

## CHAPTER IV

### KEMAL ATATURK'S APPROACH TO NATION-BUILDING

#### 4.1 Introduction

Kemal Ataturk's quest for the modernization of the new Turkish nation as we have seen, was envisioned in very secular and western terms. The secularization process involved in transforming an essentially traditional, oriental and despotic society into a western-type social, cultural and economic value system, with specifically European elements, had very practical behavioral and cultural difficulties. The impetus to change had to come from the top. It had to be imposed upon a population that was largely indifferent, hesitant and unwilling to change despite two prior centuries of attempts at reforms. Ataturk's reforms had to be imposed through legislation, sheer political will and in many instances, force. The task of changing 'the Turkish people's outlook from inward-looking, passive and one shaped by collective religious and institutional values to active, outward-looking and more realistic in terms of the economic and materialistic values of the modern world'<sup>201</sup> needed an approach that would reform a nation's mindset. One of the ways in which he sought to do this was through the educational system. At the

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<sup>201</sup> Osman Okyar, 'Ataturk's Quest for Modernism' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974) p. 50.

same time, Atatürk's own uncompromising determination to bring about change set him to fall back on the recourse that he knew best, the military.

#### 4.2 Education – Agent of Secularization

The secularization of education constituted a major and important, even crucial, element in the modernization of the new Republic. Herein perhaps lay the genius of Kemal Atatürk. He knew he could not modernize a nation if its people were illiterate. Educational institutions were, as they are everywhere, perhaps the most important and effective agent in political and cultural socialization. Secularization of the whole educational process would also ensure the secularization of the socio-political system.<sup>202</sup> The educational system could be used to propagate the ideology of the Kemalist center as well as to recruit the non-urban population into the elite stratum, thereby strengthening its ties with them.<sup>203</sup>

In line with his other reforms, his approach towards educational reforms stayed closely to his two guiding secular principles: break from the past and Westernization. His secularization program was aimed at eliminating the influence of the clergy, attacking their obscurantism and the people's dependence on the mysticism of the dervishes. He wanted to create an environment in which the individual could follow his religious belief without having to embrace predetermined and rigid dogmas. To him education should produce free-thinking

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<sup>202</sup> Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981) p. 50.

people capable of playing a successful and contributory role in economic life.<sup>204</sup> More importantly, he wanted education to be more universal and more egalitarian. This was to ensure minimal standards of education – that is, literacy and the basic use of numbers to equip a modern citizen for his economic, social and political role in society.

In Ottoman Turkey, the madrassahs or religious schools were the traditional channels of education. These schools taught Islamic law and theology. Instruction was by rote. Schools taught Arabic and Persian, not Turkish. Turkish was the language of the common people. There was no official language called Turkish.<sup>205</sup> The ulama themselves were schooled in classical Arabic and opposed any attempts to translate the Koran into Turkish or printing it, thus limiting its accessibility to the common people. The Arabic and Persian letters were also unsuitable for writing Turkish and hence, a major contributory factor to the country's low literacy rate.<sup>206</sup> The disparity in the use of language created a divide between the ulama and the common people, rendering the former who regarded themselves as learned guardians, administrators and teachers of the traditional school system, frozen in their own world, oblivious to the material world outside.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Udo steinbach, 'The Impact of Ataturk on Turkey's Political Culture since World War II' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 85.

<sup>204</sup> Andrew Mango, *Ataturk* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1999) p. 404.

<sup>205</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964) p. 192.

<sup>206</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 80.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p.193.

Established in the 18th century to keep up with modern warfare, the navy and the military were the two institutions which provided a modern and secular education. Their curriculum, by necessity, included mathematics, geography, French and history, among other military subjects such as strategy and tactics. The nobles and the rich could also send their children to foreign privately-run secular schools. There were also secular schools run by Christian missionaries. Ziya Gokkap, the Turkish poet and patriot, commented that in Turkey there were three layers of people differing from each other by civilization and education: the common people, the men educated in madrassahs, and the men educated in modern, secular schools. The result was that one portion of the nation was living in an ancient, another in a medieval, and a third in a modern age.<sup>208</sup> A common education was the key to unifying this threefold civilization.

However, education was among the many westernizing reforms carried out throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and intensified during the Tanzimat that resulted in modern, secular schools conducted alongside traditional religious schools. A Ministry of Education had been set up for this purpose in as early as 1857. These new schools were primarily aimed at preparing young men for absorption into the military and the Ottoman bureaucracy. The dichotomy between these secular and traditional schools often provoked hostility from religious teachers.<sup>209</sup> Kemal Ataturk himself was a product of the newly opened secular schools, progressing

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<sup>208</sup> Frederick W. Frey, 'Education in Turkey' in Robert E. Ward & Dankwart A. Rustow (eds) *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (Princeton University Press, 1964) p. 209.

<sup>209</sup> Michael Winter, 'The Modernization of Education in Turkey' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 184.



later on to western-type military academies. The result of these reforms ended in handing increasing power to those with a modern secular education over the rest.

