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The Politics of the Transition of the Hagia Sophia to a Mosque by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

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Abstrak

Hagia Sophia merupakan salah satu situs warisan dunia UNESCO yang dibangun oleh Kaisar Justinian I yang merupakan bangunan Basilika di Istanbul Turki dan merupakan konflik antara dua agama yaitu Kristen dan Islam. Pada tahun 2020 keputusannya yang mengejutkan dunia datang dari Presiden Recep Tayyip Erdogan yang mengubah Hagia Sophia menjadi masjid yang sebelumnya adalah museum pada masa Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Artikel ini menggunakan Library Research, yang mengidentifikasi data termasuk buku, jurnal, artikel, dan lainnya. Hasil penelitian menjelaskan bahwa status Hagia Sophia di Istanbul adalah milik hukum negara Turki, bukan hukum internasional, sehingga presiden Turki berhak mengubah status Hagia Sophia menjadi masjid yang pernah menjadi museum pada masa rezim sekuler. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, dan negara-negara lain tidak boleh memprotes keputusan tersebut. itu. itu. Menurut penelitian dari Istanbul Economic Research Institute Juni lalu, 46,9% responden setuju dengan transformasi Hagia Sophia menjadi masjid, sementara 38,8% responden menolak dan menginginkan Hagia Sophia tetap menjadi museum.

Kata kunci: politik, Hagia Sophia, Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Abstract

Hagia Sophia is one of the UNESCO world heritage sites built by Emperor Justinian I which is a Basilica building in Istanbul Turkiye and is a conflict between two religions, namely Christianity and Islam. In 2020 a decision that shocked the world came from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who turned the Hagia Sophia into a mosque that was previously a museum during the time of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. This paper uses library research, which identifies data including books, journals, articles, and more. The results of the study explain that the status of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul belongs to Turkish state law, not international law, so the Turkish president has the right to change

the status of Hagia Sophia into a mosque that was once a museum during the secular regime. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other countries should not protest the decision. that. that. According to research from the Istanbul Economic Research Institute last June, 46.9% of respondents agreed with the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque, while 38.8% of respondents refused and wanted the Hagia Sophia to remain a museum.

Keywords: political, Hagia Sophia, Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Introduction

Hagia Sophia is a historical building that has become a political dynamic in Türkiye, Hagia Sophia which in Turkish is called Aya Sophia has passed through an era of more than 15 centuries and has been a silent witness of the ongoing transition of many people. a regime that ruled Constantinople. During the Byzantine Empire, Hagia Sophia was the Church (Qodarsasi & Khofifah, 2020). By the time Constantinople fell in 1453, the Ottomans began to convert the Christian Empire to Islam through aesthetic re-identification. As a decorative feature of the mosque, a minaret serves practically for the call to prayer and other announcements. However, for the Ottomans, it was more than that. The minaret is a powerful physical symbol of the triumph of Islam, external evidence of the conversion of Christian architecture to Islam. Not surprisingly, it is said that the first minaret erected on the Hagia Sophia was a sign of Islam. Instead of destroying cultural heritage, Sultan Mehmet II reclaimed the “prestige” and symbolic power of Hagia Sophia for his political ends (Soekarba, 2020).

During the reign of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1937 the Hagia Sophia was converted back into a museum, several designs and styles of Islamic buildings were converted into churches and the ceilings of the mosques were painted with calligraphy on the remains so that Christian holy paintings were rediscovered, since then the Mosque Aya Sophia is made a famous tourist attraction in Istanbul by the Turkish government, and the museum is always open except Monday.

Recently, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a decision that shocked the international community, especially Muslims and Orthodox Christians. How not, the historical building monument, namely the Hagia Sophia, has been a museum since 1935 and was later converted into a mosque. Then the policy raises pros and cons for Muslims and Christians in the world (Iryana, 2020). The debate about the decision touches the core of the split between religious and secular parties in Türkiye,

nationalist-conservative groups in Turkiye have long wanted to worship in Hagia Sophia which is part of the Ottoman Empire, while for secular groups, Hagia Sophia should become a museum because it is a symbol of brotherhood between Christianity and Islam (Aviv, 2020).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze more deeply the studies that have been carried out including: First, Budi Sujati and Wahyu Iryana entitled “*The Change of the Erdogan Hagia Sophia Museum: Historical Perspectives and Its Implications for the Indonesian Language*”. By looking at the fact that President Erdogan wants to return the owner of the Hagia Sophia to the previous ruler. This became a scene when hardline Islamic groups in Indonesia took advantage of this moment to support their underground movement promoted by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia. (Sujati & Iryana, 2020). Then Umi Qodarsasi & Melina Nurul Khofifah entitled “*Hagia Sophia and the Awakening of Islam in Turkiye*”. President Erdogan’s policy of turning the Hagia Sophia into a mosque is a step toward Islamization in Turkiye, after the collapse of secular power from Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (Qodarsasi & Khofifah, 2020).

