

A COMPARISON OF THE STATE-FAVORED RELIGIONS IN TURKEY AND HUNGARY¹

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ABSTRACT: Is it possible to establish a radical separation between religion and politics in constitutionally secular states? Is religion a private or political matter? In many countries, religious people are becoming activists, involving politics, trying to change the policies based on their beliefs or get a share of the state power. Their claims sometimes fall within the democratic structure of the country, and sometimes outside of it. This paper provides insight into the relation between state and religion by focusing on the religious politics of two countries, Turkey and Hungary. This study is, in essence, a cross-regional and cross-religious comparative study, presenting the very first comparison of the state-religion relationships in the two countries. Ninian Smart's concept of dimensions of religion will be used as a framework to extract a pattern for each country. These dimensions exist in social systems and reflect the cultural and social milieu in which people socialize and build their own beliefs. Our goal is to present and prove that the religious features of Turkey and Hungary are comparable and show similarities along each dimension of Smart.

Exploratory qualitative analysis will be employed to collect and analyze qualitative data in order to generate new concepts and generalizations. The data will be collected from open sources, such as newspapers, statistics, and survey results in Hungary and Turkey, to find the answer to the research questions. The main results of our comparative analysis are, first, evidence for substantial similarities regarding the presence of religion in the public sphere in each Smartian dimension, although in countries that are very different in terms of religion. Second, our systematic and structured analysis provides a strong and impartial invitation for further comparative research from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives.

KEYWORDS: Turkey, Hungary, religion, state, comparison, Ninian Smart, seven dimensions of religion.

INTRODUCTION

The relation between state and religion has been a central concern of social studies for a long time. They “have historically had an uneasy relationship, at times being close allies, at others harsh adversaries, and at still others largely independent” (Cosgel and Miceli 2009, 402). Religion is the main integrating force of societies and has a role as political instrument, and, to some extent, every state supports, restricts or regulates religion. (U.N. Report 2018). However, categorizing them to generate a common pattern is challenging because the state-religion relationship is diverse, and it reflects the culture and history of the states.

This paper analyzes this relationship in Turkey and Hungary using Ninian Smart’s (Smart 1996, 1999) concept of dimensions of religion as framework. Smart’s dimensions are seldom used in sociological works,² but his approach belongs to the classics of the phenomenology of religion.

Among the dominant sociological models of interpretation of the relationship between church and state in the religious dimension of society are, for example, the four-dimensional approach of NJ Demerath III, Sabrina P. Ramet’s descriptions focusing on East-Central Europe (Ramet 1998), and Miklós Tomka’s analysis (Tomka 2011). The list of theoretical and regionally specific works is endless. What is common, however, is that the works are based on the literature and interpretative traditions of sociology, state-church law, and political science, and on the survey data drawn from these. Of the dimensions of religion developed in the phenomenology of religion, those relevant to sociological interpretative traditions are the ones that come to the fore. Prominent in the sociology of religion is the five dimensions of religiosity developed by Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark (1965), which elaborated on the dimensions of individual religiosity and made them empirically researchable.

In our study, we do not follow this theoretical and interpretative tradition. We take as our starting point Ninian Smart’s phenomenological dimension of religion, which does not refer to religiosity but to the different social presences of religion. These dimensions are present in social systems and are indicative of the cultural and social milieu in which individuals socialize and form their own beliefs. Our study aims not to analyze each dimension in-depth and certainly not to compare the religiousness of the two countries’ populations. Our aim is to demonstrate and prove that along the dimensions of Smart, the religious characteristics of Turkey and Hungary are comparable and show similarities along each dimension.

Turkey and Hungary have two different religions. However, when we look at the literature on religious changes in Turkey and Hungary, as the countries were faced with religious restrictions to different degrees in their history, we see three common main stages of the state-religion relationship: government restrictions on religion, non-intervention of governments in religion and governments’ selective support of religious communities.

Turkey is the first Muslim country which stipulated secular ideology in its constitution (Isik 1998). The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as founder, introduced new political, social, cultural, educational and economic revolutions. The aim was to create a westernized, modern, secular nation. Since then, the state-religion relationship has been a controversial issue (Pak 2004). Until the victory of the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* in 2002, (AKP, or the Justice and Development Party), all governments tried to maintain a secular public sphere, where religious activities and symbols would be invisible or under the state’s control. The AKP challenged this application of secularism and claimed that the AKP is a democratic and conservative alternative to Turkish secularism and made religion visible in the public sphere.

Hungary was founded by the Christian king Stephen I, also known as King Saint Stephen, in 1000. The separation of church and state happened in 1848, at the time of the liberal and national movements in Europe. After the communist takeover (1948–1950), the new rulers instituted extreme religious persecution, mainly against the biggest church, the Catholic Church. Although the separation of state and church did not change at the level of the constitution, the state investigated administrative tools to control religious activities. With the regime change (1990), the new government declared the separation of state and church and secured religious freedom in Hungary (Schanda 2019). Since 2010, the big churches receive a very high level of state support for their religious activities. Moreover, referring to their Christian culture and roots is an inherent part of the right-oriented government (Enyedi 2020).

Although Turkey and Hungary are different in terms of their history and concerning religion and the circumstances of the religious dimensions of their societies, there are many parallels today which make a comparison between the two countries reasonable. This research study will focus on the Erdoğan era in Turkey and the Orbán era in Hungary.

