup> Giving to Presidency of Religious Affairs, such crucial religious responsibilities, as the interpretation and execution of an enlightened version of Islam<sup>398</sup>, and the implementation of religious services, point to the protection of a particular religion in the country. Looking at the responsibilities of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, it would seem that it is the responsibilities of this institution to meet the needs of society in religious matters, such as the management of mosques, pilgrimages, etc.; however, when one looks at what occurs in practice, this justification disappears. The policies applied by this institution lead to the exclusion of other religious groups and the promotion of one religion over all others in what is a multi-religious country. The founding elite created this state institution for the dissemination of the official nationalized form of Islam across the country. This institution served as a base for the only approved form of Islam- a Turkified Islam- against all kinds of religious orders and affiliations. In other words, it has provided religious legitimacy for the state's own national interest. When one considers that the task of the Presidency of Religious Affairs is to ensure national unity within a framework of the principle of secularism, it can be said that this institution has been a tool for the protection of the nationalized Islam that was found to be compatible with secularism in the minds of the founding elite. It can be said further that the existence of this institution illustrates the lack of equality and respect of different religions in Turkey. As stated previously, the founders of Republic had no aim to establish a strict separation between religion and state, opposed to the generally accepted argument. As Davison argues, "secularism in Turkey didn't result in structural differentiation as separation between political and

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<sup>397</sup> Semiha Topal, "Everybody wants Secularism- but Which One: Contesting Definitions of Secularism in Contemporary Turkey," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-14, p. 4.

<sup>398</sup> Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, "Parameters and Strategies of Islam- State Interaction in Republican Turkey" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1996, pp. 231-51, p. 234.



religious spheres”.<sup>399</sup> The state elites launched many changes to undermine the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>400</sup>

During the interview, one professor of international relations spoke about the issue of secularism in Turkey and Israel, arguing that even though both states started out as secular states, now, neither can be described in this way:

Secularism is a contested concept. It does not have only one definition. The meaning of secularism changes according to the context, although it is still reasonable to claim that the State of Israel and Turkey have not been shaped neither according to the visions of the founders after their establishment, nor according to the principle of secularism. The role of religion has increased in the political and social spheres in both countries, and the two countries have moved away from their secular ideals.<sup>401</sup>

A professor of history in Israel approached this issue similarly, remarking upon the rise of religion in recent years:

There are many similarities between Turkey and Israel with regards to the relationship between the state and religion. For example, the two have witnessed an increase of influence of religion in recent decades. At the time of the establishment of both states, there were important struggles between the religious and secular sides that shaped politics in Israel and Turkey from the beginning. Kemalism and Zionism were similar in this sense, but the difference is that in Turkey, religious parties can gain a majority but here they are usually in coalitions.<sup>402</sup>

One of the academicians interviewed in Turkey made similar arguments with respect to the rise of religious influence in both countries, but argued that both states are secular due to the lack of an official religion in Israel and Turkey:

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<sup>399</sup> Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A hermeneutic Reconsideration* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1998), p. 158.

<sup>400</sup> Talip Kucukcan, “Sacralization of the State and Secular Nationalism: Foundations of Civil Religion in Turkey”, *George Washington International Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2010, pp. 963-983, p. 964.

<sup>401</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

<sup>402</sup> Jerusalem, Israel, 2 July, 2015.

Even though initially both states appeared on to scene as a secular, the situation changed radically after the 1980s, and they became less secular states. I consider this change to be a product of the modernization efforts in the case of Turkey. In the case of Israel, the increasing role of religion is much more related to such demographical issues as the migration of conservative Jews to Israel. Nevertheless, it can be said that both states are secular, since neither has an official religion, however they became less secular over time.<sup>403</sup>

The academician pointed that Israel and Turkey were both established as secular, although the nature of both states changed over time, becoming less secular. The academician argued that the reason for this shift in Turkey is related to the modernization efforts, and to the changes in the demography in the case of Israel. The academician also argued that the two are nevertheless secular, in that neither has an official religion. That said, the lack of an official religion does not mean that the state is necessarily secular. Whether the states are secular or not is based on the neutrality of the state to all religions in the country, and the principle of freedom of conscience in the country. When it comes to Israel and Turkey, it would be fair to say that maintaining neutrality to all religious communities has not been priority in the political agenda of the state elite, and that the national identity had been constructed not only on civic elements, but also of ethnic and religious factors. On this issue, a professor in Israel pointed out that Israel and Turkey relied on an ethnic definition of national identity, and said that religion had been significant in those boundaries, while people who fall outside those boundaries of the national identity are excluded. The professor went on to emphasize the similarities between Turkey and Israel:

They are similar in the sense that both nations are defined in ethnic terms - Turkey defines itself as Turkish, and Kurdish people are not included in that definition, and similarly, in Israel, Palestinian people are not included in the Jewish nation. They mention national security and what kind of nation, what is the nation? In Israel, it is clearly a Jewish nation. In Turkey, it is a Turkish nation, not a Kurdish nation. When it comes to the relationship between the state and religion, both states have a dominant religion. In Israel, it is institutionalized, but in Turkey, it is not institutionalized. There is no official religion in Turkey, but religion is

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<sup>403</sup> Ankara, Turkey, 8 April, 2016.

controlled by the state. A similar situation exists here. Both states promote religious beliefs or education, through *Diyanet* in Turkey, and through the Education Ministry in Israel.<sup>404</sup>

The academician convincingly emphasized the similar situation of religion in Israel and Turkey, although this study argues that religion was institutionalized in both countries. As pointed out throughout the thesis, the emphasis on religion in national identity led to the integration of religious institutions into the state and political spheres, and as a result, neither country can be described fully as secular. Another academician approached the issue in a similar way, and arguing that both states support religion. Regarding the relationship between the state and religion in Israel and Turkey, the academician pointed out that both support and regulate religion from the very outset:

No two countries in the world are identical, and no two countries have same policies. Every country is different, but the question is how they are different? Most states support religion, but how much and why they support religion differs from case-to-case. So both Israel and Turkey support religion, and the historical reasons for doing so are very different. Both countries regulate the majority religion to a certain extent, which means they also support religion to keep it under control. Not all, but most countries do that and both Israel and Turkey restrict the rights of religious minorities.<sup>405</sup>

The striking similarity between the Israel and Turkey is that both support, promote and privilege only one denomination of the majority religion, respectively Orthodox Judaism and Sunni Islam. In Israel and Turkey, the incorporation of religious institutions into the state apparatus was based on the recognition of only one interpretation of the majority religion. The founding leaders of Israel and Turkey incorporated religion into the state apparatus by means of the establishment of official state institutions that were made responsible for overseeing and implementing religious affairs – The Chief Rabbinate and the Religious Councils in the case of Israel, and The Presidency of Religious Affairs in the case of Turkey. In Israel, the religious institutions and authorities who are responsible for certain religious issues have conducted their works in accordance of one interpretation of the

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<sup>404</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>405</sup> Ramat Gan, Israel, June 28, 2015.

majority religion, the Orthodox version of Judaism. Likewise, in Turkey, the prominent religious institution, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, implements policies based on the Sunni interpretation of Islam. As stated before in this study, although the divide between the different interpretation of Judaism: Orthodoxy, Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel – is not similar to the Sunni/ Alevi divide in Turkey, the two still privilege one interpretation over the others and, leading to the same result- discrimination against the various religious groups who do not affiliate with the preferred or privileged religion.

Both states inherited similar historical legacies after establishment. At the time of the Ottoman Empire, the division of the communities was based on religion, rather than ethnicity or nationality; there were various millets such as Muslim, Jewish, and Christian, etc. The *millet* system was still functioning during the British Mandate in Palestine, and the founding elite in Israel determined to maintain this system after establishing the state, based on various ideological and political considerations. In fact, existing system contributed to the aims of the political leader, since it divided communities according to religion. By maintaining the *millet* system, the boundaries of the Jewish nation became secure. Indeed, the *millet* system represented a good opportunity for the state founding elite in Israel, although the issue of personal status was considered as “high politics”, it draws the boundaries of a nation and decides who is a Jew and who Muslim etc. The Palestinian people are also not regarded as a nation, but rather a religious community, and referring to them as such has been used to serve many political interests as a legitimization tool in Israeli politics. To illustrate, many scholars emphasized that by granting responsibility in personal status issues to the Muslim religious authority, and religious councils is proof of the claim that Israel is democratic and recognizes the existent cultural and religious differences of Palestinians. In this context, the difference in the institutional aspect of the relationship between the state and religion between the two countries is that in Israel, the *millet* system continues, and there are four recognized religions that benefit from state resources and budgets, as well as various religious councils for each stream. In Turkey, the millet system was not maintained officially, as it was in Israel, although it may be said that the political mentality was shaped by the traditional legacy of the *millet* system, to some extent.

For instance, in deciding who should stay and who should go in the population exchange, the government based their decision on religion, which constituted the main feature of the traditional legacy of the *millet* system. Moreover, related to the institutional aspect of the relationship between the state and religion, an academician in Israel underlined one particular difference between Israel and Turkey:

*Diyanet* in Turkey is responsible mainly for religious education, while the Ministry of Religion in Israel is responsible for religious services, like marriage divorce and so on. There is also a Ministry of Education that it is responsible for education, and it also finances religious education.<sup>406</sup>

An expert on international relations in Turkey also made a similar statement:

When we examine the institutional aspect of secularism in Turkey and Israel, Turkey seems to be more secular, since in Israel personal status issues such as marriage and divorce and so on are conducted in accordance with religion.<sup>407</sup>

The existence of religious institutions is more apparent in Israel than in Turkey. In other words, it can be that the existence of religious institutions is more far-reaching in Israel than Turkey, since there are various institutions, councils and organizations involved in religious affairs.

In case of Turkey, Turkish secularism promotes one sect of Islam, being the Sunni interpretation, over all others.<sup>408</sup> In this way, the state has privileged Sunni Islam within the state structure by establishing the Presidency of Religious Affairs.<sup>409</sup> Despite the presence of many other religious groups, such as Alevis, Shiite Caferis, Armenian Orthodox Christians, Jews, Syrian Orthodox Christians, and members of other Protestant sects and Greek Orthodox Christians, the state has promoted the

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<sup>406</sup> Tel Aviv, Israel, 1 July, 2015.

<sup>407</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, 19 April, 2016.

<sup>408</sup> Recep Şentürk, "State and Religion in Turkey: Which Secularism?" in *State and Secularism: Perspectives from Asia*, p. 331; Bryan S. Tuner and Berna Zengin Aslan, "Legal Pluralism and the Shari'a: A Comparison of Greece and Turkey", p. 450.

<sup>409</sup> Kristin Fabbe, "Historical Legacies, Modern Conflicts: State Consolidation and Religious Pluralism in Greece and Turkey", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2013, pp. 435-453, p. 445.

