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Political Islam in Turkey

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Dr.Gamze Güngörmü Kona

THE RISE AND THE FALL OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN TURKEY

Abstract

Religion has an independent status having the function of reinforcing both the individuals and societies. Particularly, Islam which has a more direct relation with the social structure, compared to Christianity, has the functions of designing and guiding the structure of the society, safeguarding the individuals and transferring the ideological and cultural values to the society. So, Islam religion, having the mentioned functions, is automatically integrated in the temporal matters. In Turkey, Islam as the religion of majority, has also a kind of direct influence on both society and politics. Despite this mentioned power of Islam religion in Turkey, it can hardly be spoken about the probability of the establishment of political Islam in Turkey. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that even any "light attempt" to associate Islam with politics would face severe contra-actions since the establishment philosophy of Turkish Republic is based upon western-orientation, laicism, secularism and democracy. So, this paper is not intended to explain the history or the ideology of Turkish Islamist movement but to explain the attempts that were made by the Islamist pedigree governments or Islamist-oriented political parties to include Islamic values in their political agenda since 1950, and the failure of those attempts to mix up Islam with politics through various sample cases.

Key words : Political Islam, Islamist movement, secularism, Turkish military, obstacles

INTRODUCTION

It can be claimed that Islam has various functions in Turkish society. We might say that Islam, the religion of the majority of Turkish people, has been a mediator to obtain a social identity in society. This social identity, gained by the power of Islam religion, makes the individuals self-confident and secure. (AKDOGAN, 2000 : 148-149) Islam has been a distinguishing factor for some Turks that makes some of them feel different from the West, whose rules they had never accepted as legitimate. Islam has not been just a set of religious beliefs but a way of life and civilization. Islam has been regarded as a significant factor against imperialism and against the one ones which are strictly favor for imperialist values. Besides, Islam has a function which can reinforce first the individual and then the society. Furthermore, Islam religion has been the basic determinant for some segments of Turkish society. In some circles, Islam has emerged as a constraining symbol / a barrier against the extended American and European role in Turkey. As in all traditional societies; in which cultural, religious and social symbols are appreciated more than temporal symbols; the status of Islam religion has been prestigious for Turkish society which sometimes reflects the features of traditional structure. In certain periods, Islam has been an overemphasized social

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value among the Islamist-oriented intellectuals against the Orientalists, which associates Islam with backwardness, fundamentalism, and which perceives the Muslims as reactionaries who oppose progress. Islam has multi-faceted functions in social and political arena, while in society Islam helps individuals hold their identity, the very same religion helps some political parties do populism through benefiting from Islam religion. Islam has been the basic element which determines the political ideology of the lower class. Unfortunately, Islam has been regarded as a vital instrument in maintaining political legitimacy for some political parties. Islam, which might be a factor of legitimization in political life, has sometimes become a defining item of Turkish political agenda.

Taking the explanations mentioned above into consideration one might think that since Islam religion has had various significant functions in Turkish societal and political life until now, it is largely probable that politics in Turkey has a strong tendency toward having the features of political Islam. So, in this article I will emphasize the fact that despite the influence of Islam on Turkish society and Turkish political life and despite penetration of Islam into Turkish political life and despite the attempts made by some political parties in regard to associating Islam with politics; in Turkish political life there have been only Islamist-oriented political parties but not Islamic political parties, only Islamist-oriented governments but not Islamic governments. After presenting some examples on Islamist-oriented governments / parties in the first part, in the second part of this paper it will also be mentioned that there have always been some restrictive elements before Islamist-oriented political parties / governments to materialize their ideals in regard to the establishment of political Islam in Turkey, in the last part of the paper I will explain the reasons of prevailing light Islamist movements despite the preventive factors.

RELIGIOUSLY-ORIENTED POLITICAL ATTEMPTS IN TURKISH POLITICS

It can be said that some of the political parties and some of the governments in Turkey have had a natural tendency toward satisfying the spiritual expectations and the moral needs of the majority of Turkish population. Although most of the Islamist-oriented politicians have not had any deep-rooted relations with Islam religion or they have not adopted Islam as a way of life, they did their best to integrate Islam and religious values into politics. By doing so, they could upgrade the number of their supporters but caused chaos in Turkish political life. It can be said that use of religion for the political purpose started at the very beginning of 1950s and increased gradually but each of those attempts resulted in the military intervention.