Recognizing its role in nation-building, Kemal Ataturk viewed educational reforms as a necessity and priority. In 1924 the Law for the Unification of Instruction laid the foundation for the establishment of a unified, modern, secular, egalitarian and national educational system. This was important, especially in a country where the identity was Islamic rather than national and which was fragmented into numerous regional, tribal, racial and linguistic units.<sup>210</sup> The law unified the school system, placing all educational institutions, including private foreign schools, in a comprehensive plan towards secularization under the Ministry of Education. The madrassahs were closed and all religious propaganda and symbols were prohibited. Instruction was in Turkish, not Arabic or Persian. All religious instructions were to be conducted at home or privately. In one bold stroke, Kemal Ataturk had cut off the ulama's hold in the sphere of public education.<sup>211</sup>

In 1928, the Arabic script was outlawed and the western Latin script was adopted. The effect was as dramatic as the decision was bold. Overnight a whole nation became 'illiterate'.<sup>212</sup> To Ataturk, burying the old Arabic script and learning a new one was perhaps a symbol of burying the past and re-orientating the new

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>211</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) p. 408.

<sup>212</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 80.

generation of Turks towards a new, modern and western future.<sup>213</sup> The Arabic script had always been the revered script as it was the language in which the Koran was revealed. It was the external and visible sign that distinguished a Muslim from a non-Muslim. It was however a difficult language to learn and unsuitable for printing or writing Turkish. Thus, it was inadequate as a medium of instruction and as a disseminator of knowledge and modern ideas. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intellectuals and writers had already expressed the necessity to reform the script into a simpler form. Namik Kamil, the Turkish poet and writer had as early as 1878, mentioned that the possibility of writing Turkish in the Latin script should be considered.<sup>214</sup> This need was given further impetus during the Young Turks movement when they had to devise a simple and quick means of communication across the country.

With characteristic speed, a commission completed the adaptation of the new Latin alphabets in six weeks and Ataturk took it upon himself personally to present the new 'Turkish script' to the nation. He declared the nation 'a classroom' and he took on the role of 'headmaster'.<sup>215</sup> The objective was to create a literate population out of those who could not read or write at all to those who could only do so in the old script. The gap that previously divided the learned and the illiterate Turks was closed with one common denominator for both the written and the spoken language. Elementary education became free and compulsory for both boys and girls. This linguistic and cultural changeover remain perhaps one of the most valuable monuments of Ataturk's reforms. For the first time, most Turks learnt to

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<sup>213</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 427.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 422.

read and write – in the Latin script.<sup>216</sup> Education for girls was a first step towards the early modernization and emancipation of Turkish women. In fact, women in Ottoman Turkey occupied a very low position in society, if any at all.

Overall, within a decade of Ataturk's push to spread universal education, the literacy rate had doubled,<sup>217</sup> mainly in the cities and urban areas. However, the outlying rural areas continued to lag behind due to young and inexperienced teachers isolated against the resistance and the influence of powerful religious and village leaders.<sup>218</sup> This problem was later somewhat alleviated by training and employing returning soldiers to be teachers in their own villages. The establishment of Village Institutes to train village youths locally as teachers achieved more success as agents of change of the regime. It was through these teachers and the network of the school system that the ideals and aims of the Kemalist regime could be disseminated in the early days of the republic, making the uniform secularization of education throughout the nation possible.<sup>219</sup>

To be fair it should be noted that Ataturk never aimed at a ban or a complete prohibition of religious instruction. In keeping with his modernization plans, his intention was to keep education secular, that is to separate public education from religion which he considered a private and individual domain; and

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<sup>215</sup> Lord Kinross, *Ataturk* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965) p. 504-505.

<sup>216</sup> Andrew Mango, *Ataturk* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1999) p. 466.

<sup>217</sup> Stanford J. and Ezel K., Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, 1808 – 1975. Vol. II.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 386.

<sup>218</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 82.

<sup>219</sup> Frederick W. Frey, 'Education in Turkey' in Robert E. Ward & Dankwart A. Rustow (eds) *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, p. 221.

also to keep out the interference of the ulama and religious leaders from national public education. In fact, when the Grand National Assembly formulated the goals of Turkish education as 'religious and national', in that order, the members of the Assembly were mainly traditionalists and many members of the curriculum committee were religious leaders.<sup>220</sup> Article 4 of the Law for the Unification of Instruction also provided for the training of religious functionaries such as prayer leaders and preachers through the establishment of special religious training schools whose aims were to train religious teachers who would be 'enlightened' and loyal to the Republic and its secular goals.<sup>221</sup> A Faculty of Theology was opened at Istanbul University in 1924 to cater for higher religious education but it was closed later due to a lack of students. However, a similar faculty at Ankara University has been operating since 1949.

Ataturk has often been blamed for the claim that an entire generation of young Turks was deprived of an education in the traditional values of their religion.<sup>222</sup> In truth, he was merely building and consolidating on the foundation already laid earlier as the basic structure of a progressively modern educational system from the 19<sup>th</sup> century was retained.<sup>223</sup> Nevertheless, Ataturk's approach to nation-building through the modernization and secularization of the educational system remains one of his most important reforms. The need for the reconciliation

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<sup>220</sup> Michael Winter in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 185.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>222</sup> Stanford J. and Ezel K., Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire. Vol. II.*, p. 388.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 386.

of nationalism and spirituality was to come gradually and eventually. At that time, the situation needed that specific approach.

