

**Rethinking the Peculiarity of Turkish Experience with Islamism**

Thesis submitted to the  
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences  
in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
Political Science and International Relations

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Boğaziçi University

2004

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great debt to my supervisor, Prof. Binnaz Toprak, for her valuable suggestions and corrections which created substantial improvements in the content and style of the thesis. I want to thank also to Prof. Taha Parla and Prof. Yeşim Arat for their useful comments. I am also indebted to Soli Özel for his generosity in sharing his rich library with me. Many ideas expressed in this text reflect his deep influence on my thinking. I have to express my gratitude to Gülşah Çapan for her help during my illness. I should also note that without the rich electronic and printing facilities of the Istanbul Bilgi University, I couldn't write this thesis. My special thanks go to my family who provided continuing support for my study.

## **ABSTRACT**

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By

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This thesis takes up the peculiar development of Political Islam in Turkish politics. It is generally argued that the rise of Islamist movements constitute a serious barrier to the democratization of Muslim countries. This thesis tries to question this view by showing the resilience of democratic institutions in Turkey in handling the problem of Political Islam. By taking up the model of the center-periphery, it will attempt to show the role of democracy in reducing cultural conflict, enlarging national political agenda and constraining and transforming Political Islam. It stresses also the importance of legal institutions and social factors for the democratization of Muslim countries.

## KISA ÖZET

Türkiye'nin İslamcılık Deneyiminin Kendine Özgünlüğünü Yeniden Düşünmek

Ali Sarıkaya

Bu tez, Türk siyasetinde Siyasi İslam'ın kendine özgü gelişimini inceliyor. İslamcı hareketlerin güçlenmesinin Müslüman ülkelerin demokratikleşmesinin önünde ciddi bir engel oluşturduğuna dair genel bir görüş vardır. Tez, Türkiye'deki demokratik kurumların Siyasi İslam sorunuyla başa çıkmadaki gücünü göstererek bu görüşü sorgulamayı amaçlıyor. Bu tezde, merkez-çevre modeline dayanılarak, demokrasinin kültürel çatışmaları azaltmakta, ülkenin siyasi gündemini genişletmekte, Siyasi İslam'ın etkisini sınırlandırmakta ve bu hareketin dönüşümünü sağlamaktaki rolünün altı çiziliyor. Ayrıca, Müslüman ülkelerin demokratikleşmesi sürecinde yasal kurumların ve toplumsal faktörlerin önemi de vurgulanıyor.

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## PREFACE

“Believe me, madam, I’m not a barbarian,” said, the famous British actor Sean Connery playing an Arab warrior in *The King and the Sand*. He was speaking to reassure a Western woman who was baffled with this culture of “savages.” However, the Bedouin, just after a few minutes later, relentlessly beheaded four men. Then, he argued that he had not liked this but he had to do so because this was his religious duty. This was not simply a movie of course. It was a popular form of representing the “other,” rooted in a cultural and historical framework which bestowed upon this scene a strong plausibility.

One of the most salient upshots of 11 September attacks was to increase the plausibility of this scene dramatically, and put an end to the incertitude of “post-Cold War ” by paving the way for a new cosmic struggle defined as “war on terrorism,” in lieu of the “Cold War.” Following 9/11, the first major thesis of the “post-Cold War ” era, that is, the “end of history” was dead because division of the world between the countries that ended “history,” and those which were still living within it was no longer possible in a globalized world. You could not save yourself from the burden of history inasmuch as there were some people out there who were still within the confines of history. It became painfully clear that someday they will bring history back to the developed countries that were supposedly living in a post-historical age. The destruction of this imaginary boundary brought very important changes in the contours of world politics and in the daily lives of Western people. In particular, for American society, which “was founded by an act of abolition of the past” and built upon the promise of

“building a society safe from the horrors and accidents of world history,”<sup>1</sup> learning to live with the threat of terrorism has been traumatic.

The most dramatic consequence of these attacks was to awaken the puritan zeal deeply rooted in American history and culture. The American social contract, based on the premise that American government will save her people from the sad experiences of other nations was broken. Moreover, the political elite governing the United States, the neo-conservatives, used these attacks as an historical opportunity to carry out their grand project. One major purpose of the new Manichean foreign policy discourse of neo-cons was to make clear that the US will no longer stand with living “enemies.” The Iraqi war was the first-probably the last- demonstration of this resolve of Bush government to democratize the Middle East, ending up with the death of thousands of people.

With the imminent war against the Islamic world, the controversial thesis of clash of civilizations gained an unprecedented popularity.<sup>2</sup> Ken Jowitt describes the author of this thesis, Samuel P. Huntington, as an “Augustinian,” who sees “the West(ern), that is, protestant and Roman Catholic “City of God” cultures surrounded and threatened by a “City of Man” world made up of nonbiodegradable alien cultures from which the West must separate, not integrate with.”<sup>3</sup> The Islamic world was generally seen as the most important justification behind this “Augustinian” perspective. The atmosphere of crisis

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<sup>1</sup> Octavio Paz *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds: Reflections on Contemporary History* (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1984) p.31-47

<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1998)

<sup>3</sup> Ken Jowitt “May the Boundaries Fall” *East European Politics and Societies* Vol. 17 (1) 2003 p.121

haunting Muslim civilization from the suicide terrorism of Hamas to the unbridled fundamentalism of Taliban created a strong impression that there was something terribly wrong about Muslims and Islam.<sup>4</sup> For someone, such as Huntington, the problem was Islam, for others it was Islamic “fundamentalism.” There were even some calls of revising the Qur’an.<sup>5</sup> In a period of chronic conflict and hysteria when people tend to prefer simplistic explanations, the more sophisticated and self-critical accounts of well-grounded scholarship are not given the importance they deserve.

A similar and perhaps more pathological development has been taking place in the Muslim world, especially in the greater Middle East. For Muslim countries bearing the imprint of a traumatic history, the end of Cold War did not bring the social and political relaxation that it brought to other regions of the world such as Eastern Europe and Latin America. On the contrary, it opened up a new phase of bloody wars, civil wars, and massacres which reinforced the historic sense of exclusion and injustice of Muslims. For instance, a leading Turkish Islamist reveals a panorama of suffering throughout the Muslim world:

“Palestinians who lost 80 percent of their soil to the Jews are not only being deprived of their independent and honorable state in their homeland but also they are unable to pursue their daily lives. A person having been convicted for his crimes in a Belgian court, Ariel Sharon, is the prime minister. In the last 14 months nearly one thousand Palestinians were killed. 150 of these people were 12 years old or younger...The world displays a great tolerance to the open and covert terrorism of Israel...Chechnya, has been faced with total annihilation under the open threat of Russia who used 11 September attacks in the shrewdest and most opportunistic

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard Lewis *What Went Wrong: Approaches to the Modern History of the Middle East* (London: Weifenfeld & Nicholson, 2002)

<sup>5</sup> William F Buckley, Jr. “Toward a Revised Qur’an” *National Review*, 5/19/2003, Vol. 55 Issue 9,

manner...Muslims who won a legitimate election in Algeria were slaughtered in the streets like animals...In the prisons of Egypt and other Arab countries there are hundreds of thousands of people living the dark life of the medieval age with two pieces of dry bread and water...In Afghanistan, Arab, Chechen and Pakistani warriors who have no fault other than siding with the Taliban are collectively executed after having been taken prisoner... In England, the United States, Canada and Australia, thousand of "suspected" Muslims are arrested unlawfully, the legal rules and norms which are valid for others are suspended for these people...In 32 Muslim countries freedom of religion and of conscience are under heavy pressure. Other countries are deemed as "partially free." Despite all these facts, it is Muslims and Islam who are blamed for the backwardness of their countries. We are living in a hypocrite, ruthless world, which is prejudiced against Islam."<sup>6</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict constitutes the focal point of popular resentment in the Muslim world against the West. After the waning of Oslo Peace Process, the explosion of accumulated angers of young Palestinians in the second *Intifada*, and the brutality of Israeli troops in suppressing this rebellion by targeting children, feelings of indignation against Israel and its American "boss" climaxed. The depth of this anger can be seen in the feelings of a young Palestinian girl whose father was killed by the Israelis troops: "She never smiled and told me that her father wanted her to be a doctor. She said she would prefer to study nuclear physics so she could blow up America. 'When someone comes to fight you in your home, you have to fight back, is not that true?' she asked."<sup>7</sup> It goes without saying that the recent invasion of Iraq did not help to alleviate these feelings. Finally, the banning of headscarves in French high schools opened up a new front for the growing tension between the Muslim world and the West.

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<sup>6</sup> Ali Bulaç "İki Yüzlü Bir Dünya" ["A Hypocrite World"] *Zaman* 19 January 2002

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Rubin "The Most Wanted Palestinian" *New York Times Magazine* June 30, 2002. p.55

In this atmosphere, we should pay closer attention to what Hannah Arendt once said: “Cliches, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct have the socially recognized function of protecting us against reality.”<sup>8</sup> Demonizing and stereotyping are easier than trying to understand the “other” in its complexity and displaying the courage of soul-searching rather than putting all the blame on the other side. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is happening between the Muslim world and the West.

When these two worlds seem to be coming at loggerheads with each other, an unexpected development took place in Turkey, which was one of the most important historical scenes of this fateful encounter between two civilizations. After a long period of struggle, Islamists and the Turkish secular elites began to settle accounts following the 2002 elections that brought a post-Islamist government to power. Most surprising was the dramatic reversal of roles between the Islamists and Kemalists. Kemalism is generally seen as an ideology of Westernization *par excellence*. No other ideology in other developing countries was so explicit and ecstatic in adopting a staunch Westernization ethos and carrying out reforms so subversive of collective memory of a nation. Two leading American scholars argued in the mid-1960s that “Republican Turkey...became the only Islamic country in Europe-and the only country in the modern world-to have changed its continental identity.”<sup>9</sup> By contrast, the political project of the Islamists in the Republican period was based on a radical critique of the Westernization

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<sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt “Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture” *Social Research* vol. 38 (3) 1971 Autumn p.418

<sup>9</sup> Daniel H Lerner, Harold D Lasswell “Foreword” in Frederick Frey (Author) *The Turkish Political Elite* (Massachusetts: The MIT Pres, 1965) p.IX

program of the secular elites in an effort to undermine it as much as possible at the political and societal levels.

These roles were dramatically changed after the Adalet ve Kalkınma Party (AKP) came to power, at least until the controversy of adultery. Perhaps no government since the inception of democratic politics took such bold steps on the way of the Westernization of Turkey: The creation of a legal framework that conforms to the legal norms of Europe, adopting legal measures to ensure the supremacy of civilians over the army, building good relations both with the US and European countries, taking unprecedented steps toward the resolution of the Cyprus issue, etc. By contrast, many Kemalist intellectuals opposed the EU reforms, some leading figures in the army made public their dissatisfaction with the foreign policy course of the government with some overtones of third world nationalism, and the leader of ultra-nationalist Milliyetçi Hareket Party (MHP) recently declared they were in complete agreement with the leader of the founding party of Turkey, Cumhuriyet Halk Party (CHP), on the Cyprus issue.

This scene would seem rather strange for those who have any acquaintance with the recent history of Turkey. The assassination of some prominent Kemalist intellectuals, the burning of 37 intellectuals in Sivas, the tumultuous rise of an Islamist party and its subsequent fall and banning after a bitter struggle with Kemalist establishment put their imprint on the political life of Turkey in the last decade. After the closure of Refah Party (RP), it was generally assumed that Islamist parties will never be given a place in the government. A high ranking general even claimed that 28 February process would last a thousand years. The ex-mayor of Istanbul and a leading figure in the RP, Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan, after being excommunicated as a result of one of his speeches, was rebaptized last year and became the prime minister of Turkey.

The central thesis of this dissertation took its inspiration from the stark contrast between these two trends. At the global level, there is a growing tension between the Islamic world and the West. On the other hand, in Turkey, these forces are coming to a promising peace. I want to explore what we can learn from the experience of Turkey in order to find the ways of reconciling Islamism with democracy and modernity that can be an antidote to this global development. My starting premise is that both the Muslims and Westerners (and Westernized elites) have some legitimate ground to suspect and to fear each other. However, fear solves nothing. The best way of dealing with these fears, like in psychoanalysis, is to expose it, to become aware of their roots, and to reveal its shallowness. The only way of curing socio-political pathologies is to create an open and pluralist framework allowing the expression and competition of differences.

The experience of Turkey shows that a country which is exposed to dramatic cultural dislocations can save itself from being overwhelmed by this embittered history. By taking up the peculiar experience of Turkey with Islamism, we can shed light on the present quandaries surrounding Muslim countries. Undoubtedly, there are legitimate grounds to doubt the repetition of this experience in other parts of the Muslim world, since democracy is a demanding political regime.

However, the democratization of the West was not easy either. As many scholars pointed out, the Western course of development was a result of a long history of political

struggles between different social groups and classes.<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly, there were some elements in the culture and traditional structures of the West that made possible the democratization of Western countries in the last two centuries. However, there were also some elements of totalitarianism deeply rooted in the history of the West. Hence, before declaring the non-democratic exceptionality of Muslim culture, we must keep in mind that democracy gained its normative predominance in the West only recently after the collapse of its alternatives.

A second thesis of this dissertation is that Islamism can be seen as both an impediment to democratization of Muslim countries and key to understanding this process. Muslim societies did not have a chance to enter modernity<sup>11</sup> as a result of their voluntary choice. Modernity in Muslim soils was an uninvited visitor. As Sadık J. al-Azm argues: "Modernity is basically a European invention. Europe made the modern world without consulting Arabs, Muslims or anyone else for that matter and made it at the expense of everyone else."<sup>12</sup> Modern institution and values were imposed by either the colonial governments or Westernized elites hurried to defend themselves against the threat of Western encroachment. Muslim countries did not have enough time to transform their traditional institutions and values to bridge the gap between their past and present. The rising challenge of Islamism reflects this discontinuity and aims at (often awkwardly) overcoming it. Unquestionably, there are highly authoritarian

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<sup>10</sup> For this point, see, for instance, T. H. Marshall *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development : Essays* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books 1965)

<sup>11</sup> Being aware of the enormous complexity of defining modernity, I will use this term simply as a historical situation defined by the underlying power relations in industrial societies.

tendencies in some Islamist groups that can terrify even unbiased observers. This authoritarianism should come as no surprise given the disruptive changes initiated by pseudo-modernization and the persistence of illegitimate, unsuccessful and authoritarian regimes. However, Islamism has another face: A modernizing, secularizing ideology which helps individuals come to terms with the difficulties of contemporary conditions. It helps them reappropriate their religious traditions and interpret these in accordance with their modern needs. This janus-faced nature of Islamist movements constitutes the very heart of the debates concerning the perplexing character of Islamism.

This thesis starts with a theoretical debate that provides it a conceptual framework. It will analyze some of the literature on the place of religion in the modern age and try to construe why scholars were caught unprepared to the resurgence of religion in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I will argue that the ongoing inability to come to terms with Islamic revivalism is partly due to the failure of overcoming the deeply entrenched prejudices of enlightenment thought against religion. The structural theories that dominated social sciences in the 1950s and the 1960s underestimated the ongoing relevance of tradition and religion in the modern world and thus led to an intellectual and political atmosphere which overreacted to this “unexpected” phenomenon with dark scenarios of clash of civilizations.

The second chapter will take up some issues related with Islamism. I will lay stress on the modern and diverse nature of Islamist movements and the influence of historical, political and socio-economic factors in the emergence and development of Islamism.

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<sup>12</sup>Sadık J Al-Azm., “Islam, Terrorism and The West Today” *Die Welt des Islams* 44 (1) 2004, p.125

The third section will take the experience of Turkey as a case study to understand the surprising outcome of the 2002 elections. Turkey has undergone a long period of instability in the multi-party period. Suffering the symptoms of a schizophrenic country, Turkey demonstrated a remarkable ability to spare itself from being a prisoner of its cultural contradictions. A closer look at this experience can provide us with important insights in trying to find a way out of the dilemmas of authoritarian politics in Muslim countries. Why Turkey did not experience a radical Islamist threat despite the radicalism of “secular” Kemalist reforms in Turkey? How did Islamism turn out to be a democratic force in Turkish political life?

In the final section, I will take up the future of democracy in Muslim countries and the major obstacles confronting the democratization of Muslim world. The relevance of democratic experience of Turkey will be also underlined.

The aim of this dissertation is to show that democratization is urgent for Muslim countries since there is no viable alternative. It aims to make clear that the compatibility of democracy and Islamism is a complex and multifaceted issue that needs to be approached with a great attention to the local conditions and historical development of Muslim countries. To do so, we should first get rid of essentialist analyses claiming that Islam is inherently undemocratic and of biased and sensational images of Islamist movements. Instead, we need studies that analyze structural obstacles of democratization in the Muslim world.

Needles to say, it is simply impossible to do justice to the enormous complexity of all these issues, especially in a master thesis. Hence, oversimplification and vagueness are unavoidable weaknesses of this study that tries to understand the problem of Islamism from a broad perspective. In this vein, this thesis should be seen only as a minor attempt that needs to be deepened and systematized in the future.

## CHAPTER I: MODERNITY, TRADITION AND RELIGION

### 1.1 The Problem of Conceptualization in Social Sciences

It is a remarkable fact that the most widely used concepts of social sciences are also the most controversial and the most elusive ones. We may even doubt the power of the social sciences when there is no consensus on the definition of its basic concepts such as modernity, modernization, development, tradition, religion, culture, etc. If the conceptual foundations suffer from chaos (such as in the definition the modernity), from residual definitions, (e.g., traditional is what is not modern) or, taken for granted assumptions, (e.g., religion is bounded to decline), how can we trust the theories built upon these foundations?

As Alasdair MacIntyre points out in an interesting article, some concepts of social sciences are inevitably controversial.<sup>13</sup> He duly argues that while the nature is governed by unchanging laws, most of the concepts underlying social sciences are developed with reference to historical situations created by unpredictable human activities. Hence, they are historical, contextual, and open-ended. Moreover, they include in most cases normative judgments of the social scientists.

