USING ISLAM AS POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

Turkey in Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Questioning the classical secularization thesis, this article addresses the use of Islam as political ideology in Turkey and attempts to identify the historical conditions under which this role has varied. More generally, assessing the internal tensions of post-colonial nationalism, the article places the recent popularity of religious politics within the context of challenges raised against the global project of modernization. The article argues that while 19th-century Islamism in Turkey was a prelude to the project of westernization, present-day Islamism is a manifestation of the predicament of this project.

Key Words ◇ Kemalism ◇ nationalism ◇ Ottoman Empire ◇ political Islam ◇ postmodernism ◇ secularization ◇ Turkey ◇ westernization

Introduction

Social scientists still widely believe that modernization leads to secularization. In this framework, the global history of 'modernization' is considered to have demonstrated a declining religiosity. But the rise of political Islam presents a puzzle to adherents of this belief. Framing the question of Islamist politics in terms of rising or declining religiosity poses a specific challenge: to explain why religion did not go away. Typical responses to this challenge have taken the form of either claiming Islam's incongruency with modernization theory, due to its presumed specificity, or citing Turkey as a good example of the positive effects of western impact.

In the former approach it is claimed that the secularization thesis is valid for western (Christian), but not for Muslim societies, because religion and politics are inseparable in Islam. Islamists seem to be in agreement with the

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'orientalist' perspective on this point, and both suffer from similar weaknesses of explanation. Undoubtedly, religion and the conception of a social order are connected. But this has also historically been true for Christianity and Judaism as well as other, non-monotheistic, religions. To claim that a close relationship between religion and politics is only true for Islam reflects the untenable assumption that Muslim societies have an unchangeable essence. Essentialist contrasts such as this lead to the more absolute generalization that Islam and the West are fundamentally opposed and that, therefore, the recent rise of Islamism is but a continuation of the age-old conflict between the two civilizations.[1]

Those who cite Turkey as a good example of secularization actually agree with the assumption of an essential difference between Islam and the West. They suggest that, therefore, secularism in Turkey was introduced and imposed by the state from above, while people at the grassroots level were resisting. But they also add that such resistance is bound to disappear with further urbanization and industrialization (for some recent examples, see Balım et al., 1995; Tapper, 1991). The radicalism of Turkish state secularism is thereby attributed, again, to the specificity of Muslim society. But this reasoning cannot account for Turkey's similarities with the radical anticlericalism of, for instance, Mexican nationalism (for a comparative perspective on secularism, see Keddie, 1997). Moreover, theoretical consistency demands that Turkey must be seen as an exception among Muslim countries for having achieved secularization. As Ernest Gellner (1997: 233) puts it, 'Islam is unique among world religions, and Turkey is unique within the Muslim world' (see also Gellner, 1994: 199–200).

Yet, Turkey too has been experiencing a formidable challenge to its westernist/secularist tradition in recent years. Current experience with political Islam is a historically new phenomenon. The theoretical frameworks criticized above cannot answer the obvious historical question of why the essential difference between Christian and Muslim civilizations came to be manifested at the present time in the way that it did.

Framing the question not as one of religiosity but as one of politics would lead to an alternative approach. If religion-based movements were examined as social and political phenomena calling for a historical explanation, then rising or declining religiosity would be perceived as expressions of political struggles. Quite apart from being a religion, Islam in this context represents an 'ideology' in the service of a political movement. An unambiguous expression of this situation may be found in the words of a prominent intellectual leader of Islamism, Ali Shari'ati (1981: 65), where he describes Islam as a political ideology on a par with Marxism: 'Islam and Marxism . . . are two ideologies that embrace every dimension of human life and thought . . . [and which] completely contradict each other in their ontologies and cosmologies.'

This is not the first time that Islam has been treated as an ideology for a

political project. One of the first systematic attempts to turn Islam into a political ideology was in the work of Islamic modernists (or reformists). Identified in the Turkish context with the Young Ottomans of the late 19th century, Islamic modernism was a major episode transforming the tenets of a faith into an ideology in order to legitimize a modernist political project. This episode laid the groundwork for the political practices of Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876–1909).

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other leaders of the Turkish national revolution sought to bring Islam under state control in order to pursue their alternative project of westernization. This project resulted in the suppression of Islam as ideology and of local Islamic community organizations as sites of political opposition. Yet Kemalist nationalism is currently being challenged in Turkey. There is renewed interest in Islam as an alternative political ideology to Kemalism. This paper argues that contemporary political Islam has emerged in the context of the global crisis of modernism and secular nationalism. In the 19th century Islamism was a prelude to the project of westernization; present-day Islamism is a manifestation of the predicament of this project.