#### 4.3 The Military – Modernizer and Tool of Repression

The role of the military in nation-building cannot be ignored in any study of modern Turkey. It played a key and instrumental part in the founding of the Turkish Republic.<sup>224</sup> In fact, nation-building and the modernization of Turkey occurred for the most part under the auspices of the military.<sup>225</sup> The idea of revolution itself had grown from its seed days in the CUP where army officers were the founders of the secret society and the prime movers in the movement for internal reforms and liberation from imperialistic powers. Ataturk himself was a product of the Turkish military tradition and had used the existing military organization to rally the forces and the masses behind him to gain independence for the nation.

Historically, the soldier had always been Turkey's foremost modernizer, beginning from the founding of the New Army, under the Nizam-i Cedid edicts of Selim III in 1793. In fact, the military is the oldest surviving social institution from the Ottoman traditionalist era. Military service had always been regarded as the noblest service and a professional soldier was highly respected. This tradition stems

<sup>224</sup> George S. Harris, 'The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics', *The Middle East Journal* Vol. XIX, No. 1 & 2, 1965.

<sup>225</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, 'Political Modernization and the Turkish Military Tradition' in Robert E. Ward & Dankwart A. Rustow (eds) *Political Modernization of Japan and Turkey*, p. 352.

from the heritage of the early Turkish frontier warrior in Central Asia, and the 'ghazi' spirit that founded the Ottoman Empire in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It occupied the highest position among the four pillars or estates in the social hierarchy of traditional Ottoman society: the military, the learned religious men, the merchants and the peasants.<sup>226</sup>

Modernization, a necessity to shore up the outdated Ottoman military, had begun tentatively, and not with acceptance, but with initial rejection of modern Europe. The modernization sequence was logical. The desired enhanced army needed officers schooled in mathematics, French, geography, history, strategy and tactics, including modern medicine. Thus, the reigns of Selim III, Mahmud II and Abdulmecit saw the setting up of European-styled officers' training schools: a naval school, an artillery school, a military medical school, an army officers' school and later, a general staff college. These, together with civilian schools set up later, were instrumental in producing a new elite of officers, officials and intelligentsia who, in the process of being modernized, became modernizing agents themselves. These military reforms were the starting points in Turkey's political modernization.<sup>227</sup>

Army careers, combining the advantages of a modern Western education and merit advancement, were also avenues for employment and upward social

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<sup>226</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, 'The Military and Politics in Turkey, 1960 - 64', *American Historical Review* Vol. LXXBV, 1970, p. 1656.

<sup>227</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, 'Political Modernization and The Turkish Military Tradition' in Robert E. Ward & Dankwart A. Rustow (eds) *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, p. 359.

mobility for young men of humble origins. The discipline of common residence and rigorous training bred a cohesiveness and 'esprit de corps' among cadets within the officers' corps which later developed into the necessary prerequisite for political organization, that of the first secret political society, the CUP.<sup>228</sup>

The role of the military in nation-building was witnessed in 1908 when the CUP was instrumental in forcing the sultan to restore the constitution that was shelved in 1876. Again, in 1919 when the situation called for strong national leadership, the military under Ataturk took on the role. It was ideally suited as it could garner the speed, secrecy, cohesion and physical force for effective nationalist action against the Allies and the sultan. Among all the agencies of leadership available then, only the army had the unity and the capability to provide that leadership. "If the army does not do the job, who will?"<sup>229</sup> aptly described the situation. The remark underscores the perception the military has of its role in society: its duty to the state, the responsibility that is identified with a professional group, as well as its attitude and orientation towards modernity.<sup>230</sup> From then on, the process of modernizing the new nation which had begun as an order from the rulers became a mission for the new social class of military men.

Ataturk's vision of a modern nation was aimed at freeing the Turks from the social, cultural and psychological constraints of the Ottoman Islamic system and worldview. His drive to institute such changes often had to be carried out through

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 372.

radical reforms in order to achieve the transformation desired. To him, if the process of modernization was retarded by the hostility and indifference of a section of the population, then a choice had to be made between political freedom and the desired rapid social, cultural and economic change. On that basis, Ataturk often resorted to force, through the military, to ensure that the objectives of his modernization plans were achieved.<sup>231</sup>

More importantly, his vision for the military was that it should be more than just a defender of the country. It was to become his power base and the guardian of his secular plans and ideals.<sup>232</sup> It was to be loyal to him and the Republic, and the fountainhead of the nation's progressive changes. He expected the military to be the institution for the spread of his reforms and thus, it became, as it was already, the first source of indoctrination of radical social reforms.<sup>233</sup>

One of the instruments that enabled him to use force to institute change and to overcome resistance or opposition was the passing of the Law for the Maintenance of Public Order. The law which was to be enforced through Independence Tribunals gave the government wide dictatorial powers. It gave the government the right to forbid and suppress any organization, any attempt, or any publication which might encourage 'reaction and rebellion'.<sup>234</sup> The Independence Tribunals would replace the courts, empowering them to carry out death sentences

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<sup>230</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *The Military and Politics in Turkey, 1960-64*, p. 1655.

<sup>231</sup> Andrew Mango, *Ataturk*, p. 371.

