

# Two Axes Revolving Around the Discussions of Secularism in Turkey: Şerif Mardin and İsmail Kara

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**Abstract:** In Turkey, there have been ongoing discussions on the following issues: The role of religion in social life; the relevance of modernization activities, which the government endeavours to actualize through its institutions, and religion; especially the extent that religious thought and lifestyle is affected from modernization activities as well as the extent that these areas affect modernization activities; or whether there is an interaction between religious thought and modernization; and the historical and sociological background of all the abovementioned. It is possible to say that these secularism-oriented discussions will continue to be on the agenda for a long time in Turkey. The discussions on secularism cover modernization and approaches and debates in the issue on the one hand, while it includes religion and the relevance and position of religion to modernization on the other hand. When the contemporary discussions in Turkey on secularism are considered, it is possible to mention Şerif Mardin and İsmail Kara as outstanding names. There are similarities in the approaches of these two intellectuals in certain issues on the subject as well as conflicts in some issues. In this study, moving from their works and the discussions they have been part of, the approaches of these two intellectuals on the issue is discussed and assessed. Furthermore, since Şerif Mardin has more studies to be examined within the context of our subject, more of his views are included in the study.

**Keywords:** Şerif Mardin, İsmail Kara, Secularism, Neighborhood Pressure, Turkish Modernization, Westernization, İslam.

**Öz:** Türkiye’de dinin toplumsal hayatta oynadığı rol, devletin kurumları aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilmeye çalışılan modernleşme faaliyetlerinin dinsel alanla ilişkisi, dinsel düşüncenin ve yaşam pratiğinin modernleşme faaliyetlerinden ne oranda etkilendiği ve onu hangi oranda etkilediği ya da aralarında bir etkileşim olup olmadığı ve bütün bunların tarihsel ve sosyolojik arka planının ne olduğu gibi hususlar, üzerinde tartışmaların sürdürüldüğü bir alanı oluşturmaktadır. Böyle bir coğrafyada sekülerizm odaklı tartışmaların uzun süre canlılığını koruyacağını söylemek mümkündür. Sekülerizm tartışmaları bir yönüyle modernliği ve bu konudaki yaklaşımları ve tartışmaları, öte yandan da dinsel alanı ve bu alanın modernlikle ilişkisini ve konumunu içermektedir. Türkiye’de sekülerizm konusundaki çağdaş tartışmalar dikkate alındığında, başlıca isimlerden biri olarak Şerif Mardin’i ve bir diğeri olarak da İsmail Kara’yı saymak mümkündür. İki ismin konu hakkındaki yaklaşımlarında belli açılardan paralellikler belli açılardan da zıtlıklar bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, eserlerinden ve dâhil oldukları tartışmalardan hareketle, iki ismin konu hakkındaki yaklaşımları ele alınıp değerlendirilmiştir. Şerif Mardin’in konumuz kapsamında değerlendirilecek çalışmaları daha fazla olduğu için de çalışmada Mardin’in görüşlerine daha çok yer verilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Şerif Mardin, İsmail Kara, Sekülerizm, Mahalle Baskısı, Türk Modernleşmesi, Batılılaşma, İslam.

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Atıf©: Anık, M. (2012). Two axes revolving around the discussions of secularism in Turkey: Şerif Mardin and İsmail Kara. *İnsan & Toplum*, 2 (4), 9-34.

■ DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12658/human.society.2.4.M0056>

## Introduction

Before directly moving into the discussions on secularism, it is necessary to mention what the concept refers to in the scope of our subject and its importance. When the studies or discussions revolving around secularism in Turkey are examined, it is seen that these studies or discussions are mostly focused on laicism and reforms in the field of religion in line with Kemalist ideology and on tendencies against these reforms.<sup>1</sup> Again when it comes to secularism in Turkey, the concept or conception that most often comes to mind is laicism in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup> While the concept of secularism incorporates the concept of laicism, representing the separation of religious affairs and state work and the government's impartial attitude towards religious beliefs on the one hand, it also has a broader content on the other hand. For despite the fact that this concept is perceived as laicism in a strict sense, in a broader sense it is directly related to modernization because it also encapsulates the replacement of spiritual and religious values as well as those life styles based on these values with modern earthly ideals and objectives and the transformation experienced in practical terms.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, laicism term is used in a strict sense and when it comes to a broader sense, secularism term is used in this article.

While the term "the secular" covers a central modern epistemic category; the term "secularization" covers analytical conceptualization of modern world-historical processes and the term "secularism" embodies a world-view and ideology based on these concepts (Casanova, 2011, p. 54). As one of the weighty issues of religious sociology, secularization is related to modern times and is the source of discussions of the statements saying that religious practices have become weaker in this era.<sup>4</sup> These religion-oriented discussions on secularism are closely related to such developments as scientific progress, secular politicization, secular education, and the legal system experienced in the modernization process.

- 1 Studies done in Turkey both in the past and in recent years have generally focused on "laicism." Most of the recent studies on the issue are closely related to the political developments. Particularly after the Welfare Party won the 1995 elections as the first party and after it came into power in 1997 forming a coalition government with the True Path Party and the JDP's coming to power alone, without a coalition partner in the 2002 elections, there is generally such an orientation in studies published about Turkey abroad. Please see Yavuz (2009) and Azak (2010) for a sample study in the issue.
- 2 For an evaluation related to the difference in perception of secularism in the West and in Turkey please see Davison (2010).
- 3 There are also approaches which deal with laicism and secularism in different contexts. One of these approaches with such a distinction is that secularism considers that public space belongs to civic society while laicism considers that public space belongs to the state. According to another distinction "individual" is prioritized in secularism while it is the citizen that is prioritized in laicism. The details of these discussions are not given here. For more detail on these discussions please see Delanty (2000).
- 4 It should not be understood that the emphasis made on the traditional period in this issue is within the comparisons related to the modern period.

As a result of the relative superiority on nature with the advances in techno-scientific field, the mindset that puts forward the idea that “‘the holy celestial sphere’ is not needed anymore in order to give meaning to the world and life in the world and therefore, the religious commitment fray around the edges” is one of the main paradigms of modernization theories.<sup>5</sup> In this context, secularization refers to the replacement of a lifestyle shaped around authority based on religious beliefs with that of worldly authority and lifestyle revolving around this new authority. Within the content of secularism, religion is judged as an obstacle to progress or modernization. What is implied by modernization here is the historical and socio-political experience of the West in this issue. In this process, the externalization of religious institutions, and thus the weakening of their efficiency within the attempts to remove religious symbols and values from political power, the education system, and legal regulations are interpreted as an indication of secularization.

It would not be wrong to say that the debates on secularization are ongoing in Turkey, which both served as the center of the Ottoman Empire, which undertook the Caliphate, and where religious institutions and their values symbolized played a significant role in guiding legal regulations as well as political, military, cultural, social, and economic relations. As Casanova (2001, p. 1064) expresses: “Turkey is seen as too secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis and too Turkish for the Kurds where Turkish values are strongly showed up.” Keyman (2010, p. 143) adds to this statement by saying: “for non-Muslim minorities Turkey is too Muslim.”

Beyond all the debates, instead of making generalized evaluations in this study, I would like to discuss the opinions of two modern intellectuals prominent in these discussions. Considering the discussions on secularism in Turkey, Şerif Mardin and İsmail Kara are among the prominent names. In both intellectuals’ studies, “religion,” “modernization,” and in this context, the “history of Turkish thought” are issues on which they put considerable emphasis on.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the opinions of these two intellectuals who have different, and opposite, points of view regarding secularism, from a critical perspective. Because Şerif Mardin has conducted more studies and İsmail Kara’s studies are mostly a collection of certain writers’ texts (a kind of anthology), more emphasis has been placed on Şerif Mardin in the study.

