

# Religious Rhetoric in Politics and Christian Minorities in Turkey

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## Research Thesis

The Turkish President Erdoğan's Islam oriented political reign since 2002 and the high level of religious content found in his public speeches point towards the Islamization of Turkey and increase the Turkish Christian minorities' level of fear resulting from the increased likelihood of oppression.

## Background

Erdoğan, who was a former member of a strong Islamist movement, verbally expressed his desire for a nation reshaped by and rooted in Islamist ideology. The rise of Erdoğan's popularity and an increase in his religious rhetoric has spoken to the fears of conservative Muslims while leading to deterioration of the human rights of Christians.

## Methods

A qualitative content analysis was used to compare the religious content of the presidential acceptance speeches of Sezer in 2000 and Erdoğan in 2018.

11 male and 11 female Turkish citizens who identify themselves as Christians were interviewed over Skype.

## Key Findings

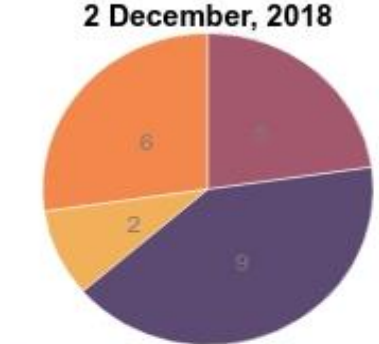
The content analysis of the two speeches indicates that there has been a dramatic increase in the religious rhetoric used during presidential acceptance speeches. While Sezer was determined to respect the principles of secularism and democracy, Erdoğan dedicates his speech to the importance of God's will over politics and uses explicitly Muslim expressions.

The interviewees stated that an increase in religion has been the main indicator of secularism's decline. The participants expressed personal experiences of an increase in negative portrayal of Christians in the media, unfair treatment at work, decreased likelihood of participation in politics, and fear to practice their faith in public.

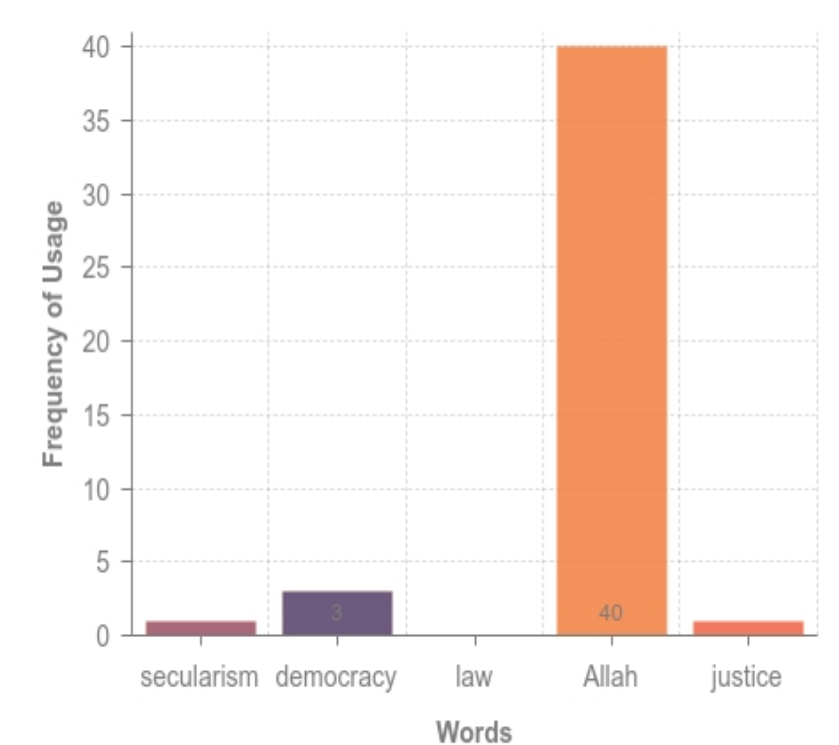
"Religion has developed to become the strong accent of the government's language" (interviewee)

"Politicians are so desperate that they keep talking about religion to appeal to the Muslim conservative fraction of the nation" (interviewee)

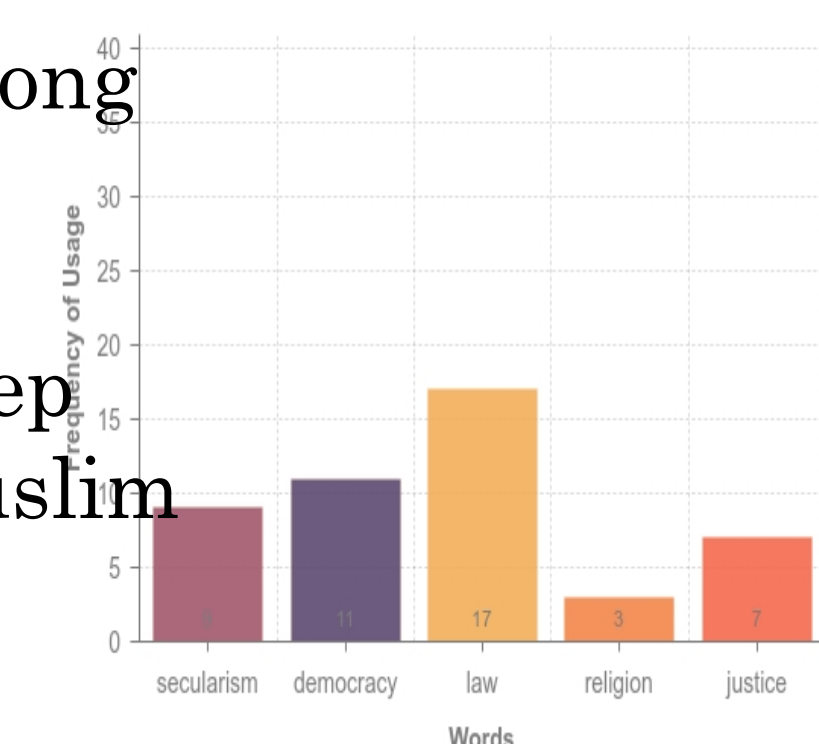
What are the main indicators of the decline of secularism in Turkey?  
2 December, 2018



Erdoğan's Presidential Acceptance Speech  
9 July, 2018



16 May, 2000



## Sources and Acknowledgements

I want to thank to Professor Pelz for his guidance and to the 22 participants who were willing to share their experiences on a sensitive subject.

