

# Analisa

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Analisa is a peer-reviewed journal published by Office of Religious Research and Development Ministry of Religious Affairs Semarang Indonesia. It specializes in these three aspects; religious life, religious education, religious text and heritage. Analisa aims to provide information on social and religious issues through publication of research based articles and critical analysis articles. Analisa has been published twice a year in Indonesian since 1996 and started from 2016 Analisa will be fully published in English as a preparation to be an international journal.

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## INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARDS

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The advancement of information and technology in this era has encouraged the editorial boards of *Analisa Journal of Social Science and Religion* to change some aspects of the journal for the better. The first changing is the name of the journal since 2015, from “*Analisa Jurnal Pengkajian Masalah Sosial Keagamaan*” to be “*Analisa Journal of Social Science and Religion*”. As a consequence, there is alteration on the ISSN 1410-4350 to be 2502-5465. Furthermore, at this time, it is a must that a journal is published electronically, as it is stated in the rule issued by PDII LIPI (the Indonesian Institute of Science). Therefore, in 2015, *Analisa* started the electronic journal with E-ISSN 24443-3853, while the printed edition has been published since 1996 and continued until now. Along with the changing of the name, *Analisa* began the publication in English started vol.1.no.1 2016 as part of the preparation for being an international journal.

There are various articles submitted to *Analisa* in the beginning of 2016. These include Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism, culture, Islam and Islamic education in Turkey. An article written by Tauseef Ahmad Parry talking about Islamism is placed as the opening of this volume. He argues that the incidence of 9/11 2011 in World Trade Center USA became a turning point for Western country to stereotype Islam as terrorist. Furthermore, after that tragedy Islam is perceived as fundamentalist religion, extremist, conservative Islam, radicalisms, and other negative stereotypes. In this article, he suggests that it is necessary to evaluate the Western perspectives on Islam in which they labeled Islam as extremists.

The next article is entitled “*The Chronicle of Terrorism and Islamic Militancy in Indonesia*” written by Zakiyah. This paper provides data and deep analysis on the series of bombing and terror happened in Indonesia from 2001 to 2012. After the fall of President Soeharto in 1998, there were a series of bombing and terror in some part of the country which caused hundreds casualties and great number of property damages. This year was also a time for some extremists coming back to Indonesia after a long period of exile abroad. These extremist figures then began their activities in Indonesia and they also disseminated the radical ideology, establishing network, recruiting new members and preparing for terror and violent action. Some of the terrorists and suspected of the bombing actions were indicated having connection with the Islamic radical group which means that there is an Islamic militancy in Indonesia

The radical ideology was also spread at prominent university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. This theme is discussed by Arifudin Ismail. He mentions that this ideology is not only spread by jihadists but also by some activists in certain campuses. For instance, there are some discussions and discussion groups existed in Gadjah Mada University, Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University, Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah University, and Indonesia Islam University. In such activity, there is an indication that there is discussion on “the radical ideology”. He focused his study on the exclusive students movement in Gadjah Mada University especially related to how the religious doctrine (Islam) disseminated and perceived by students.

Besides the discussion of the Islamism, terrorism and radical movement as the phenomena happened in Indonesia and in the world, this volume also offers other insights of Indonesia. Betty Mauli Rosa Bustamn explores the Minangkabau tradition. She describes in her article how the local people (Minangkabau) adopted Islamic values into their tradition from generation to the next generation. In this paper, it can be seen that Islam and local culture are living in harmony. In addition, Asep N Musadad talks about the assimilation and acculturation process between local traditions of Sundanese community with Islam. He describes that the harmony between them can be seen on the literature; there is a cultural change as a picture of how Islam and local tradition met and assimilated. Besides, in the folklore as he mentions that some incantations used by shaman (panayangan) contain some symbols of Islam

Besides being practiced in the local tradition as mentioned earlier, Islam in Indonesia is

transformed and disseminated through electronic media such as television; this can be read at the next article. Siti Solihati wrote a paper about how Islamic symbols are used by a soap opera broadcasted in a national television. In this article, she found that there are some ideologies embedded in such program namely; (1) ideology of materialistic-capitalist, (2) ideology of patriarchy, and (3) violent domination.

Napsiah and her colleagues wrote an article about how the people living in surrounding the Merapi Mountain cope with the disaster especially when the eruption occurred and its aftermath. Community living in Pangukrejo village near the mountain helps each other dealing with their disaster related problems. They are hand in hand in re-building their villages without looking at their religious background. All people participate in those activities since they feel that Merapi is their home and their source of convenience and safety, therefore this honorable symbol should be preserved at all cost. They argue that the eruption is the destiny from God, thus it is undeniable fact. At that time, they were at the bottom level condition, so that to wake up from that situation they need to help each other (gotong royong).

The last article in this volume is about the transformation of Islamic education at Imam Hatip School in Turkey. This paper is written by Mahfud Junaidi. He describes that the curriculum in this school aims to transfer the traditional norms based on the Islamic values. It is expected that by implementing Islam, this will contribute to the development of society and nation-state in Turkey.

Please enjoy reading articles in this volume.

Semarang, May 2016

Editorial boards

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Analisa Journal of Social Science and Religion would like to thank you to all international editorial boards for their support and their willingness to review articles for this volume. Analisa would also like to thank you to all authors who have submitted their articles to Analisa, so that this volume is successfully published.

Analisa do hope that we would continue our cooperation for the next editions.

Semarang, May 2016

Editor in Chief

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# IMAM HATIP SCHOOL (*IMAM HATIP LISESI*): Islamic School in Contemporary Secular Turkey

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## ABSTRACT

*Imam Hatip schools have been a crucial and controversial Islamic education in a contemporary secular Turkey. The majority of Imam Hatip School students come from families who live and conduct their relations in accordance with Islamic norms and principles. Many conservative, religious-minded parents in rural and small town (in central and eastern Turkey) send their children after primary school to an Imam Hatip High school because this is the only school type in which the children can study Islamic subjects besides the general curriculum and the teachers are believed to impart traditional moral values. Many of those parents would, however, wish their children to pursue modern careers and find more prestigious and better-paid jobs than that of a modest preacher. Today Imam Hatip schools do not only produce Imams (leaders of prayer) and hatips (deliver khutba at every Friday sermon), but also design to cultivate religious sensibilities (*dini hassasiyetler*) in their students. The schools aim to heighten their student's awareness of faith and promote the notion that religion should play a substantial role in the life of individuals and society. The most important is that Imam Hatip schools play an important role in Turkey's pious community and make the country more Islamic.*

*Keywords: Turkey, Imam Hatip School, religion, education, secular.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Islam is the main religion of the Turkish people, where 99.8% of the country's population is nominally Muslims. Most Muslims in Turkey are Hanafite Sunnis, forming about 72%, and Alevi of the Syiah denomination, forming about 25% of the Muslim population. There is also a Twelver Syiah community, which forms about 3% of the Muslim population. However, Turkey is more recognized as secular than Islamic country. The secularization of Turkish society started during the last years of Ottoman Empire, and it was the most prominent and controversial feature of Kemal Pasha Ataturk's reforms. Under his leadership, the caliphate—the supreme politico-religious office of Islam and the symbol of the sultan's claim to world leadership of all Muslims—was abolished. The

secular power reduced and eventually eliminated the religious authorities and functionaries. The religious foundations were nationalized, and religious education was restricted and for a time prohibited. The influential and popular mystical orders of the dervish brotherhoods (*Tariqa*) were also suppressed ("Islam in Turkey", n.d.).