Our research method is similar to exploratory data analysis in statistics, with an important difference in terms of the genre of the data. The main sources we evaluated in our research were the public data contained mainly in newspapers, statistics, official webpages, and survey results in Hungary and Turkey. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* defines the main approach of this method as follows:

Exploratory data analysis is the set of steps that qualitative researchers follow in exploring a new area of social or psychological life, which they do by collecting open-ended data from which to generate new concepts and generalizations about that area. The most efficacious exploratory data analysis leaves these investigators as much scope as possible for the discovery of new concepts and generalizations. (Stebbins 2008, 325)

Next, data were collected from secondary sources, and, following a descriptive approach, analyzed according to the pattern provided by Smart's seven dimensions. This method allowed us to focus on the dimensions of religion, as they provide a well-structured model to capture the broad and encompassing nature of religion. In the following section, we summarize the nature of public religion in Turkey and in Hungary and elaborate on this with the help of the seven dimensions.

DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

What we call “religion” or “religious” varies tremendously. How are we going to understand religion? Should we understand religion in terms of beliefs, practices, or institutions? If the aim is to perceive the impact of the politicization of religion on society, we first need to know where and how to look. Focusing on one feature of religion will show us just a small part of the whole picture. Thus, it is crucial to examine all the dimensions since it will not be possible to investigate one dimension in depth without considering the others.

Rather than giving some definitions of religion, Smart aimed to present the theory and practice of religion and discover the common dimensions seen in various religions. He asked: What do religious acts mean to the actors? As an answer, he proposed seven essential dimensions of religion: ritual/practical, ethical/legal, experiential/emotional, material, social/institutional, doctrinal/philosophical, and mythical/narrative (Smart 1996).

1. Ritual/Practical Dimension

Rituals are acts that are repetitive and have a standardized form; since they are repetitive, they are also recognizable. They are not about saying something but doing something, and they

have symbolic meanings beyond themselves (Stollberg-Rilinger 2010). According to Smart, all religions display their practical aspects through ritual. Through rituals, the community re-enacts its myths and confirms and expresses its beliefs through action. These rituals can be worshipping, meditation, pilgrimage, sacrifice, sacramental rites, rites of passage, and healing. Ritual is a core feature of religions because it has an intimate connection with all other dimensions.

The ritual dimension is very important in Islam, and it is placed at the core of the religious life of Muslims. Smart gives the five pillars of Islam, which are the profession of faith (the *Shahada*), daily prayers (*salat*), almsgiving (*zakat*), fasting during Ramadan (*saum*), and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), as examples of the ritual dimension. Although all of the pillars play a vital role in the politicization of religion, we would like to give examples from two pillars, the daily prayers and pilgrimage.

Five times a day Muslims turn to Mecca and pray. The prayer has compulsory moves and recitations from the Qur'an and is a way of communicating with the transcendental. It is the essence of the religious life of Muslims since it aims to ensure that Muslims will remain conscious of God (Özcan 2017).

Praying in the mosque is one of the main rituals in Islam, especially Friday prayer (Friday prayer must be performed collectively, especially by men), which is the most attended prayer in Turkey. The imam, the prayer leader, wears a special garment, and gives a speech before the prayer from a special place (*minber*) in the mosque. Through the ritual, the imam's status changes and with this new status he advises or preaches to Muslims, as the ritual provides him with a place above everyday action in terms of clothing and the place where the ritual is staged.

Rituals "point beyond themselves, symbolically transcend the present moment and place it in a larger – possibly a cosmic – context" (Stollberg-Rilinger 2010, 12–13). When a political leader enters a mosque not as a simple believer but as a leader, the action goes beyond being a simple individual praying and becomes a sign of becoming a leader for all Muslims to protect them. Durkheim emphasized that rituals have a crucial role for social integration, and they are associated "closely with the realm of the sacred" (Baringhorst 2008, 291). Rituals also have a connection with the past "glorious" times in the memory of many people in Turkey. Especially when the leader occupies a special place in the mosque, in the front row, it resembles the Friday divine service parade (*Cuma selamlığı*) in the Ottoman Empire, where the Ottoman sultans were also khalifahs, that is, leaders of all Muslims (*ummah*).

In Turkey, it is very common to see political leaders in the mosques, especially before elections. However, to see the imam welcoming the leader to the mosque is a quite new phenomenon. On 16 February 2019, the newspapers reported that the president of Turkey and AKP president Recep Tayyip Erdogan went to Bursa for the local elections and entered the mosque for Friday prayers. When he entered the mosque, the imam interrupted his speech and welcomed him by saying: "Our beloved and mighty leader is now in our mosque. We pay our respect to him and pray for him." Erdoğan then prayed in a place that was dedicated for him (*Erdoğan'ı gören imam* 16.02.2019).

Although politicians often attend prayers in mosques before elections, asking for votes and running a campaign in the mosque have become popular in recent years. As it is a controversial issue, campaigning in the mosques comes to the fore before every election.

The ritual dimension of Hungary's public life can obviously be observed in the celebration of the main national holy days³ – especially the holiday of 20 August – with the marked presence of Christian symbols and representatives of the main Christian churches. In the political and religious narratives, the existence of the national state of Hungary is closely connected with the decision of the first king, King St. Stephen, for Rome to be recognized as the center of Western Christianity and for the asking and accepting the crown from Pope Sylvester II.

Furthermore, the celebration of Christian liturgical ceremonies on occasion of official national holidays is accompanied by the presence of political representatives in the church buildings during the liturgy, independent from their personal belonging to a particular church. The presence of Christian representatives at national ceremonies and, reciprocally, the presence of political representatives at Christian liturgies emerged after the system change in the years 1989–1991. Since then, these appearances are more characteristic during the administrative periods of right-oriented coalitions. Since the Orbán administration that came to power in 2010, the mentioned mutual appearances have become taken for granted (Bozóki and Ádám 2016; Bruszt and Stark 1991).