<sup>232</sup> George S. Harris, *The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics*, p. 55.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.



instantly without the approval of the Grand National Assembly. Despite opposition that it was unconstitutional and against the rights of man, the law was justified on the grounds that it was necessary for the order and security of the nation and for national reforms to be carried out.<sup>235</sup>

In 1925, the military was induced to repress Kurdish rebellion and opposition to Ataturk's reforms. The Kurds were a minority ethnic group fighting for an independent state of their own in the north. Their rebellion arose from a combination of two forces: Kurdish nationalism and a religious reaction to Ataturk's secular reforms.<sup>236</sup> Unable to achieve independence from the Turkish Republic and in opposition to the 'ungodly' policies of the secular government, they organized a mutiny of Kurdish troops in the Turkish army and a rebellion among some of their tribes led by their leader, Sheikh Said, demanding for the restoration of the caliphate, the shari'ah and the rescinding of other secular reforms. Strategically planned, the army rounded up the rebels and invoked the Independence Tribunal under the Law for the Maintenance of Public Order that had been passed during the revolt. Sheikh Said and forty of his supporters were found guilty and subsequently hanged as traitors of the Republic. Ataturk defended the action, 'Opposition in this country means revolution.'<sup>237</sup> He exhibited the same resolute action in handling any opposition in another occasion. A young soldier who had fired blank shots in an attempt to restrain the frenzy of a group of

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<sup>234</sup> Lord Kinross, *Ataturk*, p. 454.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 455.

<sup>236</sup> A. L. Macfie, *Ataturk* (Longman Group UK Limited, 1994) p. 160.

dervishes returning from a pilgrimage at a town near Izmir was shot by the dervish leader and beheaded. His head was stuck on a pole and paraded through the streets amidst chanting and demands for the return of the caliphate, the fez, the Arabic script and the overthrow of the secular government. The army was instantly despatched, martial law enforced and more than a hundred arrests made, including innocent villagers. Condemned by the military court for inciting sedition, they were all immediately hanged. The swiftness and the severity in which punitive action was taken signaled a clear message that he would not tolerate nor hesitate to use force to deal with any opposition<sup>238</sup> that would hinder his plans.

He was equally ruthless in dealing with the plotters of his assassination.<sup>239</sup> More than a hundred people were arrested. In the show trials that followed, little attempt was made to investigate the motive of the conspiracy. Instead, former CUP members, some of whom were his close associates, and opposition leaders became targets of accusations that ranged from encouraging revolt, opposing the 'hat law' and profiteering from war, to fighting on the side of the enemy during the First World War. Ataturk personally signed the warrants sentencing some of them to be hanged. Some were exiled. Many fled overseas. The message of the trials was that opposition was not to be tolerated. However, he was less harsh when suppressing

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<sup>237</sup> Lord Kinross, *Ataturk*, p. 457.

<sup>238</sup> A. L. Macfie, *Ataturk*, p. 171.

<sup>239</sup> The plotters had hired professional criminals to kill Ataturk. The plan was to waylay him on the road on a trip to Izmir. Ataturk, possibly forewarned, arrived late, foiling the plan. The killers and the plotters were rounded up. The motive of the planned murder was never known as there was no investigation but generally, it was suspected to be political rivalry, revenge and hatred for the increasingly autocratic President. See Macfie. p. 161.

the press and journalists whom he jailed but later released. Newspapers were closed and those who survived closure were unable to write freely.<sup>240</sup>

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In nation-building, consensus of aims is essential for success. In many developing or new nations the school system provides a channel for inducing this important consensus,<sup>241</sup> especially among the upcoming generations. Apart from disseminating the ideals of the center, education also has intrinsic value. It ensures the minimal literacy levels that is vital for development and progress. In the case of Ottoman Turkey, society was split between the educated 'ruling elite' and the uneducated peasant masses. Ataturk used the school system and the provision of a comprehensive secular and modern school system to his advantage and as a platform from which he could propel the nation towards greater unity and modernization. In fact, it has been noted that the success of 'westernization' and 'modernization' in Turkey has been largely attributed to the history of secular education.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Lord Kinross, *Ataturk*, p. 457.

<sup>241</sup> Frederick W. Frey, 'Education in Turkey' in Robert E. Ward & Dankwart A. Rustow (eds) in *The Political Modernization of Japan and Turkey*, p. 206.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

## CHAPTER V

### KEMALISM AND REACTION TO ITS REFORMS

#### 5. I Introduction

Kemalism is often viewed as one of the first modernizing ideologies of the developing world. It is seen as a rationalization of a nation's determination to modernize and as its commitment to social transformation.<sup>243</sup> A study of Kemal Ataturk and his reforms to rebuild and modernize Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire would not be complete without an examination of Kemalism or the six Kemalist principles upon which he and his supporters shaped the new Turkish regime. These six principles: republicanism, nationalism, populism, revolutionism, etatism and secularism are enshrined as six arrows on the emblem of the Kemalist Republican Peoples' Party. Hence, they are commonly referred to as the Six Arrows of Kemalism.

It is equally important to note the general reaction to Ataturk's nation-building reforms. Reaction, or more specifically, opposition, came principally from two groups: the Islamists and conservatives, and from within the corps of the

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<sup>243</sup> Udo Steinbach, 'The Impact of Ataturk on Turkey's Political Culture' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), p. 78.

military from which Ataturk himself came. This chapter will elaborate on Kemalism as represented by these six Kemalist principles and also highlight the general reaction to Ataturk's regime.

