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Kemalism and the [sic] Islam: Legitimizing Discrimination Against Veiled Students in Turkish Daily Newspapers. By Mirsad Turanović. Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo – Faculty of Philosophy and Center for Advanced Studies, 2025. Pp. 190. ISBN 978-9926-491-53-6; 978-9926-555-27-6.

In *Kemalism and the [sic] Islam*, Mirsad Turanović examines how Kemalist secularism has defined the place of religion in Turkey's public sphere, and how this definition has been discursively mobilised to legitimise discrimination against veiled students. Using the early Republican reforms as historical background, Turanović argues that Kemalist ideology was not produced solely through legal regulations, but also via discursive practices that classified and represented social actors in particular ways. The book analyses narratives of modernity, women's rights, and 'reactionism' surrounding the headscarf in Turkish newspapers such as *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Radikal*, and *Sabah* during the 1990s.

Rather than examining the reforms themselves, the book focuses on how these reforms and legal restrictions were represented in public discourse as natural, progressive, and inevitable. From this perspective, Kemalist secularism appears as both a state policy and a normative framework that distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate forms of religiosity. The headscarf debate became the most visible and critical site of inquiry in which this framework was articulated. Discrimination emerged less through explicit prohibitions than through representations of social actors, strategies of naming, and discursive mechanisms of legitimation. By highlighting these processes, the book contributes to the growing literature on Kemalism, secularism, and the headscarf, and gives a nuanced account of the discursive construction of secularism in Turkey.

The first two chapters establish the book's methodological foundation. Turanović's conceptual framework lies in Critical Discourse Analysis, and draws on Systemic Functional Linguistics, the tradition of critical linguistics, and Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse. His discussion introduces key analytical categories, such as structural oppositions, transitivity, grammatical

metaphor, and the representation of social actors, which guide the empirical analysis of Kemalist discourse in historical narratives and newspaper coverage. The substantial space devoted to theoretical discussion occasionally delays the transition to the empirical chapters, although the later analysis shows an active application of these analytical categories.

In the third chapter, Turanović situates the historical construction of Kemalist secularism at the level of socio-cultural practice in Fairclough's framework. Rather than presenting early Republican reforms as a chronological list of measures, he interprets them as narratives that produce political legitimacy (pp. 57–58). The chapter shows how Kemalist discourse delegitimised the Ottoman past through narratives of 'backwardness' and 'decline', transmitted to new generations through education and school textbooks. Although the 'rupture' thesis in the literature on Turkish modernisation has been widely discussed, Turanović shows how this narrative is produced through specific discursive mechanisms, and connects this historical framework to the later media and headscarf analyses.

One of the chapter's most useful contributions is Turanović's conceptualisation of Kemalist religious policy in a three-stage framework: affirmation (1919–1923), transformation (1923–1933), and negation (1933–1938). This scheme shows that secularisation unfolded gradually, rather than through a single rupture. Turanović extends the analysis beyond institutional reforms to include cultural interventions in everyday life, such as the hat and alphabet reforms and the closure of dervish lodges. These examples highlight the disciplinary and symbolic dimensions of secularisation. The chapter also places Kemalist secularism in a broader discourse that equates modernisation with Westernisation, and makes orientalist assumptions about Islam.

Parts of the chapter move beyond the descriptive distance associated with discourse analysis to adopt a more explicitly evaluative tone. Some passages frame certain reforms in ideological terms, taking a strong critical stance against the Kemalist narrative. While this interpretation aligns with the chapter's broader analysis of discursive strategies of legitimation, it also risks simplifying the diversity of motivations behind such policies. The chapter is therefore most persuasive when it focuses less on what happened and more on how these policies were discursively legitimised, and presented as natural or inevitable. This articulation prepares the ground for the book's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims, which becomes more explicit in the subsequent analyses.

The fourth chapter moves the headscarf issue beyond a purely legal or administrative debate to frame it within broader discursive power relations. Turanović analyses the headscarf not as a simple question of policy, but through the meanings produced around it. Drawing on critical analysis of news reports

and opinion columns in *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Radikal*, and *Sabah* during the 1998 university protests, the chapter shows how media discourse framed the protests as threats to the regime rather than claims for rights. The repeated use of expressions associated with 'reactionary Islam' (*irtica*) and similar alarmist references, including invocations of 'Sharia' and verbs such as 'to destroy' and 'to occupy,' helped construct the protests as dangerous to the secular order (pp. 123–126). Although the newspapers differ in tone, they operate within a shared secularist framework that interprets the headscarf issue through a similar modern discourse.

One of the chapter's strengths is its combined analysis of newspaper headlines, photographs, visual representations, and lexical choices. This approach shows that delegitimation does not only take the form of openly hostile expressions, but can manifest in more subtle forms of representation. In particular, the chapter demonstrates how media discourse constructed a hierarchical opposition between the 'modern woman' (*çağdaş kadın*) and the 'veiled woman' (*türbanlı kadın*), turning women's bodies into ideological markers (pp. 141–147). In this framework, the female body is a symbolic site through which secular modernity is articulated.

Nevertheless, the chapter's interpretive framework occasionally takes on a holistic character. Although stylistic differences between the newspapers are acknowledged, much of this diversity is ultimately interpreted within a shared Kemalist logic. Because the analysis focuses on this secular-centred media sphere, the ways in which Islamist or conservative newspapers framed the headscarf debate are outside its scope. While this focus is understandable for revealing the operation of hegemonic discourse, a broader engagement with these competing voices might have illustrated more clearly the contested nature of the discursive field.

Despite these limitations, the chapter convincingly shows how secularism is reproduced not only through state policies but also through the everyday language of the media, where it operates as a form of cultural common sense. The opposition between the modern and veiled woman, and the framing of the headscarf as a problem in the public sphere, are not merely patterns tied to a specific historical moment. Although there is no longer a formal ban on the headscarf in Turkey, more subtle forms of exclusion and suspicion directed at veiled women continue to appear in academia, the labour market, and public discourse. The chapter therefore provides a useful framework for understanding ongoing tensions between secularism and religious visibility in contemporary Turkey.

Overall, *Kemalism and the [sic] Islam* makes an important contribution to debates on secularism, religious visibility, and media discourse in modern Turkey. It is a particularly useful resource for scholars of Turkish modernisation, secularism and religion, media discourse, and the politics of veiling, and provides a clear methodological example for researchers interested in applying critical discourse analysis to questions of ideology and representation.

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