

THE CHANGING POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

Burhan AYKAÇ^a, Şenol DURGUN^a

- a. Lecturer, Prof. Dr., Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Gelisim University

Corresponding Author:

Prof. Dr. Şenol Durgun

Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Economics,
Administrative and Social Sciences, Gelisim University

Cihangir Quarter Şehit Jandarma Komando Er Hakan Öner Street. No:1 Avcılar /
İSTANBUL / TURKEY

Email: sendurgun@gmail.com

Phone: 90 212 422 70 00

Fax: 90 212 422 74 01

Mobile: 90 532 220 94 49

¹ Prof. Dr., Faculty of Economics Administrative and Social Sciences, Istanbul Gelişim University

² Prof. Dr., Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Economics Administrative and Social Sciences, Istanbul Gelişim University

THE CHANGING POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

Abstract

This article deals with the Islamist movement and its ideology throughout the process of modernization and analyzes the political discourse of the Islamists about a world of consumption and the Islamic lifestyle. The article depicts the course of the Islamist political discourse from the beginning. The political discourse of the Islamists showed variations depending on the changing domestic and foreign conjunctions. Developed through a defensive understanding in the final period of the Ottoman State, the discourse of the Islamist movement underwent further changes in the following periods, which was influenced by the internal conditions of the country and developments outside. As the Islamist movement has always adapted to modern political life, political and intellectual changes in the modern period caused the Islamist discourse to change politically and acquire an appropriate language for the new situation.

Keywords: The Islamist Movement, Nation-state, Political Discourse, New Liberalism, Post Modernism, Islamist Discourse

Introduction

The Islamist movement refers to the sum of the intellectual and practical attitudes adopted by Muslims living in the modern world. Thus, it is the history of searching for new ways, which started with *opposing* modernity and arrived at developing an eclectic system with it. The Islamist movement has gone through three succeeding and complementary phases. The first, covered the second half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th, when the Islamists were in a defensive position vis a vis the West. Holding a defensive discourse in this phase brought about the argument that Islam may go well with certain Western values (Harputlu, 2002:24). That is, scholars in the first period thought that Western science and technology were not in conflict with Islam; on the contrary, they may very well be in accord with Islam. However, Islamists in the first

phase also emphasized that there was an enormous gap between the West and the Muslim world in terms of culture, morality, beliefs and so forth. The striking feature of this phase was that the Ottoman state was in decline (Eliacıık, 2002:24).

The second phase was about *creating a state* rather than saving it. In that phase, we see a persistent laicist imposition that Islam should stay out of politics and be imprisoned in conscience of each individual. In reaction to this, Muslims put forward that Islam was both a political and a worldly religion with a lot to say about state administration and thus it could not be limited to metaphysical matters in the conscience. It was further claimed that Muslim communities should take action against the large-scale invasion and looting by setting up such organizations as political parties, associations, and communities (Jamaat). It was regarded as a duty to bring down cruel governments by riots and rebellious movements when necessary to establish the *Islamic government*.

The third phase focused on *what is the state* rather than *saving the state* or *creating a state*. Especially after the 1990s, the question *what should the state be like* became prominent. Just as the problems created by modernity were produced by a modern perception, so were the solutions to such problems (Eliacıık, 2002:40). Therefore, radicalism transformed itself into realism and discussions about methods became insignificant. Thus, the goal became the most important point. This study deals with the analysis of the Islamist movement with a historical perspective based on the resources used in Islamist political discourse.

1. The Islamist Discourse in The Ottoman Era

The Islamist movement in the Ottoman Era can be analyzed under two titles: the early period and the Constitutional Period. The existing conception of religion was problematic in the early period. Islamist understanding manifested itself in the fact that Islam was forced out of the social life, the public sphere, the law, and the administration. The scholars of the time started to look for ways to halt the decline. They named their efforts *ihya* (restoration), *tecdid* (renewal), and *islah* (reformation) (Büyükkara, 2015:22). In this way, they aimed to revisit the religion and *adjust it to the age*. As a matter of fact, the first issue to discuss was *returning to the original sources to redefine Islam* because *it was not Islam that people claim to live and people went far away from the original Islam*. To do this, scholars claimed, it was necessary to turn to the period of the Messenger Muhammed (Asr-ı Saadet). Among the general arguments of the Islamist movement in this period

were the return to the *Quran and Sunnah*, that the traditional beliefs of the public full of superstitions and *bid'ah* served as a barrier to the development and there were no Islamic arguments against progress, all of which paved the way for capitalism to make its way into Muslim countries (Tantik, 2014: 55).

The second understanding of the Islamist movement in the Ottoman Period was Islamism in the Constitutional Period, when the Islamists came up with new demands, searching for a *compromise with Western civilization*. They frequently focused on the worldly aspects of western civilization and supported adopting *the West's techniques* and *Islamized* the capitalist forms of relationships so that they could be accepted by Muslims. In a sense, the Islamist movement in the Constitutional period can be seen as an effort to realize the first steps of integration with the West by promoting the idea of adopting the West's techniques (Eligür, 2010). However, the anti-Westernist attitude was symbolic rather than being fundamentally based on Islamic foundations. Here emerges the reference point of Islamic thought in the Constitutional Period. Certain clichés and frequently repeated voices were used to preserve the holiness of Islam as a religion. Among these were “it was Muslims, not Islam that should be accused”, “religion and religious understanding should be clearly distinguished”, “the requirements of the period need to be considered”, “Muslims should be united in solidarity”, and “imitation and interpretation” (Yıldırım, 2013:23). Briefly, the Islamists in the constitutional period were busy with weighing up both the good and bad aspects of *how they fell behind western civilization*. In this period, the conception of the West was transformed from Christianity, an abrogated religion by Islam, to techniques and technology, and the West was regarded as the representative of the *shared heresy of humanity*. Consequently, such ideas and arguments as “synthesizing capitalism with religion”, “modernizing by remaining Muslim”, “combining being rich with being a devotee”, “adopting the techniques of the West but not its culture” were extensively accepted in this period (Lewis, 2010:63).