The Turkish government had more freedom to pursue policies attacking Islamic institutions. Under the guise of "cleansing Islam of political interference", the educational system was completely overhauled. Islamic education was banned in favor of secular, non-dogmatic schools. Other aspects of religious infrastructure were also torn down. Religious endowments were seized and put under government control. Sufi lodges were forcefully shut down. All judges of Islamic law in



the country were immediately fired, as all Shari'ah courts were closed ("How Ataturk", n.d.).

In addition, Atatürk's attacks on Islam were not limited to the government, however, everyday life of the Turks was also dictated by Atatürk's secular ideas: (1) Traditional Islamic forms of headdress such as turbans and the fez were outlawed in favor of Western-style hats, (2) The hijab for women was ridiculed as a "ridiculous object" and banned in public buildings, (3) The calendar was officially changed, from the traditional Islamic calendar, based on the hijrah -Prophet Muhammad's flight to Madinah- to the Gregorian calendar, based on the birth of Jesus Christ, (4) In 1932, the *azan* -the Muslim call to prayer- was outlawed in Arabic. Instead, it was rewritten using Turkish words and forced upon the country's thousands of mosques, and (5) Friday was no longer considered part of the weekend. Instead, Turkey was forced to follow European norms of Saturday and Sunday being days off from work ("How Attaturk", n.d.). After all of these changes, Attaturk deleted the clause in the constitution which declared Islam as the official state religion. Islam had been replaced with Atatürk's secular ideologies.

The most important, but at the same vulnerable, is secularism in general and secularism in education which is still disputable. Some scholars think that the secularization process is not completed in Turkey. A country cannot really be called secular when it pays every month the salary of 60,000 imams and dictates the content of their weekly sermon at Friday prayers, sometimes down to the last word. On one side, there are educated people who accepted secular agenda, and on the other side, there are uneducated people who live in villages and are believers (Giuli Alasania, Nani Gelovani, 2011, p. 39).

Fazlur Rahman (1982, p.92) explained that perhaps the most spectacular development in Islamic education in contemporary Islamic world has occurred in Turkey, where after a quarter of a century's official total ban, it resurrected itself through sheer public pressure. At last, with the introduction of democracy, i.e., a multiparty system

in 1946, the Republican Party (Ataturk's party) saw that the opposition party (the Democratic Party) might successfully do campaign on the issue of freedom of religious education. The Republican leader decided to undercut the opposition and established the Imam Hatip Schools to train *imam* and *khatib*, and Faculty of Theology (*Ilahiyat Fakultesi*) within Ankara University. The faculty was established as a scientific body and would be a torch of light like other scientific institutions.

Religion and education (Islamic education or Schooling Islam) in secular Turkey are an interesting issue due to an uneasy relationship of the state and religion. In this research, I try to explore this uneasy relationship of secular Turkish state with religion by investigating how religion has been dealt within the field of education. It is also interesting and important because it has had the largest period of independent existence among Muslim countries in recent history. This research focused on Imam Hatip School (Turkish: *Imam Hatip Lisesi*) as a transformative institution of Islamic education in contemporary secular Turkey, with two research questions: 1) Why do Imam Hatip Schools still exist in contemporary secular Turkey? and 2) How do the transformation of Imam Hatip Schools in contemporary secular Turkey ?

## **B. METHOD OF RESEARCH**

This research is a qualitative study with a historical approach centering on Turkey as the setting of the study. This study reads historical moments synchronically and diachronically. Synchronic reading of the historical events is meant to look at the historical moment within a particular time associated with many variables, for example, when looking at the development of religious education in a given context, it needs to be associated with other aspects such as political, social, cultural, and religious aspects. Meanwhile, diachronic reading of history is meant to look at certain historical events as a continuation of the previous events that will continue in the next period. Turkey is chosen in this study because it is a unique secular state which is different from other

secular states in Europe and has a population the majority of which embrace Islam by the percentage of around 99 percent.

This research is related to phenomena or activities of human being in Islamic education. Therefore, the researcher uses observation to collect data and strengthen their validity. Observation is made indirectly (nonparticipant) on the implementation of Islamic education conducted by Imam Hatip Schools. In addition, the researcher needs to take some advantages of the interview method. Interviews were conducted on people involved in Islamic education in Turkey, namely Imam Hatip School, as well as those who have adequate information and understanding about the issue of Islamic education in Turkey (Mehmet Toprak, Sulaiman, and Syeifi Kenan). This research uses a historical perspective, so the documentation is used to collect data from works or references related to the Islamic education (Imam Hatip schools) in Turkey.

After the data are collected completely, they are then carried out to the data analysis. Descriptive data are analyzed qualitatively with an emphasis on primary sources supported by the results of interviews with key informants and field observations. The data are interpreted to find a new meaning of development and implementation of Islamic education (Imam Hatip Schools) in contemporary secular Turkey.

## C. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 1. Islam in Contemporary Turkey

Gibb (1978, p. 69) explained that “Islam is not only a body of religious doctrine but also a way of life with a long tradition behind it, extends to the whole range of Islamic doctrines and institutions, ethics, and rituals and also to the Islamic past”. Therefore, Islam in Turkey can be understood as Muslims civilization including of politic, social, economy, cultural, and education.

The people of Turkey are Muslims even though in 1928 Islam as the religion of the state was deleted from the constitution. This fact is well known enough though this deeply significant fact has

been less widely appreciated. An understanding of the modern Turks as Muslims has been little bit late to be cultivated, either by western students or by Islamic peoples. The people of Turkey are not only Muslims, but also, for many centuries, have been of all Muslims (W. C. Smith, 1957, p. 165). Whereas Islam had formed the identity of Muslims within Ottoman Empire, secularism was seen as molding the new Turkish nation and its citizens. The interaction between secularism and Islam plays an important role in normative and ethnic conflict, culture and politics, remembrance and representation of the past, and the formation of new social movement in Turkey (Yavus, 2014, p. 7).

In contemporary Turkey, Directorate of Religious Affairs, known as *Diyanet*, is the government body representing and directing all of Sunni Islam in Turkey. Created in 1924, a year after the Republic of Turkey was formed, the *Diyanet* is enshrined in 136 of the Turkish Constitution. The *Diyanet* is huge and powerful. Operating under the Prime Minister, it employs about 100,000 (from muftis to imams in mosques). All Sunni clergies are salaried as civil servant of *Diyanet*. (The Myth of Turkish Secularism, 2013). In addition, the state is one of the main producers of religious discourse in Turkey, providing free areas of development for mosques to be built, paying the expenses of water and electricity, and educating and paying preachers. Moreover, the state shapes the religious discourse through standardized Friday sermons, fatwas, religious publications, and to the state media, and non-Muslim are legally restricted in their religious freedoms. This attitude of the state towards religion, especially towards Islam, can be understood only in a historical framework (Bekim Agai, 2007, p. 150)

Until the present day, the *Diyanet* writes all the sermons for its clergy, but reportedly now it sometimes allows them to write their own though their contents are controlled. The *Diyanet* also controls all mosques (80,000). In the educational sector, it is responsible for 4,322 Quranic courses throughout the country and provides the series of publications dealing with educational matters.

The *Diyaset* assumes the task of including Islam in the project of national homogenization as well as exercising state control over private forms of Islamic activities (Bekim Agai, 2007, p. 150). The nation of laicism had changed. Turkish laicism means the control of religious expression through the state. By controlling religious tasks, the state hoped to depoliticize religion and integrate it into its civilizing project.