Sunni version of Islam since the inception of the Turkish Republic.<sup>410</sup> Likewise, Orthodox Judaism has been supported and promoted by the state elites since the establishment of the state. The official religious institutions in Israel are dominated by Orthodox Judaism, and non-Orthodox Jews, together with non-Jews, not treated equally. An academician in Israel stated:

The way the relationship is formed between religion and the national identity influences constantly the treatment of dominant movements over others. The dominant group's perception of itself was constructed in many respects by those who are not part of those groups.<sup>411</sup>

Taylor states, "The point of state neutrality is precisely to avoid favoring or disfavoring not just religious positions but any basic position, religious or non-religious."<sup>412</sup> One can argue that the State of Israel and the Republic of Turkey have not been neutral in the case of the various religious groups. During one interview, a political scientist in Israel stated:

The best way to tell how a state approaches religion is to see how much they restrict religious minorities, because that is a true measure. The restrictions on minorities tell you much more about how the state supports religion. There is obviously a strong correlation between the extent the state supports religion and how much it restricts minority religions.<sup>413</sup>

During the state founding years in the two countries, namely the periods of the Mapai in the Israeli case and the RPP in the Turkish case, various ideologies were implemented in the name of democracy, with an emphasis on such Western ideas and concepts as equality and neutrality. It would be fair to say that the state founding elite of both countries failed in that sense, as rather than neutrality, their policies led to privileges being given to individuals who fitted in with the national ideal, while others were discriminated against. Raphael Cohen argues that instead of plurality, the founding elite of Israel perceived cultural pluralism as a threat, and her

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<sup>410</sup> Bryan S. Tuner and Berna Zengin Aslan, "Legal Pluralism and the Shari'a: A Comparison of Greece and Turkey", p. 450.

<sup>411</sup> Haifa, Israel, 29 June, 2015.

<sup>412</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 37.

<sup>413</sup> Ramat Gan, Israel, 28 June, 2015.

argument can be applied also to Turkish case, where governments spent huge efforts to restrict other cultural symbols, traditions and languages. In addition, the state-building elite of both countries sought to transform a society that was perceived as backwards, into a modern and Western oriented society.

#### **4.5. Brief Constitutional Evaluation of the Relationship between the State and Religion in Israel and Turkey**

From a constitutional perspective, there is a significant difference between the two countries. Although constitutional provisions do not grant a certainty, regarding implementation, constitutional texts are perceived as valid and proof the approaches of the states. For instance, the principle of secularism is guaranteed in the Constitution in Turkey, while the lack of a constitution in Israel ensures that the principle of secularism is not guaranteed by the constitution. That said, it is well known that a constitutional clause is not a guarantee in practice, and so it can be said that even though there is a difference with regards to the existence of a constitution and a clause concerning the principle of secularism, in neither country the principle has been fully realized in practice. The main difference between the two countries is that even though the State of Israel reached consensus on the role of religion by means of integrating religion into legislature, in the case of Turkey, the principle of secularism was integrated into the Constitution, and religion was not publicly visible in Turkey as it was in the case of Israel, in that various policies were implemented to restrict its visibility. Another difference is that while in the case of Israel, freedom of religion was only guaranteed to some extent by means of the recognition of various religious communities, but in that a religious marriage is the only recognized option for religious and non-religious people alike that means freedom from religion does not exist in Israel, in Turkey, freedom from religion is guaranteed in the case of marriage since there is civil marriage in Turkey.

The state elite in both countries enacted various policies that reflected the status of the relationship between the state and religion. During the state-building period, religion and secularism or secular nationalism was taken into account in various policies aimed at constructing a homogenous national identity. Some famous scholars of nationalism neglected to address the role of religion in nationalism

studies,<sup>414</sup> tending to emphasize the economic and political aspects of nationalism, while ignoring the role of religion, approaching nationalism as a replacement of religion. In fact, there have been a number of studies that use a secular-religious dichotomy to explain the national identity crises in various polities, and regard nationalism as a result of modernization and secularism, and religion as a phenomenon of the past, that would disappear with modernization and enlightenment.<sup>415</sup> Another argument of this thesis was to oppose the arguments in political science, sociology and in other social science, which claim that the emergence of nationalism replaced religion in newly established nation states. Those arguments approach nationalism and religion as a rival ideology that claim the superiority of one over another. Brubaker argues:

A secular bias in the study of nationalism, like the secularist bias in many other domains of social science, long obscured interesting connections and affinities between religion and nationalism. Long-dominant modernizationist arguments, emphasizing socioeconomic modernity (Gellner 1983, Deutsch, 1953), political modernity (Breuilly 1994, Tilly 1996, Hechter 2000), or cultural modernity (Anderson 1991), neglected religion or saw it as being replaced by nationalism. A widely shared understanding of the modern nation-state- an understanding at once normative and predictive- relegated religion to the realm of the private.<sup>416</sup>

The case of Turkey and Israel reflects the invalidity of those arguments that claim religion replaced by nationalism. Moreover, as Steve Bruce argues:

In the 18th and 19th centuries, rising nationalist movements, and the states they created, often called on a shared religious identity as the basis for a sense of unity among the chosen people. The new nationalists of the first half of the twentieth century tended to eschew religion or even to suppress it. By then the dominant model of progress was secular and the new elites thought that discarding their religious heritage was an

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<sup>414</sup> Such as Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991); and Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Blackwell, 2006) cited in Gila Stopler, "National Identity and Religion-State Relations: Israel in Comparative Perspective", p. 504.

<sup>415</sup> Gila Stopler, "National Identity and Religion-State Relations: Israel in Comparative Perspective", p. 504.

<sup>416</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches", p. 22.



essential to progress as the replacement of horse by the tractor. Many of the new nations failed to develop fast enough or failed to spread the benefits of development sufficiently and eventually triggered waves of reaction that drew heavily on a religious heritage and identity.<sup>417</sup>

Steve Bruce's historical narrative, regarding the issue of secularism and national identity, can be seen in Turkey and Israel to some extent. That said, a cursory look at the historical, constitutional, and institutional aspects of the relationship between the state and religion in form a comparative perspective suggests that nationalism did not replace religion and its relations were not similar to "replacement of the horse by the tractor" metaphor, and such dichotomy would prevent us from grasping the relationship between secularism, national identity and religion.

All of the academicians interviewed in Israel and Turkey stated that a comparative study of Israel and Turkey with respect to the relationship between the state and religion would be very meaningful, and would make a valid contribution to the body of literature, since there have been few studies broaching this issue to date. As one academic stated during an interview:

Such a comparison of Israel and Turkey is very beneficial and may show how concepts like assertive secularism and passive secularism fall short of providing an understanding of the relationship between the in Turkey and Israel. In spite of the differences between them, religion has permeated into politics, society and the national identity issue, albeit by way of a different ideology, and the need to define the boundaries of nation played a leading role in determining the place of religion during the state-building efforts.<sup>418</sup>

To sum up, although various scholars claim that the Kemalist ideology and its supporters attempted to marginalize religion, Islam played a significant role in the construction of a homogenous national unity as a result of the existence of different ethnic groups, such as Kurds, Turks, Albanians, and Bosnians etc. Religion thus served as a common denominator in the national identity. In Israel, religion also functioned as a unifying element amid the various cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences between Jews such as Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, etc. To conclude, the

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<sup>417</sup> Uri Ram, "Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel", p. 59.

<sup>418</sup> Istanbul, Turkey, April 19, 2016.

melting pot ideology – by means of assimilation or exclusion, emphasizing religion as a common umbrella in the name of constituting a national unity- which was embraced by the founding elite of both countries, did not grant legitimacy to their efforts.

## CONCLUSION

Although criticized by many scholars, the secularization thesis assumes that modernization will be followed naturally by secularization, and that religion will lose significance in the public sphere; however, religion still plays a significant role both in politics and in public life. As discussions on secularism developed in this field, it became obvious that the secularization thesis did not hold in most parts of the world, including the two countries studied in this thesis: Turkey and Israel.

As discussed in this thesis, the most common approach to examining the relationship between state and religion is through the lens of secularism, which evolved and was reinforced by the Westphalian system that continues to form the basis of the contemporary state system. Secularism is defined as the separation of religious and political authority, and the nature of this relationship differs from country to country, depending on their political histories. That said, in this thesis, secularism is defined as a political doctrine that is used by the state elite to promote freedom of conscience and the neutrality of state. An analysis of the policies of different states reveals that various understandings of the relationship between state and religion exist. Some states describe themselves as explicitly secular, while others define themselves as religious states, but there are also states that fall between or even beyond the secular and religious descriptions.

There is a growing need for comparative analysis of how secularism works as a doctrine under different national contexts, and this study aims to contribute to this particular body of literature. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Casanova's classifications of "secularism as statecraft doctrine" and "secularism as ideology", as well as Brubaker's "nationalization process of religion" constitute the theoretical departure point of this thesis. Accordingly, the conclusion is based on Casanova's approach as stated previously, and Brubaker's theories on the nationalization of religion. Casanova makes a distinction between "secularism as statecraft doctrine" and "secularism as ideology". Addressing secularism as a statecraft principle, he refers to a kind of principle of separation of religious and

political authority for the sake of the neutrality of state for all religions, or for the protection of freedom of religion. In such a situation, the state does not prescribe a positive or negative role to religion, however when a state entails any view with regards to religion regardless of whether it is positive or negative, it enters the realm of ideology.

When the conception proposed by Casanova is applied to the cases of Israel and Turkey, the arguments represented in this study indicate that the “secularism as statecraft principle” has not been fully realized in the case of either Israel or Turkey. In the interviews conducted for this study, academicians put forward different arguments related to the relationship between the state and religion in Israel and Turkey, and two main viewpoints coming to light. While some academicians argued that Turkey is a secular state and that Israel is not, others argued that neither Israel nor Turkey is secular. Furthermore, some of the respondents claimed that although the two states were secular at the time of their establishment, they can no longer be described as secular. A comparison of the secularism debate in either state, on the other hand, reveals that most academicians in Israel recognize the secular character of Turkey, and believe that Turkey is more secular than Israel. Moreover, academicians in both Israel and Turkey underlined the importance of religion in national identity and state affairs from the beginning of Republic.

The founding elite in neither country implemented policies related to religion to ensure the neutrality of the state. Rather, the policies implemented during the formative years led to the promotion of one religion over the others in both countries. This preference of one interpretation of the majority religion led to both inter and intra-religious problems, and prevented the implementation of freedom of conscience and the neutrality of the state as the main features of the principle of secularism. It would be fair to say that both countries failed to maintain a neutral position towards all religions, and that in fact, the construction of national identity – Jewishness and Turkishness – was partly based on religion. Sunni Islam and Orthodox Judaism were privileged as an inevitable element of the national identity. Indeed, although an attempt was made to make a territorial definition of national identity in both countries, the imagination of the nation was not free of religion. As a result of the priorities given to the majority religion while defining national identity, various

religious groups felt excluded from that imagination, and led to significant discriminations in the histories of both countries. The flag, the national anthem, the official holidays, constitutive myths, etc. all pointed towards the majority religion in the two countries – Orthodox Judaism in Israel and Sunni Islam in Turkey. While Orthodox Jews or Sunni Muslims found it easy to identify with the state symbols, those who did not belong to those religious streams felt discriminated against. Although Israel and Turkey are generally regarded as the democratic and secular countries in the Middle East, this research demonstrates that the principle of secularism has been fully realized in neither country. If one chooses to call Israel and Turkey secular states in the region, they should be defined as states that embrace “secularism as ideology”, giving the preference of the state towards one religion over others. The policies and attitudes of both countries violate not only freedom of religion, but also the freedom from religion, with one clear illustration of this found on Israeli identity cards, where one can be defined as either Jewish, Muslim, Christian or Druze. In short, identity is not based on a civic understanding (Israeliness), but rather the state defines its citizens according to their religious affiliation, which is in direct contradiction to the principle of secularism. The power held by religious authorities in the country is apparent in many areas, such as the control granted to religious authorities in personal status issues (under the Orthodox approach), official holidays, public education, public transportation, burials, regulations related to the import of meat, etc.<sup>419</sup> In this regard, it is clear that Jewish individuals can identify with the state, whereas non-Jewish individuals cannot. These cases discussed throughout this thesis reveal that in Israel, there is no implementation of secularism which is all too clear, given Jewish nature of state. In such a diverse state,<sup>420</sup> the predominance of Judaism in the private and public spheres demonstrates that non-Jewish individuals are discriminated against in favour of the Jews. From the very beginning of the Israeli state, the core structure of the legal system was

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<sup>419</sup> Michael Mousa Karayanni, “The Separate Nature of the Religious Accommodations for the Palestinian- Arab Minority in Israel”, *Northwestern Journal of International Human Rights*, Volume 5, No.1, 2007, pp. 41-71, p. 42.

