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END OF POLITICAL ISLAM?

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Their future as a credible political force is in doubt.*



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1



From Editor: “End of Political Islam?”

2

“Political Islam in the Last Quarter-Century” by **YUKSEL CAYIROGLU**

9



“Political Islamism and the Teachings of the Qur’an” by **Prof. ZEKI SARITOPRAK**

14

“Downfall of Islamist Perspective in The Islamic World and Turkey: How Do The Minds of Political Islamists Work?” by **MAHMUT AKPINAR**

14

“Is Islamic Theocracy Possible? “
by **YUKSEL CAYIROGLU**

25



“The Rise of Islamophobia and Political Islam” by **MAHMUT AKPINAR**

30

“How Must Islam Be Reimagined, In This Age Of Complexity And Ideological Confusion?” by **AZLY RAHMAN**

36



“Erdogan’s Ambition for the Caliphate and the Failure of Turkish Democracy”
by **AYDOGAN VATANDAS**



END OF POLITICAL ISLAM?

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Aydogan Vatandas

The term Political Islam refers generally to any interpretation of Islam that serves as a basis for political identity and action. More specifically, it refers to the movements representing modern political mobilization in the name of Islam, a trend that emerged in the late 20th century. Political Islam is a distinctive aspect of a broader 20th-century development that is often called Islamic Resurgence, in which Muslims worldwide seek to strengthen their understanding of and commitment to their religion.

The participation of Islamist movements has been one of the most important features of Islamist evolution since the 1990s. For decades, Western analysts and policymakers alike had encouraged mainstream Islamists to embrace the democratic process, de-emphasize their religious origins, and form “normal” political parties. This was a natural fit for these groups. Turkish AKP experience with the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan followed this path. Erdogan identified himself and his party as Muslim Democrat when they came to power in 2002.

Political Islamists in Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Yemen all had opportunities to govern before, during and after the Arab Spring.

Today, questions about the future of political Islam have resurfaced. The political Islamist experience ended up with a military coup in Egypt. The world stood by as a military coup brought down the first-ever

freely elected president in Egypt, who also happened to be a leading member of the Muslim Brothers, putting an end to the Egyptian transition to democracy.

In 2016, while Tunisian Islamist political party Ennahda decided to abandon Islamist politics, rethinking the role of Islam in Government, addressing its own neutralization as a driver of socioeconomic change, and managing its core supporters while appealing to a broader electorate, Turkish AKP with the leadership of Erdogan turned back to Islamist politics with a regional perspective after 2010's, seeking for a leadership position in the Muslim world. Political Islam in Egypt faced a drastic undemocratic challenge, got liberalized in Tunisia, faced restrictions in Jordan but consolidated its power and influence in Turkey. The very reason of difference is that, while Political Islam in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan was not supported by the state establishment and bureaucracy, it has been instrumentalized by the Turkish state establishment to consolidate more power in the Muslim world and the globe. Turkey recently has expanded its influence to Libya's domestic politics.

For many, the end of Political Islam come years ago. Their future as a credible political force is in doubt. In this selection of articles, Politurco aims to analyze the origins, structure, methods, rhetoric of Political Islam in all over the world.



POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE LAST QUARTER-CENTURY

Dr.Yuksel Cayiroglu

Throughout the last quarter century, political Islam was one of the most significant matters which has been emphasized. The paramount reason for this is the tremendous differences between the actions of the political Islamists who take over the power; their former discourses and requests, and the practices and policies they carry out later. As well as this situation receives serious criticism from the laical and seculars, it also caused the religionists to raise eyebrows, who advocates that political Islam is a contradiction to the spirit of religion and also is not a true path or method.

Political Islam is a very complex and extensive matter with regards to having a very long historical process, possessing very different fractions inside, revealing varied experiences during different times and places, and advocates having various ideas and opinions. **However, our purpose here is not to provide thorough information about this matter, but rather try to reveal what kind of damages the political Islam causes to the communities and states in general, and to the Muslims and religion in private.**

Dawn of Political Islam

First of all, it is very important to be reminded about the fact that many individuals, groups, parties, movements, or states, which follow political Islam today and did so in recent history, never consider themselves as being Islamists. On the contrary, the researches, who focus on religious, social and political sciences, named them "Islamist" based on their ideas, reactions, requests, and their behaviors. In this respect, it is not important how the individuals or groups identify themselves; but rather their discourses and behaviors. On this basis, it is possible to detect who were Islamists and who were not throughout the Ottoman dynasty and the Republic period, and also today.

Let's have an overview on how the movement of Political Islam broke out in order to better explain the

analysis and dissections we are going to provide later on. **Ottomans getting weaker against the West; losing many of the wars and having their lands invaded as a result; and on top of that, the appearance of the new allegations that Islam would hinder progress; requests towards westernization and modernization; and the suggestions of orientalism about Islam which cannot be accepted under any circumstances are the factors which played a huge role for pan-Islamism to come into existence.**

And throughout the following years, the enslavement of approximately 80% of the Islamic world by the West, abolition of the caliphate, Muslims getting seriously weaker day by day and falling behind in many fields against the West caused a huge shock and conscience trauma, which eventually revealed new pursuits and different ideas. Being left without a caliph, rootless, deprived of any political identities, and having the status of all out "prisoners", resulted in new and different pursuits by the Muslims, since the situation they experience was a first in the history of Islam and it was explained in the books of fiqh.

Political Islam came into existence as a result of the efforts towards eluding these problems, in other words, primarily ensuring the survival of the Ottoman Empire, and retrieving the power and the government which had been lost. **From this aspect, it is a modern fact altogether, and it is a product of the social and political conditions of the time when it came into existence. Therefore, there are substantial and deep differences between Political Islam and the traditional mentality of Islam.**

Historical Process of Political Islam

Pan-Islamism has been through different phases until today since the day of its existence. Some people approach pan-Islamism in three or fourth phases with respect to various basic changes it has been through in its historical process.