Islam, having limited political expression, began in 1950 when Democrat Party won in national elections against Republican Peoples Party. Although the leader of Democrat Party Adnan Menderes adopted a more tolerant stand toward Islam, he never refrained from using Islamic sentiments in politics, and was accused of endangering Atatürk's legacy. In the end, 1960 military coup removed Menderes government and dissolved the Democrat Party.

The following Islamist pedigree in politics was seen in 1970, when Necmettin Erbakan founded the National Order Party. The Party found it inevitable to restate Islamic sentiments, conservative morals and reduction of economic relations with the west while reinforcing small businesses, local merchants, independent craftsmen and traditional economic interests. The mentioned preference in regard to the downgrade in economic relations with the west and the preference in regard to the restoration of Islamic values resulted in 1971 military coup, and the Party was banned in politics. In 1973, the National Order Party was reincarnated as the National Salvation Party and headed by Necmettin Erbakan again. Surprisingly, Kemalists encouraged the National Salvation Party as a counterweight to the then radical left, and the Party joined three coalition governments throughout 1970s. (ALTUNISIK, 2005 : 6) However, due to the anarchy in Turkish society, the military declared the martial law and banned all political parties in 1980. Turkish

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constitution after 1980 put restrictions on religion, and by the Article 24 of this constitution, the exploitation of religion for the purpose of personal and political influence was banned. Following the 1980 military coup, in 1983 the Prime Minister and the leader of Motherland Party was Turgut Ozal. The Party, on the one hand, centrist and conservative and on the other hand westernist and reformist, strictly tied with western institutions. The period in which Turkey was ruled under Motherland Party government represented quite a different period. Although Turgut Ozal might be regarded as an offshoot of rather Islamist-oriented and traditional National Order Party and National Salvation Party, the political actions of Ozal had never been Islamist and conservative. On the contrary, the relations with the United States reached its zenith during this period. Integration with the western values and western institutions had been given maximum importance. European Union membership had occupied the top priority in political agenda. In other words, Ozal, being aware of the power of religion, emphasized Islamic sentiments and values only in domestic politics but never applied religion in politics and bi-lateral relations. Besides, he never preferred to be sentimental in foreign policy. "Turgut Ozal's real contribution was his attempt to merge the disparate strands of Turkish society and bring those left outside it back into its fold, notably the Islamists. For the increase in Islamism had less to do with a sudden increase in religiosity than the huge social-economic divide which separated the 'peasants' of Anatolia (the catch-all term used by Istanbul's social elite) from the 'white Turks' of Istanbul itself. Under Mr Ozal, the conservative 'peasants' began to prosper and a thrusting grass-roots Islamist movement blossomed alongside." (KRISTIANASEN, 1997, <http://mondediplo.com/1997/07/turkey>)

Following the 1980 military coup, once again we see Necmettin Erbakan as the leader of Welfare Party, which was founded as the successor to the banned National Salvation Party. Since the Party was disqualified by Turkish generals from participating in 1983 elections, in 1987 Erbakan's Party could only receive 7% of the vote in parliamentary elections, which was not enough to win seats in the parliament. In the 1995 general elections Welfare Party won 158 of 500 seats in the parliament, and Erbakan then became Prime Minister in the coalition government. Erbakan's negative stand toward Turkey's EU membership, his encouragement for women to wear headscarf; his profound efforts to establish warmer relations with Libya, Iran, Iraq all resulted in the alienation of secular/laic/political elites in Turkey, and came as an alarming surprise to many secular elite and military authorities. The military, judicial authorities, and secular non-governmental organizations quickly organized to conduct an effective campaign against the party. On February 28, 1997, the army issued a declaration that emphasized the urgent need to protect the principle of laicism. When Welfare Party officials received the message, they immediately resigned from government. Other parties in the parliament formed a new coalition government and implemented a series of policies, named as the February 28 measures, which would inhibit political Islam from regaining power. (OZYUREK, 2002 : 168) So, in 1998, the Welfare Party and its leader were banned in politics by the then Turkish Constitutional Court.