## 5.2 The Six Arrows of Kemalism

The aim of Kemalism was to transform Turkey into a modern society. It viewed its approach towards modernism and progress as rational and scientific.<sup>244</sup> However, the fact that the six Kemalist principles were determined only after the revolution had taken place has often been used to support the argument that Ataturk never really had a systematic plan or a pre-determined set of ideas or thoughts to guide his actions.<sup>245</sup> Rather, he responded to the needs and circumstances of the situations he confronted and solved the problems of nation-building as they arose. Hence, they were viewed as practical political solutions to change and to develop the new nation.<sup>246</sup> Therefore, Kemalism is not seen as a doctrine or political manifesto as such.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ismet Giritli, 'Kemalism as an Ideology of Modernization' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 251.

<sup>245</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, 'The Principles of Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk. Founder of a Modern State* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981) p. 12.

<sup>246</sup> Paul Dumont, 'The Origins of Kemalist Ideology' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 25.

<sup>247</sup> Udo Steinbach, 'The Impact of Ataturk on Turkey's Political Culture' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 78.

It was however, undeniably a determined and resolute decision to break away from the past.<sup>248</sup> Paradoxically, it was enabled and facilitated by, and built upon the foundation of prior westernizing reforms initiated in the prior two centuries. Indeed, Kemalism has often been claimed to be an extension of the import of alien values and institutions from the west into an Islamic nation rich in its own values and traditions.<sup>249</sup>

### 5.2.1 Republicanism

Republicanism is essentially a political system in which the head of state is not a monarch. In modern times, this head is usually a president. In such a system, the ultimate political power lies with the citizens who are entitled to vote for the political officers or representatives who are responsible to them.<sup>250</sup> The Turkish term, 'cumhuriyet' for 'republic' is of Arabic origin and was used to describe the forms of governments of foreign states such as the French Republic. The Kemalist regime was not the first to advocate such a political idea or to use the term politically in Turkey.

Mustafa Resit Pasa, often called the father of Ottoman reforms, had frequently spoken of and had called for such a constitutional regime but was

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<sup>248</sup> Ali Kazancigil, 'The Ottoman-Turkish State and Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk. Founder of a Modern State*, p. 37.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>250</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976) p. 1050.

criticized for wanting to subvert the sultan's powers.<sup>251</sup> Namik Kemal had also claimed that Islam was originally a republic when he wrote favourably about it. As early as the 1870's, Ali Sauvi, the Ottoman publicist, had openly favoured a republican regime.<sup>252</sup> It was only during the First World War that the idea of a republican regime - the notion of popular sovereignty, freedom and equality before the law, really developed. This is not surprising considering that the military officers who led the revolution were products of modern secular military schools and had been bred, if clandestinely, on such western ideas of government. The idea gained momentum after the war when Ottoman provinces began to break away from the empire to form independent republics of their own.

The concept of a Muslim republic, although strange, however, was not new and any resistance to it was both short-lived and never serious. In 1918, Azerbaijan, a Turkish-speaking Muslim state had broken away from the Russian Soviet Union to become the first Muslim republic in modern times. This was followed by several other Muslim states in the Soviet Union to likewise follow suit.<sup>253</sup> After the war, the great monarchies of Europe such as Germany and Austria also succumbed to the republican trend which included the American and French republics as successful preceding models.

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<sup>251</sup> Paul Dumont, 'The Origins of Kemalist Ideology' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 26.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>253</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) p. 362.

Republicanism became, and still is the fundamental principle of the new Turkish nation when the Republic was constitutionally proclaimed in October 1923. Its political significance lies in the fact that it is now founded upon its own Turkish identity and its own homeland, rather than along a dynastic one as in the past.<sup>254</sup> The concept of the sovereignty of the people is clearly embodied in two clauses:

‘No power is superior to the Grand National Assembly’ and  
‘The Grand National Assembly has the power to make and to  
implement laws.’<sup>255</sup>

The above statements have often been used to testify to the claim that Republicanism arose as a reaction against the absolute power and authority of the Ottoman rulers who were both sultan and caliph – temporal and spiritual leaders.<sup>256</sup>

### 5.2.2 Nationalism

Nationalism is the aspiration for national independence, especially by nations under foreign occupation. According to G. E. Von Grunebaum, it refers to ‘the national movements, attitudes and ideologies which characterize the behaviour of nationalities engaged in the struggle to achieve, maintain or enhance their position

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<sup>254</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, ‘The Principles of Kemalism’ in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk. Founder of a Modern State*, p. 16.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 17.



in the world.<sup>257</sup> To the Kemalists, nationalism was aimed mainly at ensuring the cohesion of the Turkish Republic and preventing separatist movements that might eventually threaten the unity of the country. They had defined nation as 'a social and political formation comprising citizens linked together by the community of language, culture and ideal'.<sup>258</sup> This was a departure from the traditional idea of 'millet', the Turkish term for 'nation'. The term is also of Arabic origin. Although in the Koran it means religion, the Turkish term traditionally referred to the autonomous minority religious communities which lived in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>259</sup> The definition avoided references to religion, race and ethnicity.

