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THE DİYANET OF TURKEY AND ITS HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The Turkish Republic was founded in place of Ottoman Empire which was one of the largest and longest lasting empires in history. Although Ottoman Empire was a religious state, Turkish Republic defined itself as a laic state. However, the Turkish Republic is an exceptional state among many countries established in Ottoman geography in terms of taking over military, religious, cultural and social institutions of the Empire. The transformations of these institutions from religious to secular character brought about a long-problematic process in relation to Turkish modernization. (from Tanzimat in 1839 to date). The most perfect example of this phenomenon is the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, henceforth referred to as the *Diyanet*). For a long time, since it was trapped religion and state, the Diyanet had been wobbling from religious to secular identity in the framework of a laic system. In comparison to other religious administrations in Ottoman Empire, it can be said that the Diyanet is only officially surviving religious institution as in spite of the historical roots partly based on Ottoman era during the last eighty-seven years. This article examines the Diyanet in relation to these aspects. I will examine historical roots, evolution, and current situation of the Diyanet. I will also analyze the structure of the organization of the *Diyanet*, its position in Turkey's laic system, and current different approaches to it by the Sunnis and the Alevis in Turkey. I will also refer to the religious and social activities of the Diyanet in Eurasia, Africa, and Europa. Considering the activities of the Diyanet both domestic policy and international policy in period of Ak Party, it can be said that Diyanet turned into softpower of Republic of Turkey.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Today, the Diyanet is one of the most important public institutions in Turkey. Diyanet has been building high-budget mosques and has been

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opening some cultural centers in various parts of the world and leads many social aids in Africa and in Asia. But there is not enough scientific studies on the historical process of the Diyanet. This article will provide a modest contribution to the literature on the history of the Diyanet.

The Diyanet employs approximately one hundred fifty thousand personnel and has central, provincial, and abroad organs. The president, High Commission of Religious Affairs, Qur'an Verification Commission, General Directorate of Religious Affairs, Religious Education, Hajj (pilgrimage), Religious Publications and Foreign Affairs compose the central organs, while provincial organs consist of the province and country mufti's offices, educational centers, and Qur'an courses.

On May 3, 1920 after the opening of The Turkish Grand National Assembly on April 23, 1920, a ministry entitled Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti was established and carried out religious services. On March 3, 1924, the Diyanet took over the duties of this ministry. The Diyanet appeared in a constitutional text for the first time in 1961. After that time, a law was promulgated to regulate the Diyanet's sphere of duties and authority and some intellectuals and politicians began to complain that the existence of the Diyanet contravened the Turkish Republic's principle of laicism. For example, the Birlik Party argued that Turkey was a laic state, that there should be no clerics in Islam, and that it is necessary to separate religious and state matters, and that the creation of classes providing religious services contradicted not only laicism as the main guarantee of freedom of faith and conscience in Turkey, but also Atatürk's reforms and general principles of the 1961 Constitution itself. This party appealed to the Constitutional Court to remove the article on the Diyanet from the Constitution. A decision of the Constitutional Court in 1971 ruled that the Diyanet was not a religious institution, but a general administrative institution, and therefore did not contravene laicism.

İ. Gözaydın (2009, pp.245-246) identifies the Diyanet as an institution established within the framework of domestic law by the founders of the Turkish Republic to protect laicism. The state uses the Diyanet against religion and its possible influence on the sociopolitical situation of the country. İ. Kara, (2008, p.51) another excellent specialist, characterizes the Diyanet as an institution trapped between religion and the state. According to Kara, the political center of the state uses the Diyanet as an instrument to impose its religious understanding, which exists within a set of parameters, on society, and thus desires to destroy the efficacy of the social authority of the ulama and sheikhs. As a result, Diyanet has been influential in the formation of people's religiosity since 1950.

On the other hand, Ali Bardakoğlu, (2008, p.175), the older president of the Diyanet, has claimed that laicism does not require a total separation between religion and the state; rather, as the Ottoman example demonstrates, the state and religion can keep one another in balance whereby cooperation between religion and the state helps society to develop. Bardakoğlu notes that the decision of the Constitutional Court in 1971 (noted above) shares this understanding.

A basic difference between the Diyanet and the sheikh-ul-Islam derives from the fact that the Ottoman Empire was a religious state

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headed by a caliph who had the authority to appoint the sheikh-ul-Islam, whilst the Turkish Republic, which appoints the president of the Diyanet, is a laic state.

Today, removing the Diyanet from the secular state system is inconceivable. If a political party in Turkey does not recognize the existence of the Diyanet, this party will be banned, since Article 89 of the Political Party Law states: "Political parties cannot have any intentions that are in contravention of Article 136 of the Constitution, which is concerned with the position of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which, in keeping with the principle of laicism, remains removed from all political views and thoughts, which aims for national solidarity and unification and which fulfills the duties laid out in the special law, in the general administration."

Because of this article, political parties, except for small left-wing parties, refrain from criticizing the Diyanet's activities, be them domestic or foreign. Since the Diyanet has eventually become part of the prime minister's apparatus, policy changes made by the government or changes to the government itself directly affect the Diyanet's activities (Korkut, 2010, pp.118-120).

But The Democratic Peace Movement Party (Demokratik Barış Hareketi Partisi) has promised in the party program that they will abolish the Diyanet in state system when they come to power. Because of this article, the Public Prosecutor's Office sued the constitutional court for the closure of the party. But, Constitutional Court did not close this party in 1997 with a majority vote. (<http://www.kararlaryeni.anayasa.gov.tr/Karar/Content/ad42736f-51bb-42c6-af74-75cb667dd218?excludeGerekce=False&wordsOnly=False>, accessed, July 17, 2016)

Throughout the history of the Republic, even though the relationship of the *Diyanet* with laicism has been much debated, this question now only comes to the fore in connection with the Alevi problem. Thus, even during the EU ascension process, which has led to a new organization in public institutions, policies of the government to harmonize with the European Union affects the institutional structure of the Diyanet.

Also, the activities of the *Diyanet* in Europe and Eurasia in the 1990s have raised the statute of this institution to one that is indispensable from a domestic political aspect. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s opened a new sphere of its activities in Eurasia. It is true that a huge number of mosques, madrasahs, and other religious institutions were restored or built and numerous young Islamic cadres were educated in Eurasia with the help of the Diyanet during the 1990s. In order to carry out this cooperation in an effective manner, the Eurasian Islamic Council has been organized, meeting for the first time in 1995, and having its ninth meeting in 2016. Moreover, the *Diyanet* has the utmost respect for cross-cultural and inter-religious relations, as well as the local religious values of the religious administrators in its hinterland, where it operates and provides services. Also, The Diyanet has been spreading religious services to African and Latin American

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countries in the last decade. Diyanet as an effective force in Turkey's internal and external politics has been turned into soft power of Republic of Turkey.