5 According to the positivist paradigm that was dominant in the first periods of sociology upon its emergence as an independent discipline in the 19th century, religion was a remainder to be removed. It was proposed that religion-based opinions and beliefs, which represented a non-scientific manner and which were seen as the output of the childhood period of humanity, would be removed one by one in the secularization process in the adulthood period of humanity, in which science is considered dominant.

### **Şerif Mardin as a Scientist**

Before moving on to a review of Şerif Mardin, it will be helpful to shortly mention about the development of his thought, the impact of his political viewpoint on this, main features of his studies and the methodology he followed in his studies. Şerif Mardin has been accepted as a reference name when Ottoman and Turkish modernization, political sociology, religious sociology and history of thought in Turkey is mentioned, Such an approach in an epistemological context will enable us to evaluate the approaches of Mardin in the scope of our subject, in a healthier manner.

Since Şerif Mardin's studies are the result of an interdisciplinary perspective, when they are considered in their entire context, certain issues related to Ottoman, politics, intelligentsia, and its *'ulama* in both the modernization processes undergone by the Ottoman and Turkish governments stand out.. Şerif Mardin was born in Istanbul in 1927 into the Mardinizadeliler family, a notable family from the city of Mardin which is a city that gave birth to many *'ulama*.<sup>6</sup> His being a member of an important family from among Ottoman *'ulama* as well as a member of an intellectual and bureaucrat family during the Republic era helps to explain the interest that he showed in his studies as of his first ones in 1950 in movements of thought in the late Ottoman period. When his undergraduate, graduate, and PhD studies are considered, although he earned all of his degrees abroad he did not lose interest in these movements of thought in the late Ottoman period and chose his field of study within these issues.

Although he completed his bachelor's degree in political science at Stanford University, his master's degree in international relations at John Hopkins University, and his PhD in political science at Stanford University, Şerif Mardin stands out with his identity as a sociologist and is commonly known with this identity. This is both because the issues he discussed fall within the working field of sociology and because most of the intellectuals he studied are important names within Turkish sociology.

As for his political views, without giving an in-depth analysis, Şerif Mardin may be described as a liberal. In 1956, he served as the secretary general for the liberal-oriented Liberty Party and was one of the main writers in *Forum* magazine, known for its opposition to the rule of the Democrat Party and whose writers were mostly academics.<sup>7</sup> Mardin was among the founders of the New Democracy Movement (YDH), led by businessman Cem Boyner, which made its debut into politics in 1994 with its liberal approaches and emphasis. Currently, Mardin works as a professor at Sabancı University and his liberal orientation continues to have an impact on his studies.

6 For more information about Mardin's background please see: Arlı (2004, 2008, 2009).

7 For more evaluations about the *Forum* magazine, for which Mardin was a permanent writer, please see Bulut (2004).

It is observed that the general characteristic of Şerif Mardin's studies leans towards revealing the historical and sociological connection between contemporary problems in Turkey and the developments and movements of thought in Ottoman world. In this sense, it can be said that there is a certain continuity in his studies. Mardin (1993, p. 37) argues that while examining the changes in the social field, it is necessary to consider the institutional and intellectual heritage in that specific geography. In this respect, Mardin holds that it is important to consider the historical context and cultural background when making any social analysis. For him, in discussing social relations in a society, it is necessary to take traditions and institutional arrangements into account. Therefore, considering the review of institutional history and the history of thought, he deems the analysis of the developments in the late Ottoman period important. Establishing such connections will prevent disconnected and shallow evaluations on current issues.

Considering that Mardin is inspired by different disciplines and thinkers, it may be argued that he has adopted a Weberian methodology.<sup>8</sup> While he sometimes exhibits a positivist attitude like Weber, he shows an anti-positivist attitude at others. Just as in Weber's studies, religion-centered analyses occupy a significant place in Mardin's studies Mardin (2000, pp. 38-39) attaches importance to religion since it is a significant element in analyzing Turkish culture, history of thought, and social structure and because it has been a neglected field in such analyses. As did Weber, Mardin emphasizes institutional history. Like Weber, who considered bureaucratic organization important and made analyses on it, Mardin widely includes analyses on particularly Ottoman bureaucracy in his studies. The years that Mardin was working on his bachelors and graduate degree in the USA coincides with the period during which Max Weber's name was at the forefront. As Mardin (2007, p. 119) puts it, Weber was only noticed in the USA in the 1950s; and since those years, he has been a significant name both in sociological studies in the USA as well as other in other social science studies.

It is possible to say that an indirect effect of Weber on Mardin's assessments about the center and periphery is through Edward Shils and S. N. Eisenstadt. The center and periphery, as one of the basic paradigms of Şerif Mardin's studies, is put forward by Shils.<sup>9</sup> Shils is also known as a specialist of Max Weber in American sociology. Shils'

8 In a conversation with Taha Akyol in 2010, Mardin stated that he did not accept the Weberian attribution made to him and that those who were not Marxist are labeled as Weberians. His explanation on why he did not accept the Weberian attribution is as follows: "Weber properly examined the history and culture of Protestants and Jews. He is not very well-informed about Islam and made wrong judgements (...)" It is strange that Mardin considers himself not to be a Weberian due to his insufficient knowledge about Islam. Here the definition for Mardin is related with the parallelism of subject and methodology between the two names, not related to the profoundness or inadequacy of their knowledge.

9 For more information please see Shils (1975).

approach is used when Eisenstadt makes an analysis of patrimonial bureaucratic empires and their modernization.<sup>10</sup> Mardin also makes use of this paradigm to analyze the relations between the bureaucracy in the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, and modernization.

### **Secularism in Turkey and its Historical and Sociological Background from the Viewpoint of Şerif Mardin**

While analyzing secularism, Şerif Mardin (1993, pp. 44-45) first draws attention to discussions in the last period of the Ottoman Empire from which he attempts to explain how laic bureaucracy has gradually become predominant.<sup>11</sup> During this period, the reasons behind the decline of the Ottoman Empire were understood to be different by different groups. For instance, the *'ulama* tried to explain the reason behind the decline with religious insufficiencies. According to supporters of this approach, the Ottomans began to neglect their Muslim identity, and as a result lost the authority they had held during the times when they had strong beliefs. In the opinion of the military and bureaucracy, the empire declined because the state mechanism was spoiled: unqualified people took up positions that required responsibility; allowances were given to those who did not deserve them, and corruption became widespread. In order to avoid complete collapse, laic bureaucracy and military officers made certain reforms to organize a new military along with a tax system to support this reorganization. Although Mardin cooperated with high-ranking *'ulama* in preparing reform policies within various fields of the laic bureaucracy, he emphasized that he did not agree with them on certain issues. The beginning of the 19th century was the period when laic democracy was considered to have the power to realize the very changes it had been longing for. As of this period, Mardin draws attention to the fact that a program towards bringing a number of administrative and economic institutions to Turkey began to be implemented. Such institutions were products of the European Enlightenment Period. After these changes, however, the *'ulama* lost prestige and their status was lowered, compared to the past. Gradually, this section of society, representing religious institutions, was excluded from the decision-making processes.

