

State Ideology, Secularism, and National Identity: Comparing Pancasila and Kemalism in Indonesia and Türkiye

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Abstract

This study examines how Pancasila and Kemalism shape state ideology and national identity in Indonesia and Türkiye, particularly with respect to religion, secularism, and political legitimacy. It employs a qualitative, literature-based approach within comparative political science. The study draws on the constitutional and legal frameworks of both nations as its primary foundation but relies heavily on secondary sources, including scholarly works, research articles, and a literature review. The findings reveal that Pancasila represents an inclusive and accommodative model that integrates religious values within a pluralistic society, while Kemalism reflects a state-led, assertive secularism characterized by a top-down modernization process. Both ideologies are dynamic and subject to reinterpretation in response to contemporary political developments. This study contributes to comparative political analysis by demonstrating how state ideologies function as dynamic instruments for negotiating legitimacy, pluralism, and religion-state relations in Muslim-majority democracies. It offers a novel analytical framework that foregrounds the role of political parties and ideological contestation as drivers of ideological transformation. The research further introduces the concept of “ideological architecture,” highlighting how an ideology is constructed and by whom, and how these factors determine its long-term durability and its capacity to manage the intersection of religion and democracy in Muslim-majority states.

Keywords: state ideology, national identity, Pancasila, Kemalism, secularism

Introduction

Recent studies have emphasized that state ideology functions not only as a normative foundation but also as an instrument of political legitimacy, shaping state-society relations (Yilmaz & Morieson, 2022). In Muslim-majority contexts, scholars highlight the increasing complexity of ideological formation, particularly in balancing religion, nationalism, and modernization (Modongal, 2023). These dynamics often produce distinct configurations of ideology across different national settings.

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Indonesia and Türkiye are two significant examples of Muslim-majority countries that have developed state ideologies as central pillars of national development. Both countries faced similar challenges in formulating a national identity capable of accommodating social diversity while supporting political modernization. Nevertheless, the ideological solutions developed by each country reflect different approaches to managing the relationship between religion, the state, and society. Indonesia adopted Pancasila as its state ideology, whereas Türkiye constructed its ideological framework through Kemalism (Aglia et al., 2024).

Pancasila, as the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state, was formulated in 1945 during the struggle for independence and the process of establishing a new nation-state. The ideology emerged from a political compromise among diverse social and ideological groups with different religious, ethnic, and political backgrounds. The founders of the Indonesian state recognized the high degree of pluralism in Indonesian society and therefore sought a foundational principle that could serve as common ground for nationalist, religious, and pluralist groups. Within this framework, Pancasila was established as the state ideology integrating the values of divinity, humanity, national unity, democracy, and social justice (Pulhehe & Robandi, 2024).

The five fundamental principles of Pancasila consist of Belief in the One and Only God, Just and Civilized Humanity, the Unity of Indonesia, Democracy Guided by the Inner Wisdom of Deliberation among Representatives, and Social Justice for All Indonesian People. These principles reflect an effort to construct a normative foundation for a society characterized by religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity (Zhang, 2025). In practice, Pancasila does not completely remove religion from the public sphere. Instead, it provides space for religious values to remain present within social and political life while maintaining the principles of national unity and collective identity (Kim, 2024).

Türkiye developed a distinct state ideology through a modernization project known as Kemalism. This ideology emerged in the early twentieth century following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923 (Özdemir, 2025). Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish state initiated a series of political, social, and institutional reforms aimed at transforming society from a religiously based caliphate into a modern, secular nation-state oriented toward Western institutional models. These reforms included major changes in the legal system, education, language policy, and the structure of state institutions.

Kemalism was articulated through six core principles commonly known as the Six Arrows: republicanism, nationalism, populism, secularism, statism, and reformism. These principles served as the ideological foundation for Türkiye's modernization project and established a new framework for the relationship between religion and the state. Within the Kemalist framework, secularism became one of the central pillars, emphasizing a clearer separation between religious institutions and political authority. The reforms included the abolition of the caliphate, the replacement of Islamic law with a secular civil legal system, and the restructuring of religious institutions under state authority (Kaya, 2025).

The state ideologies of Indonesia and Türkiye illustrate two different approaches to managing the relationship between religion and the state in Muslim-majority societies. Several studies emphasize that Pancasila reflects a relatively inclusive model of religious pluralism, in which the state acknowledges religion as an important element of social life without establishing a particular religion as the foundation of the state. This approach has enabled Indonesia to maintain social stability within a society characterized by significant religious and cultural diversity (Chia, 2022; Muhaimin, 2023).

Kemalism is often analyzed as a more radical project of secularization within the Muslim world. The reforms initiated by Atatürk aimed to reduce the influence of religious institutions in the public sphere while constructing a national identity more closely aligned with modern citizenship (Karakuş, 2023). In much of the academic literature, this model is interpreted as an effort to accelerate political and social modernization through a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between religion and the state. Nevertheless, several studies also indicate that the implementation of secularism in Türkiye did not eliminate the role of religion in society; rather, religious institutions were placed under state supervision.

Fauzi & Asy'ari examine the implementation of secularism and democracy in Indonesia and Türkiye, highlighting historical differences and institutional practices, yet their study does not sufficiently emphasize the role of political parties as actors shaping the direction of secularism in contemporary politics (Fauzi & Asy'ari, 2024). The present study addresses this gap by centering the interaction between state ideologies Pancasila and Kemalism and political parties, examining how parties mobilize society, build political legitimacy, and navigate pluralism within the context of modern democracy, thereby treating secularism not merely as a formal institutional structure but as a living political field.