Just after 1998, Virtue Party was founded as the successor to the Welfare Party but this time with a different leader, Recai Kutan. In the 1999 parliamentary elections Virtue Party placed the third behind Democratic Left Party and Nationalist Action Party. The Virtue Party, as the others headed by Erbakan was banned in 2001 by Turkish Constitutional Court depending on the very same reasons. According to the former officer of Central Intelligence Agency Thomas Patrick Carroll; "Virtue stood accused of two transgressions. The first was that it was the political reincarnation of the old Welfare Party, which the Constitutional Court banned in 1998 for mixing Islam and politics. On this first count, the Court decided in favor of Virtue, concluding that the party was not a continuation of Welfare under another name, but truly a

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different party. On the second charge, however, the Court sided with the Chief Public Prosecutor, finding Virtue a hotbed of Islamism and therefore illegal under the 1982 Turkish Constitution.” (CARROLL, July 2001)

As the reincarnation of Virtue Party, the Felicity Party was founded. However, both the leader of the Party and Felicity Party itself faced opposition by a group of Islamist activists in the Party. Among that a group of Islamist activists two important figures were attracted attention through the way they oppose. The main concern of those two important figures, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul, was based upon Erbakan’s anti-western policies. As the result of this opposition, the group of Islamist activists headed by Erdogan and Gul founded a new Party, the AKP, more suitable to their ideologies.

Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/AKP) – Islamist or Reformist ? Since the ruling AKP government has still been raising suspicion both in international and national circles in relation with its political stand, it is quite reasonable to explain political ideology and political nature of the AKP, whether it is in favor of political Islam or not, whether the Party has any desire to erode the secular agenda, whether it deals with foreign policy issues through sentimental way or not, and whether the AKP uses democracy to attack secularism and laicism or not.

On November 3, 2002, Justice and Development Party received 34.2% of the vote and won 363 of the 550 seats in the parliament. Surprisingly, Republican People’s Party was the only other Party, following the the AKP, to win the parliamentary representation, with 19.4% of the vote and 178 seats in the parliament. This development meant that the major political parties such as Democratic Left Party, Nationalist Action Party and Motherland Party, which ran Turkey during 1990s all failed to have seats in the parliament since they could not pass 10%. According to Michael Rubin “AKP’s victory marked the first time that any party had won an absolute majority in Turkey’s parliament since 1983 when Turgut Ozal’s Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi) took 211 seats of the then 400-seat parliament, and only the second time that Islamists took the reins of government. Never before had an Islamist government won such a substantial block in parliament, though.” (RUBIN, 2005 : 34)

At that point it makes sense to explain the reasons of success of the AKP. Depending on a rough evaluation, it can be argued that some Islamist-oriented Turkish people, voted for the Islamist-oriented parties for the long years, were disappointed since each Party they supported was banned, and in 2002, those people once more attempted to bring an Islamist-oriented political party, called AKP, to power, in a way to take the revenge of their disappointment in the past. So, it can be said that “the AKP is a bottom-up movement which has successfully challenged the authoritarian, centralized top-down paternalism of the political system. This explains how it has managed to sustain political momentum, despite the bans”. (CHISLETT, 2004, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/101.asp>).

However, to explain the reason of the AKP victory by a single factor might be incomplete and even wrong. Instead, the AKP victory should be expressed as the profound discomfort of the lower and middle classes, influenced badly by unsatisfactory plans and the 2001 economic crisis in Turkey. In addition to the lower and middle classes discomfort, the urban voters were also unsatisfied with economic instability, economic bottleneck and corruption. So, the AKP attracted attention of almost all classes in Turkey, not only the Islamists.

(ABROMOWITZ, 2002 : 7-8 ; ONIS, 2005 : 16-19, <http://www.home.ku.edu.tr/zonis/ONIS>) However, since the AKP is regarded as an offshoot of the Islamist-oriented Welfare Party which was banned in 1997 for Islamist activities, the AKP government still raises questions particularly in Kemalist and military groups.

Taking the overall activities of the AKP government during three years into consideration, the Party has proved that it has no intentions in regard to the establishment of political Islam

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in Turkey and the use of religion for political and personal purposes. The members of the Party are aware of the fact that as long as they do not erode secular agenda, do not clash with military, do not challenge the established foreign policy pattern; they would be able to remain in power otherwise their rule would begin to be questioned. Unlike all other Islamist-oriented political parties in Turkey, the AKP strengthened its relations with the EU and Israel; deepened rapprochement between Greece and Turkey; refrained from alienating the military; never eroded the secular agenda upon which Turkish Republic was built; welcomed the foreign investment not only from the Arab world but also from the EU and the U.S.; consulted both civil and military bureaucracy in the times of crises; was cautious about the arrangement of its foreign policy based upon Islam and religious values; never used democracy to attack secularism and laicism; chose moderation instead of extremism and confrontation; avoided challenging the established foreign policy pattern; was susceptible to any critics on sensitive issues directed by the military; never dealt with the foreign policy issues through sentimental way as in the first visit to the U.S.; scored a smooth transformation process; favored engagement and dialogue versus confrontation and containment.

