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39883

**Kemalist and Zionist Nation Building: What Makes a Turk? What Makes an Israeli?**

**Candidate Number: 39883**

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### Abstract

Turkey and Israel share a set of eerie similarities with one another, similarities that have not yet been remarked on by the literature. They are both the products of ideologically motivated nation-building processes: Kemalism and Zionism. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of Turkey and David Ben-Gurion of Israel have succeeded in shaping nation states, and their legacies remain strong in Israel and Turkey today. This paper, through a historical incursion, draws a link between the Turkish and Israeli cases. This apparent link is established through a “theological dilemma”, a falsity of secularism, that lies in the fundamentals of these states. This dilemma has been the driving force in constructing the Turkish and Israeli nations, and has had ripple effects on today’s politics. Through this ambiguous position of religion in the making of the nation, this paper answers two questions: What makes a Turk? What makes an Israeli? As Turkey moves towards a Post-Kemalist setting, alongside Israel, which moves towards a Post-Zionist one, this discussion remarks on how foundational ideologies have persisted and live on in their respective settings, establishing once more the primacy of ideology and nationalism in the current political contexts of these two countries.



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## Introduction

*“The Turkish nation, who has been progressing towards the national ideal in exact unison, is a great nation!”*

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk<sup>1</sup>

*“Our future depends not on what the gentiles will say, but on what the Jews will do!”*

David Ben-Gurion<sup>2</sup>

Benedict Anderson’s seminal *Imagined Communities* offers a working definition of the *nation*, hoping to ascribe clarity to a greatly abstract phenomenon that has shaped and continues to shape political developments since its inception. Anderson (2016), in calling the nation an “imagined political community” remarks on the ideological creation that constitutes a nation (p. 6). His rationale rests on the maxim that the nation is a construct that is deliberately moulded and given coherence by a driving ideological force. Kemalism in Turkey and Zionism in Israel are two such ideologies that have succeeded in constructing nations. I use “succeeded” here with particular significance, as these two nationalist movements embody a certain degree of success in realizing their missions of creating nation states, in two markedly distinct contexts. These ideologies have also survived the test of time, in that they continue to be the dominant creed in their respective polities. In light of this perceived “success” in creating a “nation”, this dissertation follows an account of the nation-building processes in Israel and Turkey in a comparative manner.

The Republic of Turkey was established in 1923 as the successor state to the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional Ottoman Empire. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, spearheading what Turkish official historiographical tradition calls the Turkish Revolution or the Turkish War of Independence<sup>3</sup> defeated the invading Allied forces in Anatolia and subsequently spearheaded the creation of a modern nation state. In Mustafa Kemal and his cadres endeavours, the Ottoman Empire finally completed its transition from a heterogeneous amalgam of religions, ethnicities and languages to a

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<sup>1</sup> From Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s speech during the celebrations marking the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the republic.

<sup>2</sup> From David Ben-Gurion’s address in 1955 on an occasion marking the Israeli victory over the Arab forces in 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Essentially the Greco-Turkish War, as most of the fighting took place between the remnants of the Ottoman military and the invading Greek forces which were aided by the British.

professedly ethnically pure Turkish nation state, which was in turn moulded into the vision of its eternal father: Atatürk. The Turkey of today, though in many aspects markedly different from Mustafa Kemal's ideal, continues to preserve its distinct Kemalist underpinnings. The Kemalist project continues to influence the politics of Turkey, and remains the greatest ideological impetus shaping Turkey's public life.

The State of Israel came into existence in 1948, following the proclamation of the nation's independence and the subsequent war that ensued against the Arab forces. As Israel was born in fire so to speak the decades long Zionist dream of a Jewish state in the biblically promised homeland was realized. The Jewish Question<sup>4</sup> that had emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, had finally been resolved, with Jews accorded a state of their own. From this point came David Ben-Gurion's *mission civilisatrice* in stripping the Jews of their diasporic existence and ascribing them a novel identity as members of the Israeli nation. Under Ben-Gurion's guise Jews would no longer seek refuge in the ghettos of Europe, where they had endured the greatest calamity of modern times, but would exist as proud members of a new country that professed to be a national home for a once stateless people. Israel would be the safe heaven that Jews had not been accorded in their centuries long existence in the diaspora.

This dissertation embarks on a comparative analysis with the following two questions: *What makes a Turk? What makes an Israeli?* In other words, the subject matter of this study is the construction of the Turkish and Israeli nations. This dissertation delves into the Turkish and Israeli national psyches to ascertain the fundamental tenants of the national ethos. Indeed, these queries may appear idiosyncratic or far too abstract for the study of political science, as this paper does not address a matter of causality or correlation. Rather than addressing causality, with the motivation of providing a curated understanding of the Israeli and Turkish nations, this dissertation seeks to

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<sup>4</sup> The position of the Jews vis a vis their existence in Europe became a significant "national question" in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was exacerbated by the Russian pogroms against Jewish subjects in 1881 with the proto-Zionist movement emerging shortly after.

provide an interpretive framework for a comparison that has not yet been made in the pertaining literature.

Turkey and Israel are two nations that are eerily similar to one another, and establishing this similarity is my main motivation in attempting such an endeavour of comparison. Moreover, official discourses in both nations are coloured with a glaring exceptionalism that seeks to separate the Zionist and Kemalist projects from all other nation-building efforts as truly remarkable and unique. This dissertation also seeks to deconstruct this exceptionalism by establishing a link between the Turkish and Israeli cases.

## **Methodology**

History is the greatest arsenal accorded to one in the study of nationalism and nation-building. Indeed, it is sanitized versions of history, and the continuous political discourse shaped around such histories, that uphold and maintain the national ethos, ensuring that it transcends from state to society. This dissertation thus relies on an extensive historical account of the processes that lead to the creation of Turkey and Israel. These accounts are not “sanitized” in that the history in question is not the one widely promulgated by the Turkish and Israeli states, it is rather the summation of the vast literature that has developed in Turkish and Israeli studies regarding the past of these two polities.

Furthermore, this dissertation is an interpretive one, in that it seeks to establish the ground for a much broader research project that has been ignited by this intellectual curiosity. Thus, the paper is constructed as a narration of perceived parallels between the Israeli and Turkish polities, with remarks in areas deemed significant. This interpretive approach rests on the maxim that the Israeli and Turkish political contexts are distinct, enshrined in their respective histories, yet have somehow converged on a similar path illustrated by perceived discontents in their current societies. While Turkey is a nation born from an empire so to speak, Israel is one born from the remnants

of a people that have been the targets of systematic state violence for centuries, culminating with the horrors of the Holocaust.