The new constitution of 1982 consequently strengthened the role of Islam in Turkey. National historiography was revised, and Islam was presented as an outstanding national trait of the Turks, as well as being a source of social and moral stability. The curriculum of state schools was adapted to religious demand, obligatory religious courses were introduced, and the theory of evolution was banned from schoolbooks. Even today, there are varied levels of state involvement in the religious sphere (Bekim Agai, 2007, p. 150). Would the U.S., or any Western country, be termed "secular" if it funded a huge Christian government agency that employed all Christian clergy and controlled their sermons? Obviously not.

In both theory and practice, the Turk's version of Islam Today is different from other Muslim people. It is, we believe, of major significance in itself if we shall presently try carefully to understand. Also, its very differentiation from the others is significant, and this too needs clarification. It is, of course, related to the fact that the historical context is different, both present and past. Quite a part from religious interpretation, the Turks stand out from among other Muslims both for their current activity and development, their revolutionary prosecution of modern life, and for their past role in Islamic history, especially in recent centuries. As with other Muslims, their understanding of Islamic history and their participation in it have been markedly distinctive (W. C. Smith, 1957, p. 166).

Islam in Turkey is distinguished by considerable diversity, both in ideational content and in institutional forms. In political expression and organization, Islam is not restricted to one

part and it is even more socially and culturally developed than it is politically. Turkish Islam is distinguished by a high degree of institutional differentiation from secular counterparts in separate trade unions, business associations, foundation, education, and media activities. Some cultural and intellectual Muslims milieus display a high level of vitality and innovation, compared to the stereotypical products of much of political Islam.

A survey entitled "Religious Life in Turkey" was conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs or *Diyaset İşleri Başkanlığı* on religion and religious habits in Turkey. For *Diyaset's* survey, 21,632 people were interviewed across the country which has a population over 76 million, and 50.9 percent of them were women. The majority of them, at 77.5 percent, followed the Hanafi madhhab or school of law interpreting religious rules while 11.1 percent were Shafii and 0.1 percent followed the Hanbali School. One percent responded that they followed the Ja'fari sect of Shia Islam and 6.3 percent described themselves as followers of none of these sects while 2.4 were not aware of his or her sect. ("Turkish Muslims are more Pious as They Age", 2014).

When asked whether they believe in God, 98.7 percent of participants responded that they believe God's existence and oneness, and 0.8 percent only replied either that they doubted his existence but still believed, or were doubtful of his existence and did not believe in God at all. Moreover, a majority of participants said that they accepted all revelations in Quran as accurate and valid for people of all ages while only 1 percent expressed doubt, and less than half of interviewees said they were able to read Islam's holy book Quran in its original (Arabic), while others said they could not. Over 95 percent of the participants believe in the existence of angels, satan, and jinns. A large majority of the interviewees expressed their faith in the day of resurrection and judgment and only 0.9 did not believe in resurrection and being held accountable for their sins and good ("Turkeys Muslims more Pious as They Age", 2014).

The survey shows that more than half of those performing prayers five times a day live in rural areas while 39.4 percent live in cities. Women perform daily prayers more than men and there is a correlation between the age and frequency of performing prayers. People observe obligatory prayers more as they age according to the survey. Turkey's Muslims above 65 are most likely to perform daily prayers regularly while only 26.2 percent of Muslims between the ages of 18 and 24 regularly perform obligatory prayers. Another interesting finding in the survey is that the higher the level of education of Muslim individuals have, the more they are inclined to skip daily prayers. The frequency of performing daily prayers is the highest among illiterate Muslims. The highest rate of attendance to prayers is for Friday prayers, a prayer that needs to be performed with a congregation and is obligatory exclusively for men. Over 57 percent of interviewees said they always attend Friday prayers and only 7.2 percent said they had never attended the Friday prayers ("Turkeys Muslims more Pious as They Age", 2014).

The survey also examined Muslim's observance of fasting and giving zakat, a type of almsgiving obligatory for all Muslims considered wealthy enough. Over 83 percent perform fasting as long as they are healthy while 2.5 percent said they never fast. The rate of women was higher among those regularly fasting. Those giving zakat annually are in majority while only 1.1 percent said they did not give zakat although they could afford to.

On the matter of performing a religious pilgrimage, a pillar of Islam compulsory for every able-bodied follower who can afford it, only 6.6 percent of interviewees performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina known as Hajj. A large number of interviewees plan to perform it as soon as they can afford while a very small percent said they preferred to help the poor instead of spending money on a pilgrimage. A considerable majority of interviewees said they recite prayers at any time of day without any reason while more than half recite prayers to show their gratitude to God. The rest of interviewees recite prayers only when they face a problem, an ordeal ("Turkeys Muslims more Pious

as They Age", 2014).

Based on the survey, more than 71 percent of women interviewed said they covered their head while going out though they were not asked whether they regularly wear a headscarf or other forms of covering and 27.2 percent said they did not cover. Wearing headscarves or other items to cover the head is more common in rural parts of Turkey according to the survey. The main reason women cited for wearing a headscarf was that they believed it is an obligation of Islam. This reason was followed by family's pressure, adherence to customs and societal pressure respectively ("Turkeys Muslims more Pious as They Age", 2014).

It can be concluded that the religiosity of Turkish Muslim is good enough. Therefore, it is understandable that "more than anything else into modernist Turkey, convinced me that Islam has a very deep root in the hearts of the real Turkish people, nor can, indeed, be divorced from their mind" (Javad Saeed, p. 165). A country cannot really be called secular when it pays, every month, the salaries of Imams and dictates the contents of their weekly sermons at Friday prayers. Islam is the most controversial issue to divide the Turkish republic since 1923. On one side, there were educated people who accepted secular agenda, and on the other side, there were uneducated people who lived in villages and were believers (Giuli Alasania, Nani Gelovani, 2011, p. 39)

The facts show us that Islam is still alive in Turkey, and even they claimed that 99 percent of Turkish citizens are Muslims. In addition, although the state recently still embraces a secular ideology, the religious life of people is similar to other people in Islamic countries, either in worshiping or in practicing other Islamic cultures.

In Turkey, the state shapes Islam on different levels. Today one key actor is the directorate for Religious Affairs or *Diyanet*. With about 100,000 employees, from *Muftis* to *imams* in the mosques, all state paid, it controls the religious service in 70,000 mosques and shapes the religious discourse through standardized Friday sermon, fatwas,

religious publications, and access to the state media. In the educational sector it is responsible for 4,322 Quranic courses throughout the country and provides a series of publications dealing with educational matters. The Directorate assumes the task of including Islam in the project of national homogenization as well as exercising state control over private forms of Islamic activities. According to the constitution, it is the Directorate's duty to ensure national unity. The creation of a Sunni-state Islam is the paradoxical consequence of Turkish laicism (Bekim Agai, 2007, pp. 153-4). Such an approach had to ensure that all Turkish pupils learned the one and only "enlightened state-version of Islam" whilst undermining Islamic influence outside of state control and the potential creation of alternative forms of Islamic belongings.

Though Turkey is often portrayed as very secular and laicist, different Islamic groups found ways to transmit their forms of Islamic knowledge in Turkey. The Islamic brotherhoods were outlawed, but some continued to operate in hidden forms. Some underground *medresses* were maintained, while Qur'anic courses were held in private. The most important development during the repressive period of the early Republic, however, was the formation of new forms of religious communities, the *cemaats*. These groups attempted to maintain and transmit their Islamic ideas under the state's repressive policies. *Cemaat* can be defined as the combination of a specific discourse with certain forms of social relations. Unlike the Sufi brotherhood, the *cemaat* has no formal act to bestow membership. The *cemaats* were critical of the state's religious education and developed their own forms of Islamic teaching (Bekim Agai, 2007, pp. 153-4).