According to the sample cases indicated above, it can be said that since 1950s there have been various Islamist-oriented political parties in Turkish political life. While some leaders of those political parties chose to benefit from religion for their individual purposes, some others chose to benefit from religion to increase the number of their voters. However, the ones who used religion for political or individual purposes had been removed from political life, and none of them succeeded to establish political Islam in Turkish political life. In the following part of this article, the reasons that made the Islamist-oriented leaders fail in establishing political Islam in Turkey will be discussed.

CONSTRAINTS BEFORE SETTING UP OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN TURKEY

Despite the Islamist-oriented political attempts in Turkey, it has been improbable to bring the political Islam to the political center, and those attempts have always remained as “the light attempts” that could never reach success. Although there have been many subjective answers to the question why the attempts to execute political Islam in political center have not reached success, the objective aspect in those answers has always been disregarded. So, in the following part, I will mainly concentrate on being as objective as possible to bring a comprehensive explanation to the matter.

a. Establishment Philosophy of Turkish Republic

Secularism, westernization and nationalism can be regarded as the three main pillars of establishment philosophy of modern Turkey. The first pillar of the establishment philosophy was secularism. The removal of Islam from the prophan world was perceived as one of the requirements of the formation of ‘contemporary level of civilization.’ Since the aim was to create a modern nation-state, Islam turned out to be a threat to this formation. In this secularization process, certain reforms have been materialized such as the abolition of the Sultanate, the abolition of the Caliphate, abolition of Shari’a courts, which were adopted and executed in the Ottoman period.

The second pillar of the establishment philosophy was westernization. The westernization attempts in Turkey date back to the late Ottoman period. Until the Republican era, the Ottoman political elite regarded Europe as an instrument to get rid of decline, but never as a source of ‘civilization.’ On the contrary, the Republican political elite has regarded westernization as a mission of ‘civilization project.’ Throughout the establishment process of the Turkish Republic, westernization has become a legitimizing factor of all the reforms. Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkey, pointed out the ‘contemporary level of civilization’ as the goal to be reached. To meet these standards, in other words, taking part in

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the Western civilized world had become a rationale of the reforms throughout the Republican era.

The third pillar of the establishment philosophy was nationalism. The Republican political elite put forward the nation-state in the heart of the establishment process. A rational, reasonable and modern ruling class was preferred instead of an absolute ruler as in the Ottoman period. This transformation has aimed the transition from a religious community, which is called 'ümmet' in the Ottoman period to a nation, based on common sovereignty. In this transformation process, the notions such as individualism and rationality were inevitable to replace the traditional Ottoman patterns. (see KILINC, 2005 : 5-7, http://www.kgs.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW7/Kilinc_paper_.pdf)

Currently, preservation and continuity of these three pillars, realised at the very beginning of the Republican regime, is closely related with the preservation and continuity of Turkish Republic.

b. Republican Reforms

Republic of Turkey, founded on the land of the former Ottoman Empire in 1923, realized some profound transformations not only in politics but also in societal, religious and judicial fields. In terms of political regime, the Republican regime was adopted and monarchy was removed and democracy was adopted while theocracy was removed. The law, abolishing the Caliphate, was passed in 1924. In the same year, two more significant laws were passed. Those laws abolished the Ministry of Shari'a and religious endowments; all religious orders and all Shari'a courts were closed. Instead of Shari'a laws, Swiss civil code was incorporated. In 1928, Arabic alphabet was prohibited in all schools and Latin script was adopted. Overall education system came under the authority of the Ministry of Education. Along with the 'hat law', all religious symbols in appearance started to be eliminated in Turkish society step by step. In 1928, the Article 2, which stated that the religion of the state, was removed from Turkish Constitution. Along with the judicial amendment in 1937, the principle of secularism was incorporated into Turkish Constitution. The Law of Associations prohibited the establishment of associations based on the sects and order. Penal code prohibited any anti-secularist attacks on the Republican regime and legal system. All those social, political, religious and judicial reforms were intended to build up a modern, laic, secular and democratic Turkish Republic a way from traditionalism and religious trends.

So, the founders of Turkey had the opinion that if religion was allowed to play some role as in the Ottoman Empire period, Turkey would not be able to modernize. (SAEED, 1994 : 196)

c. Turkish Military

Turkish military, a powerful political actor at national level, and in a way the defender of secular, democratic Turkish Republic, has played very important role in overcoming religiously-oriented crisis in Turkey. In 1960, for the first time Turkish military authorities felt the responsibility that they had to execute their mission in regard to growing threats to secular establishment and to the clashes between Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti) and Republican Peoples Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi). In the end, 1960 military coup removed Menderes government and dissolved the Democrat Party. However, the military coup of 1960 could not bring peace to domestic politics and Turkish society. During 1960s the ideological disagreement between leftists and rightists reached its peak. The military coup in 1960 claimed to end political polarization caused by the leftists. Surprisingly, Turkish military found leftist ideology more dangerous than the extreme nationalist and the radical Islamist ideologies.