We can confirm the following by referring the details of the matter to the studies carried out specifically on the matter: The main goal of the first era Islamists, who came into existence during the Tanzimat Reform Era and survived until the establishment of the Republic, **was to keep Ottoman and the caliphate alive, defend Islam against the materialist and positivist ideas, prove that Islam in no way hinders progress and on the contrary, it promotes development, and procure the recovery of the community and state by reorganizing.**

According to this period Islamists, the most significant ways to provide these things were to return back to basics and focusing on Quran and Sunna once again; to abandon the imitation spirits and functionalizing the judicial opinion again, to restore the jihad spirit that had been fizzled out and withered; and finally, to provide unity and solidarity throughout the Islamic world which had started to fall apart and crumble. **In other words, the Islamists thought that the regression in the militaristic, economic and political fields, and retrogress in the religious, educational and cultural lives can only be cured by returning to self, and activating the jihad and judicial system together, thus, they intensified their work and efforts over them.**

Without a doubt, these efforts provided clear benefits for aspects such as Muslims not surrendering to the West; preserving the religious culture and Islamic civilization albeit partially; coming up with various answers within the borders of religion against the modernity's challenge; putting up a resistance against Westernization; and also pioneering various recovery efforts in the Islamic world.

Within the quarter-century after the establishment of the Republic, pan-Islamism literally sunk into sleep. However, **important individuals and movements came into existence after the 1950s especially in Iran, Pakistan and Egypt.** Together with the translation efforts of the works of these individuals into Turkish, their Islamic comments and ideas were transferred to Turkey.

• ***The policies adapted in order to imprison the religion only into the conscience of the people by isolating it in social and political fields with the help of the overwhelming and oppressive policies towards the Muslims within the first years of the Republic actually caused the pan-Islamism to rise significantly in Turkey.***

After this date, the path of pan-Islamism changed substantially. Abolition of the caliphate, establishment of modern and nation-states throughout the Islamic world, racism getting ahead of pan-Islamism, establishment of oppressive regimes in the countries where Muslims live, and serious suffering of the freedom of religion and conscience were among the factors.

Goals of Islamists

Despite the fact that Political Islam follows very different paths, and different opinions and movements appear in the countries where they come into existence, it is a reality that it has common goals and characteristic features in essence. The most important goal for the political Islamists, **especially after the 50s and 60s, was to create a social and political order where Islamic law would be able to be practiced completely, meaning in short, to establish an "Islamic state".** Therefore, they used all of their energy to politics and tried to "take over" the state.

The Islamists foresaw this as the only way to furnish the state structure and the social life, which were under the influence of “de-Islamization”, with religious values and Islamic law, and entirely make Islam dominant in life, and started a social-engineering project in order to “shape” the community again.

We can explain the ideology and the goal of the Islamists with the following simple example: For instance, let's say there is a store that sells alcohol in a Muslim neighborhood. According to Islam, the necessary thing to do is to guide and convince the people over there to quit drinking. However, according to the political Islam, the necessary thing to do is to shut down the store in question. Because if it is shut down, the people will not be able to drink.

Modern Nation-State Trial

As a matter of fact, Islamists are not aware how they can “take over” a state or try to adapt what kind of a “superstructure”. Because, just like Wael b. Hallaq insistently lays emphasis on in his book “The Impossible State”, it is nearly impossible to polish a modern nation-state with Islam. Because, the constitution, laws, operating system, political structure, bureaucracy, philosophy, and ideology of today's states possess a nationalistic and secular structure.

And the Islamists, who cannot, does not, or unwilling to see this, couldn't manage to change anything after they took charge, and in fact, they even started to change themselves. In other words, while the Islamists try to take over the power in many countries, modern nation-states actually took over them, and transferred all the negative features it possesses to the Islamists.

From this point of view, the countries where the Islamists were in power, religion was left to the hands of the state, the state was responsible to take care of

the religious needs of the people, the state sit in for the ulama in terms of religion, and while the situation turned out like to be this, the oppression, cruelty, and human right violations continued to exist only with different colors. Furthermore, the “new owners” of the state did not only use the opportunities they received to make the people “more religious”, but also they started to silence, suppress, and if these did not work, they crushed everybody, who were simply dissents, without considering their emotions or opinions. There is no doubt that these practices are a work of strange and contradictory ideas altogether and against the spirits of Islam. While an ideal state should be based on social agreement; consider the requests and wishes of the people; take care of the social, economic and religious needs of the people; and allow them to have freedom of religion, the political Islamists aimed to discipline and make the people become religious by force with the state mechanism they occupied, rather than educating and enlightening the people.

It is a paradox for the Islamists, who continuously criticized and denigrated the state while they were the weak or the minority, to aggrandize the state at a consecrated level after coming to power and care about it so much while never giving any space for the civilian organizations. When a state, which is governed by religionists or the ones who pretend to be, is aggrandized and mythicized this much, the practices of the people who occupy the administrative positions started to be approved, and they were obeyed unconditionally, some of the individuals/groups were sacrificed, and an unsupervised structure were created.

Damages of ‘Political Islam’ on Islam

Unfortunately, the experience throughout the last half century together with the scientific and intellectual accumulation shows us, this created serious negotiations over the interpretation of Islam and general conditions of the Muslims. If we are supposed to explain the negative effect of Political Islam over Islam in a single sentence: together with pan-Islamism, religion became more and more political, ideologized, radicalized,



instrumentalized, neutralized every passing day, and was formed into a reactionary, defensive, monopolist, polarized, marginalized, revanchist, complexed, pragmatist, epic, disconnected, authoritarian, and totalitarian structure.