Mardin (1993, p. 48) states that secularism in the Ottoman Empire first began within higher education institutions upon the foundation of the Medical School in 1827 and

10 Please see Eisenstadt (1963, 2007).

11 In one of his studies, published in the magazine *Doğu Batı (Orient-Occident)*, Mardin states that secularism in the Ottoman bureaucracy dates very far back. He gives an analysis of Kâtib Çelebi, who lived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as an example in this issue, stating that Çelebi not only criticized the Islam-based religious education within the Ottoman Empire, but also the negative effects of the religious disputes during his life time (2005, p. 36).

the Military College in 1834. The foundation of both schools occurred during the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839). In his study, *Modernization in Turkey* (2004, p. 179), Niyazi Berkes states that Mahmud II was a sultan who tried to separate religious affairs and state work yet while doing so, he came into conflict with the *'ulama*, particularly in education and public works. Similar to Niyazi Berkes, Mardin points to the period of Mahmud II as the beginning of secularization while also mentioning the importance of the Tanzimat Reform Era which occurred during his rule. When it comes to the history of secularism in Turkey, it is mostly the *Tanzimat* (reform) period (1839-1876) that is highlighted. Şerif Mardin (1993, p. 49; 2005, p. 43; 2011, p. 57) also attaches historical importance to this period while further asserting that secularization was successfully implemented in government institutions during this period.

In response to the attempts of secularization at the institutional or official level during the *Tanzimat* period, it is necessary to specifically mention how these opinions were transferred to the public. Considering the conditions of the period, it may be argued that different opinions within a society are transferred to the public via educational institutions or intellectuals. Therefore, Şerif Mardin's study on "Young Ottoman" thought is crucial. *The Birth of Young Ottoman Thought*, Şerif Mardin's PhD study, completed in 1958, is one of his notable works which substantially guided his later works. As for Mardin (1990, p. 236; 2010, pp. 10-11), "Young Ottoman" thought is significant in many respects. Although this movement of thought held a more radical stance towards modernization as compared to the one held during the first period of the Republic, the fact that it had not been a movement studied in detail made it an appealing issue for Mardin. As for Mardin, the source of many attempts towards modernization, including the changing of the written language after the foundation of Turkish Republic and civil reforms, rests on Young Ottoman Thought. Paradoxically, the Young Ottoman movement should be analyzed in terms of their attempts to inject Islam into the secularized state because, in addition to being the first group to make use of the opinions of the European "Enlightenment," they were among the first intellectuals who attempted to combine "Enlightenment" opinions with Islam.

In the above mentioned study, Mardin (2010, pp. 285-286) states that, at the individual level, Şinasi is the first significant voice of Europeanization in the Ottoman world. Westernization efforts until Şinasi had occurred as a result of reform thought at the official level. Those with a reformist identity trying to promote modernization in the Ottoman Empire were statesmen and emperors. Şinasi, on the other hand, is a name who stands out due to his own personal activities apart from official efforts. Niyazi Berkes (2004, p. 283) states that Şinasi is the major leading name in both secularism and nationalism. Şinasi began to publish the first private Turkish newspaper (*Tercüman-ı Ahval*) in 1860 with Agah Efendi; then in 1862, he began to publish the newspaper *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, which was published twice a week. Through this newspaper,

Şinasi struggled to spread European thoughts throughout the Ottoman Empire and was also influential in the formation of a reformist intellectual group.

In contrast to the Şinasi's secular approach and although he did have an impact on them, the Young Ottomans' dominant perspective was based upon Islamic themes. As for Mardin, the main objective of Young Ottoman theorists, who were the first ideologists of the Ottoman Empire, was to take "the best" political institutions of Europe and to place them into Islamic soil. Mardin indicates that the main Islamic theory used by the Young Ottomans to develop this synthesis was the theory of "allegiance" (OTR: *bi'at*; AR: *بيعة*)<sup>12</sup> and that *bi'at* in its widest sense meant: "a symbolic promise of the emperor to give an account of his acts to the Islamic society when he accedes to the throne" (2010, p. 442). When Mardin's works are then analyzed, it should be understood that a number of his explanations on Islamic concepts are open to criticism. To give an example, *bi'at*, beyond the explanation given in Mardin's work, encapsulates recognizing another's sovereignty and promising loyalty. The Turkish Language Association defines this specific Ottoman word as: "the acceptance and recognition of the son of an emperor, who will accede to the throne after the emperor dies, by the groups effective in government." However, it should be separately researched whether such problems occur due to Mardin's understanding or from incorrect translations of his works.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, it should be highlighted that Şerif Mardin's works are highly respected works in all social sciences and particularly in sociology. However, this interest and the fact that his works are included in the "best seller" lists have had a negative impact on attempts to correct the disorganization and wrong word use that is noticeable in some of his works. Most of Mardin's works published by İletişim Publications are a collection of his articles published at different dates and places into book form. This situation has caused to repetitions in some of his publications due to not paying the necessary attention, not following a specific organization, and the lack of any necessary review

12 Although this term does include the meaning of "allegiance," its meaning in Turkish, specifically in Ottoman Turkish, does carry different, and perhaps more precise, connotations. As such, whenever this word is used, the Turkish word will be used. It must also be noted that this word is originally Arabic and its Arabic (and Ottoman) meaning may entail something different than its usage in "modern" Turkish.

13 The same may be said for the explanation made for the word "free will" in the same work (Mardin, 2010, p. 453). According to Mardin, this term was used by Young Ottomans "in order to represent human's field of activity on which God has slight control." Here the term is explained with a total opposite meaning to its real meaning because the term means "the slight-partial-will of a person that means the freedom of decision in one's own living space against the infinite-unlimited-will of God yet still pointing that this will is not in the form of shaping everything in one's life. To illustrate, although an adult makes his/her own decisions, s/he can not determine such things as his/her date of birth, place of birth, or his/her parents. This represents the partial decision making freedom of a human will. For more information, please see Gölcük and Toprak (1996, pp. 224-245).



done on the work. Moreover, although many of his works have been published more than one time, the incorrectly translated words in them have not been corrected. However, this is an entirely different issue outside the scope of this essay.

As for Mardin (2010, pp. 446-447), the political philosophy of the Young Ottomans was based in pre-Enlightenment philosophy which has similarities to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Mardin's assessment arises from the fact that Young Ottomans' opinions are predominated by Islamic theme and that he believes they had a conservative tendency against innovation.. Mardin states that the Young Ottomans were inconsistent in their behaviors by praising the abstract "idea of progress" and the development of Europe on the one hand, and a yearning for an imaginary, ideal Islam state on the other. Mardin criticizes Young Ottoman intellectuals, such as Namık Kemal, for their lack of comprehension and internalization of liberal concepts. When Mardin's criticisms against the Young Ottomans concerning the protection of Ottoman traditions are considered, it is observed that he adopts a positivist approach in this issue. According to the positivist approach, "material progress" is realized by abandoning abstract ideas, which are the products of tradition. Modernization and tradition, therefore, represent two completely opposing elements which cannot exist together. For the record however, Japan's modernization is a living example of how cultural traditions and modernization can very well coexist.

