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Comparative Perspectives on Secularism and Politics: Necmettin Erbakan and Ikeda Daisaku*

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Refereed Article

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Abstract

This article presents a comparative analysis of Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of The National Outlook in Turkey, and Ikeda Daisaku, the third and honorary leader of Soka Gakkai in Japan, exploring their perspectives on secularism and politics. Despite both Turkey and Japan being secular states, the application of secularism varies. Building on Kuru's framework of assertive and passive secularism, the study argues that assertive secularism is hegemonic ideology in Turkey, while passive secularism prevails in Japan. The analysis delves into how Erbakan and Ikeda's discourses align and diverge within these differing secular frameworks. The findings show that, while Erbakan and Ikeda's ideologies share similarities in various aspects, distinctions emerge in their attitudes toward the state's policies and other societal groups. This study contributes to understanding how religious leaders navigate and articulate their perspectives within distinct secular contexts, providing insights into the intersections of religion, politics, and secularism in Turkey and Japan.

Keywords : Assertive and passive secularism, Erbakan, Ikeda, The National Outlook, Soka Gakkai

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1. Introduction

Turkey and Japan, although classified as secular states, stand out as distinctive cases due to the presence of politically active and highly influential religious groups within their borders. These groups, namely the National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi) in Turkey and the Soka Gakkai in Japan, have significantly shaped the political landscapes of their respective countries since the 1960s. Necmettin Erbakan, as the founder of the National Outlook, and Ikeda Daisaku¹, as the third and honorary president of the Soka Gakkai, have emerged as central figures in these movements. The purpose of this research is to examine their perspectives on politics and secularism, and the effect of type of secularism on their discourses.

To understand the views of Erbakan and Ikeda on secularism and politics, it is necessary to grasp secularism in Turkey and Japan. At its core, secularism can be defined as the differentiation of the institutional spheres of religion and politics, however, the implementation of secularism differs in different countries. Therefore, Ahmet T. Kuru's (2009) conceptualization of assertive and passive secularism will be used for explaining this difference. Assertive secularism signifies the systematic removal of religion from public life by the state, while passive secularism indicates the state adopting a neutral stance towards religion. Kuru identifies the dominant ideology in Turkey as assertive secularism while Japan was not included in his analysis. In this regard, I agree that assertive secularism is the dominant ideology in Turkey, whereas I argue that passive secularism is the dominant ideology in Japan. Using this framework, I aim to reveal the differences in the discourse of leaders in Turkey and Japan, where different types of secularism prevail.

The comparative examination of Turkey and Japan provides an insightful lens through which to analyze the political and secular perspectives of leaders within these distinct contexts. This comparison is structured based on John Stuart Mill's "method of difference" (1843, 454-456), which posits that if there is only one difference between a situation where the phenomenon occurs and one where it does not, and that difference is present only in the former, then that differing factor is considered the cause, effect, or an essential part of the cause of the phenomenon (Mill 1843, 455). Turkey, starting from the Ottoman period, has undergone a process of modernization by emulating the West (Ahmad 2003; Zürcher 2004), while Japan, during a similar period, the Meiji era, initiated a profound transformation by adopting Western systems as its basis (Gluck 1985; Garon 1994). In other words, despite not having a colonial past, both countries have similarly embraced Western models for political, economic, and social modernization (Rustow and Ward 1968), and both have adopted a secular state model. However, the implementation of secularism varies between them. Although religion and politics coexist in various countries, Turkey and Japan serve as representative cases due to similarities in their status as non-Western countries, similar processes of modernization and Westernization, absence of a colonial past, their transitions into secular states, and differences in secularism systems and the discourse of religious group leaders. This paper argues that the dominant secularism type in each country influences the rhetoric of religious groups' leaders. Specifically, religious groups in assertive secular states tend to adopt a defensive discourse to navigate their environment, while those in passive secular states tend to adopt a more adaptable discourse to integrate into their surroundings.

The National Outlook Movement is chosen for examination in Turkey because it represents the pioneering political Islamist movement to achieve political success within the secular framework of the Republic of Turkey.

¹ Japanese names are presented in the format of "surname, given name" throughout the article.

Despite facing various challenges, such as recurrent party closures and political marginalization of its members, the movement has consistently reached significant political milestones. In Japan, Soka Gakkai is selected for investigation because it has emerged as both Japan's largest religious organization and the only religious movement to achieve political success. Unlike the National Outlook, Soka Gakkai has faced pressure from the state limited to its early years of establishment. Essentially, the commonality between these groups is their presence in government despite being religious entities in secular states. The distinction between them arises from the degree of state pressure they encountered, influenced by the implementation of different types of secularism. Therefore, the disparity serves as the differing factor in employing the method of difference.

Due to the immense complexity and challenges associated with analyzing the discourse of both groups throughout their entire histories, the focus of this paper is narrowed to the examination of Erbakan and Ikeda. What makes Erbakan significant is his role as the founder and natural leader of this movement, which he led until his death. Similarly, Ikeda, instrumental in steering Soka Gakkai's expansion and establishing its political arm, Komeito, wielded leadership until his passing. This study situates itself at the intersection of two secular states, Turkey and Japan, where these movements, under the stewardship of Erbakan and Ikeda, have carved out influential roles in both the social and political domains. Through discourse analysis, this research endeavors to dissect the convergences and divergences in Erbakan's and Ikeda's stances on politics and secularism, as well as the ramifications of secularism on the rhetoric of religious leaders.

The main research question of this study is: "How does the type of secularism (assertive vs. passive) in Turkey and Japan influence the discourse of political leaders within religious movements, specifically comparing the cases of Necmettin Erbakan and Ikeda Daisaku?" This paper posits that the nature of secularism significantly shapes the rhetoric employed by religious groups. Specifically, religious groups in states characterized by assertive secularism are inclined to adopt a defensive and aggressive (or exclusory) discourse in response to their surroundings, while those in passive secular states tend to adopt a more adaptable discourse to integrate into their environment. It is expected that Erbakan's discourse leans towards defensiveness and aggressiveness due to the dominance of assertive secularism in Turkey, whereas Ikeda's discourse tends to be more moderate, aiming to integrate into the system given Japan's dominant passive secularism. To test this hypothesis, Erbakan's discourse in Turkey and Ikeda's discourse in Japan are compared using the method of difference. For this purpose, the implementation of secularism in Turkey and Japan will be examined first, focusing on the relationship between religion and politics and the policies pursued by these states. Subsequently, a discourse analysis of Erbakan's and Ikeda's writings will be conducted.