While it is beautiful to emphasize Quran and Sunna under the “going back to basics” discourse of the Islamist ulama, it is a fact that this eventually intersects with the salafi movements somewhere, and neglects the system of values of religion and fiqh, and also shakes the authority of the follower ulama. Besides, both Quran and Sunna were not tried to be understood as a whole, and these two sacred sources were read within a political plane, and while benefiting from them, the provisions about the worshipping and the morals were rather pushed into the background by acting “selective”.

The Islamists concentrating on politics, governing, and state too much caused Islam to be acknowledged as a political system and ideology; and resulted in the civil fields, which are the focus point of the religious provisions and basically concern the people, family,

community, morals, and values to stay in the background. On the other hand, together with the Islamic values starting to address politics and state, and at the same time, approaching the provisions of Islam as if they are only about realizing the earthly matters, religion was secularized, and the moral principles, wisdom, sufistic experience, worshipping life, and the faith towards the afterlife of the Muslims started to take naïve situation.

- ***Islamists, instead bringing religious morals and values to politics, they inherited today's conflicting, disputing, separating, and polarizing language of politics, and thought nothing of Islam's understanding of the community that is based on brotherhood and unity, and eventually ignited new and new conflicts and quarrels.***

On the other hand, a new party coming into existence in today's multi-party system in the name of religion, and acting like as a defender, practitioner, and representative of religion, causes all of their mistakes to

be appropriated to religion, and eventually various wrong opinions and approaches appeared as a result.

Since the idea of advocacy and fanaticism, which dominate politics and partisanship, continue in the parties founded by Islamists, qualification, merit and justice left their places to favoritism, backing, and factionalism, therefore, Islam was represented in a very bad way. Furthermore, it is a fact that the political Islamists instrumentalize religion, abuse religious values, exploit the religious emotions of the people, turn to hypocrisy in order to show themselves religious, and act Machiavellian in order to legalize every occasion.

Political Islam and Violence

Throughout the last century, the drama and tragedies experienced by the Muslims disturbed the balance of Islam and persuaded them to reactionist attitudes. Factors like west, the US, and Zionism in the international arena, and different groups like leftists and secularists were declared as enemies and opposing fronts were formed. Therefore, the language of anger was used constantly; hostilities were resurrected; emotions towards revenge were revived; however, nobody took into account how Islam should be explained, or how peace will be established in the world.

Furthermore, it is irrefutable that the hate and violence language of the Islamists targeting the West, and the secular or anti-religious people within their own countries, caused radical terrorist organizations to come into existence. In fact, together with the anti-religious attitudes of the states they live in, and the examples such as the Iranian revolution caused the Islamism to consider the idea of "revolution", and thus, rather contributing the state to be more humane, fair, and more democrat, they constantly opposed the state and tried to conquer the powerful positions.

Scientific and Intellectual Shallowness

The Islamists could not gift anything to the humanity since they did not have any realist and sophisticated project about how they would start governing according to the new conditions of the modern era after they come to power, how they would create a relationships with the "others", how they would continue their communication with the West, and how they would realize the principles, provisions, and the goals of religion.

Lack of deep opinions on how the values of the modern era would be welcomed such as globalization, pluralism, and democracy; and how these values would cause discrepancies towards execution of the religion lead them either to the repetition of the "past", or a very bad imitation of the "new".

Efforts of the Islamists towards supporting and improving the products of civilization and culture such as philosophy, ideology, artistic activities, urbanization, education, culture, sports, media, and technology were unfortunately bad at a criticizing level.

Likewise, while the discourses and the desires of the Islamists towards saving the Muslims from submission, superstition, imitation, and captivity, and urging for a new recovery movement are beautiful, the lack of their religious, social, and positive science knowledge caused these claims only to be platitudinous.

On top of that, Islamists being unaware of the fact that politics and governing require a different type of art, technique, and discipline, and thinking that they could solve the problems with the help of religious provisions are amongst the reasons which caused their failure. In fact, Islam, by force of having a universal and flexible understanding of fiqh, could not manage to provide expiatory regulations about governing, and only settled with only imposing various basic principles and doctrines.

Legacy

Despite the political Islamists started their journey with good wills in the name of religion, and offered Muslims good promises, since their methods and projects were full of many glitches and defects, aside from partially beautiful activities, left many disappointments, hopelessness, and victimizations behind.

According to the experiences throughout the last century, piety were not increased; morals were not improved; an Islamic civilization could not be established; and on the contrary, the Islamists, who whose opportunities and potencies were greatly advanced, was exposed to hubris syndrome, and dived into luxury and debauchery in the countries where pan-Islamism advanced and became the power.

At the same time, since some of these Islamists receive the "fatwa", meaning approval, of every kind of cruelty, injustice, and despotism from religion, and tried to "legalize" all of their evil actions, they were far superior than some of the historical and today's dictator regimes.