While Erdoğan is encouraging a mosque-based life, at the same time he has also asked for votes at the opening ceremony of a mosque, declaring: “We have an election after a month. We will make the best of it. We will not leave it to the thieves, God willing!” (*Erdoğan cami açılışında* 24.05.2019). Imams have sometimes joined the election campaigns of Erdoğan. A video record of this caused a big reaction because Erdoğan was not only promoting the AKP, but also describing the opposition as infidels and prayed for their failure. He said: “Oh God, give us victory. Protect us from all sorts of harm. Protect the Muslims. This [the coming election, translator's note] is the war between Islam and infidelity; do not give these infidels any opportunity to win” (*Bir savcı aramıyor* 25.02.2019).

Especially before elections it is common to witness such speeches that are given mostly by the ruling party members. The places where the main rituals of Islam are performed become stages for political propaganda. Moreover, the prayer leaders sometimes prefer to keep silent, and sometimes side with the politicians, supporting the misuse of those rituals.

Quite similar are the cases concerning public prayer in Hungary. Viktor Orbán, in his first speech after having won his third election with a two-thirds majority, uttered the following prayer: “First of all, we have to say thank God.” Furthermore, in Hungary, the national anthem starts with the words, “God bless Hungary.” Although taken literally, as a prayer-like formulation, the anthem is understood and chanted as a religion-neutral lyrical text. Nevertheless, the prime minister uses God's blessing formulations in his addresses as an established wording, following the highlighting of his Christian orientation.

In her study on the role of ritual in Ancient Maya, Lucero (2003, 544) claimed that “emerging rulers used several types of traditional rituals in various settings as a means to acquire and maintain political power.” Rituals have the power to integrate religious, social, and political life. We found similar patterns in our comparison of Turkey and Hungary; political actors can use rituals to convince people and even make them active participants of their political cause.

Many rituals regularly stimulate strong and persuasive emotions (Rappaport 1999). The data we collected from print and online news show that it is reasonable to think that the power of rituals can be a useful tool if political leaders associate themselves with these rituals: “Their association with traditional or social conventions leads to the sanctification or uncritical acceptance of their special powers” (Lucero 2003, 525). The politicians of both Turkey and

³ The three most important national holydays are in Hungary 1) March 15th in memory of the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Independence, 2) August 20th in memory of the state's founding and its founder King Saint Stephen, and 3) October 23rd, in memory of the 1956 Revolution and War of Independence

Hungary seem not to miss any opportunity to attend public events and rituals to promote their political agendas. In return, they expect to maintain political power.

2. Ethical/Legal Dimension

A religious tradition offers ethical and legal imperatives, which might form the core of religious practice. In every religion, one can find sets of rules, behavioral precepts, or guidelines. Smart combined the ethical and legal dimensions into one. For him, in some religions, such as Islam and Judaism, “ethics are expressed in legal formulations prescribing how believers are to live. Other traditions place less importance on law, but ‘still display an ethic which is influenced and indeed controlled by the myth and doctrine of faith’” (Cox 2006, 163). Based on the rules, the community judges a person as good or bad. These rules shape the members’ behavior, depending on the level of religiosity of that community. Smart stated that “to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community” (Smart 1969, 19).

Moral obligations have a vital role in the belief structure of Islam, and Islamic law regulates many issues related to women, family life, inheritance, etc. However, in some traditions, the legal system is less binding, but the concrete society has ethics influenced by doctrine. For Christianity, the center of moral attitude is love: this understanding of love is based on the belief that Jesus sacrificed his own life out of love for people (Smart 1996, 1969). Love means one must love God and love one’s neighbors; this was the very center of the teachings of Jesus. For Smart, the concept and the practice of love are rooted in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, “for God from all eternity is a society of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, kept together by the bond of love” (Smart 1989, 18).

In Hungary, the entire ethical system is rooted in the Jewish-Christian tradition, which is seen not only as a political power and orientation but also as the main source of culture. This worldview has had a robust tradition in Hungary since its foundation, except for the decades under communism (1950–1990). After communism, this foundation of culture was instrumentalized by all right-oriented governments to highlight clear opposition to the former communist regime and anti-religious political options. Since the *Fidesz Magyar Polgári Szövetség* and the *Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt*, (the Hungarian Civic Alliance and the Christian Democratic People’s Party, or FIDESZ-KDNP) administration which has been in power since 2010, the importance of Christianity has been emphasized as a core element of political rhetoric and articulated in the new Fundamental Law (promulgated on 18 April 2011), and in the so-called Declaration of National Cooperation (14 June 2010). The preamble of the Fundamental Law contains a “National Avowal” which states:

We are proud that our king Saint Stephen built the Hungarian State on solid ground and made our country a part of Christian Europe one thousand years ago. [...] We recognise the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood.

In the statements of Orbán, references such as “Christian Hungary” are very common. Orbán regularly emphasizes Christian values as the nation’s values, in opposition to liberalism. Although he differentiates Christianity as a religion from Christianity as culture and political orientation, the latter has greater importance for his politics. It signifies the traditional form of the family against the “gender ideology,” the Christian heritage of Europe against the Muslim migrants’ invasion, and the sovereignty of Hungary against the liberal dictates of the European Union (Máté-Tóth and Kasznár 2020).

Family and fertility policies belong to the core elements of the FIDESZ-KDNP ideology (Szikra 2014). They support young families, and, for them, the traditional family is a “political sacrament” which should be defended against “gender ideology” and LGBTQ+ activities

(Kováts 2020). Several supporting programs, including the family home ownership subsidy program, known by the acronym of CSOK,⁴ have the aim to increase the low fertility rate. According to Orbán, Hungary tries to address the need for workers not through supporting immigration, like the Western societies, but through supporting young parents and families. His family policy is one of the most stable fundamentals of his support by the big Christian churches. The strong correlation between the three central values of nation-Christianity-family explains very clearly his political worldview and his constant support from Christians and Christian churches.