This paper holds significance for several reasons. Firstly, it represents the first study to compare the discourse of Erbakan and Ikeda. Additionally, there is dearth of research comparing the National Outlook and Soka Gakkai, or Turkey and Japan, in terms of secularism. Secondly, while Kuru (2009) examined the secular system in Turkey, there is a lack of exploration regarding Japan in terms of secularism types. Thus, this study serves as the first examination of Japan using Kuru's framework of secularism types. Lastly, this study is pioneering in identifying the relationship between the secularism type of the state and the discourse of leaders of religious groups.

2. Assertive and Passive Secularism

Secularization refers to the historical process of differentiation of "religious" and "secular" spheres.

Conversely, secularism represents a political ideology advocating the separation of religion and politics. Casanova defines secularism as worldviews and ideologies related to religion and suggested that it encompasses "normative-ideological state projects" as well as legal frameworks based on the separation of politics and religion (2011, 66). According to Taylor, secularism is a concept built on the separation of church and state, rooted in the medieval ages and encompassing a sense of transformation (1998, 31-32). On the other hand, Kuru defines a secular state by two main features: "their legal and judicial processes are out of institutional religious control, and they establish neither an official religion nor atheism" (Kuru 2007, 569).

In debates on secularism, prevailing perspectives can be categorized into three main groups. The first is the modernization theory, which posits that religion will decrease alongside economic development. The second is the civilization approach, which asserts differences among religions and their relationships with the state depending on these differences. The third is the rational-choice theory, emphasizing individual preferences and actor rationality. According to Kuru (2009), the modernization theory falls short in explaining the high proportion of states with an official religion in economically developed countries. In other words, explaining the dynamics of religion-state relations solely through economic development proves inadequate. The civilization approach is criticized for being overly general and, for instance, for accepting the West as a unified whole, while failing to explain the variations among Western countries or similarities between a Western and an Eastern country. The rational-choice theory is found insufficient in explaining decisions made by authorities in some countries at the cost of political damage. In place of these views, Kuru argues that ideological struggles are the most significant factor in explaining the relationship between religion and the state in different countries (2009, 15-22).

In a broad sense, while secularism can be defined as the separation of religion and the state, there are variations in the implementation of secularization. Kuru emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the following categorization: "whether a secular state pursues exclusionary or inclusionary policies toward religion in the public sphere" (2009, 31). This distinction is elucidated through two concepts: assertive and passive secularism. Assertive secularism contends that the state should actively play an "assertive" role in excluding religion from the public sphere, confining it to the private domain. Additionally, it involves the state's desire to control religion and intervene in individuals' freedom of conscience. On the other hand, passive secularism advocates for state neutrality toward religion while permitting its visibility in the public sphere. It also encompasses guaranteeing individuals' freedom of religion and conscience (Kuru 2009).

According to Kuru, "modern state building defines an *ancien régime* based on the marriage between the old monarchy and religious hegemony" and "the *ancien régime* becomes the basis of the polarization between the anticlericals and conservatives" (2009, 23). The prevalence of assertive or passive secularism in a given state can be attributed to the presence of the *ancien régime*, contingent on the fulfillment of four factors: monarchy, a hegemonic religion, an alliance between monarchy and the hegemonic religion, and a successful republican movement (Kuru 2009, 25). The presence of the *ancien régime* leads to ideological struggles between republican elites and conservative groups. In countries where these conditions are met, assertive secularism becomes the dominant ideology, while passive secularism emerges in the absence of the *ancien régime*. In other words, the most fundamental determinant of whether assertive or passive secularism prevails in a country is the presence or absence of the *ancien régime*.

In this context, it is anticipated that the discourse of leaders of religiopolitical groups will tend to be more aggressive in countries where assertive secularism prevails. Conversely, in countries characterized by passive

secularism, these leaders are expected to adopt a more moderate discourse. According to the inclusion-moderation theory, groups that have been historically marginalized are likely to abandon radical stances and evolve into moderate actors as they become integrated into the system (Schwedler 2011). Therefore, in a state characterized by assertive secularism, it is expected that Erbakan's rhetoric would focus on fundamentally challenging and altering the system from an Islamic perspective. On the other hand, in a passive secular context, Ikeda's discourse is anticipated to be more accommodating and integrative, reflecting a strategy to adapt to and work within the existing system.

3. Secularism in Turkey and Japan

3.1. Turkey and Assertive Secularism

The Ottoman Empire, which had dissolved with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, was led by a sultan, fulfilling the first factor of the *ancien régime*. In the context of the second factor, the hegemonic religion in the case of Ottoman Empire was Islam. When we examine the third factor, the sultan also held the title of caliph, and beyond the alliance between monarchy and hegemonic religion, the governance and religion were closely intertwined. As the sultan governed the country, he concurrently upheld his claim as the leader of the entire Islamic world, bearing the title of caliph. Furthermore, considering the fourth factor, the successful transition to a republican form of government, where the Ottoman dynasty was abolished and the republic was founded, underscores the existence of this element in Turkey's historical narrative. In summary, the claim that the *ancien régime* exists in Turkey is confirmed by the presence of all four factors. Therefore, with the presence of the *ancien régime*, assertive secularism is expected to prevail in Turkey.

One of the main principles of this new republic was secularism which was regarded as an essential part of Westernization. Within the administrative and legal systems, Islamic values were omitted. This was due to the perception that Islam symbolized backwardness, "the traditional," and the rurality (Çınar 2008). Following the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) was established under the office of the Prime Minister. With the inception of this institution, it became the sole authority on matters related to Islam. The purpose behind the establishment of this institution can be succinctly articulated as follows: "Diyanet also became the agent of propagating the reformed, privatized version of Islam in the minds of the Kemalist elite throughout the country, as well as to counteract the possible re-Islamization of society" (Ongur 2019, 4). Moreover, in 1925, the closure of religious convents and dervish lodges resulted in the state becoming the exclusive authoritative entity on religious matters, with no other religious institution remaining in an official capacity outside of the state. This situation is indicative of the state's influence over religion and serves as an example of assertive secularism.

In 1924, as part of the unification of education under the Ministry of National Education, private religious education was also prohibited. Only the schools of the non-Muslim minority, as defined in the Treaty of Lausanne, were allowed to continue operating in accordance with the treaty's provisions. Apart from that, the establishment of new schools and the provision of religious education in private institutions were banned. Minority groups not defined in the Lausanne Treaty were not granted the right to open any schools (Oran 2007). As for Muslims, only the *Diyanet* was authorized to provide Quran courses, and it was prohibited for any private institution to offer Quran courses (Kuru and Stepan 2012).

Religious education schools (*imam hatip okulları*) are public schools opened by the state to train personnel for religious affairs. Those who graduated from these schools, whose numbers increased from the 1960s onwards, were not allowed to attend university until 1973. After gaining high school status, debates arose about whether these students from religious schools were adequately trained in line with the state's secular principles. The situation escalated on February 28, 1997, during what is known as the “soft coup.” The military also expressed concerns about these schools, leading to a legal amendment that made it nearly impossible for their graduates to enter universities outside of theology departments (Buyruk 2020).