Another movement that Şerif Mardin gives emphasis to, both in terms of intelligentsia and the history of political thought, is the Young Turks movement, which adopted a more secular approach in their opinions as compared to Young Ottomans. Mardin (2011, p. 26) states that although, just like the Young Ottomans, the Young Turks also worked toward the survival of Ottoman Empire, they were under a deep influence by 19<sup>th</sup> century positivist thought. Mardin (1994, p. 14) further states that despite their orientation in this direction, the Young Turks did not know how to implement such an opinion since they did not have a laic philosophic speculation environment in the history of the Ottoman Empire. He then concluded that the intellectual background of the Young Turks was limited because they lacked an in-depth theory, an original political formula, and an ideology that could continuously hold the sway of intellectual minds. Their main objective and greatest struggle was "to save the state." Mardin (1994, p. 18; 2011, p. 33) highlights that particularly those who graduated from Medical School among the Young Turks held a perception based more deeply in a secular life-style. Trained as doctors and due to the extreme positivist education they received, these people connected all aspects of life to chemical, physical and biological changes, in other words, to "material" factors. In these schools, life and health were explained not through religious explanations, but as a result of biological balance. Again as a result of the education they had, the approaches of these people toward the relation between statesmen and the state is one similar to that of a doctor-patient

relationship. If the government is the “patient,” the statesman will then be the one to cure the patient. Mardin holds that it is then possible to understand the Young Turks as “social doctors.”

Mardin (1994, pp. 145-146) highlights that as in the Young Ottomans, the press was one of the tools that the Young Turks used to spread their opinions. One of their main propaganda tools was the “*Ottoman*” newspaper, which began to be published in 1897. Mardin states that the audience addressed by the Young Ottomans was different than that of the Young Turks. The Young Ottomans endeavored to influence the Sublime Porte bureaucracy in particular as well as a small minority which had begun to believe Western opinions. In this sense, it can be said that the Young Ottomans endeavored to impact the upper-crust within Ottoman society, whereas the Young Turks strove to trigger the society under this upper-crust via the *Ottoman* newspaper. The audience of the *Ottoman* newspaper was a sort of “middle class” in the Ottoman Empire. They were mostly the people living in Rumelia, educated to a certain degree, and had somewhat higher standards of living. Mostly under the impact of a secular approach, the Young Turks could not create the reaction they desired on the society, and therefore began to complain about public opinion in their writings in the *Ottoman* newspaper. One of their biggest complaints revolved around the fact that “the people could never truly understand the ‘infamy’ of Abdulhamid.” Mardin indicates that while there was sympathy and respect for the abstract image of the “people” in the articles of the *Ottoman*, there was also a reaction against the real people who did not show the desired interest toward revolutionary propaganda.

The fact that the Young Turks could not persuade the “people” to accept their opinions via the “*Ottoman*” caused deep disappointment within their ranks. Since the “people” did not attempt revolution, as the Young Turks had expected, they turned into an untrustable aspect of society for them. Mardin (1994, p. 148) states that the distrust arising in the Young Turks toward the “simple people”, gave birth to the idea that Young Turks did not actually know their own nation. After 1908, this conviction led to studies about the cultural elements behind the behaviors of Turkish people. The Young Turks aimed to establish a reform program based on the cultural data collected concerning Turkish people. These attempts resulted in rapidly increasing opinions like, “Turks are the unhappiest elements of Ottoman Empire” in the articles in “*Ottoman*.” In articles defending this opinion, it was also said that Turkish people were the part of society who suffered most from both the autocratic regime of Abdulhamid and external interventions.

Since the Young Turks believed that the “people,” who were devoted to the sultan, would not, or could not, revolt against him as they had expected, they steered their propaganda toward military officers, who they believed could create the desired movement within the Ottoman Empire. Mardin (1994, p. 302) states that the secular

minded Young Turks began to adopt an elitist approach against traditional society and that they focused on “building an elite” to realize their ideals.

Mardin (1994, p. 70-71) states that during the reign of Abdulhamid, “The *‘ulama* was treated unfairly, the sultan was quite doubtful from the *‘ulama*, and because of this distant behavior of the sultan, those who ran across Shaykh Al-Islam on the road had to ignore him.” Mardin also states that again during the same period, no arrangements were made in order to improve or modernize the many madrasah and thus “a policy of neutralization” of the *‘ulama* was implemented. He adds that religious books that would have helped the discussion of political opinions were also forbidden. In his work: *Religion and Politics in Turkey*, Mardin mentions that the negative attitude toward the *‘ulama* was not only present during the reign of Abdulhamid, To him (1993, p. 86-87), even when the Ottoman Empire was at the peak of its power, its sultans were nervous about the power of religious leaders, popular sheiks, and dervishes and they tried to keep them under control by keeping them away from society. According to Mardin’s explanations, the rulers of the Ottoman Empire endeavored to prevent possible rebellions against the regime by keeping religious authorities and institutions under control. By giving Halil İnalcik as reference, Mardin (1993, p. 117) states that because of the priority given to the state, bureaucrats in the Ottoman government reacted harshly to all kinds of religious appearances that occurred out of their own control while also stating that there was no tolerance toward charismatic leaders who had the support of the society or who were of heterodox characters.

Mardin also criticizes some of the widespread ideas espoused during Abdulhamid’s period. Most of the works written about the period in which Abdulhamid ruled mention his “panislamism” policy. As for Mardin (1994, pp. 72-73), it is not possible to talk about the existence of such a policy before 1890, and he also says that it is even difficult to prove a strong “panislamism” policy after 1890. Mardin highlights that rather than a “panislamism” policy, Abdulhamid adopted an “Ottomanism” principle in which there were no racial or religious discriminations. Mardin indicates that the reason behind this common perception is a result of the book *Le Panislamisme* by Gabriel Charmes. The argument in this book, published in 1880, was that Abdulhamid would eventually have to transform his idea into Panislamism. Therefore, rather than analyzing a policy in practice, the book suggested that there was no other way for the Ottoman Empire to survive except from adopting panislamism.

As for Mardin (1993, p. 64), just like Sultan Abdulhamid’s pragmatist approach toward Islam during his reign, Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern Turkey, showed a pragmatist approach in this same regard during the beginning of his rebellion. Mustafa Kemal frequently used the theme of “Islam unity” to garner the support of the Muslim people outside Anatolia against the occupation powers and to earn the support of the Muslim people in Anatolia against the Ottoman government in Istanbul. Mardin

states that Mustafa Kemal paradoxically used the power of the very Caliphate which he planned to abolish in the future. He mentions that despite all of this, Mustafa Kemal aimed to create a secular government with all the changes he planned to realize in the future. Interestingly enough, while making assessments in this issue, Mardin uses the term "post-feudality society" to describe the new period after the foundation of the Republic, covering the changes made in line with a secular understanding. That is because feudality, within the European geography, covers a period when there is a weak central authority in political and military terms but where the church has absolute control. Yet, this is not a proper way to describe the Ottoman Empire in either historical or sociological terms because it stands out with its central structure both in political and military terms.

It is possible to come across similar approaches in Mardin's works. Some of the assessments made by Mardin regarding European-origin concepts influencing the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey are open to criticism. For instance, one criticism that may be made about Mardin is his assessments about *shalwar* (TR: *şalvar*; loose fitting trousers) and the *fez*. According to Mardin (1993, p. 75-76), Atatürk set two main targets after the proclamation of the Republic; one of them was to forcefully impose laic regulations while the other was to forcefully impose a program of cultural Westernization within the Republic. Mardin holds that the *fez* and *shalwar*, whose definitive legitimacy is based on religious values, were forbidden in line with this understanding. It is interesting that Mardin describes *shalwar* and the *fez* as religious rather than cultural elements because there are no provisions advising the wearing of *shalwar* or the *fez* in Islam. Moreover, the use of *fez* dates back to the period of Mahmud II, a significant name in Ottoman modernization. During the reign of Mahmud II, a more European style of dress began to be adopted within the official/bureaucratic realm in which the *fez* was approved as the official headgear of the empire by an imperial declaration. Therefore, the *fez*, which was prohibited under Hat Law in 1925, was itself a product of modernization activities in the Ottoman Empire.