Turkey, as the first secular Muslim majority country, adopted the Swiss Civil Code and other Western laws between 1926 and 1929 to westernize the legal system (Feroze 1962). However, the impact of Islamic rules on Turkish society has not been erased, and religious ethics and rules have continued to be alive in the society.

The AKP has a strong Islamic tradition and gets its support mainly from the conservative countryside. Çağaptay (2018, 8) has argued that “Erdogan has gradually alienated large swaths of Turkish society and eventually narrowed his platform, pushing ultra-conservative and non-egalitarian Islamist social and political values onto the rest of the country.” Although these values do not appear in the constitution, most of them are suggested by Erdoğan and AKP members on different occasions.

The promotion of family values and having big families is a good example. Erdoğan insists on families having at least three children to keep the population young (*Erdoğan again calls on Turks* 20.02.2019). Erdoğan claims that a woman’s life was “incomplete” if she failed to have offspring. Almost in every wedding ceremony he attends, he suggests that the couple should have three children. Erdoğan has said: “A woman who rejects motherhood [...] however successful her working life is, is deficient, is incomplete.” He has called the use of birth control “treason” (*Job or No Job, Erdogan Wants* 06.06.2016). For him, a Muslim family should not practice contraception or family planning (*Turkish President Recep Tayyip* 30.05.2016). These ideas of the ruling party and its leader have affected the law and, especially with indications of a decline in the birth ratio by 2012, the long-term policy to encourage at least three children per family was introduced.

Islam emphasizes motherhood, and Erdoğan has also said: “You cannot bring women and men into equal positions. [...] That is against nature because their nature is different. [...] Our religion [Islam] has defined a position for women: motherhood” (McMillan Portillo 09.01.2015). Çağaptay (2018, 188) has argued that “under Erdogan, women’s rights have been eroded and repurposed as family rights. This has shifted the focus away from the individual woman and instead toward her traditional role as a mother and a wife.”

The AKP also encourages gender segregation. Erdoğan, when he was prime minister, said that “the government was already on a mission to ‘segregate’ girls’ and boys’ buildings in dormitories operated by the state [...] It’s not clear what is going on in these places. They are all mixed up, anything can happen. As a conservative democratic government, we have to intervene” (*Turkish government to act on* 11.05.2013).

In summary, the ethical and moral values of religion, to be more precise, a certain interpretation of Islam based on a certain sect, have an undeniable influence on daily life in Turkey and also on legislation. We can also observe the impact of religion on Hungarian life and legislation with reference to Christian values. In Hungary the politically promoted value system has many overlapping features with Turkey’s political rhetoric and legislation.

⁴ Családi Otthonteremtési Kedvezmény (Family Homebuilding Allowance)

Moreover, it is important to remark that the Turkish fundamental law is clearly secular⁵ and does not mention Islam as a religion or as the main source of the Turkish society's moral system. However, the Hungarian fundamental law is full of references to Christianity, and Christian values are important for the Declaration of National Collaboration (*Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere* or NER). Yet, regardless of the constitution, our analysis indicates that politicians of both countries are not reluctant to refer to religious texts when the texts seem helpful to their political cause.

3. Experiential/Emotional Dimension

This is one of the most attractive dimensions of religion. When people have encountered something which they believe is very profound, they will react emotionally to it. These emotions are of vital importance, especially when they are related to the events that caused the religion to exist and/or the life of the founder of the religion: "Inspirational experiences helped to shape the careers of Isiah, Paul, Arjuna, Muhammad, the Buddha, and many others in the history of religion" (Smart 1996, 166).

For Smart, "so much of religious practice is soaked in emotions. Without them, the practice would be insincere, mechanical, merely external, not really worth undertaking" (Smart 1996, 195). Emotions can be thought of as vivifying aspects of rituals. Smart (1996) gave examples from the recitation of the Qur'an and the hymns from Christian and Hindu traditions which have strong emotional impacts on people. They give the feeling of having a direct conversation with the God: "We need to recognize the power of the words and music to fashion these feelings. It is an aspect of ritual which has depth and power. It is something which is a vital part of the phenomenology of religion ..." (Smart 1996, 178).

Religious practices make people experience deep emotions. For Smart (1996) rites trace out a spiritual path: "The marvellous sounds of ritual – the call of minaret, the chanting of the sacred scripture, the singing of monks, the wonderful hymns – in diverse ways give power to feelings which chime in with the numinous and the sense of the divine" (180–181). It is not rare to see a Turkish politician in mosque while reciting verses from the Holy Book before elections (*Başkan Erdoğan katıldığı* 06.01.2019). Emotions influence our perceptions about politicians and policies, and our responses to them (Isbell 26.09.2012). Moreover, emotions have a role in politics because "emotion enables past experience to be encoded with its evaluative history and because emotion enables contemporary circumstances to be quickly evaluated" (Marcus 2000, 221).

Knowing the powerful effect of religious stories on emotions, Erdoğan ended his speech at the AKP convention by praying the same prayer that the Prophet Muhammad used before the battle of Uhud (*Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Oyununuzu* 12.08.2018). It is a very emotional pray. It reminds Muslims of the loss of a battle for the first time in the history of Islam because Muslim soldiers did not follow the orders of the Prophet, and the Prophet Muhammad got injured. By reminding people of this prayer, Erdoğan recalled the knowledge about the Uhud battle and the importance of following the orders of the leader before any war, or election. Furthermore, it was an indirect way of linking the opposition party members and supporters with the enemies of the Prophet.