Islamist Modernization: Young Ottomans

An important turning point in the transformation of the patrimonial Ottoman Empire into a modern state was the declaration of Tanzimat reforms in 1839. The Tanzimat charter proclaimed a new order by instituting private property and by declaring the equality of all subjects of the empire before the law without regard to ethnicity or religion. Together with Tanzimat, a centrally regulated set of impersonal and universal rules began to replace the traditional and customary relations of power. The process thus started was further developed by the Reform Edict of 1856 which elaborated the forms of Muslim/non-Muslim equality in such matters as taxation, military service and public employment (see Findley, 1980; Karpat, 1972).

The transformation of the Ottoman Empire took place under the economic, political and ideological influence of western capitalism. On the one hand, paralleling the rise of territorial nationalisms in Western Europe, Tanzimat reforms engendered an effort on the part of the imperial bureaucracy to create an ideology of unity. Hence a policy of 'Ottomanism', based on the notion of the 'Ottoman nation', was promoted in an attempt to develop an identity of territorial nationhood between the multiplicity of religious and ethnic groups. Originally, the identity of the Ottoman Empire was Islamic, and the mediating institutions in the exercise of power were primarily religious. The numerous ethnic communities (*millet*) were formally incorporated into the central government through their religious

leadership. By contrast, Ottomanism was an attempt to redefine the state so as to command the allegiance of all people living in the Ottoman territories, regardless of religion and ethnicity (Davison, 1977; Karpat, 1982; Kayalı, 1997; Kushner, 1977).

On the other hand, however, the corrosive effects of economic peripheralization encouraged separatist movements in the non-Muslim provinces of the empire. The impact of western imperialism had intensified the differences between ethnic and religious groups. An ethnic division of labour had been created wherein Muslims controlled the countryside, while commerce and industry were dominated by non-Muslims. European business interests favoured non-Muslim minorities as trading partners (Issawi, 1982). Material conflicts of interest among these groups overrode the attempts at unification by the Ottoman state, which was also externally weakened in the network of inter-state relations. Material conflicts within the Ottoman Empire thus began to be articulated in ethnic and religious terms.

The attempt to promote an ideology of territorial unity had been unsuccessful. Moreover, while a principle of equality was being advanced, the Ottoman government was also being forced to extend special privileges, such as tax exemptions, to those Christian subjects that were placed under the protection of European governments, in accordance with various capitulation agreements. Since property was still incompletely secure in the Ottoman Empire, and wealth was subject to confiscation at any time, winning security for their domestic trading partners was a priority for European capital. Thus, European powers were eager to acquire from the Ottoman state special protection for the non-Muslim commercial bourgeoisie. Consequently, the policy of Ottomanism did not necessarily lead to a greater sense of loyalty to the Ottoman state on the part of the non-Muslim elements of the empire. Indeed, because most of these 'modernizing reforms' were being imposed from outside, non-Muslim loyalties tended towards the European states. If need be, in other words, non-Muslim elements could seek protection from foreign powers instead of their own government (Davison, 1977: 41; Issawi, 1982: 273; Kayalı, 1997: 18–19).

Young Ottoman thought emerged in this historical context. While on the one hand it voiced the Islamist reaction, on the other hand it also shared with Tanzimat reformers the goal of modernization. Islamist reaction originated particularly in response to the 1856 Reform Edict that granted formal equality between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the empire. This was rightly discerned by Muslim public opinion as an outcome of foreign intervention to the once-mighty empire. Moreover, the Young Ottomans protested that, although the edict formally declared equality, it granted certain privileges to non-Muslims in its implementation. This was the case more in perception than in reality. The Young Ottomans were thereby giving voice to the sentiments of a group of people who were

complaining because of the loss of their previous position of status superiority (Mardin, 1962: 36–7, 163; Türköne, 1991: 60–70; see also İslamoğlu-İnan, 1987). Thus, far from creating solidarity between religious groups around the ideal of Ottomanism, 'the secularizing Tanzimat policies in fact contributed to an overarching Muslim collective identity' (Kayalı, 1997: 207).