While making assessments about Islam, Mardin makes a distinction between the Islam of the statesmen or the elite (1993, p. 87) and that of the people -Folk Islam- (2000, p. 143); and highlights that there is a difference in recognition of religion by elites and by the people. Mardin makes interesting and debatable evaluations on how the Turks chose Islam as a religion. Beginning with comparisons to Shamanism, Mardin (1993, p. 85-86) evaluates Islam as a religion which encourages sultanate and states that this is the reason behind the acceptance of Islam by Turks. As for Mardin, Turks found religions based on a holy scripture more appropriate for the sultanate than Shamanism. For him, Islam was found to be an acceptable religion for Turks because it brings in the necessary "clergy" to interpret the divine message as well as the social control which derives its power from a central source of value. To him, Islam was a more accept-

able religion than Shamanism in forming a centralist structure that urged Turks away from a nomadic life and into a political structure of life. However, there are also some remarkable contradictory opinions of Mardin in regards to Islam. For instance, as is seen in his above assessment, he states that Turks were influenced by the centralized structure of Islam and its uniting feature while choosing it as a religion. However, he states in another assessment (1993, p. 97) that when history is studied, it is recognized that Islam has never been a strong integrating element. Although Mardin gives history as a reference, he is still prejudiced toward this issue through his consideration of the final period of the Ottoman Empire. When it comes to Islam, it would not be a correct approach to evaluate the entire history of the Ottoman Empire based on its period of decline because the state's religion was also Islam during its foundation. In the following pages of the same work (1993, p. 142), Mardin comes to the conclusion that Kemalism could not reach large masses and could not be a powerful integrating element. In doing so, this time he gives the Ottoman Empire as a reference, saying: "Religion, in fact, created a compatible society ideal," which is yet another instance of differing evaluations concerning Islam.

For Mardin (2011, p. 156), today both those who support a monolithic secular world view (TR: *laikler*) and Islamists systematically misunderstand the political and military history of the Ottoman Empire. While *laikler* are afraid of Islam as they believe it to be the sole element of Ottoman Empire, Islamists endeavor to make the role of Islam dominant in today's Turkey.

In line with a liberal perception, Mardin (1993, pp. 72-73) states that the secular reforms imposed on the public during the process after Turkey was reformed into a republic were intended to save the individual from neighborhood pressure. During the Ottoman period, the neighborhood was a place where an ordinary Ottoman citizen spent most of his/her life as the place where he received his first education, births were celebrated, marriage ceremonies organized, and funeral ceremonies arranged. For Mardin, there existed a collective pressure of the Islamic community on the individual within these neighborhoods. In the secular understanding, Islamic ethics and social order taught in relation to the benefits of society are described as being irrational prohibitions which aim to exploit individuals. Labeling such Islamic values as ineffective in the building of a nation-state, Mardin (1993, p. 74) points that with the appearance of the concept of society, the new focus on civic duty was influential in the decreasing importance in the neighborhood ethos' as can be observed in the articles of modernist intellectuals. Mardin states that the idea of removing neighborhood pressure was influential in Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)'s attitude toward religious groups.

Mardin (1993, p. 77) states that when the law of 1925 which abolished the legal existence of religious groups was passed, it was obvious that what Mustafa Kemal intended was to render the gentry ineffective either by strengthening local political power

or by depicting local charismatic leaders as uneducated, corrupted individuals and thereby exploit the lower classes of society. Mardin indicates that in this new period, the goal was to shape the personality of Turks in a way that they would be accustomed to Western culture and not by a society of religious men and states. By doing so, Mustafa Kemal desired to impose a new world view based on Westernization, which he equated with civilization, instead of religion and religious culture. To this end, Mardin states that the Arabic based alphabet was changed to a Latin based one in order to provide a partially easier penetration into studies in Western languages adding that banning the performing of Eastern music publicly led to a conservatory being opened in Ankara to teach opera, ballet, and Western polyphonic music. Furthermore, Western style art was encouraged and thus, government policy in many different areas was transformed into a secular identity.

Mardin (1993, p. 97) claims that Mustafa Kemal, who ensured the abolition of Sultanate with a regulation in November 1, 1922 and the abolition of the Caliphate with a regulation in March 3, 1924, believed that Islam was among the most outstanding reasons behind the regression of the Ottoman Empire. He states that with the reforms made in line with Kemalist ideology, specifically the effect of religion would be rendered ineffective. As he does when he makes assessments regarding many other issues, while making assessments about Kemalism, Mardin considers the Ottoman period and tries to base the historical background on this issue. According to Mardin (1991, p. 342), the Turkish Republic was the result and final product of the attempts which began during the Tanzimat period made in order to transform the lives of Muslims so that they view the world under new and different standards. For Mardin (2011, pp. 75-76), it would be a mistake to place the history of Turkey within the framework of the government's secular ideology. Here, it is necessary to consider the two different processes; the first being the extension of the Islamic thought which developed between 1908 and 1922, the second being the carrying of the traces of the Ottomanization- Islamization policy of Abdulhamid.

Mardin (1990, pp. 164-165; 1993, p. 141) states that Kemalism, which is inspired by Western positivism, has a background based upon Ottoman and this background is the pragmatism and relative secularism of Ottoman bureaucrats. Reformation movements in the Ottoman Empire began in the military and then evolved into the conception that the civilian population should also be disciplined. After the declaration of the Turkish Republic, it was ensured that this was set as one of the main objectives of the state within the new values.

Highlighting that Mustafa Kemal grew up in military schools, which prioritized "positive science" in the Ottoman Empire, Mardin states that M. Kemal extended the model of laicism he acquired through this education to the whole educational system after the foundation of the Republic and desired that the Turkish people should develop

positive sciences. Mardin indicates that M. Kemal accepted using science as a tool, since it was the main characteristic of Westernism, and that he was against using religion as a tool. Therefore, during this period, Islam was excluded in issues related to social order.

Mardin (1993, p. 242) states that the founding members of the Republic not only considered religion as an element that would jeopardize the political regime, but also as a tool that would enable religious groups to exercise social control over individuals and therefore, Kemalists, regard such religious institutions as the Party of Union and Progress as institutions to be refrained from.

Mardin (1993, pp. 232-233) states that in the 1930s, Turkish nationalism was entirely secular in nature and that in order to fully implement and instill nationalism in Turkey, the images of the Turkish successes before their conversion to Islam were focused heavily upon. In this approach, Central Asia was chosen as the center of the oldest achievements of Turks and the giving of such pagan names as Cengiz (Genghis), Oktay, and Mete to children became widespread among the new privileged people. These actions became a means to ostracize Muslims from Turkish society. Mardin describes M. Kemal's actions such as the acceptance of the Latin alphabet and prescriptive linguistic attempts to remove Arabic and Farsi words from the language as concerted efforts to move the focus of Turkish culture away from Islam. However, Mardin further states that this mentality changed with the transition to a multi-party system in Turkey and with the occurrence of a movement from periphery to the center, traditionalism started to form the background for Turkish nationalism.