<sup>420</sup> Nearly one-fifth of the total population, consisting of about 1.2 million citizens, is Palestinian-Arab, while the rest of the population is made up of Moslems, Christians and Druze. The total population of Israel in 2001 was estimated to be 6,439,000, which 1,227,500 18.76% were Palestinian- Arab. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

established around two ideals: a) the existence of a Jewish state and b) respect of democratic principles and freedom for all citizens. In reality, however, the development of the legal system throughout the history of new state reveals that priority was given to those of Jewish origin.<sup>421</sup>

In Turkey, the establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and its incorporation into the state structure considered mostly to be part of a control approach, and based on the desire of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to bring religion under state control. That said, such explanations disregard the crucial role of religion in the formation of the state and the national identity. The goal behind the establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs was not solely to ensure the control of religion, being rather a tool for the construction and dissemination of the official version of Islam in the country. According to some of the academicians in the study, in some cases, Islam has been a defining factor of Turkishness, and this is backed by the various government policies presented throughout this study. In the case of Israel, literature emphasizes the attitude of the founding elite towards the new country and their pragmatic motivations through their decision to incorporate religious authorities into the state structure. Furthermore, various scholars consider the incorporation of religious institutions into the state sphere to be part of Ben-Gurion's desire to keep religion in the hands of the state, comparative study of the relationship between the state and religion in Turkey and Israel, however, reveals that both the control and corporation approaches fall short of providing an understanding of the complex relationship that exists between the state and religion.

Why were religious institutions integrated into the state structures of Turkey and Israel when they referred to themselves as secular and modern? Looking at the ideologies of the state-founding elite in both countries, especially before the establishment of the state, one would expect religion and state to be separated in both countries. However, as discussed throughout this study, religious institutions were incorporated into both states following their establishment. A comparative study of Turkey and Israel reveals that despite their secularist beginnings, both countries witnessed the development of a close relationship between the state and religion that

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

stemmed from the construction of the national identity efforts of the state elite. The primary claim of this thesis is that the founding elite in neither Israel nor Turkey tried to clip the wings of religion during the state-building period, and that religion was actually integrated into the state apparatus from the very inception of the state for various strategic, ideological and political reasons. Explanations that describe Israel as integrationist and Turkey as strictly secular or separatist oversimplify the actual relationship between the state and religion. As a comparative study of the state-building periods of both countries reveals, religion retained an important place in state affairs since the very beginning. The desire to achieve national homogeneity, and the role given to religion at the boundaries of national identity influenced the level of the relationship between state and religion, and created an obstacle to the establishment of a secular state in both Israel and Turkey.

It should be noted that throughout the thesis, the failure of secularism refers to failure in a collective sense, and does not mean that secular individuals do not exist in the private sphere. Turkey and Israel both host a significant number of people who envisioned a secular way of life. Brubaker argues that most Jews in Israel are secular, but in terms of the collective national identity, the majority of them “relate to an identity defined, as in large part by terms, values, symbols, and collective memory still anchored in the Jewish religion”.<sup>422</sup>

Following the approach of Casanova and based on the findings of the interviews conducted in Israel and Turkey for this study, it is possible to argue that Israel and Turkey give a positive role to the majority religion, and that the two may exist within the realm of ideology rather than “secularism as statecraft principle”. It is also apparent that even though the states take different approaches to religion, the same conclusions may emerge regardless of the religion. To illustrate, the comparative study of Israel and Turkey ascertains that granting special privileges to one majority religion, regardless of whether it is Judaism or Islam, leads to same result: discrimination against other religious groups.

In addition to Casanova’s classification of secularism, Brubaker’s analysis of the relationship between nationalism and religion constitutes a crucial aspect of the

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<sup>422</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, p. 174.

discussion of this thesis. As mentioned in the introduction, Brubaker proposed four ways of studying the relationship between religion and nationalism that can be considered very useful in providing an understanding of the complexity of the issue, and his analysis suggests that the relationship between nationalism and religion is not in opposition. When his four distinct means of studying this relationship are applied to the cases of Israel and Turkey, it would appear that Israel fits best into the third perspective, which Brubaker refer to as “religion as imbricated or intertwined with nationalism”. In this situation, religion is considered to be a part of nationalism rather than something left outside its boundaries. The best reflection of this can be seen at the point at which the boundaries of nationalism and religion across, and he argues that in this perspective, the imagination of a nation based on the belief that a nation comprises only those belonging a particular religion, and “religious homogeneity” as a component of national cultural homogeneity, was legitimized in those cases.<sup>423</sup>

In the case of Israel, Jewish nationalism was an alternative to the traditional hegemony of Judaism. The founders of the Zionist movement and its followers aimed to resolve the Jewish problem by creating a national home for Jews. To this end, they made political, diplomatic and economic efforts to be recognized by the international world, the success of which was demonstrated by the establishment of a Jewish state. Initially, they aimed to establish a secular state in which religion played no part in state affairs, but despite their efforts to create a secular alternative to the traditional community, it can be said to have failed to some extent. This study argues that it was the role given to religion, as incorporated into the national identity by secular founding elites, which influenced the level of the relationship between the state and religion. That said, since the construction of a national identity was based on the ethno-religious definition of “Jewishness” and the role attributed to religion in that identity, the founding leaders made compromises with the religious authority that effectively annulled the separation of religion and state from its very inception. The difficulties faced while creating a civic definition of national identity prevented the founding leaders from fulfilling the dream of a secular and democratic state, and still, in contemporary Israeli polity, the relationship between religion and national

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<sup>423</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches”, p. 11.



identity is so well-embedded that a civic understanding of national identity cannot fully be realized.

The third perspective, in which “religion as imbricated or intertwined with nationalism”, is also reflected in how religion is treated by the representatives of Turkish nationalism. The urgency of the nation-building efforts that the state-founding elite confronted soon after the establishment of the state fostered efforts to define the boundaries of the nation. As discussed throughout this study, Sunni Islam was regarded as an indispensable element of the Turkish nation from the outset. More specifically, a Turkified version of Islam that was influenced in particular by the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, emphasized religion’s pivotal role in the establishment of social cohesion in Turkey. In addition to Ziya Gökalp, the idea of a Turkified version of Islam was spoken about by many prominent intellectuals, including Yusuf Akçura and Ali Ağaoğlu. For them, religion – specifically, Sunni Islam – was an inevitable component of Turkishness, and would strengthen Turkishness in Turkey among the various ethnic populations.

The academicians interviewed in Israel and Turkey raised important points related to the similarities and differences between Israel and Turkey and the place of religion in the construction of a national identity – Jewishness and Turkishness. From these interviews, it could be understood that religion was conceived as an indispensable element of the national identity, even for the secular founding elite in both Israel and Turkey, from the very outset. Based on the views of academicians in both countries, it can be argued that both states gave priority to religion and ethnicity rather than to civic elements when defining the boundaries of national identity during the state-building period. In official discourse, although citizenship was defined in secular terms in both countries, this was not the case in practice.

To conclude, in spite of the differences between Jewish and Turkish nationalism concerning the emergence and development and ideological motivations, the two reflected this category to some degree. Orthodox Judaism and Sunni Islam were granted favorable treatment and were promoted by the two states from their establishment, going against the initial intention to create nations based on principles of secularism. Islam has come to be regarded as a significant part of Turkishness, as

Judaism has become an indispensable part of Jewishness. In the two cases, rather than being in an opposite direction, the relationship between religion and nationalism has been dynamic, and in some periods, religion and nationalism *per se*, or between each other, aid in the development of nationalism or religion, while in other periods, religion is intertwined with nationalism.

The second perspective, which Brubaker refers to as “religion as a cause or explanation of nationalism”, is also very useful in aiding an understanding of the relationship between religion and nationalism. In this perspective, religion helps in the development of a particular nationalism, and this category can also be identified through the use of religious motifs, narratives and symbols borrowed from the religious sphere in the political domain in the construction of nationalist claims. Religious vocabulary was integrated into the Turkish nationalism in such terms as *gazi* (those who fought in the name of Islam and became the title of Atatürk) and *şehit* (martyr, for those who die for the protection of Islam), while the flag and national anthem represent other reflections of this category on Turkish nationalism in which religious elements gave impetus to its development of. In the case of Israel, as discussed through this study, religious myths, religious stories, holy books, and religious cults and symbols were used also by representatives of the Zionist ideology, and this appropriation gave impetus to development of Jewish nationalism. In fact, even though religion was regarded as an obstacle to the establishment of a new secular state and society in the minds of the founders, they soon became aware of the importance of religion in dealing with the various ethnically, linguistically and culturally different communities. In this regard, founders of two nationalist movements were engaged in nation-building efforts using religious elements. This thesis argues that the founding elite of both Turkey and Israel sought to nationalize religion rather than to integrate or exclude it. Religion helped in the development of Turkish and Jewish nationalism, and became intertwined with nationalism during the process. Based on the views of the academicians interviewed in Israel and Turkey on the nationalization of religion in both countries, it can be argued that the founding leaders of Turkey and Israel were actually seeking to nationalize Islam and Judaism. However, just one political scientist interviewed in Israel considered differently on this issue and underlined the difference between the two, claiming that incorporation

of the Jewish religion into the national project took place in Israel, while in Turkey, religion and nationalism remained separated and religion was excluded from the national project.

Another aspect addressed in this thesis reflects the dominant arguments in social sciences that claim that the emergence of nationalism replaced religion in the newly established nation states. Most scholars concentrate on the relationship between the state and religion, but neglect the importance of nationalism due to the dominance of the modernization approach, which was unable to foresee the development of religious nationalism. The early years of both states demonstrate that religion, nationalism and secularism were intertwined, with the strong bond between nation and religion being emphasized generally for the Israeli case, while this thesis argues that a relatively strong bond also exists in the case of Turkey. A comparison of two states reveals that in neither case was nationalism victorious over religion, in that both witnessed efforts to nationalize religion. As explained throughout the thesis, the state elite in both Turkey and Israel relied on religious content, reinterpreting and redefining existing religious features to serve their nationalist claims. Brubaker explains one of the goals of Zionism as the “reconstruction or reinvention of Judaism as an essentially modern and secular national movement rather than a religion or civilization”. To conclude, both Israel and Turkey indicate that secular and religious are not on opposing sides and separated, in that they tend rather to reinforce their respective discourse through the application of the other in varying situations.

Brubaker argues that no ways of studying the relation between religion and nationalism that he suggested are exhaustive or mutually exclusive.<sup>424</sup> In other words, they all contribute to an understanding of the relationship between nationalism and religion. This comparative study of Turkey and Israel supports his arguments, in that depending on content, time, political leaders and national discourse, the second and third categories of the Brubaker approach both contribute to the analysis of the relationship between nationalism and religion in Turkey and Israel. Brubaker’s final perspective is also useful in unraveling the complex relations that exists between religion and nationalism with respect to Israel. For this, however,

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

it is necessary to have an understanding of the era after the state-building period which falls outside the scope of this thesis, when religious nationalism gained powerful impetus as a result of the shifts that took place in the ideological, political and demographic conjunctures in Israel.