But the Young Ottomans were not actually opposed to the 'modernization' of the empire. They were reacting to Tanzimat statesmen for failing to provide an ideology to justify their institutional innovations by reference to a higher ethical or philosophical principle than the simple criterion of efficiency (Mardin, 1962: 118). They attempted to fill the gap by proposing a justification for institutional modernization 'in terms of Islamic political tradition and Ottoman principles of government' (Karpat, 1972: 262). The Young Ottomans saw Islam as the primary factor of social cohesion among the Muslim population. Hence, they used Islamic idiom to articulate ideas that originated in the West and that they believed should be imported. They presented such ideas as 'freedom', 'constitutional rule', 'democracy', 'parliament' and 'public opinion' in terms of Islamic principles. Going beyond political institutions, the Young Ottomans also took philosophical principles from western thought and adapted them to Islam. They attempted to reconcile religious doctrine with rational human action. They introduced ideas in favour of the 19th-century European dogma of 'progress' in terms of Islamic belief (Türköne, 1991: 27–9, 77–87, 99, 102).

Islam in Young Ottoman thought thus constituted the ideological dimension of a political project. In this sense, the Young Ottomans were among the first 'modern intellectuals' of the Muslim world. Because the Tanzimat statesmen could not legitimize their reforms by any coherent ideology, the Young Ottomans met an intellectual need. Although they were motivated by opposition to the Tanzimat reformers and aimed to mount that opposition by voicing what they perceived as the sentiments of the Muslim segment of the Ottoman population, they too were inspired by western ideas and were in favour of modernization. The novelty of Young Ottoman thought was to come to terms with these westernizing reforms from an Islamic perspective. In this way, perhaps paradoxically, they served as midwives for further reform and modernization of the state (see Choueiri, 1990).

Their paradoxical impact may be seen in the policies of Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876–1909), who was a fervent modernizer of the Ottoman state yet reviled as a reactionary by the secular modernizers of the Republican era. The reason that Abdulhamid was portrayed by Kemalist historiography as 'reactionary' was his ideological identification with Islamism. This characterization is misleading because he was following in the footsteps of his predecessors. As Selim Deringil (1991: 347) observes, 'Contrary to popular wisdom, the sultan, despite his suspicion of the West, did not turn his back on the Tanzimat.' Many of the bureaucratic

institutions of republican Turkey were founded during Abdulhamid's reign. The sultan was in effect implementing the model proposed by the Young Ottomans—he was using Islam to legitimize westernist modernization. Again in Deringil's (1993: 5–6) words, 'Although the state spoke the political language of Islam, it was in fact implementing the concrete policy of a rational secular programme' (see also Findley, 1980: 240–79; Kasaba, 1988: 108–9; Mortimer, 1982: 107–8). The Young Ottomans had aimed to bridge the gap created by the Tanzimat reformers between modernization and Islam. Under Abdulhamid, 'modernization' and 'westernization' were no longer identical.[2]

Abdulhamid's Islamism was a state ideology, and as such it was 'in many ways a new creation' (Deringil, 1993: 12; see also Deringil, 1991: 346; Kayalı, 1997: 30–8). It was an instrument to legitimize his power. By the late 19th century the Ottoman Empire was falling apart, and Ottomanism, designed to glue the empire together, had failed. The 1877–8 war with Russia had ended in defeat and loss of territory in the Balkans, together with most of the Christian population of the empire. The Arab provinces had been largely ignored until then. Now, they could be turned to for further extraction of economic resources. There was also the urge 'to create a viable basis of social solidarity for the state's survival' (Akarlı, 1986: 75). It was clear to Abdulhamid that, due to their protection by foreign powers, many non-Muslim subjects of the empire did not feel bound by loyalty to the Ottoman government. Muslim subjects, however, were considered loyal because of their religion. Hence, he concluded, Islam could become a vehicle for restrengthening the social foundation of the weakening state and would unite the Turkish and Arab populations. Consequently, the Arab presence in the Ottoman government was visibly increased during Abdulhamid's reign (Akarlı, 1986: 76–7; Kayalı, 1997).