Keywords: Diyanet, Republic of Turkey, Society, Religion, State, Sheikh-ul-Islam

DİYANET İŞLERİ BAŞKANLIĞI VE TARİHSEL GELİŞİMİ

ÖZET

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihinde en geniş topraklara yayıldığı halde en uzun süre ayakta kalan son devlet olan Osmanlı imparatorluğunun yerine kurulmuştur. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu dini bir devlet olmasına karşın Türkiye Cumhuriyeti laik bir devlettir. Osmanlı coğrafyasında birçok devlet kurulmasına rağmen, bu imparatorluğun sosyal, kültürel, dini ve askeri kurumlarını devralan tek devlet Türkiye Cumhuriyetidir. Bu kurumların dini bir yapıdan laik bir kimliğe doğru evrilmesi ise 1839'da Tanzimatla başlayan Türk modernleşmesi ile yakından ilgilidir. Bu duruma en uygun örnek Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'dır. Uzun zamandır din ve devlet arasında sıkışmış bulunan Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı laik bir sistem çerçevesinde dini bir yapıdan seküler bir yapıya doğru sürüklenmiştir. Osmanlı'dan miras kalan diğer kurumlarla kıyaslandığında Diyanetin kökeni Osmanlı'ya dayanan ve 85 yıldır ayakta kalan tek dini kurum olduğu söylenebilir. Bu makale, bu açılarından Diyanet'in tarihi gelişmesini önemli aşamaları dikkate alarak tetkik edecektir. Ayrıca bu makale Diyanet'in laik bir sistem içindeki mevcut konumunu ele alacak ve kuruma dönük olarak Sünnilerin ve Alevilerin yaklaşımını irdelleyecektir. Ayrıca bu makalede Diyanet'in Avrupa, Afrika ve Avrasya'daki dini ve sosyal faaliyetlerine değinilecektir. Ak parti döneminde Diyanet'in hem iç politikadaki hem de uluslararası politikadaki faaliyetleri gözönüne alındığında, Diyanet'in Türkiye'nin şeffaf bir gücüne dönüştüğü söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyet, Toplum, Din, Devlet, Şeyh'ül-İslamlık

1. The Current Organizational Structure of the Diyanet

The *Diyanet* was established on 3rd March, 1924. Today, it is one of the most important public institutions in Turkey. The Presidency of Religious Affairs has an informative, educative, and directive influence on Turkish society (Okumus, 2008, p. 353). The Diyanet employs approximately one hundred fifty thousand personnel and has central and provincial organs. The vast majority of the personnel of the Diyanet such as muftis, imams, preachers etc. constitute the class of religious services' members. The central organization is consists of a president, vice-presidents, the religious affairs high commission, the Qur'an verification commission, general directorates concerned with religious services (Er, 2008, pp. 271-281), religious education (Ata, 2008, pp.302-313), hajj (pilgrimage), religious publications (Salman, 2008, pp. 313-324), and foreign affairs (Dere, 2008, pp.291-302, Korkut, 2010, pp.117-139). The provincial organization consists of the province and county muftis' offices, educational centers and the Qur'an courses (Okumus, 2008, pp. 353-354).

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Detailed information can be attained about the *Diyanet* at the following website (www.diyamet.gov.tr) and for the *Diyanet Waqf* as an affiliated institution (<http://www.diyametvakfi.org.tr/>).

2. The Institution of the sheikh-ul-Islam, The Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti, and the Diyanet

In the Ottoman era, the provision of religious services which is one of the functions carried out by the *Diyanet* today was fulfilled by the office of the sheikh-ul-Islam. On May 3, after the opening of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 23rd April, 1920, a ministry was established under the title *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* (The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Foundations) and this ministry carried out religious services. On 3rd March, 1924, this ministry was abolished and the *Diyanet* was established.

Just as there are many similarities among the office of *the sheikh-ul-Islam*, the *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* and the *Diyanet*, there are also many differences. There are different opinions put forward about whether these institutions are continuations of one another, or whether they carry out different or similar duties. The office of *the sheikh-ul-Islam* was an institution that combined the roles of the Ministry of National Education, the General Directorate for Foundations and the *Diyanet* (named as *presidency of Meşihat* in this time) (Bozan, 2007, p.54). Also, The office of *the sheikh-ul-Islam* directed the *kaza* system (office of *Kadi*) and the *kadis* who are responsible for judicial and municipal services. Therefore, we can say that this institution had a wide scope and great authority (Bardakoğlu, 2008, pp.173,174). In the Ottoman State *the sheikh-ul-Islam* and the post of grand vizier were on an equal footing; in fact, a fatwa could remove the sultan from the throne (Uzunçarşılı, 1988, p.178). The expenses of religious services were fully paid by revenue of the waqfs, not from the state budget until 1927. In the final periods of the Ottomans, although this institution was much debated, it continued to exist with the same status until the establishment of the Republic. Matsuzato and Sawae (2010, pp.334,335) indicate the determinations for the developmental stages of the office of *the sheikh-ul-Islam*:

“The ilmiye institution continued to develop until the eighteenth century, but it did not grow into a fully-fledged bureaucracy (Akiba, 1998, pp. 188–90). Its officeholders had to hire their own staff by their own means and through their clientelist network. Only after the government initiated its modernising projects at the end of the eighteenth century was şeyhülislam equipped with buildings and professional staff (Yakut, 2005, pp. 55–82). The şeyhülislam facilitated the centralisation of the state and this is why the period of Tanzimat reform expanded his prerogatives. Beginning with the Gülhane Decree in 1839, which proclaimed the general will for political reforms, the Tanzimat reforms gained substance after the Reform Decree in 1856. The intention of the Tanzimat reforms was to strengthen the state through centralisation and the introduction of western secular institutions on the one hand and through cultivating a ‘supraconfessional loyalty’ to Ottomanism among the religiously diverse subjects of the Empire on the other (Crews, 2003, p. 54). With the aim of centralisation, the state began to supervise new spheres that had traditionally been entrusted to the Muslim communities themselves. The şeyhülislam added the activities and properties of tariqas (religious orders) and the waqfs (pious endowments) of the ulama to his previous jurisdictions such as sharia courts, local administration, higher education (madrasahs) and management of the waqfs belonging to the ruling family. Previously the şeyhülislam had been a consultant to the sultan and had been outside the Imperial Divan, where the office of the kazasker, the supreme qadi, represented the ilmiye institution. During the Tanzimat reform, however, the şeyhülislam became a regular member of the newly introduced Cabinet of Ministers, and thus became vulnerable by his involvement in partisan politics and his bearing responsibility for government policies. Reform after the Tanzimat period, however, had the reverse effect of narrowing the competence of the şeyhülislam. In the early twentieth century education and judicature, traditionally prerogatives of the ulama, were transferred to the newly introduced Ministries of National Education and Justice, which

were in charge of both secular and religious matters. The şeyhülislam ceased to supervise even madrassahs and Islamic courts. Waqf management was transferred to the newly established Ministry of Waqfs. The şeyhülislam ceased to be a member of the cabinet. As Arai remarks (2001, p. 131), the modernising reforms in the waning years of the Ottoman Empire aimed simultaneously to revitalise Islam under centralised state guardianship and to realise the secularisation project. Historians have often referred to the Ottoman Empire”

On the other hand, a basic difference between the Diyanet and *the sheikh-ul-Islam* derives from the fact that the Ottoman Empire was a religious state headed by a *caliph* who had the authority *the sheikh-ul-Islam*, whilst the Turkish Republic, which appoints the president of the Diyanet, is a laic state. (Kara, 2008, pp.63,64). Although there are opinions that relationship among the three institutions has made the transition from a structure with a religious identity towards a structure with a laic characteristic, there are also comments that the historical development of these three institutions is one that has been a transition from a civil identity to an official property relationship between religion, state and society.

