

The Kokkalis Program on Southeastern and East-Central Europe
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The First Wave of Modernization: Kemalism

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Kemalism: A Prototype

- The prototype of a “Developing Country Nationalism”, mass-produced in the Third World in the 60s and 70s, discontinued after 80s, with some trace remaining in L. America now.
- Main target: Forced Modernization/Westernization
- Summary: Kemalism has two main (and, now conflicting) features:
 - 1) Strong monist Nation-state
 - 2) Emulation of the “contemporary civilization” (Western Europe).

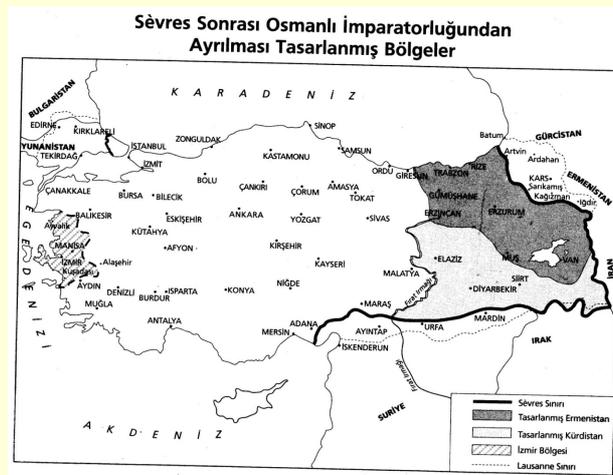
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External Circumstances That Made It Possible

- “Relative autonomy” created by contemporary developments:
 - The Soviet revolution (1917 ⇒),
 - Conflict between the Allies for war booty (1918 ⇒),
 - The Great Depression (1929 ⇒),
 - Nazi regime (1933 ⇒)
- Muslim popular reaction to non-Muslim minorities:
 - Occupation of Izmir by Greece (1919), and the fear of a Greek State in the West,
 - Kurds’ contribution to the Armenian massacres (1915), and the creation of a Greater Armenia in the East by Sevres Peace Treaty (1920).

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Kurds and Armenians in 1920



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Domestic Background to Kemalist Reforms

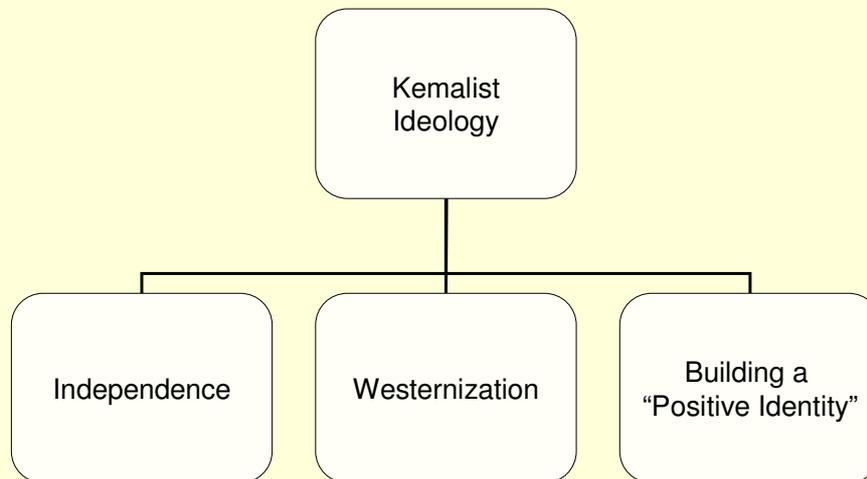
- The “New Ottomans” (1839 Tanzimat, 1876 Constitution)
 - The property of the Sultan ⇒ **Fatherland**
 - Education and constitutional monarchy
 - “Muslim trader”
- The “Young Turks” (1908 Constitution)
 - Fatherland ⇒ **Nation**
 - Westernization and Turkism
 - Muslim middle class
- Considering the reform projects of the Young Turks, nothing in Kemalism was original except for the concept of Republic.

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Ideology of Kemalism

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Ideology of Kemalism: Three Targets



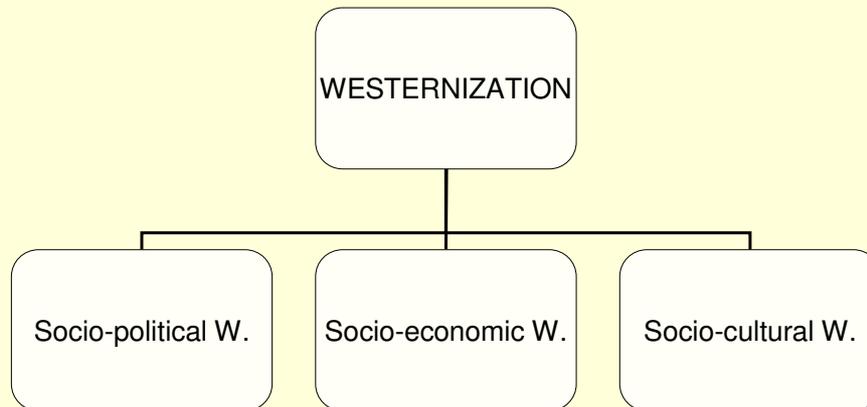
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Target One : Independence (Independence War, 1919-22)

- The only pluralist period vis-a-vis all elements because of initial weakness of the Kemalists:
 - People and notables
 - Ethnic groups: Kurds and Circassians
 - Ideologies: Communists and Islamists
 - Alternative leaders, especially the Military commanders
- Importance of Independence: Prerequisite for Modernization.