The findings of the interviews conducted within the scope of this study demonstrate that the two countries, both of which were established in the first half of the 20th century, have a number of similarities related to the relationship between state and religion. As explained throughout the thesis, the establishment of the State of Israel and the Turkish Republic spurred discussions related to the definition of national identity. What is of particular interest in these cases why both the State of Israel and the Turkish Republic committed themselves to religion as an element of Jewishness and Turkishness, despite the founding elite in both countries being mostly secular or non-religious? Even though their initial intention was to establish a secular state, a total separation of state and religion did not occur, with compromises being made by the state at its very inception with the goal of creating a homogenous nation. In both countries, religion was considered a common denominator for the various existing ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups, which could be considered a weakness in the nature of national identity in both countries. In both countries, this ended up being an obstacle in the way of the neutrality of the state, which would normally be a prerequisite for the principle of secularism.

This thesis reveals that one of the main reasons for the failure of the principle of secularism lies in the emphasis attributed to the ethnic definition of national identity by the state-founding elite. A cursory look at the historical, constitutional and institutional aspect of the issue in both Turkey and Israel reveals that the emphasis on ethnic and civil identity has not been constant being subject to change from time to time in the event of, for example, new parties and leaders coming to power. This analysis, however, presents evidence that the state-founding elite concentrated mostly on an ethnic rather than civic definition, and suggests that this may be one of the reasons for the failure of the secularism principle in both states. In other words, the nation was imagined on the grounds of ethnicity and religion in both countries at the beginning, which led to a relative failure of secularism in both the State of Israel and the Turkish Republic. The founders of both states sought to

reinterpret religion and nationalize it in accordance with Western-oriented values, although their political motivations and ideologies were different, the two integrated religion into the state sphere through the establishment of official religious institutions. Building the national identity, due especially to its emphasis on ethnicity and religion, reinforced exclusive attitudes and led to those who fell outside the accepted boundaries of the nation being discriminated against. It would be fair to say that as long as Turkey and Israel consider affiliation to the dominant religion part of the national identity, their secular desires will never be fully realized. To conclude based on the findings of the interviews, it can be said that both the State of Israel and the Turkish Republic failed to maintain or create a secular state, due to some extent to the lack of or inadequate emphasis on the civic definition of national identity. As many of the academicians interviewed argued, Judaism and Islam were considered an inherent part of the national identities of the two nations, and enjoyed significantly more privileges than other religious denominations.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from this comparative study of the relationship between the state and religion in Israel and Turkey, based again on the findings of the interviews, is that the significance of religion in the national identity was not something emerged during later decades, as was argued by many scholars. In the case of Turkey, literature emphasizes the rise of religious importance vis-a-vis secular after the emergence of *Aydınlar Ocağı* or during the 1980s. However, the root of the importance of religion dates back to the state-building era. In the case of Israel, literature contains a number of “rupture arguments” related to the relationship between secularism, religion and nationalism, arguing that before 1967, religion played no significant role in Jewishness, and that it was only after this time that the occupation led to a new kind of national religiosity. The arguments represented in this thesis, however, suggest that the root of this national religiosity had already been in place before 1967, and that new conjuncture that came into being after the Six Day War of 1967 merely triggered this existing importance of Judaism in the definition of Jewish national identity. During the interviews, some academicians remarked upon the fact that the root of importance of religion actually dated back to the early state-building period in both states.

Most studies of the relationship between the state and religion in Israel have concentrated on its uniqueness and argue that Israel is not comparable to other states,<sup>425</sup> but it is put forward in this thesis that such arguments make little sense. For example, Netanel Fisher criticizes any emphasis on uniqueness of the Israeli case with regards to the tensions that exist between nationalism and religion in the Jewish national movement suggesting that in the case of Israel, the only uniqueness is in fact that the Zionist movement depended on religion “in spite of all its opposition to religion”.<sup>426</sup> She argues that various nationalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries tried to weaken the role of religion, and that Israel is not unique in this sense. Where Jewish nationalism does differ, however, is its reliance on religion at the same time, although the comparative study of Israel and Turkey reveals that it is also not unique on that point and this argument can also be claimed for Turkey. The findings of the interviews reveal that although the two countries have many differences with regards to their political, historical, cultural and economic structures and aspects, they share a number of similarities in how the state and religion relate. Although they passed through different historical experiences, the founding leaders of both states attempted to establish a nation state with an urgent agenda to unite the nation. The two cases are very similar in the sense that although the state-founding leaders sought to create a secular state in which no place given to religion in state affairs, they still came to rely on religion. It was religion that provided them with opportunity to bring together various ethnically, linguistically and culturally heterogeneous people under the same umbrella. Comparative studies of Israel and Turkey and the secularism issue have to date been very few in number. This thesis fills this void and contributes to the body of literature analyzing the relationship between nationalism, secularism and the national identity. The interviews conducted within the scope of this study reveal more commonalities than one would expect, as

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<sup>425</sup> Neuberger also criticize the scholars who emphasize the exceptionalism of the Israeli case and say that “Certainly there are some unique features in Israeli state-religion relations, as there are unique features in almost any state which has its own history, traditions and culture... but the object of comparison is to demonstrate both similarities and differences. If everything is similar there is nothing to compare.” Benyamin Neuberger, *Religion and State in Europe and Israel*, p. 77.

<sup>426</sup> Netanel Fisher, “A Jewish State: Controversial Conversions and the Dispute over Israel’s Jewish Character”, p. 219.

well as intriguing parallels with respect to development of secularism in Israel and Turkey.

The current relationship between religion and the state has developed as a result of the various struggles and negotiations related to the issue in most polities. In this context, religion has played a crucial role in the shaping of national identities and the political agenda in both countries. The controversy related to national identity and its religious dimension has maintained popularity in the contemporary periods of both countries. Although the early years of both states saw a rise of secular parties, namely Mapai in Israel and RPP in Turkey, from the 1980s onwards, there has been a notable rise in support for religious parties and the influence of religion in the state apparatus. In both countries, a one-party system was followed by multiparty competition in which the new parties, Likud and the Democrat Party, questioned the founding ideology of the state, especially the principle of secularism. The timing of this development in the two countries is also striking and there have been intriguing developments related to this issue. To what extent the state founding elite's policies in the formative years of the two states encouraged the increase in influence of religion in contemporary politics, and also whether the processes and reasons behind this increase are shared are also substantial issues. A comparative study of Turkey and Israel to come up with answers to these questions merits scholarly attention, and should be discussed in further studies.

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## APPENDICES

### A.TURKISH SUMMARY

#### **İSRAİL (1948-1967) ve TÜRKİYE'DE (1923-1946) ULUS VE DEVLET İNŞASI: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR DEĞERLENDİRME**

Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye ve İsrail'in ulus ve devlet inşa süreçlerinin din, devlet ve milliyetçilik ilişkileri ekseninde karşılaştırılmasıdır. Din-devlet ilişkileri ve milli kimlik inşa sürecine dair genel tartışmalar literatürde yer alsa da, Orta Doğu'da bu iki devletin bahsedilen hususlar üzerinden karşılaştırıldığı kapsamlı çalışmaların az oluşu dikkat çekmektedir. Konuya ilişkin mevcut literatürde, Türkiye ve İsrail demokratik, seküler ve modern olarak tanımlanmakta ve İsrail'in bu bağlamda Orta Doğu bölgesinde istisnai olduğu öne sürülmektedir. Ancak, konuya dair sağlıklı bir analiz yapmak için bu iki devleti temel alan sekülerizm tartışmalarının her iki ülkenin de kendine özgü milli ve tarihsel bağlamlarından koparılmaması gerekmektedir. Bu amaçla bu çalışmada, bu iki ülkenin sekülerleşme süreçlerinde benimsedikleri benzer ve farklı yollar irdelenince İsrail'in bölgede istisnai bir örnek teşkil etmediği, yaygın söylemlerin aksine bu iki devletin sekülerlik süreçlerinin düşünülenenden daha fazla bir paralellikte seyrettiği ve ortak yönleri olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, iki devletin kuruluşunu müteakip gerçekleştirilen milli kimlik inşası sürecinde dinin göz ardı edildiğine dair fikirler öne sürülmüştür. Bu çalışma, belirtilen tartışmalar çerçevesinde din-devlet ilişkilerinin tarihsel, kurumsal ve anayasal ekseninde karşılaştırılması yolu ile iki devletin kurucu ideolojisinin seküler bir temele dayanmasına rağmen, milli kimlik ve ulus inşası sürecinde dine dayalı bir kimlik tanımı yapıldığını ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Buna göre, her iki ülkede kuruluş sürecinde belirgin olan dinin rolünü azaltmaya yönelik çabanın yerini dinin kıstas olduğu bir milli kimlik inşasına bıraktığı görülecektir.

Bu tezin cevap aradığı belli başlı sorular şöyledir: 1) Her iki devletin kurucu elitleri kuruluş aşaması ve bağımsızlık sonrası ilk yıllarda seküler bir devlet

kurma amacını taşıırken nasıl oldu da din ile ilişkilendirilen bir milli kimlik inşası sürecine dâhil oldular? 2) Her iki ülkede sekülerizmin başarısı ya da başarısızlığı ile İsrail ve Türkiye'nin kurucuları tarafından tanımlanan etnik ya da sivil ulusal kimlik tanımları arasında bir ilişkiden bahsedilebilir mi? İsrail'in ve Türkiye'nin bu sorulara cevap aranarak yapılacak olan karşılaştırma çalışması, her iki ülkede sekülerizm meselesinin daha iyi anlaşılmasına olanak tanıyacaktır. Bunun yanı sıra, bu çalışma her iki devletin kurucu seçkinlerinin seküler vaatlerine rağmen din ve milliyetçiliğin ilişkilendirildiği bir tutum sergilemesini karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alıyor.

Çalışmada neden İsrail ve Türkiye karşılaştırılmaktadır? Mevcut literatür ve iki ülkede yürütülen saha çalışmalarının analizi din-devlet ilişkileri açısından İsrail'in istisnai olmadığını açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. İsrail'in deneyiminin diğer ülkelerle kıyaslanamayacağını savunan görüşler mevcut olmasına rağmen, bu çalışma İsrail'in Türkiye ile benzer olduğunu göstermektedir. Her iki devletin kurucuları da 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısında yoğunlaşan ulus devlet ideolojisindeki artış ve dinin kamusal alanda öneminin azalması gibi küresel koşullara uygun olarak benzer adımlar attılar. Bu durum, her iki ülkenin erken devlet inşa yıllarında - Mapai (İşçi Partisi) ve CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) gibi seküler partilerin yükselişinde açıkça görülmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, 1980 sonrası dini partilere verilen destek artmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, dinin etkisi son on yıllar boyunca her iki ülkede de artmakta ve her biri farklı tarihsel, siyasi ve sosyo-ekonomik özelliklere sahip olsa da, din-devlet ilişkileri ve dinin milli kimlikteki yeri ve önemi açısından benzer ve ilginç paralellikler söz konusudur.

İsrail ve Türkiye'nin bu hususlarda karşılaştırılması, her iki ülkede de gerçekleşmekte olan dinin önemini ve kamusal alanda görünürlüğünün artmasının sebepleri daha iyi anlaşılabilir ve bu karşılaştırma, ulus-inşası döneminde uygulanan politikaların çağdaş siyasete olan çok sayıda etkisini ortaya çıkarabilir. Bu tezde, İsrail ve Türkiye bağlamında sekülerizm konusunun tam olarak anlaşılabilmesi için, milliyetçilik ve din arasındaki ilişkinin göz ardı edilmemesi gerektiği savunulmaktadır. Her iki örnekte, çoğu devlete benzer şekilde, seküler bir devlet kurma girişimleri, bir ulus devlet kurma arzusu ile çakıştı. Her iki devletin kurucuları, kuruluşlarını takiben "ulusal kimlik" kapsamını tanımlamak ve: Türk kimdir? Yahudi kimdir? gibi sorulara yanıt aramak durumunda kalmışlardır.