On 3 May, after the opening of the Grand National Parliament of Turkey in Ankara on 23 April 1920, a ministry was established in the name of the *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* which has third degree authority in state system. Although the duty and authority of this institution were more limited in comparison to *the sheikh-ul-Islam*, it was very successful about especially religious publications, religious services, and directing of religious institutions (mosques, *madrassahs*, *tekkes* and *waqfs*) for mobilizing them to independence war. This ministry was very effective in its undertakings during the time of the national struggle both economically and with the attending of all citizens to military struggle. Thus, the religious leaders (*imams*, *muftis*, and *sheikhs*) carried out important functions in encouraging the people to participate in the independence war. Moreover, in these times, each regiment in army had a military mufti and military imams that had continued from the Ottoman onward (Beydilli, 2000, pp. 182,183). These religious-military positions had been partly acting until the retirement of Fevzi Çakmak, the first army chief of Republic of Turkey, in 1944. When Turkey joined NATO in 1952, Turkish General Staff turned these positions into named as *officer of religious affairs* by inspiring same positions in army order of USA. After the military coup of 1981, Turkish General Staff abolished the position and formed *morale officer* on behalf of it.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha and his compatriots determined very important missions on The *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* and institutions of religious education. For example, Mustafa Kemal Pasha went to Konya and visited *Darulhilafe Madrasah* on 3 February 1923.

Just before Mustafa Kemal Paşa left the madrasah, he made a statement to this foundation’s professors and students:

“I hope you will be the modern and genuine ulama (wiseman) who will revive our homeland and nation by courtesy of our virtuous mudarrises (professors). Our precious and genuine ulama have a high capacity. People like Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali are going to be born in our nation by favor and guidance of our ulama and masters of wisdom and knowledge, and they are going to revive the truth for religion by being equipped with this age’s developments. I congratulate Aksekili Ahmet Efendi and I thank him.” (Akseki, 2001, p. 133).

This ministry carried out productive work particularly in religious publications in only three years with the participation of Islamic scholars and intellectuals like Mehmet Akif Ersoy (the poet of Turkish national anthem), Şemsettin Günaltay and İsmail Hakkı İzmirli. (Kuruluşundan Günümüze, 1997, pp. 15, 16).

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3. The Diyanet in the First Quarter of The Republic

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic on 29 October 1923, in a law that was promulgated on 3 March 1924 the *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* was abolished and the Diyanet was established. The abolition of the *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* and establishment of the Diyanet is seen to be an important transition in the relationship between religion and state, the state and society, and religion and politics. The law separated financially religious services and foundations (waqfs: religious communal properties). Thus, State grabbed foundations and paid off salary of the Diyanet's personnel and its other expenses. As a result of the new legislation, Annual Budget Act has been allocating a budget to the Diyanet for salaries of its personnel and other expenses since 1927 (Gözyayın, 2006, pp. 2,3). This legislation delineated the relationship between religion and the state and gave rise to direct dependance of the Diyanet to the Prime Minister's office both structurally and financially. Thus, The Diyanet was transformed into an institution that mainly worked under the instructions of the government (Başgil, 1962, p.205). Therefore, founders of Turkish Republic laid the groundwork for creating bureaucracy of religious administration in state system. After this legislation, a new implementation which strictly limited activities of the Diyanet was promulgated in 1931. With this legislation which adopted without any objection in the Assembly, some administrative departments and the personnel of the Diyanet were transferred to the General Directorate for Foundations. Also, this Act classified mosques around the country according to "real needs" so that the number of imams and muftis who were financially supported by the State were reduced. Therefore, some mosques in the cities and all of the Qur'an courses were closed around the country. Imams of villages were financially supported by the modest grants of citizens since the incomes of the waqfs were transferred to state budget instead of religious services. In this period (from 1931 to 1950), the Diyanet was mainly a symbolical institute because of its essential missions being limited by policy-maker elite. Also, in this period, Imams and muftis who had been educated in the Ottoman *madrasahs* carried out religious services partly. Since the institutions that provided religious education had been closed down, the number of young imams trained in this area quickly fell off.

The president of the Diyanet of that date, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki summarizes the situation in 12 December 1950 as following:

1. Due to the fact that National Education Ministry and Diyanet didn't have any vocational institution to train religious functionaries until now, far from finding a real and literate religious man, an imam or a preacher cannot be found to read a khutbah at the mimbar or to lead people during prayer at mosques. In fact there aren't any imams to make religious funeral service in some villages and because of that bodies can stay without being buried for days.

2. For twenty six years our children have been deprived of a real religious and moral discipline and growing hollowly, available to be exposed to any negative effect.

3. It is indispensable to give an inner moral to our youth and inculcate and infix them seriously and strongly against any kind of strange and negative effect (Akseki, 2001, pp.136,137).

As a result of this fact, we can say that the state was forced to revise their view on the matter of religious services to answer the needs of the society. A law passed in 1950 and once again affiliated the mosques and religious officials, who had been handed over to the General Director of the *Waqfs* in 1931, to the *Diyanet*. But, implementation of the new law completely distinguished religious services and waqfs system (religious communal properties in Ottoman era).

4. The Diyanet in Multi-Party Period

From 1950 to 1960, a period in which the Demokrat Party had been came to power, the practice of reciting the *adhan* in Turkish came to an end, the Qur'an began to be read on the state radio, religious lessons were placed on the curriculum as optional lessons and the Imam-Hatip schools (lycées) were opened (Okumus, 2008, pp.354-55; Bozan, 2007, p.54). With these implementations an intense debate on the relationship between the *Diyanet* and laicism was on the agenda. The relationship between the *Diyanet* and laicism was debated intensely on a constitutional platform, forming the most important factor in preventing the historical developmental stages that were mentioned above from occurring during the first 30 years of the Republic, delaying them until the 1950s and 1960s. When the *Diyanet* was established in 1924 the principle of laicism had not yet appeared in the constitution; when the principle of laicism appeared in the constitution in 1937 the *Diyanet* was already a symbolic institution. The discussion based on religion in Turkey's politic circles between 1950 and 1960; during Demokrat Party government ended up with a consensus that Diyanet must be placed in state system and strengthened more. By this way the Diyanet was in a constitution text for the first time.