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Target Two : Westernization
Emulating Europe
through a
Monist/Jacobinist "Revolution from Above"
to "reach and surpass the contemporary civilization"



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Modernization: Socio-Political

- Establish the Nation-state:
 - Laicist
 - Unitary (not federal, single party)
- Build the Nation:
 - Secular
 - Homogeneous
 - Ethnically: "Mountain Turks"
 - Socially: "Amalgamated mass without any social classes and privileges".

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Modernization: Socio-Economic

- Economic dimension: “Statism”
 - “Nationalize” new Turkey:
 - Lift the Capitulations
 - Cleanse the non-Muslim middle class
 - Ethno-religious cleansing (1923, 1964)
 - Pogroms (1934, 1955)
 - Non-application of laws and treaties (1925, 1927, 1964, 1971, 1993)
 - Discrimination (1920-30, 1924, 1925-30, 1926, 1929, 1930, 1941, 1942, 1950, 2005, (+1936 Declaration))
 - Create a Muslim Turkish middle class through State Capitalism (Statism or Industrialization by Import Substitution)
- Social dimension: “Populism”

Constrain the rights of the working class in order to “Keep the social order and social solidarity intact against the evil of class conflict”. Ex: Strike ban law (1936).

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Modernization: Socio-Cultural

- Westernizing reforms
 - 1920: National Assembly opened
 - 1922: Sultanate abolished
 - 1923: Republic declared
 - 1924: Caliphate abolished
 - 1925: Hat law
 - 1926: Swiss Civil Code and Italian Penal Code adopted
 - 1928: Latin alphabet adopted
 - 1930 and 1935: Women suffrage (France: 1944)
- ... done “from above”
 - 1925: The first opposition party closed (lasted 6,5 months)
 - 1925: 21 to 78 persons hanged for protesting the Hat Law
 - 1938: Atatürk declared “Eternal Chief”, and İnönü “National Chief”
 - 1941: Theology Faculties closed.

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Target Three : Building a “Positive Identity”

- Because:
 - Contradiction between Target One and Two,
 - Previous denigration of the “Turk” by the Westerners and by the Ottomans.

- Method:
 - “We have an Authentic & Superior Identity”
 - Turkish History Thesis: “The Turk is the origin of all peoples”
 - Turkish Language Thesis “Turkish is the origin of all languages”

 - “We are Westerners”

This was not possible for colonial peoples; it was made possible by:

 - Non-colonial past
 - Close historical contact with the Europeans
 - Non-existence of the color bar
 - Anti-Islamism
 - Geographical proximity
 - The “nature” of the Enlightened.

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Kemalism: A Re-appraisal

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Kemalism: The Rule and the Exception

- It was an autochthonous product of the pro-fascist Europe of the 1930s:
 - Built a strong monist State : Unitary State, Single Party, One Nation, One doctrine, One language, etc. (Ein Volk...)
 - Suppressed the minorities: Non-Muslim, Kurdish; hid away the horrors of 1915.
 - Suppressed the working class.
- It was an exception in the era of nationalisms:
 - Fought to free itself from imperialism,
 - Was not irredentist,
 - Was anti-revisionist,
 - Had no paramilitary organization,
 - State > Party
 - “Contemporary” Civilization vs. Strong monist State.

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Merits of Kemalism

- Kemalism made revolutionary transitions (Driver & Engine of Westernization):
 - Semi-feudal empire ⇒ Modern nation-state,
 - Subject of the Sultan ⇒ Citizen,
 - Umma ⇒ Nation,
 - Muslim ⇒ Turk (secularization)
 - Semi-feudalism ⇒ Capitalism
- Kemalism was different than “Turkish nationalism”
 - K. was based on praising “the Turk” rather than denigrating “the Other”,
 - K. chose the “subjective” definition of “Turk”: “Happy is the one who **says**: I’m a Turk”
- Kemalism was the most radical and successful “social engineering” ever tried
 - Certainly more successful than “A Reich of 1000 years”, “Homo Sovieticus”, “Cultural Revolution”,
 - Ended up in democracy.