The 24th article of the 1982 constitution states: "Instruction in religious culture and morals shall be one of the compulsory lessons in the curricula of primary and secondary schools." With this constitution, religious education became mandatory in all public or private schools. However, the predicament this created was that this course was predominantly focused on Islam in the form determined by the state. In other words, religious instruction in schools has been utilized as a tool by the state to establish and maintain authority over Islam (Kuru 2009, 181). The Alevi community, who do not identify themselves within Sunni Islam, struggled for the removal of this course. This was because families objected to their children receiving religious education that contradicted their beliefs (Gök and Ilgaz 2007, 135). Another problem faced by the Alevi community is the absence of the right to establish their own places of worship (*cemevi*). In other words, not only non-Muslim minorities but also non-Sunni individuals encounter difficulties in practicing their education and religious rituals (Denli 2007, 96). The state's choice not to provide space for religious practices to those who do not align with the state's policy defines another example of assertive secularism.

The headscarf ban is another example of the assertive secularism prevailing in Turkey. While there was no prohibition on wearing the headscarf in private life, it was forbidden for students at universities and employees in public institutions. Although this ban was de facto implemented earlier, it was officially introduced in universities in 1982, following the 1980 military coup. The National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Konseyi*, or MGK) exerted pressure to implement this official prohibition, justifying it primarily by considering the headscarf as a symbol of reactionism. Despite Prime Minister Turgut Özal's attempts to lift the ban, it persisted due to opposition from the President Kenan Evren and decisions by the Constitutional Court (Özdalga 1998, 39-49). Another political manifestation of the headscarf ban occurred in 1999 when Merve Kavakçı, elected as a member of parliament, was not allowed to take the oath and was expelled from the assembly due to wearing the headscarf. Yet another example took place during the receptions hosted by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in 2003. In these receptions, single invitations were sent to MPs whose spouses wore headscarves, and their spouses were not invited. President Sezer justified this decision by stating, “There has been a tendency to position against the state's secular character, and I wanted to prevent it” (Cindoglu and Zencirci 2008, 803).

3.2. Japan and Passive Secularism

Before discussing Japan and passive secularism, I would like to reiterate the four factors of the *ancien régime*: monarchy, a hegemonic religion, an alliance between monarchy and the hegemonic religion, and a successful republican movement. Additionally, it should be noted that the Japan evaluated in this section is not Imperial Japan (*Dai Nippon Teikoku*) but the post-WWII Japan (*Nippon Koku*) that emerged with the 1947 Constitution of Japan. Following this note, I would like to discuss the existence of the *ancien régime* in Japan.

Monarchy, the first factor of the *ancien régime*, has been present in Japan from the past to the present. Emperor

Showa reigned as an emperor from 1926 to 1989, indicating the presence of the first factor in Japan. Shintoism can be considered the hegemonic religion as the second factor. State Shinto held an officially superior position compared to other religions, with the emperor at the top of State Shinto. This situation demonstrates the existence of the alliance between monarchy and the hegemonic religion, which is the third factor. However, it cannot be argued that the fourth factor, a successful republican movement, existed in Japan. After WWII, the legal foundations of modern Japan were established following the Allied Occupation. The process of drafting the 1947 Constitution also involved the direct participation of Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Douglas MacArthur, and the initial drafts were sometimes referred to as the "MacArthur Draft" (Ward 1956). Following the promulgation of the new constitution, although the emperor's powers became largely symbolic, he continued his role, and this process did not involve a domestic republican movement within Japan. Therefore, it can be argued that the fourth factor was absent in Japan. As a result, even though the first three factors were present, the absence of the fourth factor implies that *ancien régime* does not exist in the case of Japan. In this case, the dominance of passive secularism is expected in Japan.

The dissolution of State Shinto and the separation of religion from the state occurred with the Shinto Directive published by the Supreme Commander in 1945. According to this directive, the state's promotion of Shinto was terminated, and Shintoism was placed on equal legal footing with other religions. As a result, the state's unequal situation between religions came to an end. With the elimination of State Shinto, *Jinja Honchō* was established as an umbrella organization and as an independent institution from the state in 1946. (Larsson 2017, 228-229). In the 1947 Constitution, Article 20 guaranteed freedom of religion and prohibited state intervention in religious matters. Article 89 also prohibited the state from providing any financial support to religious institutions. Consequently, Japan became a secular state where religion and state were separated by constitutional means. Constitutionally, the state is impartial to all religions, and individual freedoms are safeguarded.

In parallel, Article 9 of the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education prohibited religious education or any other religious activity in public schools: "The schools established by the state and local public corporations shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity" (Takeda 1968, 224-225). However, in private schools, it was emphasized that they could provide religious education and were free to determine their own curricula as long as they were not militaristic or ultra-nationalist (Takeda 1968, 231). Although the constitution prohibits the state from opening religious schools or providing funds to religious institutions, these institutions can establish their own schools. For example, in 2013, 73 primary schools, 169 middle schools, 207 high schools, and 121 colleges were registered as Christian schools. When other religions are added, the total number of schools reached 862 (Saito 2013, 58).

Due to the constitutional separation of religion and state, the provision of religious education in public schools is prohibited. However, moral education classes are offered in public schools. In these classes at the primary and middle school levels, there is no religious content; instead, topics like friendship, cooperation, and respect are taught. The moral education class at the high school level is an elective course. This course covers Christian, Buddhist, Confucian, Shinto, and Muslim religions, as well as ancient Greek philosophy, with the aim of providing students with a basic understanding of different religions (Takahata 2013, 184). The fact that the religious education class is elective and aims to introduce students to various religions is another indicator that passive secularism is the dominant ideology.

In accordance with the Religious Corporation Law that came into effect in 1951, there are two types of

religious groups. The first is a religious organization (*shūkyō dantai*), and the second is a religious corporation (*shūkyō hōjin*). On the one hand, to be considered a religious organization, they must have a religious doctrine and the purpose of propagating it, conducting ceremonies, and educating believers. They must also own facilities for worship. These are further categorized into shrines, temples, churches, missionary sites, and others. On the other hand, becoming a religious corporation means acquiring legal personality (Horii 2018, 63). Once recognized as a religious corporation, a religious organization can benefit from tax exemptions for religious activities. As evident, various religions can continue their activities in the public sphere and are not restricted by the state. This, along with their ability to establish schools and provide religious education, demonstrates that passive secularism is the dominant ideology.