Sekülerizm tartışmasının her iki ülkede ki çelişkili durumu bu tür soruların yanıtlarının belirsizlikleriyle yakından ilişkilidir.

Bu tez, İsrail'de sekülerizmin doğası ve 1948-1967 döneminde ulusal kimlik inşası sürecinde dinin rolü üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. O dönemde ve *yishuv* boyunca (devletin kuruluşu öncesi dönem), Mapai siyasi iktidarı elinde bulundurarak ve dinin konumu ile ilgili birçok politika inşa ederek dini otoritelerle günümüzde önemini koruyan, bugünkü din- devlet ilişkilerinin temelini atan önemli anlaşmalar yapmıştır. Kısaca devlet kurucuları, incelenen dönemde Siyonizm ilkelerine uygun olarak modern, Batılı ve seküler bir devlet kurmaya çalıştı. Çalışma aynı zamanda 1923-1946 döneminde, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde sekülerizmin doğasına ve dinin ulusal kimlik inşasındaki rolü üzerine odaklanmaktadır. İsrail'e benzer şekilde, devletin kurucu elitleri, o dönemde modern, Batılı ve seküler bir devlet kurmaya çalıştı ve yeni kurulan devlette dinin yerini belirleyecek çeşitli reformlar uyguladı.

### **Kuramsal Çerçeve ve Yöntem**

Sekülerizm, literatürde din ve devlet alanları arasındaki uygun ilişkiyi yansıtan siyasi bir doktrin olarak değerlendirilir. Bu doktrinin amacı dini hâkimiyetten bağımsız olarak toplumsal ve siyasal düzenin varlığını garanti altına almak ve böylelikle din özgürlüğünü ve inananlar ile inanmayan kişiler arasındaki eşitliği sağlamaktır. Bu çalışmada, sekülerizmin tanımının sabit olmadığı ve anlamının her devletin kendi tarihsel ve siyasi deneyimlerine göre farklı bağlamlarda değiştiği vurgulanmaktadır. Berg-Sorensen'in savunduğu gibi, sekülerizmin, din özgürlüğünün korunması için gerekli olan bir mekanizma, devletin din karşıtı bir duruş sergilemesi veya kamusal alanda dinlerin görünürlüğünün azaltılması olarak farklı şekillerde yorumu olduğu belirtilmiştir.

José Casanova'nın sekülerizme dair yaptığı “secularism as statecraft doctrine” ve “secularism as ideology” sınıflandırması ve Brubaker'ın din ve milliyetçilik ilişkisine yönelik yaklaşımları çalışmanın teorik bir çıkış noktasını oluşturmaktadır. “Secularism as statecraft principle” ilkesi, din özgürlüğünün korunması ve devletin tüm dinlere karşı tarafsızlığını muhafaza etmek adına dini ve siyasi otoritenin ayrılması ilkesine atıfta bulunur. Böyle bir durumda devlet, dine karşı olumlu ya da olumsuz bir tutum sergilemez. Aksine, devlet olumlu ya da olumsuz olmaksızın, din açısından herhangi bir görüş belirttiğinde ideoloji alanına



girer. Buna ek olarak, sekülerizm ve ulusal kimlik inşası konularının Türkiye ve İsrail bağlamında daha iyi kavranılması için, Anthony Smith'in yasalar, kurumlar topluluğu, ortak sivil kültür ve ideoloji gibi kapsayıcı özellikler açısından tanımladığı sivil milliyetçilik ve etnik ulusların en önemli özellikleri olarak dil, din, gelenek vurgusunun olduğu etnik milliyetçilik tanımlarından yararlanılmıştır. Bu çalışma, dinin her iki ülkede de ulus inşa sürecinin çarpıcı bir unsurunu oluşturduğunu iddia ederken, bu ilişki ile ilgili teorik tartışmalar göz önünde bulundurularak din ve milliyetçilik arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Smith'in belirttiği gibi, milliyetçilik üzerine çalışma yapan sosyal bilimciler dil unsuruna çok fazla dikkat etmekteyken din olgusuna çok az dikkat etmektedirler. Ayrıca, Smith'in ulus devletlerin etnik ve sivil modellerin bir karışımı olduğuna yaptığı vurgu önem arz etmektedir. Milletın nasıl tanımlanacağı meselesi, milliyetçilik çalışmalarının temel çıkış noktası olmakla birlikte bu tanımlamanın nasıl yapılması gerektiğine dair milliyetçilik çalışmalarının 20.yy'da yoğunlaşmasının ardından farklı yorumlar ortaya çıkmıştır. Millet olgusunun doğal bir nitelik olduğuna ve tarihin her döneminde mevcut olduğuna dair yapılan atıfların yanı sıra aslında milliyetçiliğin modernleşme süreciyle birlikte ortaya çıktığını varsayan yaklaşımlarda mevcuttur. Modernleşme üzerinden yapılan okumalarda, milliyetçiliğe dair çalışmalarıyla tanınan sosyal bilimcilerin sanayi devrimi, basım kapitalizmi, geleneklerin yeniden keşfi gibi değişimlerin millet ve milliyetçilik olgularının gelişiminde oynadıkları rol vurgulanmaktadır. Son yıllarda bunlarında ötesinde farklı alternatif yaklaşımlar ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışma milliyetçilik çalışmalarında, dinin göz ardı edilmesini eleştirmekte ve din ve milliyetçilik arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek üzere Rogers Brubaker'ın önermiş olduğu yaklaşımlardan, milliyetçilik çalışmalarında dini göz ardı etmemesi ve bu ilişkiyi kapsamlı olarak ele alması sebebiyle Türkiye ve İsrail bağlamında konunun daha iyi kavranılması açısından faydalanmıştır.

Bu araştırmada kullanılan veri toplama yöntemleri belgesel araştırma ve uzman görüşmelerini içermektedir. Kaynakların bir kısmı İsrail'de İbranice dil eğitimi için bulunduğum sırada ve bir sonraki yılı takiben gerçekleştirdiğim gezi sırasında elde edilmiştir. Bu çalışma için İsrail'de Haifa Üniversitesi, Bar-Ilan Üniversitesi, Kudüs İbrani Üniversitesi ve Tel Aviv Üniversitesi ve Türkiye'de Sabancı Üniversitesi, Koç Üniversitesi ve Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi'nde çeşitli

akademisyenlerle mülakatlar yapıldı. İsrail’de görüşmeler, Haziran ve Temmuz 2015’te beş akademisyenle gerçekleştirildi ve Türkiye’deki görüşmeler beş akademisyenle, Mart ve Nisan 2016’da gerçekleştirildi.

Giriş ve kavramsal çerçeve bölümlerinin ardından bu tez İsrail’in devlet kurma sürecinde din-devlet ilişkilerinde yaşanan deneyimleri araştırıyor ve ana tarihsel dönüşüm noktalarının altı çizilerek, sekülerizm konusunu daha iyi anlamak için Siyonist ideolojinin tartışılmasıyla devam ediyor. Bu bölümde analiz edilen başlıca konular, devletin kurulduğu ideolojik çevre, devlet kurma sürecini şekillendiren ve İsrail’e hala güçlü etkileri olan Yahudi kimliğiyle ilgili tartışmalardır. Tarihsel arka planı incelendikten sonra, konunun anayasal ve kurumsal yönü analiz edilmektedir. Bir sonraki bölüm, Türkiye’de din-devlet ilişkileri ve dinin ulus inşa sürecindeki yeri ve önemine dair tarihsel, kurumsal ve anayasal çerçeve sunmaktadır. Çalışmanın geri kalan kısmı her iki ülkede akademisyenlerle gerçekleştirilen mülakatların verileri göz önünde bulundurularak tarihsel, anayasal ve kurumsal çerçeve kapsamında İsrail ve Türkiye’nin analizini yapmaktadır. Beşinci bölüm, José Casanova ve Rogers Brubaker’ın görüşlerine dayanan kapsamlı bir analizle çalışmayı sonuçlandıracaktır.

### **İsrail’in Kurulması Ve Din-Devlet İlişkilerinin Değerlendirmesi**

Hiç şüphe yok ki, İsrail Devleti’nin kuruluşu, 19.yüzyılda Doğu Avrupa’da ortaya çıkıp Yahudi cemaatinde bir devrime yol açan Siyonist hareketin temsilcilerinin çabaları sayesinde mümkün olmuştur. İsrail’in kuruluşundan önce başlamış olan Yahudi yaşamının sekülerleşmesi, Siyonist hareketle birlikte Yahudi kimliğini bir kez "normatif bir kavram"dan "tanımlayıcı bir kavram" a dönüştürerek Yahudi kimliğini etkilemiştir. Bu yeni Yahudi kimliği bir ulus devlete ihtiyaç duyuyordu. Siyonist hareketin kurucu babası Theodor Herzl, Dreyfus olayına şahit olduktan sonra "Dünya Yahudi devletine ihtiyaç duyuyor; dolayısıyla ortaya çıkacak” demişti. Dreyfus olayı ve Avrupalı Yahudilere karşı anti-Semitizmin yükselişine şahit olan Batılı bir gazeteci ve yazar olan Herzl, Yahudi ulusal hareketini başlattı. Yahudi halkı için ulusal bir ev oluşturulmasının aciliyetini vurgulayan kitabının yayınlanmasından sonra, uluslararası politikacıları ve liderleri Yahudi halkı için bir devletin kurulması için gerekli adımları atmaya ikna etmeye çalıştı. Sonuç olarak, Birinci Dünya Siyonist Kongresi 29 Ağustos 1897’de Basel’de

toplandı ve Kongrenin çabalarının bir sonucu olarak Siyonist örgüt, devletin kurulması yönünde gerekli adımları atmak için oluşturuldu. Atılacak başlıca adımlar arasında Filistin'de tarımsal ve endüstriyel yerleşimin artırılması, tüm ülkelerin Yahudilerinin toplanması ve bir Yahudi ulusal bilincin uyanması yer alıyordu.

İsrail'in kurulmasının ardından, Siyonist hareketin asıl amacına ulaştığı açıkça ortaya çıktı: Yahudi halkı için ulusal bir devlet kuruldu. Bununla birlikte, hâkim görüş demokratik, batı yönelimli ve seküler bir devlet yaratmak olsa da, devletin Yahudi olarak tanımlanması, Siyonist kurucuların bu hayalleri gerçekleştirmesini zorlaştırdı. Siyonistler, kamusal alanları, ulusal tatilleri, resmi takvimleri ve ulusal marşı Yahudi dinine dayanan ve güçlü bir Yahudi karaktere sahip bir devlet yarattılar. Bu doğrultuda yapılan etnik-dini milli kimlik tanımı, Yahudi dininin egemenliği ile birlikte, Yahudi olmayan insanlar için zorluklar yarattı ve seküler ve demokratik bir devlet oluşturulmasını engelledi.