Silva Maulana's *The Politics of Religious Recognition* highlights formal policies of religious recognition and bureaucratic control that emphasize social stability, but it overlooks how partisan politics and ideological strategies influence secular practices (Silva Maulana, 2025). This research complements the literature by treating secularism as a dynamic and interactive phenomenon, in which ideology, political interests, and party strategies intersect to shape political practices, state legitimacy, and public narratives concerning religion, democracy, and national identity. In addition, Abdul Majiid examines how Islamic populist movements influence the discourse of secularism, showing the political pressures exerted by non-state actors on secular practices and perception (Abdul Majiid, 2023). While this research emphasizes the societal and political impact of populism, it does not position state ideology and political parties as primary variables. This study then expands on this work by highlighting how Pancasila and Kemalism interact with party strategies to construct legitimacy, respond to pluralism, and navigate modernization while discussing the influence of Islamic populism in the public sphere.

The scholarly literature thus reveals a persistent gap; few studies systematically examine the role of political parties as agents of ideological reinterpretation within the Pancasila and Kemalist framework simultaneously. This study fills that gap by treating

party politics as a mediating variable between state ideology and political outcomes, contributing an original analytical lens to comparative political theory. Furthermore, this study is conducted in the context of Muslim-majority states, focusing on how the comparison between Pancasila and Kemalism functions in managing pluralism, building political legitimacy, and responding to the demands of modernization. By positioning Indonesia and Türkiye as units of analysis, the study delineates fundamental differences in how the relationship among religion, the state, and society is regulated, while tracing how historical, socio-political, and party dynamics shape each country's strategies for navigating the complexities of democracy and diversity. Existing comparative studies on secularism and democracy in Indonesia and Türkiye have provided important insights into the relationship between religion and politics. However, these studies often treat ideology as a fixed constitutional framework rather than as a subject of ongoing political contestation.

This study takes a different approach by examining Pancasila and Kemalism as dynamic ideological arenas in which political parties, state elites, and civil society actors continually negotiate the boundaries of religion, national identity, and political legitimacy. Its main contribution lies in demonstrating that these ideologies embody two distinct approaches to managing religious diversity: Indonesia's model of negotiated pluralism and Türkiye's model of state-directed secularism. These contrasting approaches generate different implications for democratic consolidation and the protection of minority rights. Against this backdrop, the study seeks to answer the following question: How do Pancasila and Kemalism operate as contested ideological arenas, and how have political actors used them to shape the governance of religion, pluralism, and political legitimacy in Indonesia and Türkiye?

Research Method

This study employs a structured, focused comparison of two cases Indonesia and Türkiye. Cases are selected based on their theoretical relevance as muslim majority democracies that developed distinct state ideologies during cirical histories junctures. From decolonization in Indonesia (1945) and post-imperial transformation following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in Türkiye (1923). This most different system logic allows the study to identify formation across distinct social-political contexts. These contrasting trajectories make the two cases particularly suitable for a most different-systems comparison, allowing the study to explore both similarities and differences in the development of state ideology, the governance of religion, and the construction of national identity across distinct political and social systems (George & Bennett, 2005).

This study is explicitly designed as a qualitative, literature-based inquiry in comparative political science to analyze the role of state ideology in shaping national identity and political legitimacy in Indonesia and Türkiye. The primary foundation of this research is derived from the constitutional and legal frameworks of both nations. For Indonesia, regulated under Law No. 2 of 2008 on Political Parties and Pancasila in the 1945 Constitution, functions as the fundamental basis and core principles for all national laws

(Republic of Indonesia, 1945, 2008). Furthermore, this research analyzes the principles of Kemalism and the republican principle, which replaced the Ottoman Monarchy with popular sovereignty and the rule of law as a central pillar of the Turkish modernization project. The six principles of Kemalism were formally incorporated into Turkish constitutional law on 5 February 1937 and have been maintained through subsequent constitutional revisions (Jung, 2006).

To analyze these sources, the study used the comparative method to identify similarities and differences between two cases that emerged from distinct historical and political trajectories. This method is widely used in comparative politics to explore how political phenomena evolve across different contexts. By comparing two state ideologies that developed through different historical processes, decolonization in Indonesia and post-imperial transformation in Türkiye, this study seeks to explain how historical and political contexts shape the form, function, and role of state ideology in the process of nation-building. These differing historical contexts provide an important analytical space for understanding how state ideology operates both as a normative framework and as a political instrument in the construction of national identity.

A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate because the research focuses on developing a deeper understanding of the concepts, ideas, and political practices that constitute state ideology. In political science research, this approach enables scholars to examine how state ideologies are produced, interpreted, and practiced within specific social and political contexts, as well as how they function in establishing and maintaining state legitimacy.

To support and contextualize these primary materials, the research relies heavily on secondary sources, including scholarly works, relevant research or article and literature review is used as a comparative method to identify similarities and differences between two cases that emerged from distinct historical and political trajectories. This method is widely used in comparative politics to explore how political phenomena evolve across different contexts. By comparing two state ideologies that developed through different historical processes, decolonization in Indonesia and post-imperial transformation in Türkiye, this study seeks to explain how historical and political contexts shape the form, function, and role of state ideology in the process of nation-building. These differing historical contexts provide an important analytical space for understanding how state ideology operates both as a normative framework and as a political instrument in the construction of national identity.