Another aspect to consider is the status of religious symbols. Unlike in Turkey, in Japan, religious symbols do not pose a barrier to attending school. For instance, wearing a cross or a headscarf does not present any issue when attending classes in Japan. The carrying of religious symbols by individuals is considered a part of their individual freedoms, hence there are no restrictions in this regard. The absence of legal restrictions imposed by the state on religious symbols indicates the prevalence of passive secularism in this context.

3.3. Observable Implications and Data

Kuru (2009, 22-27) provides examples of countries with the presence of an *ancien régime*, such as Turkey, France, Mexico, Spain, and Russia, and those without it, such as the USA, Britain, Ireland, Poland, and India, to discuss how secularism has evolved in these countries. Specifically, he delves into Turkey, France, and the USA to explain how secularism differs. However, the example of Japan remains incomplete within the framework of assertive and passive secularism. As discussed above, Japan lacks an *ancien régime*, leading passive secularism to become the dominant ideology. This analysis contributes to the assertive and passive secularism framework by including the example of Japan.

In Turkey, where the *ancien régime* exists, the domination of assertive secularism is apparent, contrasting with Japan, where it is absent, and passive secularism prevails. Consequently, in Turkey, religious affairs are concurrently marginalized and subjected to control through the *Diyanet*, while Japan maintains a wholly impartial stance toward religion. In Turkey, the mere presence of religious groups poses issues, while in Japan, religious matters are entirely entrusted to civil society, and governmental interference is minimal unless deemed criminal. These divergent implementations of secularism underscore varied trajectories in the development of religious groups. Subsequent section will elucidate how the National Outlook and Soka Gakkai have navigated within these distinct secular paradigms.

4. The National Outlook Movement and Soka Gakkai

4.1. The National Outlook Movement and Erbakan

Erbakan's foray into politics marked the emergence of the National Outlook Movement as a significant phenomenon in Turkey's social and political spheres. In 1969, Erbakan, despite being elected as the President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (*Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği*, or TOBB), was removed from this position under government pressure. In response, Erbakan, who ran as an independent parliamentary candidate and won in 1969, established the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*, or MNP) in

1970, marking the first party of the National Outlook Movement. However, just a year later, the Constitutional Court banned the party from politics, citing violations of secularism. In 1972, the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*, or MSP) was founded, and the MSP successfully became a coalition partner in the government in 1970s. However, it, too, faced closure by the military regime in 1980.

The Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, or RP) was established in 1983. However, due to political constraints, Erbakan did not officially assume the party's leadership until 1987. Erbakan became the Prime Minister for the first time in a coalition government in 1996. Additionally, during this period, the RP achieved significant success in local elections, securing the mayoralties of several major cities. Nevertheless, the RP encountered a similar fate in 1998 following the 1997 military intervention. Moreover, political bans were temporarily imposed on party members, including Erbakan, during these periods of party closures. Subsequently, the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, or FP) was established, but it was also dissolved by the Constitutional Court in 2001. Since 2001, the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, or SP) has continued as the party of the movement.

The National Outlook put forward a new identity grounded in Ottoman-Islamic values, simultaneously advocating for technology and industrialization as answers to Turkey's social and economic dilemmas (Yavuz 2003, 209). The main ideology was anti-Westernism because Westernization process was viewed as a reason of collapse of Ottoman Empire, the economic problems and the moral degeneration (Çınar 2022, 412) which can be interpreted as a distancing from Islamic values. While all parties within the National Outlook shared a commitment to the concept of a "moral order," the RP stood out for its emphasis on promoting private enterprise and global market integration. In contrast, the MNP and the MSP had advocated for a focus on "heavy industry" and economic development driven by state initiatives (Gülalp 1999).

The National Outlook is a socio-political entity comprising a variety of associations and foundations, such as the European National Outlook Organization, the National Youth Foundation (*Milli Gençlik Vakfı*), the Raiders Association (*Akıncılar Derneği*), and the National Turkish Students Union (*Milli Türk Talebe Birliği*). However, since its inception, it has been organized around a political party at its core (Çakır, 2005). Despite occasional restrictions preventing him from formally leading the party, Erbakan remained the leader of the movement until his passing. Renowned for its grassroots activism, the National Outlook, particularly alongside the RP, excelled in mobilizing women. Collaborating with the Ladies' Commissions of the RP, it effectively engaged women at the local level, playing a pivotal role in the party's 1990s success (Arat, 2005; White, 2002).

4.2. Soka Gakkai and Ikeda

In 1930, it was founded by Makiguchi Tsunesaburo under the name Soka Kyoiku Gakkai as a group advocating educational reform. By 1937, it had evolved into a lay organization of Nichiren Shōshū. In the 1940s, Soka Kyoiku Gakkai faced escalating government oppression and, in 1943, both Makiguchi and Toda Josei were arrested on charges of lèse-majesté and violating the Peace Preservation Law. Makiguchi lost his life in 1944, and Toda was released in 1945. Toda undertook the task of restructuring the organization, giving it the new name Soka Gakkai. Under the leadership of Toda, who officially became the second president in 1951, a rapid growth process began. Starting with a few thousand members, the organization expanded, reaching 750,000 households by the time of Toda's death in 1958 (Fisker-Nielsen 2012, 52-53). Another significant aspect of the Toda era is the involvement of Soka Gakkai in politics. Toda, convinced that erecting the national ordination platform necessitated approval from the Diet and state support, perceived politics as a viable means for advancing religious

goals. As a result, he initiated Soka Gakkai's participation in politics by fielding independent candidates in 1956 (Stone 2021, 289-290). However, when Soka Gakkai entered politics in the 1950s, it once again faced a series of arrests. Ikeda, as the leader of Soka Gakkai's youth organization, was arrested for a short time during this period because of violation of public elections law, and by 1960, he had become the third president of Soka Gakkai. Shortly thereafter, politicians associated with Soka Gakkai formed Komei Seiji Renmei in the Diet in 1961 and became the third-largest group within the assembly (Baffelli 2010, 749). In 1964, Komeito was established as an official political party.

When Toda died in 1958, more than one million households have already become a member of Soka Gakkai. By 1970, under Ikeda's leadership, Soka Gakkai claimed that the number of memberships exceeds seven million household. At the same time, Komeito became the third largest political party in Japanese politics (Hrebear 2000). In 1969, a book titled *I Denounce Soka Gakkai*, which criticized the organization, was published, and it was revealed that Soka Gakkai had pressured the author to withdraw this publication. During this period, the growth of Soka Gakkai and Komeito slowed down. In response, Ikeda issued an official apology for the scandal and announced that Soka Gakkai and Komeito would be divided as two separate organizations according to a new policy of politics and religion separation (McLaughlin 2019). By 1970, religious references were removed from Komeito's agenda (Ehrhardt 2015). While Soka Gakkai and Komeito were formally separated, their ties persisted. For instance, members of Soka Gakkai have still continued to work for election campaigns as a part of their regular practices (Asayama 2017).