This study of two nation states is also pervaded by a logic of comparison, which establishes that these two cases for comparison are similar enough, but also markedly distinct from one another. This logic of comparison is achieved through several premises that this dissertation upholds. Foremost, Turkey and Israel both represent attempts of Western-like nation state creations in distinctly non-western contexts. The ideal-type of nation state that both Mustafa Kemal and David Ben-Gurion subscribed to resides in its Western conception, rooted in the rise of nationalism in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both Kemal and Gurion sought to transform society, and create modern citizens through deliberate programs of education, settlement and civic awareness. The two national fathers subscribed to Jacobin tactics that saw society as ripe for moulding in light of a perceived ideal.

Moreover, the fundamental tenants of Zionism and Kemalism are being challenged by the current political administrations in Israel and Turkey, though in an ambivalent manner which has allowed for these ideologies to continue to be the dominant creeds, albeit having been transformed to accommodate novel political figures. Benjamin Netanyahu subscribes openly to Revisionist Zionism, once considered a fringe movement due to its extreme right-wing, maximalist understanding of the ideology, whereas now these maxims have reached the apex of Israeli political life. In Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has revived the Sunni-Turkish majoritarian consensus at the heart of the Turkish nation-building project and openly challenges the Kemalist-secularist establishment.

First this paper will discuss the literature pertaining to the nation in Israel and Turkey, with special focus on the Post-Kemalist and Post-Zionist traditions. This will be followed by a curated study of the intellectual and political histories of Kemalism and Zionism, with the expectation that such a historical incursion will establish an understanding for the “Turk” and “Israeli”. This paper

will then end with the maxim that both nations share a theological dilemma rooted in their inception.

### **Post-Kemalist and Post-Zionist Discontents: A Review of the Literature**

The academic background for this work is rooted in two academic strands of historiography that have developed in Israel and Turkey respectively: Post-Zionism and Post-Kemalism. These novel historiographical traditions have emerged following the political transformations that took place in Israel and Turkey in the early 1980's. In Turkey the academic shift was ignited by the 1980 coup d'état, which enforced the so called Atatürkist System of Thought<sup>5</sup>, causing initially academic and later journalistic circles to engage in a widespread catharsis against the perceived injustices of the Kemalist project, as the state increased its coercive capacity to silence dissent. In Israel, the background for the Post-Zionist movement lies in the events that ended with the demise of the Labour Zionists in Israel, in the political earthquake of 1976, which ushered in the right-wing party of Likud and its leader Menachem Begin. Following Begin's ascent Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 and in 1987 Israel experienced the First Intifada<sup>6</sup>, forcing the Israeli academia to, with great fervour, challenge the foundational myths of their nation (Aytürk, 2015).

Though the *modus operandi* of Post-Kemalist and Post-Zionist scholars is history-writing, the broader paradigm of both movements, given the delicate nature of official history in the nation-building processes of Turkey and Israel, has hastily given way to political repercussions of a grave magnitude. The Post-Kemalist and Post-Zionist worlds, essentially nebulas of thought encompassing sociology, politics and history, continue to be the dominant academic paradigms in Turkey and Israel<sup>7</sup>. They reflect the desire of an enlightened academia to challenge the grip of an

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<sup>5</sup> *Atatürkçü Düşünce Sistemi* in Turkish – this program stipulated a novel adherence to the persona of Mustafa Kemal and his official ideology – Kemalism – that had received ideological coherence in the 4<sup>th</sup> congress of Turkey's founding political party the Republican People's Party (CHP) in 1935. The Atatürkist System of Thought stipulated that reverence to Atatürk embodied a total acceptance of the Turkish army's role as vanguard of the Turkish state.

<sup>6</sup> Popular Palestinian protests against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza that often took violent turns.

<sup>7</sup> Some scholars such as Aytürk (2015) and Kaplan (2013) have remarked on the need to address a Post Post-Zionism as well as a Post Post-Kemalism in Israeli and Turkish studies respectively, yet given the novelty of such assertions this dissertation will consider the original incarnations of both strands for the sake of coherence.

omnipresent state over the discourse of history and politics, which in this case are unequivocally tied to one another.

Having been born from a desire to “revise” official history and by extent rectify what the Post-Zionists and Post-Kemalists perceived as deceptive regimes, these two academic strands provide the lens for a contemporary discussion on the politics of Turkey and Israel. Indeed, it is unsurprising that these scholars are referred collectively as “revisionists”. The Post-Kemalist and Post-Zionists worlds essentially deconstruct claims of exceptionalism on both sides, openly challenging the mantras of Turkish and Israeli grandeur and their professed state of being *sui generis*.

Post-Zionism, especially when thought of in relation to Post-Kemalism, is a thoroughly established academic strain, and has been greatly elaborated on in the field of Israeli studies, with many scholars subscribing to the epithet openly. The apex of Post-Zionism lies in the fundamental historiographical work undertaken by Tom Segev (2007, 2018) and Benny Morris<sup>8</sup> (2003). Segev’s exposition of Israel’s founding historical narrative, as one that deceptively omitted the ambiguities and atrocities of the colonial era continues to be the single most useful tool in the arsenal of the Post-Zionist (Segev, 2018). Segev and Morris’s expose of Israel’s role in the creation and exacerbation of the Palestinian refugee problem and David Ben-Gurion’s early attempts to coercively assimilate the so-called Oriental Jews<sup>9</sup> is the pillar of this novel historiography. David Ben-Gurion thoroughly believed that the Jews of Europe had led their cause in both “quantity and quality” and that the Jews of the Orient had “receded” into the annals of history (Segev, 2018, p. 168). This recognition of a majoritarian Ashkenazi rationale in the founding of the Israeli polity is the fundamental optic for a Post-Zionist understanding of Israeli societal relations.

Segev’s mantle is carried on by the likes of Ilan Pappé (2015, 2017) and Shlomo Sand (2014). The latter provides an excellent framework for how the Zionist pioneers constructed the

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<sup>8</sup> Morris has recently changed his position to reflect more of a Neo-Zionist understanding of Israeli historiography, especially with regards to the peace process between Arabs and Israelis.

<sup>9</sup> Refers to the waves of Jewish migration into Israel from Arab countries following the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. Most Jews under this epithet belong to the Sephardim and Mizrahim, being Jews of the former Ottoman Empire and the broader Arab-Islamic world.

myth of a “land of Israel” for the Jewish people, while the former continues the tradition of challenging official historiography. Pappé’s account of Israel’s foundational history is presented in an even more revisionist spirit than Segev’s. He remarks on the early Israeli myth that the Yishuv<sup>10</sup> “brought modernisation and progress to a primitive Palestine” and thus makes a great stride in laying bare the ambiguities of Mandatory Palestine, thus deconstructing the narrative of the Zionists that perceived the indigenous Arab population as one of “Islamic fanaticism” and “pro-Arab British colonialism” (Pappé, 2015, pp. 22, 23). Pappé (2017) also places Israel and Zionism in the broader paradigm of a settler colonial project, thus viewing Palestinian-Arab resistance to the State of Israel in light of a resistance against colonial ambitions. In Pappé’s view Israel must be considered along the lines of South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, as a system of oppression against indigenous peoples, in this case Arabs.