The military coup of 1980 was intended to suppress ethnic terror, the activities of the left-wing organizations and union movement. However, from the late 1980s onwards, came the rise of political Islam, which was partly the reflection of the current developments in the

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Middle East region, and partly the result of the military authorities' repression that utilised religion against the leftist ideologies.

The attempts of political Islamic groups in Turkey reached its peak with the formation of the coalition government in 1996 led by Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of the banned political parties during 1970s and 1980s in Turkey. After ten months in power, this Islamist-oriented government was forced to resign by the military and with that relatively soft operation, political Islam was launched.

(AYDINOGLU,2003,http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/article.php3?id_article=114)

It should be noted that Turkish intellectuals have had different views on the military interventions in politics. While some think that through three military coups, Generals declared their victory upon Turkish politics and made the society believe that they are the guardians of democracy and secularism; others support the idea that that is because of the interventions of Turkish military that Turkey could not adapt itself to rational democracy and adopt the values such as freedom of thought, freedom of speech, respect for human rights and the rule of law so on. It can not be said that in years, one of these views has become a generally-agreed opinion. So, neither Turkish army has been regarded as a holy community in which the generals are applauded by heart for their support for the well-being of Turkish politics and democracy, nor they have always been criticised severely since they deliberately declared their superiority to civilian politics. Despite this two-fold approach of Turkish people, it could be explained clearly that since 1960, Turkish army has been both criticised and appreciated by different layers of Turkish society, but following each military coup generals left the floor for the civilians again and they have become able to soften their stand towards negative political developments in Turkey.

d. Voluntary Experience in Western Influence

It is quite usual to observe that any state, that was subjected to a foreign state's economic and social exploitation or hegemony, has a direct tendency toward developing a kind of alienation or rather hostility to that foreign power. While the alienation emerges as a refusal of any kind of values of the hegemon foreign power, the hostility emerges as the adoption of some morals to detoriate the morals of hegemon foreign power. Throughout history the mentioned direct correlation has been observed mainly between western powers and Arab countries, western powers and the countries in Africa. Turkey can be counted as the only country in the Middle East region, which was not forced to adopt western influence but invited western values willingly as a result of its westernization / civilization project. If there had been any kind of western compulsory influence; political Islam, as the extension of radical Islamist movements, would have appeared in Turkish politics as a resistance against that compulsion. So, western influence to Turkey was not brought directly by foreign powers, but by its own national wish. This was one of the factors that prevented emergence of a radical Islamic movement or a revolution in Turkey, unlike its Arab neighbors in the Middle East region.

e. Transformation of Islamists

Islamist identity has changed both among the political elite and ordinary people in Turkey. This transformation has appeared in two different ways among political elite and Islamist civilians (Muslim peoples). While Islamist civilians have adopted nationalist line, Islamist political elite preferred to have liberal political stand and they became conservative democrats, as observed in the AKP.

It can be said that while those newly transformed nationalist Islamists give support to the activities of military authorities and nationalist views, they direct severe criticism toward the westernization and European Union policies of the present Islamist-oriented parties. Those nationalist Islamists have been trying to develop a new brand "Turkish-Islamic synthesis". They also back the idea that the new political elite, shaped by Islamic morals associated with

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national features, should come to political power. In fact, it is reasonable that the mentioned nationalist aspect has become more favoured than the Islamist aspect since in Turkey secularism was tried to be saved by nationalism, which is one of the main principles of Kemalism, through inclusion of convergent aspects of Turkish-Islamic patriotism. Metin Heper explains this clear-cut identity transformation process; in which 'being Turk' has become more important than 'being Muslim' in identity definition period; among Islamic groups and Muslim peoples in Turkey in these words : "Empirical data show that increasingly being a Muslim was no longer an essential dimension of the identity of the people. In the late 1960s, when asked, 'How do you see yourselves?' 50.3 percent of the workers in a textile factory in the city of Izmir (Smyrna) on Turkey's Aegean coast considered themselves as 'Turks' and 37.5 percent as 'Muslims.' In a 1994 nationwide survey, 69 percent identified themselves as 'Turks', 21 percent as 'Muslim Turks', and only four percent as "Muslims." (Another four percent said they were 'Kurds', and the remaining two-percent mentioned other ethnic identities.) It was only a century ago that people in that same country had identified themselves as either a 'Muslim' or 'non-Muslim.'" (HEPER, 2004: 5, <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi>)