By 1979, Ikeda had stepped down from the presidency of Soka Gakkai, continuing his role as the honorary president and president of Soka Gakkai International. Ikeda's resignation from the presidency of Soka Gakkai was primarily due to the tension that had developed between Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Shōshū (Métraux 1980). This tension escalated further in the 1990s, culminating in Soka Gakkai's excommunication by Nichiren Shōshū in 1991. As a consequence of this division, Ikeda's influence within Soka Gakkai increased. In 2002, Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda were designated as the "three great generations of presidents" (*sandai kaichō*), emphasizing that subsequent presidents after Ikeda held "purely administrative" roles. With this innovation, Ikeda's position and charisma within the organization were officially affirmed by Soka Gakkai (McLaughlin 2019, 63-65). On the side of politics, Komeito became a part of the coalition government for the first time in 1993, and since 1999, Komeito has also been a coalition partner of the Liberal Democratic Party.

5. The Discourse Analysis of Erbakan and Ikeda

5.1. The Perspective of Erbakan on Secularism and Politics

To comprehend Erbakan's mindset, it is essential to seek an answer to how the National Outlook was defined by him. Erbakan defines the movement as follows²: "The National Outlook means our nation itself, its faith, identity, history. It represents the essence of the nation against Western imitators and collaborators" (2021a, 107). This statement indicates that the National Outlook is positioning itself against the West. Not only does the National Outlook espouse anti-Westernism, but also anti-Semitic views are among the fundamental elements of it.

²Erbakan's books used in this study are compilations, hence there are discrepancies between the publication year and the content year. The references to Erbakan's works are as follows: Erbakan (2019) includes a conference from 2010; Erbakan (2021a) contains chapters from 1991 (23-104), 2010 (105-136), and 1997 (137-158); Erbakan (2021b) features a conference from 1969; Erbakan (2021c) includes a conference from 2009; Erbakan (2022b) contains content from 1991 (91-114) and 1994 (115-138), while the exact dates of others remain unspecified.

Erbakan argued that Greater Israel will be established with Turkey becoming a province of Israel. According to him, there are two groups which are imperialism and Zionism as the “Oppressor Force,” and Muslims along with other oppressed groups who prioritize the supremacy of God (Erbakan 2022b, 94-95). The worldview of “Muslims versus the rest” is reflected in the following quotation:

This trajectory is dragging humanity into the war between beliefs, which has suffered throughout history, as seen during the Crusades, and today, Zionists and Christians are once again aiming to annihilate Muslims by resorting to all forms of persecutions (Erbakan 2022b, 95).

Erbakan’s perspective on civilization also highlights his Islam-centric ideology: “The National Outlook knows that our civilization based on Islam is superior to other nations. Look, I’m not saying believes, I’m saying knows. The National Outlook knows it because it’s the reality” (2019, 28). Moreover, Erbakan criticizes communism and capitalism based on Islam again. In Islam, the prohibition of usury is rooted in the belief that charging interest goes against the principles of economic justice and fairness. In this sense, Erbakan accuses the “capitalist order” because of the existence of the interest. While Islam allows for trade and profit-making, the prohibition of these practices under “communist regimes”, despite God’s allowance, serves as a foundation for Erbakan’s opposition to communism (Erbakan 2022a, 11-12). Thus, his proposal is “just economic order” which combines positive aspects of capitalism and communism while adhering Islamic values.

While arguing that the deficiencies of capitalism and communism can be addressed with a “just economic order,” it is emphasized that the internationalization of this process is necessary. Various organizations should be established, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Defense, Organization of Islamic Cooperation for Economic and Trade Cooperation, Organization of Islamic Cooperation for a Common Currency, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation for Cultural Cooperation, to foster a common stance against the West. This is seen as a means to combat Western powers and Israel (2022b, 54-55). As evident from this example, the “Muslims versus the rest” perspective is reflected in international organization ideas, and a religion-based unity is desired. Also, with the government of the National Outlook, not only Turkey but the entire Islamic world will be rescued, and a “New World Order” will be established (Erbakan 2022b, 138).

When we look at world history, in the century following the Golden Age in 622, Islam dominated the world and there was an order of prosperity. Until 1683, Muslims were the founders, guardians, and protectors of this realm of prosperity. However, in 1683, when the siege of Vienna failed to achieve its goal, Racist Imperialism seized material power (Erbakan 2021c, 26-27).

As seen from this quotation, Erbakan argues that contemporary global challenges are a consequence of the diminishing power of Islam. Restoration of Islam’s authority is the sole solution for these challenges. According to him, the same holds true within the context of Turkey. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which was vital for the establishment of Greater Israel (Erbakan 2022b, 119-120), Muslim countries were occupied by Westerners, and Turkey distanced itself from Islam and succumbed to imperialism. National Outlook offers a solution which is reconstructing Turkey based on Islamic values as seen from Erbakan’s words: “The goal of the National Outlook is to establish a moral-oriented Turkey” (Erbakan 2019, 31).

For establishing “the just order,” education plays a crucial role. Raising new generations as “faithful individuals” is considered as a fundamental aspect of Turkey’s development. These “faithful individuals” will contribute to the advancement of Turkey. They will not only be equipped with academic knowledge but also will possess a strong moral compass and a sense of social responsibility (Erbakan 2021c, 128-129). Erbakan defines

religious education as a moral-oriented development (*maneviyatçı kalkınma*) and parallels its significance with heavy industry. The state should provide religious education and also offer employment opportunities to graduates within the state (Erbakan 2021a, 50-51).

While Erbakan places Islam at the center of his worldview and defines it as the sole source of the truth (2021b, 12), he criticizes the implementation of secularism in Turkey as “a rigidly positivist understanding of secularism dated back to 19th century” (Erbakan 2021a, 127). He elucidates his interpretation of secularism as follows:

We are against portraying secularism as antagonism towards religion and we are uncomfortable with its frequent exploitation to target the believers. However, in Turkey, secularism is misunderstood by certain groups as hostility towards religion. Secularism should not be perceived as hostility towards religion. What we desire is for our country's implementation of secularism to be consistent with that in Europe and America. Conversely, being pious does not equate to being against secularism (Erbakan 2021a, 145-146).

It can be understood that Erbakan criticizes the assertive secularism and asserts that passive secularism is needed in terms of Kuru's categorization. As mentioned above, the exclusion of Islam was one of the founding principles of the Republic of Turkey. Erbakan challenges the position of Islam, which was shaped by elites of the republic, and emphasizes the concept of passive secularism. However, it is worth noting that Erbakan made this statement shortly after the February 28th 1997 military intervention, it can be argued that he didn't truly hold favorable views toward secularism, even in its passive form. This statement may have only been intended as a defense to prevent the closure of the Welfare Party. Nevertheless, these statements were ultimately ineffective in stopping the closure, and in 1998, the Welfare Party was banned by the Constitutional Court for violating the principle of secularism.