The data used in this research draws on the constitutional and legal frameworks of both nations as a primary foundation (Indonesia's 1945 Constitution and Law No. 2/2008, and Turkish constitutional amendments of 1937), but relies heavily on secondary sources, including scholarly works, research articles, and a literature review as the framework. These sources were selected for their academic relevance and contributions to discussions of state ideology, nation-building, and the relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia and Türkiye. By drawing on credible scholarly literature, this research aims to

provide a comprehensive analysis of the development of state ideologies in both contexts (Jung, 2006).

In the analytical process, the study adopts an interpretative approach to examine how state ideology is represented and constructed within political discourse. This perspective allows state ideology to be understood not merely as a formal doctrine articulated in constitutional texts or official documents, but also as a political narrative continuously shaped and reinterpreted through political practices, state institutions, and social interactions. In this sense, state ideology is treated as a dynamic phenomenon that evolves through the relationship between the state, political elites, and the broader public.

To support this analysis, the research draws on three principal theoretical approaches within political science: constructivism, the concept of civil religion, and nation-building theory. These frameworks are selected because they help explain that state ideology functions not only as a normative principle within political systems but also as a social construction that shapes national identity and provides symbolic legitimacy for the state.

The constructivist perspective emphasizes that political identities, norms, and social values are formed through social interaction and historical processes rather than existing as fixed entities. Within this framework, state ideology is understood as a social construction that develops through political negotiation and institutional transformation (Guzzini & Leander, 2006; Wendt, 1999). In Indonesia, for example, Pancasila emerged from a process of political compromise during the period leading to independence, involving diverse ideological and religious groups. It subsequently developed into a normative framework intended to accommodate the religious, cultural, and ethnic pluralism of Indonesian society. In contrast, in Türkiye, Kemalism arose in response to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and became the ideological foundation of the republican state's modernization project, emphasizing secularism, nationalism, and institutional reform.

The second approach employed in this study is the concept of civil religion introduced by Robert N. Bellah (Bellah, 1998), this concept explains how modern states develop symbolic systems resembling collective belief structures in order to strengthen the moral legitimacy of the state and foster social solidarity among citizens. Within this framework, state ideology can serve as a shared source of values, providing a normative foundation for political and social life. In Indonesia, Pancasila is often framed as a moral framework that emphasizes the principles of belief in God, humanity, national unity, democracy, and social justice. In Türkiye, by contrast, Kemalism constructs symbolic legitimacy for the state primarily through the principles of secularism and nationalism, which serve as the foundation of the modern republican state.

The civil religion approach also enables an analysis of how state ideology may function as a mechanism for legitimizing political authority. Symbols, state rituals, and the values embedded within a state ideology can reinforce state authority while simultaneously cultivating political loyalty among citizens. For this reason, the analysis of state ideology not only considers its role in promoting social integration but also examines the dimension of power embedded in the processes by which ideology is reproduced and institutionalized (Karakuş, 2023; Steven S. N. Rogahang, 2025).

The third approach applied in this study is the nation-building theory (Bourchier, 2019). This theoretical perspective emphasizes that national identity is a social construction shaped through state institutions, educational systems, national language policies, and collective symbols. Then, the nation is understood as an imagined community that emerges through social and institutional processes. In the Indonesian context, Pancasila serves as an ideological foundation supporting a relatively inclusive nation-building process by integrating a highly plural society in terms of ethnicity, religion, and culture. In contrast, in Türkiye, Kemalism promoted a more centralized nation-building project through reforms in language, education, and the creation of state symbols that emphasized a secular and modern Turkish national identity (Anderson, 2006).

By integrating these three perspectives, this study conceptualizes Pancasila and Kemalism as multidimensional state ideologies. These ideologies function not only as constitutional principles within political systems but also as social constructions that shape national identity, sources of symbolic legitimacy for the state, and political instruments within the broader process of nation-building.

Results and Discussion

Authoritarian Legacy of Kemalism

Modern political transformation in Türkiye is often associated with the modernization project known as Kemalism, the state ideology developed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This ideology aimed to establish a modern, secular nation-state through extensive institutional reforms to the legal system, education, language policy, and the relationship between religion and the state. These reforms not only restructured the political system but also contributed to the formation of a new national identity oriented toward modernity and rationality (Kaya, 2025). Contemporary studies suggest that secularism in the Turkish context does not fully correspond to the separation of religion and state found in many Western liberal models. Instead, it has often taken the form of state supervision over religious life. Within this framework, the state continues to play an active role in regulating religious institutions and practices within society (Smith, 2022).

Kemalist modernization is also frequently interpreted as a state-led transformation project. Social and political reforms did not emerge primarily through broad-based societal mobilization but were largely implemented through policies designed by state elites and bureaucratic institutions. From the perspective of nation-building theory, this pattern illustrates the state's dominant role in shaping national identity and directing the course of social transformation. Through a range of institutional reforms, Kemalism served as a normative framework that defined the core values of the republic, including secularism, nationalism, and modernization (Coşgun & Zarpli, 2022). Furthermore, the concept of secularism in Atatürk's political thought has distinctive historical characteristics and cannot be fully understood solely through the conceptual framework of Western secularism. Rather, it evolved from Türkiye's specific historical and social context (Dąbrowski, 2024).