2. The Islamist Discourse in the Republican Era

a. The Islamist Movement until 1960

This era can be categorized into a one-party period and a multi-party period. A clear-cut distinction between Westernism and Islamism came out in the one-party period. Superstition and *bid'ah* as additions to the Islamic thought from outside of Islam were thought to play a major role

in the underdevelopment of Muslims in the Ottoman period. With the establishment of the republic, these issues were considered as the grounds for eliminating the effects of Islam in all spheres of life. In this way, Kemalism eradicated the far-reaching effects of Islam on life as a whole, including politics, law, economy, literacy and education. Thus, due to the laicist practices of the Republic, the Islamic movement lost its position as the most influential political movement originating in the final period of the Ottoman state and started to be dormant until the second half of the 1940s, during which time the Islamist intellectuals dealt mostly with the beliefs, prayers, and morality in Islam to contribute to the protection and development of religious identity within the existing system in reaction to the oppressive attitude of the state. Because of the strict laicist policies, Islamist intellectuals were unable to search for an alternative Islamist political ideology and project, for with the Republic, the discourse of *exploiting religion for politics* was used to parry the Muslims' demands. In this way, Muslims in Turkey were intimidated and were made to feel anxious, concerned and uneasy. In a sense, the intellectual discussions about the Islamic thought and the perception of Islam became *ordinary* in the Kemalist period as a result of the effect of the crude language. Muslims were brought into disrepute through such images as black-bearded, chadored, skull capped, clog wearing, and deviant hodja (Yıldırım, 2013: 35). As all these suggest, *religion as an issue* arose in the country. At the time, the Kemalists were supporting the argument of ideology or civilization versus religion, contrasting Islam with science (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008). Hence, science was made to function like *a religion* as it was thought to have the power to create values, methods, and criteria and the discussions about Islam frequently contained scientific disputes. Consequently, Islam was accused of being *outdated* in the political atmosphere of the time and reduced into a religion of metaphysics. As a matter of fact, the Kemalist state understood Islam as a combination of beliefs and prayer. In this respect, Islam was regarded as a personal belief not as a religion for society (Durgun, 2009:130). Not surprisingly, the Islamist movement in this period focused on criticizing the Kemalist system, responsible for the disadvantaged position of Muslims, and dissolving or destroying the structure formed by the Kemalists.

The discourse of reaction in the 1940s, the strict laicist practices, changing the language of Azan and prayers from Arabic to Turkish brought about the rise of a strong opposition among the Islamists through moralism. During this period, no demands for increasing the influence of Islam in public administration and legal issues were emphasized. What was demanded was to regain the

original forms of the prayers and minimum opportunities for education, which means the redistribution of the lost rights back to *the public*. This continued until World War II.

After World War II, the Islamist movement took a new direction. The shift in the control of the world system, and the struggles during the Cold War period caused Islamism to get in a different lane. In the struggle against communism during the Cold War years, religion became prominent and the idea of a common front by all religions came out, which caused the Islamists to go hand-in-hand with the USA (Örnek, 2015:309). They claimed that the Anglo-Saxon tradition attached more importance to religion than those countries such as France, which adopted radical laicist policies and thus they had a more tolerant attitude towards religion; hence, the Islamists attempted to bring more religious freedom through the USA. As a result, the Islamists publications frequently provided coverages of the importance attached to religion in American society, the interest in the churches and the religious policies of the government. In this respect, in the post war period, the American model of piety was promoted in the context of Islam in Turkey (Örnek, 2015:328). That attitude paved the way for the quick adoption of democracy on the parts of the Islamists in Turkey. However, in the one-party period the Islamists avoided participating in the modern processes for a long time because of the rejection of religion in the public sphere. This position continued until the 1950 elections. After 1950, the Islamists adopted the American way of modernization and searched for a new way within the system (Arslan, 2015:161). Afterwards they started to actively participate in the modern processes. The Islamists of the time interpreted democracy with a *liberal* emphasis and they discussed their demands for religious freedom against political authority. They thought that democracy meant the end of one party practices and that Azan should be performed in Arabic. However, their wish to participate in modern processes was not as strong as their wish for Azan to be performed in Arabic. In fact, Azan and other prayers performed in Arabic, free religious education and Quran instruction were at the top of the list in the Islamists' agenda. The opposition movement performed through secret Quran courses started to change when the Islamists participated in modern processes, which would lead to their secularization after the 1940s (Arslan, 2013:187). Democratic practices were the most important course for the Islamists to become stronger, and enjoy religious freedom and for religious groups to run in their natural course. In this respect, the Islamists' demand for democracy opened up an important area for freedom (Keyman and Gumuscu, 2014).

Concurrently, as the political conjuncture required, after WWII the anti-colonial struggles in the Muslim countries achieved a great deal of success and the struggle for independence in the colonies accelerated, which gave rise to the optimism that the Muslim world would have a bright future. All these developments accelerated the doctrinal transformation. Under such circumstances, the once-popular subject, *Islamic Unification* in the Islamist publications was brought up again (Örnek, 2015:349). However, the conception of Islam developed by the Islamists at the time, who were searching for the intellectual roots of Islam in other Muslim countries, was far from being inclusive. Instead, it was rather exclusive, causing variation in the understandings of Islam in Turkey. Exclusivity paved the way for the loss of the possibility of unification.

b. The Period between 1960 – 1980

Following the democratic advances, which started in the 1960s, religious values began to be more represented in social and political spheres more. As in socialism and liberalism, it was thought, the Islamist movement addressed the world with its own arguments. After the military coup of 27 May 1960, as in other ideological movements a new Islamic generation started to appear in the Islamist movement. This generation ignored its historical roots and had lost its connection to the resources in the Ottoman period. Despite the tremendous influence of Necip Fazıl, the Islamists at the time brought up the Islamic arguments, which were inconsistent with Turkey's social and political realities. The Islamists at the time wanted to see Islam as the system of government in Turkey and thus expended much effort to see Islam influential in all spheres of social life. Language reform and prohibitions on obligatory religious practices hindered the traditional religious culture; in addition, the translated works reigned over the intellectual *market* and the connection to the Ottoman Islamic thought was lost, all of which brought about far more serious issues in the subsequent years (Yıldırım, 2016:579). During the years when religious education was forbidden, the Islamist discourse was profoundly under the effect of the return of the students of Turkish and Balkan origin receiving high school and university education in Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo, and the start of a translation movement from Arabic to Turkish by these students. Most of the translated works were written by the intellectuals and activists who were members of the Ihvan movement and the founder of Jamaat-i Islami Ebu'l-Ala Mevdudi of Pakistan. Such a tremendous effect manifested itself in the spread of Imam-Hatip schools, faculty of theologies, and high Islamic institutes, which marked *the Islamic transformation* in Turkey