This research is different from that carried out by the researchers above, because this research looks at hidden political influences between religion and the government so that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan easily turned Hagia Sophia into a mosque on the grounds that there were many tragedies in the name of religion such as: from a Mosque to a church in Spain, Mosques destroyed in India. plus the Hagia Sophia site is a world heritage located in the territory of Turkey where the majority of the population is Muslim.

This study uses a type of qualitative research with a library approach (Library Research), which collects several reference materials from various sources related to the research to be studied, including books, research journals, articles, and research related to writing.

Result and Discussion

History of the Founding of Hagia Sophia

Hagia Sophia in Greek is “Hagia” which means holy, and “Sophia” which means wisdom, is one of the works of ethnic Christian mysticism combined with Roman imperial architecture and revealed through the characteristics of Early Byzantine art, the first name of Hagia Sophia is “Mega Ekklesia” which means “Big Church”. At first, only Sophia was used to refer to Jesus as part of God's wisdom or

word. Then this structure is called Hagia Sophia which means Holy Wisdom, Great Wisdom, or God's Wisdom (Iryana, 2020).

Great Roman Empire. Justinian I started the construction of the Hagia Sophia along with the Byzantine city. At first, the building was planned as a long basilica covered with a wooden roof. After the collapse of the first building due to the earthquake. Then Constantinos II rebuilt the Hagia Sophia more largely and its execution was carried out with a great ceremony and was completed in 361. The Hagia Sophia ceremony was decorated with gold and silver curtains, the new structure was built larger than the old small church, as a basilica with stone walls and wooden roofs (Assist & Şahin, 2019). even the construction of the Hagia Sophia was an important milestone in proving the political power of the Byzantine government.

With the division of the Roman empire in two in 392, Istanbul became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. In line with these developments, the importance of the Hagia Sophia has also increased. Hagia Sophia is the focal point of the city, not only religious but also political. Hagia Sophia became an important political arena for various dissent at that time. At the beginning of the fifth century, it was the patriarch's constant criticism of the imperial dynasty in the Hagia Sophia that led to the conflict (Iryana, 2020).

The second building of the Hagia Sophia was reopened by Theodosios II on 10 October 415 by creating a five-ply wooden structure built by the architect Rufinus. Theodosios II fully contributed to Constantinopolis as the capital of the empire by building the walls of the historic peninsula that still stands today with the construction of the second Hagia Sophia, the city became more strategic and religiously important, and politically. This second Hagia Sophia building survived until the Nika Rebellion, which began at the Hippodrome against Emperor Justinian on 13-14 January 532. Many public buildings, including the Imperial Palace, were destroyed and burned by the Nika Rebellion. Among these buildings are the Ayya Irene Church, the Samson Nursing Home, the Senate building, and the Hagia Sophia (Assist & Sahin, 2019).

Hagia Sophia is a building that was built with all the complete facilities of its time and became a turning point in the history of architecture in the world. The final version of the structural plan and design is not related to the previous structure. The structure was not formed from the evolution of other sources due to intensive efforts to realize its unique structure. Precious stones and ornate pillars from various temples from several places were brought to be used in the construction of the Hagia Sophia, one of

which is the Temple of Artemis of Ephesus which is also used in an important part of the structure of the Hagia Sophia. In its construction, a total of ten thousand people were employed with a hundred architectural people, and the Hagia Sophia was one of the largest churches in the world at its time (Coruhlu & Uzun, 2020).

On February 23, 532, just a few weeks after the destruction of the second basilica, Emperor Justinian I decided to rebuild a third basilica which was completely different from the previous basilica which was larger and more magnificent than its predecessor, Justinian chose the physicist Isidore Miletus and mathematician Anthemius of Tralles. as architecture, This construction is described in the Byzantine historian Procopius on the building. Columns and other marble were brought from all over the empire, throughout the Mediterranean. The idea of this column became spoiled from cities like Rome and Ephesus. Although made especially for the Hagia Sophia, the columns show variations in size (Papanikos, 2020).

More than ten thousand people were employed, and the new Church was recognized as an architectural masterpiece. Alexandrian theory may have been used to overcome the challenge presented by constructing a building so vast that it had the shape of a dome over such a vast space. The Emperor, together with Patriarch Menas inaugurated the new basilica on 27 December 537.5 years and 10 months after construction began with much pomp. The mosaic inside the church was completed under the reign of Emperor Justinian II (Mango, 1962).

After some time finally, earthquakes came on August 553 and December 14, 557 causing cracks in the main dome and the eastern part of the dome. The main dome collapsed completely during an earthquake on 7 May 558, destroying the altar, and the ciborium. The accident was mainly caused by the high bearing load and the enormous shear load of the too-flat dome. This results in a pier supporting the dome. The emperor ordered an immediate restoration. He entrusted Isidorus the Younger, nephew of Isidorus of Miletus, in addition, young Isidore changed the type of dome and erected a striped dome with a pendant (Kiilerich, 2012).

