

## **„SECULAR STATES, RELIGIOUS POLITICS: INDIA, TURKEY AND THE FUTURE OF SECULARISM“**

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The term secularism has originated in European political theory and practice, and aims to present such a system of state-religion relations, in which religion is an individual's private matter and has no influence on public authority. In addition to the term secularization, the term laicism and laicization is used, which basically means the same, more precisely it represents the separation of state and religion.<sup>1</sup> To contribute to the concept of secularism, Sumantra Bose, Professor of International and Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science, accepted the challenge and analyzed two leading examples of secular states in the non-Western world. The product of his analysis is a comprehensive and well-written study entitled *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey and the Future of Secularism*.

The book *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey and the Future of Secularism* consists of a preface and seven chapters. The chapters are entitled as follows: 1. The Discontents of Secularism, 2. Paths to the Secular State, 3. Paradoxes of the Secular State, 4. India: The Anti-Secularist Ascendancy, 5. Turkey: The Anti-Secularist Triumph, 6. Secular and Anti-Secular Authoritarianisms, a. The Case of Kemalism, b. The Case of Hindu Nationalism and 7. The Futures of Secularism.

It is important to note that there has been no comparative study in academia analyzing the cases of secularism in India and Turkey, therefore this book is a pioneering study in the researching of the functioning of secularism in the non-Western world (p. 32). Namely, the aim of this comparative analysis is to explain the political transformation of India and Turkey and to present anomalies, contradictions and problems, as well as the future of secularism in the non-Western world.

The cases of India and Turkey have similarities as well as differences. The two crucial differences between the cases of India and Turkey are as follows. The first difference concerns the motive for establishing state secularism in both India and Turkey (p. 34). Namely, both states adopted secularism as a key principle of state functioning, but the motives for establishing secularism were different. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's First Prime Minister, believed that secularism was a primary element needed to maintain a multi-religious community in India. More specifically, secularism in India represented the central segment of the coexistence of differ-

1 Miroljub Jevtić, *Politikologija religije*, Centar za proučavanje religije i versku toleranciju, Beograd, 2009, p. 79.

ent religious beliefs. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey's First President, sought to achieve the model and prosperity of Western civilization by implementing secularism in Turkey. As the study shows, Turkish state secularism was motivated by a desire to embrace the history and model of „the other” - the Western Model, while India sought to distance itself from “the other” which was embodied in Pakistan (pp. 75-76). However, it is significant to say that Nehru and Atatürk shared a skeptical view of religion and considered it an obstacle. Nehru and Atatürk deeply believed in a strong modern version of their societies with a sovereign state as the most significant agent of modernization. There is another key difference between the two cases. Namely, Turkish secularism was ideologically promoted by the deep authoritarian state, while in India, secularism has been an integral part of democracy ever since 1950 (p. 39). Bose saw in the above differences of state secularism between India and Turkey a signal for the need to examine the future of secularism in the countries of the non-Western world. This is exactly what makes the book really useful.

In this important and comprehensive study, the anomalies and paradoxes of the secular state are described in detail in both cases. Neither India nor Turkey have official religions, and state secularism in both cases is significantly different from the Western understanding of secularism. Both states have a specific regulatory function and authority when it comes to religion and religious institutions (p. 4). In addition, although India and Turkey remain “secular”, their leaders and ruling political parties in the 21st century are clearly in favor of anti-secularism (p. 27). In India, this is supported by certain family and marital laws, courts' activities, the adoption of a Resolution on Hinduism - seen as the most effective guarantor of secularism in India, also the cow issue, the Kashmir issue and the growing tensions between Hindus and Muslims. All these facts are a stumbling block to the functioning of the secular state in India. Regarding Turkey, since the 1950s, we have seen an increase in anti-secular currents. A turning point on the path of political and social transformation of Turkey happened in the reign of President Turgut Özal, which led Turkey from state secularism to anti-secular policy in the 21st century (p. 191). We can find the following paradoxes and anomalies of the secular state in Turkey. The first paradox is that the Diyanet – Directorate of Religious Affairs, an organ that was in charge of controlling religious practice, over time became the engine for promoting the majority religion of Sunni Islam (p. 107). The second paradox was the promotion of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (a combination of Turkish nationalism and Muslim identity) under President Özal, which was supported by the military (known to be the iron guardian of secularism). Another important fact is the policy towards the Kurds and Alevis, which puts to test the reach of state secularism in Turkey. Finally, the headscarf issue points to the struggle between secular and anti-secular tendencies and places Turkish secularism in history. It is these anomalies that illustrate that secularism in India and Turkey has come to an intersection under the influence of anti-secular