In Turkish political practice, the state's role in managing religion is also reflected in the establishment of official institutions to regulate religious affairs. One of the most significant institutions is the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which administers mosque governance, supervises imams, and formulates national-level religious policies. The existence of this institution demonstrates that Kemalist secularism did not eliminate religion from the public sphere; instead, it placed religious institutions under state supervision. In this sense, Turkish secularism can be understood as a form of administrative secularism, where the state actively shapes religious practice in ways considered compatible with the national modernization project (Asad, 2018; Zengin Arslan, 2024).

Beyond institutional mechanisms, Kemalism has also been reproduced through powerful political symbols embedded in national life. The figure of Atatürk occupies a central symbolic position in the narrative of Turkish national identity. This symbolism is visible in various forms of public representation, including monuments, official portraits displayed in state institutions, and national education curricula. From the perspective of civil religion theory, this phenomenon illustrates how political symbols can function as sources of moral legitimacy for the state. Contemporary research even suggests that Kemalism may be interpreted as a form of "civil religion", in which republican values and state symbols acquire a quasi-sacred status within national political life (Karakuş, 2023).

However, the dominance of state ideological symbols in the public sphere has also generated debates regarding their implications for democratic development. When the symbols and values of a state ideology occupy a particularly strong position within the structure of political legitimacy, criticism of that ideology may be interpreted as a challenge to national identity. In certain contexts, such conditions may limit the space for broader and more pluralistic political debate. For this reason, the political legacy of Kemalism is frequently described as paradoxical. On one hand, the ideology played a crucial role in the modernization and secularization of state institutions; on the other hand, the highly centralized character of this modernization process has at times generated tensions with the principles of political pluralism and liberal democracy. In this regard, Kemalism is not merely a historical legacy but remains an ideological framework that continues to influence the trajectory of Turkish politics in the present era (Ramdhani & Asyadulloh, 2025). This analytical finding is novel in that it frames the Kemalist paradox not merely as a historical tension but as a structurally recurring pattern activated whenever political actors invoke Kemalist legitimacy, used to constrain democratic competition, is a dynamic that distinguishes the Turkish case from analogous secular nationalist projects elsewhere.

Political Instrumentalization of Pancasila

Kemalism is frequently interpreted as carrying an authoritarian legacy associated with the dominance of state institutions in political life, otherwise a different dynamic can be observed in the development of Indonesia's state ideology through Pancasila. From the outset of its formulation, Pancasila was designed as a foundational principle capable of accommodating the social, cultural, and religious diversity of Indonesia's plural society. The principles embodied in Pancasila reflect the efforts of the country's founding figures to

establish common ground among various ideological groups, including secular nationalists, Islamic groups, and other social forces involved in the formation of the modern Indonesian state (Suko Wiyono et al., 2023).

From a constructivist perspective, Pancasila can be understood as the result of a complex process of political negotiation in the construction of Indonesian national identity. The ideology did not emerge from the dominance of a single ideological group but rather from a process of compromise among diverse political actors involved in formulating the state's foundational principles. For this reason, Pancasila conceptually possesses an inclusive character designed to accommodate the plural nature of Indonesian society. In the literature on Indonesian politics, this state ideology is often interpreted as a normative framework intended to build national consensus amid the diversity of social and religious identities (Aglia et al., 2024).

The political development of Indonesia also demonstrates that state ideology may undergo instrumentalization in political practice. During the New Order period, Pancasila was positioned as the sole ideological foundation that had to be adopted by political and social organizations. This policy effectively limited the space for political opposition because every organization was required to adopt the state's official interpretation of Pancasila. In this context, Pancasila served not only as the philosophical foundation of the state but also as a political instrument for regulating political life and maintaining the stability of the ruling regime (Mustapa et al., 2024).

State-led ideological programs, such as the Guidelines for the Appreciation and Practice of Pancasila (Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila, P4), illustrate how the government sought to promote a singular interpretation of state ideology in the public sphere. Through this program, the state sought to institutionalize an official understanding of Pancasila among citizens through the education system and various socio-political initiatives (Mustapa et al., 2024). In this way, state ideology functioned not only as a normative principle but also as a mechanism that shaped the boundaries of acceptable political discourse in public life. Studies on Indonesian politics also indicate that the use of Pancasila as a source of state legitimacy formed part of a broader strategy by the regime to maintain political stability within a highly centralized political system (Hasan et al., 2025; Muhdar et al., 2025).

The concept of civil religion introduced by Robert N. Bellah (Bellah, 1998) also helps explain how Pancasila acquired a strong symbolic position in Indonesian political life. Within this framework, Pancasila is frequently presented as a moral value system that serves as the foundation of national unity. This ideological symbolism plays a significant role in fostering national solidarity while also enabling governments to use state ideology as a source of legitimacy for various public policies (Steven S. N. Rogahang, 2025).

From the perspective of nation-building theory (Siallagan & Syuhada, 2023) national identity is understood as a social construction that continuously evolves through political processes and social interaction within society. In the Indonesian context, Pancasila remains a symbolic foundation for the construction of national identity, yet its interpretations are not static. With the process of democratization since the late twentieth century, Pancasila

has increasingly been interpreted as a value framework supporting democracy, pluralism, and the protection of human rights. This transformation illustrates that state ideologies may undergo reinterpretation in response to shifts in political structures and the evolving demands of modern society (Kuru, 2007).