The notion of pan-Islamism grew out of this trend. It was during this time frame that the title of caliphate was reasserted for political purposes (Kayalı, 1997: 31–3; Türköne, 1991: 191). There was concern about the weakening of the Ottoman government vis-à-vis foreign powers and its consequent loss of prestige in the eyes of its own subjects. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 provided Britain passage to the Indian Ocean from the Mediterranean, after which point gaining direct control over Egypt became more important to Britain than supporting the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire (Pamuk, 1987: 78). Unified Germany emerged as a new potentially imperialist power in 1871. Britain and France had begun to occupy and claim parts of the Ottoman Empire in those years, pushing the Ottoman government into closer relationship with Germany (Davison, 1968: 94–5). Germany appeared to be willing to endorse the anti-western sentiment expressed by Ottoman Islamism and eagerly recognized the title of 'caliphate'. There were also widespread expectations from, and support for, the Ottoman Empire from among other Muslim populations around the

world, most of which were under direct or indirect colonial rule by European powers.

Pan-Islamism was not a successful project. Abdulhamid could never actually help the Muslim populations under colonial rule, but domestically he was able to keep 'what remained of the empire together for 30-odd years' (Deringil, 1991: 354). Although Abdulhamid was successful in including the Arab subjects of the empire into the realm of state power, it was impossible to win or retain the loyalty of the non-Muslim subjects of the empire on the basis of an Islamist ideology. In the long run, the modernization of the state, involving the notion of equality between subjects with different religious affiliations, proved incompatible with Islamist ideology.[3]

Nationalist Modernization: Kemalism

A sense of Turkish identity and nationalist consciousness began to take shape for the first time around the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. It became a serious ideological option when the other Muslim groups (i.e. Arabs and Albanians) also proved separatist. As Ziya Gökalp (1959: 72) has remarked:

> The ideal of nationalism appeared first among the non-Muslims, then among the Albanians and Arabs, and finally among the Turks. The fact that it appeared last among the Turks was not accidental: the Ottoman state was formed by the Turks themselves. (See also Kayalı, 1997.)

Like the initial rise of Islamic consciousness, the rise of Turkish nationalist consciousness too was an expression of Ottoman reaction to disempowerment vis-à-vis European imperialism. The domestic policy associated with this new ideological trend was a systematic attempt to replace the non-Muslim bourgeoisie with the Muslim and Turkish elements of the population. This policy first started under the Young Turk regime of 1908–18 and was finally completed by the end of the Turkish War of Liberation, 1919–22. The class base of the Liberation War was principally composed of Muslim landowners and the newly emerging Muslim commercial bourgeoisie (Ahmad, 1984; Keyder, 1987).

Kemalist ideology presents Turkish nationalism as a territorial identity. In the official definition Turkey was a geographical concept and the Turkish people were those living within that territory (Karal, 1981). This was, in principle, different from both the Islamist and the ethnic/racial models of nationalism, and was much closer to the original Ottoman nationalism. But both in state practices and popular-cultural assumptions, a 'Turk' preferably spoke Turkish and was a Sunni Muslim (Kirişçi, 2000). Thus, the Kemalist version of Turkish nationalism was an updated variant of the earlier notion of Ottoman nationalism, now made possible by the expulsion

of the non-Muslim elements from the territory defined as Turkey.[4] Similarly, although in one sense Sultan Abdulhamid's Islamism and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's radical secularism were polar opposites, in another sense they were variations on the same theme. The Kemalist construction of the 'Turkish nation' was the culmination of the search by a multi-ethnic state for a unified identity.

Kemalism also presents the creation of the Turkish Republic as a complete rupture with the Ottoman Empire, although of course the rise of the nation state was a direct descendant of 19th-century Ottoman modernization. But the novelty of the Kemalist revolution lay in its reconstruction of the legitimacy of state power through the ideology of Turkish nationalism (Mardin, 1981). Kemalist nationalism was simultaneously 'anti-imperialist' and 'pro-western'. In Kemalist ideology, Turkey could only defeat western imperialism by adopting westernization. According to Kemalism, modern Turkey had to sever all ties with the Ottoman past because the Ottoman state was an instrument of imperialist powers. Hence, Kemalism presents the break with the Ottoman past as an anti-imperialistic act (see Karal, 1981).

One of the major goals of the Kemalist revolution was to rescue Islam 'from the position of a political instrument' (Ahmad, 1993: 54). Islam was seen as a political threat by the Kemalists and brought under the control of the secular state. The Islamic pillars of political power were demolished after the Turkish Republic was formally proclaimed in 1923. In March 1924, the caliphate was abolished, and all members of the Ottoman dynasty were banished from the country. The Constitution of April 1924 stated that sovereignty belonged to the nation. The same Constitution originally stated that the religion of the nation was Islam, but this clause was struck out in 1928.