Many AKP followers believe that Erdoğan is a leader of the Muslim nation, and it is compulsory to obey him. Moreover, besides the ordinary people, some AKP members have also made very emotional statements about Erdoğan. Some prominent AKP members have called Erdoğan the leader of the Muslim nation and even a second Prophet. Some consider

⁵ For more information: https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf

touching Erdoğan as worshipping. Last but not least, an AKP deputy has described Erdoğan as a leader who has all the features of God (*Erdoğan sevgisinin coştugu* 02.12.2012).

After the regime change in Hungary, right-wing politicians started to appear at the Sunday services of Christian churches. In the first freely elected parliament, a considerable percentage of MPs were regular churchgoers, and there were even Protestant pastors who became MPs. On major national holidays, the Catholic Church holds a solemn service, where several members of the current ruling coalition and the political elite attend, taking their reserved seats in the front rows. After the services, politicians are regularly invited to speak and share their political ideas inside the church or on the square in front of the church, especially during election campaigns. These ritual occasions, often broadcast by government-controlled media, serve to underpin the cooperation between right-wing parties and Christian churches.

During the prime minister's state of the union speeches and other high-profile occasions, Christian bishops are in the front row. What takes place in the sacred space with the presence of politicians during Sunday services, also takes place in the profane space with the presence of religious representatives. This state-church cultural and political coalition has great symbolic power for religious voters who regularly attend church.

Referring to the great past and promising to bring it back and protect the nation are common features of politicians in both Turkey and Hungary. Orbán is often considered as the savior of Hungary from the post-communist and liberal destructive forces, from the international cultural and political influences, from the migrants and Islam, in general from insecurity, by ensuring a confident and powerful Hungary. In his address in celebration of the anniversary of the 1956 October Revolution, Orbán summarized many areas where Hungarians were mentioned as "we":

We are the ones who in '56 holed world communism below the waterline, and we are the ones who knocked the first brick out of the Berlin Wall. And we are still standing firm. All we say is not that the Hungarians are right, but that they will be right. And because what is right for Hungarians is proved by the third instance, after utility prices and the migrant issue, we will be right for the third time: there will be a referendum, and we will protect our children. Hungary will be the first country in Europe in which we stop aggressive LGBTQ propaganda at the school gates (Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's commemoration 23.10.2021).

In brief, the most attractive dimension of religion, the experiential one, has attracted a great deal of attention from politicians also. Political leaders often refer to the religious and national rituals and narratives that people would emotionally react to. This emotional experience of people helps the leaders to place it into a collective and historical context and form a collective identity. The image of Orbán as a savior of Hungary or the image of Erdoğan as a leader of all Muslims are good examples of the experiential dimension of religion.

4. Material Dimension

The material dimension of religion is expressed through the Christian chapels and cathedrals; Muslim mosques; Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, and Jewish temples; and religious icons, paintings, statues, scriptures, books, and pulpits. These physical buildings, paintings, books, and statues are associated with the tradition, geographical places, and narratives of the belief systems.

The material dimension is a reinforcement of ritual, and with that reinforcement of cosmology. The impressiveness of the institution is registered through vestments, relics, jewels, glittering divinities, glorious statues, soaring buildings. In effect the material dimension is both congealed ritual and conceptual hardware. (Smart 1996, 288)

Though these places are segregated from the profane world because they are for praying to God, people can gather for different reasons, even for political purposes. They do not serve only for religious ceremonies, but also secular activities can take place there.

In the Ottoman Empire, mosques were mainly built by the people of a particular neighborhood, town, or city, and this tradition has continued in the new Republic of Turkey. However, the discussion about the number of mosques, alongside their function, has never ended. The AKP increased the budget of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and shouldered the financial responsibility for building mosques in Turkey and abroad. According to the Presidency of Religious Affairs, the number of mosques was 79,096 in 2007, and had increased to 89,445 by 2020 (*TÜİK merakla beklenen* 07.06.2021). Many people criticized this number, arguing that in many cities, mosques outnumbered schools (*Hakkari'de okul ve* 08.06.2021). According to the Ministry of Education, there are 67,125 schools in Turkey (Şahin .2021).

Since the 1950s, the mosque in Taksim has caused intense discussions among both its advocates and opponents, a challenge for both sides to defend or conquer Istanbul: "Taksim Square, a significant Republican landmark in the city of Istanbul. Central to the dispute was always the political-symbolic implications of the project rather than practical matters like public demand for a mosque at Taksim" (Buyuksarac 2004, 1). The mosque project was first proposed by a non-governmental organization (NGO) in 1954, and rejected. In his election campaign, mayoral candidate Erdoğan (now president) promised to build a mosque in Taksim "to carry Istanbul from darkness to light, [...] just as Sultan Mehmed of the Ottoman Empire had done when he had conquered the city in 1453" (Buyuksarac 2004, 6). Most of the opponents of this mosque claimed that it was not an urban project but political (Çelik 2013, 24).

The construction of the mosque started in 2017, and it opened on May 28, 2021. It overshadows the statue of the Turkish Republic's founder Atatürk in Taksim, changing the topography and design of the square: "It is highly symbolic of Erdogan's reign taking over Turkey's Republic" (*In Istanbul, Erdogan* 22.03.2019). During the opening ceremony, Erdoğan said: "I view Taksim Mosque as a place greeting Hagia Sofia Grand Mosque and a gift for the 568th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul we will observe tomorrow. [...] Have no doubt that this sound [of adhan] disturbs those who plot against our country. Taksim Mosque is one of the signs of the birth of a great and strong Turkey ..." (*Istanbul's Taksim Mosque* 28.05.2021).