Nitekim Siyonist ideoloji, Yahudi toplumunu seküler bir toplum haline getirmeyi amaçlıyordu ve klasik Siyonizm, dinin ulusal kimlik içindeki rolünü en aza indirmeye çalıştı. Başka bir deyişle, Siyonist hareket çoğunlukla sekülerdi ve diaspora hayatının reddine dayandı. Diaspora Yahudilerinin kırılğan ve dindar görüşlerini bırakıp seküler ve kendine güvenen bir "Yeni Yahudi" kimliğinin oluşturulması gerektiği vurgulandı. Diasporayı reddetme ve diaspora yaşamında Yahudilerin acılarına vurgu, yeni devleti meşrulaştırmak amacıyla Siyonist siyasi ve kültürel seçkinler tarafından araçsal bir biçimde kullanıldı. Siyonizm din kurallarını, sembollerini, motiflerini yeni bir yorumla yeniden tanımlayarak, dini Yahudi milliyetçiliğinin gelişimine ivme kazandıracak şekilde araçsallaştırıldı. Bu, İsrail'e gelen kişilerin farklı etnik, kültürel ve dilsel kökenden geldiği gerçeğinin doğrudan bir sonucuydu ve bu kişiler için din birleştirici bir unsurdu. Başlangıçta Siyonist liderler dini millileştirmeye ve Yahudilerin ulusal kimliğini ulusallaştırmaya ve sekülerize etme çabasıyla, Filistin'de, iddia ettikleri tarihi vatanlarında, Yahudiler için seküler bir ulusal devlet kurmaya çalışıyorlardı. Yahudiler tarafından diaspora döneminde kullanılan Yahudilerin günlük dili olan Yiddiş yerine, iki bin yıl boyunca kullanılmayan, kutsal dil ve dini ritüellerin dili olan İbraniceyi kullandılar. Ayrıca diaspora bağlantılarını yansıtan Yahudi isimlerinden vazgeçerek bunun yerine İbranice isimler kullanmaya başladılar ve Avraham Avi, Yossef, Yossi oldu vs.

İsimleri değiştirmek için teşvik yukarıdan gelmişti; örneğin, David Ben-Gurion (eski Gryn), ordu ve siyasi kuruluşta bir isim değiştirme politikası uyguladı. Dahası, hahamlar gibi dini figürleri vurgulamaktan ziyade, ulusal savaşçılar rol model olarak sunulmuştur. Buna ek olarak, Yahudi cemaatinin Roma İmparatorluğu'na karşı ayaklanmasının lideri olarak *Bar Kochva*, Siyonizm'in kurucu mitlerinden biri olarak kullanılmış ve Siyonist kurucular tarafından ulusal bir kahraman olarak vurgulanmıştır. Diğer kurucu mit, Siyonistler tarafından "özgürlük için Yahudi mücadelesi" olarak yeniden yorumlanan ve tekrar vurgulanan *Masada* 'ydı. Masada olayı yüzlerce yıldır dini gelenekte görmezden gelinmişti, ancak Siyonist kurucular, "*Masada*'nın tekrar düşmemesi için her şey yapılmalıdır" mesajını taşıyan bir *Masada* miti yarattılar. Bu bakımdan, kutsal kitaptaki ulusal kahramanlar devlet kurucularına hedeflerini gerçekleştirmeleri için çok önemli bir fırsat sundu. Dini festivaller, ritüeller ve sembollerin ulusal arzuları güçlendirecek şekilde yeniden tanımlandığını ve yeniden yorumlandığını belirtmek gerekir. Devlet kurucuları geleneksel dini sembollerini benimsedi ancak geleneği kendi hedefleri doğrultusunda yeniden yorumladılar; bazı dini festival ve semboller dini içerikten yoksun bırakıldı veya yeni milliyetçi anlamlar kazandı. *Rosh Hashana* ve *Yom Kippur* gibi dinsel festivaller tamamen dini kökenleri nedeniyle göz ardı edilirken, *Hanuka*, *Tu Bishvat* gibi Yahudiler arasında ikincil önem taşıyan bayramlar Siyonist söylemde daha büyük önem kazandı. Siyonist milliyetçi amaçlara hizmet etmek için yeniden yorumlanan dinsel bayramlara bir örnek olarak *Shavuot* (Haftanın Şenliği) verilebilir. Geleneksel olarak Tevrat'ın Sina Dağı'nda verilmesinin zamanı olarak kutlanan bayram Siyonist söylemde bir "doğa ve tarımın tatili" olarak yeniden yorumlandı.

Devlet seçkinleri dini yeni kurulan devletin varlığını meşrulaştırmak için araştırdı ve Yahudilerin Filistin'de ikamet etmelerinin tarihsel bir hak olduğunu Yahudi halkı ve uluslararası topluluğa kanıtlamak için arkeolojik çalışmaları teşvik etti. Bu ideolojik değerlendirmelere ek olarak, Holokost'un muazzam etkileri ve Ortadoğu ülkelerinden gelen büyük göçmen dalgası, Yahudi ulusal kimliğinin tanımında dinin kaçınılmaz bir yerinin olduğu bir milli kimlik vurgusu yapılmasına neden oldu. Birincisi, Holokost, seküler liderlerin diasporadan uzak durma konusundaki daha önceki tutumlarını sürdürmesini zorlaştırdı. İkincisi, Müslüman ülkelerdeki Yahudilerin İsrail'e göç etmeleri dini vurgunun yükselmesine katkıda

bulundu. Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika'dan gelen yeni göçmenler sahip oldukları kültürel, tarihsel, etnik ve ulusal çeşitliliği getirerek, kurucu elitler tarafından hayal edilen seküler ve modern devlete uymadılar. Kısacası, çeşitli etnik, kültürel ve dil farklılıklarına sahip olan yeni göçmenleri kolektif kimliğe entegre etme ihtiyacının bir sonucu olarak, devletin kurucu seçkinleri ortak bir unsura ihtiyaç duyuyordu ve bu hedefe ulaşmada dinin ortak bir unsur olarak mükemmel bir şekilde hizmet ettiğine inanmışlardı. Din farklı kökenden insanları aynı çatı altında bir araya getirmeyi başarabilirdi. İsrail'de ulusal bir kimlik inşa etmede dinin giderek artan önemi, Arap-İsrail çatışması meselesinin analizi olmadan yeterince anlaşılamaz. Yahudi kimliği belirli bir noktada Filistin kimliğine göre şekillenmeye başladı. Yahudi ulusal kimliğinde dinin restorasyonu, Yahudi Soykırımı ve Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika'dan İsrail'e toplu göç nedeniyle zaten gerçekleşmişti, ancak devlet kurucu seçkinlerin dini otoritelerin desteğini almak ve koalisyon hükümetinin kurulması için kaçınılmaz olan dini partiler ile yapılan koalisyon gibi ideolojik ve pragmatik düşünceleri ile ivme kazandı.

Bir Anayasa'nın yazılması, genellikle bir devletin kurulmasından sonra öncelikli bir görevdir. İsrail bu konuda istisna teşkil etmemekte ve İsrail'in kuruluşunu müteakip Anayasa üzerine uzun tartışmalara başlamıştı. Birleşmiş Milletler Kararı, eşitlik, bireylerin özgürlüğü vb. gibi liberal temelli bir Anayasa'nın ilan edilmesini öngörüyordu, ancak İsrail hala yazılı bir anayasaya sahip değildir. Anayasa'nın ilanı, seküler kurucu seçkinler tarafından çeşitli taraflar arasındaki gerilimleri bastırmak amacıyla ertelenmişti. "Status Quo Anlaşması", dinin yeni kurulan devletteki yerini belirledi ve dini otoritelerin Siyonist Yönetici temsilcileri tarafından Bağımsızlık Bildirgesi'ne destek vermesi karşılığında Siyonist olmayan *Agudat İsrail* ve David Ben-Gurion arasında imzalandı ve dini otoritelere ayrıcalık tanındı. 1948 tarihli Kanun ve Yönetim Yönetmeliği ile Ortodoks dini otoritelere evlilik ve boşanma konularında önemli güç ve kontrol sağlandı. 1953'te *Knesset* (İsrail Parlamentosu) tarafından onaylanan Evlilik ve Boşanma Kanunu, dini otoritelere evlilik ve boşanma konusunda tam yargı yetkisi verdi. Sonuç olarak, kendini demokratik bir rejim olarak tanımlayan İsrail'de sivil evlilik yoktur.

*Knesset* tarafından Geri Dönüş Yasasının yürürlüğe konması, İsrail'de din ve devlet arasındaki ilişkinin anayasal yönü açısından çok önemlidir. Dönüş Yasası 5

Temmuz 1950'de kabul edildi ve Siyonist ideolojinin başlıca yasal ifadesi idi: Yahudileri vatanlarında topluyordu. Nitekim ulus devletin sınırlarını ve kimin bu sınırlara ait olduğunu veya kimin olmadığını belirledi. Yahudi dininin homojen bir ulus devletinin kurulmasında belirleyici bir rol oynaması tesadüf değildir. Yahudi dininin yalnızca İsrail'de değil, dünyanın dört bir yanındaki mensupları ulus devlete entegre edilmiş olmasına rağmen, Ortodoks olmayan Yahudilerin ve Arap halkların eşit muamele görmediği açıktır.

### **Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Kuruluşu ve Din-Devlet İlişkilerinin Değerlendirmesi**

Türkiye'de sekülerizm meselesiyle ilgili tartışmalar Cumhuriyet'in kuruluşunun ilk safhalarında yaygın olarak görülüyordu. Bu tartışmalar çoğunlukla kurucu aktörlerin dini dışladığı varsayımı üzerinden devam etmiştir. Ayrıca devletin kuruluşunun ardından Cumhuriyet'in kurucuları tarafından uygulanan modernleşme reformlarının amacı, çeşitli araştırmacılar tarafından devletin dini kontrol altına almasının bir aracı olarak yorumlanmıştır. Bununla birlikte, bu çalışma bu yaklaşımların din ve devlet arasındaki ilişkiyi basitleştirdiğini iddia ediyor.

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun yıkılışının ardından kurulan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu arasında çeşitli devamlılıklar ve kopuşlar mevcuttur. İdeolojiler, milliyetçi seküler politikalar vb. gibi ekonomik, kurumsal ve siyasal yapılar açısından her ikisi arasında meydana gelen birçok kopma çok açıktır; ancak milli kimlikte dinin yeri söz konusu olduğunda, özellikle Cumhuriyet'in oluşum yıllarında kopmalara kıyasla daha fazla süreklilik bulunduğunu iddia edebilir. Dahası, yeni devletin milliyetçi ideolojisi, Jön Türklerin milliyetçi söyleminden bağımsız olarak düşünülemez ve bu bağlamda 1923'te Cumhuriyet'in kurulması, kısmen I. Selim'in 18.yüzyıl sonlarında yaptığı reformlarla başlatılan modernleşme ve Batılılaşma çabalarının bir doruk noktası olarak görülebilir. Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki geleneklerin birçoğu, örneğin Sünni kimliğin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda egemenliği gibi unsurları yeni devlete miras olarak kalmıştır. Bununla birlikte, reform hareketleri, Müslüman nüfus arasında artan bir kızgınlığa yol açmıştı, çünkü zaten ekonomik olarak egemen olmuş gayri-Müslim cemaat ile Müslüman toplum reformlardan sonra eşit haklara kavuştuklarından Müslüman toplum mutsuz durumdaydı. Sonuçta reform hareketleri, ironik bir dönüşle, gayrimüslimler arasında ayrılıkçı hareketleri engellemedi, aksine, Müslüman nüfus

arasında kızgınlık yaratmaya başladı. I.Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Balkan Savaşları sırasında Avrupa Devletleri'ne önemli toprak kayıpları ve daha sonra birçok halkın göçüyle birlikte Osmanlı toprakları esas olarak Anadolu'ya kısıtlandı.