Saying that one of the significant social features of developing societies is that the intellectuals of that society learn modern Western thought before other elements of the society, Mardin (1992, p. 136) states that as a result, the intellectuals of these countries began to see their own culture as a primitive or undeveloped culture and so broke their connection with the public on the one hand, and on the other, felt the need for a completely new social order. In this context, Mardin makes a number of observations on the Turkish revolution and on the ideological paradigm, Kemalism, of the revolution. Mardin (1990, p. 52) indicates that the peasants, who represented a large part of the society during the proclamation of the Republic, were described as "underdeveloped" according to the Republican ideology and that the development of the peasants was planned to be imposed through a sudden and unexpected integration as a reflection of Ottoman social governorship. Mardin (1993, p. 149) highlights that despite these efforts, the secularly oriented Turkish revolution could not succeed to be a movement adopted by a large mass of people. According to Mardin, the Turkish War of Independence, which was the first phase of the Turkish revolution, was supported by the lower classes as long as it represented opposition toward a hated invading occupant. However, the civil objectives of the revolutionists in the

following period, the political and social modernization of Turkey, did not match with the demands of society. For Mardin (1993, p. 142; 2000, p. 149), secularist Kemalism neither contained a comprehensive explanation on how social justice was to be realized nor did it provide a more general ethical ground for how society was to derive its social principles from a respected ideology. In this framework, Mardin indicates that Kemalism failed to be a social value addressing to both mind and heart, and therefore, continued to remain dependent on the conservative tendencies of the large masses in Turkey.

One important study of Mardin on religion sociology is his work on Sa'id Nursi. Mardin (2011, p. 207) states that he began to work on this issue in the beginning of the 1980s under the guidance of Cemil Meric. Instead of simply describing Sa'id Nursi and his movement as "reactionary," "deceiving," or "exploitive," Mardin (1989) says that it is important to understand the sociological dynamics of the movement. Mardin states that Sa'id Nursi is seen as the star of the Naqshibandi world and that he offered the tools to build an Islamic identity for his followers in the modern world and adds that Sa'id Nursi offers a new Islamic solution for his followers who are disturbed by the attempts to secularize them in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. Mardin says that against a governmental mind that cares nothing about forming a map detailing the relationships of people in daily life, Sa'id Nursi forms a paradigm on how one may solve everyday problems, and thus, the *Nur* movement achieved to turn into a movement with wide public support. The *Nur* movement was a part of the movement from periphery to the center and the current situation in this context is that JDP (Justice and Development Party; TR: AKP) led by Tayyip Erdoğan came into power.

As for Mardin (2011, pp. 92-93), secularism penetrated so deeply into the concept of Islam in Turkey that the understanding of Islam in this country can be described as a synthesis of secular and religious values and therefore, as a belief displaying "exceptionalism" elements. Here, Mardin places particular emphasis on the example of Tayyip Erdoğan. He describes Erdoğan and his generation as a segment which had become integrated into the secular culture of the Republic.

### **The Pressure Environment on Different Neighborhoods and Criticisms towards Şerif Mardin**

Following the publication of the interview conducted with Mardin in 2007, he came into prominence due to his concept of "neighborhood pressure." Later, this concept was popularized and various debates have since been made around the issue by different parts of the society. Before the concept of "neighborhood pressure" made its appearance, Mardin was still known for his comments regarding the pressure on the scientific world, which was based on his own personal experiences. In his interview



with Sefa Kaplan, published in the newspaper *Hurriyet* on December 20, 2004 under the heading: "I have been vetoed due to Said-i Nursi," Mardin expressed that he was rejected twice by The Turkish Academy of Sciences (TUBA) because of his work on Sa'îd Nursi, without receiving any official justification.<sup>14</sup> Mardin states that because of his work, he has been accused of "reactionism" and protecting Islamists. Mardin's interest in Sa'îd Nursi, his movement, as well as his study on Nursi and his movement, where he tried to be fair without any prejudgments, made him a well-known, and even respected, personality in Islamic environments. However, his work on this subject caused severe criticisms particularly from the Orthodox secular environments.

Years later, Şerif Mardin came back into the agenda with his concept of "neighborhood pressure." In the assessments made above about Mardin's works, it is seen that he had used the term a long time ago. Particularly, following the publication of Mardin's interview titled: "I cannot say if Turkey can or cannot be like Malaysia" with Ayşe Arman in *Hurriyet* on September 16, 2007, he was accused of having reactions from the Islamic segment of society while the Orthodox *laikler* had positive reactions saying "he finally accepted what we had been saying for years." Before his interview with Ayşe Arman, Mardin made similar statements in two other interviews with Ruşen Çakır (2007a, 2007b) in the same year. In his first interview published under the heading: "Neighborhood pressure exists and it can even defeat the JDP" in the newspaper *Vatan* on May 20, 2007, Mardin indicates that Islam is an important structural issue for Turkey and that in case Islamic powers come into power, unwanted results might emerge and that cannot be considered as maintaining a liberal environment. Here, Mardin argues that he does not mean the JDP government and says that there is an atmosphere of "neighborhood pressure" in Turkey independent of the JDP and that this environment could have a negative effect on the JDP as well. In his interview, in which he made very vague statements, Mardin says that what he called "neighborhood pressure" took a new form with Islamic sub-environments and, in case this environment develops, the JDP will have to obey it as well. Although he does not indicate anything in the issue, moving from his use of the word Islamic sub-environments in his previous works on neighborhood pressure, it may be said that what he meant with the word is the Islamic communities and groups.<sup>15</sup>

Following the positive and negative reactions of this interview within different groups, Mardin felt the need to make new statements in his interview: "There is a Party and it

14 In Sefa Kaplan's interview with Prof. Dr. Yücel Kanpolat, the President of TUBA, which was published in *Hurriyet* on April 12, 2010, Kanpolat's explanation for refusing Şerif Mardin's TUBA membership was as follows: "Şerif Mardin is not criticized for his work regarding Said-i Nursi, he is criticized for over-praising him. (...) Mr Mardin behaved as a follower here."

15 In his interview with Neşe Düzel, published in the newspaper *Taraf* on October 10, 2011, Mardin focused especially on the fact that religious groups in Turkey have gradually come into prominence recently.

is Increasing Opposition” with Ruşen Çakır published in *Vatan* on June 10, 2007 where he stated that although he had no thought of it, his statements in his previous interview were interpreted as unreliability toward the public and was “the basis for objection against the people’s choice of President.” Mardin particularly emphasized that he did not side with those who were “systematically calling for a military coup d’état” with his statements in a previous interview. In his statements where he criticized the CHP<sup>16</sup> without explicitly naming it, Mardin expressed his discomfort with the fact that the term “neighborhood pressure” was very much liked by those who oppose the JDP and that the concept is used by them only within the scope of JDP opposition. As can be understood from his statement: “I would not be disturbed to think the same things as Kemalists” that he made in a previous interview, he states that he is not a Kemalist despite those who declare him to be a Kemalist, and that there are both reasonable and unreasonable sides of the Kemalist ideology, and that he only agrees with reasonable parts of this ideology.

After these two interviews were published, Mardin again made statements that raised debates in his interview with Ayşe Arman.<sup>17</sup> While his first interview Ruşen Çakır disturbed the Islamic environment, it was welcomed by extreme secular environments. On the other hand, Çakır’s second interview pleased the Islamic environment while it disturbed extreme *laikler*. While his interview with Ayşe Arman received positive reactions from Orthodox secular environments, it caused big reactions from Islamic environments. Following Mardin’s explanation on the debated issues, there have been various reactions from various environments and debates around the concept and thus, the issue continued to be in the news with subsequent statements.<sup>18</sup> In the discussions concerning this concept, those with a secular attitude complained about the rise of Islam within the “neighborhood” and argued that it was limiting their own living spaces while others with an Islamic attitude stated that it was they who have been under pressure in Turkey for years.