Table 1 Comparative Analysis of Pancasila and Kemalism

Aspect	Pancasila (Indonesia)	Kemalism (Türkiye)
Historical Context	Formulated during Indonesia's struggle for independence in 1945 as a political compromise among nationalist, Islamic, and pluralist groups.	Emergenced after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in the early twentieth century (1923)
Ideological Objective	To create national unity within a multi-ethnic and multireligious society.	To construct a modern, secular nation-state oriented toward Western institutional models.
Ideological Principles	Five principles: belief in God, humanity, national unity, democracy, and social justice.	Six principles of Kemalism: republicanism, nationalism, populism, secularism, statism, and reformism.
Model of Secularism	Accommodative secularism, in which religion remains recognized within the public sphere.	Assertive secularism, characterized by clearer restrictions on the political role of religious institutions.
State-Religion Relationship	The state recognizes official religions and guarantees freedom of religious practice, formal inclusion of religious diversity; special autonomy (Aceh)	The state regulates religious through Diyanet: Nationalized Islam rather than full separation.
Party Mediation of Ideology	PKS/PPP (Islamist), PKB/PAN (Muslim-Moderate), PDIP/Golkar/Democratic Parties (secular-nationalist compete to define Pancasila's religious meaning	CHP (Kemalist-Secular), AKP (Islam-Democratic/Neo ottoman) contest the meaning of secularism and national identity
Political Implementation	Relatively flexible and subject to reinterpretation across different political regimes.	More institutionalized and historically safeguarded by state institutions, including the military.
Contemporary Dynamics	Re-emerging as a symbol of national unity within Indonesia's democratic era.	Undergoing reinterpretation within the context of contemporary Turkish politics.
Democratic Implications	Interpretive flexibility enabled the democratic transition (1998 Reformasi)	Institutional coherence constrained democratic pluralism; AKP's rise exposed secular rigidity.

Source: (Fauzi & Asy'ari, 2024; Fox & Menchik, 2023; Kuru, 2007; Zhang, 2025).

This comparison illustrates that both ideologies function as foundational frameworks for nation-building, yet they adopt different strategies in managing religious diversity and political modernization. Pancasila emerged in 1945 through a multi-actor negotiation process involving secularism, Islamic organizations, and ethnic minority representatives,

designed to accommodate Indonesia's religious and ethnic plurality. While Kemalism emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in the early twentieth century (1923). This top-down process generated high institutional coherence in ideological formation. In addition, Indonesia's model corresponds to concept of passive secularism or accommodative secularism is religion retains a recognized presence in the public sphere, the state maintains official religious institutions, and multiple religions. Then, Türkiye's historical model corresponds to assertive secularism, religious expression was actively stricted, Islamic law replaced by secular civil code, and religious institutions placed under state bureaucratic control through the Diyanet (Chia, 2022; Kuru, 2007, 2023; Yilmaz & Barry, 2020). Despite these differences, both ideologies continue to shape political discourse and national identity in their respective countries, demonstrating how state ideologies remain dynamic and open to reinterpretation in response to changing political and social conditions.

Constitutional Approach and Political Parties in Response to Evolving Realities

Pancasila and Kemalism are firmly embedded in the constitutional frameworks of their respective states and have undergone significant adaptation as political parties respond to changing domestic and global realities. In Indonesia, Pancasila is explicitly enshrined in the 1945 Constitution and functions as the fundamental basis for all national laws. The Indonesian political party system, regulated under Law No. 2 of 2008 on Political Parties, requires political parties to uphold the unity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Although political parties are required to acknowledge the supremacy of Pancasila, Indonesian law permits other ideological orientations as long as they do not conflict with the constitutional framework (Fitriyah et al., 2025; Hadiprabowo et al., 2024).

In practice, political parties in Indonesia tend to exhibit only modest differences in their ideological orientation and policy platforms. The most visible distinctions generally concern their positions on the role of Islam in public affairs. This dynamic has encouraged many parties to position themselves within a broad nationalist-religious coalition, appealing simultaneously to both Muslim constituencies and secular nationalist voters. For example, the Democratic Party, Golkar, and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) are commonly identified as secular-oriented parties. In contrast, the National Awakening Party (PKB) and the National Mandate Party (PAN) are generally characterized as Muslim-oriented but not explicitly Islamist, while the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and the United Development Party (PPP) are typically categorized as Islamist parties (Afrimadona, 2021; Fox & Menchik, 2023).

In Türkiye, the six principles of Kemalism were formally incorporated into Turkish constitutional law on 5 February 1937 and have been consistently maintained through subsequent constitutional revisions, including those following the military coups of 1960 and 1980. The Republican People's Party (CHP), founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, played a fundamental role in the adoption and institutionalization of these constitutional principles. Over time, the party's engagement with Kemalist ideology has evolved, even

though it has not actively revised its philosophical foundations. Instead, the CHP has introduced several programmatic adjustments, often adopting more socially democratic and left-leaning positions within the contemporary Turkish political landscape (Özdemir, 2025; Yavuz & Öztürk, 2023).

The rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 marked a significant reinterpretation of Kemalism within Turkish politics. Emerging from a political tradition influenced by Islamist movements, the AKP challenged the dominant Kemalist narrative and sought to construct a new national identity that incorporated stronger Islamic cultural elements. Initially, this challenge was articulated through pro-Western, pro-European Union discourse that criticized Kemalism for its perceived anti-democratic tendencies. As the AKP consolidated political power, however, its ideological orientation increasingly shifted toward a form of neo-Ottomanism that emphasized the Islamic dimensions of Turkish identity and more directly questioned the strict secularism associated with the Kemalist tradition (Ege, 2022).

This reinterpretation has contributed to a gradual transformation of Türkiye's historically assertive secularism toward a model that is more accommodating of religious expression in public life. Such developments reflect broader changes in public religiosity and the evolving dynamics of Turkish political identity. At the same time, the Turkish military, traditionally regarded as the principal guardian of Kemalist secularism, has experienced a significant decline in political influence, particularly following the failed coup attempt in 2016. This shift has enabled President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to consolidate political authority and advance policies that incorporate stronger religious and conservative elements within state governance (Sandal, 2021; Türegün, 2025).

These developments demonstrate substantial adaptation within the constitutional frameworks and party systems of both Indonesia and Türkiye. Dominant state ideologies can be contested, reinterpreted, and reshaped by emerging political forces, leading to significant shifts in governance practices and the construction of national identity. The ongoing political contestation between the AKP and the Kemalist-oriented CHP illustrates the dynamic nature of ideological projects in contemporary political systems, highlighting how state ideologies remain subject to continuous negotiation and reinterpretation in democratic and competitive environments.

Approaches to National Unity, Identity, and Democracy

The strategies adopted to cultivate national unity and social cohesion differ significantly between Indonesia and Türkiye. In Indonesia, the nationalism associated with Pancasila is closely linked to the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* "Unity in Diversity" (Firmansyah et al., 2024). This approach actively embraces Indonesia's vast ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity as a source of national strength. Rather than attempting to suppress differences, the Indonesian model seeks to synthesize them into a cohesive national identity. National unity is promoted through shared values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and a collective sense of responsibility, emphasizing that social,

religious, linguistic, and cultural differences should not undermine national solidarity (Zhang, 2025).

Kemalist nationalism in Türkiye, while also intended to unify the nation, historically focused on cultivating a strong sense of Turkish ethnic identity. This process involved policies often described as “Turkification” and a deliberate rejection of broader Pan-Islamic or Pan-Turkic ambitions in favor of constructing a distinct and territorially defined Turkish nation-state. Although this strategy succeeded in fostering a new sense of national consciousness, it also produced tensions by marginalizing non-Turkish identities, particularly Kurdish communities whose cultural expressions were frequently restricted by the state. The Kemalist project aimed to create a “new citizen” aligned with Western modernity, sometimes at the expense of traditional cultural expressions and minority identities (Cizre-Sakallioglu, 1994; Kuru, 2024; Yağlı, 2024). This emphasis on cultural homogenization, while intended to strengthen unity, often generated internal divisions and enduring challenges from marginalized groups.

These contrasting approaches to national unity reflect the different historical contexts in which the two states were formed. Indonesia’s strategy of fostering unity through the inclusion and synthesis of existing diversity has allowed for a more flexible and accommodative national identity. Türkiye’s strategy of promoting unity through cultural homogenization and a decisive break from its imperial past contributed to the formation of a strong modern state but also generated persistent contestation from groups whose identities were suppressed or marginalized. These differences carry significant implications for minority rights and cultural expression within each nation-state.

Both Indonesia and Türkiye have also grappled with democratic aspirations while experiencing periods characterized by authoritarian tendencies. The fourth principle of Pancasila: “Democracy guided by the inner wisdom of deliberation among representatives” emphasizes a consensus-oriented form of governance rooted in Indonesian philosophical and legal traditions. This principle implies accountability to the belief in the One Supreme God and stresses that democratic practices should respect both national unity and humanitarian values (Pulhehe & Robandi, 2024). Although Soekarno initially embraced parliamentary democracy, he later replaced it with a system known as “Guided Democracy,” characterized by strong presidential authority and increasingly authoritarian tendencies aimed at managing ideological divisions and political instability. During this period, the military’s political role expanded, and Soekarno relied on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to balance the armed forces’ influence (Hajar et al., 2024).

The New Order regime under Soeharto (1966–1998) further consolidated authoritarian governance by using Pancasila as the ideological foundation for what has often been described as a form of “pseudo-democracy.” In this period, political stability and economic development were prioritized over individual freedoms and broad political participation. The era was marked by restrictions on freedom of expression, documented human rights violations, and the labeling of political opponents as “anti-Pancasila”. The post-Suharto Reformasi period, beginning in 1998, reintroduced more democratic norms,

including the dismantling of ideological uniformity and the emergence of a competitive multiparty political system (Hajar et al., 2024; Karjono et al., 2024).

In contrast, the republican principle of Kemalism replaced the Ottoman monarchy with the rule of law and popular sovereignty, establishing a constitutional republic with elected representatives and a formal separation of powers. However, the early Kemalist regime was characterized by a concentration of authority within a small group of military and civilian bureaucratic elites, resulting in an authoritarian political structure. While key institutions of representative democracy formally existed, political pluralism was limited and many segments of society were excluded from meaningful participation in policymaking. The Turkish military historically played a central role in safeguarding Kemalist secularism and intervened directly in politics through coups in 1960 and 1980 to preserve the state's secular character and national unity (Köker, 2010).