We have seen how strongly and comprehensively the state involved in religious teaching, and how it causes traditional patterns of classical Islamic education disappear. The followers of Said Nursi, Nurcu movement, (Fethullah Gullen group) are a specific result of these developments which have made Turkey a unique case in Islamic world.

The political scientist Hakan Yafuz, as cited by Ozgur, argues that "Turkish Islam" is different from the Arab and Persian Islam because of its production of cultural norms and modes of thought as related to religion, faith, personal life, ritual practices, and religious holidays, covering a whole spectrum from social mores to personal ones and the interpretations of Islamic principles. Since they are contextualized in a setting where "Turkish Islam" is the norm, it is conceivable that the communities around Imam Hatip schools advocate a more "liberal" form of Islam (Ozgur, 2012, pp. 189-190). Religion, either as an expression of individual piety or as an institutional organization, could not be suppressed or ignored.

## **2. Social and Political Background**

Turkey is a country located in Europe, Asia, and Middle East. Ninety nine percent of the population of Turkey is Muslim. Turkey is the only country in which Islam is the major religious community, but is constitutionally secular guaranteeing complete freedom of worship to non-Muslim. In addition, the present conservative government, has Islamic origins, is engaged in reform, with the goal of Turkey joining of European Union (EU) (Mustafa Cinoglu, 2006, pp.676-687).

Turkey is a parliamentary democracy with multi-party system. Major parties are defined as political parties that received 10 % of the votes in the latest general election (July, 22, 2012) and/or represented in parliament. Minor parties are defined as political parties that have fulfilled the requirements of the Supreme Election Committee ((*Yuksekk Secim Kurulu* (YSK) in Turkish). Parties represented in Parliament now are: (1) *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party), (2) *Cumhuriyat Halk Partisi* (Republican Party), (3) *Milliyetci Hareket Partisi* (Nationalist Party), (4) *Halklan Demokratik Partisi* (People's Democratic Party), and (5) *Bans ve Demokrasi Partisi* ("List of Political", n.d.).

Social mobility has increased since the emergence in the 1950s of a multi-party participative nature of policy and greater economic development. The neglected villagers who clung to

their traditional ways as a result of one-party city center modernization have come to participate in the educational system at a greater rate than ever before. The changed policy in the agricultural sector has also helped the peasants to be more mobile and economically strong.

Although democratic Turkey is overwhelmingly Muslim, for almost eight decades its legal and political system have shown a deep seated fear of Islam as political force. The government monitors and regulates how Islam is preached and practiced. In recent years, One of many restrictions on religion, on December 1981, the Prime Ministry issued a list of regulations which required all personal and students in institutions of higher education to wear “clothing which is compatible with Ataturk’s revolution and principles” not cover they heads while in the institution. Many people saw the decision as a reflection of the nation’s partisan politics. The Republican people’s party called the verdict a “triumph of justice,” while the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*), a group with roots in Islam, defended the scarves as a matter of individual rights. Consequently, many families sent their children abroad for university education. The Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdogan, said that he had two daughters and they were going to university in the United States because of the head scarf problem. On February 9, 2008, Turkey’s parliament approved a constitutional amendment that lifted the ban on Islamic headscarves in universities. Prior to this date, the public ban on headscarves officially extended to students on university campus throughout Turkey. Nevertheless, some faculty permitted students to wear head coverings in class. On June 5, 2008, Turkey’s constitutional Court annulled the parliament’s proposed amendment intended to lift the headscarf ban, ruling that removing the ban would run counter to official secularism. The last debates were solved in such a way: students can have headscarves but not their teachers. ([http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslim/portraits/turkey.html)

[muslim/portraits/turkey.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslim/portraits/turkey.html)).

In politics, it is important to recognize that although the Justice and Development Party (Turkish: *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*/AKP), the ruling party now, can be regarded as a Muslim government, it controls power within a secular state. Since the late 1990s, scholars have been examining the practices of secular states and challenging some of the established categories used to understand and asses secularism. There has been a widespread definition that secularism is the separation of religion from the policy and practices of the state. Recent scholars, however, finds this definition too narrow and argues that secularism seeks not so much to banish religion from the public domain, but to reshape the form it takes, the subjectivities it endorses, and the epistemological claims it can make (Ozgur, 2012, p.5-6.). This broader definition better captures the ways in which religion and state interact in Turkey.

The AKP’s politics and discourse are characterized by conservative democracy, which claims to combine the traditional lifestyle inspired by Islam with the Western liberal values that are based on the free market and globalization. The AKP’s orientation, which is based on the contradictory attitudes of Islam and the West, is quite different from traditional Islamic discourse. After the political victory of the AKP, the debates about the relationship between Islam and functions of Imam Hatip schools significantly increased. These schools, after the 1970s, became the sources of the grassroots of Islamist parties (Interview with Mehmet Toprak, September 25, 2014). There is ample evidence that, though they might not be attempting to turn Turkey into an Islamic state, members of the AKP are prepared and interested in evolving the country into a state that is more sympathetic to religiously conservative Turks.

Secularization in Turkey is a product of the interaction and influence of many diverse factors, such as pro-French policy is redundant of the sultans, intensive and massive campaigns of people who love to imitate the West and Western-educated elite to take over institutions and

Western values. Coupled with diplomatic pressure continuously from European countries since the beginning of the nineteenth century. And the most important among the causes of the change is the military defeats and insults suffered by soldiers of Osmaniyah in the eighteenth century and the nineteenth, the increase of Western countries in the fields of politics and economics and a sharp decline of empire Osmaniah (Al Attas, 1988, p. 9).

Turkish secularism is based on the radical Jacobin *laicism* that aimed to transform society through the power of the state and eliminate religion from the public sphere. The Jacobin faith "in primacy of politics and in ability of politics to reconstitute society" guided Mustafa Kemal and his associates (Yavus, 2014). The aim of the project was to modernize Turkey, give it a Western outlook, and make it compatible with modern, Western civilization, regardless of the difficulties this might cause for the populace (Bekim Agai, 2007, p.151).

Although Turkey was secularized at the official level, religion remained a strong force at the popular level. After 1950, some political leaders tried to benefit from popular attachment to religion by espousing support for programs and policies that appealed to the religiously inclined. Such efforts were opposed by most of the state elite, who believed that secularism was an essential principle of Kemalist ideology. This disinclination to appreciate religious values and beliefs gradually led to a polarization of society. The polarization became especially evident in the 1980s as a new generation of educated but religiously motivated local leaders emerged to challenge the dominance of the secularized political elite. These new leaders have been assertively proud of Turkey's Islamic heritage and generally have been successful at adapting familiar religious idioms to describe dissatisfaction with various government policies. By their own example of piety, prayer, and political activism, they have helped to spark a revival of Islamic observance in Turkey. By 1994 slogans promising that a return to Islam would cure economic ills and solve the problems of

bureaucratic inefficiencies had enough general appeal to enable avowed religious candidates to win mayoral elections in Istanbul and Ankara, the country's two largest cities ("Islam in Turkey", n.d.).