In response to the question: “Do you think we would be like Malaysia one day or not? Can you please relieve us by saying ‘No.’” in his interview with Ayşe Arman (2007) on “neighborhood pressure,” Mardin replied by saying that he cannot definitively say

16 *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (EN: Republican People’s Party): The main opposition party in Turkey. It is a continuation of the party established by Mustafa Kemal.

17 In exactly such an environment, it is interesting to indicate in many articles written about Mardin that he does not often make statements to the press.

18 On May 23, 2008, in a meeting titled, “Neighborhood Pressure: What did I mean?” organized by SORAR (Social Problems Research and Solution Association), and chaired of Ruşen Çakır. Binnaz Toprak, Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, Fuat Keyman, Necdet Subaşı, and Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal participated as debaters. At the end of the meeting, Mardin answered participants’ questions. Çakır collected the dialogs from this meeting along with his previous interviews with Mardin and compiled them into book form. For this book, please see Çakır (2008).

no and cannot comment on whether or not Turkey will become like Malaysia. Giving Indonesia as a sample, Mardin indicated that in the 1960s there were not many people who discussed Islam, yet today it has become a leading political power in the country. Many of Mardin's statements in this interview caused to various debates and criticism. While his statements were supported by extreme secularist environments, he was accused of using an Islamophobic statement by Islamic environments. Mardin's comment, "Women have only recently been allowed to wear trousers in parliament (instead of skirts)," and his assessment on the dress code in the Parliament as being "the reflection of Islamic practice," though he bear no relation to it, are examples of this.

### **İsmail Kara: Secularism, Islam, and Islamism**

İsmail Kara is an academic known for his works on religion, modernization, and most particularly, on Islamism. While mentioning the significance of Islamism, Kara (1994, p. 7; 1998a, p. 5) highlights that the Islamist movement has only been discussed in terms of a "reaction" until very recently and that speaking about Islam having a political, social, and cultural content has been regarded as stepping into a prohibited and dangerous area. Kara indicates that since this issue is approached from an ideological framework, its academic aspect is lacking. For Kara, until today, issues on how religion effects modernization, how and to what extent modernization effects religious thought, and what kind of an interaction exists between religion and modernization have generally been ignored. According to Kara (1997a, p. 7), the idea of Islamism existed as a separate and distinct idea movement in modern Turkish thought after the Second Constitutionalist Period (after 1908). From that period onward, Kara examined the names he thought to have contributed to Islamist thought after the Second Constitutionalist Period and, in this context, he collected the leading names as of the Ottoman Empire until modern Turkey, who stood out with their Islamic ideas in various issues in their lives, main studies, and ideas. As Şerif Mardin puts it (2011, pp. 57-58), İsmail Kara's work, *Islamism*, is a main reference book on Islamic thought. Mardin (2011, p. 61) indicates that among all studies aiming to examine the development of Islamic thought in Turkey, the most significant source is Kara's three-volume anthology.<sup>19</sup>

İsmail Kara (2005, p. 44) states that although modernization is a secular project in essence, it also serves as a source for becoming religious (in a way), religious recovery, as well as nurturing religious-mystic movements; and since there are no other legalizing and triggering elements in Islam world stronger than religion, modern (secular) ideas, institutions, and implementations can only be defended with religious content.

19 For these studies, please see Kara (1997a, 1997b, 1998a).

Kara highlights that the experience in Turkey needs to be discussed and evaluated within the framework of this understanding. Saying that "in Turkey, there are almost no issues which are not somehow associated to religion," Kara (2010, p. 6) highlights that the assessments to be made on the modernization or secularism experience of Turkey should be discussed within the center of religion/Islam.

Emphasizing that the issue of religion has more than one aspects and stages in the Republic of Turkey, Kara indicates that a chronological analysis is necessary in order to find out how and why they occurred and around which axis and possibilities they maintain their vitality. Saying that the Republic is built by a "coalition" made up of military officers, bureaucrats, intellectuals, and religion men (scholars and sheikhs) from the Ottoman Empire in the post World War One era, Kara expressed that there are some common characteristics of the people in this layer and lists these characteristics as:

"(...) those who were born in the last quarter of the 19th Century, who spent their childhood and education years during the rule of Sultan Abdulhamid, and who also began to serve as civil servants in the same period; who have been a part of or supported the Party of Union and Progress during the Second Constitutionalist Period; who were influenced by the policies and ideas of Ottomanism, Islamism, Nationalism; who attached great importance to Islam/religion for their nation and state although their actual devotion varied; who admired science and technology; who were inclined towards positivist opinions; who experienced rough conditions, who were patient, courageous but also cautious; Western enthusiasts in terms of culture and civilization (and as allies), yet opponents to Europe and nationalists when it came to independence and imperialism..." (Kara, 2010, pp. 13-14).

Of course there are parts open to criticism among what Kara generalizes. For instance, when Ziya Gökalp, who may be included among the group Kara mentions, is considered, it is obvious that he espouses western enthusiasm in terms of civilization but not in terms of culture, and that he places particular emphasis on protecting culture, which he describes as a domestic element and that this is one of his main approaches in political and sociological terms.

Kara (2005, p. 14) states that the abovementioned "coalition" who realized the War of Independence with a statement supporting "Islam and the Caliphate," who founded a religion-based state having a constitution containing a clause declaring "The religion of the state is Islam," and who were represented by different groups in the first Parliament was dissolved during the Lausanne negotiations. When it was dissolved and the Turkish Republic was proclaimed, what was left behind was a small and relatively homogenous group who went on to adopt the idea and policy of a single-party regime. Kara indicates that both the management and ideology of the Republic and its strict secularist mind and practices are in essence the product of this small group.

Kara attempts to make a number of evaluations on the features of Islamic expression. His comparisons and evaluations on traditional and modern Islamism are open to discussion from certain aspects. Kara (2005, pp. 36-37; 2010, pp. 367-368) indicates that modern Islamic philosophers are partly doubtful about their cultural heritage. Kara expresses that these philosophers emphasize that Islam is not the reason behind the regression and loss against the West as expressed in Orientalist works; and that Muslims' lowly feelings against Westerners do not arise from "real" Muslimism or Islam. He adds that these philosophers emphasize that their own ancestors misinterpreted Islam, and that they therefore did not live their religion correctly and that the reason behind the defeat is this misinterpretation. He also points to how they highlight that Islam is, in fact, a religion of the mind, logic, and science. Kara says that the real "authentic" Islam and historical Islam segregations are nourished from these approaches.

Kara emphasizes that "national" inclinations were prioritized as much as religious elements in Islamism during the Constitutionalist period and that, in this context, the existence of government was considered to be important. In modern Islamism however, this changed and a "homeless" Islam perception was developed. Kara states that not being able to relate the concept of the "Islamic state" to any certain country, land, or center after the Caliphate was abolished is the most significant reason behind the ideological change in this direction. Another reason why Kara emphasizes that the ummah mentality, whose internationalist dimension started to rise in parallel with the impact of the Marxist-socialist theory after the Second World War, weakened the indispensability of such terms as homeland, state and land for religion. Kara's association of the ummah mentality with the impact of Marxist-socialist theory is open to discussion because such an impact already exists in Islam due to its being a universal religion.

It should be said that Kara's approaches to Islamism statements, both in the Constitutionalist period and in the modern age, contain generalizations and that he regards these statements as a whole and does not consider the different tones among the expressions of Islamism in the modern age. To illustrate, when both the advent of Islam in modern Turkey and the existence of an Islamism, are considered, the invalidity of Kara's approach is observed. It must be kept in mind, however, that Islamism is against Marxist and socialist paradigms rather than one that is influenced by these paradigms under the conditions following the Second World War and which may be considered as a nationalist structure.. In terms of Islamism, because religious belonging was important and there were generally wars with Westerners during the rule of Ottoman Empire, protecting the state's existence by bolstering national feelings was seen as a requirement of religious belief. However, following the end of the War of Independence, it may be argued that instead of external focuses, there were struggles with internal powers that adopted a Western secular paradigm and established a position in important governmental institutions which therefore, destroyed national sentiments.

Kara (2005, p. 42; 2010, p. 381) indicates that one of the major statements of Islamism is that the values and features that built up Europe (such as wisdom, science, technology, tolerance, democracy, justice, and diligence) were all inherited from Islam anyway. By all means, it should be highlighted that Kara's attitude here contains an over-generalization. Whether such a statement as: "Whatever is good in Europe, originates from Islam" is a dominant statement of Islamism is an issue still under discussion. Instead of making such an over-generalization, it would be more acceptable to say that regardless of West-centered approaches, which attribute all positive improvements of civilization to itself, Muslims made major contributions in the development of the West in this field. Moreover, such an approach is not only a statement made by Muslims but also one that is stated by leading Western names working in this issue.<sup>20</sup>

Kara (2010, p. 380) indicates that Islamic expression is modern (have loose connections to a long historical process or traditions), modernizing, ideological (generalizing, minimalist, simple, political) and to a large extent, secular both as to period and content. Under these conditions, Kara considers Islamism as an outcome of modernization and, within the context of the main constituents they put forward, he evaluates all the groups within the Islamic world in this context despite some differences. Kara (2005, p. 45; 2010, p. 385-386) states that whether the Islamic world view and political structure is close to a socialist or capitalist system became a central issue of debate, particularly under the circumstances after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Finally, stating that Islamic expression holds a defensive characteristic, Kara expresses that this reveals that it works towards conservation rather than construction. Kara argues that beyond expressing themselves very strongly, Islamists have not been able to gain their freedoms, that they are overwhelmed by imitation and hold on to one of many popular statements either voluntarily or involuntarily. Before concluding the evaluations about İsmail Kara, it is necessary to mention that Kara has also been involved in debates regarding Şerif Mardin, particularly concerning "neighborhood pressure" and that he criticized Mardin's statements about this issue. In his interview in the journal *Aksiyon* (Kalyoncu & Adlı, 2008) made during the publication of his book *Islam as an Issue in Republican Turkey*, he charged Mardin with "showing off," which can indeed be observed in Kara's own way of answering:

"What Şerif Mardin does is a total show off. Mr. Mardin has aged and is talking nonsense. I want these to be written word by word. He used to perform well-chosen studies when he was young. Since the issue of religion is not well-known by intellectuals; however, they think he again said something of significance. All what he wrote about the Naqşhi movement is also pathetic. He has been writing about the Naqşhi movement for almost 10 years. Ridiculous."

20 Hobson's (2011) study may be used as an example in this issue. For another Orientalist sample study with similar explanations please see Hentch (1996).

In this non-academic response, Kara severely criticizes Şerif Mardin. It should be pointed out here that this was not Kara's first criticism of Mardin. In his work *Some Recent History, Some Distant Superstition* Kara (1998b) also criticizes Mardin. He states that Mardin's assessments on Sa'îd Nursi and the Nur movement is destitute of profoundness and adds that his recent works on Sufism, religious sects, and the Naqshî movement are without any effect.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

When Şerif Mardin and İsmail Kara are discussed within the context of secularism debates in Turkey, it is obvious that they share certain viewpoints; while for others, they are located on completely opposite poles. The primary issues that both Mardin and Kara agree are that religion/Islam is a neglected issue within the studies of social sciences as well as in studies on secularism in Turkey and that religion should be taken into higher consideration in order to better understand Turkish modernization. Related to this, while identifying the general characteristics of religious thought in Turkey, it is necessary to understand the modernization experience of Turkey as well as its characteristics which will then make it possible to correctly determine to what extent religious thought is authentic and in which aspects it has been effected by modernization activities.

All in all, it is seen that both Mardin and Kara adopt a retrospective approach in their studies and that they approach the issues discussed with a yesterday-today and today-yesterday connection. Significance of this perception notwithstanding, it can be problematic when the connection is not properly made. Both Kara and Mardin emphasize the authenticity of their works and prefer to position themselves distinctively. Although both of them have substantial works in their fields of study, sometimes this might lead to ignoring previous works or the works of others. To illustrate, in the introductory sentence of his presentation titled: "Culture and Religion toward 2000" (1993, p. 213) in a conference organized by Turkish Political Science Association in 2000, Şerif Mardin claims that both culture and religion are new discoveries of Turkish social sciences. However, when religion and culture-centered studies as well as discussions by Ziya Gökalp and his successors, such as Hilmi Ziya Ülken and Tarık Zafer Tunaya, are considered, it is difficult to say that such a discovery is new.<sup>22</sup>

21 For a critical evaluation regarding Mardin's assessments on the Naqshî and Nur movements, please see Şeker (2007).

22 It should be indicated that this situation does not arise from a bad intentional approach. As is stated above, Şerif Mardin's praise for İsmail Kara's works can be given as an example.

İsmail Kara defines the Islamic thought today as being far from tradition and highlights the modernist dimension of this train of thought. It is also possible to see similar exceptional approaches in Şerif Mardin, who generally emphasizes permanency. Mardin evaluates Tayyip Erdogan and his entourage, whom he indicates to come from a Naqshi tradition, as a group who has been influenced by their share of secular culture. There are certainly differences in the approaches and color of both of these scholars. While İsmail Kara criticizes modern Islamic thought because it is far from tradition; Mardin considers the modernist orientations in the Nur movement and the JDP to be positive. Mardin does not criticize positive attitudes toward secularism and because of his liberal identity, he considers secularization to rescue the individual from the pressure of the community. For İsmail Kara, secularization indicates the loosening of ties with an important tradition.

Mardin particularly deems the investigation of history important and when analyzing the issue of secularism, he adopts an institutional history-oriented approach. Mardin (1994, pp. 17-18) indicates that the effect of the ideas of the “Enlightenment” in Europe that stands out with its secular content were not transmitted via the important philosophers of the age but via the new obligatory “values” brought about by the new institutions from the West. Therefore, Şerif Mardin states that secular ideas have been brought to Turkey as an outcome of the changes made at the institutional level in line with Westernization.

İsmail Kara states that as a result of the government’s adoption of secularism as its underlying ideology, extremely secular regulations have led to a situation away from tradition and that, at the same time, modern Islamic thought has such a dimension that distances itself from tradition. Kara specifically mentions this in his studies while Şerif Mardin considers religious groups in particular and mentions the increasing intensity of religious belief in Turkey. Mardin highlights that despite the secularizing government policies imposed over long years, Islam has maintained its vitality in modern Turkish society. Mardin understands this as the failure of the Kemalist ideology, in a sense. For him, the secular symbolism that was developed in line with the Kemalist ideology after the foundation of the Republic was too shallow to expand among the people and had no esthetic appeal. Since there were no guiding principles made for the daily lives of the people, Kemalism created a gap that was filled by religious sects. While Mardin’s explanations in the press regarding religious groups which shape social relations are generally approved by extreme *laikler* from time to time, more Islamical oriented groups criticize him for the shallowness of his criticisms. Furthermore, İsmail Kara criticizes Mardin by saying that although he makes various statements about the Naqshi movement, these statements are full of mistakes.



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