Osmanlı'da toplumsal yapının en önemli unsurlarından biri olan millet sistemi dini aidiyetin önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Millet sisteminde cemaatler bireylerin dini aidiyetlerine göre birbirlerinden ayrılmışlardı. Osmanlı devlet seçkinleri İmparatorluğu muhafaza etmek amacıyla 18.yüzyılda reform hareketlerine başlamıştı. İmparatorluğun muhafazası için birbirinden farklı ideolojiler ortaya çıkmıştı. Bunlar Osmanlıcılık, Pan-İslamcılık ve Türkçülüktür. Balkan Savaşları ve yükselen milliyetçilik hareketleriyle bağımsızlıklarını elde eden unsurların ardından, Abdulhamid Osmanlı tebaasının İslami unsurlarla birleştirilmesi için çaba harcadı. Onun için bütün İslamcılarını hilafeti altında birleştirmek için pan-İslamcılık gerekliydi, ancak ideoloji Sultan-Halifenin etrafındaki bütün Müslümanları bir araya getirmeyi başaramadı, Pan-İslamcılığın ve Osmanlıcılığın başarısızlığı, Jön Türklerin ve diğer entelektüellerin, Türk kimliğini vurgulamasına yol açtı. Jön Türk hareketi özellikle 1908 Anayasal Devrimiyle hız kazanmış ve Türk kimliğine ve Türklüğe vurgu yapmaya başlamıştı. İmparatorluğun çöküşünün hızlanması ve bağımsız milli devletlerin kurulmasının ardından, devlet seçkinlerinin çabalarıyla Türk milliyetçiliği ortaya çıktı. Ziya Gökalp ve Yusuf Akçura gibi birçok entelektüel, milliyetçiliğin İslam ile uyumlu olduğunu düşünüyor ve dinin Türk milliyetçiliğini güçlendireceğini düşünüyordu. Bu bağlamda, İslam'ın ulus devlet çıkarlarını desteklemek için kullanılması gerektiğine inanıyorlardı. 1923'te Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni ilan edildi ve birtakım ekonomik, siyasi ve kültürel değişiklikler yapıldı. 1923'te Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulmasından 1946 yılında çok partili siyasetin başlangıcına kadar, Türkiye tek parti rejimi -Mustafa Kemal Atatürk önderliğinde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi tarafından yönetildi. Yeni devletin amaçlarından biri, hem devlet düzeyinde hem de toplumsal düzeyde değişiklikler getiren bir Batılılaşma projesi başlatmak ve devletin çeşitli reformlarla var olan siyasi ve ideolojik yapıları yeniden yapılandırmasıydı. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, seküler bir ulus devlet ve Batılı bir toplum yaratmaya çalıştı ve ülkenin gelişimi ve toplumun dönüşümü, gelişmiş Batılı ulusların modeline uygun olarak planlandı.

Cumhuriyetin kurulmasından bir yıl sonra 1924'te Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası Millet Meclisi tarafından ilan edildi. İkinci maddede, İslam devletin resmi dini olarak ilan edilmiş, ancak "Türk Devletinin Dini İslam'dır." olarak ilan edilen yazı 1928'de kaldırıldı. Laiklik ilkesi ilk önce CHP tarafından 1931'de altı temel ilkedен biri olarak kabul edildi ve Atatürk'ün ölümünden bir yıl önce 1937'de anayasaya dâhil edildi. Laiklik ilkesi, 1961 ve 1982 yılları gibi daha sonraki anayasalara da dâhil edildi ve Anayasanın değiştirilemez bir ilkesi haline geldi. Yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi, bu reformlar dini dışlamayı amaçlamadı. Devlet elitleri, geleneksel yasaları ve kurumları ortadan kaldırarak Osmanlı mirasını yok etmeye çalışsalar da, dini devlet aygıtına dâhil ettiler. Aslında milliyetçilik dini unsurlardan arındırılmış değildi ve Cumhuriyetin kurucuları, özellikle Ziya Gökalp'ın ve diğer önemli entelektüellerin dinin toplumsal bütünlüğe katkıda bulunmasında öncül rolünü vurgulayan düşüncelerinden etkilenerek, Türkleştirilmiş bir İslam ortaya çıkarmaya çalıştılar. Buna örnek olarak, Ezan reformunda ana motivasyon, Arap etkisinin ve geleneğinin ortadan kaldırılması ve devlet seçkinlerin ülke çapında İslam'ı ulusallaştırmaya yönelik arzusunun yaygınlaştırılmasının önünü açmasıydı. Kısacası, milliyetçi gündem İslam pahasına yaratılmadı ve milliyetçi söylem millet, vatan, gazi, şehit gibi dini kelimeleri kullanarak dinin millileştirilmesine katkıda bulundu. Türk milliyetçiliği, dinin ortadan kaybolmasından kaynaklanan boşluğun doldurulması ihtiyacından ötürü büyümedi; Ezan'ın Türkçe olarak okunması devlet elitlerinin dinin millileştirilmesine dair motivasyonunun açık bir göstergesi olarak işlev görür.

Devletin kuruluşunun ardından devlet seçkinleri ulusun tanımlanması gerekliliği sorunuyla karşılaşmıştı. Resmi yorum, kurucu seçkinlerin sivil bir kimlik tanımlı oluşturmaya çalıştığını iddia etse de, Türk kimliğinin etnik-dini bileşeni devlet politikalarında belirgindir. Lozan Anlaşması'nın ardından Türkiye ve Yunanistan arasında gerçekleşen nüfus mübadelesi, milli kimlik tanımlı yapılırken dini kriterlerin kıstas alındığını güçlü bir şekilde ortaya koymaktadır. Nüfus mübadelesi sürecinde kimlerin gitmesi ve kimlerin kalması gerektiği gibi soruların cevapları din kıstas alınarak verilmişti. Nüfus mübadelesinde, ulusal kimliklerin geleceğini belirlemek için karar verme süreci, etnisite veya dil yerine dini aidiyetlere dayanıyordu. Örnek vermek gerekirse, Karamanlılar Türkçe konuşmaktaydı; ancak Ortodoks



Hıristiyanlardı. Dinsel aidiyetleri nedeniyle nüfus mübadelesi anlaşması uyarınca Yunanistan'a göç ettirilip göç ettirilip ettirilmeyeceği sorusu gündeme geldi. Şaşırtıcı olmayan bir şekilde, bu tür durumlarda Müslüman olmayanlar Yunanistan'a göç etmek zorunda kaldı. Ya da Yunanca konuşan ancak Müslüman olan Arnavutların kaderi ne olacaktı? Uygulamada olan şey, etnik ya da dilsel bağlılığın değil, dini kimliğin belirleyici olduğuna işaret etmektedir. O zaman milli kimliğin sınırı açıldı: Müslüman olmak Türklüğün önemli bir bileşeniydi. Soner Çağaptay'ın iddia ettiği gibi, ideal Türk Müslüman bir Türktü. Kirişçi, Türklerin ulusal kimliğinde Sünni İslam'ın önemini vurgulayarak ve bir Türk'ün tercihen Türkçe konuşması ve Sünni bir Müslüman olması gerektiğine dair inancı belirtmektedir. Gayrimüslimlerin hayal edilmiş ulusal topluluğun sınırlarından çıkarılması amacı, nüfus mübadelesine açıkça yansımıştır. Bu sebeple, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşunun hemen ardından başlayan süreçte dini kriterler milli kimliğin önemli bir birleşeni olarak tanımlandı. Diğer bir deyişle, İslam Türk milliyetçiliğinin gelişimine ivme kazandırmıştır. Devlet kurucularının seküler ilkelerle hareket etme amaçlarına rağmen, milli kimlik neden din ile ilişkilendirilmişti? Bu sorunun yanıtı, kurucu elitlerinin homojen bir milli toplumun ortaya çıkması için dinin elzem olduğu inancında yatar. Farklı etnik, dini, kültürel özelliklere sahip insanlar İslam çizgisinde birleştirebilirdi. Türkçe, Kürtçe, Arapça, Lazca, Arnavutça gibi birbirinden farklı dillere sahip bireylerin olduğu bir toplum İslam vurgusuyla birleştirilebilirdi. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde din ve devlet arasındaki örgütsel bağ Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın kurulması ile devam etmiştir. Bugün kurum, dini alanla ilgili geniş bir görev yelpazesine sahiptir; imam ve müftü ataması; Haccın düzenlenmesi; Camilerin idaresi ve dini konularda fetva yayınlanması gibi işleri yürütmektedir. Kurum ayrıca Kur'an okullarını örgütlüyor ve Kur'an ve Hadislere göndermelerde bulunan İslam'ın Sünnî yorumuna dayanan fatwa hizmetlerini uyguluyor. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın kuruluşunun ana hedefi sadece din kontrol etmek değil aynı zamanda ülkedeki resmi bir İslam'ın inşası ve genişletilmesi için bir araç olarak kullanılmasıydı. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın kurulması, Türkiye'de ana dini azınlık grubu olan Alevileri etkiledi. Onlara göre, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Sünni Müslümanlar tarafından yönetiliyor ve Alevilerin ihtiyaç ve taleplerini karşılamada başarısız oluyor. Devlet tarafından resmi olarak tanınmamasının yanı sıra, yalnızca Sünni İslam'ı öğreten zorunlu din derslerini almak

zorundalar. Ortodoks, Ermeniler ve Yahudiler bu zorunlu derslerden muaf olsalar da, Aleviler değildir. Bu bağlamda, Türklüğün önemli bir bileşeni olan Sünni İslam, devlet tarafından ayrıcalıklı ve korunmuş haldeydi. Siyasi seçkinlerin gündeminde, millileştirilmiş bir İslam, devlet için bir tehdit teşkil etmiyordu, aksine homojen bir ulus devletin gelişimine katkıda bulunuyordu. İktidardaki seçkinlerin akıllarında, Arap ve Osmanlı unsurlarının ortadan kaldırıldığı millileştirilmiş bir İslam, sekülerizm ilkesi ve bir ulus devlet fikri ile uyumluydu.

### **Karşılaştırma ve sonuç**

İsrail ve Türkiye coğrafi boyut, ekonomik ve siyasi yapılar, nüfusun bileşimi, tarihi deneyimler ve devlet geleneği gibi çeşitli açılardan birbirlerinden farklı olmakla birlikte, özellikle din ve devlet ilişkileri açısından dair çarpıcı benzerlikleri paylaşmaktadır. Yahudi milliyetçiliği ve Türk milliyetçiliği, toplumu dönüştürmeyi amaçlayan modern bir ulus devlet kurmayı amaçladı. Theodor Herzl liderliğindeki Siyonizm ve Mustafa Kemal Atatürk önderliğindeki Türk milliyetçiliği – seküler bir devlet ve modern ve Batı odaklı bir toplum yaratmayı amaçlıyordu fakat her iki milliyetçi ideoloji de dine önemli ve ayrıcalıklı bir statü verdi.

İsrail'de ve Türkiye'de görüşülen akademisyenlerin dinin millileştirilmesine ilişkin görüşlerine dayanarak, kurucu liderlerin başından beri İslam'ı ve Yahudiliği ulusallaştırmaya yönelik girişimlerde buldukları söylenebilir. Buna göre, akademisyenlerin birçoğu, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin ve İsrail'in kurucularının dini millileştirmek ve dini her iki devletin Batılılaşma çabalarıyla uyumlu hale getirmek için çeşitli reformlar uyguladığını belirttiler. Her iki ülke arasında benzerliklere ek olarak, İsrail ve Türkiye'deki akademisyenler tarafından birtakım farklılıklar vurgulanmıştır. Her iki ülkede seküler ve dini aydınlar arasındaki işbirliğinin bir sonucu olarak kurulmuştur. Ancak dini entelektüellerin Türkiye'de kurulduktan sonraki yıllarda elimine edilmesine rağmen; kuruluşun sonra İsrail'de dini entelektüeller ile seküler olanlar birlikte yönetimde bulunmaya devam etti.