Public spaces, especially city squares, are key points where everyday activities overlap with political events: "This overlapping leads to the politicization of otherwise mundane daily practices, transforming the city dwellers into political subjects even if they are not directly involved in political actions" (Batuman, 2015, 3). Taksim Square, as a significant place in the history of the new Republic, is a main transportation hub and a popular destination for both Turkish citizens and tourists. It is being redesigned using religious arguments. The Taksim Mosque project has made clear how the seculars and Islamists imagine the Turkish identity and culture.

In Hungary, during the 11 years of Orbán's administration, the large Christian churches have received substantial budgetary support. Although the issue of church funding is extremely complex and cannot be analyzed in detail here, (Schanda 2009, 2019), the government has been extremely generous in providing material support to the churches. Since 2010, 3,000 churches have been renovated and almost 150 have been built with government support in Hungary and in Hungarian-inhabited parts of the Carpathian Basin. In the autumn of 2021, the Minister of Finance announced that the budget will support church construction and renovation projects on a scale of St. Stephen's (HVG 9. Sept. 2021).

"When we renovate a church, we want to serve the community, regardless of the size of the municipality." state secretary Miklós Soltész explained during the ceremony of the reopening

of the church in Budaörs on October 12, 2020. His argument represents the government's thinking behind support for church renovations and new church buildings. The "government's aim with the church renovation program is to retain the population of smaller settlements, as these investments bring life to their daily lives and preserve the community and Christianity." The program mentioned by Soltész includes support for church renovation in 1,400 cases inside Hungary and 400 churches in the former Hungarian area (István Szabó 07.05.2021).

We gave examples only of churches and mosques; however, any ordinary objects or places can symbolize or manifest the sacred. Rosary beads, books, sculptures, the cross, *sejjade* (prayer rug), or parts of the natural environment can be examples of the material dimension. Our data briefly introduce that there is no clear and sharp line between religion and politics in both Turkey and Hungary in terms of the material dimension. The leaders and politicians of both countries utilize the material dimension of religion, and associate material aspects with the nations' history to gain political goals.

5. Social/Institutional Dimension

The social dimension of religion "is the mode in which the religion in question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself" (Smart 1969, 21). This dimension forms the organizational component of religion and, through it, perpetuates itself. Individuals may or may not follow a religious tradition; however, the teaching is preserved and passed on through social organizations such as churches, mosques, and temples.

Smart (1996, 215) stated, "Any tradition will manifest itself in society, either as a separate organization with priests or other religious specialists (gurus, lawyers, pastors, rabbis, imams, shamans and so on)," and further commented, "These experts, functionaries, charismatic figures and holy persons exhibit in their differing ways many of the modes of religious expressions."

Smart found some similarities between the church in Christianity, *sangha* in Buddhism, and *ummah* in Islam. Islam, first, organized the state, and then gradually the understanding of *ummah* appeared. This *ummah* gathered under the leadership of caliphates, who are the successors of the Prophet (Smart 1998). Smart (1977) believes that this unifying character of Islam is very important. There are many reasons that Muslims have the idea of unity in their minds and hearts: Muslims have only one holy text, one *kiblah* (Mecca), they emphasize the oneness of God, and all Muslims follow the same holy laws and traditions.

When it comes to the social and institutional sides of Islam in Turkey, there are three main institutions: the first is *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (in short form, *Diyanet*, the Presidency of Religious Affairs), the second is the religious schools (IHLs, Imam Hatip High Schools, or IHLs), and the last is religious organizations.

With the introduction of the new Republic of Turkey, the Islamic institutions were abolished. However, to meet the demand of the people for religious guidance, the *Diyanet* was established. The *Diyanet* are responsible for "administering affairs concerning belief and worship and managing mosques and religious officials" (Watters 2018, 357). To educate the religious prayer leaders who also lead the religious funeral ceremonies, IHLs, schools with secular and religious curricula, were opened. Moreover, especially in the last two decades, religious organizations have increased in number and also in financial, political, and social power. Following the victory of the AKP, religion has become visible in the public sphere, especially through these institutions.

Imam Hatip High Schools have always received generous support from Erdoğan. The number of religious schools has increased since 2012, in parallel with political support (*Millî Eğitim İstatistikleri* 2021). Turkey has also increased religious education in public schools, some of which have been converted into IHLs (Butler 2018). The drastic rise in the number of IHLs is the materialization of Erdoğan's famous goal, "creating a pious generation," who will work "for the construction of a new civilization" (Butler 25.01.2018). One can find hundreds of examples of reference to this in Erdoğan's speeches. Sometimes he devoted his entire speech to IHLs. On different occasions, he has emphasized the importance of religious education by saying that "to attack IHLs is equal to attacking the roots of the nation because IHLs are the body between our nation and our roots" (*Erdoğan: Omuz omuza* 13.04.2019). Their aim is to create "an ideal young person carrying a computer in one hand and a Qur'an in the other" (Lüküslü 2016, 637).

Regarding Hungary, Smart's societal dimension can be found in the recognition of churches and religious organizations, the church-maintained school system and faith-based organizations (FBO) in the NGO sector. In Hungary, the biggest Christian denominations with the most members are the Catholic Church (39%), the Calvinist Church (11,6%), the Lutheran Church (2,2%), the Congregation of Faith (0,2%), and the Baptist Church (0,2%).⁶ Non-Christian denominations are Jehovah's Witnesses, different Jewish communities, and other communities following Far Eastern and esoteric spiritualities. The question of the official registration of religious institutions was highly debated right from the beginning of the Orbán administration (Schanda 2019; Ádám and Bozóki 2016). According to the criteria of the former law, approximative 350 to 400 religious communities (i. e. traditional churches, denominations, traditional sects, new religious movements etc.) had been registered; the new law (2011) restricted the criteria and less than 40 churches and denominations have been registered. The massive change of the former law demonstrated, on the one hand, the profound Christian orientation of the new government, and on the other hand, the power of the government in the field of religious affairs.