Turkey's "laïcité" does not call for a strict separation of religion and the state, but describes the state's stance as one of "active neutrality." Turkey's actions in relation to religion are carefully analyzed and evaluated through the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*). The duties of the Presidency of Religious Affairs are "to execute the works concerning the beliefs, worship, and ethics of Islam, to enlighten the public about their religion, and to administer the sacred worshipping places" ("Secularism in Turkey", n.d.). Religion is mentioned on the identity documents and there is an administration called "Presidency of Religious Affairs" or *Diyanet* which exploits Islam to legitimize sometimes State and manages 77,500 mosques. This state agency, established by Ataturk (1924), finances only Sunni Muslim worship ("Islam in Turkey", n.d.).

This fact indicates that secularization does not necessarily mean that religion loses its ability to influence political behavior. Among the many factors which affect political responses toward modernization, religion is undoubtedly an important one. Gibb says that we must not think of all Westernizers as secular minded and antireligious, even if it is true that a great number of the educated neglect the observances of religion (H.A.R Gibb, 1978, p. 51). In contemporary Turkey, the separation of Islam from the polity or secularism is not complete success. It is recognized the significance of Islam's role in Turkish history and it is an essential part of the individual's life of Turkish.

So far, Turkey is still a secular country. It may be the way to maintain Ataturk Reforms or to have similarities among countries in the European Union, but Islamic movements find a conducive position. The model of secularism in Turkey is different from that in Europe. Turkey recently led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the third term as

the Prime Minister since 2003 (“Recep Tayyip Erdogan”, n.d.), gives attention to Islam. Erdogan was a graduate of Imam Hatip School, and he is a Muslim and religious person. Therefore, he has a mission to support Islamic movements through many ways including policy of National Education System, especially related to Islamic schools. However, he is still careful to implement such a policy in order to run smoothly. He performs an integrated ideology of secular and Islam.

This analysis demonstrates how the fortunes of Imam Hatip schools have risen and fallen with the shifting fortunes of the Islamic political movement. Since the early 1920s, Imam Hatip schools have been at the center of a conflict between the secularist and Islamist forces in Turkey and have been debated within the larger context of social and political issues. Imam Hatip schools are unique institutions in the religious education experience of secular Turkey.

### 3. The Development of Imam Hatip Schools

Each historical period has the education relevant to it. As a mirror, education reflects all social changes. No essential changes are possible without deep changes in education. Traditional education, transmitted through generations, was spread for a long time in the early Turkish history. Traditions were preserved and developed in the theocratic Ottoman Empire, where Sultan was Caliph and civic and spiritual powers.

The Westernization and secularization processes among Turks started much earlier than Republic and Ataturk’s time, it was as early as in the late medieval Ottoman state. First of all the process was revealed in education which was crucial for economic and social changes. The secularization of education was set up on agenda; however the longstanding traditions of religious education were still very strong and viable (Giuli Alasania, Nani Gelovani, 2011).

According to the law issued on 3 March, 1924, 479 medresses were closed, and also religious courses were deleted from the curricula of the public schools. Such a situation lasted until 1949. Education and curriculum contents in medresses

did not go through important changes for centuries except some minor modifications, and thus, medresses in general remain solidly traditional institutions, which end up losing their connection with the modern period and its realities, and the needs of the society when entering the 19th century ( Seyfi Kenan, 2009,p. 521).

Additionally, the *medresses* established by old Turks are degenerated ruins, unable to be reformed in the light of modern academic mentality (Bekim Agai, 2007, p. 150). Syefi Kenan (2009) said that each school or any kind of educational organization emerges and survives based on satisfying certain needs and expectations of its own society. However, when they fail to meet those needs and demands, society will start searching for new models of schooling and education. This is what happened in the late of 19th century. There was no course for the teaching of religion available in the public school system for fourteen years between 1935 and 1948. Religious education moved to the private realm for a while, and the young generation received their religious education in informal settings, mostly from their parents at home, sometimes from imams, old medresses graduates, or scholars at mosques. There was also a plethora of religious books written by the prominent experts of religion in the period to teach Islam to the young generation as part of the activities of informal religious education during these silent years (Seyfi Kenan, 2009, p.532).

Moreover, it is important to note that the fourth article of the Law of Unification of Education required to open, at the same time *Imam Hatip mekteps* in 29 centers as secondary schools, and reestablish a Theological Faculty in *Darul Funun* in Istanbul. The new Republic offered a new modern of religious education at both secondary and higher level replacing the *medreses* education, but this attempt could not succeed well in the following years. The number of Imam Hatip schools decreased gradually, and by 1927, there were only two schools surviving, one in Istanbul and the other in Kutahya, due to a lack of students. Nonetheless, informal religious education continued under the supervision of



the Presidency of Religious Affairs, for instance, in limited number of Quranic Schools (*Darrul kurra*) to preserve the tradition of recitation and memorization of the Quran. This Quranic schools (*Kuran kursu*) still exist today in certain numbers for religious education under the supervision of the same Presidency, admitting students only after they have completed the eighth grade in compulsory primary schools (Seyfi Kenan, 2009, pp.530-531).

The first phase of Imam Hatip schools was brief and ill fated. Early Imam Hatip schools bore several elements that resembled *medreses*. The schools attracted students and teachers from shuttered *medreses* and taught from a curriculum that combined secular and Islamic subjects. During the 1923-1924 academic year, Imam Hatip schools enrolled 2,258 students and employed approximately 300 teachers. By the 1926-1927 academic year, the number of Imam Hatip school students had decreased to 278, and the number of teachers had decreased to 10. The schools were closed in the 1929-1930 academic year. The government closed Imam Hatip schools because the ministers themselves -not the students- had lost interest in them (Ozgur, 2012, p.35).

The government in power, which was Ataturk's Republican People's Party, decided to go ahead with a new announcement in September 1, 1947 amid diverse public opinions, and to initiate a formal religious education program again after a long period of official silence to train teachers of religion, qualified imams and hatips under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education.

Intellectuals and politicians from diverse political and ideological backgrounds debated in those years whether religious education violates the principles of secularism that should provide religious education if the state does not have it since Islam does not have a mosque bureaucracy or hierarchy like a church in the West, and how this education can be provided (Ozgur, 2012, p.533). Besides, intellectuals and politicians were also concerned about the fact that if the state does not provide religious instruction, then people would

get immersed in superstition and wrong beliefs, and fanaticism might spread all over the country. Ihsan Olgun, a representative in his speech in 1948 in the National Assembly, affirmed that most of the imams and hatips/preachers in the period were unqualified or poorly educated in religious matters (Ozgur, 2012, p.533).

In 1949, in a relatively weak response to grassroots demands, the government announced the opening of *Imam Hatip* courses (*Imam Hatip Kurslari*) in ten cities. The ten month program included topics such as Qur'an, Hadits, and Islamic History. Lessons were fifty minutes long and ran from nine o'clock in the morning till 12:50 in the afternoon. Their enrollment was limited, they graduated only fifty students after their first year. It is unlikely that the courses were perceived as a serious effort to satisfy the need for more religious functionaries ((Iren Ozgur, 2012). On 13, October, 1951 the government decided to open new religious schools. The first schools known as Imam Hatip schools (*Imam Hatip Liseleri*) started to function in Ankara, Adana, Istanbul, Isparta, Konya, and Kayseri in 1951-52. The total number of students at these schools was 876. Later the number of students at these schools increased parallel with the increasing number of schools (Alasania, Gelovani, 2011).