The year 1925, marked by the Shaikh Said rebellion, was a critical turning point in the history of the Kemalist regime. The rebellion, and its quick and forceful suppression, revealed the regime's perception of an intimate connection between the Kurdish and Islamic threats to its own stability (Olson, 1989; Tunçay, 1981; van Bruinessen, 1992). The incident prompted the government to accelerate its move towards further secularization and the consolidation of Turkish nationalism. Many of the 'modernizing reforms' were legislated after this incident. In the following months (1925–6), the Swiss Civil Code and the Italian Penal Code were adopted, the Dress and Headgear Law and the Alphabet Law were passed, and all religious orders, lodges and shrines were closed down and outlawed (see Keddie, 1997: 31–2; Toprak, 1981). The Kemalist revolution thus transformed the state from an Islamic empire to a national state, and its legimitizing ideology from Islam to nationalism. The question of identity raised at the inception of the Turkish Republic was now answered: Turkey was a unified nation aspiring to achieve western civilization.

Kemalist leadership declared the national goal to be the achievement of 'contemporary civilization'. But, unlike Ziya Gökalp (1959), who proposed a synthesis between 'local culture' and 'universal civilization', Kemalists saw the former as an obstacle to the latter (Davison, 1995, 1998; Toprak, 1981). In the minds of the Kemalist leadership, and of Mustafa Kemal himself, modernization meant westernization. In so far as they saw Islam as an obstacle to the achievement of 'contemporary civilization', in so far, that is, as Islam was considered to represent 'a set of traditions, values, legal rules, and norms which were intrinsically non-Western in character, it clashed with the Kemalist version of a modern nation-state' (Toprak, 1981: 40; see also Oran, 1988: 135–40).

But the Kemalist mode of coming to terms with western civilization in some ways closely resembled the Islamic reformist mode. In both ideologies the goal was to combine universalism with particularistic essentialism. The primary concern of the 19th-century Islamists was the challenge presented by western civilization and its perceived superiority in military, economic and political arenas. Islamic reformism was guided by an effort to 'catch up'. The questions addressed were those raised by the West (Türköne, 1991: 48–50). This was also true for Kemalist nationalism. Islamic reformism served to legitimize the adoption of western institutions through a reinterpretation of Islam and aimed to justify the modernization of the state in terms of Islamic principles. Islamic modernists claimed that tenets of Western civilization have really originated from (or could easily be found in) Islam in order to legitimize 'westernization' as a reappropriation of what truly belonged to the Muslims (Kayalı, 1997: 36). For example, the Young Ottomans contended that 'European representative institutions had existed for all times in Islam' (Mardin, 1962: 249). A similar sort of mythology can be found in Kemalist nationalism: that the origin of the entire humankind and its various cultures and languages is Turkish.

In a way similar to Islamic modernism, then, some seemingly extreme theses of official Kemalist historiography served to justify westernization in terms of the (imagined) authentic, yet definitely pre-Islamic, Turkish character. The Turkish Institute for Historical Research, created with government mandate in 1930, put forward the thesis that Turks had to leave their original home in Central Asia due to climatic changes and, by doing so, spread their civilization all over the world. Also in the 1930s, the Turkish Language Institute tried to demonstrate that all languages of the world derived from the original Turkish spoken in Central Asia. Both of these theses became standard material in high school curricula and textbooks (Copeaux, 1998: 39–53; Oran, 1988: 155–9).

Putting forward these theses was actually an attempt to resolve an internal contradiction (Oran, 1988: 215–22). This internal tension is quite possibly a common feature of all Third World nationalisms, and is in turn generated by the internal contradictions of eurocentrism. The duality

between the West and 'the rest' proposed by eurocentric ideology is in contradiction with the universalistic claims and ambitions of capitalism. Capitalism itself simultaneously unifies and divides the world. It has pretensions of homogenizing the world, but instead generates uneven development. This internal contradiction is reflected in western culture, which is both universalist and relativist at the same time (Amin, 1989). Third World people are told to emulate the West while they are simultaneously described as inherently incapable of accomplishing this. Third World nationalism, too, is internally contradictory because it is simultaneously universalistic and relativistic. It borrows from the West what is billed as a universal model, that is, the nation state, but it does so by legitimizing it through the assertion of a particular authentic identity.