Post-Kemalism lacks the coherence that Post-Zionism possesses, as scholars of Turkish studies rarely subscribe to the title with much enthusiasm<sup>11</sup>, yet the divergence from Kemalist historiography is acutely apparent. Kemalist historiographical tradition had been based on the seminal text of Mustafa Kemal – the Speech – or *Nutuk*<sup>12</sup> in Turkish, embodied in texts such as Bernard Lewis’s *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, the single authoritative document in English that shaped the initial expanse of Turkish studies. In this monologue detailing the events of the Turkish War of Independence, Mustafa Kemal presents a self-narrative of his role as saviour of the Turkish nation. A historiographical tradition based so greatly on the persona of a single man was aptly deconstructed in the same manner, in essentially humanizing the myth like figure of Mustafa Kemal and historicizing him within the scope of broader Ottoman, Turkish and world history. Erik Jan

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<sup>10</sup> The proto-state Jewish entity that existed in British ruled Mandatory Palestine. David Ben-Gurion and the founding fathers of Israel were all inhabitants of the Yishuv, having emigrated to the Ottoman Empire following their expulsion from Russia.

<sup>11</sup> This is due to the nature of the Turkish state. While in the Israeli case archives were opened for Israeli historians to genuinely engage in “revisionist” endeavours Turkey remains a much-closed system. Archives for research are rarely available to “un-sanitized” forms of history writing with the bulk of Post-Kemalist research emanating from foreign archive material.

<sup>12</sup> Mustafa Kemal presented his *magnum opus* – the “Speech” – to his party’s congress in 1927 over a course of six days. The text is taken as the *sine qua non* account of Turkey’s independence struggle, and is largely accepted as the primary document pertaining to official Turkish historiography (Adak, 2003).

Zürcher (1984, 1993, 2010) and M. Şükrü Hanioğlu (2008, 2013) are the proponents of such a deconstructing crusade.

Zürcher's fundamental *Unionist Factor* presents the greatest challenge to the historiography surrounding the "Speech", as it aptly characterizes it as a self-vindication of Mustafa Kemal, promulgated as a means to justify the purges directed against former members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the political party which had ruled the Ottoman Empire and had spearheaded the national resistance movement in Anatolia against the Allied forces prior to Kemal's ascendancy. Turkish official historiography is thus characterized as a means to solidify the Kemalist regime by effectively eliminating the apparent Unionist element in Turkey's national resistance movement. Mustafa Kemal's attempt to conceal the CUP's role from official historiography not only serves to bridge the gap between his regime and the Ottoman Empire, rather also strips Republican Turkey of its professed exceptionalism.

Hanioğlu's (2013) intellectual biography of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, by delving into Atatürk's *weltanschauung* provides the catalyst for dismantling the omnipotence and exceptionalism of Mustafa Kemal's self and subsequently the regime that flourished around his grand persona. While Kemalist historiography had emphasized Mustafa Kemal as unique figure, completely distinct from the Ottoman Empire from which he hailed, Hanioğlu characterizes him as a typical *fin de siècle* Ottoman military officer, who had experienced the same political maturation that scores of other officers had. Mustafa Kemal was not unique in ideology nor upbringing, as he experienced the same political revival that countless other Young Turks had under the tenants of vulgar-materialism, social-Darwinism and a distinct Prussian militarism that hailed from the Ottoman military academy's infamous German instructor Colmar von der Goltz<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> The Goltzian maxim of militarism is enshrined in his seminal work – *Das Volk in Waffen* – or *A Nation in Arms*. This text which stipulates a vanguard-like role for the military in society was part of the essential reading that young Ottoman cadets of the military academies had to complete as part of their studies. Mustafa Kemal was a direct disciple of Colmar von der Goltz, who appears in his graduation photograph from the military academy. Goltz from the offset was impressed with Kemal's military mind (Hanioğlu, 2013).

The most recent form of Post-Kemalist deconstruction has been conveyed by left-wing scholars of Turkish politics, who ardently opposed the post 1980 regime, which they saw as the consolidation of right-wing interests in Turkey. This academic form has focused on the ideological tenants of Kemalism, much like Hanioglu's focus on the ideological world of Mustafa Kemal. The overarching maxim in such studies is that Kemalism represents a stand of "republican conservatism" which fashions an aristocratic role for the nation-building elite, with the overall regime representing a "dictatorship of reason" (Bora, 2017, pp. 119-135; Heper, 1985). Here the left-wing Post-Kemalist critique debases the self-ascribed revolutionary character of Kemalist thought, and instead likens it to the modernizing mission adopted by the late Ottoman intelligentsia, which sought to reassert the power of central government over peripheral interests. Moreover, advocates of this tradition characterize the Turkish Republic as a project of forcing Sunni-Turkish majoritarianism into the greatly heterogeneous Anatolian heartland (Ünlü, 2018).

### **Turkey: The Kemalist Inevitability**

The Kemalist republic was the inevitable end of the Ottoman Empire's broad modernization paradigm, which has its inception in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Kemalist project is not a deliberate one, in that it is not the product of a clearly articulated ideology, nor a grand mission of rebirthing a civilization. This is one of the greatest discrepancies between the Israeli and Turkish cases, and such a discrepancy allows this comparative analysis a great amount of breadth in addressing a convergence from opposing ends. The Turkish nation was born from necessity rather than initiative, as it is the inescapable product of a strenuous process of modernization that plagued the Ottoman Empire. Social, political and economic realities gave birth to the Kemalist republic in the end of empire, when the Ottomans, alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary, lost the Great War. The burgeoning Kemalists then sought to shape a Turkish nation.

The Kemalist nation-building project was realized upon the rural masses of Anatolia, the geography that the new republic was founded in, but it was in the vast expanse of Ottoman imperial

domains that it has its roots. The Ottoman Empire, starting from the reign of Sultan Selim III, and culminating with the ascent of the single party regime of the Committee of Union and Progress, spearheaded a process of modernization, westernisation and centralization. In the Ottoman rationale these three notions were taken as synonyms, as the Ottomans equated modernity with the development of the modern state in Europe, and saw this as a means to reassert the authority of the central state over a greatly fractured provincial administration, of which the greatest burden was the lack of taxation capabilities and an unruly military that had lost its former grandeur. This is also an era in which the Ottomans became acquainted with Europeans in a novel manner, as travel between the two worlds exacerbated, with permanent diplomatic representations being opened across European capital. This novel form of interaction also facilitated the transfer of novel ideas regarding burgeoning philosophies such as liberalism, conservatism and most significantly nationalism.