Her iki ülkedeki akademisyenlerin görüşleri, devlet inşa sürecinde ulusal kimliğin sınırlarını belirlenirken, iki devletin demokratik ve sivil unsurlardan ziyade din ve etnik kökene öncelik verdiklerine işaret ediyor. Vatandaşlık, resmi söylemde seküler araçlar vasıtasıyla tanımlanmış olsa da uygulamalardaki gelişmeler bundan uzaktı. Seküler olduğunu iddia eden bir devlet, bir dini diğerlerinden üstün kılarak,

yalnızca bir dine değil, aynı zamanda ulusal sınırlar oluştururken o dinin belirli bir yorumuna (sırasıyla, Türkiye ve İsrail'de Sünni İslam ve Ortodoks Yahudilik) ayrıcalık vererek ve sadece Müslüman veya Yahudi olanları kucaklayarak nasıl seküler olduğunu iddia edebilir? Türkiye'de Nüfus Mübadelesi ve İsrail'de Dönüş Yasası dinin milli kimliğin çok önemli bir bileşeni olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Yahudiliğin Ortodoks yorumuna ayrıcalıklı bir statü verilirken, Yahudiliğin Reform Yahudiliği ve Muhafazakâr Yahudilik gibi diğer yorumları ise resmi olarak tanınmadı. Türkiye'de Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Sünni İslam'ı ayrıcalıklı hale getirmesi Müslüman olmanın Türk olmanın ön şartı olarak varsayıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Her iki ülkede akademisyenlerle yapılan görüşmelerin bulguları iki temel bakış açısını ortaya koymaktadır. Akademisyenlerin bir kısmı, Türkiye'nin seküler bir devlet olduğunu ve İsrail'in olmadığını iddia ederken, diğerleri her ikisinin de seküler olmadığını savundular. Çoğu akademisyen, her ikisinin de seküler olarak başlamış olmalarına rağmen, artık böyle tanımlanamayacağını belirttiler.

İsrail ve Türkiye arasındaki çarpıcı benzerlik, çoğunluk dininin yalnızca bir mezhebinin - Ortodoks Yahudilik ve Sünni İslam'ın desteklemesidir. İsrail ve Türkiye'de dini kurumların devlet aygıtına dâhil edilmesi, çoğunluğun dinin yalnızca bir yorumunun kabul edilmesine dayanıyordu. Öte yandan İsrail'de dini kurumların varlığı daha kapsamlıdır. Ayrıca sekülerizm ilkesi, Türkiye'de Anayasa'da güvence altına alınırken, İsrail'de bir anayasa bulunmamaktadır. Bir başka fark ise, İsrail örneğinde, din özgürlüğünün çeşitli dini cemaatlerin tanınması vasıtasıyla belli ölçüde güvence altına alınmış olmasına karşın, dindar olmayan kişiler içinde tek seçenek olarak dini bir evliliğin olmasıdır. Türkiye'de ise sivil evlilik söz konusu olduğu için din özgürlüğünün nispeten var olduğu anlamına gelir.

Sonuç olarak, çeşitli sosyal bilimciler Kemalist ideolojinin ve taraftarlarının dini marjinalleştirmeye çalıştıklarını iddia etseler de, İslam, Kürtler, Türkler ve Arnavutlar gibi farklı etnik gruplarının homojen bir ulusal birlik oluşturulmasında önemli bir rol oynamıştır. İsrail'de din, Aşkenazi ve Mizrahi gibi Yahudilerin çeşitli kültürel, etnik ve dil farklılıklarının ortasında, birleştirici bir unsur olarak da işlev gördü. Sonuç olarak, her iki ülkenin kurucu seçkinleri tarafından benimsenen eritme potası ideolojisi - asimilasyon veya dışlanma yoluyla, dinin ortak bir şemsiye olarak

vurgulanması, ulusal bir birlik kurma adına yürüttükleri çabalara meşruiyet sağlamadı.

José Casanova'nın öne sürdüğü yaklaşım, İsrail ve Türkiye örneklerine uygulandığında, bu çalışmada ortaya konan argümanlar, "secularism as statecraft principle" ilkesinin tam olarak gerçekleşmediğini göstermektedir. Kısacası, milli kimlik sivil bir yurttaşlık anlayışına dayanmıyor, daha ziyade devletin vatandaşlarını sekülerizm ilkesine doğrudan aykırı olarak dini inançlarına göre tanımlıyor. Bu tezin birincil iddiası, ne İsrail'de ne de Türkiye'de kurucu seçkinlerin, devlet inşası sürecinde dinin kanatlarını tıkamaya çalışmadıkları, dinin aslında çeşitli stratejik, ideolojik ve politik nedenlerle devlete entegre edildiğidir.

İsrail ve Türkiye'de din ve milliyetçilik meselesinin karşılaştırılması, Yahudilik veya İslam olmasına bakılmaksızın bir çoğunluktaki dine özel ayrıcalıklar kazandırmanın aynı sonuca yol açtığını, diğer dini gruplara karşı ayrımcılık yapılmasına neden olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Brubaker'ın milliyetçilik ve din ilişkilerine yönelik yaklaşımları, bu çalışmada bahsedilen iki ulus- devlet örneğine uygulandığında, İsrail'in, Brubaker'in "milliyetçilikle iç içe geçmiş şekilde din" olarak değindiği üçüncü perspektife uyduğu görülür. Bu durumda, din, sınırlarının dışında kalan bir şey olmaktan çok milliyetçiliğin bir parçası olarak düşünülür. Bu yaklaşımda, ulus yalnızca belirli bir dine ait olanların oluşturduğu bir topluluk fikri üzerine kuruludur. Her iki ülkedeki akademisyenlerin görüşlerine dayanarak, millet ve devlet inşa sürecinde ulusal kimliğin sınırlarını tanımlarken her iki devletin de sivil unsurlardan ziyade din ve etnik unsurlara öncelik verdiği savunulabilir.

Sonuç olarak, ortaya çıkış, gelişme ve ideolojik motivasyonlar açısından Yahudi ve Türk milliyetçiliği arasındaki farklara rağmen, ikisi bu kategoriyi bir dereceye kadar yansıtıyordu. İki ulus devletin analizi, kuruluşlarının arasındaki zaman farkının bu hususta önemli bir değişiklik yaratmadığını ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Her iki ülkede de çoğunluk dini desteklendi ve İsrail'de Ortodoks Yahudilik, Türkiye'de Sünni İslam teşvik edildi Brubaker'in "milliyetçiliğin bir nedeni veya açıklaması olarak din" olarak atıfta bulunduğu ikinci perspektif, din ile milliyetçilik arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamada çok faydalıdır. Bu perspektifte, din belirli bir milliyetçiliğin gelişiminde yardımcı olur ve bu durum, milliyetçi iddiaların inşasında siyasi alanda dini alandan ödünç alınan dini motif, anlatı ve sembollerin kullanılması

yoluyla da tanımlanabilir. Gazi, şehit gibi dini terimler Türk milliyetçiliğine entegre edilirken, dinin Türk milliyetçiliğinin gelişmesine ivme kazandırması bu yaklaşımın yansımalarını temsil eder. İsrail örneğinde de dini efsaneler, dini öyküler, kutsal kitaplar dini kültler ve semboller Siyonist ideolojinin temsilcileri tarafından da kullanılmış ve bu din ve milliyetçilik arasındaki uzlaşma, Yahudi milliyetçiliğinin gelişimine hız kazandırmıştır.

İsrail üzerine din-devlet ilişkilerine dair yapılan pek çok çalışma, İsrail'in diğer devletlerle mukayese edilemeyeceği hususunu vurgulamıştır. Bu çalışmada, bu iddiaların geçerli olmadığı tezi ortaya atıldı. Örneğin, Netanel Fishner, Yahudi ulusal hareketi içinde milliyetçilik ile din arasında yaşanan gerginlikler konusunda İsrail'in benzersizliğine yapılan vurguyu eleştirerek, 19. ve 20.yüzyılın çeşitli milliyetçi hareketlerinin dinin rolünü zayıflatmaya çalıştığını ve İsrail'in bu anlamda eşsiz olmadığını savunuyor. Bununla birlikte, Yahudi milliyetçiliğinin farklı ve benzersiz olduğu tek durumun Siyonist hareketin dine karşı tüm muhalefetine rağmen dine bağlı olması olduğunu iddia ediyor. İsrail ve Türkiye'nin karşılaştırmalı çalışması aslında İsrail'in atıf yapılan noktada da benzersiz olmadığını ortaya koyuyor. Görüşmelerin bulguları, iki ülkenin siyasi, tarihi, kültürel ve ekonomik yapıları ve yönleri bakımından birçok farklılığa sahip olmalarına rağmen, din-devlet ilişkileri açısından önemli benzerlikler paylaştığını ortaya koyuyor. Her ne kadar farklı tarihsel deneyimlerden geçtilerse de, iki ülkenin kurucu liderleri, homojen bir ulus devlet kurmaya çalıştı. Etnik, dilsel ve kültürel açıdan heterojen insanlara aynı çatı altında bir araya gelme imkânı tanıyan din unsuru olmuştur. Her iki ülkede de, devletin hâkim dine verdiği destek din-devlet ilişkilerinin belirleyici bir özelliği olmaya devam etmekte ve din ve milliyetçiliğin bu uzlaşması devletin tarafsızlığı ve din özgürlüğü gibi sekülerizm doktrinin önemli bileşenlerinin ortaya çıkmasına engel olmaktadır.

Her iki devletin ilk yıllarında İsrail'de Mapai ve Türkiye'deki CHP gibi seküler partilerin olması gözlemlense de, yakın dönemde dini partilere ve dinin devlet aygıtındaki etkisine yönelik kayda değer bir artış oldu. Bununla birlikte, bu çalışma din ve milliyetçiliğin kaynaştığı kutsal sentez atıflarının aslında Türkiye'de 1980'li yıllar sonrası, İsrail'de 1967 sonrası ortaya çıkan yeni bir durum olmadığını, bu sentezin köklerinin kuruluş yıllarında yattığını ortaya koymaktadır. Her iki ülkede

de, seküler partilerin ardından yönetime gelen Likud ve Demokrat Partinin, devletin kurucu ideolojisini, özellikle de din devlet ilişkilerini sorguladı. Bu gelişmenin iki ülkedeki zamanlaması da çarpıcıdır ve bu konuda her iki ülke arasında ilginç gelişmeler var. Devletin kurucu seçkinlerinin her iki ulus-devletin oluşum yıllarındaki politikaları, çağdaş siyasette dini etkilemeyi teşvik etmesinin yanı sıra, bu artışın arkasındaki süreçler ve sebeplerin paylaşılıp paylaşılmadığını da önemli sorulardır. Türkiye ve İsrail üzerine, bu soruların cevaplarını bulmaya yönelik karşılaştırmalı bir çalışmanın, literatüre katkı sağlayacağı aşikâr olmakla birlikte, bu iki ülkeye dair sekülerizm tartışmalarında bu tezde vurgulandığı gibi milliyetçilik ve din arasındaki ilişkiler dikkate alınmalıdır.

## B.TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

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### YAZARIN

Soyadı: TAŞÇIOĞLU  
Adı : BELCİM  
Bölümü : ORTA DOĞU ARAŞTIRMALARI

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : NATION AND STATE BUILDING IN ISRAEL (1948-1967) AND TURKEY (1923-1946): A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT

**TEZİN TÜRÜ**: Yüksek Lisans  Doktora

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