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POLITICAL ISLAMISM AND THE TEACHINGS OF THE QUR'AN

Prof. Zeki Saritoprak

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the idea of what came to be called Political Islam has been a feature of many political movements in the Islamic world. In our own century the ideology of Political Islam has become increasingly important in the Islamic world and in the West. As I have said elsewhere, I am not comfortable with the term Political Islam for various reasons. To me to speak of Political Islam bifurcates Islam, the singular religion of the Prophet. I have no problem with people talking about Islamic politics, that is the politics that are compatible with Islamic values as this is more about politics than about Islam. That said, given its salience and for the sake of sharing a common language of discourse, I use Political Islam out of convenience. Occasionally, due perhaps to the inability to easily define such terms, Political Islam,

Islamism, and less commonly Islamic fundamentalism are used interchangeably. As a scholar of Islamic theology, I approach this topic from a theological perspective and not from that of a political scientist or a policy expert. In the manuals of Islamic theology, politics, especially in the form of leadership in the structure of a state, takes place in the final chapter under the title of imama, (lit. leadership). This is because in the Shiite tradition, it is a requirement that the head of a state be a religious person from the family of the Prophet or someone who represents the family of the Prophet. While this is a settled matter for Shiites, Sunni theologians argue whether or not it is necessary for the head of the state to be from the tribe of Quraysh, the Prophet's tribe, or not. The main reason for these debates is the famous hadith of the

Prophet which says, “The leaders are from Quraysh.” A longer version of the hadith says “The leaders are from Quraysh. When they judge they judge justly, when they promise they keep their promise. When they are asked for mercy, they show mercy. Any of them who do not fulfill these let the curse of God and angels, and all people be on them.”[1] One can see the importance of qualities of the leader, such as justice and honesty, and the desire to work towards these

ideals for society. It seems that among Sunni theologians, it is universally accepted that while a leader from Quraysh is ideal, a leader who is not of Quraysh who exhibits the qualities of a leader is acceptable. It can be argued that he qualities mentioned in the hadith: justice, trustworthy, and mercy are the most important qualities of a leader. Therefore, anyone who has these qualities is able to be a leader based on the Prophetic hadith. Today, those who adhere to the idea of Political Islam use Islamic principles as an ideological basis for their own political gains. The problem is not political engagement, but it is in making Islam a political ideology. The values of Islam are not used for the betterment of society, but as rhetoric and support for their agenda. This is not nourished by the main sources of Islam, rather it takes its political basis from other modern political and social movements which have a variety of “isms.”

There is no doubt that power is necessary for the establishment of justice and seeking justice or the power to bring justice in a legitimate way, through peaceful means, without causing any injustice has been an ideal principle in the Islamic discourse and tradition. Therefore, politics is not inherently prohibited in Islam. Politics is acceptable as long as it serves the community and organizes venues for the betterment of society. To have such an achievement requires strong, knowledgeable, truthful, righteous, merciful, pious, and skillfull personalities. Mere religiosity is not enough for leadership in a society. **For Islam, a leader should be someone who will sacrifice**

their own personal interests for the interests of their community. Such political involvement is even praiseworthy. However, politics that is based on self-interest can polarize society and is so dangerous to the well-being of the society as a whole that some scholars of Islam have compared this to a savage animal. The early successors to the Prophet including the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs and the Prophet’s grandson Hasan, who is known as the “Fifth Caliph” are considered examples of this piety and justice. After these five, there have been a few pious individuals who were also able to combine piety and politics. One such leader was the Umayyad caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz or Umar II, who is considered by many theologians as the first renewer (mujaddid) of Islam.

• ***Politics and piety can rarely be found together.***
• ***The Prophet of Islam showing such a concern***
• ***for justice and leadership says that “The***
• ***caliphate in my community is thirty years. After***
• ***that, it will be a kingdom.” [2] The narrator of***
• ***this hadith says that Umayyad leaders claimed***
• ***that they were caliphs. In fact, they lied. They***
• ***were kings and the worst of kings.[3] Because***
• ***of this hadith of the Prophet, many Muslim***
• ***theologians considered the first thirty years***
• ***after the death of the Prophet as the era of***
• ***justice, but after these thirty year justice and***
• ***injustice have mixed.***

At times, even great injustices have occurred at the hands of Muslim leaders. The oppression of al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi (d. 714) who historians describe as leader, genius, blood-shedder, orator and known in Islamic history as Hajjaj Zalim or the Wrongdoer Hajjaj, against the members of the family of the Prophet is beyond imagination. Perhaps because of this situation and because of the dangers of political leadership especially when injustice is involved, Sunni Muslims have always looked with suspicion at those in

power because of the fear that they might not be as just as it is necessary to be. Muslim jurists like Abu Hanifa, when they were offered a high position in the court, would reject it out of fear that they would be manipulated by the leadership of the state and forced to do injustice. Similarly, when one of the relatives of Umar, the second Caliph, came to Umar asking for some money from the state budget, Umar responded "Do you want me to meet my Lord as a traitor?" [4]

Therefore, if politics is based on the benefit of a group, a party, or individuals, or the elimination of the other, that political involvement becomes a problem in Islamic teaching. For those in the Islamic world, who with ill-intent use Islam as a vehicle for their own political goals and agenda, the pursuit of power becomes dangerous not just for their own spiritual lives, but for society as a whole. In Islamic countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan there are Islamic movements that seek power through politics. Many of these movements in these countries established so-called religious parties, using the name of Islam whether explicitly or implicitly and contested elections. **The problem with these Islamist political actors is that first a political agenda is set up and then the various sources of religion including Holy texts are used to legitimize and even mystify those parties and personalities in them. The political leader of an Islamic party is propagated as the rescuer of humanity. Messianic roles are also often attributed to these figures. They have been called the Mahdi or Khalifa or Amir of the Believers. Leaders generally enjoy these titles as long as they bring them more votes or on occasion have been known to actively accept the title. If the leader is ignorant and not aware of the religious principles, it can be dangerous to lead people with such messianic views.**

In fact, one of the most important venues of mystification is the idea of messianic expectation. The ambiguity of sources in this regard, especially secondary sources, is used to mobilize people behind a political leader that can be otherwise seen a charlatan.