While Islamist civilians (Muslim peoples) in Turkey have gone under this kind of identity transformation process, transformation of the Islamist-oriented political elite have appeared as more multi-dimensional. This political elite include the Islamist reformists that are not against the European Union process, that do not struggle with the military authorities, that do not want to erode the secular agenda, that favour for multi-lateral relations with the West and Israel; unlike the former Islamist-type. So, it seems rather unreasonable to claim that these profoundly transformed Islamist civilians and Islamist political elite would back the Islamist movements or execute political Islam in Turkey.

In the last part of the paper, I will explain the reasons why Islamist movements in Turkish society and politics will continue to occupy Turkish political agenda forever despite all the prevailing obstacles.

THE REASONS OF POTENTIAL POLITICAL ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS

It should be noted that despite the counter-policies, laws incorporated in Turkish constitution and the firm stand of Turkish military authorities Islamist movements; classified according to five categories according to the most recent study in Africa; (see AL-SAYYID, 2004 : 4-6) upgraded in Turkey particularly after the military coup of 1980. There have been various reasons that feed both political Islam, Islamic movements and Islamic organizations in Turkey. According to Turkish academic Nilüfer Narli, "The Islamist movement is an outlet to express political dissatisfaction with the existing order on the part of the geographical periphery and specific social groups and classes with grievances or different interests." (NARLI, 1999 : 43) Following this explanation, Narli determines five main pillars that provoke Islamic movements almost in each period : center-periphery conflict, class cleavages, regional cleavages, Islamist-secularist conflict, and sectarian antagonism (i.e., Sunnis vs. Alevis). In this paper, keeping these five pillars determined by Narli in mind, we developed a more comprehensive explanation to the revival of Islamic movements in Turkey : Republican Reforms, Lack of Alternative Ideology, The Power Vacuum, Lack of Bourgeoisie, Lack of Methodology in Laicist Policies, Traditional culture of Anatolian Periphery Carried to Political Center, The Political parties Supported by Religious Orders, Islamic Morals to Suppress Communism After 1980 Military Coup.

a. Republican Reforms

It would be a complete subjectivity to support the idea that any system or anyone is perfect. It becomes much more difficult to support the mentioned idea when that system is very different from the established system and when the people, trying to establish that new

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system, are rather amateurish. The very same idea can easily be applied for the republican regime and the founders of this regime, established after the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire. It has always been very difficult to collapse the deep-rooted traditions and build up the new system, and to provide that new system to cover the needs of the people. In this process; severe clashes, criticism, polarity and misunderstanding appear profoundly. If the main subject is religion and belief, the clashes get much severer.

Deactivating Islam religion through locating it only on peoples' faith has been one of the most attacked activities of the republican regime. So, "for the Islamists therefore the republican reforms made it clear that it was not the west but the westernizers and the westernization program that swept them away from the centers of political and social order. They felt excluded and marginalised not only as a group of people but their identity and discourse were de-legitimized in the process of radical secularization embarked on by the republican leaders." (DAGI, 2003, <http://www.policy.hu/dagi/osi-finalreport.htm>) In addition to that, some other reforms in regard to traditions have also been misinterpreted and caused discomfort in Turkish society, and after very long years it has been realised that the rise in Islamic values and Islamist trends in Turkey was the indirect result of the mentioned discomfort. In other words, in the very beginning of republican regime the approach of the Kemalist revolution toward religion has been misunderstood by some religious circles, and in the following years it turned out to be a matter between Kemalists and Islamists. Under this title the probable reasons of prevailing Islamist-oriented attempts in politics will be discussed.

b. Lack of Alternative Ideology

Following the establishment of Turkish Republic, it was believed that the idea of creating secular society and laic state would be managed as long as religion is individualized and as long as religion is isolated from its societal and political functions. The determined target was tried to be realised by the help of laicism, which was aimed at taking religion under state authority. Islam religion, having had multi-dimensional societal and political functions in the Ottoman Empire period, started to be regarded as an element of backwardness in the process of secularization and modernization attempts of Turkish Republic. Religion was removed from the agenda and left behind without any alternative through the policies adopted by Republican Peoples Party government during 1940s.