The historical analysis of the Imam Hatip schools in their reinstated form could be divided into four periods. They are (1) 1951 – 1973, a period of nascence and growth, (2) 1973 – 1997, a period of transformation and progress, (3) 1997 – 2002, a period of weakening and decline, and (4) 2002 to the present, a period of resurgence and renewal (Alasania, Gelovani, 2011).

The period from 1951 to 1973 witnessed the steady expansion of the Imam Hatip School system as different government made concession to Islamic sentiment in the country. The number of Imam Hatip schools increased from 7 to 72 and the number of students from 876 to 36,378. The increasing in the number of Imam Hatipp schools brought forth the opening of higher Islamic Institutes (*Yuksekk Islam Enstituler*) in the late

of 1950s. Between 1951 and 1973, Imam Hatip school students came predominantly from similar socio-economic background. The majority came from poor and lower-middle-class families who were either villagers or recent migrants to cities. Some stayed with relatives, while others stayed at dormitories or the courtyards of mosques (Alasania, Gelovani, 2011).

The period between 1973 and 1997 was one of growth and progress for the Imam Hatip schools. During this time, successive governments undertook initiatives to transform Imam Hatip schools from vocational schools into more mainstream educational institution. For the first time, the schools began to cater to both male and female students who wanted to pursue university degrees in nonreligious fields. In these two decades, the number of Imam Hatip schools and students increased significantly. The growth of Imam Hatip schools during this period reflected advancement in Islamist politics, (Alasania, Gelovani, 2011).

During the 1974-75 school year, the number of students attending to the Imam Hatip high schools grew to 48,895. This number subsequently grew to 200,300 by 1980-81. In addition, females gained the right of entry to Imam Hatip high schools in 1976. The proliferation of Imam Hatip high schools is often cited as the effect of the National Salvation Party's membership of a number of coalitions with Nationalist Front governments. In October 1972, the Islamists were allowed to form National Salvation Party (1972-1981). The party's goals were compulsory secondary education, including religion in curricula, and restoration of the caliphate. Their voters were lower-middle class. The party was against of the common market and exhorted for closer relations with Muslim countries. They believed that the Ottoman Empire was destroyed by Westernization process and alienation from Islam. Regardless of their anti-secular agenda after the elections in 1973, during the 70s Islamic parties were frequently in coalition with secularists. As the result, Islamists were promoted to the high positions and number of mosques, or Imam Hatip schools, courses of Qur'an or related personnel increased (Alasania,

Gelovani, 2011).

Two decisions of education and training have a positive effect on the future of the Imam Hatip schools. One decision (number 394, August 25, 1974) introduced Qur'an, Arabic Language, and religion courses into the Junior High school curriculum. The other decision (number 632, November 28, 1975) recognized the Imam Hatip school's equivalency to regular high school (Imam Hatip school diplomas) since then having read "Senior High and Imam Hatip schools". Consequently, Imam Hatip school graduates became eligible for admission to national universities. Since 1975, the Imam Hatip school graduates have successfully entered diverse majors in the national universities: Theology, Education, Economics, Public Administration, Engineering, Medicine, Law and Political Sciences (Alasania, Gelovani, 2011, pp. 35-50). In 1989, according to the University Exam Centre statistics, 22% of Imam Hatip Schools applicants were admitted to universities. In the 1980s and 1990s, Anatolian Imam Hatip schools placed many of their graduates into prestigious professional faculties in leading Turkish universities. During this decade, approximately 80 percent of the graduations from Kertal and Kadikoy Anatolian Imam Hatip schools in Istanbul and *Tevfix Ileri* Anatolian Imam Hatip school in Ankara received high score in the university entrance exams and enrolled in a wide range faculties. Moreover, the success of these Imam Hatip schools graduates is accountable for the enhancement in the appeal and standing of Imam Hatip schools in the eyes of many religiously conservative Turks. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the schools had influx of new students. In the 1982-1983 academic year, there were 374 Imam Hatip schools enrolling 219,931 student's. In 1996-1997 academic year there were 601 Imam Hatip schools enrolling 511,502 students. (Ozgur, 2012, p.50). The period from 1997 to 2002 was weakening and decline of Imam Hatip schools because of the escalating tensions between the Islamist Refah Partisi (RP). Also, it was due to the secularist forces in society leading to the 1997 political crisis. Since their rise to power,

members of Refah Partisi had encouraged several Islamic practices that had especially provoked the military, such as interest free banking, veiling in state institutions, and public prayers. As a direct result of the crisis, the number of Imam Hatip school students decreased from 511,502 to 77,392 between 1997 and 2002 (Ozgun, 2012, pp. 52-53).

Research indicates that between the years of 1993 and 2000, prospective students registered at Imam Hatip high schools primarily to receive religious tutoring alongside a more general education ("Imam Hatip School", n.d.). In addition, research shows enrolment at Imam Hatip high schools was based solely on the student's decision. The third proposed factor in the rise in popularity of Imam Hatip schools is the admission of female students in 1976. By 1998, almost 100,000 females attended Imam Hatip high schools, making up almost half of all students. This statistic is particularly revealed because women are not eligible to become either priests or ministers ("Imam Hatip School", n.d.). By 1995, 13,826 females compared to 29,103 males had graduated from Imam Hatip schools (Alasania, Gelovani, 2011, p.43).

However, the introduction of eight years of compulsory education in 1997 has seen a sudden decline in the popularity of Imam Hatip schools. In 1999, the reclassification of Imam Hatip schools as "vocational schools" meant that, although more options had been made available to graduates, attaining places at prestigious university courses became more difficult. By requiring that all eight compulsory years of schooling be spent under the same primary-school roof, middle schools were abolished. Children could not enter vocational schools (one of them is the Imam Hatip school) until the ninth grade (rather than the sixth, as before) (Andrew Finkel, 2012), and 2002 to the present, a period of resurgence and renewal of Imam Hatip schools. In this period Imam Hatip schools have been regaining the status, enrollment levels, and overall capabilities of previous decade. Although they lag behind the figures of the late 1990s, the enrollment figures have risen from 71,100 to 235,000 in 2011 (Ozgun, 2012, p.63).

Following the reforms of March 2012, which extended compulsory education to 12 years and allowed for Imam Hatip schools to be opened and "middle school" level (second term of four years) experts, warned that the possible increase in the number of Imam-Hatip schools was not in line with people's expectations, and described it as a "top-down" process. Critics noted that the new education system seemed to be a revenge being taken for Imam-Hatip schools which were shut down after 1997.

Like so many state institutions in Turkey, Imam Hatip schools (*Imam Hatip liselerli*) were initially established to further the top-down secular goals of the early republic, but have undergone a gradual redefinition ever since. They were opened in 1924, with the specific purpose of monopolizing religious education in the training prayer leaders (*imam*) and preachers (*hatips*). Today the Imam Hatip curriculum is around 40 percent religious, and 60 percent secular, that allowed Imam Hatip schools to begin functioning as general high schools, not simply as schools for the training of religious functionaries. The expansion of the Imam Hatip schools was accelerated after the 1980 military coup, which was led by generals who believed that ignorance about religion had made Turkish youth susceptible to radical groups of left and right. A "Turkish Islamic synthesis" was thus promoted by military authorities, which aim to utilize Islam as a socially unifying force ("Islamic Schools in", n.d.).