As time progressed a major earthquake occurred on October 25, 989, which caused the collapse of the western arch of the dome, Emperor Basil II asked the Armenian architect Trdat, who built major churches such as the Ani and Argina, to repair it. He rebuilt and strengthened the arch of the collapsed dome, and rebuilt the west side of the dome with 15 ribs of the dome. The extent of the damage required was six years of repair and reconstruction, then the church reopened on 13 May 994. At the end

of the reconstruction, the decoration of the church was also renovated, including the addition of a large painting of Jesus Christ on the dome, and in the apse a depiction of Mary holding Jesus among the apostles of Peter. and Paul, On the great side arch, depicts the apostles and teachers of the church (Knezevic, 2015).

After the conquest of Constantinople during the Crusades, the Church was looted and desecrated by Latin Christians as described by the Byzantine historian Niketas Choniates. During the Latin occupation of Constantinople (1204-1261), the Church was later converted into a Roman Catholic Cathedral. Baldwin I of Constantinople was crowned emperor on 16 May 1204 at the Hagia Sophia, in a ceremony that followed Byzantine practice. Enrico Dandolo led the looting and invasion of the city by the Latin Crusaders in 1204 and is buried in the Church. a tomb inscription bearing his name which had been part of the floor decorations was then spat on by angry crowds in Byzantium and then reclaimed Constantinople in 1261 (Kalavrezou, 2019).

After being recaptured in 1261 by the Byzantines, the Church was in a state of disrepair. In 1317, the emperor Andronicus II ordered four new buttresses to be built in the eastern and northern parts of the Church. On May 19, 1346, the church was again cracked due to an earthquake, and some parts of the building collapsed as a result the church was temporarily closed until 1354, after which repairs were carried out by architects Astras and Peralta (Kalavrezou, 2019).

The Transformation of Hagia Sophia into a Mosque by Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih (Conquest of the City of Constantinople)

Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomans on 29 May 1453(Iryana, 2020), with an army of about 250,000 soldiers. The main attack was launched, and the mujahideen were ordered to raise their voices of Takbir and the words of monotheism when attacking the city. The Ottoman army finally managed to penetrate the city of Constantinople through the Edirne Gate and they raised the Ottoman flag over the city. The sincerity and high fighting spirit among the soldiers of Muhammad al-Fatih finally succeeded in realizing their ideal (Arslan).

Constantinople had fallen, city dwellers flocked to Hagia Sophia and Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih gave protection to all residents, whether Jews or Christians because they were dhimmi (infidels who had to be protected) residents for paying taxes (which were bound by treaty) and mustaman (who are protected like interstate traders)

are not kafir harbi (infidels who must be fought). Constantinople changed its name to Istanbul (Whole Islam). and Hagia Sophia eventually turned into a mosque the other churches are still functioning as they are (Saradi, 2015).

During the Ottoman period, the structure of the Hagia Sophia was converted into Islamic architecture, a tower was built to sound the call to prayer, and a madrasa school and library were built (Qodarsasi & Khofifah, 2020). Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih immediately ordered that the city be rebuilt. Instead of destroying all previous Christian icons, Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih added an Islamic nuanced decoration that seemed to make it look like a beautiful mosque building.

When the first Friday prayers were held at the Hagia Sophia, al-Fatih read his sermon and his teacher Akshamsaddin became the imam of the prayer. Al-Fatih invited architects and construction foremen from Anatolia and the Balkans to rebuild entire cities, from the construction of aqueducts to road repairs. He brought to life an art institution he built called "*Nakkahane-i Rum*" and he rebuilt his city. He took artists not only from the Islamic world but also from the western world. He invited artists from the European world, especially Italy after his conquest. The Sultan spent most of his time rebuilding the city of Istanbul and laying the groundwork for the care of the Hagia Sophia. All the possessions that al-Fatih acquired during the spoils of war were counted individually and their income was donated to the foundation to build many artifacts in Istanbul, especially the Hagia Sophia building (Lowry, 1986).

Sultan al-Fatih prevented the destruction of the Hagia Sophia building and after performing his first prayers, he turned it into a Mosque. Al-Fatih also has a madrasa adjoining the building. He also ordered the first tower to be built on the two towers to the south. The tower was later moved during renovations in 1574. For the Hagia Sophia to operate as a Mosque, Sultan al-Fatih donated a large part of his property to his foundation. All subsequent Ottoman sultans also contributed with new additions, renovations, and decorations (Iryana, 2020).

The structure of the Hagia Sophia has also been damaged in a major earthquake in the city of Istanbul. Forty years after a major renovation by Sultan Mahmud II in 1809, the building had to undergo another major renovation. Various repairs were carried out by the Swiss architect Gaspare Fossati on the orders of Sultan Abdulmecid between 1847 and 1849, then in 1894, the Hagia Sophia was again damaged by an earthquake, cracks appeared in the walls and the large mosaic surface was damaged when the plaster was removed. Sultan Abdulhamid II strengthened the building by

repairing the damage. The condition of the building was inspected by the architects Raimondo Tommaso D'Aronco and Kemalettin Bey. During the constitutional period, Henri Prost was among the Western architects who examined the condition of the Hagia Sophia. The building served as a Mosque until the end of the First World War, after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was elected President of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923 (Saragih, 2021).