Consider the concept of market economy which is generally defined as a realm of a “free exchange of goods and services.” We often take for granted this definition, but Karl Polanyi showed that the equation of economy with market relations is a recent

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<sup>13</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Essential Contestability of Some Social Concepts” *Ethics* (1) Oct 1973 pp.1-9

phenomenon. In most periods of history, economy has been embedded in a broader social framework. Only recently, with the rise of *laissez-faire* ideology is economy depicted as an independent realm, paving the way for a market society.<sup>14</sup>

Or, take the concept of culture. Samuel P. Huntington quotes approvingly a conservative American politician who said that “The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics that determines the success of society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.”<sup>15</sup> This cultural determinism of Huntington is based on a dubious assumption that culture is a self-enclosed system that has definite boundaries that makes it independent from society. As Barrington Moore argues, this view of culture is questionable: “Culture, or tradition- to use a less technical term- is not something that exists outside of or independently of individual human beings living together in society.”<sup>16</sup> Culture is not something that is given. Rather, it is instituted, imagined, and in some cases invented by humans.<sup>17</sup> Even the religious traditions which are based on charisma cannot be reproduced without constant interpretation by every generation. As Edward Shils puts it, “the text would only be a

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<sup>14</sup> Polanyi, Karl, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economical Origins of Our Time* (Beacon Hill: Beacon Pres, 1944)

<sup>15</sup> Samuel P. Huntington *Keynote Adres to Colarodo College's 125th Anniversary Symposium: Cultures in the 21st Century: Conflicts and Convergences* (available at [www.colarodocollege.edu/Academics/Anniversary/Transcripts/HuntingtonTXT.htm](http://www.colarodocollege.edu/Academics/Anniversary/Transcripts/HuntingtonTXT.htm) , accessed in 2002)

<sup>16</sup> Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Pres, 1966) p. 486

<sup>17</sup> For these points see respectively Cornelius Castoriadis, “Power, Politics and Autonomy” in Axel Honneth [et al.] (eds) *Cultural-political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1992) pp.269-297; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York : Verso, 1991); and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)

physical object without interpretation.”<sup>18</sup> During this process of interpretation, it is adapted to the socio-economic and political conditions of the time. The production and reproduction of the culture cannot be understood without taking into account the role of human agency.

Huntington conveys a unified and coherent image of cultures and argues that they “clash.” This is misleading because no dimension of social life can escape from conflict and contradiction. Whereas historians and social scientists have long talked about conflict in politics and economy, the importance of conflict in the realm of culture has only recently found acceptance in academic works. The reasons behind the conflictual nature of culture are several: As Isaiah Berlin insisted during his brilliant intellectual career, there are a plurality of values which inevitably come into conflict with each other. No religious and cultural system can eliminate the need for intellectual efforts to find a balance among these values in accordance with the conditions of the time. For instance, Ottoman *ulema* supported the Westernization reforms in the 19. century despite the fact that they were undermining their moral base, i.e., the *Sharia*, because they put a higher value on the preservation of the state. The great religious divide in Islamic history between orthodox Islam and mystical Islam hinges on the difference between two basic values: love and fear of God.

There are also different interests, experiences, traditions, mental structures which lead to diverse interpretations, life styles, *weltanschauungs* within the bounds of every culture. The term of culture inevitably -like all other meta-concepts- impoverishes the richness of reality. This is perhaps inevitable because we have to simplify reality in

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<sup>18</sup> Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981) p.17

order to understand it. Unfortunately, the concept of culture is often “abused, misused and overused,”<sup>19</sup> because it provides a simple, plausible and exotic explanation: they act so because they are different from us. Although the new cultural turn in social sciences offers more sophisticated accounts, this line of reasoning still remains. The most dangerous aspect of this attitude is to reinforce the cultural fault-lines among diverse groups and nations in a shrinking world which badly need common channels of communication. For instance, the thesis of Huntington with its obsession to build a new Schmittian friend-foe framework for world politics has a self-fulfilling potential that must be taken very seriously.

## 1.2 Modernization Theory: An Assessment

Modernization<sup>20</sup> theories, influenced by the Parsonsian interpretation of Weber, constituted the dominant paradigm in social sciences in 1950s and 1960s. Pressed to find the recipes of development for the newborn countries, these theories optimistically claimed these countries will follow the trajectory of Western countries in the process of modernization. This initial optimism declined with time and the complexity and elusiveness of modernization is better grasped with revisionist theories. It was increasingly clear for a growing number of scholars that the process of the social change in the developing countries could not be taken in the modernization paradigm that saw

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<sup>19</sup> Robert A Dahl, “Political Culture and Economic Development” in Fredrik Engelstad and Ragnvald Kalleberg (eds) *Social Time and Social Change: Perspectives on Sociology and History* (Oslo and Boston: Scandinavian University Press, 1999) p.88

<sup>20</sup> In an influential definition, Cyril E. Black associates modernization with “increase in man’s knowledge permitting control over his environment” Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) p.7

social change as a “systemic, global, homogenizing, irreversible, progressive” process.<sup>21</sup>

In this paradigm, modernization was seen as a whole of interrelated processes of industrialization, urbanization, structural differentiation, modernization of values, social mobilization, and eventually, democratization. For instance, Lipset, in his seminal book, claimed that there was a strong correlation between economic development and democratization.<sup>22</sup> It was generally thought that when the virus of modernization entered a country through the influence of Western powers or Westernized elites, it would spread into other areas of social life and challenge the reign of traditional values and institutions.

### 1.2.1 The Shortcomings of Modernization Paradigm

The weakness of modernization theories became so apparent in the crises shaking most of Third World countries that they were challenged from a myriad of perspectives and lost their predominance in the intellectual agenda of 70s.<sup>23</sup> This is not a convenient place to sift through all this literature and give a fair picture of the controversies. I want rather to benefit from certain insights of these critiques to show some of the shortcomings of modernization theory which are relevant for our subject. The underlying reason for this

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics” *Comparative Politics* Vol 3 (3) April 1977 pp.288-300

<sup>22</sup> Martin Seymour Lipset, *Political Man The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1981 [originally Published in 1960])

<sup>23</sup> See *inter alia* Dean C. Tipps, “Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol.15 (2) March, 1973 pp.199-226

effort is that even though modernization school lost its paradigmatic status in social sciences, it is still part of the conventional wisdom lurking in the minds of many policy makers and intellectuals.

*Modernization theories had a Western bias.*

As Tipps argued in his rather trenchant critique, modernization theories sustained the Western division of the world between civilized and barbarians, albeit in more “neutral” terms, i.e., modern vs. traditional. They continued “to evaluate the progress of nations like in nineteenth-century forebears, by their proximity to the institutions and values of Western, particularly Anglo-American societies.”<sup>24</sup> This use of the West as a benchmark of modernization had two important consequences: First, it avoided the problematization of progress in the context of Western history. The painful process of homogenization of Western societies through ethnic cleansing, massacres and genocide and the traumatic destruction of little worlds of humans in the last centuries, which are so powerfully recounted in the novels of Dickens and Zola, are easily overlooked. Secondly, it led to the neglect of the problem of imperialism, which left a deep imprint on the collective memory and the social structure of new nations of the developing world. This great neglect seriously distorted the true nature of problems in these countries, such as the resilience of nationalism and prevented the emergence of a self-critical attitude that could have helped the West to overcome its past in the non-Western parts of the world.

*Modernization theories downplayed the role of politics and political institutions*

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p.206

Most of modernization theories see politics as a dependent variable. In these theories, “politics is too often regarded as a poor relation, inherently dependent and subsidiary: it is rarely praised as something with a life and character of its own.”<sup>25</sup> With a structuralist perspective that overemphasizes socio-economic and cultural factors, the fact that “not all causal links run from social and economy to political factors,”<sup>26</sup> is not taken into account. Politics not only reflects but also shapes its social and cultural environment. It is about conflict based on unavoidable existence of difference and deals with this fact. Undoubtedly, too much conflict can be inimical to politics as a conflict solving mechanism. It needs institutions and values. However, these institutions and values can emanate only from political struggles. They have to be based on the political experience of societies. “The moral consensus of free state is not something mysteriously prior or above politics: it is the activity (the civilizing activity) of politics itself.”<sup>27</sup> Of course, this process of learning can be painful as the experience of Western countries clearly indicates. As Joel Migdal puts it, “...all societies have ongoing battles among groups pushing different versions of how people should behave. The nature and outcomes of the struggles give societies their distinctive structure and behavior.”<sup>28</sup>

*Modernization theories were based on a misleading dichotomy between tradition and modernity.*

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<sup>25</sup> Bernard Crick, *In Defense of Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Pres, 1993) p.15

<sup>26</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy : Toward A Dynamic Model” *Comparative Politics* Vol 2 (3) p.346

<sup>27</sup> Crick, *In Defense of Politics* p.24

<sup>28</sup> Joel S. Migdal *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 2001) p.12

The cornerstone of modernization theories, namely the distinction between tradition<sup>29</sup> and modernity, proved to be of the most controversial aspect of these theories. First, there is a problem of definition. As Huntington points out, "...modernity and tradition are essentially asymmetrical concepts. The modern ideal is set forth, and then everything which is not modern is labeled traditional."<sup>30</sup> Enormous diversity of human cultures and histories is then subsumed under the rubric of an ill-defined concept.

Second, it carries highly normative connotations in favor of what is "modern". "It was thought that when traditionality yields place to reason and to scientific knowledge, all the vices, ignorance, intolerance, superstition, clericalism which it sustained would fall away."<sup>31</sup> There is no need to argue that the most brutal acts of human history are committed in modern age by modernist ideologies claiming to free people from the fetters of tradition. Thus, modernity based on rationalization should not be seen in all cases a liberating force. Tradition, in this respect, should not be always regarded as a useless relic that must be brushed away. As Bellah succinctly puts it, "...progress requires some balance between structural continuity and structural change, between memory and receptivity, so that the society will become neither rigid nor

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<sup>29</sup> I follow the definition of Edward Shils: "Tradition means many things. In its barest, most elementary sense, it means simply a traditum: it is anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present. It makes no statement about what is handed down or in what particular combination or whether it is a physical object or cultural construction; it says nothing about how long it has been handed down or in what manner, whether orally or in written form...The decisive criterion is that, having been created through human actions, through thought and imagination, it is handled down from one generation to the next. Shils, *Tradition*...p.12

<sup>30</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Change to Change..." pp.293-294

<sup>31</sup> Shils, *Tradition*... p.5

disappointed.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, traditions play an important role by providing a stable image of the world, as Shils points out:

“...human beings at least most of them, much of the time do not fare well in a disordered world. They need to live within the framework of a world of which they possess a chart. They need categories and rules. They need criteria of judgment. They cannot construct these for themselves...Human beings need the help of their ancestors.”<sup>33</sup>

Third, this sharp dichotomy downplays the debts of the “modern” to the “traditional”. Many scholars point to the continuity between liberalism and religion in Western history. For instance, one of the leading scholars of religion argued that, “liberalism contained the same basic commitment to individual responsibility and social voluntarism that emerged from the puritan revolution.”<sup>34</sup> The emphasis of Christianity on human dignity and brotherhood was an important factor in the development of the natural law tradition. The ethic of Gandhi took its inspiration directly from traditional resources. There are others stressing the positive role of tradition in the emergence of the “Asian Miracle.” In fact, in some circumstances the distance between tradition and modernity may not be as great as usually thought.

*Modernization theories failed to see the crucial importance of everyday life.*

One important drawback of modernization theorists has been to overlook the importance

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<sup>32</sup> Robert N. Bellah, “Epilogue: Religion and Progress in Modern Asia” in Robert N. Bellah *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia* (New York: The Free Press, 1965) p.171

<sup>33</sup> Shils, *Tradition* p.326

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* p.199

of everyday lives of humans.<sup>35</sup> They simply saw people as a passive object of the macro-structural changes. They failed to notice that people have enough cultural resources based on their daily experience to interpret their social life and pursue micro strategies to survive against the backdrop of dramatic changes. They ignored the potential of traditional values and institutions deeply embedded in daily lives of humans to survive and help people to resist the disruptive changes in their social lives. Many scholars pointed to the resilience of tradition and popular culture in the emergence of social movements that played significant role in the historical development of Western countries. For instance, Calhoun emphasizes the importance of traditional values and communal bonds in the struggles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He rightly argues that “traditions do not reflect the past so much as they reflect present-day social life.”<sup>36</sup> They are reinterpreted according to new conditions and became weapons of communities to defend their interests and ways of life against the challenges of modern life. There is also a sea change in the study of revolutions with a new emphasis on the role of culture. In this perspective, revolutions do not simply emerge out of structural reasons; they also need a revolutionary ethos, which is to be relevant in the daily life concerns of people.<sup>37</sup>

All these caveats against modernization theories should not give a false impression

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<sup>35</sup> For the concept of everyday life see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and New York: University of California Press, 1988)

<sup>36</sup> Craig Jackson Calhoun “The Radicalism of Tradition: Community Strength or Venerable Disguise and Borrowed Language?” *Annual Journal of Sociology* Vol.88 (5) 1983

<sup>37</sup> See Jack A. Goldstone, “Toward A Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory” *Annual Review of Political Science Review* 4 2001, pp.139-187

that we have to get rid of modernization theory altogether. On the contrary, many basic insights of modernization theory, such as the existence of a positive relationship between high level of economic development and durability of democracy still hold. As some scholars point out, democracy becomes more secure with increasing level of economic development.<sup>38</sup> Economic welfare can undoubtedly contribute to political stability and resolution of many enduring conflicts. Even cultural conflicts can be less sharp with the help of development. Their emphasis on the importance of deep fissures between the rulers and the ruled in many developing countries epitomized in dichotomies such as elite-mass or center-periphery gap are still relevant to a large extent for many parts of the world, especially for Middle Eastern countries. Thus, we can still benefit from many insights of these theories without embracing their ahistorical, apolitical, and ethnocentric vision.

### **1.3 The Resilience of Religion: Whither the Thesis of Secularization**

One of the deeply entrenched assumptions underlying the intellectual atmosphere of the post-war period was that the importance of religion was disappearing. Religion was declining as a result of the process of modernization that was bringing social differentiation and rationalization of values. It was thought that with economic, scientific, technological, cultural and political progress, the need for a transcendental interpretation of life would diminish. In another version, religion was considered to have no longer the monopoly of truth in polytheist modern culture which was creating different truths. Robert Bellah describes the ideal city of secularist thought colorfully:

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<sup>38</sup> Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi "What Makes Democracies Endure?" *Journal of Democracy* 7.1 (1996) pp.39-55

“Here all myth, magic, and ritual are gone. God if not dead, is merely a symbol for man’s highest aspirations. Political and even familial structures are seen not as given in the nature of the universe but as changeable human constructions. Individual responsibility, which scarcely exists in dreaming innocence, is almost overwhelming in the secular city. Man makes not only his religion, his polity, and his family but himself...Virtually the only integrating principle is convenience or utility, the maximization of interests of individuals and the progress of the whole.”<sup>39</sup>

This secular ideal, deeply rooted in the history of Western political thought from “Machiavelli to Karl Marx, from Feuerbach to Nietzsche, from August Comte to Max Weber,” had been so taken for granted that it “was never either rigorously examined or even formulated explicitly and systematically.”<sup>40</sup> Casanova adds that, “it was not until the 1960s one finds attempts to develop more systematic and empirically grounded formulations of the theory of secularization.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, it has not been usually possible to make a distinction between the ideal and the fact in the theories of secularization. Attributing a passive role to religion in the face of structural changes, modernization theories transformed the anti-religious bias of enlightenment thought into undisputable axioms about the withering away of religion in the modern world. For instance, Lerner argued in his seminal book that “Islam was absolutely defenseless.”<sup>42</sup>

Then came the Iranian Revolution, the rising of Islamist movements, the destruction of Ayodha mosque, the waxing of fundamentalist influence in the political scene of the

<sup>39</sup> Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post Traditional World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) pp. 147-148

<sup>40</sup> José Casanova, *Public and Private Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p.17

<sup>41</sup> *ibid* p.19

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Lerner *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1958) p. 45

United States, the increasing political role of Catholic churches in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Even Buddhism, one of the quietest religions, also became a member of politicized religions and implicated in bloody sectarian conflicts in South Asia. When this upsetting rise of religions as a political force was challenging the dominant secular institutions and shaking the world, the neglect of religion in scholarly debates of preceding decades led to an overreaction with some works having apocalyptic titles, such as *Clash of Civilizations*, *New Cold War*, or *The Revenge of God*. These new works claimed that we were entering into a world of irrational and cosmic struggles that cannot be understood or tackled in old conceptual frameworks.

From the vantage point of recent developments, the thesis of secularization is so heavily criticized that we can speak of a general revolt against secularization. Peter Berger, who was one of the foremost proponents of secularism thesis, turned against it and became a sharp critic of secularism. In one of his recent articles, he expounded his about-face:

“The point of this little story is that the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false: The world today, with some exceptions attended to below, is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature written by historians and social scientists over the course of the 1950s and '60s, loosely labeled as "secularization theory", was essentially mistaken. In my early work I contributed to this literature and was in good company so doing--most sociologists of religion had similar views. There were good reasons for holding these views at the time, and some of these writings still stand up. However, the core premise does not.”<sup>43</sup>

Then, he added that “strongly felt religion has always been around: what needs

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Berger “Secularism in Retreat” *National Interest* Issue 46 Winter 96/97 p.3-4

explanation is its absence rather than its presence.”<sup>44</sup> Religion can no longer be seen, in this sense, a phenomenon that can be neglected or described as “invisible.”<sup>45</sup> The thesis of secularization is criticized from several angles: failure to provide a solid empirical basis for the secularization thesis; using the rather exceptional case of European history as an explanatory basis; embracing the myth of the golden age of religiosity in Europe and then postulating from this myth the decline of religion; supposing an inherent enmity between religion and science etc.<sup>46</sup>

It is clear that secularization thesis at least in its strongest form is no longer tenable. However, we should be cautious in rejecting it altogether. Both the “resurgence” of religion and secularization are uncontested facts of today’s world and their simultaneity creates a more complex picture than we have usually thought. Thus we have to go further than the limits of this controversy.

### 1.3.1 *Religion and Secularity: A Complex Relationship*

Both religion and secularism are controversial concepts. There is no commonly agreed definition of religion and the concept of secular has been more difficult to grasp than its common usage would suggest. I will discuss the ongoing sociological and political relevance of religion in modern conditions in the next section where I consider Islamist

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid* p.9

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Luckman, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967)

<sup>46</sup> For a good collection of critiques, see Ali Köse, (ed) *Sekülerizm Sorgulanıyor 21. Yüzyılda Dinin Geleceđi* [Secularism is in Question: The Future of Religion in the 21. Century] (İstanbul: Ufuk yayınları, 2002)

revivalist movements. For now, I will elaborate the concept of “secular” and the theories of secularization and try to show their highly complex nature that can help us to devise a more nuanced view of the role of religion in social life.