The confused eurocentric claim elicits a similarly confused response. What is a Third World nationalist to do, whose project it is to attempt to replicate the western model, but also retain a measure of self-respect and presumed authenticity? What is the right dosage of combining these elements? Obviously, the answer has varied from case to case. Kemalist nationalism chose a risky course. It claimed to have severed all ties with the Islamic and Ottoman past (although of course it had not), opted to join wholesale that mythical 'universal civilization' thought to be exemplified by the equally idealized Western European experience, and yet asserted that this civilization was not an alien imposition.

Turkey (like the rest of the Third World) was unable to replicate the western experience. This was not an indication of any inherent deficiency of the Turkish nation, as the eurocentric perspective would have it, but simply an outcome of the uneven global structure of capitalism. Yet it was the failure of nationalist assumptions, and of the project of replicating the western experience, that set the stage for the emergence of post-nationalist critiques of western domination, which included a new variant of Islamism that rejected both Kemalism and Islamist modernism.

Islamist Challenge to Kemalist Modernization

For the most part, Islamist opposition during the hegemonic period of Kemalism shared the same modernist assumptions. Concerns were similar: how to modernize? The path offered, however, was an *alternative* to secular nationalism. In the Islamic modernist view, unlike the rigid interpretations of Kemalist secularism that advocated the suppression of Islam, Muslim societies were perfectly capable of modernization.

The views propagated by the National Salvation Party (NSP), the popular Islamist political party of the 1970s, are a good example. NSP was the predecessor of the controversial Welfare (Refah) Party of the 1990s and was likewise led by Necmettin Erbakan, who was a professor of mechanical

engineering at Istanbul Technical University at the time that he entered politics. Always proud of his Islamic heritage *and* technical training, Erbakan, a reportedly very popular lecturer at the university, has repeatedly asserted, through the years of his public presence, that western technology could be traced back to the Muslim world between the 7th and 14th centuries, and quipped that were 'we' (i.e. the Muslim world) to charge the West for our intellectual property rights, 'they' would surely go bankrupt. This sort of assertion is typical of modernist Islamism that claims western technology and institutions as originally Islamic, with the obvious implication that accepting them does not violate authenticity. As Binnaz Toprak (1984: 123, 127) has observed, 'like the Islamists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the NSP saw no correlation between Western civilization and technology' and, hence, rejected 'the definition of modernization as synonymous with westernization'.

Despite its opposition to the core tenets of Kemalism, this idea was not completely alien to mainstream political culture. It has already been indicated that there was an element of ambiguity in the Kemalist definition of the Turkish nation. Although Kemalists rejected Islam as a civilizational project, they still imagined the Turkish nation as Muslim. Thus, after the first several decades of the republic, when the regime had fully been established, there was a tendency towards the incorporation of Islam into the legitimizing ideology of political power (see Sakallıoğlu, 1996). In the same process, also, the Turkish history and language theses, summarized above, began to lose their official sanction and popularity (Copeaux, 1998). The ambiguity was never resolved, until the conflict between the Kemalist and the Islamist imaginings of modernity came to a head in recent years. Erbakan's Welfare Party was elected to power in 1996, but within a year was driven out by the staunchly Kemalist military and subsequently closed down for violation of the constitution (Gülalp, 1999).

In order to interpret the rise of this conflict in the 1990s, we need to include into the analysis a new strand of Islamist critique, which goes beyond offering an alternative identity for modernization and actually rejects the project of modernization itself. This new brand of Islamism was marked by the unprecedented popularity of a group of Islamist writers that emerged in the 1980s. Ruşen Çakır (1990) credits İsmet Özel's book, *Üç Mesele: Teknik, Medeniyet ve Yabancilaşma* (Three Problems: Technology, Civilization and Alienation), first published in 1978, as the pioneer of this literature. Çakır (1990: 252–3) points out that, until the publication of this book,

> . . . the goal of Muslim intellectuals in Turkey was to reach the level of contemporary civilization, and even to surpass it in order to settle accounts with the West, without 'compromising' their religion. For the first time with Özel's book, however, not the procedure but the essence of modernism began to be questioned . . .