As the African American novelist James Baldwin said, "It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have." The expected Islamic messianic figure, the Mahdi, can become identified with a political leader. Often in such cases, the country's intelligentsia comes under the sway of the leader and uses its power to spread the word of the leader. On top of this, there is typically hopelessness and dissatisfaction with corruption and people become easily influenced by ideas that seem to confirm their fundamentally held beliefs. Such mixing of Islamic messianic hope with politics leads to utopian thought and intern leads to destruction of individuals and communities.

One of the first instances in recent memory of such expectations is perhaps most starkly seen in the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 by members of a paramilitary organization led by Juhayman al-Otaybi a former Saudi military figure turned ultra-fundamentalist who believed that his brother-in-law was the Mahdi. He interpreted a hadith on the Madhi to influence people that the Mahdi was among them and used this as the basis for his claims. He used the Islamic calendar to his advantage saying that with the new century, a new renewer had arrived. That is why the group seized the grand mosque on the first of Muharram, 1400AH. After his group seized the mosque, a siege ensued, and hundreds were killed and injured. Though the ideology of al-Otaybi was outside of mainstream political Islamists, it illustrates just how easily such ideas can become destructive. In more recent times, we have seen groups such as ISIS using similar messianic ideas to further their own political goals. Additionally, even today, there are followers of Islamic heads of state who believe that their leader is the Mahdi.

Despite the initial hope that a moderate Islamic government, could lead to the betterment of society, generally the ideas espoused by Political Islam have tended to become totalitarian in nature and those who are involved with Political Islam are generally obsessed

with power that the use of force to compel people to follow specific Islamic principles such as the prohibition of alcohol, even for non-Muslims. In many cases these extreme obsessions ignore the foundational principles of Islam that basically consist of public welfare, compassion, justice, and wisdom. There is no public welfare in killing of individuals. Any violence will go against the principle of mercy. Similarly, the Islamic principle of wisdom requires things to be done wisely with mercy, harmlessness, and through justice. These four principles actually complete each other. Nevertheless, these seem to be absent in the agenda of Political Islam.

A prominent Islamic scholar of the last century, Said Nursi, when speaking of his own experience presents a good example of many people who get involved in politics. People who are initially attracted to get involved in politics for the right reasons but find it impossible to live up to the Islamic ideals of the political life. This man was Said Nursi. In the beginning of his career as an Islamic scholar and theologian, he thought that through politics, he could serve the religion of Islam. He met with various leaders and political figures but what he saw of the extreme level of polarization frightened him. He says that such polarization would cost him his spiritual life and go against his understanding of Islam. He specifically said there was a Satan-like person in one party and the leader of that party praised that person as if he is an angel, just because he is a member of his party. The same leader spoke of another person in the opposition party who is angelic in quality as a Satan-like person. After seeing this nature of politics that makes a Satan an angel and vice versa, he coined his famous statement "I take refuge in God from Satan and politics." After this he left politics, he voted, but he did not pursue an active political agenda or take a political stance. When he voted, he said he voted for the better of the two parties.

In contrast to proponents of Political Islam who believe that they protect Islam, Nursi believed that Islam did not need to be protected by the power of politics. Islam, in his view, was like the Sun; no threat could extinguish its light. Islam was in the hearts and minds of millions and, to Nursi, was alive in the rhythm of the universe. He was confident that Islam could bring bliss to the stressed hearts of human beings in our modern age. In his letter to his students on the occasion of laylat al-qadr (the Night of Power or Honor), he mentions that, under the title, "An Important Matter Came to the Heart on the Night of Honor," since humanity had witnessed the inhumanity of the two World Wars and the ugly face of politics, which costs the lives of tens of millions of people, "humanity will seek for eternal life and the signs of this search, to him, started in the West, in America, and in the North. Since this is a great need of humanity, "the Qur'an gives good news about eternal life and eternal bliss and cures all spiritual sicknesses by mentioning in thousands of its verses and proving, with certain evidence, the existence of the eternal life. Humanity will find the cure for its sickness in the Qur'an, and the Qur'an provides this cure, that is if humans do not bring destruction upon themselves before the end of time." [5] Political Islam prevents people from meeting with this Qur'anic message as if the Qur'an is their own property. Instead of promoting the idea of the Qur'an, the shad of politics covers the Qur'an. This is why it becomes very difficult to serve Islam through politics. Therefore, Nursi wanted to establish a civil society and cure the ills of society rather than developing an Islamic political agenda. This is in direct contrast to practitioners of Political Islam who often try to devolve the institutions of society to meet their own needs.

As understood from the Qur'an, one third of which is about the afterlife, the goal of every human being should be the attainment of the eternal bliss of the afterlife, whether the person be a Muslim or not. This requires compassion and wisdom. No politics could replace such an essential goal of humanity and no gain be it political or monetary can be equivalent as such a gain which the Qur'an describes as "the mighty triumph" in at least thirteen verses.

- *One of the problems with Political Islam, and other Islamic political movements, is in using selective Qur'anic verses to support their views and to demonize their opposition. They ask how the opposition can go against the will of God and violate the ideas they point to in the Qur'an. Such absolutism leads not space for debate even when the opposition is better versed in the Qur'an and in Islamic theology and jurisprudence than they are. This brings us to the danger of generalization.*

The Qur'anic verse which says: "No soul shall bear another's burden" (6:164), clearly teaches that none should be blamed for the mistakes of others, whether they be relatives, political allies, simply fellow nationals, etc. Unfortunately, modern Islamic nations whether they are Islamic or secular, ignore this Qur'anic injunction. As a result, human rights are violated, wars are fought and human lives are loosed. This can also lead to the belief that the power of the state is sacred and the elimination of any opposition to that is justified. Therefore, in this view, human beings can be sacrificed for the sake of the state. Their property can be confiscated and given to the state. This goes against the Qur'anic principle which sees human beings as a universe and every individual human being is responsible for his or her own actions. It is unfortunate to see today in Turkey, the torture, purging, and the violation of all human rights of

anyone remotely associated with the Hizmet movement by a ruling party that is supposed to be a model for moderate political Islam. This has shown the ugly and disgusting face of politics in the name of Islam.

