

Secularism and Political Inclusion: Turkey in the 2000s

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Abstract : For more than a decade, secularism's compatibility with religion has been called into question. Particularly, secular states' exclusionary practices were raised to prove that secularism is not necessary for democracy. Meanwhile, with the debut of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002, Turkish state's approach to religion has gradually changed. It is argued in that presentation that this change has led Turkey to a process of de-secularization, which refers to a considerable regress in state's inclusionary and pluralist credentials. In this regard, this study both reflects on the relationship between secularism and democracy within the context of Turkish experience and analyses the consequences of the process of de-secularization of state in Turkey. To analyze Turkish state's changing approach to religion and measure the de-secularization of the state, the connection between state and religion will be examined in three levels: ends, institutions, and law and policies. The presentation will indicate that Turkish state's connection with religion in all three levels significantly weakened its secular credentials, which at the same time risked state's commitment to neutrality, freedom of conscience and equality. In this regard, the change in Turkish state's approach to religion throughout the 2000s, which this study refers to as the process of the de-secularization of the state, also brought about a process of de-democratization for Turkey.

Keywords : AKP, political inclusion, secularism, Turkey

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