No doubt, there was always a strand of Islamism that rejected modernity and technology, during the hegemonic period of Islamic modernism and of Kemalism; but it was a reclusive and reactionary current of thought, which never gained much popularity. By contrast, this new literature not only proliferated in the Islamist wing, but actually sparked a debate on rejecting modernization that came to dominate the Turkish intellectual landscape during much of the 1980s and 1990s (for some early accounts of this new Islamist literature, see Meeker, 1991; Toprak, 1993). I have elsewhere argued that this was the outcome of what might be called the 'postmodern condition' (Gülalp, 1995, 1997). In other words, the 'universal' civilization to which Turkey always aspired began to be questioned at the global level in recent years and exposed as western particularism. The project of imitating the West was globally discredited and the idea of returning to 'authentic culture' acquired more appeal. The critique of modernity no longer appeared as backward-looking nostalgia; on the contrary, assertions of authenticity were now received as welcome challenges to western hegemony.

What made the Welfare Party, the Islamist political party of the 1990s, such a formidable challenge was the union of the two strands of Islamism in one political movement—the strand that proposed an alternative path to Kemalist modernization and the strand that rejected Kemalism because it rejected modernization altogether. Their unstable union in one political movement, promising different (sometimes contradictory) things to different segments of society, was made possible by their common opposition to Kemalism, taking advantage of the rising challenges against Kemalism in the context of globalization and the weakening of the developmentalist and welfare functions of the nation state (Gülalp, 2001).

Kemalism's crisis was part and parcel of a global trend. As Gyan Prakash (1994: 1475) notes, 'neither nationalism nor Marxism broke free from Eurocentric discourses'; they both universalized Europe's historical experience and 'staked a claim to the order of Reason and Progress instituted by colonialism'. Both Kemalism and the revolutionary left in Turkey were in agreement on the virtues of statism and development, which, in turn, meant 'progress' and the attainment of 'civilization'. But western civilization is now being deconstructed as a provincial culture, and modernization as a hegemonic project (see e.g. Chakrabarty, 2000; Escobar, 1995). Previously, the most radical response to imperialism was nationalism, and the most radical response to capitalism was Marxism. Now both of these responses are dubbed as modernist—hence outdated.

It was in this context that the Islamist response thrived. Kemalists considered western civilization a 'universal' model. They took the universalist assertions of western imperialism seriously and were oblivious to their provincial origins. For the contemporary Islamists, however, nationalism is ultimately a western ideology, and its adoption by the post-colonial world

in the 20th century amounted to a rejection of the authentic self. Islamism, they argue, is more genuinely nativist and therefore more radically and thoroughly anti-imperialist.

Several examples from the work of the prominent Islamist Ali Bulaç may illustrate these points. He criticizes modernization with the following words (1991: 38):

> . . . the notion of modernization shoved down the throats of underdeveloped societies under the heavy barrage of the media and of political discourse holds out the illusory promises of modernism, progress, development, welfare, catching up with contemporary civilization, and so on, and ruthlessly leads people to consumerism and corruption; but what it really offers these people is hardship, deprivation, sacrifice, inflation, belt-tightening, and so on, resulting in oppression, desperation and conflict.

According to Bulaç (1991: 228), nationalism is a materialist ideology and directly linked with the question of development. Elsewhere, Bulaç (1995: 201) points out that in this age of globalization, when the whole world is being restructured, a big question is 'how much longer the nation-states, relying on the notion of military and economic independence, can maintain their structures inherited from the last century'. Paralleling Samuel Huntington's notorious thesis, Bulaç (1995: 214) states: 'It is reasonable to expect that in the future the world will evolve towards a tri-polar division between Christianity/secularism, Confucianism/Buddhism and Islam.' Thus, while Islamic reformism of the 19th century (as well as, one might add, modernist Islamism of the 20th century) 'aimed at bridging the gap between European supremacy and Islamic culture so as to amalgamate both in one single unit of civilization' (Choueiri, 1990: 69), the contemporary Islamist critique of modernity aims to reject European civilization because it is not in any way superior. While Islamic reformists were in favour of the Enlightenment, the new Islamists are opposed to it. The Young Ottomans were particularly influenced by the European notion of 'progress' (Mardin, 1962: 319). By contrast, new Islamists reject the idea of 'progress' as an outdated and misguided western dogma.

Conclusion

Islamism, then, ought to be studied not as an instance of rising religiosity alone (although that certainly is an important part of the decline of modernism), but also as an ideology to legitimize political struggle. This was as true in the 19th century, when Islamism arose in the Ottoman Empire, as it has been at the end of the 20th century. The rise of Islamism in the Ottoman Empire was due less to the peculiarity of state–religion relations in Islam, as is usually held by the orientalists, than to the legitimation needs of the state in response to economic, social and political changes taking place at the time. This period was followed by the dominance of nationalism. During

that period, too, state–religion relations were determined primarily by the use of Islam as political ideology rather than the peculiarities of the Islamic religion. At the present time, Islamism has re-emerged to legitimize a post-nationalist politics of identity.