c. The Power Vacuum

The point that should be paid attention is that by those attempts despite the power of religion in Turkey was downgraded, any other alternative was not put forward to compensate this power vacuum. In the 16th century the west, which realized many reforms in religion, did not refine Catholicism, which was criticised severely by some segments of the society but set up the sect Protestantism to cover the religious needs of almost all segments of society, and this alternative sect -Protestantism- was appreciated by nobles, bourgeois and peasants, in other words by the people from all social classes. However, the individuals witnessing the laicist policies in Turkey, faced to the reality that religion was individualized, isolated from its societal and political functions, reduced to the rural culture. Those people, who had to adapt themselves to the new cultural, social and political values transferred from the west, felt a profound alienation toward those new values. (UGUR, 2003 : 19-20, http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/ehat/past_conferences/papers03/Ugur.doc)

d. Lack of Bourgeoisie

Policy of deactivating religion and not compensating religion with any other alternative ideology has been one of the most important mistakes of Turkish Republic political elite. If this newly-established Turkey had prepared a suitable floor for the development of free enterprise ideology through providing legitimacy for economic initiatives as in the west, the

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influence of religion, dominant in Turkish social life, would have lost its power as the result of the money to be gained by the help of the mentioned free enterprise, and so, an alternative ideology to Islam religion would have developed by itself. However, at that time Turkish governments prevented capital accumulation assuming that this would give damage to state's benefits, and unfortunately this prevention resulted in the non-establishment of bourgeoisie and capitalism. Lacking of Turkish bourgeoisie, which in a way maintained a suitable milieu for the reformation process in the west, supported Kemalist reformists to realize reforms on behalf of bourgeoisie. (AHMAD, 1985 : 225)

e. Lack of Methodology in Laicist Policies

Kemalist reformists realised all the reforms, far from periphery, from top down-type and in an authoritarian way. It would make sense to mention that Kemalist reformists, who made an effort to deactivate religion without restoring it, adapted rather irrational methodological attitude. Unfortunately, Kemalism became superficial in laicist policies since Kemalist ideology only dealt with the symbols of "Folk Islam" (MARDIN, 1993 : 143-156) such as turban, headscarf, gown and veil; instead of going into the roots of the ideology of Islam religion which pushed out shoots in rural areas and which then started to be used as a political instrument. The ones; who were left alone without their identification symbols and whose moral needs were not covered; claimed to enlarge the sphere of influence of Islam religion in Turkish society, and this attempt resulted in their struggle to politicise Islam.

f. Traditional Culture of Anatolian Periphery Carried to Political Center

Unfortunately, Turkish political life has witnessed disturbing discrimination/ between the center and periphery. According to this discrimination, inherited by the Ottoman period, politics can only be developed and executed by the highly-educated, intellectual 'White Turks' for the benefit of ignorant, uneducated, inexperienced people, living in Anatolia, away from the wealthy big cities, located in the center. This discrimination first emerged along with the political activities of the Republican Peoples Party. Bearing the typical feature of the Young Turks' ideology, they did their best to isolate themselves from the people in Anatolia-periphery, and not to integrate the periphery with politics and decision-making process. By doing so, they made the periphery believe that politics is something that exceeds the intellectual limits of the peasants living in the periphery. Although this belief did not cause any de facto hatred among those people, in the following years this resulted in the strong wish of those people to come to political power, as a kind of revenge of this humiliation they faced in the past.

The first hope for the periphery raised in the Democrat Party power. The Democrat Party members, aware of the fact that their Party owes much to the people in the periphery, did their utmost to get those people feel prestigious. It can be said that the first migration wave from villages to big cities (from periphery to center) began in Democrat Party government period. Although the ones, who came to the big cities, could not cover their expectations and satisfy their needs in these big cities, they felt that for the first time they were regarded valuable by the 'White Turks' - center. The second hope for the periphery was seen in 1970, when Necmettin Erbakan founded the National Order Party. Erbakan reinforced small businesses, local merchants, independent craftsmen and traditional economic interests. This paved the way for the Anatolian people to prosper themselves during 1970s. In 1983 the Prime Minister and the leader of Motherland Party was Turgut Ozal. Ozal was successful enough to bring hopeless segments of Turkish society into its fold. Parallel to the prosperity of the Anatolian people, the socio-economic gap between the people in the center and periphery became less visible. Following this development, those Anatolian people began to search for gaining political power depending on their wealth, obtained recently. So, the AKP's success to hold the political power as the only party in the last elections, without

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going into coalition with any political party, should partially be evaluated as the desire of the Anatolian people to continue experiencing the positive transformation in their social and economic status.