After the military coupe of 27 April 1960, a new constitution was promulgated in 1961. In this regulation the Diyanet appeared for the first time in a constitutional text and immediately afterwards law 633 dated 22.06.1965 named as "the law about the Presidency of Religious Affairs, its Establishment and Obligations", which regulated the duties and responsibilities of the Diyanet was passed (Bozan, 2007, p. 56). After the Diyanet appeared in a constitutional text and a law had been promulgated regulating its area of duties and authority, some intellectuals and politicians started to express their opinions that this institution was in contravention of the Republic's principle of laicism (Bozan, 2007, pp. 57-59). For example, the Birlik Party (founded by leading Alevi intellectuals) argued that the Turkey was a laic state, that there should be no clerics in Islam, and that it is necessary to separate religious and to state matters, and that the creation of a class providing religious services contradicted not only laicism as the main guarantee of freedom of faith and conscience in Turkey, but also Atatürk's reforms and general principles of the 1961 Constitution itself. This party applied to the Constitutional Court to remove the article on the Diyanet from the constitution. A decision of the Constitutional Court in 1971, ruled that the Diyanet was not a religious institution, but a general administrative institution, and therefore did not contravene laicism. (Kuruluşundan Günümüze, 1997, pp.38-44). The decision of Constitutional Court included following ideas:

"Above everything it must be stated that because laicism principle regulates the religion and state relationship, it is a compulsory consequence that there are differences between the laicism concepts of countries as well as their religions and actual conditions. Legally and classically laicism means separating religion's and state's affairs from each other. This separation means religion can't intervene in the state's affair and state can't involve to religion's affair which church is completely independent in this respect. This situation is a consequence of many historical facts, necessities and obligations of Christian nations as much as the effect of Pope's acceptation as a holy religious president and existence of clergy and clerical religion service. In Islam there is no clergy, just as attendants in sanctuaries are not holy. So then these two religion's conditions are not the same, thus results of people's independence or autonomy who deals with religion are not the same as well. As results of the causes explained above due to the fact that it is compulsory that Christian and Muslim nations' states have different laicism concept, it is just possible for the states which approve Christianity as a religion that people who are involved to sanctuary and religion business are separate and independent from state as a laicism conception. Or else there is no chance to give it a

general principle qualification without taking into consideration the differences of every religion caused by their beliefs and necessities. Owing to that laicism is a principle which regulates religion's and state's affair, we should understand that it is the consequence of the differences between conditions that a country which can't find similar conditions in respect of religious conception can't adopt laicism principle as its meaning and form in Western law."

Constitutional court defines laicism as a principle which regulates religion's and state's affair rather than a principle which require a separation between religion's and state's affair. Thus, constitutional court close the practice of laicism which has been adopted from Western countries legally and politically, and comparison of laicism and secularism practicing in those countries, and forming it like in those countries. Likewise this opinion means Turkish legal system is closed to international legal system. So, Turkish legal system opens as unquestionable area showing laicism's special criteria in religion and state relations as a reason. While directorate of religious affairs which has 100.000 stuffs is accepted as a necessity in laicism, on the other hand covered girls' university education which has occupied Turkey's agenda for half of a century is thought to be against laicism. Likewise this concept functioned as a block between international rights on religion and belief freedom and their reflection on Turkey. Constitutional court defines laicism as a principle which regulates religion and state affairs in this decision, not separating religion and state affairs.

Two arguments which contradict each other are defended at the same time in almost every scientific study on the Diyanet. The Diyanet is presented both as a tool for state to control religious area and an institute which serves only to Sunnis. When we think the controlled institutions are Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, Nur Movement and Suleimaniyya which mostly follow Hanafi. Maturidi line in the Islamic law and theology field, it seems like a contradiction that in one hand Diyanet controls the Sunnis but on the other hand it serves to them. The only researcher who drew attention to this situation is İsmail Kara. It is true that almost every Diyanet personnel is Sunni but that doesn't mean it is a Sunni institution.

The 1982 Constitution gives the *Diyanet* the new duty, alongside its former ones, of ensuring "national solidarity and unification".

"The Diyanet, which is within the general administration, will remain removed from all political views and thoughts in keeping with the principle of laicism and will strive towards national solidarity and unification, as well as fulfilling the duties shown in the special law. 1982 Constitution, Article 136." (<http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1982ay.htm>, accessed July 17, 2016)

To eliminate the drawbacks of Law No. 633, which was concerned with the *Diyanet* and to revise it, a new law was prepared in 1974 and passed in 1976. This law was later annulled by the Constitutional Court in 1979 and a new ruling was made in its place. In 1982, many articles of law 633 were annulled by the Constitutional Court, and the Higher Court demanded that a new law be created for the *Diyanet* within a year. But such a law was not created from this time to 2010 by the Turkish Great National Parliament. During this process, the Diyanet was ruled according to law 633 dated 22.06.1965 named (above mentioned). In 2010, Turkish Great National Parliament changed some sections of this law and adopted new regulations of some laws related to Diyanet. This new law reinforced the Diyanet institutional structure in the state system, expanded the areas of the Diyanet activities, and introduced new missions to departments of the Diyanet. According to the law, the president of the Diyanet is not elected by the muftis or religious scholars, but is appointed by the president of Turkey on the recommendation of the Turkish prime minister.

There exists a state ministry responsible for the Diyanet in Turkish government. State does not allocate any budget to construction or restoration of mosques, the Qur'an courses, and buildings

of mufti's offices but these costs are met by public donations. The budget allocated to Diyanet by Prime Minister's office is only for the expenses of the personnel.

If we make a comparative study of the *Diyanet* from the point of view of secular systems, it is not possible to compare either the Anglo-Saxons or the French style secular state systems with an institution like the *Diyanet* from the point of view of the relationship between religion and state. In contrast to this, there is no form of "mosque tax" in Turkey that would be equivalent of the "church tax" that we can see in some Western countries; the *Diyanet*'s budget is part of the general budget of the Prime Minister's office. This phenomenon is unique to Turkey. Moreover, according to 1982 constitution, the *Diyanet* presented a part of laicism in the constitution.

One of the most important reasons for the debate about the *Diyanet* is that laicism still forms an ambiguous concept and practice in Turkey, because, as İsmail Kara has stated, there is as of yet no common aspect to laicism in Turkey; it is used more as a vehicle for political and party ideological struggles rather than as a scientific/legal concept (Kara, 2000, p. 29). For example, Dr. Ali Bardakoğlu, who is the older president of the *Diyanet*, has claimed that laicism does not make necessary a total separation between the religion and the state, defending that, as with the Ottoman example, the state and religion keep one another on a balanced course, that mutual communication and cooperation between the religion and the state provides for the development of the society, and that the same fact was reflected in the decision given by the Constitutional Court in 1971 (Bardakoğlu, 2008, p. 175). In contrast to this, İftar Gözaydın has stated that the mentioned separation between religion and state is contrary to secularism, that religious control in a laic state is much more advanced and for this reason the *Diyanet* is not secular but laic (Gözaydın, 2008, pp. 216, 224).

Another criticism of the *Diyanet* is directed at how the Turkish Republic keeps under control main religious groups that form a threat to itself via the *Diyanet*. This was a result of a trend that started in the final periods of the Ottoman State, that is, a desire to carry out modernization parallel with religious renewal in the Republic in Turkey. In fact, this method is necessary as Islam has a strong authority that is constantly present in political and social life. Those who defend this view claim that the religion is used as means of legitimization and wielding influence on the society and claimed that this is done via the *Diyanet* (Kara, 2000, p. 32).

