

“Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey and the Future of Secularism”

Review of Sumantra Bose Book

By [James M. Dorsey](#)

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Region: [Asia](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

[Sumantra Bose's](#) new book [Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey and the Future of Secularism](#) (Cambridge University Press, 2018) is a fascinating comparison of the rise of religious parties in the non-Western world's two major attempts to establish a post-colonial secular state.

The secular experiments in Turkey and India were considered success stories for the longest period of time but that has changed with the rise of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party in Turkey and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in India and the capture of state power by political forces with an anti-secular vision of nationhood.

In his ground-breaking book, Bose attributes the rise of secularism to the fact that non-Western states like Turkey and India never adopted the Western principle of separation of state and church and instead based their secularism on the principle of state intervention and regulation of the religious sphere. In doing so, Bose distinguishes between the embedding of secularism in Turkey in authoritarianism entrenched in the carving out of the modern Turkish state from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and the fact that secularism in India is rooted in culture and a democratic form of government.

With the anti-secular trend in Turkey and India fitting into a global trend in which cultural and religious identity is gaining traction, Bose's study constitutes a significant contribution to the study of the future of secularism and the of the complex relationship between religious parties and the secular state.

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