Dubbed the era of “Tanzimat” or “reorganization”, this era is very much concerned with the notion of *beka*, a concept that pervades the Ottoman ruling mind. *Beka* is best translated into the political context as the sustenance of the perpetuity of the state. The reformers and late Ottoman modernizers, whether they be members of the military-bureaucratic establishment, the Sublime Porte<sup>14</sup> or the sultans themselves directed their efforts towards ensuring the perpetual existence of the Ottoman state. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, the Ottomans realized that the only viable method of this was the establishment of a constitutional regime, in which citizenry and pseudo civic practices were realized, alongside sweeping centralization, as a means to curb the violent spread of Christian nationalism in imperial domains. These maximalist nationalist movements had caused the Ottomans a great deal of economic woes as well as loss of territory in the empire’s traditional heartland, the Balkans. Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian and Greek nationalism had succeeded in splitting from the empire, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, either by

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<sup>14</sup> The Porte was the seat of the Ottoman Grand Vizier – a first ministership of sorts, whose office became the locus of power in an ever-growing Ottoman bureaucracy.

establishing independent states or extremely autonomous pseudo-state structures that were under the auspices of more powerful European patrons, such as the Russian Empire or the British.

Classical Ottoman institutions such as the *devshirme*, the practice of incorporating Christian subjects into the Ottoman military and bureaucracy via forced conversion and education, and *timar*, the Ottoman system of provincial farming and conscription, which had flourished in the Balkans, were rendered redundant, as European Turkey slowly receded into the Western Thrace, thereby cutting the empire off from its greatest source of revenue and human capital. The greatest Ottoman cities that had remained in the Balkans slowly became hostile centres of resentment towards central authority, and became the theatre for some of the most catastrophic wars that scarred the late Ottoman psyche. Notably the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 almost completely eroded the Ottoman presence in the European continent. The Thrace, roughly the border the Turkey shares with Europe today, came to represent the confinement that the Ottomans faced in the gradual process that ushered in the end of the empire.

Ottoman efforts at constitutionalism and centralization offered mixed results at best, while prolonging the demise of the empire, they also paved the way for the creation of modern institutions that shaped an entire generation of Ottoman intellectuals, who in turn became the fathers of the Turkish nation. When Mustafa Kemal and the cohort of Turkey's nationalists had become adolescents and had either enrolled in military academies or had engaged in proto-nationalist political endeavours, they were faced with a markedly different empire. The Ottoman Empire in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a majority Muslim state, whereas in previous centuries the populational balance between non-Muslim and Muslim subjects tilted towards non-Muslims, the loss of European Turkey had driven the Muslim inhabitants of those regions into the imperial capital and Anatolia, setting the stage for an inevitable Sunni-Islamic majoritarian takeover of the reigns of the state.

The catalyst for the republican inevitability came in the 1913 coup d'état<sup>15</sup> in the Ottoman Empire. The central committee of the Committee of Union and Progress orchestrated a takeover of the state in the form of a raid on the Grand Vizier's office, murdering members of the incumbent Ottoman cabinet. In the ensuing year the Ottoman Empire joined the Great War on the side of Germany and during the course of the war the Ottoman state eliminated the last sizeable Christian population in the empire: the Armenians (Morris & Ze'evi, 2019). The empire alongside the other central powers was defeated in 1918, ushering in the Kemalist era in Turkish politics. Mustafa Kemal and his compatriots organized a popular resistance movement against the victorious allied forces in Anatolia which successfully expelled the Europeans from what would become in 1923 the Republic of Turkey.

While the republic took shape in the 1920's, Kemalism was not promulgated as an official ideology until the early 1930's, when the young republic had already been in existence for almost ten years. Mustafa Kemal and his retinue, feeling a lack of fervour on the part of the larger populace vis a vis the nation-building project, decided to promulgate Kemalism in order to allow for greater coherence in their bid to shape society. The party sanctioned Kemalism would make the heralding of the Kemalist project easier, yet it would still remain alien to the majority of the Turkish populace, who would have to be constantly reminded of the state's ideological underpinnings, and the character of their national existence. In contrast, Zionism had achieved a great amount of ideological coherence in the late 1890's, and had already been articulated in writing, through Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*, long before Mustafa Kemal even fathomed the idea of an official ideology for the Turkish nation, and even longer before Israel came into existence.

Markedly, the fortuity of Turkey is apparent in the patch-work nature of Kemalism and its vision for the nation. Kemalism in essence embodies currents of thought that shaped the late Ottoman intellectual, whether those be maxims of social-Darwinism, militarism, Westernism or an

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<sup>15</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher (1984) aptly characterizes the single party era of Turkish politics as having its inception in 1913 and ending in 1950, when the Democrat Party (DP) emerged the victor of Turkey's first multi-party elections. The continuity of the Unionist tradition to the Kemalist reveals the regime's rationale for governance.

understanding of secularism that lies in the maxim of *laïcité* derived from the Third French Republic, which in Mustafa Kemal's vision embodied a most ideal form of governance (Hanioglu, 2013). Kemalism represents not an ideology per se, but rather the lack of one which in turn has been shaped by superiorly crafted notions that pervaded the mind of an enlightened Ottoman, and later an enlightened Turk. In Mustafa Kemal's sudden takeover<sup>16</sup> of the Turkish nationalist movement in Anatolia, his notions of societal relations were gradually transferred to the movement, and later were used as the basis for his nation-building program.

Take for instance, militarism, one of the fundamental tenants of Kemalist rationale. Mustafa Kemal, a young Ottoman military high school student, hailing from a modest middle-class background, would be one of the recipients of the novel Hamidian system of military education in Sultan Abdülhamid II<sup>17</sup>'s overhaul of the military to encompass novel modes of Prussian teaching (in prior the French model was upheld), reflective of the burgeoning Ottoman-German alliance. Here Mustafa Kemal's ideological world would develop to encompass the vanguardism of Prussian military doctrine. Mustafa Kemal, like many Unionist and Young Turk peers, would subscribe to a militarism that would see the populace of the Ottoman Empire as a "nation in arms". This view is reinforced by various slogans in Turkey that reflect the prevalence of 19<sup>th</sup> century Prussian rationale in official discourse, such as "every Turk is born a soldier<sup>18</sup>" and is epitomized in the official colloquium "Mehmetçik" literally meaning "little Mehmet" that is used to refer to the hundreds of thousands of servicemen of the Turkish Armed Forces. The phrase "little Mehmet" was popularized during the Unionist era of Ottoman politics, yet became a cornerstone of the Turkish

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<sup>16</sup> It is unclear under which circumstances that Mustafa Kemal ascended to the helm of the brewing Turkish nationalist resistance movement in Anatolia in the aftermath of the Great War. While official historiography points to a linear path followed by Kemal, the likely scenario is that he was part of an intra-CUP negotiation that recognized him as the desirable candidate for leadership (Zürcher, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Sultan Abdülhamid II ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909, in which he was deposed by the Unionist regime. He is arguably the most successful of the reformist Sultans, having greatly institutionalized the state in matters of military, diplomacy and economic governance.