Hagia Sophia's Transformation Into a Museum by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

After the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk emerged as an idea for renewal, namely on November 24, 1934, the Turkish Council of Ministers officially designated Hagia Sophia as a museum (Soekarba, 2020), the reason Mustafa Kemal Atatürk turned the building of the Hagia Sophia Mosque into a Museum to highlight its universal value and to strengthen secularism above religious religiosity (Jeffreys, 2020). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk also declared Modern Türkiye a secular state by abolishing the Islamic system as the official religion in 1937. Previously, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had abolished Islamic institutions in the government, among others; The Shaykh Al-Islam Bureau in 1924, the abolition of Shari'ah Ministry, the abolition of Sharia Court, the abolition of Arabic and Persian language lessons in schools in 1928, then the abolition of religious education in schools in 1933. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's ideas were also heavily influenced by the rational conception built by Ziya Gökalp who was also a nationalist (Jeffreys, 2020).

The Hagia Sophia museum monument invites the United Nations, UNESCO, and the World Monuments Foundation to generously fund its restoration and preservation. After full restoration by World Monuments Fund, Hagia Sophia became a world-famous museum, especially in Türkiye and more than 4 million visitors visit the country every year to visit this Turkish museum which became famous for its cross-cultural significance which unites East to West, merging Islam and Christianity in one impressive monument (Sebastian & Ravishankar, 2020).

During his tenure as the number one person in Türkiye, various policies carried out by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk were westernization in all aspects of Turkish people's life, especially in terms of civilization. The main theme of this Westernization thought is that Türkiye should be part of the West in every way. To that end, he took extreme and very different policies from the Ottoman Caliphate, one of which was the prohibition of wearing clothes that were considered religious attire in public places and

encouraging Turks to wear Western-style clothes Mustafa Kemal Atatürk died on November 10, 1938 (Sujati, 2021).

In 2006, the Turkish government tried to revoke the religiosity of this museum by allocating a small room in the museum complex to be used as a place of worship for Christian and Muslim museum staff. So, there is popular secularism in Türkiye which allows two religions namely Christianity and Islam to live in harmony in one building. Hagia Sophia is a universal monument, a true symbol of coexistence between religion and culture which is well-funded by UNESCO (Dorffner, Kraus, & Tschannerl, 2000).

The idea of reopening the Hagia Sophia museum as a place of worship has sparked ongoing discussion (Ozer, 2017). There used to be a donation box which was a form of voluntary alms, but now the entrance fee is set at 60 Turkish Lira which is collected not in the spirit of charity, but in the spirit of capitalism. The tower is now a symbol used by both secular and non-secular, especially during Türkiye's struggle for independence. This tower is not only used to announce the call to prayer, but also to foster a sense of love for the homeland. Thus, there is no longer any aesthetic evidence of the victory of Islam, but rather the integration of the propaganda of the secular regime. The government of Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel decided to acquiesce to the demands of conservatives and set aside the part of the Hagia Sophia known as the Imperial Gallery as the Holy Place of Islam in July 1980. Demirel reopened a small wing separated by the vast main basilica. The Imperial Gallery, formerly dedicated to the Empress and her court, was decorated with mosaics during Byzantine rule associated with the religious functions of the imperial court. During the reign of the Ottoman Turks, when the Church was converted into a Mosque, most of these mosaics were covered with paint and are now in dire need of restoration. The Hagia Sophia has become highly politicized and is a contest between Christianity, Islam, and secularism (Stanicek, 2020).

Attention is paid to reviving Istanbul and creating a national identity based on the previous culture that developed here. The focus is on the "generosity" of rules that accommodate a particular pluralism in the city (Ozer, 2017). Buildings representing Ottoman domination were converted to serve secular functions (Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace) or retained their functions and opened to non-Muslim visitors (Blue Mosque), symbolizing the construction of a new national narrative and a new identity for Istanbul moving towards a secular state. making the Hagia Sophia one of the symbols of Istanbul's plurality (Ozer, 2017).

In 2003 under the protection of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Hagia Sophia separated from the constitution of any religious affairs. These new ways of organizing structures have a great impact on the daily operation and use of each of the buildings stemming from the secular movement and later from changes in cultural heritage management policies, these buildings take on a new identity as part of the narrative larger national (Hedges, 2020).

There is a further separation between Hagia Sophia as a secular and Hagia Sophia as a religious place as evidenced by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCaT), the Administrative Body of Hagia Sophia, In the official MoCaT website, Hagia Sophia is categorized under “Religious Monuments” as well as “Museum”. The same pattern is repeated on Turkiye’s official tourism portal. Although the government bestowed the title “Museum” to Hagia Sophia, the role of the structure is not fully understood by many people, because two labels have been given to Hagia Sophia namely “Museum” and “Religious Room”, but neither of them is fully understood. summarize the meaning or understanding of the building site. Hagia Sophia is proving to be a unique heritage site that has yet to find a way to balance the sacred and the secular aspects of the building (Avdoulos, 2020).