Today, let alone perceiving the *Diyanet* as an institution that can be pushed outside the secular system, it is one that has been well established, even within the regulations that govern the activities of the political parties. That is, if a political party in Turkey were to put any article in their charter which stated that they do not recognize the institutional status of the *Diyanet*, this party would have no chance of being established and such a situation would require the said party to be closed down. Political Party Law, Article 89 states:

"Political parties cannot have any intentions that are in contravention of the Article 136 of the Constitution, which is concerned with the place of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which, in keeping with the principle of laicism, remains removed from all political views and thoughts and aims at national solidarity and unification and which fulfills the duties laid out in the special law, in the general administration." (<http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/genser/kanun3.html>, Madde: 89. accessed, July 17, 2016).

Generally, from the very beginning the Alevis have stated that the *Diyanet* is contrary to the principles of laicism, and that in order to continue laicism the *Diyanet* should be removed (Üzüm, 1997, p. 130). Some Alevis rather than as a scientific/legal concept groups claim that although the *Diyanet* has a share of the state budget it does not carry out religious services for the Alevis. They claim that if the *Diyanet* is to continue to have a role with the state then they should be given the

same share. In connection with this, Alevis want either for the Diyanet to be abolished or for it to be restructured in such a way that it represents the Alevis (Kutlu, 2008, pp. 254-260). Thus, they have demanded the acceptance of the *jemev*, which began to be constructed in a large number in cities, particularly in the 1990s, the awarding of a salary to the *dedes* of the Alevis comparable to that given to the imams, as well as the arrangement of primary and secondary school curriculums to include separate course books for Alevi and Sunni students (Bozan, 2007, pp. 74-81).

In response to this, the *Diyanet* has stated that throughout the history of Islam the place of worship has been the mosque and that any other location cannot be considered to be a place of worship for Muslims (<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cemevi-diyanet-in-kirmizi/siyaset/detay/2172767/default.htm>, accessed July 17, 2016). In this situation, the *jemev* has the same status as the Mawlawihane in the Mawlawi *tarikats*, and the Naqshibandi and Qadiriyyah *tekkes*. This phenomenon corresponds to the classic Alevi-Bektashi structure and to the historical development. In contrast to this, while there are the Alevi workshops that the Ak Party government has arranged under the scope of the Alevi Opening, no changes are being considered in the regulations of the laws relating to the formerly closed *tekkes* or *zawiyas*. It has been demanded that the Alevi *jemevs* and the Alevi-Bektashi *tekkes*, which were closed with the *Tekke and Zawiya Law*, which went into effect in 1925, have separate statuses, like that of mosques and temples (Kara, 2008, p. 105). Thus, the state faces a dilemma in the matter of *jemevs* today. If the state accepts the *jemevs* as temples, then the *jemevs* have to be evaluated within the scope of the law Concerned with the Closure of *Tekke and Zawiya*, which was secured as a reformatory law in the 1982 constitution, and they will become an institute that is not legal. But, under these circumstances, to make any kind of regulation in the reformatory law in question in terms of the *jemev* problem will lead to strong anti-governmental reactions, stretching up to the head of the state, from well-established groups like the Naqshibandis and the Qadiriyyah (these in particular have been politicized and commercialized with the transition to the multi-party regime, but are not legal). On the other hand, if we accept the *jemev* as a place of worship, this will be the first time that in Islamic history that a religious sect within Islam has a place of worship that is not a mosque. It seems that this dilemma will continue for a while longer. As the government has continued the existing Alevi Workshops, which were organized in 2009 to formalize this matter, we would like to state that we wait with anticipation the final decision.

Here I would like to mention the publication project of the Alevi-Bektashi classics as part of the *Diyanet*'s religious publications in recent years and the extraordinary nature of these works. The Alevis, in comparison to other religious groups in Turkey, are a formation that is more attached to tradition and in which the oral culture is dominant. Within their own structure, the number of experts who are acquainted with classic religious knowledge, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish are few. This situation has caused a distance to occur between the classic scholars who give direction to Alevi and the Bektashi school and the Alevis today. For this reason in the eighty-six year history of the *Diyanet*, the publication of the basic classics of a sect or group that has remained outside Sunni Islam and which is living in Turkey has come on the agenda and some of the classic works from this series have been published. (<http://www.diyanetyayinlari.com.tr/index.php?Page=Liste&No=2>, accessed July 17, 2016). This type of activity is the result of the *Diyanet* wanting to be perceived not only as an institution that provides public services for just the Sunni sector of society, but one that serves all sects that are within the country.

However, on the other hand, İsmail Kara who an expert in modern history of relationship between religion and state in Turkey argues that the *Diyanet* is not a Sunni institution because in the development of the Republic, even though it has not taken a stance against the Alevis, it has targeted some Sunni groups, *tarikats* and *jamaats*; for this reason the care taken to publish Alevi classics while no attention has been shown by the *Diyanet* to Sunni classics, is a new and problematical

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development. (Kara, 2008, pp. 53, 54). Kara (2008, p.106) claims that the idea of Alevis as a separate sect or religion from Islam is not an indigenous idea, but rather it is more likely that this is part of the political pressure introduced in the EU ascension process, centered in Germany and France.

If we are to return to the argument about the existing status of the *Diyanet*, it is interesting that in the EU ascension process, the restructuring of the *Diyanet*, either institutionally or bureaucratically, has not been discussed in any way and has not found its way on to the agenda. In fact, one of the leading Turkish theologians and a leader in the formation of alliances between civilizations, Mehmet S. Aydın, states that due to problems like the integration of Turks and Muslims in Europe, the *Diyanet*'s responsibility within the country is not less than its responsibility outside the country (Aydın, 2008, p.167, 168).

On the other hand, there is a matter that is overlooked by those who argue for pushing the *Diyanet* out of the system in Turkey or abolishing it: this is that the *Diyanet*, as a civilian and autonomous institution, has a claim to at least a certain percentage of the income from the *waqfs* that were connected to the Sheikh-ul-Islam's office in the Ottoman era, to the *Evkaf ve Şer'iyye Vekalet* in the period of the First Parliament and which today are connected to the General Directorate of *Waqfs*.

This is because one of the most debated problems concerned with the religious minorities in the Balkans and other regions with the conclusion of the Cold War is the return of the estates that belonged to the *waqfs* that were owned by the minorities during the Ottoman State. This fact, at the same time, is one of the most debated subjects concerned with the *waqfs* of non-Muslims in Turkey in recent times. But the return of *waqf* estates that were owned by non-Muslims in the Ottoman period, as well as those that were sold or donated after the 1936 manifesto, came into execution with the publication of the Official Gazette on 27 February 2008. (<http://rega.basbakanlik.gov.tr/main.aspx?home=http://rega.basbakanlik.gov.tr/eskiler/2008/02/20080227.htm&main=http://rega.basbakanlik.gov.tr/eskiler/2008/02/20080227.htm>, accessed, July 17, 2016).