While seemingly endorsing passive secularism, Erbakan is, in fact, advocating not for the state's neutrality toward religion but rather for the state to embrace a more Islamic character. In other words, Erbakan's primary demand is to prevent the state from interfering with Islam, as his worldview is entirely Islam-centric. This inclination is discernible in his critical evaluation of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Erbakan not only criticizes the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, or AKP), but also accuses them of being pro-Jewish. According to Erbakan, those who brought Erdoğan to the position of Prime Minister are also part of the Jewish lobby, and Erdoğan is someone who carries out their orders (2019, 46-48). Erbakan claims that there is no democracy, and that the existing system is just a deception. Erdoğan's inability to solve the headscarf issue, to bring in Sharia, and to increase the number of religious schools are also demands of this lobby (2019, 54). Erbakan's criticism through the lens of Judaism is not limited to the AKP. He also criticizes Iranian leaders shortly after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, saying, "You are teaching Western books in schools; how can this be an Islamic revolution? Tomorrow, these children will destroy your revolution" (2021a, 118). Furthermore, according to Erbakan, Jews benefit from the use of the American dollar, and he advises Iranians to stop using the dollar for their transactions (2021a, 116-118).

Another indication of Erbakan's lack of commitment to his views on secularism can be observed in the examples he cited while listing the achievements of the National Outlook in 2009. He itemized 26 accomplishments attained by the National Outlook administrations. The first point is the Cyprus Operation in 1974, while subsequent eight points pertain to Islam which are: moral-oriented development, the increase of the religious vocational schools and Quran courses, the inclusion of religious and moral education course in the

curriculum, diploma equivalency for students from Muslim countries, Turkey's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Turkey's founding partnership of the Islamic Development Bank, and authorization of an interest-free banking system (Erbakan 2021c, 141). This list indicates that Islam related policies are the most significant achievements for the National Outlook.

Despite Erbakan's statement advocating passive secularism, his other actions and expressions suggest that he did not fully embrace secularism and may have even stood against it. As emphasized by Yavuz (2003, 212) and Güllalp (1999, 38), Erbakan chose to refer to culture rather than religion directly due to pressure from the military and to prevent the closure of the party. This approach resulted in Erbakan avoiding explicit discussions of secularism or Islamic governance. Nonetheless, he persisted in portraying the National Outlook as the embodiment of ultimate truth (*hak*), while categorizing all other political parties and their supporters as proponents of absolute falsity (*batıl*) (Erbakan 2019, 31). It can be argued that not only political parties but also all people are divided into two groups, believers and non-believers, as understood from Erbakan's statement, "In human history, there are two types of quests for rights: one is the correct quest for rights taught by the prophets, and the other is the wrong quest for rights followed by the pharaohs" (2019, 23). Here, by 'pharaohs,' he refers to those who do not believe in Islam or other Abrahamic religions. The division of people based on their beliefs, the hostility felt towards the West on the grounds that they are not Muslims, the emphasis on religious education, and the efforts to integrate Islamic values into the political and legal system all reflect Erbakan's perspective that Islam is the only valid rule and his lack of a positive stance towards secularism.

5.2. The Perspective of Ikeda on Secularism and Politics

According to Ikeda, religion is a vital phenomenon for people's satisfaction. He elaborates the necessity of religion as follows:

No matter how remarkable the progress of science may be, humans cannot be satisfied with science alone. On the contrary, the more science advances, the stronger the demand for religion becomes. In fact, in my opinion, religion must possess significant guidance (Ikeda 1970, 136).

As seen from this quotation, the role of religion in life holds a considerable significance according to Ikeda. His understanding of religion is not limited to prosperity of humanity. He describes it as "Religion, like the earth, is the origin of all forms of culture such as politics, economy and education, and is eternal and unchanging philosophy" (Ikeda 1964, 1). In other words, he is indicating that everything is fundamentally based on religion or should be. It can also be interpreted as the belief that religion is an inherent aspect of everything in the world, and the existence of something independent of religion is not possible.

In parallel with this belief, Ikeda's political view is built upon this belief that religion is the source of all aspects of existence. *Ōbutsu myōgō* is a significant concept for Soka Gakkai. Literally, *ōbutsu myōgō* means the fusion of politics and Buddhism. Ikeda states that Komeito was founded for realization of *ōbutsu myōgō*. The reason why Komeito was needed and why it was founded is explained by Ikeda as follows:

How did a strong and principled political party with such distinctive features come to emerge? This is the embodiment of *ōbutsu myōgō*, harmonious unity of the king and Buddha, and if we trace the history of development for observing the relationship between the king (politics), symbolized by the Komeito, and Buddha (religion), which is Soka Gakkai, we can clearly understand the relationship between philosophy and practice (Ikeda 1964, 262).

Ikeda clearly states that Komeito was established to realize *ōbutsu myōgō*. In other words, Buddhist principles should be applied to address social and political issues, and Komeito will serve as the political representative of Soka Gakkai to achieve this goal. In short, it is impossible to separate Komeito from Soka Gakkai. While Komeito represents politics and governance, Soka Gakkai forms the religious and philosophical foundation behind this politics. With Komeito in power, the goal of *ōbutsu myōgō* will be realized, bringing together religion and practice. Ikeda interprets the concept of *ōbutsu myōgō* more broadly, stating that every political party is built on an ideology, and they, too, are in harmony, *myōgō*, within this ideology. He asserts that Komeito is no different, explaining it as follows:

For example, the politics of the Communist Party is in harmony with communism... The Liberal Democratic Party, as well as the Socialist Party, combines its ideological principles with political actions to form its image as a political party. The Komeito is no exception. Taking political actions rooted in the faith in Buddhism, we refer to this as “*ōbutsu myōgō*” (Ikeda 1969, 40).

The ideology of Soka Gakkai is defined by Ikeda using four terms which are the Buddhist democracy as politically, the third civilization as culturally, humanistic socialism or neo-socialism as economically and world nationalism as internationally, and all four terms should be based on Buddhist doctrine (Ikeda 1964, 249).