Islamic reformism of the 19th century reinterpreted Islam to facilitate the adoption of western institutions and ideologies. This was a contradictory process. It culminated in the denial and suppression of Islam as politics and culture. In retrospect, Islamic reformism was a movement of compromise and an abandonment of cultural and political authenticity. Ultimately, it paved the way for the adoption of nationalism and the nation state form of political organization. The current period of the rise of Islamist ideology as a tool of political mobilization took place after a whole stage of modernist politics and the construction of nation states along the lines of the western model. But when western civilization itself fell into question, and all its modernist dogmas, such as statism, developmentalism, rationality and progress began to be challenged, the political mode of adopting western civilization in the post-colonial world, i.e. the secular nation state, began to be questioned as well. If the Third World had failed in its attempt to emulate the West, then what better alternative was there than to go back to the imagined authentic self? If Third World nationalism was an imagined self that did not work, then an alternative form of imagining the self could be found in Islam.

It is interesting to note, finally, that if secular nationalism implied at least a concealed recognition of the superiority of the West and thus the need to imitate its ways, the assertion of an authentic self that is essentially different from the western character inevitably and paradoxically leads to the reproduction of another western dogma—i.e. the dogma of orientalist essentialism. Only, it does so in reverse. The problem, it seems, lies in the still hegemonic position of the West, despite the numerous challenges to its power. With power emanating from the core of the global system, and attracting reactions and resistance to itself, the powerless inevitably have to position and define themselves in relation to this core. Whether in competition with it, or in trying to accommodate to it, or rejecting and withdrawing from it, they still tend to remain within the frame set by the powerful core.

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NOTES

1. See, for example, Gellner, 1981, 1994; Lewis, 1993. For critiques of this perspective, see Ayubi, 1991; Keddie, 1994; Zubaida, 1995. The 'fundamentalist' movements tend to reaffirm in their own discourse this orientalist image of Islam. On this point, see Arkoun (1994: 7, 18–23). Rodinson (1987: 60–1) points out that the notion of an essential eastern civilization 'sealed off' in its own specificity only came into existence in the 19th century and then as a result of specific historical developments. See Amin (1989) on the historical origins of eurocentrism.
2. Karpat, 1972: 262; Choueiri, 1990: 39. There was, of course, an important difference between the Young Ottomans and Abdulhamid. The Young Ottomans were liberal and they supported constitutionalism. Abdulhamid was brought to the throne by a coup in 1876, on the promise that he would put a constitution into effect. The most important novelty in the 1876 Constitution was the creation of a parliament. But the parliament, which had its first session in 1877, was prorogued by Abdulhamid in 1878. Although the sultan's prorogation of the parliament was not unconstitutional, the parliament did not reconvene for the next 30 years until the Young Turk coup of 1908. See Devereux, 1963: 236–49. According to Mardin (1962: 403) the Young Ottomans should be credited for the proclamation of the constitution 'the genesis of which owed something to their propaganda and the substance of which incorporated some of their ideas'. He adds that they helped establish the 'belief that Sultan Abdulhamid had perpetrated a crime in suspending it. It is this belief, which would not have been widely held before the appearance of the Young Ottomans, which fed the underground opposition to the sultan between 1878 and 1908.'
3. See Sonn, 1987: 285–6: 'Religiously legitimized government is suitable for a theoretically universal political entity, i.e., an empire. . . . [W]here God was seen as the foundation of all morality, expansion of frontiers was not only legitimate, but an ethical imperative'. The modern nation state, however, is a territorially circumscribed entity and its legitimacy derives from its power within its boundaries. Citizenship in the modern state is determined by territory and individual members of that territorial community have to be accepted as equals regardless of their religious affiliations. See also Sonn, 1990.
4. In 1920, during the War of Liberation, Mustafa Kemal was referring to the people of Anatolia not as Turks but as a mosaic of ethnicities united by Islam: '[they] are not just Turk or Circassian, Kurd or Laz. They are composed of all the Islamic elements and constitute a coherent whole.' In 1922, however, after the war was won, Mustafa Kemal began to speak of the 'people of Turkey, unified by race, religion, and culture'. See *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, Cilt 1* (Ankara: Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1990: 74 and 236). See also Yerasimos, 1987: 69.

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