The most important point that we should keep in mind regarding the dyads of secular-religious, profane-holy is that the boundaries between these realms have never been fixed, clearly delimited or sharply defined. On the contrary, they have always been contested, debated and redrawn according to the changing balance of power among different social actors. Casanova stresses the evolution of the concept of secular from defining lay clergy to describing this-worldly realm that is completely independent from religion. “If before, the religious realm which appeared to be all-encompassing reality within which secular realm will have to find its proper place, now the secular sphere will be the all-encompassing reality, to which the religious sphere will have to adapt.”<sup>47</sup>

Huntington often refers to the insuperable cultural barrier between Islam and Christianity in that the latter accepts a clear separation between church and state in stipulating that “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and render unto the God the things that are God’s.” This might be true but there is still a problem: before making a distinction between the realm of God and the realm of Caesar, we must first determine what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God. This is perhaps the most difficult problem underlying historical confrontation between religious and secular institutions. Islam has generally been seen as an all-encompassing religion that regulates all aspects

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<sup>47</sup> Casanova *Public and Private religions* p.15

of social and individual life. This might not be less true for some Christian churches. For instance, in Catholicism it has been strictly forbidden to take pleasure from sexual intercourse. In the powerful novel of Umberto Eco, the *Name of the Rose*, the efforts of the Church to prevent people from reading a classic book on laughing is recounted impressively.

We may even argue against the claim of Marx, who sees class struggles as the motor of history, that the dominant force that shaped the development of Western history at least until the modern age had been religious struggles which took place in various aspects of social life: the definition and way of reaching truths; control of education; control over civil matters, such as marriage, divorce, funerals; the provision of social services; the shaping of political arena and public policies in order to defend religious/secularist values, etc. Lipset and Rokkan, in their seminal article, underline the importance of the religious factor in the political development of Western countries. "The outcomes of early struggles between state and church determined the structure of national politics in the era of democratization and mass mobilization three hundreds years later."<sup>48</sup> According to them, where Catholic Church had consolidated itself as a major force having close ties with certain elements of the ancient regime, the result had been a polarization of politics embodied in a religious-nationalist divide. By contrast, in countries having established churches, religious factor was less relevant.

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<sup>48</sup> Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments" in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967) p.38

### 1.3.2 *Secularism in the Western World*

With this caveat in mind, we can proceed to elaborate the basic axioms of secularization theories. I will concentrate mainly on the experience of Western countries because secularization in non-Western parts of the world has a more complicated nature as we will see in the next section. Casanova in his influential study of secularization thesis counts three major theoretical premises on the future of religion:

1. The differentiation and secularization of society.
2. The decline of religious thesis.
3. The privatization of religion thesis.

At a first glance, all of these premises seem to have a plausible basis. With the differentiation of social structures, advent of capitalism, emergence of the modern state, rise of scientific and technological knowledge, religion lost much of its political influence. However, we should not overlook the fact that church-state relations in modern Western countries have been rarely based on a total separation.

“In Germany and Spain, for example, the state collects religious taxes that are used to support the church, in France the state helps support churches and some mosques; and in Great Britain there is an established law of blasphemy-however rarely employed- that covers only the majority religion, and state support for various forms of religious education.”<sup>49</sup>

Stepan also points to the fact that “the only constitution of a member state of the

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<sup>49</sup> Nikki R Keddie “Secularism and the State: Towards Clarity and Global Comparison” *New Left Review* 226 November /December, 1997 pp.22-23

European Union that explicitly calls its democracy “secular” is France.”<sup>50</sup> Religion is simply too important to be discarded by the political authorities. He rightly notes that “the lesson from Western Europe...lies not in church-state separation but in the constant political construction and reconstruction of the “twin tolerations.”<sup>51</sup> In the United States, on the other hand, there has been a highly tense controversy over the place of religion in the public sphere. In the post-war period, Supreme Court took several decisions on the subject of state-religion relations as a response to growing tensions in American politics on religious issues. In these decisions, it made state support impermissible for several activities listed below:

- mandatory prayer, Bible reading or other types of worship before, during or after classes in state schools;
- Religious instruction on the premises in state schools;
- limiting exemption from conscription to persons professing faith in God;
- posting the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms;
- giving Churches veto power over the issuance of liquor licences within a specified distance from Church property;
- mandating the teaching of biblical accounts of the creation of the universe;
- providing subsidies to teachers in religious schools;
- providing tax subsidies exclusively to parents with children in religious schools;
- Requiring employers to grant employees the day off on their Sabbath.<sup>52</sup>

However, the decline of religious convictions and commitments with the process of modernization has some empirical support. For instance, in many countries of Europe,

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<sup>50</sup> Alfred Stepan, “The World’s Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the “Twin Operations” in *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Pres, 2001) p.217

<sup>51</sup> *ibid* p. 222

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth D. Wald “Social Change and Political Response: the Silent Religious Cleavage in North America” Moyser, George (Ed) *Politics and Religion in the Modern World*. (London: Routledge, 1991) p.258

belief in God and church attendance steadily declined: "...the half-century between 1950 and 2000 represents a significant break in religious behavior in the liberal democratic states of Western Europe."<sup>53</sup> As a member of the English Church blatantly puts, "The fact is that Europe is no longer Christian."<sup>54</sup> However, in the US the picture is very different. According to a poll conducted by Pew Research Center, "a solid majority of voters (61%) say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month -- and 45% go at least once a week."<sup>55</sup> "Nearly half of Americans (48%) think that the United States has had special protection from God for most of its history."<sup>56</sup> The power of evangelical groups in US politics is a well known fact. The ongoing debates on public prayer, abortion etc., also points to the increasing salience of religion in American politics. In the United States, religion does not seem to be on the way of decline or privatization, as predicted by the theorists of secularization.

How can we explain this great divergence between a pious America and less religious Europe? One common argument is that in Europe religion was too close to the state and too far from society whereas religion in the US has always been a part of civil society. Thus religion has been able to build a dynamic relationship with the community

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<sup>53</sup> Brian Girvin, "The Political Culture of Secularisation: European Trends and Comparative Perspectives" in David Broughton and Hans-Martien ten Napel (eds) *Religion and Mass Electoral Behaviour in Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) p.12

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Faith Fades "Where It Once Burned Strong: THE CHANGING CHURCH: First of two articles: Europe" *New York Times* Oct 13 2003

<sup>55</sup> "Religion and Politics: the Ambivalent Majority" Pew Research Center (Released in 20 September, 2000) (Available at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=32> (accessed in 2004)

<sup>56</sup> "Americans Struggle with Religion's Role at Home and Abroad" Pew Research Center (Available at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=150>) (accessed in 2004)

of believers and adapt to the social and cultural changes. Peter Berger points to state control over educational system as a major reason of secularization in the old continent:

“When primary and secondary education became compulsory, many parents had no way of shielding their children from the secularizing influence of the school. Until recently, a vastly different situation existed in the United States—the schools were under local authorities, and thus much amenable to the wishes of parents.”<sup>57</sup>

The rise of religious movements in the United States reflects also an increasing awareness on moral problems spurred by scientific developments:

“The public seems increasingly intolerant of grand, technical fixes, even while it hungers for new gadgets and drugs. It has also come to fear the potential consequences of unfettered science and technology in such areas as genetic engineering, germ warfare, global warming, nuclear power and the proliferation of nuclear arms.”<sup>58</sup>

The rise of religious movements in the US does not mean that secularization is on the decline. On the contrary, the increasing influence of these fundamentalist groups points to the resilience of secularism under different forms. These groups live in modern society and must use modern means and language in a bid to reach large audiences. Peter Berger in his seminal book on secularism argued that in the US which is marked by religious pluralism and consumer culture, “...religion can no longer be imposed but must be marketed. It is impossible, almost a priori, to market a commodity to a population of uncoerced consumers without taking their wishes concerning the commodity into consideration.”<sup>59</sup> “For instance, all religious institutions oriented toward

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<sup>57</sup> Peter L. Berger “The 2000 Paul Hanly Furfey Lecture: Reflections on the Sociology of Religion Today” *Sociology of Religion* 62 (4) 2001, p.448

<sup>58</sup> “Is Public Doubt Trumping “Primacy of a Religion?” *International Herald Tribune* 12 November 2003

<sup>59</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Cacophony: Elements of Sociological Theory* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969 p.145

the upper-middle class market in America will be under pressure to secularize and to psychologize their products-otherwise, the chances of these being “bought” diminish dramatically.”<sup>60</sup> In other words, they unsanctify, or “secularize” religion in order to survive and thrive in a secular setting. In fact, this is a common and crucial aspect of all religious movements in the world. We are indeed living in a “religio-secular world” wherein

“most people blur, mesh, meld and muddle together elements of both the secular and the religious, the worldly and the otherworldly etc. In adjusting to the complex world around them, people confound the categories of the social scientists, theologians and philosophers: they simply “make do” with a syncretic and characteristically modern blend of attitudes.”<sup>61</sup>

In brief, the experience of Western countries shows that the future of religion will depend on the existing cleavages of countries and on the actions of secular and religious actors. Religion will undoubtedly remain a political and moral force that must be reckoned with for the fact that no moral authority in liberal democracy can substitute the weight of religious calling. People may not go to church, pray frequently, even believe in the existence of God but they will always feel the necessity of a moral force to speak authoritatively about existential issues, such as death, illness, and old age. Daniel Bell puts this point elegantly: “...The ground of religion is existential: the awareness of men of their finiteness and the inexorable limits to their powers, and the consequent effort to find a coherent answer to reconcile them to that human condition.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p.148

<sup>61</sup> Martin E. Marty “Our Religio-Secular World” *Daedalus* Summer 2003 Vol. 132 (3) p.42

<sup>62</sup> Daniel Bell, “The Return of the Sacred? The Argument on the Future of Religion” in Daniel Bell *The Winding Passage: Essays and Sociological Journeys 1960-1980* (Cambridge: ABT Books, 1980) p.351

## CHAPTER II: ISLAM AND ISLAMISM: THE BURDEN OF PSEUDO-MODERNITY

### 2.1 The problem of “fundamentalism”

Religion in the non-Western parts of the world is not simply a reaction to modernity or the “disenchantment of the world,” it is also a self-defense with strongly nationalist overtones to the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the West. In this sense, religion has a different social function in the rest of the world from that of American protestant fundamentalists. The concept of fundamentalism has been an important subject matter of controversy among scholars. Some criticize the use of this concept for it does not do justice to the great diversity of attitudes, ideas and visions within these movements and gives a highly prejudiced picture. Some other scholars point to the value of “fundamentalism” as a conceptual device enabling researchers to make comparisons among different religious movements.<sup>63</sup> However, this defense of “fundamentalism” misses the importance of context. Religious opposition in non-Western countries has to do with something more than religious considerations: Western (especially US) influence, oppression, economic inequality, corruption, etc. In Western countries, on the other hand, religious movements have a mobilization power only in strictly religious-moral issues.

Then, Islamism seems to be a more convenient term than fundamentalism. Having

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<sup>63</sup> R. Scott Appleby and Martin E Marty “Fundamentalism” *Foreign Policy* (128) January/February 2002 p.18

put this, we can proceed with examining various approaches on Islamism and understand the historical and social underpinnings of the Islamist challenge. Evidently, it is beyond the limits of this dissertation and ability of the author to provide an exhaustive study of this debate, or to give a highly detailed view of Islamism which is indeed a very complex phenomenon defying any attempt at simplification. My aim is rather to clarify the so-called “resurgence of Islam” and give a general overview of the historical conditions paving the way for this resurgence.

One of the main theses of this dissertation is that Islam and Islamism are by no means *sui generis* phenomena that can be understood only on their own terms. Islamism can and must be brought under investigation like other social facts. We need a flexible framework to ensure a balance between general aspects of this phenomenon and the stunning variety within it. Undoubtedly, offering a highly detailed picture of various Islamist movements in different places of the world is beyond the scope of this work. I just want to give a general framework of Islamism that can help us understand the particularities of the Turkish experience.

## **2.2 Religion as a Cultural Resource**

Orientalists have stressed the historical role of Islam in sustaining a normative order that integrates various social groups.<sup>64</sup> This approach seems to be inadequate to explain the divisive role of Islam in modern era. Modern Islam is characterized by divisions,

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<sup>64</sup> For this view, see especially H. A. Gibb and H. Bowen. *Islamic Society and the West Vol.1, Parts 1 and 2* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957)

diversity, and radically different interpretations. This confusing picture cannot be understood without taking into account the role of interpretation. Reading is in fact a dialogue between the author and the reader. As Gadamer argues, understanding a text “is not merely a reproductive, but always a productive attitude as well.”<sup>65</sup> In this regard, it can be argued that religious texts are especially susceptible to different interpretations since they assume an interpretative capacity on the part of the readers. Thus when the “reader” comes into picture, Islam becomes a dependent variable since the identity, worldview, values of the reader and the social context within which these factors are molded, should also be taken into account. Hence, in lieu of discussing the nature of Islam, we should rather look at what people make of it.

The power of Islamist movements in Muslim countries has been much talked about. As Vali Nasr puts it: “Nowhere is the scope of change produced by fundamentalism more evident than in the Muslim world. It was here that fundamentalism found its most vociferous and disruptive voice and mounted its most direct and poignant challenge to secularism and its institutions.”<sup>66</sup> To understand this phenomenon, we must first come to terms with the societal role of Islam as a religion.

As we have seen above, the best starting point is seeing Islam not as a body of texts but rather as a repertoire of cultural resources having a wide range of instrumental value in different aspects of social life that can be used for different purposes by different actors.

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<sup>65</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer “The Historicity of Understanding” in Paul Connerton (ed) *Critical Sociology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976) p.122

<sup>66</sup> Vali Nasr “Lessons from the Muslim World” *Daedalus* vol. 132, (3) Summer 2003 pp.67-68

The great Marxist sociologist E. P. Thompson provided us with one of the most powerful accounts of culture and its role in the last centuries of European history: "...when the people search for legitimations for protest they often turn back to the paternalist regulations of a more authoritarian society and select from among those parts most calculated to their presents interests."<sup>67</sup> He rightly argues that societies selectively use their cultural resources in order to cope with the challenges of their time. Social conditions do not wholly determine the forms of resistance. For instance, he observes that "...hunger does not dictate that they [the peasants] must riot nor does it determine riot's forms."<sup>68</sup>

There is another side of the coin. Modern conditions restrict the intellectual horizon of resisting forces. You cannot simply turn to tradition and interpret it as you wish. Especially in non-Western contexts where the hegemony of the West is felt in its full weight, it is no longer possible to perceive and interpret tradition without the distorting effects of major socio-cultural changes of the time. As the present changes, so does the past. Thus, we should understand both the nature of traditional resources available to societies and the present conditions constraining them as well as the usage of these resources.

Religion is above all a response to the ontological loneliness of human beings. Malraux

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<sup>67</sup> E. P. Thompson *Customs in Common* (New York: The New Pres, 1991) p.10

<sup>68</sup> *ibid* p.266

once described humans as the only animals who know that they will die one day. Religions are important especially in traditional settings to make sense of the world and cope with its stupefying complexity and troubles. This crucial function of religion is particularly important in periods of serious social distress that effectively destroy the taken for granted aspects of everyday lives and make people feel weak against the rationalization and impersonalization of social life. Bellah explains this point quite clearly:

“Perhaps the central function of religion is to act as a cultural gyroscope, to provide a stable set of definitions of the world and correlatively of the self so that both the transience and the crises of life can be faced with some equanimity by the society or person in question. It is this stability, continuity, and coherence provided by commitment to a set of religious symbols...that give religion such a prominent place in defining the identity of a group...”<sup>69</sup>

One crucial aspect of religion is constituting the “background understanding”<sup>70</sup> of individuals, that is, providing a cognitive framework for people to interpret the external world by answering some basic questions: What is good? What is just? What is valuable in this life? Religion grants believers a cognitive road map, stable expectations, normative criteria in dealing with their social environment. In sum, religion provides a home for the homeless minds of the modern world.<sup>71</sup>

### 2.3 The Many Uses of Islam

The crucial embedded nature of Islam as a religion in the identities and daily lives of

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<sup>69</sup> Robert N. Bellah “Epilogue: Religion and Progress in Modern Asia”... p.175

<sup>70</sup> I borrow this term from Charles Taylor “Two Theories of Modernity” *Hastings Center Report* 25 (2) 1995 p.28

<sup>71</sup> Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Random House, 1973)

ordinary people makes it a very important asset in political conflicts as a language of linking micro to macro structures, legitimating rule and mobilizing individuals. Religious symbols and references have always been a playing ground of conflictual claims by different actors, from secular states and leaders to religious groups. From colonial states to the Soviet Union, from Abdulhamit II to Mustafa Kemal, from Khaddafi to Saddam Hussein, religious symbols and institutions are used by various actors for different (usually unislamic) purposes. "Islam ...is an element both of the state ideologies and of revolutionary utopias. It is the shared medium of political discourse grounded in the ambiguity of mass culture in which state, ethnic, national and Islamic identities are imperfectly fused."<sup>72</sup> Fouad Ajami, illustrates perceptively this complicated point with respect to modern Middle Eastern politics:

"Where is the true Islam? In Khomonei's view of things or Sadat's in Saudi Arabia or in Qaddafi's Libya? Radical fundamentalist Islam is one form. Bourgeois Islam is one form. Reactionary Islam is yet another. Some read socialism into Islam. They insist that their radical economic policies can be found in this or that scripture, in the record of this or that caliph, in this or that hadith...but their adversaries find in the same Islam high regard for private property and inequality. The Muslim Brotherhood condemns the Egyptian treaty with Israel, but al-Azhar, Egypt's and Muslim world's most distinguished institution of Islamic learning, gives its approval to the treaty as the opinion of Islam."<sup>73</sup>

Islam, along with this legitimizing role, has also a great mobilizing potential. Islamic networks based on traditional structures and values provide a fertile ground for collective action in different social milieus. Islamist discourses use concepts that are close and meaningful for a large audience and Islamist organizations are very effective

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<sup>72</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.717

<sup>73</sup> Fouad Ajami *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1981) p.193

in recruiting new activists and providing financial support for the poor where the process of modernization failed to destroy informal social relations. Secular ideologies such as Marxism have a comparative disadvantage vis-à-vis Islamist movements in that they are alien to the masses and more vulnerable to the repressive policies of the state.<sup>74</sup>

By contrast, Islamist movements can escape from the heavy hand of state because they are based on informal networks which are flexible enough to survive the repression of regimes.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, challenging the autonomy of the mosques which work as an alternative public sphere and bringing them under the control of the state is not easy for any government, even though they do whatever they can to control them such as determining the content of Friday sermons, forbidding the use of mosques outside the hours of prayers, destroying some mosques, especially in North African countries.<sup>76</sup> These measures, on the other hand, exacerbate their legitimacy problems.