Hagia Sophia politics under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Recently President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a decision that shocked the world, especially Muslims and Christians. How not, a very historic building monument, namely Hagia Sophia, has been a museum since 1935 and was later converted into a mosque on July 24, 2020, with a court decision approved by the government of the President of Turkiye that Hagia Sophia must return to the mosque, so this policy raises pros and cons against society Islam and Christianity especially Orthodox Christians around the world (Iryana, 2020). One of the responses came from Western countries including the United States, criticism also came from the European Union's Head of Foreign Policy Josep Borell, in a statement saying that the decision of the Turkish state council to overturn one of the important decisions for Modern Turkiye and President Erdogan (Saptaningtyas, 2021).

One of Turkiye’s neighbors also criticized the same thing, namely Greece. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in a statement that Greece condemned Turkiye’s decision to turn the Hagia Sophia museum into a Mosque, a choice that offended all those who recognized the monument as a world heritage site. The

implications of this Turkish policy affect not only Turkiye's relations with Greece but also its relations with the European Union.

The head of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Ieronymos, said Erdogan was using religion as a means to achieve his geopolitical goals by turning Istanbul's Hagia Sophia into a mosque. The transformation of religion into an instrument to achieve party, geopolitical, and geostrategic goals only characterize the society that uses it to do so. Meanwhile, previously Pope Francis, the supreme leader of the Vatican, said he was deeply saddened by Turkiye's decision to change the status of the Hagia Sophia back to a Mosque. Pope Francis' comments came from his studio window overlooking St. Peter's Square as the Catholic Church marks Sunday as International Ocean Day. Pope Francis, who heads the Roman Catholic Church, expressed his sadness a day after the Geneva-based World Council of Churches made the same statement. The organization notes that Hagia Sophia has been a place of openness, encounter, and inspiration for people of all nationalities. This council is made up of Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican churches (Junaidi, 2016).

According to the Chancellor of the International Islamic University of Indonesia (UIII), Komaruddin Hidayat said the change in the status of the Hagia Sophia to a Mosque was not related to the legitimacy of Islamic influence in Turkiye, he considered the change step. Hagia Sophia's status is only for Erdogan's political interests. "It's not just that the Hagia Sophia's transformation into a Mosque shows that Islam is victorious. In the Middle East, there tend to be leaders of countries who want to emerge as leaders of the Muslim world (Khabbah, 2021).

Komaruddin said it is also irrelevant if Erdogan bases his decision on increasing the worship capacity of Muslims in Istanbul. He considered that in terms of the function of the place of worship, the change of the Hagia Sophia as a mosque was not urgent because in Istanbul there are so many mosques, even opposite the Hagia Sophia stands a very beautiful and large mosque that still stands strong and can accommodate many worshipers (Khabbah, 2021). So this is only Turkiye's domestic political interest. In the same vein, Professor Ridwan al-Sayyed finds that the transformation of the Church into a Mosque, since the beginning of Islam, was not a religious act, but a political act, he concludes that the re-conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a Mosque is also an act of political interest by Erdogan (Goodyear, 2021).

The Foreign Minister of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulides, took to his Twitter account to strongly condemn Erdogan's decision, saying that he "strongly condemns

Turkiye's decision regarding Hagia Sophia as an attempt to attract attention at home and asks Turkiye to respect international agreements," Nikos also continued, Turkiye's actions "triggered a violation of international agreements with the transformation of the Hagia Sophia, which is a world heritage site, and also a symbol of adherents of the Orthodox Christian faith" (Khabbah, 2021).

The head of the Eastern Christian Orthodox Church in Istanbul, Patriarch Bartholomew I, warned last June that turning the Hagia Sophia into a mosque would trigger conflict between adherents of the two major religions and the Russian Orthodox leader. The Church, Patriarch Kirill, requested that the status of Hagia Sophia be returned to its original state by a neutral location. Kirill also called the Hagia Sophia a holy place for Orthodox Christians. "Russians are mostly Orthodox Christians, so what happened to Hagia Sophia will hurt all Russians," the Associated Press reported. It is alleged that Erdogan is doing this only to increase his political prestige among his support base, which is mostly Muslim. According to an opinion survey conducted by the Istanbul Institute of Economic Research in June, 46.9 respondents agreed that the Hagia Sophia would serve as a Mosque, while 38.8 percent of respondents wanted the Hagia Sophia to remain a museum (Goodyear, 2021).

Then a spokeswoman for the United States Department of State Morgan Ortagus said he was very disappointed with the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a Mosque. He also hopes that the Turkish government will continue to open access to the Hagia Sophia for all visitors. "We understand that the Turkish Government remains committed to maintaining access to the Hagia Sophia for all visitors and look forward to hearing about Turkiye's management plan to ensure it remains unhindered access for all". Meanwhile, the Hamas group welcomed Erdogan's decision. "The opening of the Hagia Sophia for worship is a proud moment for all Muslims", wrote the head of the Hamas International Press Office, Rafat Murra, saying that the decision fell under the internal sovereign rights of the Turkish state (Soekarba, 2020).