Political Islam need not lead to such negative outcomes, the example of Tunisia bears this out. In fact, in moderate principles that some groups began with can be a model for a positive engagement with the modern state. What Political Islam needs is the religiosity that is found in the heart and not rhetoric and the ideology of power. A key idea in my book *Islamic Spirituality: Faith and Practice for the Modern World* is that piety is in the heart, as the Prophet said pounding his heart three times "Piety is here, piety is here, piety is here." This piety and religiosity is what leads to peace, serenity, and harmony. A statement from the famous Mauritanian Islamic scholar, Abdullah bin Bayyah, puts it succinctly: "Religiosity is like energy. Through energy one can have prosperity, greenness, water, fertility, and life. On the other side, it can be used to make destructive bombs which lead to destruction and demolition. That is how religiosity is. We attempt to make of religiosity prosperity and life instead of destruction and demolition. We want to cooperate with all those who believe in these thoughts so that we can take humanity to peace. We may not be able to achieve it, but it incumbent upon us to try." [6]

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[1] Al-Tayalisi, Al-Musnad, Nos: 968 and 2247. The hadith is also found in Ibn Abi Shayba, al-Musanaf, No. 32388.

[2] al-Tirmidhi, al-Sahih, No. 2226.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibn Sa'd, Al-Tabqat, v 3, pg. 230.

[5] Nursi, Sozler, in ibid, p. 60.

[6] Speech given at "Religious Freedom, Minority Rights, and Apostasy in Islam," Georgetown University May 14, 2012.



DOWNFALL OF ISLAMIST PERSPECTIVE IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND TURKEY: HOW DO THE MINDS OF POLITICAL ISLAMISTS WORK?

Dr. Mahmut Akpınar

The sense of political Islam showed up by imitating the ideologies in the west, and while it defends Islam, it is also a modernist approach as well. They use Islamic concepts throughout their discourses; **they state that their aim is “Muslim and virtuous community”;** however, **their methods are modernist, meaning western style.** It is emergent; it only came to light within the last century. **The methods are not applicable to Islamic principles and fundamentals.** Together with a competitive and challenging method, and by referring to dialectics; using polemics; they try to reach to their Islamic goals by taking over the government/ state

through politics. They refer to the method of deduction and they are the fans of bolting from the blue. They try to take the power/state/government.

Raising perfect human beings, advice and guidance are not the priorities of the Islamist approach. On the contrary, **they use religious fundamentals and Islamic values for the political goals, and they make party propaganda with a mixture of Islamic concepts over them.** In most cases, they experience leader fetishism and they view their leaders as “the savior of Islam”, “the only solution”, “emir of the believers”. Aside from

the ones who accept the leader as the “messiah”, and “caliph”, there are also the ones who believe that the leader is “the person who carries the qualities of Allah in full” [1]. There are also partisans who interprets not voting for the party or the leader as “objecting the religion”, “huge sin”, “cooperation with Israel”, “serving to the masons”.

Essentially, political Islamism came to existence in the subcontinents of Egypt and India. It was exhibited as a solution to the defeat of the Islamic world against the west by the intellectual people who were looking for a way out. A few Islamist intellectual such as Jamal al-Din al Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Fazlur Rahman Malik are accepted as “political Islamists”. Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) movement in Algeria, Al-Nahda movement in Tunisia under the leadership of Rached Ghannouchi, Hizbul Islam in Pakistan, the political line of MNP-MSP-RP in Turkey are all accepted as Islamist movements. In respect of the first two terms, although **AKP (Justice and Development Party)** had been viewed as a “conservative-democrat” movement, as of the “mastership” term (after 2010), they might be identified as a political Islamist party.

Despite using traditional methods and adopting proper attitude coherent to the strands of Islam, due to the fact they aim to have government/state/power and using religion for the interest of politics, the movement of Ihvan’u Muslimin (Muslim brothers) and derivatives are accepted as political Islamists as well.

Islamist movements which had been started to be effective in the 20th century are widely spread throughout the Islamic world today, and they are quite effective.

A considerable amount of masses throughout the Islamic communities believed that the social and political problems would only be solved by Islamist governments to take power together with Islamic ways and methods, and they had been conditioned towards the facts that Muslims would get rid of the problems related with the regime/system, and the flaws (interest

for money, immorality, bribe, education problems, social and family problems etc.) which had been caused by ‘modernity’ would be overcome.

For the last hundred years, this mentality, which was effective throughout the Muslim states and communities, has been dissolving, draining away, and started to be far from being a hope for the people.

Orientation towards authoritarianism during the short termed Mursi government in Egypt, which was supported by Ihvan, efforts towards ignoring other actors, and consecutively the coup staged by el-Sisi caused political Islamist method to be questioned. Political Islam has been practiced strongly by a group of aristocratic religious functionaries, who have influence over the state, since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979.

However, one can argue that Islam and the related practices in Iran, where the state is governed by Islamists, are far behind Turkey. The Iranian regime, which has been in the hands of Mullahs together with very effective tools, could not manage to generate a virtuous Muslim community.

On the contrary, it is obvious that a generation is being raised in Iran, who only obliges the mandatory style conditions but admires the West under a bohemian web, far away from Islam and its practices. The distance between the state and the people is growing just like it was during the Single Party era in Turkey. Despite the state and the administration try to constrain Islam to the community with the help of public opportunities and tools, the community, especially the youth are falling apart from Islamic life, and the beliefs cannot travel to the core, but only manages to stay inside the envelopes as an image.