However, underlining the importance of Islam as a cultural resource, however may it be important, does not tell much about how and for what purposes it is used. To find answers to such questions we must look at the present political, social and historical conditions and try to understand the underlying motives of those who use it. That is, we

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<sup>74</sup> It should be also noted that liberalism has been more successful in a few countries, such as Turkey.

<sup>75</sup> For an insightful analysis of Islamic networks see Ziad Munson "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood" *The Sociological Quarterly* vol 42. Number 4 2001 pp.487-510

<sup>76</sup> François Burgat and William Dowell *The Islamic Movement in North Africa* (Austin: Center For Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas) p.88

have to face the issue of Islamism in its full complexity and shed light on some important points regarding the current political dilemmas confronting Muslim countries. There is a large literature dealing with Islamist movements in recent years in parallel with the increasing doubts and fears about the rise of Islam. My aim is simply to shed light on some important points raised in this literature and provide a general historical and theoretical background of Islamist resurgence.

#### 2.4 The nature of Islamism

There are highly different approaches on Islamism: Those who trace back the roots of Islamism on Islam, those who see it as a reaction to modernity, the West, socio-economic problems, globalization etc. Some lay stress on the similarities between these movements and third world nationalisms, some others describe it as a modern form of Puritanism, etc.<sup>77</sup> In a similar fashion, there is an inflation of terms to describe these movements: fundamentalism, revivalism, integrist, political Islam, radical Islam, public Islam, civil Islam etc. Islamism simply defies monolithic explanations not least for its diverse socio-economic, political and historical contexts. It consists of a set of discursive practices used for different purposes by different actors. Islamism, in South East Asia represents a challenge to the traditional religious authorities. In most of Middle Eastern countries, it signifies a challenge to weak and illegitimate states that are incapable of saving Palestinian people and creating jobs. In Turkey, it expresses the demands of a

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<sup>77</sup> For a sample of studies on Islamism, see Emmanuel Sivan *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven and London, 1985); Burgat and Dowell *The Islamic Movement in North Africa...*; Nazih Ayubi *Political Islam: Religion, and Politics in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 1991) Olivier Roy *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), John Esposito and John O. Voll. *Islam and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) Ellis Goldberg "Smashing Idols and the State: The Protestant Ethic and Egyptian Sunni Radicalism" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol.33 (1) January, 1991 pp.3-35

rising Anatolian bourgeoisie and the frustration of lower classes. It is a multi-class phenomenon. The middle class origins of Islamist militants have been documented by a number of works.<sup>78</sup> In many countries, such as Iran, Syria, and Turkey, petty bourgeoisie has constituted for many years the backbone of the Islamist resurgence. In Indonesia, the rural origins of Islamism is still strong.<sup>79</sup> As Moaddel forcefully notes, “Far from being a set of shared beliefs, political Islam became a potent revolutionary force precisely because it meant different things to different people.”<sup>80</sup> Nor are the purposes of the movement identical. For some who argue that Islamism is simply a reaction against modernity, it would be very difficult to explain the role of Islamist opposition challenging regimes applying *Sharia* in its strictest form, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. Keeping this diversity of Islamism in mind is an indispensable part of any serious investigation of Islamism. Having put this important point, we can now turn to some basic features of Islamist challenge to the modern world.

## 2.5 Islam and Modernity: Enmity or Amity?

Islamism<sup>81</sup> is undoubtedly a modern phenomenon. Some scholars like Gellner lay stress on the continuity between the orthodox strand of Islam and modern Islamist

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<sup>78</sup> Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of The Muslim Brothers* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p.329 Henry Munson, Jr *Islam and Revolution in Middle East* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988) pp.95-104 and Burgat and Dowell pp.97-100

<sup>79</sup> Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle, “Politics, Islam and Public Opinion” *Journal of Democracy* 15.1 (2004) pp.109-123

<sup>80</sup> Mansoor Moaddel, “The Study of Islamic Culture: an Overview and Assessment” *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol 28, 2002 p.379

<sup>81</sup> I define Islamism as an ideological current aiming at Islamize society either by political means or community-oriented efforts

movements.<sup>82</sup> This is, at best, a questionable argument. Modernist Islamism, which constituted the first phase of Islamism, was born as a revolt against the *ulema* and their conservative teachings. One Islamist had even accused them with intellectual prostitution.<sup>83</sup> As Hamid Enayat shows in his comprehensive study of Islamist thought, early Islamists tried to part company with the “sanctity of the status quo” and rejected the “corrupting realism of medieval writers.”<sup>84</sup> They “found it necessary to revise the methodological foundations of the Islamic orthodoxy, give primacy to reason in the interpretation of religion, to equate revelation with natural law, to reject the institution of male supremacy, and to devise rationalist approach to Islamic history.”<sup>85</sup> This attitude can be seen more clearly in the famous letter of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani to Renan:

“In truth, the Muslim religion has tried to stifle science and stop its progress. It has thus succeeded in halting the philosophical or intellectual movement and in turning minds from the search for scientific truth. A similar attempt, if I am not mistaken, was made by the Christian religion, and the venerated leaders of Catholic Church have not yet disarmed so far as I know. They continue to fight energetically against what they called the spirit of the vertigo and error. I know all the difficulties that the Muslims will have to surmount to achieve the same degree of civilization, access to the truth with the help of philosophic and scientific methods being forbidden them. A true believer must, in fact, turn from the path of studies that have for their object scientific truth, studies on which all truth must depend, according to an opinion accepted at least by some people in Europe.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) p.18

<sup>84</sup> Hamid Enayat *Modern Islamic Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press) p.17

<sup>85</sup> Mansoor Moaddel “Conditions for Ideological Production: The Origins of Islamic Modernism in India, Egypt and Iran” *Theory and Society* 30 2001 p.683

<sup>86</sup> Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani “Answer of Jamal-ad-Din to Renan, Journal des Débats, May 18, 1883” in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968) p.183

Perhaps the most important representative of this tendency of coming to terms with the modern world and science in Turkey is Said-i Nursi, the founder of Nurculuk. Nursi, was one of the most original Islamist thinkers of modern era since he demonstrated a great skill in reframing modern scientific outlook within an Islamic worldview. For instance, he claimed that the miracles of Qur'an were harbinger of modern techniques and innovations.<sup>87</sup> Şerif Mardin, describes Nursi's writings as a "reaffirmation of the norms set by the Qur'an in such a way as to reintroduce the traditional Muslim idiom of conduct and personal relations into emerging society of industry and mass communication."<sup>88</sup> Today, the followers of Nursi are propagating a new Islamic vision which embraces both the findings of modern science and religious values.

Undoubtedly, not all Islamist movements have a modernist face. Indeed, Islamism in modern Middle East has been dominated by more radical and nativist interpretations of Sayyid Qutb and al-Mawdudi.<sup>89</sup> The conservative teachings of Wahhabism also became influential after the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 which dramatically increased the political, economic and ideological impact of Saudi Arabia. However, Islamism takes more unusual forms. For instance, some Turkish Islamists interestingly challenge modernity

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<sup>87</sup> İsmail Kara "Türkiye'de Din ve Modernleşme" ["Religion and Modernization in Turkey"] in *Modernleşme, İslam Dünyası ve Türkiye* [Modernization, the Islamic World and Turkey] (İstanbul, Ensar Neşriyat, 2001) pp.201-203

<sup>88</sup> Şerif Mardin *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Beüzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Pres, 1989) p. 13

<sup>89</sup> Anti-Westernist as they were, these thinkers also used Western concepts, such as Islamic socialism, theo-democracy, etc. See John Esposito (ed) *Voices of Resurgent Islam...*

and science through a post-modernist Islamist discourse.<sup>90</sup> These intellectuals benefit from the writings of radical Western philosophers to address a large audience in a westernized country.<sup>91</sup> This stunning variety within Islamism as an ideology of resistance does confirm the important insight of Foucault:

“...there is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead, there is a plurality of resistances...: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable: others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant or violent: still others that are quick to compromise, interested or sacrificial.”<sup>92</sup>

John O. Voll maintains that current Islamist groups must be seen as a new wave of renewal movements that were very influential in the history of Muslim societies.<sup>93</sup> Undoubtedly, there are some similarities between *Kadızadelis* and many aspects of current Islamism, i.e., an obsessive insistence on moral and cultural purity. However, neither *Kadızadelis*, nor *Vahhabis* possessed a utopian project. Their only purpose was to purify religion from *bidats* (innovations) like drinking coffee, or visiting the tombs of Sufi saints. By contrast, modern Islamism, at least in the beginning, emerged as a radical political and social project of creating a just and pious society.<sup>94</sup> They are created and

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<sup>90</sup> See Haldun Gulalp. “Globalizing Postmodernism: Islamist and Western Social Theory,” *Economy and Society*, 26 no. 3 1997 pp. 419-33; Binnaz Toprak “Islamist Intellectuals: Revolt against Industry and Technology,” in Metin Heper, A. Oncu and H. Kramer (eds) *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993) pp.237-257

<sup>91</sup> A leading Islamist Ali Bulaç, in his *Din ve Modernizm* [Religion and Modernism] (Istanbul: Endülüs Yayınları, 1991) refers to following names: E.F Schumacher, Frantz Fanon, Herbert Marcuse, Gilles Deleuze, Ivan Illich, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean François Lyotard, Karl Polanyi, Max Weber, Michel Foucault, Karl Jaspers, J.K Galbraith, Barrington Moore, André Malraux, Max Horkheimer, and so forth

<sup>92</sup> Michel Foucault *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: vol 1*. (London: Penguin Books, 1998) pp.95-96

<sup>93</sup> John O. Voll “Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: Tajdid and Islah” in John Esposito (ed) *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Pres, 1983) pp.32-47

<sup>94</sup> Roy *The Failure of Political Islam*

shaped by modern conditions. For instance, many Islamist intellectuals, such as Ali Shariati, Calal al-Ahmed, have a Western education and close acquaintance with Western thought from which they borrowed concepts and ideas to construct their ideological schemes.<sup>95</sup> These thinkers revolutionized traditional Shiite thought and created a revolutionary ethos which was, then, hijacked by the maverick *mullah* Humeyni.

Another confusing issue that became a source of serious controversy is the nostalgia of Islamists about the golden age (*asr-i saadet*) and their firm belief to revitalize this age in the modern world. In a crude analysis, this can be seen as reactionary, wanting to turn the clock back. However, the picture is much more complicated. "When imagination finds no satisfaction in existing reality", Mannheim explains, "it seeks refuge in wishfully constructed places and periods. Myths, fairy tales, other-wordly promises of humanistic fantasies, travel romances have continually changing expressions of that which was lacking in actual life."<sup>96</sup>

Undoubtedly, the age of the Prophet is not a constructed myth for Muslim tradition. For Muslims in a great bulk of history, it was the most important moment of humanity on earth that had gone for good. Still, if we include to this age the period of four caliphs, then we can question whether this age was so golden and see the constructed nature of this imagination without infringing Muslim sensibilities. In this period, three of the

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<sup>95</sup> See Hamid Dabashi. *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1993)

<sup>96</sup> Karl Mannheim. *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harvest Books, 1936) p.205

caliphs were killed; two men who are believed to be heralded by God, Talha and Zubeyr fought with another heralded person Ali, the son in law of the Prophet; Ayşe, the wife of the Prophet also fought with Ali; hundreds of companions of the Prophet killed each other in wars. If we go a bit further, we would see Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet, brutally beheaded by other Muslims. Islamists avoid speaking about this more problematical aspect of political life of early Muslims in a bid to delineate a harmonious image of the time.

Islamists do not attempt to restore the “past.” They rather consciously work on it to build a new future. They see their past “in terms of the present and for the purpose of the present.” Oakeshott describes this use of past as a “practical past.”<sup>97</sup> In this fashion, Croce was not entirely wrong when arguing that all history was indeed a contemporary history. For instance, for Muhammad Iqbal *hicra* (the Prophet’s move from Mecca to Medina) is a symbol of the necessity of leaving traditional forms behind.<sup>98</sup> For radicals, on the other hand, it signifies a radical departure from the rest of corrupted society.

Therefore, it is worth to question the value of seeing Islamism as a reactionary, brutal force antithetical to modernity, democracy, social and cultural development. This view is undoubtedly true if we take into account only some violent Islamic groups like

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<sup>97</sup> Michael Oakeshott. *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1994) p.107

<sup>98</sup> Annemarie Schimmel. “Sun at Midnight: Despair and Trust in the Islamic Mystical Tradition” *Diogenes*, No. 165, Vol. 42/1, Spring 1994 p.10

al-Kaide, GIA, Turkish *Hizbullah* or al-*Takfir*. However, these groups constitute only a tiny number of Islamist organizations. By limiting our discussion to these cases, we might miss the larger picture.

Humans need not only meaning, they need also economic and social opportunities that can provide secure jobs, certain amount of welfare, self-realization, enjoyment, happiness, etc. In brief, they need this-world. They must come to terms with the socio-economic conditions of the time, try to protect themselves from the whims of their social environment and benefit from opportunities offered by these conditions. People demand simultaneously "...to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past and ...desire to embrace the limitless possibilities of modern life and experience that obliterate all values."<sup>99</sup>

Many important strands of Islamism, such as the Muhammadiyya, or Nurculuk work to satisfy these two conflictual needs of their followers. On the one hand, they provide them a solid identity in a confusing world, on the other hand, they help them come to terms with this world, raising their consciousness and orienting their energy to find the ways of being successful in political, economic and social life:

"Muslim organizations facilitate the transfer of popular loyalties from tribal and parochial communities and from saintly religious authority to national regimes. They are also congruent with modern industrial societies because of their egalitarianism and emphasis upon universal education and with urbanized societies for they favor disciplined behaviour. Muslim reform movements are not merely an accommodation to the secularization of Muslim societies, but a creative adaptation to the development of

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<sup>99</sup> Marshal Berman *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988) p.35

more complex and highly integrated social system.”<sup>100</sup>

Geertz concurs with this idea in pointing out to the modernizing role of *madrasahs* in Indonesia:

“Religious school (*madrasah*)...is an ally of secularist modernizing elites...because it allows, and in fact encourages, an established religious tradition with a powerful hold on the minds of the population to come to terms with the modern world, neither simply rejecting nor simply capitulating to it but becoming part of it. More paradoxically yet, it is not a rigid separation of education from religious influence that will make it possible to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s in an Islamic society but the further integration of secular and religious learning in modern schools that Islam...will be able to enter the modern world.”<sup>101</sup>

Henceforth, we can speak of two major roles for Islamism in modern society. One is “identity defense” that is based on a vehement defense of authentic identity, and the other is “identity adaptation”, that serves to adapt identities to the conditions of the age. The main problem is to determine the conditions under which Islamisms play a defensive or an adaptive role. Finding a simple answer to this question is undoubtedly out of the question but we can find nevertheless some general patterns that can help us to decipher the dialectical relations between Islamism and modern conditions. To do so, we must go deeper and elaborate the general context of Islamist movements.

## 2.6 Roots of Islamism

Islamism is not simply a reaction to economic crisis, or globalization etc. Islamism as an ideological and political force emerged in the 19. century as a reaction to the increasing

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<sup>100</sup> Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* p.888

<sup>101</sup> Clifford Geertz “Modernization in a Muslim Society: The Indonesian Case” in Robert N. Bellah (ed) *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia* (New York: The Free Press, 1965) pp.106-107

encroachment of Western powers. Thus, we must distinguish between the factors that paved the way for the emergence of Islamist movements and the others that strengthened these movements and brought them to the fore of political and social life in Muslim countries. In the first category are the impact of the West, the authority crisis in Islamic institutions; in the second category are the existence of weak and authoritarian governments, socio-economic disruptions, geo-political developments. Needless to say, these variables are closely interrelated and are predicated upon some complex historical developments which were heavily influenced by local conditions. However, these variables are by themselves very useful to give a sound idea about the emergence and development of Islamist movements.

### 2.6.1 *The Impact of the West*

Islamism as an ideological and political force emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to Western imperialism.<sup>102</sup> Sufi orders played a leading role in the peripheral regions of the Muslim world as they were the only force having an organizational basis to lead anti-imperialist struggles, although they were finally defeated by the Western forces. Then, Islamism was mainly represented by some intellectuals having weak bonds with societal forces until the birth of radical Islam. Major representatives of Islamism at this time were Seyyid Ahmed Khan, al Afghani and Muhammed Abduh. Their basic problematic was to ensure the survival of the Islamic world in an age of increasing Western dominance. They were not obsessed with preserving authenticity at all cost. Interestingly

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<sup>102</sup> For this point see Nikki R. Keddie "The Revolt of Islam, 1700 to 1993: Comparative Considerations and Relations to Imperialism" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 36 (3) July 1994, pp.463-487

enough, they saw Western dominance mainly in political terms. As Hourani argued, their revivalism “took place under the stimulus of European liberal thought and led to a gradual reinterpretation of Islamic concepts as to make them equivalent to the guiding principles of European thought.”<sup>103</sup> In an apt phrase of a Turkish scholar, they were committed both to “Westernization and Remaining Muslims.”<sup>104</sup> This is actually what nationalism was about in the liberal age: on the one hand, it claimed to preserve and exalt one’s cultural identity, on the other hand, it westernized countries by developing modern state institutions and national education systems. Nationalism has been a means of closing -albeit in a superficial manner- the gap between the past and the present. It attempted to enter into the age of modern nation-states marked by the predominance of the West. However, at the same time, it created a highly ambivalent rhetoric and mythology to get over the possible loss of identity that could emerge out of this process of Westernization.

By taking the dominance of the West as a given and attempting to come to terms with this fact whilst preserving the unity of the Islamic *Umma*, Islamic modernism came to be a proto-nationalism paving way for the emergence of Arab nationalism. After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the urgency of defining an Arab identity dawned on the Arab elite since there was no longer an *umma* united by an Islamic state. By the same

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<sup>103</sup> Albert Hourani *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962) p.344

<sup>104</sup> İsmail Kara “İslam Düşüncesinde Paradigma Değişimi: Hem Batılılaşım Hem de Müslüman Kalalım” [The Change of Paradigm in Islamic Thought: We Should Both Westernize and Remain Muslim] in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 1 / Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet’in Birikimi* [Political Thought in Modern Turkey Vol. 1/ The Legacy of Tanzimat and Meşrutiyet] İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, 2001) pp.234-264

token, the role of Islam was relegated to a secondary position of buttressing a burgeoning Arab identity.