Several Malaysian clerics expressed full support for the decision of the Turkish High Court to change the status of Hagia Sophia back to a Mosque. The statement was delivered directly by Ahmad Awang Chair of the World Mosque Alliance in Al-Aqsa Defense, and Wira Abdul Ghani Samsudin as Chair of the Secretariat of the Asian Ulema Council. "We express full support for Hagia Sophia to be converted back into a Mosque following the decision of the Turkish High Court", in a statement in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He also said that "We provide unwavering support for the decision.

We protest loudly against the voices of some countries who seem to have the will to challenge the rights of the Turkish government to officially reopen the monument as a Mosque”, They said countries and UN agencies have no right to protest Turkiye's sovereignty to enforce legal decisions. “We condemn their stance and demand that foreign countries should show their respect for Turkiye’s right to determine their heritage and history,” the cleric said in a statement. They also called on all Muslim leaders in the world and prominent leaders, especially the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) countries to express their unanimous support for defending the decision. The clerics considered the Turkish government to take the right steps to allow the court to decide on the Hagia Sophia (Junaidi, 2016).

Iran and Pakistan fully support Turkiye’s decision to turn the Hagia Sophia from a museum into a Mosque. This support comes as Western countries and the Orthodox Christian community strongly condemn the steps taken by Erdogan. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said that Tehran was very pleased to see the opening of the Hagia Sophia for Muslim worship. Quoted from the *Greek City Times* media, Referring to the response of several Western countries to Turkiye's decision, he said that the fate of Hagia Sophia is an internal Turkish problem. “This is an issue that needs to be studied in the context of Turkiye’s national sovereignty” (Matital, Ridhul, & Daties, 2021).

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, chairman of the state assembly of Punjab, the country’s largest province, said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was “bold” for transforming the Hagia Sophia from a museum into a Mosque. “We commend President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his bold decision on the status of the Hagia Sophia Mosque. This is not only following the wishes of the Turkish people but the entire Muslim world” (Bogdanović, 2016).

Responding to the response of various countries around the world, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan dismissed international criticism of the decision to transform the Hagia Sophia from a museum into a Mosque. Erdoan reasoned that his decision was his “sovereign right”. In the past, he has repeatedly voiced that the stunning building should be renamed a Mosque. Even in 2018, he recited a verse from the Koran that was plastered on the wall of the Hagia Sophia.

The sacred building, the Hagia Sophia, was built 1,500 years ago as a cathedral of Orthodox Christianity and was converted into a mosque after the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453, now its name is Istanbul. Then the secular

government of Turkiye, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, decided in 1934 to turn it into a museum. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Friday 24 July 2020, officially transformed the building, back into a mosque and declared it open for Muslim worship. The announcement came hours after Turkiye's High Court overturned a 1934 decision that turned the Hagia Sophia into a museum. According to Erdoğan, Muslims in Turkiye can hold worship at UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Soekarba, 2020).

Turkiye with its Islamic political style leads to neo-ottomans politics which has changed government policies both at home and abroad, then marked by the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque again for Muslims is a sign of Turkiye's seriousness in building the image of Islamic political leadership. although Turkiye is still shy to admit it by continuing to establish diplomatic relations with countries that are very contrary to its ideology (Nursya'ban, 2021).

Hagia Sophia's status is under the Turkish State Sovereign Law

Another thing that needs to be underlined is the fact that the Hagia Sophia was included on the World Cultural Heritage list in 1985 (Avdoulos, 2020), and is one of the most original examples of cultural property that must be protected. Cultures and natural features included in the World Heritage List created by the World Heritage Committee established under the Convention are subject to special protection regimes. Articles 4 and 5 of the Convention, entitled "National and International Protection, Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage" stipulate the obligation of state parties to protect property located on their territory and the World Heritage list. When evaluated within the scope of the Convention, the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a Mosque does not violate any obligations undertaken by Turkiye under the Convention including the provisions in question, and most notably, the obligations of protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission to future generations of cultural property (Saragih, 2021).

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property located on their territory and the World Heritage list. When evaluated within the scope of the Convention, the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a Mosque does not violate any obligations undertaken by Turkiye under the Convention including the provisions referred to, and especially the obligations of protection of conservation, presentation, and transmission. the next generation of cultural wealth (Saragih, 2021).

In addition, this does not mean that it will lose the features on which it is based on the List, and there will be no damage or risk of loss or destruction of the basic features of the building if all types of building surveys, restoration, and restoration projects are carried out following the standards and principles of cultural heritage protection. . Taking into account the Convention, it is concluded that any claim and any change in the status of the building in violation of the obligations under the Convention are unfounded. It further seems unnecessary with permission from the World Heritage Committee to turn the Hagia Sophia into a Mosque. In addition, it should be noted that Article 6 of the Convention stipulates that the state party must fully respect the sovereignty of the state whose territory lies the cultural and natural heritage (Chatterjee & Gruber 2020).

The 1972 World Heritage Convention, one of the most widely ratified treaties in the world, stipulates the status of the Hagia Sophia as a global icon. The World Heritage List contains 1,121 sites worldwide. The Istanbul Historic Areas, on the list since 1985, are of world significance (or, in the language of the Convention, of “Outstanding Universal Value”), due to the overlap of several civilizations. The question is whether, by privileging one of the layers of the Hagia Sophia, its use as a Mosque goes against the nature of the list.