This fact is the same for the *Diyanet* and for any civilian institution. As we mentioned above, the *waqfs*, which are the most basic source of income for mosques in the Republican period, are separated from religious services. This separation, a debated component in the 1950s and 1960s, today is not on the agenda in any way. In the period from 1947 to 1951, Ahmed Hamdi Akseki, who was president of the *Diyanet*, wrote a report on religious education and institutions; here he stated that he wanted to connect the General Directorate of the *Waqfs* to the *Diyanet*. However, the political authority did not take such a draft onto the agenda. (Akseki, 2001, p. 141). Moreover, one of the leading thinkers of this same period, Ali Fuat Başgil, (1962, pp. 203-206) defended that the *Diyanet* should be an autonomous institution, stating that thus the *Diyanet* could be further removed from changeable political power and circumstances, and defending that in this way the state would be able to achieve laicism in its true nature. Başgil emphasized that as the *Diyanet* and *waqf* system did not possess official state institutional status this caused both institutions to be weakened, and if the system he proposed were to be brought about then the *waqf* system in the Turkish Republic would be revitalized. Thus, in such a system, he suggested that Turkey could be rescued from the dilemma it found itself in between religion and laicism.

90% of the share of the budget that the state has set aside for the *Diyanet* is made up of personnel expenses (Faaliyet Raporu, 2008, p.33). This budget is not used for building mosques, social aid or services abroad; a large proportion of these services are carried out by the *Diyanet Waqf*. Here I would like to make a brief digression about the *Diyanet Waqf*. The *Diyanet Waqf* was established in 1977 to support the services of the *Diyanet* and all the financial resources were formed

after that date. The *Diyanet Waqf* meets all the financial needs for many of the services carried out by the *Diyanet* both in Western countries and in the Eurasian region. In keeping with the *waqf* charter the President and the vice-president of the *Diyanet* form a trustee committee for the *waqf*. The *Diyanet Waqf* carries out publishing activities, sacrificing of animals by proxy, and hajj services, as well as providing scholarships and supporting religious education and training (Uzunoğlu, 1994, pp.460-469. In Istanbul the Islamic Research Center (ISAM) is connected to the *Waqf*. (<http://www.isam.org.tr>, accessed July 17, 2016). This center has been publishing the Encyclopedia of Islam since 1980, and it was completed in 2015.

The *Diyanet Waqf*, despite its institutional status that adds a civilian dimension to it, has been added to the official nature of the *Diyanet*, thus it is not civilian enough to eliminate the basic distinction, described above, that exists between the *waqfs* and religious matters. This is because a large percentage of the estates, like land, bazaars, shops, baths, caravanserais, bedestans, etc., which are connected to the General Directorate of *Waqfs*, or a large section that were connected in the Republican Period, and which were handed over to a variety of individuals, companies or institutes, consisted of the private property of the *waqfs* (İnalcık, 2004, p.120). The expenses of religious services are met from the financial reservoirs of the *waqfs*. For example, when one examines the regional balance sheets of income and expenses of the Ottoman State in 1527-28, the Anadolu Beylerbeylik provided salaries for 3,756 personnel in 344 mosques and 1055 masjids (imam, muezzin and other employees) (İnalcık, 2004, p.124). This situation continued until the 1920s, with a variety of regulations. But this system did not envision the control of the mosques by the state, as in the Republican period. Today, although no office has been assigned for any of the mosque construction or repairs from the budget that has been set aside for the *Diyanet*, the limitations of state inspection on mosques have been extended and the condition that the opening of mosques for worship must be handed over to the *Diyanet* has been introduced with a law that went into effect in March 1998 as part of the 28 February process, the text for the Friday prayers is prepared centrally and the sermon has started to be delivered via a central system (Kara, 2000, pp. 41,42). As a result of this, the publication of sermons in the Friday editions of Islamic newspapers and magazines, which continued until the 1990s, no longer occurred after 2000. Despite this, the *Diyanet* is accepted as the final authority in any kind of publicly debated religious matter in Turkey. Despite the fact that 80% of the public finds the *Diyanet* publications reliable and applies to the *Diyanet* on matters of religious knowledge, it can be said that other religious groups and *jamaats* (congregations) have an intense effect on society. Moreover, in recent periods, the positioning of mobile telephone base stations on the minarets of mosques in the cities, particularly in poorer regions, has been criticized by the public. (<http://www.vahdetgazetesi.com/saglik/700-camide-baz-istasyonu-tehdidi-h24744.html>, accessed July 17, 2016).

Here, I would like to mention the basic characteristics of the mosques in Turkey. It is not possible to categorize the mosques in Turkey as Sunni, Jaferi or Alevi mosques. The fact that the Alevis do not carry out prayers (except for the 'Eid-ul Adha prayer) as intensely as the other groups provides an advantage for Turkey in comparison to other Islamic countries, as the fact that mosques have not taken on the identity of different sects has removed Turkey from being a country that could suffer from intersect conflict in connection with places of worship, unlike Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq or even Iran. We have witnessed, particularly in the past ten years, how Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and even Iran have fallen victim to terrorist events that include terror when one mosque is a Shi'a mosque and then a Sunni mosque. That the mosques are under the control of a centralized institute like the *Diyanet* means that Turkey, from the point of view of possible future events, appears to be a Muslim country with an advantage. According to very valuable study of Toprak and Çarkoğlu, proposing of "it is necessary that Diyanet financially directly supported by people's willingly

contributions instead of state budget” adopted by %49 of trieds and % 25 of these trieds are not adopted (Çarkoğlu, 2006, p. 80).

Religious Affairs High Commission is the most important department of the Diyanet. There are 16 members on the Religious Affairs High Commission, consisting of experts employed from different branches. According to last law about Diyanet, some duties of the Commission are following:

- 1.Planning and organizing a religious council (Shura) periodically.
- 2.Making a decision about religious subjects and responding to religious questions taking into account both main sources of Islam, their methodologies, and their historical practices and also current demands and necessity.
- 3.To observe and investigate Islamic movements, religious-social groups, and traditional religious sects in Turkey and outside the country.
- 4.Investigation of the contents of works that are to be published by the *Diyanet*, as well as deciding whether or not such works are to be published. (<http://www.diyamet.gov.tr/turkish/kurul/Kurul.asp?sorgu=1> accessed July 17, 2016).

This commission is a sort of *fatwa* court. But this does not mean that the *fatwas* delivered here are always new decisions in response to new issues. Rather they are in the form of answers or judgments that have been given by the classic sources to questions related to the religion (in particular the Sunni sources). Instances of the commission arriving at a judgment that is in conflict with the classic sources on religious matters are almost non-existent. In addition, questions of organ transplant, in vitro fertilization and other matters from the modern period, which are not dealt with in the classic sources, are studied from a religious point of view and decisions are made.