ascendancy and anti-secular triumph.

The fourth and fifth chapters of this study are of great importance in mapping and highlighting the anti-secular ascendancy in India as well as the anti-secular triumph in Turkey. The anti-secular ascendancy in India is embodied in the actions of the political ideology of the Hindutva, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) - a Hindu nationalist movement, which was formed back in 1925. The goal of the RSS movement was to make India a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu state). Since the establishment of India's independence, the RSS has sought to act more politically and accordingly, it assisted in the formation of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS) political party in 1951, the precursor to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (p. 120). BJP leaders are politically trained in RSS, including two Hindu nationalist Prime ministers - Atal Behari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi. Although the BJP is now in power in India, it must be noted that the Hindu nationalist movement was long been marginalized in the politics of India until the 1980s. Then its significant influence on politics slowly began, culminating in 2014 with Modi's rise to power. The anti-secular triumph in Turkey, started in the 1980s, during the reign of Özal and culminated by the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) coming to power in 2002. As in the case of India, a movement was supporting the AKP in the elections. This was the Gülen Movement (Hizmet Movement), an Islamic movement that was later accused of organizing a coup attempt in Turkey in 2016. The key point representing the victory of the anti-secular currents over the secularists during the reign of the AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdogan was their victory in the headscarf issue (p. 326). Also, the AKP regime has succeeded in doing what no one else has, namely putting the military under civilian control. What the anti-secular currents have taken over from the Kemal state in the 21st century is the authoritarian model of the state. Namely, anti-secular authoritarianism has replaced secular authoritarianism in contemporary Turkey (p.39).

In this comparative study, the author explains the ideologies of Kemalism in Turkey and Hindu nationalism in India. Namely, the similarities between the two ideologies are embodied in the pursuit of homogeneity of the nation. Both Kemalism and Hindu nationalism find their form of nationalism legitimate, and both ideologies foster a militaristic ethos, the commitment to a unitary and centralized model of the state (p. 273). However, both ideologies, the author argues, are incompatible with democratic political culture (p. 274).

At the end of the book, Bose questions the future of secularism in these two countries. He finds that the Turkey established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is dead. Turkey now represents a state based on the religious Sunni-Hanefi concept of Turkish national identity (p. 321). It has undergone an anti-secular social and political transformation in the 21st century, which has been finalized in the past few years under the rule of the AKP and Erdogan (p. 322). India's future as a secular state is still questionable and will depend on how successful the BJP is in expanding its political base and consolidating the state power that is crucial in realizing

the anti-secular Hindutva project. As the author argues, India is currently at a crossroads; it is an “advantage of Hindutva” (p. 355).

As we find, the book *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey and the Future of Secularism* is a significant and sophisticated scientific study of the possibilities and obstacles to the functioning of state secularism in the non-Western world. We hope that this study will be of benefit to all academic researchers of the Politology of Religion<sup>2</sup>, Political Sciences and International Relations, and especially to those concerned with the reach and future of the secular state, both in the Western and in the non-Western worlds.

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2 See more about the Discipline of Political Science called *Politology of Religion* at: Miroљub Jevtic, Political Science and Religion, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, pp. 59-69.

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