This convention is ambiguous concerning state control over inheritance and its meaning:

Article 4. Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the task of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission to future generations of its cultural and natural heritage lies within its territory, especially that of the State itself.

Article 6.1. By still fully respecting the sovereignty of the country whose territory is a cultural and natural heritage.

The States Parties to this Convention recognize that such heritage is a world heritage whose protection is the obligation of the international community as a whole to cooperate.

Both provisions show the tension between sovereignty and the idea that heritage represents the collective values of humanity. Adding a site to the World Heritage List

could not happen without territorial state initiatives; thus, Hagia Sophia is on the list because Türkiye is actively seeking that result. However, once the site is on the list, the unresolved question is who controls the meaning of the site and changes its use. UNESCO may see it as their prerogative, but the Convention's Operational Guidelines assert that states are responsible for the presentation of sites and their contents, and the international community has only "collective interests" (Lixinski & Tzevelekos, 2020).

According to Article 2(1) of the United Nations Charter, the constitutive instrument of the United Nations, of which Türkiye is a founding member, this organization is based on the principle of sovereign equality of all member states and each country must recognize the sovereignty of other countries. The most obvious form of the principle of sovereign equality in international law is the prohibition of interference in the domestic affairs of a country. After that, member countries are obliged to refrain from any attitude or behavior that can harm each other's sovereignty. The same situation applies to the United Nations and it is clearly stated in Article 2(7) of the Charter of the United Nations that nothing contained in the Charter authorizes the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any country (Goodyear, 2022).

However, a country can remove an issue from its jurisdiction by giving it an international character through international treaty instruments and can authorize other countries and international organizations to deal with the matter. In such cases, the limit of non-intervention in domestic matters is limited to the will of the state. Violation of this principle can only occur when the estimated limit is exceeded.

Türkiye changed the status of Hagia Sophia by turning it into a museum from a mosque through an administrative decree by Cabinet Decree of 24 October 1934 which was issued in its domestic law under its sovereign rule. Neither at the time the change in status was made nor throughout the time to this day, there is no information or document on Türkiye's sovereign power-sharing to identify the legal status of Hagia Sophia with other international legal entities. It is known that the Hagia Sophia was brought to the agenda and discussed during the Paris Conference after World War I, during the Treaty of Sevres, or even at the Lausanne Conference when the issues of Istanbul and minorities were being negotiated. However, neither in the Lausanne Treaty nor in other international instruments there are provisions regarding the Hagia Sophia (Goodyear, 2022).

Ultimately, the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a Mosque frames the distinctive dilemma between ownership and shared values, the difference is that these values are not sufficiently defined. For International Cultural Heritage Law (ICHL) they may be cosmopolitanism which is religiously neutral for a country like Turkiye, these values can become religion as standard-bearers of pluralism. Operational Guidelines are mostly at the crossroads of religion and heritage, except for cultural landscapes (which include sacred areas, usually for indigenous peoples) and cultural routes (which include pilgrimage routes). The guidelines recognize that religion and religious values are the main reasons why these types of sites are valued, but they say nothing about reconciling the use of religious and non-religious sites. Religion is important to enter the door of recognition as a World Heritage site (Arif, 2021).

The conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque is a move condemned by UNESCO, which is in tension with its secularist, International Cultural Heritage Law (ICHL), vis-a-vis sites with multiple religious strata, this signifies the priority of one layer of history over all others and undermines interreligious and intercultural dialogue. As UNESCO's Director-General puts it, "Hagia Sophia's status as a museum reflects the universal nature of its heritage, and makes it a powerful symbol for dialogue". If conversion into a functioning Mosque means removing the historic lining that is key to the value of the Hagia Sophia, it goes against the object and purpose of the World Heritage Convention. Only two sites have ever been removed from the World Heritage List, if Hagia Sophia became the third it would be the first removal in the name of Religion (Bogdanovic, 2016).

If the conversion is indeed in contravention of the World Heritage Convention, the next question is who can hold Turkiye accountable for international law. The International Law Commission (ILC) article on State Responsibility for Internationally Wrongful Actions, which largely codifies customary law, distinguishes between injured and uninjured states, allowing uninjured states to hold wrongdoers accountable if obligations are breached owed to all other countries. The right of uninjured states to hold states responsible for violating obligations is well established in the case law of the International Court of Justice, which recently affirmed this right in its January 2020 interim action orders in Gambia and Myanmar on Genocide Cases (Edition, 2012).

The World Heritage Convention aims to protect the common heritage of mankind. Therefore, all state parties have a legitimate interest so that their common heritage can be protected and used following its universal values. Therefore, even as an

unaffected country, all parties to the World Heritage Convention can claim from Turkiye the cessation of the use of the Hagia Sophia as a Mosque, and guarantee that its non-denominational nature will be maintained in the future (Lixinski & Tzevelekos, 2020).