(Durgun, 2011:80). Through Imam-Hatip schools, the religious people avoiding contact with the state during the one-party period were included in the process of education. The graduates of Imam-Hatip schools were more keenly interested in the publications in Arabic than the works in Ottoman Turkish. The new discourse emerging with the translated works brought about a different understanding of religion. Such topics as *nabawi movement*, *rabbani way* and *fiqh for contemporary call* were not familiar to the religious people in Turkey. Using the newly coined concepts, the difference between the existing situation and the traditional understanding of religion was emphasized, implying that the following step would be to establish a society and politics based on religion. With this in mind, *Islamic call* became prominent in the discussions on the Islamic movement and methodology, which became more popular at the time and were around the prospective Islamic state. The method of how the Islamic state should be established was discussed using such concepts as *taghut*, *mustakbir*, *mustadafin* and such statements as “you either adopt the right path (Haq), Islam, or you will be in the hands of wrong orders (batil)”, “the divine order is one: Islam” (Yıldırım, 2016:90). As a result, such discussions continued intensely from the 1960s to the 1980s. As the atmosphere of the period required, strict and strong opinions made Islamism acquire a heroic language with doctrinal symbols. In this way, Islam went *beyond* being a religion and was conceived of an ideology and thus the Quran was necessarily considered to be *the constitution of the Muslims*. Concisely, the effect of the thinkers on whose thoughts Islamic fundamentalism was based in Turkey gripped almost all the Islamists between 1960 and 1980. Because the ideals of the Islamic movement were regarded as a dream between *a nostalgia about a past civilization* and *a utopia about a bright and prospective civilization*, which could not be changed, discussed and delayed, the Islamist movement of the period exhibited a transitory character. In other words, while in the Ottoman times the Islamist movement was rather of an intellectual character than a political one, it acquired an ideological identity on its own and was represented in the political arena after 27 May. However, participating in the election as a way to come to power in democratic politics manifested itself as an untried solution thus far. On the one hand, the religious people participating in the modern processes were internally being secularized while trying to express their demands by using the secular concepts of the modern political discourse (Arslan, 2015:162). On the other hand, this led the Islamist movement in Turkey to marginalize by parting from the rightists and nationalists, which brought about the Islamification of politics. However, the Islamist ideology in Turkey was strikingly in harmony with the West and

capitalism, compared to the ideologies of the Islamist intellectuals in the Middle East. As was observed in certain publications with ideological content between 1977 and 12 September 1980, the religious thought in Turkey gradually obtained a political character and thus became radicalized. As the publications of the time showed, this extremely political emphasis (in which the leading cause of motivation was the struggle for freedom to women wearing the headscarf in the public sphere--freedom for headscarves), laid the foundations for radicalization. Despite all these changes, the Islamic thought regarded the Islamist movement of the time as a movement searching for an alternative civilization. However, such a pursuit made the Islamist movement unite with the Western civilization by continuously rejecting it. In conclusion, the Islamist movement in this period after 1950 had gained tremendous experience. In this respect, the longest years of the Islamist movement were between 1950 and 1980, when tariqa, jamaats and radical groups and parties became influential, each fraction disseminating their thoughts through their media. It was such an atmosphere in which establishing political parties and associations, tariqas, the leading cadre, legality and illegality were scrutinized.

c. The Year 1980 and After

This period can be divided into three subperiods: 1980-1994, 1994-2002 and 2002-Present.

c.1. 1980 – 1994

The Islamic movement in Turkey in the 1980s was in an atmosphere in which the effect of the military coup of 12 September was still felt, politics being directed by the ideology of *Milli Görüş* (led by N. Erbakan), rising radicalism, a strict understanding of civil society and the discussions about *the Islamic state*. In this period, the intellectual agenda of the Islamists were largely determined by the conflicts, clashes, battles, and cruelties in the Muslim countries. Under the influence of the idea of Islamic Unification, the Islamists directed their sensitivity to outside: the war between Iran and Iraq, the Afghan jihad, the cruelty in Palestine by Israel. The Islamists' self-confidence and the severity of radicalism in some fractions were increased by such events as Iran exporting the revolution, the defeat of the USSR by the Afghan forces, the assassination of the President Enver Sedat of Egypt, the start of a mass uprising in the city of Hama by the Ihvan in Syria, the retreat of Israel and the USA from Lebanon as a result of Hezbollah's resistance and the start of the Intifada movement as a result. Consequently, the 1980s were the years when the external effects with radical tendencies were deeply felt in Turkey. Within the context of such