Firstly, Ikeda argues that the Western democracy is flawed system, and the only democratic system which advocates freedom and justice is the Buddhist democracy (Ikeda 1964, 12). The reason of the Buddhist democracy is explained by Ikeda as “Because Nichiren Buddhism expounds the sanctity of true life, the respect for individuals, true freedom, and equality, and realizes them in their entirety” (Ikeda 1964, 8). In other words, since it is only possible to reach the truth through Nichiren Buddhism, democracy without a Buddhist foundation will be incomplete. Therefore, the establishment of Buddhist democracy is of great importance. Secondly, the third civilization is a combination of spiritualism and materialism encompassing religious beliefs and scientific developments. Thirdly, capitalism lacks collectivism while socialism lacks individualism and spirituality. Therefore, a new system called neo-socialism, as proposed by Ikeda, is necessary. Neo-socialism is an economic system that combines the positive aspects of capitalism and socialism, advocating for progress in both individuals and society, while promoting freedom and equality (Ikeda 1964, 241-248). Lastly, Ikeda emphasizes the importance of cultivating a sense of unity, shared purpose, and cooperation among individuals worldwide, transcending traditional national boundaries in the name of world nationalism. However, he stresses the necessity of nation-states for administrative purposes and unification of a world federation (Ikeda 1964, 250). The equality of nations and the need for world nationalism is grounded in Buddhism and is explained as follows: “Nichiren Buddhism is a universal Buddhist doctrine. It does not focus solely on just one country, Japan” (Ikeda 1964, 252).

Ikeda establishes Soka Gakkai's ideology on a foundation that encompasses the four aspects mentioned above: political, cultural, economic, and international. However, for the implementation of this ideology, Soka Gakkai needs to grow and gain more members. In this sense, Ikeda set a goal of ten million households for Soka Gakkai's membership, drawing inspiration from the Buddhist concept of *shae no san oku*. This concept stipulates that one-third of a community should be Buddhist, another third should express empathy even if they don't directly adhere to the faith, and the remaining third can maintain non-believer status. In Japan, Soka Gakkai was striving to achieve this objective (Ikeda 1969, 216). Additionally, this goal is not limited to Japan, Buddhism should expand to the rest of the world (Ikeda 1964, 223). Gathering new members is an integral part of *kōsen rufu*, widely declare and spread the Nichiren Buddhism, which constitutes the primary objective of Soka Gakkai. To

accomplish this goal, the construction of *honmon kaidan*, an ordination platform, is needed. The construction of *honmon kaidan* is defined as a prerequisite for “creating paradise of Japan” (Ikeda 1964, 223). In other words, it is impossible to create the 'paradise of Japan' before these religious goals are achieved, and this is the very purpose of Soka Gakkai's existence.

Ikeda explains the state's stance on religion, emphasizing that the government should never interfere with religious matters. The state should ensure freedom of religion and belief without involvement in individual beliefs (Ikeda 1970, 270). About the relationship between Buddhism and politics, Ikeda argues that Buddhism has never envisioned becoming a state-religion throughout its history, and always advocates freedom of belief for everyone (1964, 177). Therefore, he rejects all claims about Komeito's trying to create a religion-state in Japan. In this sense, his stance can be viewed as an exemplification of passive secularism, in terms of Kuru's classification. According to Ikeda, the freedom of religion and belief never has never been an issue in Japan's history. Although Christianity faced oppression during the Edo period, it cannot be considered a problem of Japanese (Ikeda 1970, 266). On the one hand, this statement shows that he advocates the passive secularism practices in Japan. On the other hand, it highlights that his primary concern for the autonomy of Buddhism.

Ikeda argues that politicians can be Buddhist, and this should not be viewed as a violation of secularism. However, he emphasizes that a true democracy should rest upon Buddhist values, as detailed in the concept of Buddhist democracy. In addition, he stresses that the essence of politics must be grounded in religious foundations, and it should be Nichiren Buddhism. This situation is not line with secularism, as secularism necessitates the independence of politics from religion. Although Ikeda proclaimed the separation of Soka Gakkai and Komeito, he refers himself as “the founder of Komeito” (1975, 117), and he describes Soka Gakkai as a “supportive organization” of Komeito after the separation (1976, 85). Furthermore, he continues to debate whether Komeito is a right-wing or left-wing party on the political spectrum (Ikeda 1976, 85-89). This indicates that Ikeda still perceives himself as the party's founder and influential figure. The idea of placing religion at the center of politics and the persistence of these relationships demonstrate that Ikeda's viewpoints do not fully align with secularism. However, it should also be noted that with the dominance of passive secularism in Japan, Soka Gakkai also gained ground for its activities. Before the war, when Shintoism was placed above others and other religions were oppressed, Soka Gakkai faced difficult times in Japan. Also, in 1956, the election of Soka Gakkai members as parliamentarians and the subsequent arrest of members in 1957, including Ikeda, were criticized by him as an exercise of state authority against Soka Gakkai (1975, 117-121), indicating that Ikeda faced difficulties with the government of that time. However, the atmosphere of freedom born with the new constitution created an opportunity for growth for Soka Gakkai. In this context, it is observed that Ikeda has no complaints about the administration dominated by passive secularism.

5.3. Comparison of Perspectives of Erbakan and Ikeda

The discourse analysis applied to Erbakan and Ikeda indicates that the two leaders share many common points in their perspectives on politics and religion. Both leaders have placed religion at the core of their political and social perspectives. Erbakan presented Islam as a political and social solution, while Ikeda emphasized need for Nichiren Buddhism as a fundamental idea in politics. Both leaders endorsed the integration of religious values in politics, directly in Turkey's case and indirectly in Japan's case. Additionally, they expressed similar views on economic systems, criticizing capitalism and socialism while suggesting a combination of their favorable aspects.

Erbakan advocates for a “just economic order” aimed at promoting economic stability and social welfare. Ikeda suggests that neo-socialism is a possible solution to injustices.

It is noteworthy that both leaders espouse a stance aligned with passive secularism, advocating for the state's non-interference with religion. Given the predominance of secularism in both Turkey and Japan, it is apparent that both leaders feel compelled to articulate and safeguard their respective worldviews within the confines of their countries' prevailing secular frameworks. Religious movements inherently seek state non-interference to safeguard their religious freedoms and expand their sphere of influence. This demand persists regardless of whether the prevailing secularism is assertive or passive. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Erbakan and Ikeda share a common stance on this matter. However, despite appearing to lean towards passive secularism, their centrality of religion in their lives and the construction of their political ideologies upon it could be construed as conflicting with secular principles. Erbakan's Islam-centric discourse, advocating for a more stringent embrace of Islam for Turkey's development, and Ikeda's legitimization of Komeito's establishment through the concept of *ōbutsu myōgō* and Buddhist democracy, serve as illustrations of this phenomenon.

When analyzing the divergent perspectives of the two leaders, a salient divergence emerges in their attitudes towards other religions and nations. Erbakan's rhetoric is marked by explicit anti-Semitic expressions and a hostile disposition towards all nations except Muslim countries. In contrast, Ikeda's discourse lacks such inclinations.

