

# Keep Your Friends Close And Your Enemies Closer: Turkey and Israel’s Approaches to Incorporation of Religion

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## Abstract

Turkey and Israel are often pointed to as states that still struggle with balancing religious and secular forces. Both Turkey and Israel’s independence era leaders desired secular, modern republics, looking to French laicism as a method to subordinate religion from the state, but unlike France, neither was able to accomplish this goal. How did this come to be? I

argue that the compromises of Turkish and Israeli independence-era secular leaders with religious advocacy coalitions which established Religious Ministries as a quick policy solution inadvertently paved the way for religion to exert a central influence. Through such ministries, religious groups were able to enshrine particular strains of Islam and Judaism along with their particular conceptions of citizenship based on ethno-religious grounds in place of initial republican ideals. This pull between rival definitions of citizenship—secular and religious--would go on to define debates for decades. Using the complementary lenses of historical and discursive institutionalism I will trace the processes by which particular conceptualizations of citizenship were reached by advocacy coalitions of secular and conservative forces, how these philosophies became the basis for institutions, and how those institutions went on to constrain future interpretations.

## Foundational Theory

- The Importance of Institutions: Historical Institutionalism
- The Power of Discourse: Discursive Institutionalism
- Citizenship Discourse: Republican, Ethno-national and Liberal Conceptualizations
- Nationalism and Kemalism- Interchangeable?
- Secularism and Laicite- What are the impacts and influences of each?

## Institutional Origins

- Ottoman Legacies
  - Millet System: The Legacies of Autonomous Rule
  - Tanzimat Reforms
  - Young Turks: Military Heroes, Champions of Secularism?
  - The Palestinian Mandate and the Yishuv Period: Parallels



- Turkey
  - Competing Ideals: Kemalism, Islamism, Ottomanism
  - Ataturk and Compromise with the “Enemy”
  - Specification of Sunni Hannefi Islam
  - The Result: Islamic Control of the Presidency of Religious Affairs



- Israel
  - Competing Ideals in the Yishuv: Ultra-Orthodox, Ben Gurion, Zionism
  - War of Independence: Coalitions and Compromise
  - Division of ministries and power
  - Result: Creation of the Ministry of Religious Services, under Orthodox Party Control

## Results of Incorporation

- Narrowing Definitions of Citizenship
  - Who is a Turk?
  - Who is a Jew?
- Preeminence and Dominance of Conservative Groups
  - Islamist rise to power via the popular masses
  - Ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox increased power in the Israeli parliament
- Alevi Attempts to Broaden Turkey’s Definition of Islam
- Islamist success in isolating the Presidency of Religious Affairs
- Non-Orthodox Attempts to Limit Haredi Influence
- Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox success in re-establishing the Ministry of Religious Services

## Conclusions

- Turkey and Israel are incredibly influential players in the modern international system, and their internal political disputes play out on the international stage. Domestic political debates are clearly reflected in their Ministries of Religion.
- These disagreements extend to the general public who continue to struggle with national definitions of citizenship.
- Even though both countries attempted to emulate laicism and the French model, the Ministries of Religion became divisive institutions that alienated minorities and enabled narrow definitions of “Who is a Turk?” and “Who is a Jew?”
- Each ministry set up an inherently flawed, factious system based on a quick policy solution that enshrined conservative beliefs.
- Subsequent alterations to the Ministries further reinforced conservative forces and highlighted the importance of gaining discursive unity at the philosophical level of generality before campaigning for institutional change.