<sup>18</sup> "Her Türk asker doğar" – in Turkish. The phrase was popularized in the environment following the 1980 coup d'état as part of the "Atatürkist System of Thought".

Republic's discourse as well, with Mustafa Kemal utilizing the term most notably in his address to the fallen Allied soldiers during the Battle of Gallipoli, in which he had served as an officer.

The congress of the Republican People's Party (CHP) redesigned Kemalism to fit a more ideological prong, by outlining six fundamental tenants for Turkey's official ideology, and thus cloaked the Turkish nation building project with a façade. The six prongs were stipulated as republicanism, nationalism, populism, etatisme, secularism and revolutionism<sup>19</sup>. While republicanism outlined the character of Turkey's political regime, nationalism and populism defined the Turkish people as a classless amalgam of peoples bound by overarching notions of "language, culture and ideal" that inhabited the Turkish state (Bose, 2018, p. 221). Etatisme, derived from the state interventionist French model of economic governance, refers to the economic rationale behind the Kemalist regime, which stipulates a large role for the state apparatus in economic affairs. The opaquest concept, revolutionism, denoting the Kemalist as vanguards of societal change, likely derives from Kemal having fallen under the above-mentioned Prussian école of "a nation in arms".

Secularism is perhaps the most intriguing of the six prongs of the Kemalist ideological world, and reveals how Kemal sought to transform the novel "Turk" of the republic. In practice the notion has been the basis for the realization of Turkey's secular credentials, through the abolishment of the Ottoman caliphate and the importing of the Swiss civil code in lieu of Islamic law (*şeriat*). The notion is often colloquized along phrases such as "civilization" and "progress", terms that are constantly articulated by the Kemalist political machinery (Bose, 2018, p. 223). Atalay (2018) aptly notes that "civilization" is the first and most significant "sacred" tenant of the Kemalist project, and forms an integral part of the secular "Kemalist religion". Here civilization is used interchangeably with the West, hence establishing that Western civilization is the only incarnation that is worthy of adherence to, and the way in which it is achieved is through the Kemalist understanding of laïcité.

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<sup>19</sup> *Cumhuriyetçilik, milliyetçilik, halkçılık, devletçilik, laiklik* and *devrimcilik* in Turkish.

Mustafa Kemal's ideological world, largely influenced by a positivist and Darwinist understanding of societal affairs, perceives a constant state of conflict in society between the forces of "progress" and "civilization" and those of Islam, which is the antithesis of civilization. This conflict is best illustrated in the Menemen Incident of 1930. On December 23<sup>rd</sup> a group of dervishes advocating for the restoration of the Islamic regime, reinstatement of Islamic law and the return of the caliphate caused an uproar in the town of Menemen, close to the Turkish port city of Izmir. The uproar caused alarm in the local gendarmerie unit, led by lieutenant Mustafa Fehmi Kubilay, who arrived to the area only to be attacked by the dervishes and subsequently beheaded, with his severed head paraded on a stick alongside a green banner representing Islam.

The Kemalist regime was flabbergasted by these events, not necessarily because lieutenant Kubilay had been so violently murdered, as the Kemalist regime had been facing local opposition since its inception, but rather because none of the hundreds of town-folk that witnessed the event intervened to stop the reactionary forces. Following the suppression of the riot, Mustafa Kemal entertained the notion of razing Menemen to the ground with all of its inhabitants, like he would in the Dersim incident in 1937, yet was later made content by the proclamation of a state of emergency, enactment of martial law and the subsequent execution of those involved (Zürcher, 1984, pp. 180, 181). Menemen would serve to remind the Kemalist cadres of the wider populace's indifference to their societal vision, hence forcing them to step up their nation building efforts, with great emphasis being made on the transformation of the countryside.

The Menemen Incident laid bare the fragility of the Kemalist project, and the lack of popular support for Western civilizational ethos amongst the masses of Anatolia. In this spirit, lieutenant Kubilay became a "martyr of civilization" having died in defence of Mustafa Kemal's laïcité. *Cumhuriyet*, the officially sanctioned publication of the Kemalist regime, had more specifically referred to Kubilay as "martyr of the Turkish Revolution" (Atalay, 2018, p. 131), with his death causing major public interest in the newly established capital, Ankara. The phrase "martyr of civilization" reflects the inherent duality and paradoxical nature of Kemalist laïcité. Martyrdom

– *şehadet* or *şehitlik* in Turkish – is derived from Islamic colloquialism, and refers to one that has been killed in service of faith, with the reference being strictly Islamic faith<sup>20</sup>. For instance, Turkey today mourns all of her fallen soldiers as martyrs, with the tradition having been firmly established in the republican discourse.

The ambiguity of the term “martyr” is one of the several dualities that plague the Kemalist ideological world. As Bose (2018) argues, the Kemalist projection of laïcité was not an incarnation of secularism in the broad manner it has been realized in the Western world, that is by separating the public and religious realms. Rather secularism à la Mustafa Kemal has been a project of controlling the dominant creed of Islam in Turkey, the Sunni-Hanefi doctrine, fundamentally linking the practice of religion to the burgeoning Kemalist state machinery. The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) replaced the Ottoman office of the Sheikh al-Islam, who was the hierarchal head of the Ottoman Islamic clerical class – the *ulama* – and the official designate of the central government in managing the dominant creed of Islamic faith in the empire – the Sunni-Hanefi branch.

The Diyanet is emblematic of the “theological dilemma<sup>21</sup>” that resides at the core of the nation-building project of Kemalism (Friedman, 1989). Mustafa Kemal, and the entire extent of his regime, attempted to disengage the burgeoning Turkish nation from the creed of Islam. In the quest for “civilization” and “progress”, the Kemalist regime attempted to regulate and confine the reach of Islamic faith, constructing a common intellect that subscribed to a Darwinist and materialist understanding of society, while taking Western civilization as a benchmark. Yet despite this fervent adherence to laïcité, the common denominator in Kemal’s national construct was Islam itself. As the modernization paradigm of the late Ottoman Empire stipulates, the republic did not

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<sup>20</sup> The Turkish Language Association, the regulatory body of Turkish, defines *şehit* – or martyr – as one that has died for the sake of a great ideal or belief.