In terms of their approaches to secularism, as mentioned earlier, both leaders emphasize passive secularism, advocating for the state to maintain a neutral stance towards religions and guarantee religious freedom. The notable contrast lies in their respective stances towards the prevailing state system, reflecting the effects of Kuru's (2009) distinction between assertive and passive secularism. While Erbakan adopts a confrontational approach towards the Turkish system, challenging its foundations, Ikeda seeks to align himself more closely with the existing system and adapt to its dynamics. This distinction stems from the differences in secularism prevalent in these countries. The National Outlook Movement has faced opposition from republican elites since its inception, encountering measures such as recurrent party closures, political bans, and military interventions. Disenfranchised by the existing system, it has attempted to alter the system and struggled to end the dominance of assertive secular policies. The end of assertive secularism's dominance in Turkey occurred only in 2011, achieved not by Erbakan but by Erdoğan (Kuru, 2023). In Ikeda's case, with the rise of passive secularism following the 1947 Constitution, state pressure on Soka Gakkai gradually dissipated over time. With passive secularism as the prevailing ideology, there was no longer a need for Ikeda to directly challenge the system. This circumstance led to Ikeda adopting a softer approach and striving to adapt to the system, unlike Erbakan.

5.4. Alternative Explanations

In a study of Erbakan's anti-Zionist views, Arpacı (2018) attributes Erbakan's stance directly to Islam, suggesting that Erbakan identified Zionism as the source of various problems by positioning it against Islam. Due to state pressure, Erbakan avoided explicitly Islamic language, using anti-Zionist rhetoric instead to evade repression while aligning with his beliefs (Arpacı 2018, 141-142). Similarly, Landau (1988) argues that, fearing party closure, Erbakan targeted Zionism as an Islamic “villain image” to garner support without directly attacking secularism. Regarding Soka Gakkai, Goulah and Urbain (2013) attribute Ikeda's discourse on peace and education to the traditions of Nichiren Buddhism, which emphasize dialogue and openness (Goulah and

Urbain 2013, 310). Although some scholars attempt to explain Erbakan's and Ikeda's discourses through their respective religions, this approach might be inadequate. For instance, Wijzen (2013) emphasizes that extremism is more about interpretation than Islam itself. Henson and Wasserman (2011) demonstrate that radical Islam and fundamentalist Christianity share similar logics, suggesting that alternative explanations might be more appropriate.

The differences in their discourses may be better explained by their target demographics. Erbakan's audience in Turkey is predominantly Muslim, making a direct call to Islam unnecessary. Instead, his focus is on mobilizing an already Muslim audience. In contrast, Ikeda's goal is to integrate individuals into Nichiren Buddhism, regardless of their initial religious affiliations, and then channel their support into the political sphere through Komeito. Therefore, the disparity in their rhetoric can be attributed to the differences in their target constituencies.

6. Conclusion

In this study, the perspectives of Erbakan, the leader of the National Outlook, and Ikeda, the leader of Soka Gakkai, on politics and secularism have been examined. For this comparison, the differentiation of secularism in Turkey and Japan has been analyzed through Kuru's (2009) categorization of assertive and passive secularism. From the perspective of the relationship between religion and politics, both Turkey and Japan are secular states as both have prevented religion from influencing the political and legal systems. However, there are differences in the implementation of secularism in these two states. As discussed earlier, the conditions of the *ancien régime* are present in the Turkish example, while they are lacking in Japan. Consequently, assertive secularism prevailed in Turkey, whereas passive secularism is dominant in Japan.

When examining the differences in the implementation of secularism between Turkey and Japan, it is observed that in Turkey, the state holds authority over religious institutions, whereas in Japan, this matter is left to civil organizations. Officially, establishing a religious organization is prohibited in Turkey, while this is allowed in Japan. This difference directly impacts the rights of religious minorities. In Turkey, the ban on forming religious organizations not only restricts interpretations of Islam other than the one determined by the state but also leads to problems for those who do not identify themselves as Muslims. Another issue is religious education. In Turkey, the sole authority to provide religious education is the state, and private institutions do not have the right to offer religious education. In Japan, on the other hand, the provision of religious education in public schools is entirely left to the private sector. Another distinction is in the realm of religious symbols. Turkey enforced a strict headscarf ban until the 2010s, whereas no such ban is observed in Japan. For these reasons, it is possible to characterize the dominant ideology in Turkey as assertive secularism and in Japan as passive secularism.

The experiences of the National Outlook and Soka Gakkai diverge significantly within the context of ideological struggles that have influenced the nature of secularism. The National Outlook, which faced the closure of its party and the imposition of political bans on its members at regular intervals from its inception, adopted a defensive stance against the assertive secularist policies of the state. This defensive position manifested in the form of anti-Western sentiments. According to Erbakan, secularism was as a concept of Western origin that implied the rejection of Islam. Consequently, he tended to interpret it as anti-Islamic concept and developed a stance that could be summarized as "Muslims versus the rest," opposing non-Islamic policies.

Ikeda's situation was distinct. With the implementation of the new constitution, Soka Gakkai gained more freedom of movement and the ability to recruit members more comfortably. However, when Soka Gakki entered politics in the 1950s, they faced resistance from the state. Still, as passive secularism gained greater prevalence, this pressure gradually diminished. As a result, neither Soka Gakkai nor Komeito faced any legal sanctions. This context had an impact on Ikeda's discourse, leading him to adopt a more tolerant tone and develop a critical language rather than directly opposing all policies of the state.

In conclusion, the application of secularism has a significant influence on religious movements, and this influence is reflected in their discourses. Assertive secularism forces religious groups into a defensive discourse, whereas passive secularism offers religious movements the opportunity to adapt to the system. Although I argue that the type of secularism influences the shaping of discourse, I do not claim that it is the sole influential factor in shaping leaders' perspectives. The thoughts of leaders are shaped by various historical, social, and other factors. However, the nature of secularism, whether assertive or passive, is a significant factor in shaping discourse, and this study elucidates how discourse is affected.

This study has focused on the National Outlook in Turkey, where assertive secularism dominates, and Soka Gakkai in Japan, where passive secularism is prevalent, to highlight the discourse of leaders in different types of secular states. The significance of this study lies not only in exploring the interplay between secularism and the discourse of religious group leaders but also in offering implications for broader societal understanding and policymaking. Understanding how assertive and passive secularism influence the rhetoric of religious leaders can provide insights into fostering inclusive political environments globally. Furthermore, this research marks the first attempt to apply Kuru's framework to analyze Japan's secularism, thus paving the way for future comparative studies in diverse cultural and political contexts. Moreover, the findings suggest that passive secularism may mitigate the radical tendencies of religiopolitical groups. Further discourse analyses of religious groups in other countries could enrich our understanding of these dynamics and inform more nuanced approaches to managing religion and secularism worldwide.

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