developments, the books by the intellectuals in favor of Salafi jihadism made their way into the shelves of the bookstores in Turkey, which was known as the third wave of the ideological translations, in which the thoughts of Sayyid Quttp and Mevdudi were reinterpreted with a takfiri, exclusionary and pro-violence emphasis (Büyükkara, 2015: 274). However, the books on the Islamic movement and its methodology were far from the Turkey's reality, for the discussions about the Islamic state were held with no reference to and even with no mention of the Seljuk and the Ottoman governmental experience and traditions were nothing but mere repetitions of what was happened in the post-colonial countries. The discussion about the Islamic state, starting with such topics as Dar (the state of being under Islamic or non-Islamic rule), takfiri accusations, and the Friday prayer, increased in variety. In addition to whether it was acceptable to perform the Salah (prayer) led by the official imams or whether it was religiously proper to work as a civil servant, the arguments in favor of violence attracted a huge number of supporters. In this period, serious questioning directed at hadith (the sayings of the Prophet-PBUH) and the rejection of Sufism appeared and thus radical groups left the traditional jamaats and dervish lodges, becoming independent groups (Durgun, 2011:100). In other words, the Islamists, who relied intellectually on the translations from the Muslim writers in other countries and the Orientalist and convert Muslim writers in the West, were concerned about finding and performing *the Islamic alternatives* of everything in all fields, looking at their own history and sociology through the lens of others. In this respect, the discourse on returning to Islam (Ihtidah) was influential in the politics of 1980s. The Islamists, who wanted to prove that Islam is a safe haven, relied on the intellectuals, artists and leaders' return to Islam, tried to guarantee that *Muslims are reliable* (Yıldırım, 2016:111). Within this framework, the Islamist movement almost completely separated itself intellectually from its Ottoman and Republican roots, not addressing the fundamental problems and not creating the discourse and language proper to address its own society, for they used the translated works as the basis for their epistemology. Hence, sensitivity to count on the Seljuk-Ottoman roots of the Islamic thought was lost. Furthermore, based on the mentality and the understanding of the Islamist movement of the period, Turkish thought in the classical period was considered to be of rightist-conservative, desensitizing the public, killing off the *revolutionary spirit* and thus preventing it from coming to power. As a result, the Islamic movement, on the one hand, struggled against the status quo, namely Kemalism; on the other hand, it fought against Turkish thought and the traditional understanding of Islam (Durgun, 2011:24). The Islamists, in search of other resources

different from those in the history of Islam, avoided using the concepts developed in the world system and participating fully in that system. Thus, they searched for a different understanding of daily life from that of the West, including its political and economic aspects. In this respect, the 1980s were the years when the Islamic thought experienced a deep intellectual transformation, besides political changes. As a matter of fact, the movement in favor of relying on the meaning of the Quran in translation (Mealcilik) appeared as a rational understanding of the world. The exuberant preachings in the mosques, which popularized religious radicalism in 1970s and the early 1980s were replaced by recorded dramas, recorded marches, and panels of hot debates (Büyükkara, 2015: 276). Though the Mealcilik movement lost its influence in the course of time, such popular academicians as Hüseyin Atay, Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, and Süleyman Ateş delegitimized the traditional approaches and opened a way for the modernist interpretations by speculating on the soundness of Sunnah and hadith (Yıldırım, 2016: 144). The intellectual efforts in this period were in a sense laying the foundations for the new discourse of the 1990s through the Islamization of knowledge after which eclectic, synthetic, reductionist and integrationist culturalism were accentuated in many disciplines such as Islamic anthropology and sociology. As a result, this period witnessed not only the transformation of Islamic thought but also the elimination of Islamic arguments regarding building an alternative state and carrying out an Islamic reform. During President Özal's rule, new financial institutions sensitive to Islamic concerns were established and the profit made by such organizations, the economic functions they served or the efforts to attract Arab capital to Turkey, *persuaded* the Islamists to get into contact with *monetary organizations* from which they had long refrained. Therefore, with the neo-liberal practices, the Islamists learned all the economic rules of finance capital. Through private financial organizations, they developed Islamic banking, in this way getting integrated into the system. The Islamists adopted certain policies to internalize material wealth as a result of the idea that *we have to adopt the technology of the West*, so that they could keep pace with the developments in technology, communication and transportation. Making their way into the market through companies, the Islamists were, through private financial organizations, the voluntary practitioners of the new liberal practices, which had the aim that *no Muslim left behind in receiving interests* (Yıldırım, 2016:53). Until recently, *the economic behavior* was explained through the concept of *Rızq* (provision) the understanding of waste (israf) was a determining factor in consumer behavior. However, after 1980, such concepts as *green capital*, *Islamic capital* or *Anatolian Tigers* were frequently heard

and with their participation in the economic realm, the Islamists discovered the three important concepts of capitalism and consumer society: profit, fashion, and brand name, which was not limited to the economic realm spreading to the political realm. As a matter of fact, the modern ways of life from the metropolitan areas to the seaside became more widespread through participation in the economic process, *new fashion of wearing hijab* seen in the podiums through fashion shows and thus the word *Takbir* losing its meaning and acquiring a commercial meaning as if it were *a commodity*. Significantly, the introduction of the swimsuit *haşema* (the original swimsuit for Muslims), participation in economic activities was legitimized and the Islamists met the modern concept of profit (Arslan, 2015:163). In this way, the anti-Islamic and immoral nature of the market was tolerated and representation of the Islamic symbols and the Islamists in the public sphere was regarded to be more important than the immorality of the market.

This liberalization in the economic realm spread to the political realm, which caused the search for a synthesis between Islam and democracy and even Islam and laicism. In this way, the integration of the Islamists into the system by regarding the Islamic principles secondary was explained by the phrase, *no other choice*; hence, it was thought that the main target of the tariqas was not metaphysical matters but to be close to the political power so as to survive. The religious groups and tariqas turned into companies; sheiks turned into chief executive officers and the members become stakeholders. Thus, the size of the company, their prevalence and profit margin were considered to be the indications of their power. Without doubt, the primary advantage of being close to political power was to be protected from any attacks by the state and to take advantage of the governmental facilities (Yıldırım, 2016:54).

The developments in communication technologies in the 1980s had also an effect on the transformation of the Islamists. During those years, Islamic radio stations were established to convey Islamic messages and knowledge and at the same time Muslims started to become a consumer *mass*. All these developments in the media came to mean Muslims' participation in the modern way of communication and thus their integration into the system. The broadcasts, starting originally with the recitation of the Quran and religious marches, became in a very short time very popular among a huge *audience* and focused on satisfying modern consumption demands in Islamic disguise, leaving some Islamic principles behind [(like no voice of woman and musical instruments apart from religiously used ones)] (Silverstein, 2011).