The Kemalist emphasis on common language and culture only was part of the nationalistic movement to promote Turkism, the idea of loyalty to the Turkish nation as opposed to Ottomanism or loyalty to a dynasty as in the past. Ottomanism had failed, as had Pan-Islamism which failed to take off. The Kemalists also avoided Pan-Turanism, the movement based on the glorification of the Turkish race<sup>260</sup> and aimed at uniting all the Turkic, Mongolian and Finno-Ugric peoples<sup>261</sup> who were thought to originate from Turan, an ancient Persian name for the mythical ancestral land in north and central Asia.<sup>262</sup> From the mistake of the Empire, they also avoided Pan-Turkism, the movement aimed at uniting all the

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<sup>257</sup> G. E. Von Grunebaum, 'Problems of Muslim Nationalism' in Richard N. Frye (ed) *Islam and the West*, p. 7.

<sup>258</sup> Paul Dumont, 'The Origin of Kemalist Ideology' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 29.

<sup>259</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 329.

<sup>260</sup> George S. Harris, 'The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics', *The Middle East Journal* Vol. XIX, No. 1 & 2, 1965, p. 62.

<sup>261</sup> Jacob M. Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974) p. 193.

<sup>262</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 341.

people and tribes of Turkic descent from the eastern Mediterranean to Sinkiang, and from the Volga to Southern Anatolia. The premise of this movement was the common heritage of all these people from a joint stock in Central Asia.<sup>263</sup>

Ataturk's aim was to make the Turkish language and Turkish culture the cohesive bond of the new nation. He wanted to instill into the Turkish people new feelings of patriotism for the new republic, instead of vague sentiments for unrealistic ideas and mythical concepts.<sup>264</sup> As such, he emphasized retraction of national borders in favour of a limited but homogenous and nationalistically based state within the frontiers of Anatolia. The aim of his nationalist movement was to create a new Turkish state within the regions where Muslim Ottomans were a majority. This would even exclude the regions with Muslim Arabs such as Syria and Iraq. He wanted people to give up the concept of a 'grand empire' which would tie them to a specifically traditional worldview.<sup>265</sup> Hence, he emphasized a nationalism based on a Anatolian homeland – the center of Turkish nationhood.<sup>266</sup>

### 5.2.3 Populism

Populism is a political philosophy directed to the needs of the common people and which advocates a more equitable distribution of wealth and power.<sup>267</sup> It was the

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<sup>263</sup> Jacob M. Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*, p. 197.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>265</sup> Osman Okyar, 'Ataturk's Quest for Modernism' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 48.

<sup>266</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 354.

<sup>267</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary*, p. 965.

Kemalist equivalent of democracy although it was never so explicitly stated. In a speech in 1920, Ataturk linked populism with a people's government, saying that 'it means the passing of government to the hands of the people'. Later in the same year, he elaborated that populism meant 'that power, authority, sovereignty, administration should be given directly to the people, and should be kept in the hands of the people'.<sup>268</sup>

The ideals of populism paralleled and supported the concept of republicanism. It had connotations of political, cultural and economic egalitarianism and had a vague tinge of socialism.<sup>269</sup> The description was also derived from the Kemalists' move to mobilize support for promoting the economic, cultural and social progress of the masses. It was reminiscent of the Russian movements of 'going to the people' in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and which later gained momentum that resulted in the 1918 revolution.<sup>270</sup> In Turkey, Ziya Gokkap had advocated populism as a form of social organization in which class differences are suppressed and in its place there is an interdependence of occupational groups or occupational solidarity.<sup>271</sup> Ataturk and his supporters adopted and adapted these concepts of populism which became a subject of much propaganda during the Kemalist years but the political rhetoric eventually waned in the face of political reality and practice.

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<sup>268</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 251.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 459.

<sup>270</sup> Paul Dumont, 'The Origin of Kemalist Ideology' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 31.

#### 5.2.4 Revolutionism

The fundamental premise of Kemalism was social change.<sup>272</sup> It was to be a continuous effort towards modernism and progress.<sup>273</sup> In this regard, there is an ambivalence among writers over preferences for the use of the terms 'revolutionism' and 'reformism' for the Turkish word. This is because 'revolution' conjured an image of a sudden or momentous change in a situation; a sudden political overthrow or seizure of power brought about from within a given system, or an action to bring about socio-economic structural changes.<sup>274</sup> 'Reformism', on the other hand, connotes a movement that attempts to institute improved social and political conditions without revolutionary change.<sup>275</sup>

The Kemalists saw their 'reform' movement as a series of 'revolutions' and 'counter-revolutions' that would act towards eventually transforming Turkish society.<sup>276</sup> The transformation that Ataturk's reforms hope to engender was a shift in outlook, adoption of a western way of life, fight against ignorance and superstition and towards a more scientific and rational approach to problem-solving and development. In this respect, Ataturk's 'revolution' was an extension of a 'reformist movement' that had begun from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>272</sup> Sabri M. Akural, 'Kemalist Views on Social Change' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 125.

<sup>273</sup> Ismet Giritli, 'Kemalism as an Ideology of Modernization' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 251.

<sup>274</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary*, p. 1058.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., p. 1039.

<sup>276</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, 'The Principles of Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk, Founder of a Modern State*, p. 23.