What is the source of this mentality?

This mentality originates from a deductive approach. It originates from the mentality of first conquering the states and institutions, then dominating the people, not advising Islam and Islamisation, act of showing the true path, spreading charity and beauty, or raising perfect human beings,

It was considered that the same thing would happen in Egypt. The government under the leadership of Mursi supported by Ihvan-u Muslimin rose to power with the support of liberals first, and some other different masses, too. However, they started to be authoritative and establish an "Islamic state" without considering the conditions of the country, the requirements of democracy, the requests of the people. The Islamist AKP of Turkey encouraged Mursi and his friends towards being authoritative. Ihvan rose to power, but Egypt was not politically Islamized. On the contrary, there had been a coup, the people have been divided, and have faced with terrible suffering and conflicts.

The results of a century old testing and practices are becoming clear; what we have been witnessing is the downfall and failure of the Islamist perspective throughout the Islamic world and Turkey.

The political Islamists dissertations could not manage to generate virtuous communities or ethical generations. However, Muslims have been suffered greatly and targeted by the cruel Islamist Governments. Muslim politicians also become dirty, retrogressed, and lost their reputations and trusts in the public's eye.

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[1] http://haber.rotahaber.com/ak-partili-vekil-allahin-vasiflarini-erdogana-yukledi_430226.html, 27.1.2014

[2] According to a research made on 32000 high school freshmen in 154 high schools in 39 cities; every 45 of 100 students stated they smoke, 32 use alcohol, and 9 use drugs. Smoking is widespread in vocational schools while alcohol is more common in Anatolian high schools. <http://www.ensonhaber.com/liselerde-uyusturucu-alkol-tuketimi-had-safhada-2013-11-03.html>, 27.1.2014



IS ISLAMIC THEOCRACY POSSIBLE?

Dr.Yuksel Cayiroglu

Whether or not the political model of Islam is theocratic, it has taken an important place in Islamic political studies. It is distinguishable that the “Islamic state” is identified with theocracy when the studies carried out by the Westerners on this subject are observed. However, **the Islamic scholars persistently reject this observation and point out that theocracy has nothing to do with Islamic ruling by no manner of means.**

There have been numerous conflicting studies around the subject up until today. By “theocracy”, the people comprehend that it is a government system based on religion and it is implied that religion intervenes in the state. However, it is impossible to assert that every single state that has a relationship with religion will have theocratic characteristics.

Therefore, it is important to confirm the limits, form, and nature of this relationship. Except that it is also extremely difficult.

Another reason for the exposure of different approaches on this subject is the inability to distinguish theory from practice. It is not possible to talk about a theocracy that is well understood and performed by the West when the first-period Islamic practices and principles on the provisions of the Quran and Hadith about ruling are observed. However, it will be concluded that they draw close to theocracy to a great extent if we focus on some of the heads of state in history and the regimes of the countries like today’s Iran.

It is worth reminding the following before getting into the subject: **The provisions imposed by Islam on**

public law and especially on state governance do not go beyond some basic principles and guidelines. Moreover, the “Islamic political theory” that was presented around the “caliphate” and “imamate” concepts during the fourth and fifth centuries is substantially based on judicial thought. And the influence of social and political conditions of the period on this judicial perspective is an unquestionable fact. Similarly, when the Islamic states established throughout history are observed; it is impossible to deny the fact that other foreign states and cultures had a significant influence over their political organizations.

Considering all of the above, it gradually gets difficult to provide an answer for the following question: “What is the political model Islam prescribes?” Furthermore, it is difficult to state that there is a particular model prescribed by Islam. It is always possible to habilitate different political models to Islam. In this respect, getting to work by providing an answer to the following question of Ali Bulac will have a significant contribution towards understanding the subject properly: “What is not the political model of Islam?” (Ali Bulac, Islam and Democracy, p. 8)

As it is understood from the article, we have written previously titled “Autocracy and Islam”; no form of totalitarianism may be in harmony with Islam. And it is also not possible for theocracy, which constitutes an important sort of totalitarian governments, to be recognized by Islam and be in harmony with Islamic principles.

Definition and Character of Theocracy

Theocracy, which is a Greek word (theokratia), is the combination of the words “teo”, which means God, and “kratos”, which means “to rule”. Thus, theocracy refers to a divine/deific ruling as the etymology of the word suggests. More clearly, theocracy is a form of government that grounds its legitimacy on God and predicates the source of its power and rulership to God also. In this respect, it identifies and determines the

ultimate source of the state authority rather than presenting a form of government such as democracy or monarchy fundamentally.

Ensuring legitimacy has always been the primary objective of all political systems and rulers due to the fact that the heads of state and governments cannot establish sovereignty over the people and make them obey as long as they cannot manage to express themselves on a legitimate and legal basis. And there is no doubt that religion is the most sacred and supreme source of legitimacy. This is the reason for many of the heads of state tried to legitimize themselves by putting on cloaks of religion and attributing their rulership to a divine source since the first periods of history. At the same time, they also prevented their actions to be questioned by alleging that they ruled in the name of God.

Not all the theocratic regimes are all the same just like not all totalitarian regimes are the same. For example, some of the rulers like Pharaoh claimed that they were divine and attributed with some divine titles, established a complete hegemony over their people and nearly enslaved them. Similarly, it is possible to see throughout the theocracy-dominated states that some of the rulers claim they are the son of God, some are representative of God, some are the shadow of God, and while some are specially selected by God, some are ruling on behalf of God. And the ruling is recognized as the duty of the religious functionaries and the political decisions were left to their discretion as well as the religious decisions.