Developments in education also had an effect on such changes. Significantly, the Imam-Hatip schools became a disputed subject in domestic politics in the 1980s, *private high schools* became popular among the Islamists as a way of taking part in educational processes. The newly established *private high schools* offered completely modern education, with a modern content (Arslan, 2015:189), which eliminated, from the 1990s onwards, *the Islamic* sensitivity and resistance to what was modern. In addition, the translations of works of Western thinkers and an increasing interest in the postmodern literature, a new generation of Islamists youth emerged, curious about new ideas and perspectives (Yıldırım, 2016:128). Shaped by such developments, the Islamist movement was radically different from the ones in the previous period in terms of method, ideology and objectives. The newly emerged middle class continued its formation of *tariqas* and *jamaats*, claiming to carry out an Islamic mission using such concepts as *jihad*, *Islamic activity*, *service*, and *for the sake of Allah*. Islamist businessmen regarded their businesses as mission, ignoring such controversial topics as interest, loan and insurance, which were seen as normal. As a result, none of the Islamist groups in the neo-liberal period after 1980 had an Islamic objective, as they were after transforming the Muslims rather than an Islamic transformation (Yıldırım, 2016: 55). Moreover, the idea that *Muslims deserve the best, the most beautiful and the most expensive* had a great impact on the strengthening of neo-liberalism in Turkey and its adoption by the Islamists.). Therefore, the proponents of the Islamist movement in the neo-liberal period, preferred to work in commerce, construction, service sector, communications and transportations rather than in industries. This trajectory showed that the Islamists were rather pragmatic, which drove the Milli Görüş movement (led by Erbakan), aiming at boosting heavy industry, out of the political agenda (Yıldırım, 2016:45).

Compared to those in the previous periods, the Islamists in the 1990s went through dramatic transformations. For instance, what was indispensable in the previous periods was not regarded as such then, for the Islamists in the previous periods spent a very conscientious effort to keep themselves away from and be superior to others while searching for ways to establish a daily life according to one's beliefs. In the 1980s this effort manifested itself through ghetto housing projects such as Akevler in İzmir and Elif Sitesi in Ankara, representing a form of *isolated religiousness*. The Islamists from the mid-1980s changed their monolithic Islamic demand to finding a way *to live together*. With such a profound change, the Islamists, searching for ways to live together with the non-Muslims and co-exist with *the others*, were in fact trying to make their way into the market

(Yıldırım, 2013:135-136). In other words, though the system pushed the Islamists out of the public sphere, they resorted to pluralism and multi-culturalism to guarantee their space in the public sphere and started to voice the discourse that they would not *Otherize* anyone and could live together with non-Muslims. As a result, in the 1990s, Islam was reduced to a cultural level and a search for legitimacy, through plurality, started.

The changes in the 1990s represent a concise explanation of the drastic change the Islamist movement had gone through thus far. The Islamists abandoned the idea of *the uniqueness of Muslims*. When the Welfare Party came to power and had to *embrace Turkey*, the integrative discourse as well as *the equalizing* attitude required by the need for coexistence, the demand by the Muslims for Islamic daily life in the political sphere naturally disappeared. As a result, the desire for the integration into the system became more prominent with the Islamist argument in the manifesto of the Welfare Party with an emphasis on *servant state* and *coexistence*. However, the Islamists had not spent a day without rejecting the accusations of being reactionaries since 31 March Incident -the first rebellion by the Islamists wanting sharia against the restoration of the constitutional system in the last period of the Ottoman state-. Though such accusations diminished in the 1990s, when the Islamists approached the center, they were still influential. In point of fact 28 February (the so-called postmodern military coup without military intervention) was brought about by such accusations. In this respect, the Islamic movement in the new liberal period after the 1990s summarizes the end of the Islamists having a worldview of their own. The Islamists in this period were in favor of downsizing the state and the new liberal effect along with the liberals, so that they could get rid of the official ideology and the *nation state* idea. The discussions about the second republic had a profound influence on the Islamists and they started to question the system as a result. In the 1990s, the idea that *the system came to a halt* was put forward to restrict the cumbersome bureaucratic structure and nation state practices and to eradicate the official ideology. Such a discourse combined with a form of activism inflicted serious damage on the national structure emerging as a result of a long history in Turkey and broke the historical ties of the Islamist movement. Furthermore, the discussions about ethnic problems were influential in restricting the central power. Criticizing the official ideology using the Kurdish matter brought about discovering new bonds of belonging. For example, the idea of Kurdish nationalism was strengthened with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Kurdish Islamism started to see all the national developments as nationalist and promote this discourse through Pan-Islamism. Briefly, the Islamists gaining

relative power in the 1980s, the thoughts of returning to religion, avoiding direct conflict with the system brought about various quests for legitimacy and belonging with these developments the Islamists, may be for the first time, came in close contact with *the opposite neighborhood*. Consequently, the pessimism that there was no way out of capitalism and that there was no alternative system to introduce, paved the way for what was to come after the 1990s for the Islamists.

c.2. 1994-2002

In the second half of the 1990s, the Islamists adopted a postmodern discourse. Hindered by such prohibitions as the ban on the headscarf, the Islamists were trying to find their way into the system using pluralism, multi-culturalism, and tolerance. In other words, the state constrained the Islamists at the door of the public sphere; in return, the Islamists found a way out through the postmodern discourse rearranging the system in line with the Westernist tendencies (Crooke, 2014:76). Up to that time, the ethnic and religious groups oppressed by Kemalism were devoid of the opportunities to express themselves. In this respect, it was postmodernism that addressed such agents as non-Muslims, Alewi, Kurdish and other radical Muslims, who were in the periphery. As a result, rather than developing a new understanding of *the truth*, the liberal-leftist-Islamist opposition against Kemalism was formed upon the principle of *the plurality of truth* systematized by the post-structuralists and postmodernists (Yıldırım, 2016: 396), for the Kemalist system presented modernism as the only truth for the world system, whereas postmodernism attacked this idea, claiming that *there is no one reality and truth*. As a matter of fact, the idea that *every person has their own truth* paved the way for the destruction of absolutism. The Islamists, using deconstruction against the Republican elite with the effect of the idea that *the state is ours, but not the governors*, worked for the improvement of the official ideology and the restoration of the system in the 1990s, taking an anti-status quo and anti-guardianship regime position (Taslaman, 2016:30). The improvement and restoration did not refer to an Islamic transformation but referred to the weakening of Kemalism and the Republican elite, sharing the power and the Islamists representation at a higher level in the center. In this respect, such concepts as democracy, pluralism, multi-culturalism, co-existence, and civil society were used as appropriate tools for the Islamists to be included in the political realm. Hence, the nature of the truth was plural, not absolute as in the classical Islamic understanding. Such a perspective led the Islamists to adopt an individual

singular morality. This individualistic understanding, which a Muslim should not adopt and which has rarely been witnessed in the West, prevented the Islamists to a great extent from acting in groups in later periods.