<sup>21</sup> Menachem Friedman’s concept of a “theological dilemma” serves as the link between the Turkish and Israeli cases. Here it is applied to the functioning of the Diyanet and nature of Kemalist laïcité, while further below in the discussion it will be utilized to address the state of affairs in the Zionist political context.

emerge as the result of a virgin birth, it was not an isolated event, rather the Ottoman Empire had already been pregnant with republic for some time.

The Turkish Republic in its inception faced the fundamental question of who the new “Turks” would be. As such Turkic identity was geographically distant from Turkey and had proved to be a fruitless endeavour to reach during the Unionist era, hence Mustafa Kemal had to look inward, into Anatolia to discover the Turkish nation. Thus, the Muslim inhabitants of what had remained of the Ottoman Empire became Turks, and despite their heterogeneity in class and creed, they were equalized by their faith. The demographic realities of the late Ottoman world caused the inevitable ascent of the Turkish Republic. The Sunni, Turkish speaking inhabitants of Anatolia became “Turks” in the construct of the Turkish nation. Any groups that did not fit to this ideal where either left out of the nation-building process completely, or became only partial members.

### **Israel: The Zionist Triumph**

Zionism triumphed in realizing its goal of establishing a Jewish nation in what it considers the biblical homeland of the Jewish people. Zionism, unlike Kemalism, is not a patch work of ideologies, rather represents an acute understanding and ailment to the Jewish Question. Zionism, though encompassing diverging ideological colourings, the most apparent being Labour Zionism as opposed to Revisionist Zionism, encompasses a conscious attempt to establish the State of Israel and create the new Israeli. The ideological clarity of Zionism lies in the history of the Jewish Question of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Whereas the Kemalists never had to be challenged by a similar “Turkish Question”, as they inherited an existing and institutionalized state apparatus, the Zionists had no such advantage. While the Jacobin tactics of David Ben-Gurion and Mustafa Kemal represent a great convergence, especially in their similar materialist view of society, Mustafa Kemal could rely on the coercive capacity of the state which he inherited, a state apparatus that had already been tested in a two centuries long experiment of centralization. The Jewish nationalist movement of David Ben-Gurion had to institutionalize and execute in a much shorter time frame,

and hence one may speak of their triumph in achieving their ends. This triumph is especially apparent when one considers that after its inception Zionism remained a fringe ideology for the overwhelming majority of world Jewry, passing a test of legitimacy only after it had realized its endeavours.

While Jews for centuries had survived globally as a “tolerated” peoples, despite occasional state violence directed against them, most notably in Europe, the 19<sup>th</sup> century shifted the fundamentals of the existence of Jews in an unprecedented manner. Concurrent with the rise of nationalism in Europe, and the endeavour of European nations to homogenize and consolidate their national character, the position of the Jews vis a vis such a national collective became a national question, the likes of which were already being addressed with regards to perceived national communities in Europe. While Jews in western Europe, under more liberal regimes, would continue their existence despite the upswing in nationalist rhetoric<sup>22</sup>, the great bulk of European Jewry, residing in the territories of the Russian Empire, would be excluded from such acceptance.

In the violent pogroms that ensued in 1881 against Jewish subjects by Tsar Alexander III, the seeds of Zionism were sown. Initially, proto-Zionist movements<sup>23</sup> sprouted, advocating for a solution to the Jewish Question, and calling for the establishment of Jewish national home rather than assimilation in the wake of violence. These proto-Zionists broadly represent a continuity with the Jewish Enlightenment Movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, whose broadly secularized vision for the Jew had already began revering the Jews not solely in messianic terms, but rather also as a national people (Pappe, 2017). This discourse gained coherence with Theodor Herzl ascending to the helm of Zionist movement in the First Zionist Congress. Herzl remains the greatest ideologue of Zionism, in his articulation of the tenants of the movement in *Der Judenstaat*. Moreover, Herzl’s

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<sup>22</sup> One such instance is the *Dreyfus Affair*, which the political ideologue and founding father of Zionism Theodor Herzl witnessed as a young journalist. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, was unjustly accused of espionage by the French authorities following their defeat by the Prussians. Dreyfus, who was later acquitted, faced public condemnation and humiliation.

<sup>23</sup> The Territorialist Movement and the likes of Leon Pinsker are part of such proto-Zionist formations. Pinsker was the first figure to articulate views that may be deemed Zionist, as he recognized that Jews would be condemned to an existence of suffering if they did not reconnect with their ancestral homeland.

time coincided with the internationalization of the Jewish Question, and also for the first concrete attempts at realizing the Zionist endeavour.

With Herzl would begin the Zionist endeavour to attempt to form a state-like entity in what was Ottoman Palestine at the time, and which after the Great War, became part of the Mandate of Palestine, a colonial possession of the British Empire. Herzl initially approached the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II, whose era remarkably also had an imprint on the political psyche of Mustafa Kemal, with the request for autonomous Jewish rule in Ottoman administered Jerusalem. The sultan was uncooperative, and shortly thereafter Herzl would die. Following Herzl's death in 1904, the Zionist movement would be coloured with socialism, with the so-called Labour Zionists ascending to the helm of the movement both in the Zionist Congress and in the ground in Palestine. Following the pogroms in Russia, two groups of Jews had emigrated to Palestine, referred to in historiography as *Aliyah*<sup>24</sup> in the Zionist tradition. The first group arrived immediately after the pogroms of 1881, more significant though is the *Second Aliyah* into Israel, settling in the Holy Land in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which comprised members of the Socialist Zionists, the likes of Ben-Gurion and his retinue. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the loss of Palestine to the British, in the aftermath of the Great War, the Labour Zionists were presented with the greatest opportunity to realize their dream of statehood.

The Zionist movement would experience their first genuine push for statehood under the mandatory regime in British ruled Palestine, where David Ben-Gurion would take the mantle, leading the Labour Zionist collective. The charter of the mandate would allow for the creation of a pseudo-state structure, paving the way for the creation of Zionist institutions. It is in this crucial point of history that the Israeli nation building project begins to bear fruit, as Palestine becomes the bedrock for Zionist activity. Zionist pioneers, taking advantage of a broken system of Ottoman

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<sup>24</sup> Aliyah denotes "going up" in Hebrew and refers to the waves of immigration into Palestine and later Israel. The First Aliyah came to Ottoman Jerusalem the immediate aftermath of the 1881 Pogroms, comprised of elderly Jews. The seeds for the Zionist agricultural collectives, the *Kibbutzim*, have their roots in these waves of early immigration, as the newcomers had to adjust to a rural economy, whilst especially those of the *Second Aliyah* had been accustomed to city life.

land administration, would work to create a territorial reality to their eventual realization of the Zionist project, and engage in their “conquest of land” so to speak.