Imam Hatip schools (*Imam Hatip liselerli*) has developed and increased fivefold in the past 11 years, with the ruling party of Turkey, the AKP, showing that they want to get rid of secular system. The number of Imam Hatip schools located across the Turkey has risen from 450 to 708 in the 11 years that the AKP has been in power. It was being planned that in the education year of 2013-2014, by creating 100 new Imam Hatip schools, this figure will reach 808 ("AKP Replaces High Schools", n.d.). Kenan Cayir (2012), an assistant professor of Sociology at Istanbul's Bilgi University, says the schools can have a positive impact so that religion and modernity can be together. In addition, a survey

conducted by the Turkey İmam-Hatip Alumni Foundation (TİMAY), titled “Perception of İmam-Hatip High Schools and İmam-Hatip Students in Turkey,” was conducted between April 24 and May 18, 2012 with 2,689 people in 26 provinces. Most of the respondents were not İmam-Hatip graduates. The survey shows a majority of the respondents hold a positive perception of İmam Hatip students and graduates (<http://www.todayzaman.com/columnist/joost-lagendijk>.)

In the following time, the progress happened in policies on İmam Hatip schools were that: (1) the curriculum were not only contain Islamic teachings but also general knowledge, and (2) the graduates were allowed to take further study at any discipline of knowledge at any universities. This policy was welcomed by most Muslim community in Turkey and made İmam Hatip school developed very rapidly. Every city and town had an İmam Hatip school which had more students than its capacity. The students of these schools not only become *İmams* for the mosques, but also enter the various faculties of universities.

However, an objection to the free choice of İmam Hatip graduates came from TÜSIAD ([Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association](#)). According to their research conducted in 1988, approximately 32% of graduates of İmam Hatip schools picked faculties of law as their first choice in university entrance exams, proving more popular than religious based alternatives. The report concluded that due to fundamental differences in their upbringing, İmam Hatip graduates were rendered unsuitable for public office. Politicians tended not to agree with TÜSIAD's position. For example, the then Minister of National Education, Avni Akyol, criticized the report in terms of human rights, claiming such proposals undermined the principle of equal opportunity in education (“İmam Hatip School”, n.d.).

#### **4. The Transformation of İmam Hatip Schools**

A broad definition of “education” must be adopted when assessing how and by what

means students learn and grow intellectually and spiritually in an İmam Hatip school's environment. Monica Ringer, as İren Ozgur cited, defines education as the body of texts, ideas, and concepts transmitted in the educational system and argues that education “forms people's intellectual and cultural perspectives, their values systems, and their world views” (Ozgur, 2012, p.66). The courses at İmam Hatip school consists of vocational, cultural and scientific classes. While the ratio of professional or religious course is 40%, the ratio of cultural and scientific courses is 60%. This 60% ratio is composed of the same courses that are found on the curriculum of general high schools. Thus, the 40% religious or vocational courses are additional courses. Therefore education at İmam Hatip schools is an amalgam of two elements: formal curriculum and experience (Observation in Uskudar İmam Hatip schools, September, 25, 2014).

Formal curriculum denotes the subjects which teachers intentionally plan and teach to their students in organized and structured ways. Besides, it refers to what students learn or are exposed to in classrooms, assemblies, and planned school activities (Ozgur, 2012, p. 66). An İmam Hatip school education takes four years to complete, during which students take classes from a curriculum comprised of secular (*beleri*) or cultural and scientific course and religious (*dini*) or vocational courses. Secular courses, commonly known as “cultural and scientific classes,” include : History, The History of the Republic, National security, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, and Turkish Language, Foreign Languages (English, French, Germany), Geometry, Trigonometry, Geology, Astronomy and Space Science, Chemistry, Biology, Computer, Science and Technology, Physical Education, Music, Art and Literature. Although the majority of cultural and scientific courses are compulsory, some of them are optional. However, İmam Hatip school students have less exposure to the secular curriculum than students of general high schools. For example, during his/her third year, a general high school student takes

six hours of history per week, while an Imam Hatip school student takes only two hours (Interview with Mehmet Toprak, September, 22, 2014)

Courses on religion, commonly known as “vocational classes”, enable students to familiarize themselves with teachings and principles of Islam. The vocational classes include Qur’an, Arabic, Quranic Exegesis (*Tefsir*), Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fikih*), The Life of Muhammad, the History of Religions, Religious Rethoric and Islamic Theology (*Kelam*). The state-directed curriculum is designed to emphasize historical rather than contemporary forms of Islam and transmit information and learning that adheres to the secular values of the republic. However, the curriculum still allows teachers latitude to teach topics in a manner of their choice (Interview with Mehmet Toprak, September, 22, 2014).

There are eleven classes in the vocational (religion classes) curricula of Imam Hatip schools. A first year Imam Hatip school student takes twenty hours of vocational classes per week, a second year student takes ten, and third and fourth year students takes sixteen. Of these eleven classes, Arabic and Qur’an classes form of backbone. These two classes are the only classes that are required every semester, in each of the four years. Imam Hatip schools are the only schools that offer Arabic as a foreign language in their curricula. In the Arabic class I attended, a teacher introduced new grammar rules and demonstrated how they were applied in sentences. The students would then write then write these sentences in their notebooks and memorize them (Observation in Uskudar Imam Hatip School, September 25, 2014). Arabic class is designed to help students read and understand the Qur’an. The Arabic teacher told me that the class was meant to cultivate the idea that learning Arabic was an essential part of embracing Islam and becoming a religiously conscious individual. He said that the class was designed to strengthen the students’ ties with religion rather than having them engage with Arab culture.

The second element of Imam Hatip curricula is

“experience” as hidden curriculum. “Experience” refers to what students learn by simply being in school. The experience side of education includes everything that students learn and internalize informally or passively through their interactions with peers, teachers, and the powerful aesthetic and normative environment that surrounds them (Ozgun, 2012, p.67). Compared to the formal curriculum, the hidden curriculum is not written, does not have explicit objectives, and varies considerably from one school to another. The hidden curriculum is the most powerful influence in the classroom and the school generally. Alan Skelton defines the hidden curriculum as a set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behavior and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational process (Ozgun, 2012).

There are non-curricular (hidden) elements that, by adhering to Islamic customs and rituals, contribute to the formation of an Imam Hatip school experience. These elements refine and reinforce the religious consciousness that the schools, through their vocational curricula, seek to engender in the students. The first of these elements has to do with the schools’ social aesthetics. Social scientists study aesthetics choices to understand the cultural traditions, practices, and behaviors of societies. The social aesthetics concern the character itself and pervade the entire range of human culture. At Imam Hatip schools, social aesthetics can refer to the design of buildings and grounds as well as the use of space and clothing (Ozgun, 2012). Imam Hatip schools bear distinctive features that set them apart from other general high schools. A significant number of the Imam Hatip schools, like Uskudar, Kartal, and Umraniye Imam Hatip, have mosques in their courtyards. Others, like Esatpasa and Sariyer Imam Hatip, have mosque in their immediate vicinity. In addition, the more common practice is to build Imam Hatip schools next to existing mosque. Despite the common existence of mosques either nearby or on their campuses, most Imam Hatip schools also accommodate prayer rooms within their main buildings. There are two prayers rooms (*mescit*) in the schools, catering to

each gender separately.

It is arguable that mosques and prayer rooms (*mescit*) allow Imam Hatip school students to pray within a congregation and in so doing inculcate the importance of performing *namaz* alongside other believers. Most of the Imam Hatip school graduates I met said that they attended prayers at mosques.