The Islamic movement in the postmodern era did not face and defeat modernism and capitalism. Instead, it was in this era that the Islamists got modernized with the fastest pace ever because the Muslims would become influential if they were to integrate with the world system and market economy by gaining power. Thus, the Islamists left such concepts as returning to the classical resources of Islamism, *tajdid* (renewal), *ihya* (revival), *islah* (reform) and unification of Islam, which connoted Islamic transformation behind and adopted politics as the preferred method. Consequently, they used such concepts as living together in peace, pluralism, multiculturalism and tolerance to guarantee their existence in the public sphere (Yıldırım, 2016:10). In short, the Islamists tried to centralize the Islamic movement by using the postmodern discourse, while they learned how to safeguard their personal interests. The possibility of the Welfare Party to come to power helped to promote the idea that the Islamists could take control of the system by vote and money, without using any radical and violent methods (Yıldırım, 2016:149). In this respect, money and career were emphasized in the discourse of the 1990s. The claim that the two weapons of the believer were vote and money encouraged the mujahedeen to start businesses. Similarly, starting from the 1990s, the tendency for change was reinforced by such behaviors as going for a holiday, hosting expensive (breaking the fast) banquets, wearing fashionable clothes and buying modern cars, houses etc. (Tantik, 2014: 144). As a result, the West and modernity were not rejected in the 1990s' perception, but the Islamists searched for finding out *the Islamic* lifestyle in the reality of modernity. In other words, the Islamists had already forgotten the previously well appreciated concepts of *mustadafin*, *mustakbirin*, Islamic call, Islamic state and consciousness for Tawhid and started to use a discourse in which hermeneutic interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah, the place of Turkey in finance capital and multiculturalism were emphasized (Crooke, 2014:175), with a concern to take advantage of *market opportunities*. Unlike the translated books, published soon after 27 May 1960, the books translated by certain publishing houses and the books by Western intellectuals placed a veil on history, shaping the perception of the new young Muslim academicians. In other words, foreign thinkers influenced Islamic thought of the 1990s. For example, Foucault's understanding of power, Gadamer's hermeneutics (Taslaman, 2016:32), and Habermas' idea of the public sphere fed the intellectual discourse of these young academicians.

Furthermore, the translated works by Muslim writers included some ideas against the Islamic state (Yıldırım, 2016:141). Since the mid-1990s, the Islamist intellectuals were quite busy with such themes as returning to the Quran, original resources, historicism, public-private spheres, family and modern life, traditional-modern dichotomy, Europe and Islam, reformation in the religion, Turkish Islam, Muslims' idea of joining the EU, globalization, protestantization of Islam and urban issues. In this respect, the post-structuralists and post-modernist philosophies substantially influenced the Islamists of the period who became extremely interested in *hermeneutics*.

In this way, the position of the Muslims in Turkey was explained by the concept of the Islamist movement, for this concept referred to active participation in the process and Islamism meant refraining from such a struggle. In this new understanding, it was claimed that Islam had no perspective for the state, that there was no relationship between Islam and politics, that politicizing Islam meant using Islam for politics, that political Islam causes bloodshed and tears all over the world and that political Islam prevented the Muslim society from benefitting from the facilities created by Western civilization. In such an atmosphere, most of the Islamic publications in the 1990s were on questioning the possibility of the Islamic state, which can be summarized as *Allah meant Islam to be a religion, but people have changed it into politics*. Hence, the Islamists in the 1990s had no other Islamic demand for the public sphere than freedom for women wearing the headscarf (Kaya Osmanbaşoğlu, 2015:403). The Islamists demanded a place in the public sphere rather than *organizing the public sphere*, which showed that they did not have a broad perspective for what to demand. In this respect, the Islamists did not follow a political movement based on the application of Islamic law. Indeed, what they demanded from the system was nothing beyond just treatment in political representation. As a matter of fact, the Islamist discourse of the 1990s highlighted democracy and disregarded the idea of the Islamic state. Further, as a result of the developments in this period, the arguments put forward by the liberal-leftist intellectuals were passionately embraced. The close contact between the Islamists and the liberal leftists yielded fruitful results in the 1990s and 28 February (the so-called postmodern military coup without military intervention) paved the way for a close collaboration between the two groups. The coalition between the Welfare Party and the True Path Party was exterminated by 28 February and the Muslims were subjected to a *postmodern military coup*, which caused the Islamists to resort to postmodern arguments and democratic values (Levin, 2011), leading them to *the Grand Alliance* as required by the idea of *the lesser evil*. Worse than that, it is remarkable that the breaking point

in the 150-year-long history of the Islamist movement was marked by the fact that the Welfare Party applied to the European Court of Human Rights, which destroyed the Islamic image of Milli Görüş.

c3. 2002—Present

Significantly such concepts as tolerance, living together in peace, others, freedom, human rights, and democratization were defined in Islamic terms; hence, the Islamic thought in 2000 and after highlighted the mottos of *there are no ideas, but different analyses; there is no cause, but different interpretations; there is no movement, but activism; there is no belonging, but obedience* (Yıldırım, 2016:250). With this development, the Islamist movement was unprecedentedly integrated into the system. Therefore, in 2000 and the following years, the Islamic movement as a political movement diverted the farthest from its original roots.

