

Secularism, the State, and Religion

Comparing the United States, France, and Turkey

Abstract: Why do secular states pursue different policies toward religion? Current American policies are largely tolerant toward religion, whereas French and Turkish policies generally prohibit public visibility of religion. Kuru argues that state policies toward religion are the result of ideological struggles between the defenders of two types of secularism. In the U.S., the dominant ideology is “passive secularism,” which requires the state to play a passive role by allowing public visibility of religion. The dominant ideology in France and Turkey, however, is “assertive secularism,” which demands that the state play an assertive role in excluding religion from the public sphere. Passive and assertive secularism became dominant in these cases through certain historical processes, particularly the presence or absence of an *ancien régime* based on the marriage between monarchy and hegemonic religion during state-building periods.

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