### 5.2.5 Etatism

'Etatism' is a French word that has a general meaning of a state's intervention in all social, economic, cultural and educational activities. In Kemalism, it refers more specifically to the economic policy of the state's participation in economic affairs. Generally, the state would initiate and direct industrial activity in the interest of development and defence of the nation where private enterprise and capital were too weak to be effective.<sup>277</sup> This paternal responsibility for organizing the nation's economic life and problem-solving was necessary after the War of Independence and later, during the years following the 1929 world depression.<sup>278</sup>

Etatism is essentially a western concept. It began as a reaction against accumulated wealth and increasing liberalism. Although Kemalist etatism was strongly influenced by the socialist government of the Soviet Union, etatism was not entirely new in Turkey. In Ottoman Turkey, the state had always intervened in economic affairs and played key roles in industries such as in arms and ammunition making or protecting certain domestic industries. Under Ottoman rule, there had been no foundation of a 'modern economy'. For centuries, the sultans had lived on loans. There was no private wealth to invigorate the economy, making it necessary for later governments to step in. The CUP regime had to intervene and to stimulate

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<sup>277</sup> Paul Dumont, 'The Origins of Kemalist Ideology' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 39.

<sup>278</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 463.

industry with a 1914 Bill to Encourage Industry which bore resemblance to the Kemalist's instruments of economic policy many years later.<sup>279</sup>

Intellectuals such as Ziya Gökalp had also advocated such intervention. According to these intellectuals, unlike the Soviet Union, Turkey had no accumulated wealth. Hence, there was no struggle. But it was the duty of the government which comprised qualified leaders, to direct the economy in such a way as to prevent such a class struggle in the future.<sup>280</sup> Once again, although etatism may be a foreign concept, it can be observed that there was a strong continuity of state economic involvement through from Ottoman times.

### 5.2.5 Secularism

Secularism was the cornerstone of Kemalism. It was the foundation upon which all the other Kemalist principles was based and the 'engine' that drove the Kemalist regime. The separation of government from religion meant not only the rejection of religious influence from the nation's life, but also the cultural traditions that had so restricted and inhibited social development and progress. In this respect, the secularization of Turkey meant to a great extent, social freedom. People were free

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<sup>279</sup> Paul Dumont, 'The Origins of Kemalist Ideology' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 40.

<sup>280</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 463.

to make choices in their personal lives instead of being ruled by religion and tradition.<sup>281</sup>

Clearly an alien concept, in view of the nature of Islam and the Ottoman theocracy, a modern and secular Turkey was not a model that the Kemalists drew up overnight for the new regime. The opening of modern secular schools and military academies had been a chief source and disseminator of secular ideas since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Masonic lodges to which Ottoman gentlemen and military officers fashionably belong were also a major channel and network of the spread of radical thoughts. Many of Ataturk's reforms such as the ban on the brotherhoods, the Sufi orders, closing of religious schools, the ban on the fez and its replacement by the western hat, the Latin script, equality and greater freedom for women and the translation of the Koran and religious texts into Turkish, were all based on the writings of Abdullah Cevdet, a prominent writer who was also a freemason.

The emergence of the duality of systems during the Tanzimat as we have seen earlier, was really the beginning of the secularization of Turkey. During the Young Turk period, Turkist nationalists, especially Ziya Gokkap had officially proposed that the religious courts, schools and other institutions be removed from the jurisdiction of the religious office and that the Seyh-ul-Islam or head of the religious office be confined to strictly religious matters only.<sup>282</sup> In accelerating the

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<sup>281</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, 'The Principles of Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk. The Founder of a Modern State*, p. 23.

<sup>282</sup> Paul Dumont, 'The Origin of Kemalist Ideology' in Jacob M. Landau (ed) *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, p. 37.

### 5.3.1 The Conservatives and Islamists

Among the conservatives who first reacted to Kemal Atatürk were the CUP leaders, many of whom were members of the Grand National Assembly. Although they had jointly fought in the national struggle against the Ottomans, they were nevertheless, loyal to the Ottoman house. Whilst they did not support the abolition of the sultanate, they still cherished the hope of a constitutional monarchy under the Ottoman dynasty. In their view it was essential to maintain the caliph as spiritual head of state and as the focus of an Islamic constitutional regime. In reality, they were deeply suspicious of Kemal's real intentions and his increasing exercise of power. In April, 1920, the CUP met to draw up a proposal calling for greater decentralization, universal suffrage, equal rights to all Turkish nationals and to keep Istanbul as the capital of Turkey.<sup>284</sup>

Observing the political rivalry in the Grand National Assembly where these conservatives dominated, Atatürk formed the People's Party, later renamed Republican People's Party (RPP), which won the general elections - the first in many years - making him the new President of the Republic. He quickly proclaimed Ankara the new capital and appointed an old friend as Prime Minister to replace the conservative incumbent.<sup>285</sup> The bitter political rivalry was suppressed and henceforth, the RPP became the mainstay of political activity. The Unionist

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<sup>283</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 53.

<sup>284</sup> A. L. Macfie, *Atatürk*, p. 155.

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### 5.3.1 The Conservatives and Islamists

Among the conservatives who first reacted to Kemal Ataturk and his reforms were the CUP leaders, many of whom were members of the Grand National Assembly. Although they had jointly fought in the national struggle against the invaders, they were nevertheless, loyal to the Ottoman house. Whilst they did not object to the abolition of the sultanate, they still cherished the hope of establishing a constitutional monarchy under the Ottoman dynasty. In their view it was necessary to maintain the caliph as spiritual head of state and as the focus of power of an Islamic constitutional regime. In reality, they were deeply suspicious of Mustafa Kemal's real intentions and his increasing exercise of power. In April, 1923, they met to draw up a proposal calling for greater decentralization, universal suffrage, equal rights to all Turkish nationals and to keep Istanbul as the capital of Turkey.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> A. L. Macfie, *Ataturk*, p. 155.