Moreover, the decisions and *fatwas* of the Religious Affairs High Commission are not matters of political law, nor are they to be taken as references for implementation. For example, while the Religious Affairs High Commission naturally answers questions that might be put to it about gambling, alcohol, the lottery and bets on sporting events by stating that these are forbidden in Islam, in the process of regulations and practice, in no way have the legislature or the political powers made any reference to these answers. In Turkey today there are no discussions about this type of problem. But there is one matter that has been discussed for a long time in the political arena in Turkey; the freedom to wear headscarves in public institutions and foundations, as well as in secondary schools and universities. With this matter, we can say that the simple distinction that was made in the previous sentence becomes clouded over and the matter has become more complicated. The *fatwa* given by the Religious Affairs High Commission, as Ruling No. 6 on 03.02.1993, in connection with the compulsory nature of the headscarf for women in Islam, has been taken as a reference by political parties, individuals and NGOs that defend the right to wear the headscarf in the aforementioned areas. As this *fatwa* is seen as a cornerstone, from the point of view of the consistency or inconsistency of some theories that will be mentioned further on about the relationship of the *Diyanet* and the religion-state-society relationship, I would like to say that it comes forward as an important component, without going into any details.

- 1.Diyanet brings service to every fraction of Turkey especially because it prioritizes investment groups of religious communities.
- 2.Diyanet brings to service to the community in informal religious education field and provides many religious books free through its publication service.
- 3.Diyanet doesn't leave citizens living abroad alone and doesn't allow any abuse.

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4. Diyanet saves the mosques in Turkey from being a center of any religious group like any other Islamic country.

5. Diyanet supports religious education considerably via the Vaqf.

The Foreign Affairs Department was established to meet the religious needs of Turkish workers who went to European countries, particularly to Germany, in the 1960s and 70s. The Turkish workers who went to European countries at the end of the 60s and beginning of the 70s carried out their religious duties, particularly the Friday prayer, which is to be prayed as a congregation, in factory rooms, apartments or hotels. In the 1980s a number of associations were established, as well as mosque centers. In the 1990s the number of these associations and mosques increased. From 1980 on, the *Diyanet* started to send imams to these mosques (Dere, 2008, pp.292, 293).

Moreover, a religious consultant and religious attaché staff was created in affiliation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to offer guidance in religious matters in many countries. The consultants from Turkey provide religious services in Germany, the USA, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Great Britain, the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Macedonia and the Republic of Northern Cyprus, and there are 22 religious attachés, most of them are in Germany. In the Eurasian geography only Nakhchivan and Romania have religious attachés. The religious service consultants and attaches also act as the president of NGOs and federations that have been established in the name of the *Diyanet* in Western countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France and the Netherlands, <http://www.ditib.de/index.php?lang=en>, accessed July 17, 2016). In addition to these personnel there are 1,400 imams who carry out their duties in a number of countries, including those in the Eurasian geography. Most of these are serving in Western countries, with 100 serving in the Eurasian geography in 2008 (Korkut, 2008, p. 117-119).

Until 2003 the *Diyanet* selected the consultants or attaches who were to be sent abroad from among the muftis or high-level officials in its own organizational structure. In 2002, with the AK party becoming a majority government, the *Diyanet* president and vice presidents were chosen from among academics who were teaching at theology faculties. As a reflection of this, from 2003 some of the religious service consultants have been selected from among academics who are serving in theology schools in Turkey and who have relatively more expertise as far as the language, culture and religion of the country they are appointed to.

In addition, the foreign affairs department carries out dialogue activities and relationships with members of other religions and religious institutions on behalf of the Presidency. For this reason, in the 1990s an Inter-Religious Dialogue unit was established within the makeup of this department.

I mentioned above that from 2000 onwards the place of the *Diyanet* within the secular system has been questioned only within the framework of the Alevi problem but that its legitimacy has not been questioned within the framework of the EU ascension. Without a doubt, there are many reasons for this. From the 1990s on, we can indicate that the most important of these reasons is the increasing value of religion on a world-wide scale. But, in my opinion, another important reason is the contributions that the *Diyanet* has made to services abroad and Turkish foreign policy in religious matters. I can say that the *Diyanet*'s activities in Western countries and the geography of Eurasia have opened a larger area of legitimacy than the internal policies.

5. The Diyanet in Period of Ak Party

Ak Party coming to power in 2002 the ruling party, the Diyanet gained a different identity, and a different bureaucratic construction. The senior management of the Diyanet was overtaken by academicians from Faculties of Theology. The rank of the President of the Diyanet was elevated to

the tenth row in the state protocol with the law that was enacted in 2011. Again, with this law, the Managers of Departments in the Diyanet were raised to the status of being General Management Departments. The economic status of the muftis in city centers and counties, and the senior level staff in the central organization of the Diyanet was improved. In September 2014, the Diyanet was connected directly to the Prime Minister's Office. One of the areas cared much by the Diyanet during Ak Party period has been the field of education and training. The Directorate of Religious Affairs Centers were opened in many cities. KAGEM (Women, Family, and Youth Center of the Diyanet Foundation), which had its headquarters in Ankara, opened branches in many cities. KAGEM has been organizing many intense activities about religious seminars, cultural programs and Islamic arts. In addition, again in this period, thousands of women religious attendants were employed in the field of teaching the Qur'an in courses as women preachers. Prof. Mehmet Görmez, who is the current present President of the Diyanet, cares much for the integration of mosques and the staff of the Diyanet with the society. Mehmet Görmez says that the members of the Diyanet should guide the society with the exemplary life of Prophet Mohammad, and tries to make the mosques become active centers for young people, women and children; and demands that muftis, imams and muezzins and women officials try in a dynamic manner for this purpose. For this purpose, the Holy Birth Week, which is celebrated every year in April; the Mosques Week, which is celebrated every year in October; the Qur'anic Courses, which are organized during every summer, are celebrated in a more glorified manner with enhanced activities when compared with the past.

In this context, it is necessary to emphasize the fight between the Diyanet and the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO) as a problem occupying the agenda in Turkey. Three or four years ago, the Turkish bureaucracy started a bitter struggle against the members of FETO. FETO wanted to have the same organization that it had in judicial bodies, security and military organizations in Diyanet. For this reason, Diyanet was the target of the units with the epicenter of FETO and the media in the past years. One of the most important reasons of this was the donations that were made with religious feelings and that constituted the economic power of FETO. As soon as Diyanet defined FETO as a false religious movement, the religious donations stopped at once. For this reason, the organization kept the issue of Friday Sermons as a debatable issue, blamed the number of the personnel of the Diyanet and its budget with unjust claims, and started abuse and blackmail campaigns against the members of Diyanet. FETO wanted to use mosques as a base in its fight against politics and democracy. However, timely interventions of Mehmet Görmez, eliminated the struggle of FETO to overtake Diyanet and form a power over it. During the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, azans and knellings continued during all night with the order of the President of the Diyanet. The azans had important role in the resistance that was formed by the nation against the coup attempt. (Okumuş, 2016, p.1,2)

Mehmet Görmez, the President of the Diyanet, called the High Religious Council to convene for an extraordinary meeting after the coup attempt. The Extraordinary Religious Council convened on August 3-4, 2016, and decided on the following some items about FETO.