As a historical fact, the initial honeymoon of Islamism with the West lasted very shortly. The broken promises of World War I, the growing angst against cultural and social impact of Western imperialism among the new middle classes and the birth of a Palestine problem cut the ground from the under the feet of pro-westernism.<sup>105</sup> Albert Hourani recounts the feelings of Muslims impressively:

“The victim of power can never forget his inferior status. The sense of being at somebody’s else’s mercy weighs always on his mind, sharpening his sensitiveness to slights, making him feels stranger at in his own country. He is tempted into sudden and violent self-assertion to prove- first of all to himself –that he is *something*.”<sup>106</sup>

Arab nationalism had not a promising start in coming to grips with this embittered legacy of imperialism for it could not create solid national identities because identities need stable boundaries. Arab countries lacked such boundaries as a result of their artificial creation by the imperialist countries and the absence of a long state tradition except in some countries, such as Egypt and Morocco. Nationalism could have reproduced itself only by taking on a strong anti-Western outlook as happened with Arab socialism. However, again the golden days of Arab socialism did not last long. After the humiliating defeat of 1967, it became history. With the ultimate defeat of other ideological alternatives, Islamism became the main channel in the Muslim world for the

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<sup>105</sup> For the impact of the West on the Middle East see David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922* (New York : H: Holt, 1989); Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain’s Moment in the Middle East: 1914-1956* (London: Chatto and Winus, 1963) and Albert Hourani, *A History of Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1991)

<sup>106</sup> Albert Hourani “The Decline of the West in the Middle East-1” *International Affairs* vol.29 Issue 1 (Jan.,1953) p.33

expression of the feelings of injustice against the West.<sup>107</sup> It can be argued that the deeper the impact of the West on a Muslim country, the more likely that this country will experience a strong Islamist backlash. The resilience of Islamist movements in Iran, Algeria and Egypt exemplify this fact dramatically.<sup>108</sup>

### 2.6.2 Authority Crisis in Islam

Another important factor paving the way for the politicization of Islam has been the authority crisis in Islam as a result of state policies aiming at controlling religious institutions and the process of modernization. Modern states are wary of autonomous religious space because they are aware of their weak legitimacy in the eyes of religious communities and naturally fear any opposition using a religious discourse. Gaining the control of religious institutions may prevent the use of religion against secular regimes and also bolster the legitimacy of their rule by dint of their control over them. These institutions also stood in the way of their Westernization project. For this reason, secular regimes destroy these institutions in some cases, they prefer in other instances to hold them under their control. Fadl vividly expounds this process as:

“...the nationalization of private endowments (*awqaf*) that supported and funded the law guilds, the withering away of law guilds and their replacement with state-owned secular law schools, the adoption of civil law system into large number of Muslim countries, the development of enormous hegemonic state bureaucracies that co-opted and transformed many jurists into salarized employees, and the experience of colonialism that often methodically dismantled the traditional institutions of Islamic law

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<sup>107</sup> For the role of Islam as a language of expressing and resisting injustice see Şerif Mardin “The Just and the Unjust” *Daedalus* vol.120 (3) Summer 1991, pp.113-129

<sup>108</sup> The obvious exception of Turkey will be taken up in the next chapter

under the guise of the imperative of modernization.”<sup>109</sup>

Sufi orders also took their share from this destiny by being either destroyed by the colonial or nationalist regimes or gradually undermined by the process of urbanization and migration. As a result of these developments, a fragmentation of religious space ensued without an institutional center that could speak authoritatively on religious matters. This authority void gave ample opportunities to radical or moderate Islamists to preach their own versions of religion by taking advantage of the modern media. “The era of skaykh in the classroom instilling wisdom and devotion in his students is gone; the era of the religious quester, male or female, logging onto the internet in search of answers to moral and political questions-regardless of the formal qualifications of the answerer- has arrived.”<sup>110</sup> Although there is a widespread celebration of this fact among scholars as a sign of remarkable change in Muslim societies, one should be also cautious about its benevolence since it helps radical groups to spread their ideas and hijack the national agenda of countries. An Iranian *mullah* laments this danger: “Some of the young *talebefs* think that religion is like a melon that anybody can divide with a few quick slices and then everybody can eat his piece. I tell you, if their wishes are fulfilled, we will have melons but no religion.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law: Authority and Women* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2003) p.16

<sup>110</sup> Richard W. Bulliet, “Twenty Years of Islamic Politics” *Middle East Journal* Vol.53 (2) Spring 1999 p.195

<sup>111</sup> Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) p.253

### 2.6.3 *The Price of Socio-Economic Failures*

The current conditions feeding Islamism have to do with weak, authoritarian, and corrupt governments being overwhelmed by the confounding problems of modernization and globalization that create a favorable environment for radical groups.<sup>112</sup> The weakness of the state in the Greater Middle East is indeed the crux of the problem. Following the lead of Michael Mann, we can argue that most Muslim states do not have an infrastructural power, i.e., capacity to penetrate society and extract resources.<sup>113</sup> For this reason, they rely on their despotic power and “geo-political clientelism.” The second point is particularly well expressed by the French sociologist Bertrand Badie who stresses the link between the dependence of Muslim states to foreign resources and their internal weakness:

“...separated from internal social spaces and challenged in their legitimacy, these elites are well advised to invest in the international scene and to seek patronage from the northern princes, from whom they can thus obtain protection and resources that will permit them subsequently to reinforce their positions in the center of their own society.”<sup>114</sup>

As a result of insuperable legitimacy problems, lack of autonomous public institutions which are in part a legacy of colonialism, a great number of Muslim states seems to have lost the major claim of a modern country: transforming society. Their only aim is to survive against the backdrop of mounting challenges from increasing

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<sup>112</sup> For the inability of Middle Eastern countries to meet the challenges of globalization see the excellent study of Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, “Economic Liberalization and the Liabilities of the Rentier State” *Comparative Politics* Vol. 27 (1) October 1994 pp.1-25

<sup>113</sup> Michael Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results,” *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie*, vol. 25, 1984 pp.185-213

<sup>114</sup> Bertrand Badie, *Imported State: The Westernization of the Political Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) p 23-24

population, unemployment, poverty, rampant corruption, geo-political developments, etc. They give all their energy to surviving the challenge of Islamism through clientelist networks and repression. Young people who could not find for themselves enough life-spaces<sup>115</sup> participate in mainstream or radical Islamic networks. The repression by governments reinforces radicalism of these groups and often creates a vicious cycle of violence. Thus, the deep fault line between state and society continues in full swing when enormous political and economic problems are waiting for speedy solutions.

In sum, the general picture of political and social life in the Greater Middle East seems rather bleak. Most of these countries are experiencing "...a peculiar kind of stalemate in which the existing regimes retain political power while ceding substantial control over the societal and cultural spheres to the revolutionary challenges."<sup>116</sup> However, there is at least one country that escaped this fate, Turkey. Now, we turn to deciphering the secret of this achievement.

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<sup>115</sup> By this term I imply the breadth of social life from which a person can derive meaning. People do not derive meaning only from religion. They also need other dimension of social life such as love, good job, family etc., to pursue a satisfying life. For this point see Norbert Elias, *The Germans* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) p.351

<sup>116</sup> Sheri Berman, "Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society" *New Political Science* Vol. 1 (2) June 2003 p.258

## CHAPTER III: TURKEY: THE VIRTUES OF DEMOCRACY

### 3.1 Defining Democracy

Among the theories that aim to legitimate 'really existing' democracies, democratic elitism or pluralist theory emerged out as the dominant paradigm. Pluralism defines democracy not as the participation of the people but as the competition of elites. The great virtue of the democracy in this perspective is to provide legitimate channels to the elite competition that safeguard plurality in the political system by dispersing power. Despite its several drawbacks, pluralist theory keeps its explanatory power to a certain extent in elucidating modern democracies. Thus, in this essay, democracy will be defined within this paradigm, but in a slightly different form put by the noted political scientists Philip Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl as: *a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their action in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.*<sup>117</sup>

We can infer from this definition three important implications in a bid to call a political regime a democracy. First, the mechanism of accountability, the elections, must be fair, free, and competitive. Second, as the term of accountability implies, in democratic polity, the makers of important political decisions shall be accountable either to the voters or to the people who are accountable to the voters. There is no place for charismatic or traditional authority in the decision making process of democracies.

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<sup>117</sup> Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl "What Democracy is....and is not" in. Larry Diamond, Mark F Platter (eds) Global Resurgence of Democracy (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Pres, 1996) p.50

Third, a democratic system presupposes the existence of rule of law and certain liberties, such as freedom of speech and association, to insure that people can use effectively their judgment in elections and change the government as the existence of alternatives is effectively secured. This balanced definition of democracy, which is neither minimalist, nor maximalist, can shed light on the remarkable difference between the resilience of democratic institutions in modern Turkey and the tragic dilemmas facing the process of democratization in most of Middle Eastern countries.

### 3.2 Turkey as a Model Country

It is an interesting observation that Turkey, which was generally portrayed in the intellectual history of the West for centuries as an example of oriental despotism, turned out to be a country in the spotlight of Western elites as a successful example of democracy and secularism in the world of undemocratic Muslim countries. For instance, Kaiser argues that

“...the persistent presence of the Ottoman Empire in early modern French political culture helped to crystallize French notions of their enemies, both foreign and domestic, in complex, often paradoxical ways. Long before the revolution, the French developed a notion of “despotic rule and associated it with the Turks.”<sup>118</sup>

Western elites no longer think in this way and perhaps the most impressive evidence of this about-face can be seen in the speech of the US president Bill Clinton given in Turkish parliament during his highly popular visit to Turkey:

“Turkey’s past is a key to understanding the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, more importantly, I believe Turkey’s future will be critical to shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century...Since people have been able to draw maps, they have pointed out the immutable fact of

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<sup>118</sup> Thomas Kaiser “The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth Century French Political Culture” *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (March 2000) p.33

Turkey's geography-that Asia Minor is a bridge between continents...Turkey's ability to bridge East and West is all the more important when another fact of Turkey's geography is considered. You are almost entirely surrounded by neighbors who are either actively hostile to democracy and peace or struggling against great obstacles to embrace democracy and peace."<sup>119</sup>

This admiration for Turkey's experience is not new. Since the beginning of the Cold War, Turkey has been given a particular attention for her remarkable efforts to become a Western country. Turkey's strenuous efforts to be a member of the developed world led Western scholars and policy makers to see in Turkey a fertile laboratory to ponder the difficulties of becoming a modern nation. No wonder that some of the important scholarly works of this period were written on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey.<sup>120</sup> However, the geo-strategic value of Turkey as a bulwark against the Soviet Union became more important and shaped the image of Turkey in Western countries in the following decades.

After the end of the Cold War when the specter of confrontation between the West and the Islamic world became a vexing possibility, this experience of Turkey stood out again as a model for the rest of the Greater Middle East. This bridging role of Turkey bolstered the strategic value of Turkey, which was once seemed to be waning. However, lacking in these discourses was a diachronic understanding of this experience. Turkey has been presented as a country exemplifying the possibility of building a working democracy and market economy in a Muslim society without digging into the unpleasant

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<sup>119</sup> Bill Clinton "Remarks to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara" *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* Nov 22, 1999

<sup>120</sup> See, for instance, Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Frey, *Turkish Political Elite...*; Robert E. Ward and D. Rustow (eds) *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964)

historical details of this experience. However, if we take a closer look at the political development of Turkey, we can see more clearly the difficulty of engendering a democratic regime even in a country relatively hospitable to modern institutions and values. However, despite these difficulties, we can also see that those who point out the relevance of Turkey in the democratization of the Muslim world have a good point: Muslim countries have no other alternative than democracy to reach modernity.

This work lays stress on the success of the democratic institutions in Turkey. Undoubtedly, there are many dramatic indicators of failure in the Turkish political system: four military interventions, one civil war, closure of some dozens of parties by military regimes and the constitutional court, several economic crises, voter volatility, party fragmentation etc. However, under the influence of these uncontested hardships of the democratic process in Turkey, scholars tended to downplay two important facts: This country had undergone a traumatic process of nation building and when looking from a Middle Eastern perspective, she quite succeeded to overcome the strains of this process, or at least, not to be overwhelmed by it. Turkish Republic emerged out of the ashes of a collapsing Ottoman Empire and it bore the imprint of this heavy legacy. It should come as no surprise that with democratization, the repressed contradictions of Kemalist period resurfaced, subverting political life of the country. For this matter, I claim that the secular-Islamist confrontation in the mid-90s was perhaps inevitable due to this bitter legacy. However, there are two important questions to be answered: Why did this confrontation take place so lately? And why could it be possible for an "Islamist" party to come to power just a few years later after this clash?

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Generally speaking, given the anti-Islamist nature of Kemalist reforms, why did not political Islam play a major opposing force in Turkish politics, such as Muslim Brothers? Why did not Islam take a radical and violent stance against the secular state? Finally, how did the democratic and liberal turn of Islam(ism) in recent years become possible?

In dealing with these questions, I will lay stress on the strength of democratic institutions that created the exceptionality of Turkey in coming to terms with the Islamist challenge. Democracy provided a legitimate framework for a peaceful resolution of social and political contradictions in the long run. When the political system would come to a standstill, ending with the intervention of the military, a new fresh start was always possible with new political actors in a different political context, which were beyond the control of the army. Hence, democracy effectively precluded any attempt of building hegemony by military elites by steadily creating unexpected political environment. Another major function of democracy was to bridge the center-periphery gap. In this way, it limited the social basis of political and radical Islam. It helped also to preclude an authority crisis in religious space by strengthening traditional religious organizations and parties. Therefore, radical Islam could not find a fertile ground to thrive. A final effect of democratic politics was that it restricted the impact of political Islam by encouraging diversity within the political structure and the Islamist movement. It forced the leaders of Islamist parties to adopt a more pragmatic stance and in the long run it contributed to the transformation of political Islam. Before proceeding with explaining these arguments in a greater detail, a brief conceptual overview may be useful.

### 3.3 Center and Periphery: A Conceptual Analysis

Perhaps the best starting point in taking up the role Islam in Turkey is to place it in a general context of the state-society relationship in Turkish history which was characterized by a deep fissure between the center and the periphery. This center-periphery analysis was brought forward first by a leading scholar, Edward Shils who defines these concepts as follows:

“...every society seen macrosociologically, may be interpreted as a center and periphery. The center consists of those institutions (and roles) which exercise authority - whether it be economic, governmental, political and military- and of those which create and diffuse cultural symbols-religious, literary etc.- The periphery consists of those strata or sectors of the society which are the recipients of commands and of beliefs which they do not themselves create or cause to be diffused, and of those who are lower in the distribution or allocation or rewards, dignities, etc.”<sup>121</sup>

The process of modernization consists of integration of center and periphery, which is predicated upon the nature of their relationship. For Shils, the existence of a center and its ability to penetrate and shape periphery is a *sine qua non* of the modernization process. However, he seems to bestow upon the periphery a rather passive role. Another leading scholar, Daniel Lerner, in a brief but perceptive essay gives a more dynamic picture of this relationship by laying stress on the pro-active role of the periphery.<sup>122</sup> He gives three modes of relationship. First, center “may ignore the periphery. Pay no attention to it. Pretend it does not exist.” He calls this, “*Disinterest.*” A second form is “*Difference Promotion*” when the center begins to negotiate with the periphery. A third

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<sup>121</sup> Edward Shils *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1975 ) p.39

<sup>122</sup> Daniel Lerner “Some Comments on Center-Periphery Relations” in Richard L. Merritt and Stein Rokkan (eds *Comparing Nations : the Use of Quantitative Data in Cross-National Research* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) pp.259-265

one is “*Dissidence Reduction*,” when certain elements of the periphery challenge the power of the center.

For Lerner, the critical mode is the third one. Given their geographical, social and cultural distance, how a center and a mobilized periphery can deal with each other in a “reasonable, humane, stable and durable way” became an acid test of modernization. He does not give a clear-cut answer to this question apart from advising a policy of “Difference Promotion” or coexistence. He worries about cultural and political unreadiness of the periphery to play a responsible role on the national political scene. This is undoubtedly true but he overlooks the fact that the center may be unready as well to play such a role. Thus, a conflictual relationship seems to be inevitable in some stages of political development and this might not be necessarily harmful in itself because it might help both the center and periphery to learn the limits of their power insofar as this conflict takes place under an institutional framework of pluralist politics, as was the case in multi-party period of Turkey.

### 3.4 State and Society in Turkey: A Short Historical Sketch

As some of the leading scholars on Turkey, such as Halil İncalcık, Şerif Mardin, Metin Heper argued,<sup>123</sup> the Ottoman Empire was characterized by a deep fissure between the

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<sup>123</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* June 1969 pp. 258-81, “Center and Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?” *Daedalus* Vol. 102 (1) Winter 1973, pp.169-191, “Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3. (Jul., 1971) pp.204-216 ; Metin Heper *The State Tradition in Turkey* (North Humberstone, The Eothen Press, 1985); Halil İncalcık “The Nature of Traditional Society: Turkey” in Robert E. Ward and Dankwart Rustow (eds) *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964)

ethnically and religiously divided people and the patrimonial state. Recent research shows that their center-periphery analysis still holds a good explanatory power.<sup>124</sup> Thus, a brief summary of their work may provide a good background of Turkish politics to understand the “problem of Islam” in Turkey.

Many observers underlined the weight of the state in the development of Turkey.