The second area of the social dimension of religion is the educational system maintained by denominations. In Hungary, a remarkable expansion in the takeover of public schools by religious organizations took place and is still taking place. The reasons for the switching of schools from the secular to the religious domain is at least twofold. On the one hand, denominations can provide more financial support for schools, and on the other hand, the FIDESZ-KDNP government motivates schools to make this change as well. Basically, changing a public school to a church-maintained school has only a low-level effect on the teaching staff and curricula. The change focuses almost solely on the ownership. Debates about this transformation highlighted the problem of freedoms, including the freedom of religion, especially in cases where a town has only one elementary school. Nevertheless, adults and schoolchildren are satisfied with the new situation. Politically, the Orbán government declared the success of this delivery and underlined the importance of church education.

The third area of the social dimension is the increasing presence of faith-based organizations in the field of Hungarian NGOs. In the last 10 years, the government has supported FBOs from the state budget on an extraordinary level. There is a clear preference for organizations which declare themselves as religious, or declare their activities to have religion- or church-related aims. In general, we can state that the growing presence of FBOs is in the political interests of the government, partly to reduce FBOs related to the former governments and partly to amplify voters in civil society (Máté-Tóth and Szilágyi 2020).

⁶ Data from the census 2011. The data of the census are confused because the question about religion was false formulated. It asked not the belonging to but the feeling close to. According to other surveys the big Christian Churches have definitively higher membership rates.

In summary, the Turkish educational system provides a powerful example of the government's efforts to change the next generation by using religious educational institutions. Furthermore, the presence of the institutional dimension of religion in politics becomes more visible. In the light of the data presented above, we can reach the conclusion that the Hungarian government is expending too much effort in supporting church schools. The societal dimension of religion can be observed in the relationship between the government, on the one hand, and churches, religious organizations, the church-maintained school system, and FBOs, on the other hand. While the aim of the AKP was made clear by Erdoğan, it cannot be ruled out that the FIDESZ government hopes to recruit a generation that thinks and feels differently by making use of church schools. Nevertheless, with or without mentioning the goal, the financial support of both governments to religious institutions gives us a concrete example of the material dimension of religion in Turkey and Hungary.

6. Doctrinal/Philosophical and Mythical/Narrative Dimension

Smart believed that all religious and secular belief systems evolve doctrines and philosophy for various reasons. They have a system of doctrines or beliefs about the nature of divinity or ultimate reality and the relationship of humans to that ultimate reality or divinity. These differing doctrines or philosophies are integrated with other aspects of religion because they offer explanation of and justification for the seven dimensions (Smart 1969).

The doctrinal and narrative dimensions of religion are related to each other, as the first strengthens the second. For example, "in the Christian tradition, the story of Jesus' life and the ritual of the communion service led to attempts to provide an analysis of the nature of the Divine Being which would preserve both the idea of Incarnation (Jesus as God) and the belief in one God. The result was the doctrine of the Trinity, which sees God as three persons in one substance" (Smart 1992, 17).

Myths or narratives are the sacred stories about the invisible or divine world. They tell the stories about the founders or important personalities of religions, and these stories are passed from generation to generation. They reveal and explain the beliefs of that religion about the ultimate nature of gods, humans, and the universe. The story of Adam and Eva and the creation is a good example of this dimension. Moreover, many religious narratives have a connection with other dimensions, such as the ethical, social, economic, and political dimensions.

"The stories of the gods help to shape the past, and to throw light on the way the group sees itself" (Smart 1996, 132). The doctrinal dimension often manifests itself in politics through stories. Thus, in this section, we will take these two dimensions together to understand the relationship between politics and religion.

To understand the role of myths in contemporary Hungarian society and politics, we need to remember that there is a certain heritage in Central and Eastern European societies, thus also in Hungarian society. The geopolitical and geo-cultural public sphere is at its core (Máté-Tóth and Hajdú, 2017). The societies of these regions have been occupied by great powers for many centuries. In the second half of the 20th century, the Soviet Union was in power. Vulnerability and lack of state autonomy deepened people's desire for autonomy and made the region politically exploitable. It is a kind of collective insecurity and borderline syndrome, which is perhaps the most powerful factor in the construction of collective identity.

Referencing the importance of churches and certain religious myths are closely linked to the emphasis on autonomy and independence (Máté-Tóth 2015). The reference to Christianity and the support given to large Christian churches represent a break with the communist past, an emphasis on independence from vulnerability to communism. In contrast to liberalism,

the prominent political support for Christianity can be interpreted as a struggle for autonomy from the EU and the influence of the “powerful” countries of Western Europe (Germany, France, and the UK) (Máté-Tóth and Krasznár, 2020).

The mythical dimension includes references to Hungarians’ ancient roots, which is partly reflected in the ideology of alternative religious groups but is also present in the studies and artworks of the government-funded Institute of Hungarian Research⁷, favored by the Ministry of Culture. According to them, Hungarians are a much more ancient people than academic historiography teaches. So much so that alternative historiography traces the origins of Hungarians back to the Parthians.⁸ The broader framework of these national myths is formed by tales and legends depicting the prehistory of the Magyar people, the legend of the miraculous deer, the legend of the white horse, etc.

The six doctrines of Islamic faith are reflected in political conceptions, and believing in one God is the key to all: it means believing in the absolute unity of God, who has no partner, is the only creator, and none but Allah (God) is worthy of worship.