1. The definition of a religious structure is not compatible with Fettullahist Terror Organization (FETO/PDY) which deemed everything permissible to reach their secret and dark goals, which exploited religion and religious sentiment, which stole our people's zakat, fitr, and qurban, which took away our people's sons and daughters, which distorted and destroyed the basic values and concepts of our religion, which recruited people and created opportunities with un-Islamic and immoral acts and behaviors, with mischief, sedition, lies, and tricks; which infiltrated into all bodies of the state and tried to endanger the nation's future, and which was caught in the act by the nation in its recent coup attempt. The head of this organization cannot be accepted as a "religious scholar" or "hocaefendi."

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2. In Islam, no “innocent and indisputable” authority and guide can be accepted other than the Prophet. Nobody and no group can see themselves as the sole representative of religion and call people to show them unconditional obedience and commitment. Since absolute loyalty and commitment is only valid in Islam for principles the framework of which is determined by the Quran and Sunnah, there is no legitimacy according to Islam when someone considers themselves as an infallible authority and guide or when they are viewed as such by those who are affiliated with them. It is clearly against Allah’s book and the Prophet’s Sunnah. Within that framework, it is unacceptable from a religious perspective when it is claimed a person is special, chosen and infallible or their statements and teachings have holiness. FETO/PDY is clearly a movement of religious exploitation.

3. In Islam, people are called to the path of Allah and the Prophet. The call to various individuals, organizations, and factions using the name of Allah is deceiving people using religion and Allah; and it is the greatest injustice done to religion. Nobody can surrender their mind, will, and character to another individual. It is impossible for structures that are founded by exploiting people’s religious sentiment in the name of religion and Allah to receive approval from Islam.

4. It is not compatible in any way whatsoever with the fundamental principles of Islam to turn educational activities disguised as religious into a network of power and interest and create a political and financial organization, and therefore cover all sorts of secret and dirty relations. Moreover, capitalizing on and gaining influence off religion has no religious basis.

5. There were many movements of sedition and malice throughout history that had mahdi/messiah arguments and hurufi/esoteric character that threatened public safety. Secrecy, mystery, commitment, exhibition of charismatic personality were the most apparent traits of these movements. In modern times, these types of movements were used to tear apart and exploit the Islamic community under the yoke of international political engineering.

6. In the so-called religious discourse of this organization, dreams and mysterious stories were more in demand than Islam’s basic sources of knowledge. Through those dreams and stories, innocent masses were deceived and charmed and a diseased mentality was created. To that end, they resorted to distorting religion through conversations, sermons, and preaches especially using media. It was claimed the Prophet attended these sermons and conversations and orders and instructions given to the followers were predicated on the Prophet through dreams. It is impossible to religiously legitimize such an organization that considers it a method to fortify its authority by deceiving people in this way.

7. Different denominations, dispositions, and schools of thought came together in harmony and created tremendous richness in the Islamic community. However, all sorts of division and factionalism that may ruin the unity were forbidden in Islam since the unity of Muslims is essential. (FETO/PDY) An organization that monopolizes the truth and ostracizes everyone else does not accord with the Islamic tradition. Therefore, no organization, thought or movement that aims to tear apart Islam’s Ummah can be considered innocent.

8. It is for certain that structures and organizations operate in the field of religion which cannot be inspected and which especially have no transparent financial sources will involve all sorts of dubious activity and dark relations. At this point, there is no sound and accurate basis to the politics and strategy of a movement that tries to obtain legitimacy through fabricating religious arguments in their own way. Therefore, this organization exploited people’s religious sentiment to use them for its own goals.

9. Methods like hiding, acting different what they really are, being a hypocrite, speaking differently in different places, disregarding what is lawful/unlawful in Islam for deception, using

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code names, living a different life than what they believe, lying, curiosity, violating privacy, blackmailing, favoritism, organized solidarity for evil purposes are un-Islamic and unethical.

10. Recruiting their own followers in state staff, committing all sorts of corruption and illegal acts and especially stealing exam questions to take over the state mean infringement of rightful due. A structure that adopts such a method as the basic tool for its organization cannot be considered Islamic.

(http://webdosya.diyamet.gov.tr/anasayfa/UserFiles/din_surasi_2016/sonuc_bildiri_esi_En.pdf, accessed 3 October, 2016)

Diyanet formed new religious consultancy offices in Macedonia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Albania, and Mauritania; and opened coordinating offices in African Countries during Ak Party Period. Again, in this period, 1st and 2nd African Religious Leaders Congress, 1st Latin America Religious Leaders Congress, and 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Eurasia Islam Councils were organized with the leadership of the Diyanet (Korkut, 2008, p. 117-119). The Diyanet Center for America was opened in Maryland on April 2, 2016. A fully equipped Mimar Sinan Mosque was opened in this Center, and cost 100 million dollars. Again, in this period, Köln Merkez Mosque was opened, which cost 25 million Euros, together with the cooperation of the Diyanet Foundation and DITIB. Again, in this period, International Faculties of Theology were opened in Marmara University, Faculty of Theology; and in Ankara University, Faculty of Theology; which continued their education in English and with the sponsorship of the Diyanet Foundation. The children of the Turkish employees coming from European countries like Germany, France, Belgium, Holland were accepted to these departments. When these students graduated from these faculties, they started to work as religious officials in their countries. In addition, the Diyanet Foundation brings students from many African and Eurasia countries, and sponsors them to be educated in Imam-Hatip Religious High Schools and Faculty of Theology in Turkey. Again, the broadcasting of the Diyanet Publishings in various dialects and languages for the Muslim people living abroad was accelerated. In addition to these, the Diyanet Foundation distributes the meat of sacrificed animals to many African countries, build many small mosques, and pioneers in many social and humanitarian aids. When all these activities are considered, it becomes obvious that the Diyanet has turned into a *Ottomanic soft power* with its present status in the foreign politics of Turkey (Lepeska, 2015, 1-5).

CONCLUSION

The *Diyanet*, which carries out religious services and whose personnel numbers more than one hundred fifty thousand, is one of the most important public institutions in Turkey. It carries out an important function in the relationship between state, religion, and society. Throughout the history of the Republic, even though the relationship of the *Diyanet* with laicism has been much debated, this question now only comes to the fore in connection with the Alevis problem. Thus, even during the EU ascension process, which has led to a new organization in public institutions, policies of the government to harmonize with the European Union affects the institutional structure of the Diyanet. Also, the activities of the *Diyanet* in Europe and Eurasia in the 1990s have raised the statute of this institution to one that is indispensable from a domestic political aspect. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s opened a new sphere of its activities in Eurasia. It is true that a huge number of mosques, madrasahs, and other religious institutions were restored or built and numerous young Islamic cadres were educated in Eurasia with the help of the Diyanet during the 1990s. In order to carry out this cooperation in an effective manner, the Eurasian Islamic Council has been organized, meeting for the first time in 1995, and having its ninth meeting in 2016. Moreover, the *Diyanet* has the utmost respect for cross-cultural and inter-religious relations, as well as the local religious values of the religious administrators in its hinterland, where it operates and provides services. Also, The

Diyanet has been spreading religious services to African and Latin American countries in the last decade. Diyanet as an effective force in Turkey's internal and external politics has been turned into soft power of Republic of Turkey.

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