For instance, Frey writes that:

“...all Turkish revolts, including the Young Turks, the Atatürk revolution and the “Gentle Coup” of May 27, 1960 have been engineered by intellectual and official cadres! They were revolutions primarily to maintain or enhance the prestige of the state, not essentially to admit a rising new class to power or adjust a society to major economic and social changes.”<sup>125</sup>

We can trace back the enduring power of the state in modern Turkey to the disembedded autonomy of the state in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman state was characterized by the absence of institutionalized links between state and society. The state was highly autonomous thanks to elitist education that created an absolute devotion to the state among public servants.<sup>126</sup> It was also very jealous in guarding its power against any possible challenge from society. Underlying the public philosophy of the state was the idea of keeping “each individual in his proper place as determined by his

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<sup>124</sup> See, for instance, Ali Çarkoğlu and İlğaz Ergen, “The Rise of Right-of-Center Parties and the Nationalization of Electoral Forces in Turkey” *New Perspectives on Turkey* Vol. 26 Spring 2001 pp.95-127

<sup>125</sup> Frederick Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite...* p.38

<sup>126</sup> Autonomy does not mean that the Ottoman state was ruled by “Oriental Despotism.” Although the state was independent from social classes in determining the priorities of social and political policies, it could not ignore the economic power of notables and merchant class and the legitimizing role of the *ulema*.

ability.”<sup>127</sup> Economic life, especially land regime was dominated by the interests of the state, such as financing wars and ensuring the stability of food supply to the cities. Hence, it was very difficult for any economic group to reach an independent status and led to the marketization of economic relations. As İlkey Sunar argues, “in this state-administered mode of domestic production” wherein “economic activity was organized and coordinated by the state for use,” “there was a strong tendency for production to move in customary ways and to settle into a conservative pattern.”<sup>128</sup>

Religious realm was not independent although the *ulema* had a considerable autonomy that sometimes threatened the survival of the Sultans. They were integrated with the state and became a salaried class. The domain of the *Sharia* was constrained by a secular legal framework of *kanuns* based on a strict *raison d'état*. In this state-dominated social environment, Islam had many crucial functions. It was used by the rulers as a means of legitimizing their rule. It provided a common language between the center and the periphery. In the absence of alternative channels of communication, religious organizations and functionaries helped the state to reach the people. Another important role of religion was to ensure social cohesion as an agent of integration among different social groups.

### 3.5 The Westernization of the Ottoman Empire

In the 19. century, Ottoman elites realized that they had to make serious changes in the

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<sup>127</sup> İnalçık, “The Nature of Traditional Society... p.42

structure of the Ottoman state and society in order to survive the economic and military threats of the Western countries. Without entering into complicated details of Westernization/modernization of the Ottoman Empire, we will deal with some aspects of Westernization that are relevant for our subject. First, Westernization in Ottoman/Turkish context was carried out by indigenous elites. Elite discontinuity, which had highly subversive effects in other parts of Muslim world, was notably absent in Turkish history. As a result of this, anti-Westernism was not as popular as it was in the remaining parts of the Middle East. As a related fact, the urgent need of saving the state had a disciplining force on the ideas of Ottoman elites. To put it more clearly, Ottoman thinkers including Islamists and the *ulema* had no luxury of entirely rejecting the West based on utopian or traditionalist lines, not least because they were dependent on Western techniques and institutions to counter the Western threat. For instance, Uriel Heyd in his seminal article, illustrates the acquiescence of higher *ulema* to reforms contravening the *Sharia* for the reason that they had internalized the *raison d'état*.<sup>129</sup>

Perhaps the problem was an excessive dose of Westernization rather than anti-Westernism or anti-modernity. In this respect, the works of two students of late Ottoman history, Makdisi and Deringil, who documented the existence of an Ottoman orientalism are particularly relevant.<sup>130</sup> These scholars argued that Ottomans adopted the colonial

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<sup>128</sup> İlkay Sunar "State and Economy in the Ottoman Empire" in Huri Islamoğlu-Inan (ed) *The Ottoman Empire and The World Economy* (New York: Cambridge, 1987) p. 67

<sup>129</sup> Uriel Heyd "The Otoman Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II" in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization* (Jerusalem: Magnes Pres, 1961) pp.63-96

<sup>130</sup> Ussama Makdisi "Ottoman Orientalism" *American Historical Review* June 2002 pp. 768-796; Selim Deringil "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol.45 (2) April 2003 pp.311-342

and orientalist mindset of Westerners within an Islamic framework and legitimized their rules over non-Turkish Muslim as a project of civilizing heretic and uncivilized “orientals.” One may speculate that this kind of borrowed orientalism paved the way for the secular reforms of Kemalists in the 1920’s and 1930s. For instance, Kahraman describes Kemalism as a form of internalized Orientalism because of its *weltanschauung* equating civilization with the “West” and backwardness with the “Orient.”<sup>131</sup> It seems that Turkish reformers thought that in order to come to terms with the superiority of the West they had to adopt a Western self-image which entailed the creation of their own “Orient”, conceived first as the Arab Middle East and then as Islam and the Ottoman past. This way of thinking has created a deep and persistent identity crisis on Turkish elites, as elegantly expressed by Orhan Pamuk:

“The occidentalist is first of all ashamed because he is not European. Then (but not always) he is ashamed of what he does to become European. He is ashamed that he has lost his own identity in the endeavor to become European. He is ashamed of having identity and not having his own identity. He is ashamed of the shame itself, which sometimes he erupts against and sometimes accepts with resignation. He is ashamed and angry when these shames are bared.”<sup>132</sup>

Second, the process of Westernization was not supported by a national bourgeoisie that could bring these reforms to their logical end, i.e., creation of a strong civil society. The incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the world economy created a bourgeois class that was comprised of Christians and Jews who were denied political power. Thus, the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the state took an ethnic form, which resulted in

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<sup>131</sup> Hasan Bülent Kahraman “İçselleştirilmiş, Açık ve Gizli Oryantalizm ve Kemalizm” [“Internalized, Open, and Hidden Orientalism and Kemalism”] *Doğu Batı* Vol: 5 (20) 2002 pp.153-178

<sup>132</sup> Orhan Pamuk “A Private Reading of André Gide’s Journal” *Social Research*, Vol 70 (3) Fall 2003 p.1013

the elimination of the former by the nationalist elites. These elites, then, created a national bourgeoisie during the Young Turks era and the Kemalist period, which was to be loyal and dependent on the state.<sup>133</sup> The inability of the bourgeoisie to challenge the state in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave a free hand to the state elites to determine the national agenda and helped them to continue to the project of modernization from above.

Third, modernization of the empire was not a story of epic struggle between modernizers and reactionaries. Seminal studies of the 19. century show that the major debates of the time took place among different conceptualizations of modernity or Westernization and different ways of coming to terms with the modern world while still being anchored to Islam.<sup>134</sup> Although the institutional basis of religion had been steadily undermined by the displacement of the *Sharia* by secular rules, Islam as an idiom loomed large in the political and intellectual life of the empire in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tanzimat reformers legitimized their reforms as a restoration of the past and protection of Islam. Young Ottomans criticized Tanzimat reformers for their negligence of Islamic norms. Paradoxically they interpreted these norms to legitimize a deeper form of

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<sup>133</sup> For the development of the state-bourgeoisie relations in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, see Çağlar Keyder "Class and State in the Transformation of Modern Turkey" in *State and Ideology in the Middle East* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988) pp.191-221 For the efforts of Young Turks to create a nationalist bourgeoisie, see Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de "Milli İktisat," 1908-18* ["National Economics" in Turkey, 1908-1918] (Istanbul: Yurt, 1982)

<sup>134</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962) Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* [History of Contemporary Thought in Turkey] (Istanbul : Ülken Yayınları, 1979) Mümtaz'er Türköne. *Siyasî ideoloji olarak İslâmcılığın Doğuşu* [Emergence of Islamism as a Political Ideology] (Istanbul : İletişim Yayınları, 1991)

Westernization, i.e., liberalization of the political structure of the empire. Abdulhamit II used Islamic symbols and networks to create a strong Islamic identity among the Muslim population of the empire and succeeded to bestow a new visibility on the religious nature of the state from which he astutely benefited in his relations with foreign powers. However, interestingly enough, in parallel to this Pan-Islamist policy, he followed a far-reaching modernization program, which in the long run undermined its power base by strengthening pro-Western forces.<sup>135</sup>

With the rise of *Young Turks* who had developed highly secular and positivist ideas imbued with nationalist flavors, arguments in favor of a full-scale Westernization gradually took precedence. For the *Young Turks*, “Science was the religion of elites and religion was the science of the people.”<sup>136</sup> The popularity of positivism in Ottoman and Turkish eras was indeed related with the mission of saving the state. New Ottoman elites were seeking epistemological certainty in the face of serious problems challenging the traditional normative order of the empire. However, the ethnically and religiously divided nature of Ottoman Empire prevented them from putting their secular and nationalist preferences into practice in a full-fledged manner. After taking power in 1908, they acted prudently not to infringe the sensibilities of non-Turkish Muslims by pursuing radical nationalist or secular policies. They manipulated Islam to legitimize

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<sup>135</sup> For the period of Abdulhamit II see Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains. Ideology and The Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B: Tauris, 1998) and Engin Deniz Akarlı, *The Problems of External Pressures, Power Struggle, and Budgetary Deficits in Ottoman Empire Under Abdulhamit II (1876-1909)*, unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1976

<sup>136</sup> For the ideas of Young Turks, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu *Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Pres, 1995)

their positivist ideas.<sup>137</sup> Even Ziya Gökalp, the founding father of Turkish nationalism, “spoke of an Islamo-Ottoman culture of which the Turks and Arabs were part” in order to not to “alienate non-Turkish Muslims.”<sup>138</sup>

However, after the loss of Albania and the emergence of the “Arab revolt” that dramatically discredited Ottomanist and Islamist ideologies, secular and nationalist tendencies became sufficiently crystallized.<sup>139</sup> In this period, a new wave of secular reforms came with the removal of the *Şeyhülislam* from the cabinet, modernization of the *medreses*, adoption of a more Western family law, tightening of state control over religious institutions. Henceforth, they paved way for more radical secular reforms of the Kemalist period. In conjunction with these developments some Turkist writers, such as Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura developed a secular nationalist ideology which relegated the role of Islam to a source of solidarity.<sup>140</sup> What was left to the Kemalists was simply bringing this process to its logical conclusion. They exactly did so after a brief interlude of using religion for the mobilization of the Anatolian peasantry against the Greek invasion and legitimizing the Ankara government.

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<sup>137</sup> *ibid*, pp.200-203

<sup>138</sup> Kemal H. Karpat *The Politicization of Islam : Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2001) p.377

<sup>139</sup> David Kushner “The Place of the *Ulema* in the Ottoman Empire during the Age of Reform (1839-1918)” *Turcica: Revue d’Études Turques* XIX, 1987. p.74

<sup>140</sup> Taha Parla *Ziya Gökalp, Kemalizm ve Türkiye’de Korporatizm* [Ziya Gökalp, Kemalism, and Corporatism in Turkey] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989) p.50

### 3.6 Kemalism: A revolt Against Islam

Silverstein, when claiming that “the issue of secularism is the central issue of Turkish modernity,” gives the crux of the “problem of Islam” in Turkey. “Rightly or wrongly Turks tend to locate the modality of their modernity in what they call secularism.”<sup>141</sup> The reason of this limited horizon of modernity is clear: modernity in the Turkish context is defined against religion. According to a prominent Kemalist intellectual, “The Turkish Republic as an independent and national state was created by fighting with ignorance, backwardness, superstition. This is another meaning of the War of Independence. War did not end yet”<sup>142</sup> Almost all Kemalist reforms aimed at either eliminating the social, political and cultural influence of Islam or controlling its institutional base. As Binnaz Toprak puts it, “since Islam had entrenched itself so thoroughly in the social, legal, and political system of the Ottoman Empire, those who looked for change had to look outside of the Islamic framework. In the end, it became increasingly clear to modernizing elites that the only way to modernize was to reject Islamic creed.”<sup>143</sup> Just consider the well-known list of Kemalist reforms aiming at “the transformation of dominant symbols in society:”<sup>144</sup>

Sultanate and caliphate were abolished. Medreses were closed down and all

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<sup>141</sup> Brian Silverstein “Islam and Modernity in Turkey: Power, Tradition and Historicity in the European Provinces of the Muslim World” *Antropological Quarterly* 76 (3), 2003 p. 511

<sup>142</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya *İslamcılık Akımı* [The Islamist Current] (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003) p.262 emphasis added

<sup>143</sup> Binnaz Toprak *Islam and Political Development* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981) pp.33-34

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p.41

educational institutions were brought under state control. The central religious institutions of the Ottoman Empire, *Şeyhülislamlık* and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations were replaced with a Directorate-General for Religious Affairs and Directorate-General for Pious Foundations. Religious courts were abolished and the *Sharia* was replaced with Italian Criminal Code and Swiss Civil Code. Dervish orders were closed. With the hat law, the use of traditional *fez* was forbidden. The Latin alphabet was adopted in lieu of Arabic one. Sunday became the weekly holiday instead of Friday. In 1928, article of the 1924 Constitution stating that “The religion of the state is Islam” was abrogated and in 1937 the principle of secularism (*laiklik*) was included in the constitution. Women were given their electoral rights and their full participation in social and political life of Turkey was genuinely encouraged.<sup>145</sup>

This sweeping wave of reforms westernizing the country and bringing Islam under state control was accompanied by some attempts of turkification of religion, such as making the call to prayer (*ezan*) Turkish. Religious education was also seriously undermined in this process. “From 1934 to 1948, the only indigenous, legal Islamic religious training available to Turkish Muslims was either as a routine part of basic Armed Forces training for recruits, or in the very elementary courses for memorizers of the Qur’an and on the Qur’an (Hafız ve Qur’an Kursları).”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> For Kemalist Reforms, see Gotthard Jaschke, *Yeni Türkiye’de İslamlık* [Islam in New Turkey] (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1972)

<sup>146</sup> Howard A. Reed “Atatürk’s Secularizing Legacy and the Continuing Vitality of Islam In Republican Turkey” in C.K Pullapilly (ed) *Islam in the Contemporary World* (Indianapolis: Cross Roads, 1970) p.330

Kemalist period was perhaps one of rare moments in history where a state is committed to systemically and relentlessly destroy the traditional political institutions, symbols of daily life and collective memory of a people. Mete Tunçay, the leading historian of this period describes Kemalism as a form of enlightened despotism and the Kemalist intellectuals as Jacobins who thought that only they knew the truth and had the right to impose this truth on “ignorant masses.”<sup>147</sup> Ernest Gellner offers a parallel view in his devastating critique of Kemalism:

“One has an impression that the Turkish commitment to modernization of the polity and society has, or initially had both an Ottoman and Qur’anic quality. The new faith, like the old, is linked to the state, constitutes its legitimation and is itself in turn justified by the strength which it bestows on the state. ...the state is there to be strong, maintain order, enforce good and suppress evil... The raya (people) is there to produce enough to keep the state in the style to which it is accustomed and to obey.”<sup>148</sup>

Since the elimination of social and political influence of religion was the principal aim of the Republican ethos, secularism has a different meaning in Turkish context. Lacking the societal and intellectual background of secularization experience of Western countries, laicism by Kemalist elites implied a project of challenging the dominant value system of the people. As Toprak puts it, “the problem of the secularization in Turkish politics...has been in a sense a problem created by the Westernized elite to impose their version of modernity on a mass of population reluctant to abandon their cultural orientation.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Mete Tunçay *T.C'de Tek Parti Rejiminin Kuruluşu 1923-1931* [The Formation of One-Party Regime in Turkish Republic, 1923-1931 ] (İstanbul: Türk Tarih Vakfı, 1999)

<sup>148</sup> Ernest Gellner “Kemalism” in *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) p.83

<sup>149</sup> Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*...p.58

Turkey is not an ideal type of secular state because religious institutions are under the control of the state since "Islam did not dispose of an autonomous religious institution such as the Catholic Church which would carry its religious functions independently of the state."<sup>150</sup> Moreover, Kemalists were too aware that Islam as a political resource can be used against them. For that reason, not only did they narrow religious space by radical secularization but they also established a strict control over what remained of it -except sufi activities which were driven underground. However, they also knew that religion can be a valuable means they can use. Thus, in addition to their efforts in the way of de-Islamizing political and social life, they also worked to redefine Islam as a "privatized" religion which is rational, modern and perfectly compatible with the principles of the republic. In the Kemalist as well as the multi-party period, state and political elites used religion for different purposes and the public control over religious institution facilitated this use. For instance, a general recently spoke of the army as the household of the Prophet (*Peygamber Ocağı*), a popular term denoting the army. Stone, writing in 1970, recounted an interesting story of an *imam* having being honored with a gold medallion by the Air Force for his successful raising of funds to strengthen the Armed Forces.<sup>151</sup> In every Friday sermon, there is a prayer asking from God to protect "our state." Thus, secularism in the Turkish context is highly problematic and has constituted one of the major problems in Turkish politics in the multi-party period.

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<sup>150</sup> Şerif Mardin "Religion and Secularism in Turkey" in A. Kazancigil and E. Özbudun (eds) *Atatürk, Founder of a Modern State* (London, C. Hurst, 1981) p.191

<sup>151</sup> Frank A. Stone "Religious and Secular Perspectives" *Current Turkish Thought* No. 6 November 1970 p. 13-14

### 3.6.1 *The Limits of Kemalism*

Cultural radicalism of Kemalism had a high price: socio-economic conservatism. Şerif Mardin noted the increasing distance between the center and the periphery in the early years of the republic due to the alienation of the religious periphery from the secular center.<sup>152</sup> However, this increasing gap was not a source of concern for Kemalists who were too preoccupied with creating a new center rather than mobilizing the periphery. The standard attitude of the center toward the periphery at this time was simply “disinterest.” In fact, the center-periphery gap had an instrumental value for Kemalist program as Frey explains succinctly:

“...the basic bifurcation in Turkish society between the educated elite and uneducated masses actually provided Mustafa Kemal with rather a convenient “halfway house” in the reshaping of the country...Put another way, it can be said that he *exploited* the educational bifurcation in the society instead of deploring it...”<sup>153</sup>

If the purpose of the Kemalist period was to produce “new Turks,”<sup>154</sup> it can be argued that a majority of Turkish people remained unaffected by this project. This failure to penetrate and mobilize the rural population was also predicated upon the coalition built during the Independence War between the Kemalist elite and the local notables. To undertake a revolution from above, the Kemalists had to rely on the power of the notables.<sup>155</sup> This coalition, in turn “resulted in the denial of comprehensive political

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<sup>152</sup> Mardin, “Center and Periphery...”

<sup>153</sup> Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* p. 41

<sup>154</sup> Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* p.112

<sup>155</sup> Ellen K. Trimberger *Revolution from Above: Military Bureaucrats and Development in Japan, Turkey, Egypt and Peru* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1978)

refashioning of society for development.”<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the old “politics of the notables”<sup>157</sup> continued in the republican area with the persistence of the intermediary role of the notables between the state and the peasantry.

However, there was more than a sociological failure. As Şerif Mardin recurrently argued, Kemalism did not and could not replace Islam, which played a crucial role in different aspects of life of the people. “It [kemalist secular culture] provided no equivalent for the widely used Islamic idiom, it did not understand the degree to which existing space-time configurations were and it had no strategies of the quotidian to offer the masses.”<sup>158</sup> While Ottoman system had a legitimating language linking macro structures with micro aspects of social life. The Kemalist republic with its positivist logic lost contact with the daily lives of the individuals.