There are significant similarities between the qualities of humans and the divine qualities. The names, actions, and qualities that are attributed to God by man are also present in man at a micro level and to a limited extent. Therefore, Allah’s attribute of *tawhid*, the oneness of God, is a general perspective to reality, the world, space and time, the history of humanity, and destiny. It is interpreted as the unity of Muslims on earth, and the theme of protecting the unity and integrity of society in the Muslim political tradition is among the main themes. A close relationship has been established between the concept of *tawhid* and the concept of *ummah*, which means the unity of believers and basically has a political meaning. *Ummah* is one and whole because Allah is also one (Ay 2005).

Therefore, it was normal to have only one leader in the first periods of Islam. After the Ottoman Empire, the understanding of “one nation, one state” survived in the new Republic of Turkey. Yusuf Akçakura, an influential Turkish nationalist, summarized the relationship between religion and nationalism as follows: “One of the fundamental tenets of Islam is expressed in the saying ‘religion and nation are one’” (1981; Goalwin 2018, 161). Another nationalist author, Ziya Gökalp, emphasized the role of religion in promoting national identity and solidarity (Goalwin 2018).

Hence, it is not surprising to see a reflection of the concept of “one God, one state” in Erdoğan’s statements. He has emphasized the concept of *ummah* in almost every argument in the first decade of his ruling, and, especially after the 2015 elections, Turkish nationalism. He has re-emphasized one state, one nation, one flag, and one language in addition to his usual arguments regarding holy figures, God, Islamic martyrdom, the respectability of religious schools, headscarves for women, and a personal interpretation of women’s place in Islam (Tekinalp 2018; Burç 2018).

Narratives help to define groups and sacred entities, as well as persons (Smart 1996). They support doctrines; they are the scripts for rituals and explain the origins of doctrines and rituals. They also depict how God acts when dealing with humanity. Our data indicate that finding both dimensions of religion is not too hard in either Turkey or Hungary. While the myths and narratives strengthen collective identity by referring to the ancient roots of Hungarians, the first doctrine of Islam became an important way of producing and protecting the unity and integrity of society in Turkey. The politicians of the two countries have often

⁷ <https://mki.gov.hu/en/>

⁸ E.g., Badinyi, Jós Ferenc: A magyarság igaz őstörténelme [The very ancient history of Hungarians]; Angyali Menedék, Budapest, 2015

referred to the myths and doctrines of their religions, especially to create a common history and a united nation.

OUTLOOKS

In our comparison, we presented and explained many different facts and correlations between Turkey and Hungary which allow us to formulate one evidence-based statement regarding the place and function of religion. The data were collected using an exploratory data analysis research design from open sources in order to discover new concepts and generalizations. We employed Ninian Smart's concept of the dimensions of religion to collect and analyze the data and extract patterns for each country. Our paper demonstrates that the religious features of Turkey and Hungary are comparable and show similarities along each of Smart's dimensions.

Although there are many historical, societal, and religious differences, the main political structures of the two countries show parallelism. Political use of religion by the governments is common to support and secure the stability of political power. The leaders of the political hegemony have religious vision, although the population in both countries is not religious to a very great extent. We can observe strong efforts by both governments to draw a demarcation line between nationalist and religious people, and between institutions loyal to the government and those who are against the main national aims defined by the governments. Religion in this regard is, first of all, not the religious commitment of the people, but a favored discursive dimension in the public sphere and an ideological tool for political interests.

Despite the differences in religions and regions, both countries underwent similar stages in terms of the religion-state relationship, and this makes them comparable, and Smart's dimensions provided a useful framework to do so. The politicians of both Turkey and Hungary seem aware of the importance of religion for maintaining political power. We found that rituals play a crucial role in the political agendas of the politicians, and they are not reluctant to utilize them. Both leaders, Orbán and Erdoğan, have attended religious ceremonies and highlighted their religious orientations.

Turkey is a secular country with no reference to Islam in its constitution, while the Hungarian fundamental law is full of references to Christianity. However, in practice, there is no significant difference between the two. Both countries' governments politically promote religion-based value systems. The ethical dimension of religion has an undeniable influence in the lives of people. To increase this influence, the governments largely support the religious institutions economically and politically. By doing this, the Turkish government expects to raise a pious generation; however, we cannot say that the Hungarian government has the same aim. Yet, the social/institutional dimension is visible in the acts of both governments.

Both governments support institutions connected with the material dimension. The increase in the number of mosques, churches, and other religious institutions in recent times constitutes a good example of the use of any material that manifests the sacred. Moreover, the leaders prefer to use the materials not only because of their religious meanings, but also because of their association with the history of the nations for political gains.

The experiential dimension is the most attractive dimension of religion, and our data indicate that politicians are knowledgeable about this. They often refer to national and religious stories or rituals, expecting – or knowing – that people will react emotionally. They use this to create a collective identity, to justify their political actions, and to achieve their aims. In addition, the myths are used to strengthen collective identity, and doctrines play a role in protecting the unity and integrity of the nation.

Our analysis indicates that the dimensions of religion identified by Smart are all strongly present in the politics of both Turkey and Hungary. Religion plays a role in politics and law, and the appearance of politicians in churches and mosques is not necessarily related to private religiosity. Moreover, it is worth noting the place of religion in all types of media, especially in pro-government media, because the visibility of political leaders in the media is quite high, for example, at opening ceremonies of religious institutions, national/religious days, etc.

In summary, we argue that this type of comparison will work for all societies with different religions. The main benefit this comparison provides is being able to conduct a more detailed analysis of one society in the mirror of another. Our study has indicated that a theoretical approach from religious studies has certain advantages in the complex analysis of the social presence of religion, as it provides a broader perspective than sociology, international relations, or political science. We hope our study demonstrates how useful this approach is for formulating fine-tuned insights regarding the presence, and kinds of, religions in societies.

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