Although Kemalism contributed to the modernization and Westernization of Türkiye, it has also been criticized for its top-down and state-centric approach, which fostered exclusionary forms of secularism and contributed to authoritarian tendencies within the political system (Jaberi, 2022). The expansion of universal suffrage during the multiparty era after 1946 reintroduced religious orientation into a political system that had previously marginalized Islam, creating enduring tensions within Turkish politics. The rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002, which challenged the established Kemalist order, marked a major shift in the country's political landscape. This transformation led to a gradual reconfiguration of assertive secularism toward a model more accommodating of religious expression, while simultaneously raising concerns about democratic backsliding and the consolidation of executive power (Türegün, 2025).

The experiences of Indonesia and Türkiye illustrate that although foundational state ideologies may articulate democratic aspirations, their implementation is profoundly shaped by historical conditions, political power dynamics, and societal contestation. Indonesia's political trajectory has included alternating phases of democratic governance and authoritarian rule, with Pancasila frequently reinterpreted to legitimize different regimes. Türkiye's experience highlights the enduring tension between top-down secularization and the religious and social realities of its population, with the military historically acting as a guardian of the Kemalist political order.

Religious Pluralism and State-Religion Relations

The management of religious pluralism and the relationship between the state and religion presents a striking contrast between Indonesia and Türkiye, rooted in their fundamental ideological choices. In Indonesia, Pancasila was inherently designed to accommodate religious diversity. The first principle, *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* ("Belief in One Supreme God"), was deliberately framed to be inclusive of all recognized monotheistic religions, rather than establishing a state religion, despite Indonesia being a Muslim-majority country (Razuni, 2023). This approach represented a critical compromise during nation-building to ensure unity among the country's diverse religious and ethnic groups. The state guarantees freedom of religion to its citizens and actively promotes interfaith

understanding and tolerance through education and reinforcement of Pancasila values (Badrun et al., 2023; Pulhehe & Robandi, 2024). Although Islamic law is implemented in specific regions, such as Aceh, under special autonomy, it is generally considered complementary to Pancasila rather than conflicting with it, with ongoing efforts to align Sharia with broader human rights principles (Aziz et al., 2023). This model embodies a principle of “respect for all, positive cooperation, and principled distance” between the state and religion.

In contrast, the assertive secularism (*laïcisme asertif*) of Kemalism (Köker, 2010) adopts a markedly different approach, seeking to remove religion from public life and place it under strict state control. This included the abolition of the caliphate, the elimination of Sharia courts and religious orders (*tariqas*), and the removal of religious symbols from public spaces. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) was established to centralize and regulate religious activity, effectively nationalizing Islam rather than fully separating it from the state. This top-down imposition of secularism, driven by the belief that Islam was an “obstacle to progress”, generated significant social friction and a persistent adversarial relationship between the state and religious segments of society. Religious pluralism was managed through suppression and assimilation rather than accommodation, resulting in ongoing tensions with groups such as Kurds and the rise of political Islam (Cizre-Sakallioglu, 1994; Mansoor & Hashmi, 2024; Nolte, 2025).

These contrasting approaches highlight the profound impact of foundational ideological choices on state–religion relations. Indonesia’s model, born out of the necessity to unify a diverse population, prioritizes religious harmony through inclusivity and state accommodation of religious expression within a pluralistic framework. Türkiye’s model, driven by a revolutionary break with the imperial-religious past, seeks to impose a singular secular identity, producing recurring tensions and challenges with religious and ethnic identities that were marginalized or suppressed. Taken together, these two cases indicate that the long-term stability of state-religion arrangements is more closely related to the level of ideological inclusivity at the founding moment of the state than to the formal institutional architecture of secularism. This finding has implications for comparative studies on religious governance in Muslim-majority democracies.

Kemalism, AKP, Erdoğan, and Religious Narratives

Kemalism, once the unrivaled state ideology of the Republic of Türkiye, has undergone significant evolution and reinterpretation, particularly with the rise of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*) under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. By the late 20th century, Kemalism had become associated with an urban elite, prompting demands for liberalization, including economic deregulation and greater allowance for public religious expression. These social and political pressures contributed to the AKP’s electoral success in 2002 (Sandal, 2021; Türegün, 2025).

Rooted in an Islamist movement that sought to revive elements of Ottoman heritage while challenging Turkey’s rigid secularism, the AKP gradually reinterpreted Kemalism. Initially, the party adopted a pro-Western/European Union stance to delegitimize

Kemalism by portraying itself as democratic and opposed to Kemalism's exclusive, monolithic national identity and authoritarian secularism. This strategy allowed the AKP to consolidate power while integrating Islam into politics and public life without military interference (Ege, 2022; Sandal, 2021).

After consolidating authority, especially post-2007, the AKP shifted toward a neo-Ottoman discourse, emphasizing Sunni-Islamic aspects of Turkish identity and using Ottoman history as an alternative framework to redefine political community. This period saw friction with Turkey's EU accession process and direct challenges to secularist policies, such as the headscarf bans at state universities. The AKP's conception of democracy became increasingly Islamically oriented, as exemplified by the expansion of religious freedoms in public institutions (Ege, 2022).

Following the failed 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan further centralized power, purging secularist elements from the military, judiciary, and academia, replacing them with loyalists (Yilmaz, 2020). This consolidation enabled a broad project to Islamize aspects of Turkish society and politics, positioning Sunni-Muslim values as central to national identity. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) played a critical role in this process through fatwas and official guidance. AKP foreign policy increasingly adopted an anti-Western and revisionist stance, questioning the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and embracing Ottoman-inspired policies, such as converting Hagia Sophia back into a mosque (Ege, 2022).