Today Imam Hatip schools do not only produce Imams (leaders of prayer) and hatips (deliver *khutba* at every Friday sermon), but also Imam Hatip schools designed to cultivate religious sensibilities (*dini hassasiyetler*) in their students. The schools aim to heighten their students' awareness of faith and promote the notion that religion should play a substantial role in the life of individuals and society (Interview with Mehmet Toprak, September, 22, 2014).

Religious sensibilities can refer to a range of attitudes, values and practices that have Islamic underpinnings. It is a concept used both in speech and writing to indicate a level of religiosity that affects not only one's personal and spiritual outlook on life, but also his/her behaviors and actions toward others in society. Religious sensibilities include, but are not limited to, elements of faith and worship. To say that a person has religious sensibilities broadly means that he/she is religiously conscious. On the other hand, an individual's sensibility is always comprised of many discrete facets (Ozgun, 2012).

The schools integrate religious elements into their curricula through either elective religion courses or daily religious rituals. Turkish secularists often allege that Imam Hatip schools create ideologized and politically radicalized graduates and that the schools act as the primary agents in promoting religious sensibilities. There is, however, a difference between assuming that religious schools will graduate students who are more religious in their personal lives and more religiously conscious in their politics, and understanding that religious schools promote these results. A closer examination reveals that that while the schools endeavor to teach their

students to observe, uphold, and advocate Islamic norms and practices, they do not overtly promote political opposition or religious revivalism (Ozgun, 2012).

On the political socialization of Imam Hatip school students, an informant told me "Don't be afraid of people who know religion. Be afraid of people who don't, for it is they who become radical Islamists". (Interview with Mehmet Toprak, September 22, 2014). The schools do not promote radical Islamism, and inculcation of religious sensibilities can put the schools in a position to raise generation that can challenge the Turkish state's historically secular ideology. It is highly likely that the communities, that is external influences and variables around Imam Hatip schools in Turkey, are more moderate. Turks have a particular interpretation of and approach to Islam that is more "liberal" compared to their counterparts in other Muslim countries, like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.

The Imam Hatip schools have expanded so much that they are producing many more graduates than ever found, such as mosque personnel. In fact, many if not most of their graduates have no intention whatsoever to just become prayer leaders or preachers. The schools have turned into something different from what their founders intended: schools of preference and a channel of upward social mobility for the children of an important, conservative segment of the population. Many conservative, religious-minded parents in rural and small town (in central and eastern Turkey), sent their children after primary school to an Imam Hatip high school. This is the only school type where they would study Islamic subjects besides the general curriculum, and where the teachers were believed to impart traditional moral values, much like many parents in Europe would prefer a Christian over a neutral school. Many of those parents would, however, wish their children to pursue modern careers and find more prestigious and better paid jobs than that of a modest preacher (Interview with Seyfi

Kennan, September 15, 2014)

It should be noted that students who enroll in Imam Hatip schools, most of which are in the countryside, do not do so necessarily with intention of pursuing a religious career. Most of these schools are like ordinary schools where one gets the education to follow whatever profession one may wish to pursue later on. In many cases, these are the only schools available to parents in the countryside, so they send their children there. Of course, many parents also prefer to send their children to Imam Hatip schools because these schools offer instruction in the religion of Islam besides giving a basic education. It should also be noted that the buildings of Imam Hatip schools are constructed by local community effort, and only after their construction does the government hire teachers. This shows the real basis of the strength of Turkish Islam (Interview with Mehmet Toprak, September 25, 2014).

Today, only 15 percent of the school's graduates become religious functionaries, and the majority of Imam Hatip school graduates enter business, the practice of law, and politics, and many of them fill middle and high level posts in national and local government. The growing tendency of Imam Hatip school graduates to pursue careers outside of the religious realm have put the schools at the nexus of debates over Islamism, secularism and modernity in Turkey. The country's secular learning and religiously conservative communities possess contrasting perspectives about the schools' role in politics and society (Ozgur, 2012). But the most important is that Imam Hatip schools play an important role in Turkey's pious community and making the country more Islamic.

The fact that the president of Republic of Turkey and many leading figures of the AKP, the ruling party, are Imam Hatip school graduates is of profound significance because it reinforces the perception that they are good Muslims and highlights the schools as successful models for Islamic education. Scholars and journalists have named Imam Hatip schools as potential building blocks for an international network of "moderate"

Islamic educational instructions. They have noted how the schools equip students for entry into a wide range of professions in international markets and regional politics.

Ziauddin Sardar, a contemporary Muslim scholar, argued that the establishment of Imam Hatip schools, where Islamic studies are combined with modern scientific thought, and the emergence of a contemporary school of young intellectuals, who are concerned with issues of justice and equity, science and values (the epistemological basis of Muslim civilization and ecological and environmental problems) is an indication that in the next decade Turkey will become intellectually the most exciting country in the Muslim world. (<http://www.salam.co.uk/knowledge/inquiry3.php>).

The transformation of Imam Hatip schools, from only vocational school to general and vocational high school is powerfully influenced by the ruling politics party. Currently, AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*) or Justice and Development Party is the ruling party in Turkey with Recep Tayib Erdogan as the president of Turkey at present. He was a student of Imam Hatip school, called as *Imam Hatipli*. AKP and Erdogan had good policy for the advancement of Imam Hatip schools. The experience of what can be described as an intriguing and dynamic relationship between politics and religious education since the birth of Republic achieved major progress, despite its up and down, during the last 80 years.

## D. CONCLUSION

The development of Imam Hatip schools is very powerful and influenced by the development of social and political condition of Turkey. Therefore, the existence of Imam Hatip schools is determined by and very depending on the ruling party in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP: *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*).

State of Turkey (Ministry of National Education) grants permission for operation of Imam Hatip Schools (Turkish: *Imam Hatip Lisesi*), appoints their teachers, and designs their

curricula. Imam Hatip Schools are Islamic Schools that provide the most prominent exception to the rule of secular education in Turkey. The courses at Imam Hatip schools consist of vocational, cultural and scientific classes. While the ratio of professional or religious course is 40%, the ratio of cultural and scientific courses is 60%. This 60% ratio is composed of the same courses that are found on the curriculum of general high schools. Thus, the 40% religious or vocational courses are additional courses. Therefore, education at Imam Hatip schools is an amalgam of two elements: formal curriculum and hidden curriculum (experience). The hidden curriculum is the most powerful influence in the classroom and the school generally. The hidden curriculum as a set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behavior and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational process.

The majority of Imam Hatip School students come from families who live and conduct their relations in accordance with Islamic norms and principles. Many conservative, religious-minded parents in rural and small town (in central and eastern Turkey) sent their children after primary school to an Imam Hatip High school, because this is the only school type where they would study Islamic subjects besides the general curriculum and where the teachers were believed to impart traditional moral values. Many of those parents would, however, wish their children to pursue modern careers and find more prestigious and better paid jobs than that of a modest preacher.

Today Imam Hatip schools do not only produce Imams (leader of prayer) and hatips (deliver *khutba* at Friday sermon), but also design to cultivate religious sensibilities in their students. The schools aim to heighten their students awareness of faith and promote the notion that religion should play a substantial role in the life of individuals and society. The most important is that Imam Hatip schools play an important role in Turkey's pious community and making the country more Islamic.

In the following time, the progress happened in

policies on Imam Hatip schools: (1) the curriculum were not only contain Islamic teachings but also general knowledge, and (2) the graduates were allowed to take further study at any discipline of knowledge at any universities. This policy was welcome by most Muslim community in Turkey and made Imam Hatip Schools developed very rapidly. Every city and town had an Imam Hatip school that had more students than its capacity.

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