The question is whether the Hagia Sophia site violates the conversion of the separation between religion and secular authority in the Turkish Constitution. possible. Although the State Council statement refers to waqf law, the purpose of conversion is very different. The excessive linkage between Islamic law and the ruler of President Erdogan is at least contrary to the spirit of the secular state promoted by Kemal Ataturk. Therefore, the legality of conversion under Turkish law should be questioned. Recep T. Erdogan firmly stated that the status of the legacy of Hagia Sophia is an internal affair of the Turkish state. condemning, criticizing, and rejecting conversion is part of the invasion of the Turkish nation's sovereignty (Goodyear, 2021).

He (President Erdogan) believes that the status of Hagia Sophia, whether from a Museum or a Mosque, is a sovereign right of the Turkish state. sovereign territory power is entirely within the political and legal territory of the Turkish state; however, that sovereignty can be limited by international legal treaties that have been approved by the Turkish state. Turkiye's legal constitution expressly stipulates that international treaties have legal force in Turkiye. The restrictions on opportunities are not limited to Turkiye's legal constitution on the Hagia Sophia which is particularly prominent concerning treaties at the Court of Human Rights in European courts, religious freedom, cultural heritage rights, minority rights, and conquest. The Hagia Sophia heritage reserve is not a single religious site, but rather has a mixed history that serves as a significant religious site for various ethnic religions, more precisely as a "universal religious site". This universal religious site has functioned as a place of worship or pilgrimage site for more than one ethnic religion (Altun, 2020).

While universal religious sites are not very common, there are many important examples outside of Hagia Sophia such as Cordoba, Spain, La Mezquita which served as the main Mosque for the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba and their successors during the Middle Ages, but the Mosque was converted into a cathedral by Ferdinand III (1217-1252) of Castile in the thirteenth century. Attempts to cover up La Mezquita's history as a mosque led to hundreds of thousands of people signing petitions in protest and condemnation by the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, and a total ban on prayer inside the building has also been criticized (Altun, 2020).

In Ayodhya, India, a site believed to be the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama, and also has the Babri Mosque built by the Moghul emperor Babur (1526-1530), the Babri Mosque was demolished by Hindus in 1992, and a controversial Indian court in 2019 awarded the Babri Mosque site to Hindus to build a temple to the god Rama. Then in Jerusalem, the Temple Mount is a holy place for the Jewish and Muslim religions, which sometimes causes tension and conflicts between the two religions in the Temple Mount area. Even in Turkiye, many other mosques were formerly Byzantine Church buildings such as the Chora and Hagia Sophia churches in Iznik and Trabzon. The list only scratches the surface of the number of universal religious sites in the world (Stanicek, 2020).

Anthropologist Khalid Yacine argues that the use of the Hagia Sophia as a mosque, compared to the active demolition of religious buildings by Christians or the banning of Arabic in converted Mosques is harmless. But this difference is highlighting the problem rather than articulating the exception. As the furor caused by the Muslim ban on prayer in La Mezquita or the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, these points of religious significance can mediate conflict. The Hagia Sophia as a shared space emotionally filled with religious importance for Christians and Muslims is no different. Conquest is no longer a legitimate goal, and universal stability and peace are goals of international law. Therefore, there is a strong interest in maintaining a neutral position on these controversial sites.

An applied solution could be taken from the example of the Hagia Sophia: remain a neutral museum, or, as some have suggested, be open to the affected universal religion or all religions more generally in some workable setting. This would maintain a neutral approach to these highly contested spaces rather than fueling more conflict by allowing future interests to elevate one religion over another.

Currently, there are no specific international legal provisions for universal religious sites. However, future cultural heritage conventions may provide for maintaining the status quo or maintaining it as a museum or site open to all religions. The model will not differ much from the World Heritage Convention, with certain universal religious sites nominated by countries for inclusion on lists maintained by UNESCO (Goodyear, 2021).

Conclusion

Regarding politics and the transformation of the status of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque by Erdoan, if we look at the problem by looking at one of the phenomena from a historical approach, it is very natural for the highest leader in a country to carry it. go out. the policy as long as it does not conflict with state law because all of these are sovereign rights. In this case, Erdogan as the leader of a populist and Islamist state wants the rights of the previous rulers in which Sultan Mehmed II who turned the Orthodox Church into a mosque must be returned to the conquerors of the city of Constantinople.

Erdogan took lessons from many important examples outside the Hagia Sophia such as in Cordoba, Spain, La Mezquita which was once the main mosque of the Umayyad Dynasty and later turned into a cathedral by Ferdinand III. Then in Ayodhya, India there is also Babri Mosque which was built by the Moghul emperor then Babri Mosque was demolished by Hindus in 1992 and the Indian court gave the site to Hindus to build a temple to Lord Rama. And we as citizens must respect every leader of the country in taking their decision steps to determine what is best for their citizens, especially in Turkiye.

The researcher realizes that this paper is far from perfect, therefore this research needs to be updated so that research related to the politics of Hagia Sophia conducted by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan becomes more perfect, It is hoped that future researchers can examine more deeply and more sources and references related to the current politics of the Hagia Sophia building so that readers know about the situation and condition of the UNESCO heritage site (Hagia Sophia) which is still being debated by international world political elites.

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