In this new perspective, religiousness depended on material wealth, handsome appearance, fancy clothes, and using technology. In this new understanding of religiousness, pleasure was enhanced as the religious rituals were performed publicly; thus, satisfaction in religious terms was met in the public sphere. In other words, such religiousness manifested itself as a strong feeling of *pleasure of religiousness* (Tantik, 2014:196). Consequently, the new understanding of religiousness required such a material wealth that could not be afforded by people of low income and material indicators of such religiousness became widespread. For example, the number of religious people going on holidays during religious festivals not to meet the visitors is on the increase. The new religious people who go on holiday during the holy month of Ramadan and who spend the day (fasting-time) sleeping maintain a culture between the dinner table and the swimming pool in the evening. Therefore, the new religiousness is defined as *religiousness during victory* due to the gains against one-party status quo and is also defined as *the religiousness of opportunity* due to its visibility in the public sphere. Wearing trendy clothes, going on frequent holidays, using goods of modern consumption, celebrations of breaking the fast dinners or special days all come to mean that *I exist* through religiousness against the system, with an attitude of passive challenge as part of the political movement based on religiousness, for showing off, visibility, and noticeability are identified with the pleasure of victory (Öztürk, 2015). In other words, material wealth became one of the determinants of the new religiousness. A new youth disconnected from the previous periods, thus, was created through entrepreneurial, educated, and

consuming individuals, agreeable with the new economics character, and able to make compromises with the economic conditions and Islamic principles. In this respect, the Islamic understanding of the period was a kind of Islamism, which adopted the agent who *found what they had been looking for*. As a matter of fact, the new religious people had no political demands for profound change. What was *new* about the Islamist movement of the period was its opposition to all the traditional deep-seated understanding of religiousness in which taqwa (consciousness of Allah, piety), zuhd (asceticism), night prayer, modesty, *an understanding of just enough to keep body and soul together*, hijab and the moral behavior required by it, and eating less was replaced by the religiousness based on appearance, showing-off, and an understanding of *minimum prayer maximum publication and revealing*. The new understanding of religiousness rendered such concepts as prayer, taqwa, zuhd, useless, and traditional Islam lost its significance in view of the developed economic level. Taqwa came at the end of the list of the new religiousness, while it occupied a central place in the original Islam. Classical Islamic publications frequently mentioned Ibn Arabi, the hadiths, Sunnah, the Quranic verses and how we should practice them in our daily lives and how an Islamic lifestyle could be maintained. Such a pursuit was ignored in the new understanding of religiousness, to which activism, protest, spirituality, and being political were added as the criteria for morality to the classical criteria such as beliefs, prayer, and ahlaq. Consequently, the criteria showed considerable variation and seemed to be disconnected among the religious people (Taslaman, 2016:255).

With these developments after 2000, no Islamic groups, school or person had the idea of keeping away from *the market*. The rules of the market made people think of the religious realm with such concepts as secular, worldly, metaphysical, otherworldly and caused massive expansion in the borders of worldliness.

Such efforts to be noticeable individually in the public sphere had political and economic consequences and the year 2011 witnessed the start of major changes for the Islamists. Up to that time, more tolerant and withdrawn to gain strength against the *essential elements* of the system, the Islamists adopted a more active attitude. Similarly, the AK Party (the Justice and Development Party) governments based development on the services sector and consumer culture, as part of the neo-liberal politics introduced in the 1980s. In other words, leaving the idea of heavy industry and development, the Islamists in that period focused on strengthening the free movement of

commodities and finances brought about by globalization. For example, by the 2010s, this understanding became so internalized that it was not possible to criticize it. However, after 2011 both the understanding of development based on the services sector, free circulation of commodities and finances and the understanding of development based on industrial production for defense and technological development were supported equally. In that period, the focus was on establishing *Muslim existence* in modernity, getting the Muslims to participate in the global civilization, creating an understanding of Islam, using contemporary concepts, and having the Muslims comply with this understanding (Taslaman, 2016:83). The new Islamist-careerist elite, collaborating with the Fetullah Gulen's movement, started to criticize Turkey's identity of *nation state* and ancient state philosophy; they gained considerable power in the public sphere and thus their support of the AK Party started to diminish. Considering social engineering as trivializing old national and indigenous values, the new generations of academicians started to be involved in interesting actions to compensate for AK Party's weaknesses without Erdogan in policy development, while they were preparing for an AK Party after Erdogan. Applying the discourse they acquired from the West for social engineering in Turkey, the academicians had a powerful effect on Islamist thought because of their attitude toward the public as *the ignorant* to be manipulated, *undervaluing* the AK Party supporters, accounting for 49% of the general electorate. After 2015, the new Islamist academicians, just as the Republican People's Party (CHP) did, regarded the public as ignorant and despised Erdogan's background of belonging, which was particularly noticeable in the disagreement between the academicians and Erdogan during and after the elections in 2015.(Reference)

Not contributing to political power and the political sphere without repeating the terms *status quo* and *guardianship*, this new generation of academicians started to criticize Erdogan's discourse, his intellectual background and his Islamic emphasis by referring to Necip Fazıl Kısakurek, Arif Nihat Asya, Sezai Karakoc and Mehmet Akif as *his bonds of belonging*. Composed to a great extent of *old radicals* with ethnicist origins, these people make a lot of effort to support one another by establishing their own networks rather than producing ideas. While Erdogan continued to maintain his contact with the Sufi circles, considering the figures and values of the Ottoman and Republican Islamist movement, the new generation of Islamist academicians had no such concerns. It seems clear that the former Islamist intellectual leaders changed into journalists and academicians in the new period. Hence, the Islamist movement was perceived as

an ordinary subject for whom a number of definitions were proposed. In this respect, rather than the intellectuals and ustazs (masters), the populist *analysts* became the legislators, the new group of pioneers of the Islamist movement (Yıldırım, 2016:249). However, after 2015, a renewed effort to revise the Turkish tradition of government and people under the leadership of Erdogan started. As a result of Erdogan's persistent attitude, the efforts of the Islamist people to get back to the Ottoman Islamist movement has increased.

Conclusion

From the stand point of Islam, the Islamist movement developed as a pursuit of understanding and analyzing the West and adapting what is Western to the needs of the people in the Muslim lands. Just as the conditions in different periods of history were different, so were the understandings of the Islamist movement in each period. Thus, the Islamist movement in the Ottoman period focused on *the situation of the state*, while the Islamist movement in the Republican period largely dealt with *the situation of the Muslims*. Historically, the Islamist movement has always had certain common features. For example, the Islamist movement did not perceive modernity as a counter-civilizational project, which continued in the following periods. As a matter of fact, the desire to criticize and put aside the historical repertoire of Islam with the claim of *returning to the resources* has been one of the most important characteristics of the Islamist movement since its origin, which has brought about new interpretations and understandings. The process starting in the final period of the Ottoman state continued with the Republic. In other words, the Republic was after *the true religion* as well.