The AKP's reinterpretation has resulted in a substantial shift toward a more religion-friendly governance model, challenging the entrenched secularism of Kemalism. Some Kemalists have adjusted their principles to appeal to broader audiences (Akan, 2023), while the AKP continues to marginalize Kemalist narratives, framing the CHP as a Western-aligned, anti-Islamic bloc (Özdemir, 2025). This case illustrates how a previously hegemonic ideology can be contested and reinterpreted by an emerging political force, producing profound transformations in the state-society relationship. The Turkish experience provides a comparative reference for understanding similar, albeit less intense, dynamics in debates over Pancasila in post-Reformasi Indonesia. In Indonesia, conservative religious groups have also sought to reinterpret this ideological framework to support their policy agendas, thereby highlighting the main contribution of this study's analysis.

Appropriation of Pancasila: Political Use and Religious Narratives in Indonesia

Pancasila, as Indonesia's foundational ideology, has also been appropriated for political purposes, particularly through religious narratives, reflecting ongoing ideological evolution. In the post-Suharto era, there has been a shift in the ideological center of gravity from democratic norms toward a more conservative and religiously oriented nationalism. This shift was partly due to reformists' limited success in addressing the legacy of Soeharto-era Pancasila indoctrination and the ability of conservative New Order elites to regain influence over democratic processes after 2001 (Mietzner, 2010).

Concessions to Islamist interests, such as the Constitutional Court's validation of laws on blasphemy, have contributed to the transformation of Indonesia into a "highly religious state," opening the way for increased state involvement in enforcing moral norms

grounded in Islamic and indigenous cultural values (Karjono et al., 2024). This illustrates the complex interplay in which Pancasila, despite its intended inclusivity, can be interpreted and used to advance particular religious agendas.

Appropriation of Pancasila through religious narratives manifests in several ways, particularly in its perceived compatibility with Islam. Many mainstream Indonesian Muslims do not consider Pancasila “secular” because its first principle, “Belief in One Supreme God,” along with other pillars, aligns with Islamic teachings. Religious leaders have actively contributed to shaping Indonesian national character through Pancasila, emphasizing its consonance with values such as justice, unity, and social welfare (Abdurrahim, 2023).

Pancasila has also been actively promoted as a tool for counter-radicalization. Its core principles belief in God, just and civilized humanity, and national unity are leveraged to prevent extremism and terrorism. Both government institutions and civil society play crucial roles in embedding Pancasila values through education and outreach programs aimed at countering radical ideologies. Political discourse in Indonesia frequently revolves around the themes of “Islam” and “the people,” which can create consensus while simultaneously obscuring underlying economic and social contradictions (Badrun et al., 2023).

Despite broad agreement on Pancasila as the state foundation, debates persist regarding its practical implementation, with some groups arguing that its principles are insufficiently realized in daily life. The relevance of Pancasila depends on its adaptability to contemporary challenges, including globalization. Its future hinges on how effectively society understands and practices its values to maintain national identity and strengthen unity amid complex social change.

Conclusion

Pancasila and Kemalism represent two contrasting yet equally strategic models of state ideology for shaping national identity in Muslim-majority societies, distinguished not merely by their content but by their modes of construction and institutionalization. Pancasila’s negotiated construction has given it interpretive flexibility, allowing it to adapt and endure under both authoritarian and democratic governments. In contrast, Kemalism emerged as an elite-driven project that produced strong institutional coherence but struggled to secure broad social and political legitimacy. As a result, its durability depended heavily on state enforcement and, over time, became more exposed to pressures arising from democratic change. This distinction constitutes the study’s central analytical contribution. Rather than focusing solely on ideological content, what an ideology says, the study shifts attention to ideological architecture, meaning how an ideology is built and by whom. This perspective provides a framework for understanding how state ideologies shape the relationship between religion, political parties, democracy, and national identity, particularly in Muslim-majority states. The study advances propositions for comparative political science that ideological settlements as the founding stage, political parties serve as active actors of ideological change, and ideological durability depends more on broad

founding coalition. These proposition contribute to explaining on secularism, democratization, and nation building in Muslim majority states.

Based on these findings, this study recommends several policy directions with cross-national applicability. Governments in both Indonesia and Türkiye should institutionalize inclusive civic education programs that emphasize constitutional values and critical engagement with state ideology, thereby preventing ideological monopolization by any single political or religious group. Policymakers should strengthen constitutional safeguards by ensuring that judicial institutions function independently in mediating ideological disputes related to religion and identity politics. Political parties should be regulated through clearer guidelines that limit the instrumentalization of religion for short-term electoral purposes. Both countries would benefit from structured dialogue platforms involving religious leaders, civil society organizations, and state actors to foster consensus-based policy formulation on contentious ideological questions. These recommendations contribute to comparative political theory by offering practical instruments for managing the intersection of religion, state ideology, and democracy, while providing actionable insights for policymakers seeking to sustain social cohesion and democratic resilience in ideologically contested, diverse societies.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Claude and Grammarly as generative AI tools to assist with language editing and grammar checking. All research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and scholarly conclusions were produced independently by the human authors without AI assistance. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the published content.

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