In the process of the mentioned transformation from traditional Anatolian periphery to political center, the people did not leave their Islamic morals and traditions in Anatolia, but they also carried their own Islamic and traditional-based morals to political centers, which they began to occupy. Since they are able to practice their traditional Islamic morals in their newly-held political center and since they are quite satisfied with their new socio-economic status it is hardly reasonable to assume that those people have their own hidden agenda to establish political Islam in Turkey.

g. The Political Parties Supported by Religious Orders

According to the law, came into force in 1925, all the religious orders were banned and have been illegal since this date. However, since the establishment of modern Turkey the growing support of the religiously-oriented ruling governments for the powerful religious orders have made them come to surface again. Despite the fact that not all of the religious orders are equally strong, and equally dangerous, there have been two basic religious orders that have raised political concern in Turkey : The Nakshibendi groups (see ÇAKIR, 1990 : 15-60 ; Mardin, 1993 : 204–232) and Nurcu movement. It was proved that the Nakshibendi groups function very well under cover, and these Nakshibendi groups have political ambitions. Despite some think that the religious orders are just for the well-being of Islam religion, in Turkish politics, it has been a well-known fact that one of the Nakshibendi groups helped Necmettin Erbakan to found the religiously-oriented National Order Party (Millî Nizam Partisi - MNP) in 1970 (ÇAKIR, 1994 : 15-24), and the very same Nakshibendi group also supported the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi - ANAP).

Although there have been many religious orders in Turkey except for the Nakshibendi groups, it can be said that only the Nurcu movement seems to be as powerful as the Nakshibendi movement. This group is not considered as a traditional religious order but this can be described as a movement which does not deny but tries to associate Western technical and scientific improvements with traditional Islamic morals. The members of the Nurcu movement are not bound to any sheikh - the leader - as in all religious orders based on Sufism, but they are bound to the Nur Risaleleri, the writings of Said Nursi, the founder of the Nurcu movement. (ÇAKIR, 1990 : 84-87) Also this group has given evidence of political involvement. The Nurcu movement has generally supported the Democratic Party (Demokrat Parti – DP) and its successors the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi - AP and the True Path Party (Do ru Yol Partisi – DYP), although some from the group have preferred to support the ANAP. (ÇAKIR, 1990 : 92-95)

h. Islamic Morals to Suppress Communism After 1980 Military Coup

1980 military coup was targeted at ending a long period of widely spread terrorism and societal chaos in Turkey caused by leftists and rightists, and also suppressing the threat of radical Islam reinforced by the National Salvation Party led by Necmettin Erbakan. However, while military rule between 1980-1983 was successful in controlling and even diminishing the extreme left and right, the Islamic activities grew during the 1980s. Contrary to the military coups of 1960 and 1971, military authorities of 1980 military coup emphasized the importance of religion in the political life of Turkish nation. (TOPRAK, 1990 : 10-15). After the coup of 1980 the military authorities in charge tried to revive the moral values as a counter factor against communism and communist ideology. The president of Turkish Republic, Kenan Evren often referred to Islam and to moral values in his speeches. Besides, religious lessons in school were made compulsory, even for children with a non-Muslim background. On the one hand, the mentioned over-emphasised reference to Islam religion and

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traditional values of Turkish society and on the other hand, compulsory religious lessons at schools have been claimed to have contributed to the development of radical Islam in the following years.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I tried to explain the attempts that were made by the Islamist pedigree governments or Islamist-oriented political parties to include Islamic values in their political agenda since 1950, the reasons that made these attempts resulted in failure and the historical reasons that provoked radical Islamists to install political Islam in some periods. Unlike other Islamist movements and the attempts to bring political Islam into political center in the Middle East region, Islamist attempts have their own peculiarities in Turkey. Turkish republic, as the only democratic and laic country among other Muslim communities in the region, faced Islamist movements as an opposition of state controlled religion, secular regime which radical Muslims evaluated as a process in which religion was extremely limited, Kemalist ideology which deactivated Islam religion in each segment of society and politics and military establishment which puts constraints before religion assuming that any radical Islamist movement would endanger democratic regime in Turkey. However, despite those serious contra-attempts and constraints against any radical Islamist movement, it should be noted that Islamist movements in Turkey never ended, even raised according to the internal or international conditions of the time and will never end. This explanation can be regarded as the pessimist aspect of the issue but when the promising aspect of the same issue is put forward it should be said that despite the fact that periodical Islamist movements in Turkey will never end, it will never be possible to install Islamist regime in Turkey. This was also proved through various sample cases in history.

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