The ideological failure of Kemalism is not limited to the creation of a coherent personal identity. It was also unsuccessful in building a strong national identity. There is a wide consensus on literature with respect to modern nature of nations. This might be true -perhaps one of the best examples is Turkey- but as A. Holly Shissler points out, “nations are made of something.”<sup>159</sup> Anthony D. Smith emphasizes that nationalist

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<sup>156</sup> İlkay Sunar “A Preliminary Note on The Politics of Civil Society Formation in Turkey” *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Dergisi* Vol. 28 (3-4) September-October 1973 p.74

<sup>157</sup> Albert Hourani, “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables” in W.R Polk and R. L. Chambers (eds), *Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968) pp.41-68

<sup>158</sup> Şerif Mardin “Islam and Mass Society: Harmony Versus Polarization” in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (eds) *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic* (Boulder: Westview, 1994) p.164

<sup>159</sup> A. Holly Shissler *Between Two Empires Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris 2003) p.206

imaginaries had to incorporate certain aspects of cultural traditions in order to be significant and meaningful in the eyes of the people.<sup>160</sup> The founders of the Republic with their insistence on a complete breaking with the Ottoman past and with Islam deprived themselves of a crucial cultural resource that could be used to build a modern Turkish identity, relevant for a large majority of the people. Turkish History and Sun-Language theses were simply too mythical, too alien to be persuasive even for the Westernized groups. Thus, Kemalists, willy-nilly and without thinking too much about it, adopted Islam as an important aspect of Turkishness and non-Muslims were relegated to a second-class citizenship in this process. For instance, high ranking positions in the state bureaucracy have been denied to the non-Muslim citizens although they are equal before the law.

A serious and far-reaching drawback of Kemalism has been the absence of a coherent ideological framework. "...As an ideology it [kemalism] lacked coherence and perhaps even more importantly emotional appeal. This ideological void was filled to some extent by the personality cult which grew up around Mustafa Kemal during and even more after his lifetime."<sup>161</sup> Kemalism, apart from its obsession with de-Islamization was indeed a highly pragmatic ideology. Metin Heper, for instance, describes the outlook of early Kemalists as a *weltanschauung* rather than an ideology.<sup>162</sup> However, the

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<sup>160</sup> Anthony D. Smith "The Poverty of Anti-Nationalist Modernism" *Nations and Nationalism* 9 (3), 2003 p.362

<sup>161</sup> Eric J. Zürcher *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co.Ltd, 1997) p.190

<sup>162</sup> Metin Heper *The State Tradition in Turkey...* p.65

price of this pragmatism was very high, as Toprak puts it: “The state, by its secular policies and its program of Westernization, had threatened the dominant value system of a traditional Islamic society without providing, at the same time, a new ideological framework which could have mass appeal.”<sup>163</sup>

In sum, it can be argued that Kemalist reforms left an ambivalent legacy on modern Turkish politics. On the one hand, they must be credited for their unambiguous response to the challenges of the traumatic collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the necessity of creating a nation-state. Kemalists succeeded to create a secular framework and culture within which political Islam had to find its place. It is by no means a coincidence that mainstream Islamism in Turkey never openly expressed the battle cry of many Islamist groups in other Muslim countries, i.e., creating an Islamic state. On the other hand, Kemalists neglected the communication aspect of nation building. They didn’t “speak” with the people. As a result, Kemalist elites have suffered serious problems in trying to communicate with the electorate in the multi-party period.

### **3.7 Multi-Party Period: Democracy Makes Peace with Islam**

#### *3.7.1 Changing Dynamics in the Center-Periphery Relations*

The emergence of the multi-party period in the mid-1940s culminating in the victory of the Demokrat Party (DP) was a turning-point in modern Turkish history. The center could no longer ignore the periphery. It had to come to terms with it and to be more

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<sup>163</sup> Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*...p.70

attractive to it. The process of “difference promotion” replaced the complacent “disinterest” policy. This was evident in the soul-searching of Kemalist elites during the early years of competitive politics. Radical “laicism”<sup>164</sup> of the early period was questioned. The “positive” aspects of religion was more pronounced. As a result of electoral pressure, CHP began to relax its laicist attitude and compromise to a certain extent its early radicalism. Foreign exchange was made available in 1948 for those who wanted to go to the *Hac* in Mecca. In 1949, optional religious courses were restored to primary schools. Prayer Leader and Preacher courses were opened. A new theology faculty was opened at Ankara. Some of the closed tombs were reopened.<sup>165</sup> In sum, the party of Atatürk “exploited” religion for political purposes. However, it was “too little and too late”<sup>166</sup> given the bitter legacy of Kemalism and the rise of new elites.

The sweeping victory of the DP in the “ruralizing elections”<sup>167</sup> of 1950 created a new dynamic between the center and the periphery by paving the way to the peripherization of the center. In the first place, it created a remarkable change in the elite structure of the country by debureaucratizing and demilitarizing Turkish politics. Old political elites which consisted to large extent of civil bureaucracy and military officers were replaced with urban professionals and merchants with more provincial

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<sup>164</sup> Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey A Hermeneutic Reconsideration* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998) pp. 181-188

<sup>165</sup> Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı* p.167-191

<sup>166</sup> Frey, *The Turkish Political elite*, p.393

<sup>167</sup> Samuel P. Huntington *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press, 1968) p. 448

backgrounds and more pragmatic and populist approach to politics.<sup>168</sup> Bureaucrats lost their prestige and became more sensitive to the demands of Turkish citizens due to the influence of their new political bosses. The rise of new elites, which were less alien to and more dependent on the electorate led to a more healthy relationship between the state and the peasantry.

“Party competition and voting has changed the position of the government vis-à-vis the workers and the villagers. The oppressiveness of the gendarme has lessened and state and factory heads have been obliged to behave more congenially. Politicians have become visitors to the villages. Some concessions have been made to workers and villagers. Thanks to these changes, the masses have more or less begun develop feelings of citizenship (identification with the Turkish Republic). In this regard, competitive party politics has undoubtedly been a progressive force.”<sup>169</sup>

The new governing party Demokrat Party under the leadership of old republicans such as Adnan Menderes, played a crucial role in recent Turkish history. The main role of DP and its successor center-right parties was to mediate between the center and the periphery. On the one hand, they represented the interests and values of the periphery in the political arena and tried to curb some anti-traditionalist features of the center. They also borne the brunt of military coups and prevented a direct confrontation between religious and secular forces. On the other hand, they politicized and mobilized peripheral forces without endangering basic secular institutions of the republic. They integrated some parts of periphery with national political life through populism, patronage politics and a conservative discourse. There was no place in Turkey for movements such as Muslim Brothers, which work outside the constraints of formal political life to mobilize

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<sup>168</sup> Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, p.196-197

<sup>169</sup> Quoted in Arnold Leder, “Party Competition in Rural Turkey: Agent of Change or Defender of Traditional Rule?” *Middle Eastern Studies* vol. XV (1) 1979 p.93

people strictly on religious lines.

One of the most important aspects of the DP legacy was its legitimization of the periphery and its values as a respectable force that must be reckoned with in nationalist politics. By doing so, they put a deep imprint in the collective memory of the peasantry by catering to their cultural values and making them realize their power to shape their destiny.<sup>170</sup> We can perhaps describe the multi-party period as a re-traditionalization of Turkish politics as opposed to the staunch anti-traditionalism of the early period. All leaders of the center-right parties which governed Turkey in most of this period used a more sympathetic discourse to Islamic sensibilities of their constituencies.

As a result of their affectionate attitude to Islam, the old radical reforms of the Kemalist period were steadily undermined. Menderes made a clear distinction between the reforms that are accepted by the people (*Halka malolmuş inkilaplar*), and those not accepted, and expressed his resolve to eliminate the latter. His decision to allow the call to prayer in Arabic again made him a hero on the part of the religious masses. Even the CHP accepted this turn for electoral purposes. Religious courses were reintroduced to public schools from which students would be exempt only with the demands of their parents. During the Demokrat Party's rule, 15,000 mosques were built and the number of religious organizations increased from 95 in 1949 to 5,104 in 1960.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, 19

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<sup>170</sup> I remember my late grandfather taking out from his wallet pictures of Menderes, Polatkan and Zorlu. He was not a politically conscious man but that he had borne the pictures DP leaders for more than 40 years in his wallet might give an idea of how deep was the mark of the DP on the minds of peasants

<sup>171</sup> Javaid Saeed, *Islam and Modernization: A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey* (Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1994) p.151

Prayer Leader and Preacher schools were opened. Religious programs were allowed to be broadcasted in radios. Religious literature flourished. Religious orders or *tarikats*, such as Nurcus, thrived thanks to the free atmosphere of the time and warm relationship with the government which sought for their support in the late 1950s to compensate for the loss of economic dynamism of the early years.

The rise of Islam as a political factor in the public life of the country continued with successive center right parties which were dominant forces until the 1990s. As a result, the number of Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools, which created social mobility opportunities for the male and female children of conservative families, increased from 19 in 1959 to 464 in 1997.<sup>172</sup> The General-Directorate of Religious Affairs became an institution controlling nearly 76,000 mosques and more than 3,500 Qur'anic courses.<sup>173</sup> Religion became an institutionalized channel between the secular state and the religious people.

More interestingly, even Kemalist elites seemed to have accepted the rising importance of Islam as a fact until the “post-modern coup” in 28 February 1997. Even the military leaders of the 1960 coup did not dare to eradicate the gains of Islam made in the DP period. Instead, they preferred that “Islam was to be given a nationalist and progressive image in order to prevent its being used as an anti-reformist [anti-kemalist]

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<sup>172</sup> David Shankland *Islam and Society in Turkey* (Huntingdon : Eothen, 1999) pp.27-28

<sup>173</sup> General-Directorate for Religious Affairs web site,  
<http://www.diyenet.gov.tr/turkish/tanitimistatistik.asp> (accessed in 2004)

instrument.”<sup>174</sup> In the later decades, Islamic language became much more instrumental for generals as well as for the center right parties to counter the “threat” of leftist groups in a typical Cold War milieu. The well-known “Turkish-Islamic synthesis,” developed by some conservative intellectuals in the 1970s, became the dominant state discourse of the 12 September regime as a language of social solidarity.<sup>175</sup> The only moment when Kemalist elites turned their attention fully to the rise of Islam(ism) took place in the 28 February process when they dealt a serious blow to political Islam but these measures were far limited than intended, not least for the reluctance of rightist parties to whole-heartedly implement the 28 February decisions out of electoral concerns. More importantly, although the Kemalist elites had the power to close Islamist parties, they were unable to prevent Islamists from forming new parties. To put it simply, the Turkish army constrained democracy but democracy also constrained the military. Thus, Turkey experienced a “democratic surgery” in the second half of the 20. century, which, while keeping intact the basic secular institutions of the republic succeeded to undermine many radical aspect of its laicism.

### 3.7.2 *Economization of Politics*

Another important impact of competitive politics was “economization” of state-society relations. By this term I mean the dominance of socio-economic issues in national and local politics over cultural ones. Sunar traces back the reason of this phenomenon to the

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<sup>174</sup> Feroz Ahmad *The Turkish Experiment...* p.374

<sup>175</sup> Faruk Birtek and Binnaz Toprak “The Conflictual Agendas of Neo-Liberal Reconstruction and the Rise of Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Hazards of Rewriting Modernity” *Praxis International* 13 (2)1993 pp. 192-212

contract between Kemalist and DP leaders before the advent of democracy.<sup>176</sup> This might be true but I tend to see it rather as a result of democratization. Contending political parties had good reasons in addressing primarily socio-economic issues in a country which was marked by underdevelopment.

With the economization of the politics, the state of gendarmerie and military conscripters is replaced by the figure of *devlet baba* (the father state). The existence of cheap credits, agricultural subsidies etc. paved the way for a distributional politics even in remote villages and helped the penetration of state through political parties in rural life. The role of parties is especially important in the political development of Turkey because they increased political consciousness of traditional masses by providing them patronage channels. Party patronage helped change the local power relations and gave a new social and political dynamism to rural areas.<sup>177</sup> Henceforth, parties channelized the political energies of masses to a legitimate political terrain and limited the potential influence of movements giving priority to primordial identities. In this vein, we can argue that the outbreak of Kurdish conflict was in part due to the weakness of parties in the Southeastern region wherein patron-clients relations between the *aghas* and the peasants could not be replaced with party patronage.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> İlkey Sunar "State, Society, and Democracy in Turkey" in Wojtech Mastny and R. Craig Nation (eds), *Turkey Between East and West: New Challenges for a Rising Regional Power* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996) p.144

<sup>177</sup> Arno Leder, *Catalyst of Change Marxist versus Muslim in a Turkish Community* (Austin, Texas: Middle East Monographs, No. 1 Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1976)

<sup>178</sup> For an excellent discussion of patronage in rural areas see Sabri Sayarı "Political Patronage in Turkey" in Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (eds) *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977) pp.103-113

Another important consequence of economization was to prevent cultural issues, e.g., Islam from dominating the national agenda. Where national debate and conflict are strongly affected by economic issues and developments, it is very difficult for any party to mobilize large numbers of people strictly on religious issues. Toprak, for instance, attributes the failure of religious parties in the early years of multi-party period to the reluctance of Turkish voters “to cast their votes to obscure parties which offered nothing else than the promise to create a more relaxed religious atmosphere.”<sup>179</sup> The trajectory of discourse of Islamist parties from stressing the development of a heavy industry to propagating “Just Order” points to the importance of economic and class concerns in rallying support in a democratic and rapidly developing country.

### 3.7.3 Resolving Authority Crisis

One of the most important contributions of democracy to the handling of the “problem of Islamism” was to prevent the emergence of an authority crisis in the religious realm by strengthening traditional religious authorities and integrating them with the political and economic structure. Şerif Mardin, in a recent interview underlined the importance of the elimination of the *ulema* in the Turkish context.<sup>180</sup> This is only a part of story. As stressed above, the destruction of traditional religious authorities led to an authority crisis in the religious realm which was, then, exploited by the radical Islamists. In the Turkish case, on the other hand, *tarikats* that left a deep imprint in the Ottoman society,

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<sup>179</sup> Binnaz Toprak *Islam and Political Development...* pp.75-76

<sup>180</sup> Vatan 30/9/2003

survived the repression of the Kemalist period and thrived under the patronage and tolerance of center parties at the peril of attracting the criticism of the Kemalists.

The *differentia specifica* of Islamism in Turkey is the strong role of various *tarikats* in social and political life. *Tarikats* have provided a cultural and psychological refuge especially for the young people who have constituted the backbone of radical Islam, amidst a period of serious social and economic dislocations, and have encouraged them to participate in political and economic life. With the help of competitive politics, they oriented all energies of their *mürids* to carve out a religious space without confronting state authorities directly. In this process, they paved the way for the emergence of an Islamist bourgeoisie which has had important stakes in the economic and political stability of the country and the integration with the global economy. Moreover, along with the rising Islamist parties, they restrained the popularity and influence of radical Islam. It is by no means a coincidence that the most influential and brutal organization of Radical Islam in Turkey, Hizbullah, killed more Islamists than Kemalists. This does not mean that violent attacks of radical Islam were not important. On the contrary, 28 February process cannot be understood without the traumatic effects on secular elites of assassinations of leading Kemalists, the burning of 37 secular intellectuals in Sivas by an Islamist mob, and the inability of Islamists to come to terms with this violent face of Islamism. In sum, the strength of democratic institutions and a fair degree of economic development prevented Turkey from falling into a vicious cycle of violence which dominated political life in other Muslim countries.

### 3.7.4 *The Transformation of Political Islam*

Democratic politics had also a crucial effect of constraining, taming and transforming political Islam.<sup>181</sup> The seriousness of Islamist threat to democracy has been feverishly debated in recent controversies on the future of democracy in the Muslim world. However, as Vali Nasr rightly argues, we must rather look at the impact of democracy on Islamist movements.<sup>182</sup> Some eminent scholars like Albert O. Hirschman and Robert A. Dahl laid stress on the role of democracy in reducing the intensity of conflicts.<sup>183</sup> Democracy reflects the complexity of the social structure on the political arena. The existence of multiple cleavages and various social groups and political actors that must be taken into political calculations curtails ideological sharpness of parties. In order to reach to a larger audience, parties embrace a more pragmatic political discourse because doing otherwise will undermine their political support. The dynamic of competitive politics constrains their room of maneuver. Another important aspect of democratic politics is that by giving a chance of government to parties, it exposes the limits of their power and their ideological recipes. However, we should also keep in mind that these functions of democracy are predicated upon a certain institutionalized framework: free and competitive elections, political parties, rule of law, etc. In this respect, democracy cannot be defined by the mere existence of elections.

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<sup>181</sup> For the influence of democracy on Islamist parties see also Binnaz Toprak "Türkiye'de Laiklik, Siyasal İslam ve Demokrasi" [Secularism, Political Islam and Democracy] in *Uluslararası Atatürk ve Çağdaş Toplum Sempozyumu* [International Symposium on Atatürk and Modern Society] (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2002) pp.286-305

<sup>182</sup> Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Pres, 1994) p.220

<sup>183</sup> Albert O. Hirschman "Social Conflicts as Pillars of Democratic Market Society" *Political Theory* Vol. 22 (2) May 1994 p.203-218; Robert A. Dahl "Introduction" in Robert A. Dahl (ed) *Regimes and Oppositions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973) pp.1-25

When assessing the achievements of Islamist parties in elections, what is striking at a first glance is that their national electoral results were not as successful as those achieved by communist parties in Europe in the post war period.<sup>184</sup> In the 1973 national elections, the Milli Selamet Party (MSP) got 11.8 per cent of total votes. In 1977, this rate dropped to 8,56 percent. Its successor, the Refah Party, increased its share from 7.2 percent in 1988 to 16.9 in 1991 (with two nationalist parties). In 1995, it became the first party with 21.4 percent vote ringing the alarms bells in Kemalist circles and Western capitals. However, in 1999, its successor, the Fazilet Party (FP) could only get 15, 4 percent of votes.