The Islamist movement in Turkey has positioned itself mainly in the public sphere, which has prevented it from having an intellectual character. The Islamist movement followed a political course and thus it became a movement to exploit the power of the government and its resources. In other words, to operate in the public sphere became an ailment for the Islamists. As a matter fact, the discourse of inferiority, otherness, and marginality expressed by *we are the citizens of this country, too* manifested itself with the complex that Muslims were treated as if they were *Negros*. Before 1980s, there was the discourse that *the state is ours, but not the administrator*; after 1980, it changed with new liberal practices, in other words, the Islamist movement ignored the heritage of the Islamist movement in the Tanzimat Period and the Islamists started to look for new ways to

live together with non-Muslims, the West, and capitalism, adopting an integrative attitude through the discourse of the servant state and the Charter of Medina.

The understanding of *becoming powerful in all spheres of social life* and *Muslims existing everywhere* enabled the Muslims to be influential, but it did not stop capitalism from gaining more power; such an understanding weakened religion and consolidated capitalism. Wealth, vote, search for new careers, new companies, new media and a *petty bourgeoisie attitudes* caused by these resulted in a *low culture* among the Islamists. The conservative mass encountering wealth and career opportunities often arrived at eclectic conclusions. Ranging from Islamic holidays to the modernization of wear, a new kind of religiousness, a new type of culture, new issues and even a new Islamists profile have emerged. The idea that Muslims could have fun, go shopping, follow the fashion and the idea that *Muslims deserve the best* have been used as the valid grounds to appear on the podiums and beaches. The ladies trying hard to be *invisible* before the 1980s have started an effort to be *noticeable* in every setting. As a result, the Islamic movement has ignored its historical repertoire, considering many details of *i'tiqad* as *bid'ah*, which results in the exclusion of all the characteristics necessary to live as a nation on a shared land. In other words, the Islamist movement has eliminated those who want to resume the historical mission by recreating the bonds with the history of Turkey, so it has paved the way for the people enthusiastic about working in higher bureaucracy. As a matter of fact, today the Islamists have no conception of a political system. The previously emphasized arguments such as democracy being a *qufr* regime as it is based on the sovereignty of people not of Allah is not on the Islamists' agenda any more. In other words, initially Muslims were in search of getting stronger against their opposition by referring to the Quran and Sunnah to find solutions for the *modern situation* in which they lived, trying to adopt such *new things* as technology and science to *their world*, but today, they are trying to make the existing modern world Islamic by the help of the Quran and Sunnah. It is pretty clear that the Islamists with enough economic prosperity have no problem with the system and the type of government. However, they have always had the potential to take a counter attitude against the worldly systems and this potential is what is required by their religion and what they have been practicing throughout the history. Nevertheless, as the Islamist movement today has adopted the idea of progress, it is in an effort to *nullify* all the values *formerly valid*. Thus, the discourse of the Islamists is not an Islamic discourse, not a Muslim one. At this point, the best answer to the

question of what happened to the Islamist movement is that it has lost its ties with its tradition, ignored the metaphysical aspect, and become politicized beyond the acceptable limits.

REFERENCES

- Arslan, A. (2015). *Modern Dünyada Müslümanlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Büyükkara, M. A. (2015). *Çağdaş İslami Akımlar*. İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları.
- Crooke, A. (2014). *Direnış-İslamcı Devrimin Özü* (G. Ongun, Trans.) İstanbul: İyidüşün Yayınları.
- Durgun, Ş. & Bayraktar, G. (2011). *İslam and Politics*. Ankara: A Kitap.
- Durgun, Ş. (2009). Müslüman Siyasetler. *Almıla*, 5(16), pp. 78-87
- Eliaçık, R. İ. (2002). Yirminci Yüzyıl İslam Siyaset Düşüncesinde Üç Evrilme. *BD-Bilgi ve Düşünce*, 1(1), pp. 38-51
- Eligür, B. (2010). *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harputlu, A. (2002). İslamcılarının Batı Tahayyülü. *BD-Bilgi ve Düşünce*, 1(1), pp. 23-27.
- Kaya Osmanbaşođlu, G. (2015). The Politics of What You Wear on Your Head, *Middle East Critique*, 24:4, pp. 389-406
- Keyman, E. F. & Gumuscu, S. (2014). *Democracy, Identity and Foreign Policy in Turkey: Hegemony Through Transformation*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Levin, P. (2011). *Turkey and the European Union: Christian and secular images of Islam*. New York, NY: Springer.

- Lewis, B. (2010). İnanç ve İktidar-Orta Doğu'da Din ve Siyaset (A. M. Şengel, Trans). Ankara: Akılçelen Kitaplar.
- Örnek, C. (2015). Türkiye'nin Soğuk Savaş Düşünce Hayatı. İstanbul: Can Yayınları.
- Öztürk, Ö. (2015). The Islamist Big Bourgeoisie in Turkey. In The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey. Balkan, N., Balkan, E., & Öncü, A. (Eds.). New York: Berghahn Books.
- Rabasa, A., & Larrabee, F. S. (2008). The rise of political Islam in Turkey (Vol. 726). Pittsburg, PA: Rand Corporation.
- Silverstein, B. (2011). Islam and modernity in Turkey. Springer.
- Tantik, A. (2014). İslamcılığın Arayışı. İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları.
- Taslaman, C. (2016). Türkiye'de İslam ve Küreselleşme. İstanbul: Destek Yayınları.
- Yıldırım, E. (2013). Türk Düşüncesinde İslam. İstanbul: Hece Yayınları.
- Yıldırım, E. (2016). Neo Liberal İslamcılık: 1980-2015 İslamcılarının Dünya Sistemine Entegrasyonu. İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları.