

## **The Nature of Change in Politics, Society and Religion in Turkey between 2011-2021: The Case of Diyanet**

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Despite the adoption of 79 years (1923-2002) of French form of secularism (laicism) deemed necessary by the founders of the Republic to eliminate the visual aspects of Islam and the culture generated from it, Turkey is still a country divided along religious, political and sociological lines struggling to create an identity that would offer its people a culture of consonance. The arrival of the pro-Islamist AK Party in 2002 has fundamentally shifted the social, political and religious dynamics of Turkey towards more religious conservatism. This division in Turkish society is an underexplored social dilemma worth analysing. This research aims to explore the research question: the nature of change in politics, society and religion in Turkey between 2011-2021: the case of Diyanet. The research will attempt to uncover the nature of change of Turkish form of secularism, where Turkey has come to in manifesting more religious freedoms for individuals and the seemingly increased involvement of the state with religion during the AK Party rule. The *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Presidency of Religious Affairs—hereinafter *Diyanet*) was established as a fundamental organisation of the secular Turkish state with the role of regulating religion in accordance with the vision of the founders of modern Turkey. In a country that is ever divided along secular vs conservative frames, Diyanet poses a critical case in exploring how secularism is shifting and has shifted in the last 10 years of Turkish political experience. The research will attempt to reveal how the Diyanet has deviated from serving the policies of the secular state to serving a new form of Islamic politics in the last 10 years of AK Party rule. The research will attempt to shed light on Turkey's level of state neutrality within the theoretical framework of the renowned German legal scholar Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde's theory of state neutrality. Böckenförde provides underpinnings of how secularism, deemed by some as the guarantee of neutrality, should be addressed by governments. The research will be carried out through mixed methods. Two separate sources of primary data in “media news articles, op-eds” and the “Diyanet sermons” will initially be analysed and coded using NVivo QSR Application. Diyanet Sermons will be analysed through, content, textual, latent and thematic analysis.

*Ismail Haskara* began his professional career as a TESOL teacher and a translator-interpreter, and later became an expert in Terrorism and Security Studies, for which he was awarded the Executive Dean's List. After working as a TEFL lecturer at various universities in Turkey, he then worked for various institutions as a translator and interpreter. In 2013, Haskara worked for the Attorney General's Department in Australia as a Language Content Analyst until 2017.

His goal after graduating will be to teach at a university in Australia or Turkey, in a discipline that is relevant to his acquired skills.