The Yishuv under British auspices would flourish to an unprecedented degree, with the Zionist pioneers working meticulously under the mandatory regime to create a political reality for a Jewish state. Ben-Gurion, along the other founders of the Jewish nation, immigrants hailing from the enlightened circles of Russian Jewry, would impose their statist-socialist rationale on the Jewish polity taking shape in Palestine. Hebrew would be reintroduced into common circulation, in a stroke of linguistic nationalism, and Jewish farmers would be organized around the *Kibbutzim*, the farming collective that would come to form a basic unit of the State of Israel (Aytürk, 2010). The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) would see its foundation in these crucial years, with the Labour Zionists forming their own military brigades under the mandatory regime, initially to fend off growing Arab discontent with the settlers, and later with the initiative of the British authorities, who militarized Ben-Gurion’s security forces in light of perceived military threats in the region during the course of the Second World War.

At the zenith of the Zionist endeavour, having secured the support of international political institutions, following the aftermath of the *Sboab*, and Britain’s retreat from Palestine with the colonial possession having become difficult to manage due to the constant threat of Arab and Jewish terrorism, an ominous alliance would mark the birth of the State of Israel between religion and secularist nation-building. Indeed, much like the Turkish case, a theological dilemma rests in the foundation of Israel as well. The Zionist pioneers were veraciously irreligious, Ben-Gurion himself had on several occasions openly rejected Judaism. They had openly subscribed to a socialist worldview, akin to the materialism and Darwinism of Mustafa Kemal, that saw the populace as a malleable entity, ripe for the creation of national and civilizational consciousness. Religion was the greatest obstacle in the creation of the novel nation, as in the Israeli case, religion was parallel with diasporic existence that had plagued the Jewish people, and had in their view caused the immense suffering of millions of their kinsmen. The new Jew, the Israeli, could simply not be religious, but

at the compromise that rests in the national existence of Israel, the pragmatism of Gurion prevailed in tying the religious entity of the Yishuv to the secular one.

It was religion, in total convergence with the case of Kemalism, that provided the unchallengeable foundation of the nation-building project. While the idea of a “secular Jew” is a thoroughly “bizarre” concept it remains the most fundamental tenant of the Israeli national ethos (Pappe, 2017, pp. 30-35). This is natural for two reasons. Foremost in the Jewish – or rather the Israeli case – a unique overlap of faith and nation persists. Adherence to Judaism entitles one to Israeli nationality, at least in the broadest sense. While the Ashkenazi majoritarianism of Israel is apparent, all Jews were pushed to relocate to Israel, to turn Ben-Gurion’s political reality into a demographic one, and indeed the majority of those arriving were religious and messianic Jews, who had no notion of belonging to a modern nation state, and rather had generationally been accustomed to diasporic existence, either in the Arab world, or in Eastern Europe. Israel was not popular with the well to do Jews of western Europe, who had already to a degree secularized and joined one nation or the other, this was also true for many Jews living in the United States, who also had adopted secularism as their guide. Hence the early target population of Ben-Gurion became deeply traditional messianic communities from across the spectrum of world Jewry, whether they be the Ashkenazim, Sephardim or the Mizrahim.

Secondly, Zionism nurtured its ideology on the basis of a mythical return to a biblical homeland. In their view the return of the Jews to Eretz Israel marked the end of the “wandering Jew”. The Labour Zionists made an early effort to ratify their cause with a distinctly biblical undertone, framing Israel as a deliverance from God in order to sway the massively religious Jews that would constitute Israel’s polity. Not only was this rhetoric successful in facilitating an understanding of the Jew’s return to the Promised Land, heralding an end for the perennial exile of the Jewish people, it also served to motivate the Zionists settlers to “conquer” the land so to speak. Biblical scenes of picturesque farming and ancient Jewish kingdoms served as the ideological drive and justification in settling in a majority Arab occupied Palestine, when on the eve of

independence, the Jews still could not boast a sizeable demographic advantage. The Zionists, in the name of religion, invoked “an ancient moral right to Palestine” (Pappe, 2017, p. 35).

Thus, the theological dilemma in Israel is made apparent by the duality that exists between maxims of a secularist understanding of the nation that is irrevocably tied to a messianic view of the Jew. This duality resides at the core of Israel’s foundation, through the *Status Quo Agreement*. On the eve of Israel’s independence, David Ben-Gurion secured the support of the Jewish religious establishment in Jerusalem, which appears in the *Status Quo Letter*, outlining the extent of correspondence between Ben-Gurion’s Jewish Agency, the executive organ of the Yishuv, and the Agudat Israel Movement, representing the established Jewish rabbinate of Mandatory Palestine. The agreement outlined that in exchange for the sanctioning of the state by the Jewish clerical class, Ben-Gurion would greatly compromise on the extent of secularism to be implemented in the Jewish State. The concessions concern four key areas starting from the maintenance of religious civil code, observance of the Sabbath, observance of Jewish dietary law and complete autonomy in exercising religious education in Yeshiva seminaries<sup>25</sup> (Friedman, 1989).

Embarking on a secularizing, nation-building crusade, Ben-Gurion eventually had to crown the Zionist project with the kippah. The religious undertone is expressed in the phrase Tsur Yisrael – rock of Israel – which the secular Zionists saw as the glorification of the state and the religious establishment perceived as a glorification of God in Hebrew. Much like in Atatürk’s Turkey, where the Kemalist regime built its nation on the Muslim remnants of the Ottoman Empire, calling them “Turks”, Ben-Gurion sanctified his mission with rabbinical authority. The inherent flaw of secularism in both these contexts are the preludes to the political transformations that Israel and Turkey have experienced over the course of the 1980’s until present day. Zionism and Kemalism continue to dominate the public sphere, yet due to this inherent flaw in their inception, Israel and

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<sup>25</sup> The Yeshivas represent the greatest concession that Ben-Gurion made to the non-Zionist religious establishment in Jerusalem. Yeshiva students, in very traditional settings, devote themselves to the study of the Torah and Talmud, and hence are exempt from mandatory military service in Israel. The Israelis take great pride in their military, and the militarized nature of society in Israel, much like it is in Turkey, is one of the primary tenants of the nation-building process. Ben-Gurion’s accommodation of the Yeshiva is particularly noteworthy in this regard.

Turkey have shifted towards a direction that had not been fathomed by their founding elite. Forces that were left in the fringe of the nation-building processes have ascended to the helm of the state and now exercise total control over state power and the state's coercive capabilities. This phenomenon is especially acute in Turkey, which has seen its central state endure long after the departure of the Kemalist establishment.