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Failures of Kemalism - 1

- Revolution unfinished became anti-revolutionary:
 - ⇒ Modern nation-state: Assimilation and/or ethno-religious cleansing
 - ⇒ Citizen: Compulsory (infra-identity denied),
 - ⇒ Nation: Homogeneity violated human rights & democracy,
 - ⇒ Turk (secularization). A White Turk is **Muslim, Sunni, Hanefi, and Turk**:
 - “Turk” and “Hanefi” alienated the Kurds;
 - “Muslim” alienated the non-Muslims;
 - “Sunni” alienated the Alevis;
 - “Happy is one who says I am a Turk” alienated Kurds and non-Muslims
 - ⇒ Capitalism: Suppression of the working class.
- By cleansing the only middle class inherited from the Empire, it retarded industrialization (second target) by at least half a century (Jews-15th, Huguenots-16th).

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Failures of Kemalism - 2

- “Contemporary Civilization” was sacrificed to “Strong monist State”. This turned:
 - Kemalism into a “secular religion” with K. Atatürk as its prophet, and into a tool for secular elites to perpetuate their privileges (CHP and the Military, and now the Judiciary),
 - Laicism into an ideology to interfere with private lives and to tyrannize over the society,
 - Unitary and nation-state into an instrument to deny and assimilate Kurdish identity, and to cleanse non-Muslim citizens.
- Kemalism is now terrified by its own creature, the Second Wave of Modernization, and generates the “Sevres Paranoia”, its “chosen trauma”:
 - “Imperialist West wants to bring back the Sevres Treaty and ...”,
 - “We will be dismembered if we grant cultural rights to the Kurds”,
 - “If we don’t prohibit the veil, the Islamists will force our daughters to wear it”.

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Failures of Kemalism - 3

- Kemalism transformed Turkey but was unable to transform itself, blocking the way to “contemporary” civilization today. It’s now against the civilization of 2000s:
 - EU membership,
 - Human and minority rights
- In the mean time, the Islamists are slowly but definitely changing because they are becoming upper middle class (“Green Capital”, “Anatolian Capital”, “Anatolian Tigers”): They now strive for:
 - EU membership,
 - Human and minority rights,
 - Solving Kurdish, Armenian, Cyprus questions,
 - Even for making “a reform in the language of the Islamic theology”.
- This now results in a swapping of roles:
 - Kemalists are now the Louis XIV aristocracy, and the Islamists, its bourgeoisie,
 - Kemalists are now the “Catholics”, and the Islamists, the “Protestants”.

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Failures of Kemalism – 4 : The Vicious Circle

Worse still, Kemalism today triggers a vicious circle:

- 1923 revolution ⇒
- 1950 elections (DP victory) ⇒
- May 1960 military coup ⇒
- 1965 elections (AP victory) ⇒
- September 1980 military coup ⇒
- 1983 elections (ANAP victory) + 1995 elections (RP victory) & the rise of “Green Capital” ⇒
- February 1997 military memorandum ⇒
- 2002 elections (AKP victory) & the “protestantization” of the Islamists ⇒
- 27 April 2007 military memorandum + “Deep State” military conspiracies ⇒
- July 2007 elections (AKP victory) + Ergenekon trials + Kurdish, Armenian, Cyprus “Openings” of 2009.

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Comments on the Vicious Circle

- This circle can be theorized as follows:
 - Laicist/Kemalist action ⇒
 - Popular reaction in elections ⇒
 - More Laicist/Kemalist action ⇒
 - Stronger popular reaction in elections
- The Laicist/Kemalist action is weaker every time:
 - revolution ⇒
 - military coup/intervention ⇒
 - military memorandum ⇒
 - “Post-modern” memorandum (February 1997) ⇒
 - “E-memorandum” (April 2007)
- Because:
 - One can do “revolution from above” only once...
 - And one has no choice but leave the rest to the internal dynamics one has already triggered.

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Epilogue

- Kemalism was a progressive action for its time ('30s) because:
 - It had then adopted the “contemporary” Europe (a package).
 - It was not a racist regime although it had also copied the racist element of 1930s' Europe. Racism has always remained a dry riverbed.
- Today, Kemalism became a retrograde action that has come to merge with “Turkish nationalism”:
 - In 1920-30s it was in love with the West, now it hates the West (“imperialist and divisive”),
 - In 1920-30s it had equipped Turkey with self-reliance, now it generates insecurity and fear,
 - Under the impact of “Dominant Millet” ideology and certain external factors this riverbed is now filled with pogroms, lynching parties, and murders,
 - Laicist/Kemalist intervention in civilian politics has turned:
 - First, into a praetorian regime (military coups and memorandums),
 - Second, into mafia relations (1996 Susurluk incident: Police, “Commissioned” Mafia, Tribe),
 - And finally degenerated into a series of military conspiracies (Ayıışıđı, Sarıkız conspiracies; Ergenekon trial).

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Main Source

- *Atatürk Milliyetçiliği -- Resmî İdeoloji Dışı Bir İnceleme*, Ankara, Dost Publishers, 1988. 309 p. ("**Kemalist Nationalism – A Non-Official Interpretation**"). Enlarged editions in 1990, 1993, 1997, and 1999 by Bilgi Publishers).
- Also see several related articles: www.baskinoran.com / Other Languages / Academic Articles.