<sup>285</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 53.

leaders were later indicted, together with religious rebels, in the show trials of treason and sentenced to exile and death.<sup>286</sup>

Although the proclamation of the republic was generally well received, the conservatives opposed the republic on the grounds that it would endanger the Turkish people's links to their Islamic and imperial heritage.<sup>287</sup> When the caliphate, naturally seen as the focus and symbol of both these sentiments, became the subject of exploitation by vested political interests, Kemal Ataturk, spurred by the Khalifa Movement in British India, jumped at the opportunity to abolish the caliphate.<sup>288</sup> The subsequent closure of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the religious foundations, madrassahs and shari'ah courts were aimed at attacking the ulama and eliminating the power and influence they wielded in political and social affairs.

However, it was the dervishes and the brotherhoods, long used to opposing orthodox Islam rather than these ulama, which reacted with strongest opposition to his secular reforms. This erupted in the form of the Kurdish rebellion in 1925. Together with the call for a separate Kurdish nation, they demanded the restoration of the caliphate, the fez, turban and the revocation of other 'Godless reforms'. Their leader and scores of his supporters were arrested and hanged.<sup>289</sup> Among all the reforms, it was the ban on the fez and turban, long a symbol of Islamic identity and social ranking in Turkish society, that provoked the greatest resistance among the

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<sup>286</sup> See Chapter IV

<sup>287</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 258.

<sup>288</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>289</sup> See Chapter IV.

people.<sup>290</sup> Despite his support of women's emancipation, Ataturk never attempted to ban the veil on women after he predicted the downfall of the Afghan king when he outlawed the veil in Afghanistan.<sup>291</sup>

### **5.3.2 The Militarists**

Four of Ataturk's closest collaborators in the national struggle were military generals and colonels: Kazim Karabekir,<sup>292</sup> Ali Fuat,<sup>293</sup> Rauf Orbay<sup>294</sup> and Refet Bele.<sup>295</sup> Together with a number of army commanders, they led an opposition front against Ataturk by forming an opposition political party, the Progressive People's Party. It was a reaction to the unilateral decision and action of Ataturk to proclaim the republic, declare the abolition of the caliphate and other constitutional changes. Ataturk had failed to consult or inform these senior leaders and fellow independence fighters of these significant reforms and they perceived his actions as an attempt to eventually install himself as sultan or dictator or even to start his own dynasty.<sup>296</sup>

The new party attacked and questioned the competence and integrity of the government, and by implication, Ataturk and his Kemalist regime. The press supported the opposition party by writing about the increasing authoritarianism of

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<sup>290</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 405.

<sup>291</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 87.

<sup>292</sup> Army commander, CUP member and a key member of national resistance movement.

<sup>293</sup> Army commander, CUP member and a key member of national resistance movement. Ataturk's military classmate and closest friend.

<sup>294</sup> Naval commander. Co-founded opposition party.

<sup>295</sup> Army commander. Co-founded opposition party.

Ataturk and his suppression of the press and political opposition. Hatred and opposition against the new president was so intense that it motivated a plot to assassinate him. Although the real motive of the plot was never unraveled, it is believed that the man behind the plot was a critic of Ataturk and hated the personality cult he believed Ataturk was promoting of himself.<sup>297</sup> Ataturk's response was ruthless. He arrested thousands of the rebels - religious, unionists, army officers – including their leaders and through the Independence Tribunals, committed them to exile and death.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

The Turkish revolution was launched by the nationalist movement to fight for the nation's independence. Kemalism became the basis of social change that paved the way for building a new Turkish state. Whilst Ataturk may not have had a 'preparatory phase of intellectual development'<sup>298</sup> that would have presented a 'systematic explanation of his thoughts and actions',<sup>299</sup> it must be noted that Ataturk was honed for years on the concepts of western government and political philosophy. His aim and vision were consistent throughout, thereby allowing his actions and reforms to be coherently collated into six logical and systematic principles that were to become part of the Turkish constitutional framework.

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<sup>296</sup> A. L. Macfie, *Ataturk*, p.155.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>298</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, 'The Principles of Kemalism' in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Ataturk. Founder of a Modern State*, p. 12.

Approaches to nation-building are always multi-pronged and multi-faceted. In this respect, Kemalism was a sound model for political, economic and cultural modernization for developing countries. It is seen as a democratic and non-dogmatic ideology that allowed for dynamic development and action.<sup>300</sup> In spite of the benefits and progress that Atatürk hoped to generate for the Turkish people and nation, his reforms encountered opposition from people entrenched in their own values and traditions and from those who perceived his actions as arbitrary, unilateral and authoritarian and that he had imperial plans for himself. Throughout his term of office, his fear was that mass discontent over his reforms would turn into popular movements that would demand the restoration of the caliphate and the return of the state to the shari'ah law, prompting him to take swift and ruthless actions when signs of opposition emerged.

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., p. 12.