The National Outlook parties were systemic parties although they expressed themselves in an ambiguously anti- systemic language. They were rarely implicated in violent activities. They avoided tinkering too much with the Kurdish problem in order not to attract the ire of the military. Their language was an amalgam of nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire, aspiration for moral life, an equitable economic development, anti-Westernism and anti-semitism. An avowedly anti- secular discourse would be too dangerous for the survival of the party. Henceforth, economic issues loomed large in their political discourse. MSP defended the interests of Anatolian petty-bourgeoisie against big industrialists of Istanbul. Its emphasis on social justice even made possible a coalition with the CHP, which under the leadership Bülent Ecevit, were trying to spare

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<sup>184</sup> I exclude the sweeping victory of the AKP because this party had a significantly different program, say, a post-Islamist electoral platform, from those of previous Islamist parties.

itself from its elitist legacy. Economic justice became an issue of paramount importance especially in the discourse of the RP.<sup>185</sup>

Although it was integrated to the political system, the RP became the major political concern of secular elites in the mid-90s as a result of the political and economic conditions of the time. The center right parties, being sandwiched between the aspirations of the periphery and requirements of neo-liberal globalization, could no longer mediate the relationship between the Kemalist elites and religious masses. Rampant corruption, traumatic Kurdish war, foreign conjuncture, such as the Bosnian war created a congenial atmosphere for the ultra-populist “Just Order” discourse to resonate in marginalized and disillusioned masses especially in urban *gecekondus* areas. Islamism was no longer a “revolt of the petty bourgeoisie”<sup>186</sup> although lower middle classes were still an important constituency of the Islamist parties. It had become a language of discontent with the status quo of different social groups, such as the urban poor, the Anatolian bourgeoisie, and the new Islamic elites.<sup>187</sup> In this atmosphere, the traditional leadership of the RP, who failed to perceive the great changes that Turkey and the world underwent since 1970s, resorted to utopian populism stressing the failures of the political and economic order. This was rational in the sense of the getting support

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<sup>185</sup> For MSP see Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, *Türkiye’de Modernleşme, Din ve Parti Politikası: MSP Örnek Olayı* [Modernization, Religion, and Party Politics in Turkey: The case of MSP] (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1983); for RP see M. Hakan Yavuz, “Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 30 (1) October, 1997 pp.63-82

<sup>186</sup> İlkey Sunar and Binnaz Toprak “Islam and Politics: the Case of Turkey” *Government and Opposition*, vol 18 (3) (Autumn 1983). P.421-441

<sup>187</sup> Sencer Ayata and Ayşe Güneş-Ayata “Religious Communities, Secularism, and Secularity” in Lenore G. Martin.(ed) *New Frontiers in Middle East Security* (New York : St. Martin’s Press, 1999) p.112-113

of whoever was dissatisfied with the existing political system. However, by doing so they put themselves in a political position from which it was not possible to retreat without paying a high price.

After coming to power thanks to the need of the coalition party's leader to escape legal prosecution, all that the RP could achieve was to simply show the inadequacy and irrelevance of its social project and political discourse in a highly complex society integrated to the global economy and Western institutions. The visit of Erbakan to Islamic countries was a disaster and none of the elusive "Just Order" policies were put into practice. He even signed a military agreement with Israel. To offset these concessions, RP leadership resorted to several symbolic acts that further provoked the Kemalist elites and spurred the military to step in politics and oust the RP-DYP government in a "post-modern coup."

### *3.7.5 The Rise of AKP*

The Islamists took lessons from this bitter experience of struggle with the army, closing of the Refah Party and loss of significant share of the votes in 1999 elections. They realized that their power was limited and that they needed democracy and human rights. The successor party of the RP, the Fazilet Party stressed the lack of democracy and human rights in Turkey and the necessity of EU membership, which was anathema to the traditional discourse of the National Outlook Movement.

After the banning of RP, an important intra-elite confrontation surfaced within the

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Islamist movement. Islamism has never been a monolithic movement. It consisted of different groups, such as the *tarikats*, businessmen, intellectuals along with the Islamist politicians. There had always been a tension among these groups. For instance, that *tarikats* had disliked the patronizing attitude of Erbakan is a well-documented fact.<sup>188</sup> However, with the weakening of Erbakan due to the prohibitions of 28 February process, these tensions became more acute and more openly expressed. New and younger elite representing more modern and dynamic Islamist circles grew stronger and challenged the uncontested authority of Erbakan. These new and upwardly mobile Islamist elites,<sup>189</sup> which gained a significant visibility in the economic, cultural, and social life of the country had realized the necessity of a new leadership and political perspective in the movement. After the banning of FP, they took the upper hand in the Islamic movement and formed AKP.

When the earthquakes and economic crises were shaking Turkey and delegitimizing all existing political parties, AKP under the charismatic leadership of Tayyip Erdoğan emerged as a true alternative to all “tried” parties. In the 2002 elections, it obtained a sweeping victory with a great majority based on the realignment of voters and filled the gap of old parties which were bulldozed by the anger of the people.<sup>190</sup>

The central irony of Turkish politics in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century lies in the

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<sup>188</sup> For this point, see Ruşen Çakır *Ayet ve Slogan* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1995)

<sup>189</sup> For the rise of new Islamist elites see Nilufer Gole “Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites” *Middle East Journal* v. 51 (1) Winter 1997 pp.46-58

<sup>190</sup> Soli Özel offers a penetrating analysis in “After the Tsunami” *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 14. Number 2 April 2003 pp.80-94

fact that although the process of Westernization was started by Kemalists, it is likely to be finished by ex-(or post-) Islamists. One reason for this is that Westernization is no longer an elite project of transforming society. It became a common project of various social actors, including the Islamists to tame and transform state and to ensure a more humane life. The power of AKP lies in its ability to use EU membership as leverage to consolidate democracy and ensure the protection of human rights. Although a low intensity conflict still exists between state elites and the AKP government, domestic and international context is not congenial for an old-fashioned Kemalist-Islamist conflict.

In sum, a brief look at the recent history of Turkey shows that democracy as “dissidence reduction” institution is an indispensable antidote to the pathological encounter of Muslim countries with the modern world. The crucial benefits of democracy in dealing with the challenge of Islamist movements can be enumerated as follows:

*Democracy creates a socio-political environment that reduces the political and ideological influence of Islamism:* Democracy reduces the cultural distance between society and political elites. Hence, it becomes more difficult for Islamists to rally support under the banner of protecting Islamic values. Moreover, in a democratic setting, which is based on competition among different social groups, ideologies, and ideas Islamists can not succeed to monopolize opposition and determine national agenda.

*Democracy encourages pragmatism and self-criticism:* Competitive politics forces

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radical parties to be more pragmatic in order to address a larger pool of voters. In a democratic setting, parties are evaluated according to their performance and the relevance and acceptability of their projects. As a result, parties which insist on following their ideological recipes face serious problems, such as losing votes or attracting strong opposition by other political and social actors. Moreover, democratic politics as a continuous game provides a fresh new start for political actors in that it allows them to learn from their past mistakes, reassess their ideas and values and come up with a new vision. The career of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from staunch anti-Westernism to the championship of the cause of EU membership dramatically bears witness to this fact.

*Democracy can more easily accommodate the changes in elite structure.* As Toprak argues, Islamism in Turkish context reflects a fact of social mobility rather than signifying a fundamentalist challenge.<sup>191</sup> In the last two decades, Turkish politics witnessed the rise of new Islamist elites, such as businessmen, intellectuals, who wanted their share from political power and social prestige. In this regard, it can be argued that the recent transformation of Turkish Islamism can be partly attributed to the role of democratic institutions in providing channels for these new elites to increase their power and challenge the old leadership of the RP. Similarly, the emergence of multi-party politics in Turkey was coincided with the rise of provincial elites. Authoritarian regimes in other parts of the Muslim world are more closed to these kinds of changes.

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<sup>191</sup> Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and The Secular State in Turkey" in Çiğdem Bahm et. al. (eds) *Turkey: Political, Social and Economic Challenges in the 1990s* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) pp.90-96

## CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

Does the Muslim World have a problem with democracy? The conventional wisdom is that Muslims are particularly prone to authoritarian rule and fail to establish a democratic order. For instance, Freedom House report underlines a democratic deficiency in the Muslim world.

“Since the early 1970’s, when the “third wave” of democratization began, the Islamic world-and its Arab core in particular- has seen little significant improvement in political openness, respect for human rights, or transparency. Indeed, the “democratic gap” between the Islamic countries and the rest of the world is dramatic. In the 47 countries with an Islamic majority, only 11 (23 percent) have democratically elected governments while 110 of the 145 non-Islamic states (76 percent) are electoral democracies. This means that a non-Islamic state is nearly three times more likely to be democratic than an Islamic state. Furthermore, none of the Arab countries is an electoral democracy”<sup>192</sup>

That Muslim world has a democratic deficit is an undeniable fact, but the reasons of this deficit seem to lie on non-cultural factors. Many scholars lay stress on the fact that there is no big difference between Western and Muslim societies’ assessment of democratic values.<sup>193</sup> Democracy and its underlying values enjoy a great prestige among the embittered Muslim populations. However, interestingly enough, Inglehart and Norris, having put this important point, nevertheless embraces the Huntingtonian “clash of civilizations” framework by pointing to the serious cultural divide between Muslims

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<sup>192</sup> Adrian Karatnycky “The 1999 Freedom House Survey: A Century of Progress” *Journal of Democracy* 11.(1) 2000 p.103

<sup>193</sup> Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris “The True Clash of Civilizations” (135) *Foreign Policy* March/April 2003 pp.62-70

and the Western world on the issue of women and homosexuality. They claim that democracy will never come to these countries inasmuch as these problems remain intact. There is no need to argue that homosexuals need more humane treatment than that of Taliban who discussed whether "...they should take these sinners to high roof and throw them down," or they "should dig a hole beside a wall, bury them, then push the wall down on top of them."<sup>194</sup> It is also beyond question that the establishment of gender equality and participation of women to social and political life will greatly contribute to the democratization of these countries (and also Islamists) and render political and cultural conflict less acute.

However, there is a great problem with the view that democracy will emerge only after all social contradictions are solved. If so, why should we need democracy if it cannot help us solve these problems? The culturalism of Ingleheart and Norris obscures the fact that politics and politicians do not have to follow their society. On the contrary, one major aspect of politics is to lead to society, finding ways of adapting it to changing circumstances. For this reason, Muslim democrats do not have to wait a total socio-cultural transformation in order to make scores in politics. Moreover, democratic politics can open up new channels for the empowerment of the women. We should also keep in mind that some Muslim countries have more pressing problems. The existence of chronic violence makes democracy an urgent priority for Muslim countries because it is the best way of dealing with it.

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<sup>194</sup> Quoted in Ahmed Rashid *Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000) p.115

Democracy has a particular relevance in Middle Eastern countries. By softening the cultural gap between the rulers and the people, it can significantly reduce legitimacy problems. By integrating Islamist groups to a competitive politics, it can help them to understand that Islam is not a solution to all problems. It can curb the appeal of radical groups by marginalizing them. Democracy (with some liberal guarantees) can also provide a more congenial framework for discussing the place of religion in the modern world and reinterpreting religious creed with respect to modern conditions.

One important and highly debated issue on Islamism is what we may call Hitler Syndrome. There is an established view that Islamists after coming to power through competitive elections will impose their religious ideology on society by force. This was the rationale behind the crackdown of the Algerian army on Islamists in the aftermath of their sweeping victory in national polls in 1990. This argument was also brought forward by secular elites in the 28 February process to legitimize the guardianship role of the army and banning of the Islamist party. In one instance, the infamous prosecutor, Vural Savaş referred to Karl Popper in pointing out that democracies had the right to defend themselves against illegal opposition (in this case, Refah Party). Many people tried to justify this repression by making an analogy with the collapse of the Weimar Republic which was destroyed by Hitler who came to power through legitimate elections.

This Hitler Syndrome is at best misleading that serves nothing more than

reproducing authoritarianism in the Muslim world. Most secular critics argued that the RP was paying lip service to democratic practices and that after taking power it would change the secular nature of the regime. As a result, the army as a legitimate guardian of the regime had the right to interfere by ousting the Islamist party. Even if we accept that the RP had a hidden agenda, one can nevertheless question the soundness of saving democracy through military guardianship. The price of military intervention in the Algerian case was unjustifiably high.

Those who relied on the analogy of the Weimar republic overlooked one crucial point. The Weimar regime collapsed not because it was a democracy but because it was a weak democracy.<sup>195</sup> In the case of Turkey, the situation was completely different: The existence of democratic institutions, such as the Parliament and the political parties since the time of the Ottoman Empire;<sup>196</sup> resilience of democracy despite all authoritarian tendencies in Turkish political culture;<sup>197</sup> relative success in the institutionalization of rule of law and economic development. As Mardin insightfully notes, secular culture and lifestyles are strong to reduce the appeal of Islamist discourses.<sup>198</sup> Another important

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<sup>195</sup> For the historical development of Germany see Norbert Elias *The Germans...* and Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York: Doubleday, 1967)

<sup>196</sup> For the importance of parliament in the democratic development of Turkey, see Michele Penner Angrist "The Expression of Political Dissent in the Middle East: Turkish Democratization and Authoritarian Continuity in Tunisia" *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 1999 Vol. 4. Issue 4 pp.730-757

<sup>197</sup> As İlkey Sunar puts it, "Since 1950, Turkey cannot succeed to live with democracy, but it cannot live without democracy either. Although historical and social conditions do not give a permanent guarantee to the democratic order, they do not provide either a continuous support for an authoritarian regime." See İlkey Sunar "Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Demokrasiye Geçiş Sorunları" ["The Problems of Transition to Democracy in the World and Turkey"] *Journal of Economics and Administrative Studies* vol 1 (1) (Winter 1987) p.95

<sup>198</sup> Şerif Mardin *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset* [Religion and Politics in Turkey] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991) p.237

barrier against Islamization is the power of the national and global market and the geopolitical position of Turkey. First, as the development of capitalism and the advent of globalization restrict the room for the maneuver of the nation state, the policies of Islamization of the RP, challenging the stability of Turkey, could have led the markets to send painful signals to Refah Party leaders to mend their ways. Even if the RP had aimed to follow a foreign policy totally different from the general orientation of the state, which is a logical corollary of Islamization, economic and political ties between Turkey and the West would have shown their resilience: Turkey is an active member of the Western security system and has developed close political ties with Europe and the US. There are more than three million Turks living in Western countries. Economic stability of Turkey is heavily dependent on Western aid. More than half of Turkish foreign trade takes place with Europe. A dramatic turn in foreign policy could have created enormous problems that would be beyond control of any government.

Moreover, in order to achieve Islamization, the RP had to “win” the state, that is, the army, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, etc. However, these institutions are predicated upon different norms stipulated in the constitution. This differentiation of state and government, which is badly needed in other Muslim countries, is a very effective barrier against the use of political power for ideological purposes. As should be clear from the first year of AKP rule, Turkish republic is indeed an “overprotected” state. The president has important executive and legislative prerogatives restricting the power of the executive. There is a powerful constitutional court. What RP could have done and did in fact in these circumstances was only creating some symbolic acts that raised the

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visibility of Islam in public sphere.

In the Turkish case, the problem has not been the weakness of democracy, but the weakness of democrats. The view that democracy can be safeguarded primarily by democratic means is not well established in Turkish political culture. The Kemalist elites have no problem with the guardianship role of the military, but political elites and most of civil society actors also took the lead of the army for granted in the 28 February process. They thought that they had nothing to lose in the removal of Erbakan from office and closing of parties. On the contrary, political leaders calculated that they could come to power with the help of the army and make up for their weakness in the electoral game with their more acceptable status on the part of the Kemalist elites.<sup>199</sup> Fortunately in recent years, democracy as a discourse and value is taken more seriously in Turkish political life, not least for the prospect of EU membership. This was one of the key reasons for the low profile of the army in the recent dramatic political changes.

The Hitler syndrome has more plausibility in the Middle Eastern context because democratic traditions and institutions are really weak and the stakes of conflict are too high. Letting Islamist parties come to power is too risky because there is no strong institutional mechanism that can render them accountable. The principle of rule of law

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<sup>199</sup> For the political reasons that sustain the guardianship role of the Turkish Army, see the brilliant analysis of Ümit Cizre in *Muktedirlerin Siyaseti* [The Politics of Strong People] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999)

and the independence of the judiciary is not yet established.<sup>200</sup> Political society is not powerful enough to counter the power of the state. Absence of a strong bourgeoisie integrated with global economic forces is another matter of concern for the viability of a democratic regime. In this environment, democratization creates a dilemma for secular elites. When they allow these Islamists to come into government, there is no guarantee that they will play the game democratically. In the absence of strong democratic norms and institutional mechanisms, they cannot afford an Islamist government. However, the fact remains that lack of information can only be eliminated by letting them play the game. Thus, the problem whether Islamist movements can play democratically or not cannot be answered in the political realm. As a result, endless and unfruitful series of debates lingers on the nature of Islamist movements.

If this had been the major preoccupation of current regimes their reluctance to democratize would be more understandable. As the recent history of Israel shows, letting the religious parties to be too influential can end up with enormous political and human costs. Thus, Muslim states should find ways of restraining Islamist parties by creating a system of checks and balances. However, they are reluctant to build such an institutional framework. Speaking clearly, they have no genuine interest in democratization. Their only concern is to continue their neo-patrimonial rules. Hence, sporadic democratic

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<sup>200</sup> The eminent Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio stresses the importance of the rule of law: "The rule of law is now celebrating its final triumph as the basis of democratic system. What is democracy other than a set of rules...for the solution of conflicts without bloodshed? And what constitutes good democratic government if not rigorous respect for these rules?...I can conclude in all good conscience that democracy is the rule of law *par excellence*." Norberto Bobbio. *The Future of Democracy: A Defence of the Rules of Game* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987) p.156

openings are followed by periods of harsh repression. Islamism is often used as a pretext of their authoritarianism. Thus, the prospects of democratization and the emergence of more liberal forms of Islamism do not seem bright at the beginning of the new century. The persistence of authoritarian patrimonialism and the continuing pathological nature of the relationship with the West (US) condemn the rise of democratic Islam in Turkey and Southeastern Asia to be the exception, not the rule, at least for a short or medium term. The only promising case is Iran where the enemy is no longer pseudo-modernity but pseudo- tradition.

The place of religion in modern society has always been contentious, as the recent history of Western countries shows. The peripheral status of Muslim countries in the world-system makes this problem more acute. The central thesis of this dissertation is that in a democratic setting this conflict can be less harmful to the socio-political health of a society. It remains to be seen whether Muslim (mostly Arab) countries will be able to learn this lesson without paying a very high price. After all, barbarians do not have to come. They are our own creatures.

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