In Israel this transformation has taken place under the guise of the Likud, the incarnation of the Zionist right-wing movement of Revisionism. In Turkey the tide has turned against the zealous secularism of the CHP and the Kemalist establishment. In the post 1980 regime in Turkey, characterized by some scholars as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Turkish Republic<sup>26</sup>, the state has come to realization that it must emphasize the Sunni-Turkish consensus at its heart in order to perpetuate its existence, in line with the ever-lasting paradigm of preserving the *beka* of the state. Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan both hail from political traditions that were deliberately excluded from the apex of the nation-building projects in Israel and Turkey, now they have ascended to the zenith of political life.

### **From Dilemma to Reckoning**

The dilemma at the heart of the Turkish Republic was the reliance of its nation-building model on the Sunni and Turkish speaking demographic in Anatolia, which in itself was an inevitability. The Unionist Era of Ottoman politics and the woes of nationalism had motivated the Kemalists to promulgate an exclusive form of the Turkish nation, in their detest of Ottoman heterogeneity. This model deliberately excluded non-Muslim elements, as their "Turkishness" could not be justified, and hence they were systematically removed from public life, becoming only a shadow of their former existence. Likewise, Kurds and the Alevis – heterodox Muslims residing in the eastern provinces of Anatolia – would play second fiddle to the ethnic Turks in the

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<sup>26</sup> This refers to the constitution of the Republic of Turkey. The First Republic was established in 1923, under Mustafa Kemal. The Second Republic, which promulgated a new constitution, was established in the aftermath of the 1960 coup. Thus, the Third Republic, which is still in existence as Turkey continues to rely on the same constitution, was established in the aftermath of the 1980 coup.

framework of the republic's nation-building project, being subject to Turkification in order to place them in the nation. Mustafa Kemal believed that this demographic reality could be coupled with an interventionist laïcité that would strip the new Turk from Islam, and in the Kemalist spirit drive the nation towards “progress”, enshrined in a novel civilizational ethos.

This changed in the aftermath of the 1980 coup d'état, as the Kemalist state had to make its peace with the Islamic credentials of Turkish existence, in order to retain the conservative republican political consensus in the wake of left-wing dissent. Religious seminary schools were once again opened and proliferated in an unprecedented manner, with conservative and Islamically motivated political forces establishing themselves in the mainstream of Turkish politics. In lieu of Mustafa Kemal's total embrace of Western civilization, Turkey's rulers would turn to a “Turkish-Islamic synthesis”, the pervading ideological maxim in Turkey today. This new model appropriated the centralist aspect of the Kemalist republic, all the while exploiting existing Kemalist institutions, such as the Diyanet, to further the means of the state. Undoubtedly the figure of Mustafa Kemal, the reverence surrounding his persona and the history of the “Turkish Revolution” have not lost their role in the apex of Turkish political life, yet they have been appropriated to fit a new paradigm. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who reflects in his politics the Sunni-Turkish foundation of Kemalism, does not constitute a rupture with the established regime, rather a continuity where political pragmatism has allowed for him to emphasize Kemalism in a novel manner.

Israel's dilemma came in the Revisionist Zionist turn in Israeli politics. While this strand of maximalist right-wing Zionism had existed in concurrence with the advent of Ben-Gurion's endeavours in Mandatory Palestine, it had been side-lined for its perceived extremities, especially vis a vis the question of Arabs and the exact territory in which the Israeli state would exist. On both accounts the Revisionists promulgated a maximalist agenda, foremost through their hostility towards the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel and secondly through their ideological obsession with *Eretz Yisrael* – Land of Israel – denoting their appetite for expanding Israel's borders well beyond internationally sanctioned areas.

Ben-Gurion's alliance with the religious establishment and the usage of messianic rhetoric to justify the Israeli cause gave way to the eventual political alliance that the Zionist right wing would make with religious Jews, exemplifying a perfect fit of ideology. Coupled with the messianic dream of Israel was the Likud's drive for territorial expansion and military might, which had already been brewing in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, where Israel branched out to incorporate the ancient Jewish lands into its territory. In adopting a messianic rhetoric and allying with the Rabbinical classes, the Labour Zionists had heralded their own demise, losing their grip on the civilizational ethos of Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu's Israel is one that flourishes with the same messianic strain of Zionism, albeit grifted with right-wing politics of nationalism.

### **Ode to the Nation State?**

In the introduction to *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson argues that the "long prophesized" end of nationalism is a false reading of political affairs. Nationalism, and its expression the nation state, remain the most politically legitimate maxim of our era. This is why this study of the nationalisms of Turkey and Israel has been particularly apt. As I have illustrated, even though the Kemalist and Zionist regimes have been thoroughly deconstructed, and entered into "post" eras, they have endured, in part due to the relevance of nation-building. Two ideological worlds, one Kemalist and the other Zionist, succeeded and realized their missions of nationhood. In Turkey this process was the summation of the Ottoman Empire's drive for modernization, which resulted in the inevitable Kemalist republic. In Israel the concentrated efforts of the Yishuv under the British Mandate of Palestine propelled the Zionist collective from exiles and emigres to members of a proud nation-state.

Both nations suffer from an ambiguous role that religion plays in the nation building process. While both movements subscribed to a secularist, European-style nationalist endeavour, religion was taken as the key defining factor into who would be admitted into the burgeoning Turkish and Israeli nations. This perhaps points to the notion that in the absence of natural

processes that lead to nations, which has been the case in much of the Western world, modernizers who sought to mimic the European model, juxtaposing it with their own understanding of the nation, relied heavily on another pronounced identifiable trait: religion. The prevalence of religion, and the subsequent political transformations in Israel and Turkey that have been concurrent with the rise of religious politics, is testament to the role accorded to Islam in the nation of Turkey, and Judaism in the nation of Israel.

By recognizing the theological dilemma that rests at the foundation of the Turkish and Israeli nation-state models this dissertation lives true to its interpretive credentials, all the while offering a historically backed account for the cause of said dilemmas. The eerie similarity between Israel and Turkey, a similarity that academe has overlooked, is established as a result of this account. This opens a wide framework for comparative discussion on Turkey and Israel with a novel understanding of their nation-building processes in mind. While Post-Zionist and Post-Kemalist optics have provided the means to deconstruct the Israeli and Turkish polities, stripping them of the armour of official historiography, it is equally prudent to consider how Kemalism and Zionism have survived. This paper has also illustrated how ideologies, namely the Kemalist and Zionist ones, remain at the centre of political life. What is most fascinating is that Israel and Turkey represent a convergence in this regard, with neither being an exceptional case.

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