Although it seems that there are some differences between them by all appearances; their common purpose is to prevent any questioning, disobedience, and opposition by placing themselves and the state into a place that is impossible to reach and touch because it is not possible for the decisions and actions that are considered coming from a “high and supreme authority” to be criticized.

Rulers, who are the so-called representatives of God and use the authority they receive from God, would not assume any responsibility for their actions inherently. Moreover, they would even legitimate their oppression and cruelty in a genius way and find a cover for their mistakes and errors due to the fact that they place themselves in a transcendental position where their actions cannot be questioned, attribute holiness to themselves, and regard themselves as excellent and perfect.

Needless to say, no one would have the courage to question these tyrants who seize even the divine authorities aside from every kind of political authority.

Theocratic States Established in History

It will be obvious that the theocratic perceptive prevailed for long centuries when the states established in history are observed. The fact that gods were depicted as the kings on their thrones in general in many archaic cultures and civilizations and many states were ruled by the god-kings shows this. The kings, who wanted to ground their rule on a divine source, described themselves with the titles such as “the master of the sky and the earth”, “the shadow of the God on earth”, “ruler of all countries”.

To provide an example, many scientists stated that Hittite and Urartian states were governed by a theocratic system. The Hittite kings regarded themselves as the representatives of God on earth and alleged that all of their actions were carried out according to the will of God. The people accepted that they took their power and rulership from God and believed that they were gods even after they were deceased. Those who dared to oppose the orders of the kings supported by divine powers were sentenced to death since it was out of the question to do so. The

situation was no different with the Urartians. They also regarded themselves as the representatives of God and claimed that they were protected by the gods and they were the servants of the gods. Thus, they became absolute rulers of the country and decorated with unlimited authorities. (See Veli Unsal, Eski Anadoluda Teokratik Devlet Duzeni / Theocratic Government System in Ancient Anatolia)

Various civilizations and empires established throughout history had shown similar characteristics. For example, the city-states in the Sumerians were ruled by the “patesi” who were priest-kings one each. They regarded themselves as the representatives of God on earth and monopolized all kinds of political and religious authorities. And the former Japanese emperors, who regarded themselves as the son of the sun, grounded their rulership on a divine origin and even divinized themselves.

The emperor was regarded as the son of the sky and believed to be entrusted with organizing the world in ancient China. Another example of theocracy was emerged in India, which has one of the oldest civilizations. Here too, the state was governed by the oracles and religious functionaries (Brahmans), who are at the top of the caste system, and those in the lower layers were forced to obey the Brahmans. Because, according to their belief, the Brahmans had some privileges due to the fact that they were created from the mouth of God.

Similarly, the “kisas”, who were the Sassanid emperors, were regarded as having divine power and granted significant privileges. There were seen as almost superhuman beings. Thus, the people were not able to casually come into their presence and even not even speak of their names. Their sovereignty was regarded as a sacred and non-transferable right for the dynasty members who descended from the kisas. Similarly, the Zoroastrian religious functionaries monopolized important power, influence, and unlimited authorities, and represented the highest offices of the state.

Certainly, the states where the reference of the rulership is sought in the heavens and the rulers played the role of a god-king are not limited to the ones mentioned above. Similar ideas and practices exist in countries such as Ancient Egypt, Babylon, Rome, and Tibet. As we have already pointed out, it is a fact that some of the sultans who ruled in the Islamic geography attributed some kind of sanctity to their rulership in order to strengthen their authority and attributed some titles for themselves such as “the shadow of Allah on earth” or “the ruler of Allah on earth”. We would like to content ourselves with these examples in order not to be wordy and focus on the church which immediately comes to mind when theocracy is mentioned.

Church and Clergy Class

When it comes to theocracy, many will immediately think of Catholic Christianity and church administration that dominated the Middle Age. As a matter of fact, the theoretical studies about the theocratic state have been rather shaped around this. Moreover, one of the most important reasons for the emergence of the secular and laical state is the totalitarian rulership style of the theocratic state that dominated the Middle Age, which basically disregards human rights and freedoms.

The church made good use of the political vacuum that emerged after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century and became stronger day after day. It completed its religious and bureaucratic organization and covered the whole West like a network especially after the 8th century. In this respect, it replaced Rome which was almost being destroyed. The church also possessed large quantities of property and land and seized political authority as well as spiritual authority. Such that the church reached a power to bring the kings to power, crown them, and dismiss them when necessary. The kings had to obey the Pope even though they reigned on their own territory. Because the church gained an

indisputable superiority against the kings and earthly powers.

Of course, it was not easy for the church to be organized until it reached to the towns and villages and gain a serious strength in the political, economic, and military fields besides religious authority. Therefore, it entered into endless conflicts and wars with the kings and developed a new Christian doctrine that gave the church and clergies very serious authorities.

Catholic Christianity claimed that the Roman church was built on the tomb of Peter, and therefore, the powers, which were given to Peter by Jesus, were transferred to it. Paulos developed the doctrine of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and suggested the church was under the protection of the Holy Spirit and received revelation through it. Moreover, popes were regarded as the deputy of Jesus and the successors of Peter in Catholic Christianity, it was claimed that they were protected from mistakes (innocence), and they were given the authority to decide on behalf of Jesus and legislate on behalf of religion. And the authority to interpret the Bible was monopolized by the church.

In addition, Paul’s comments also presented that the church was universal and salvation outside the church was not possible; it was accepted that the church could forcibly convert anybody into religion and also make anybody abandon the religion too. It is thereafter that the church itself did more of the Roman oppression and cruelties in the first years of Christianity in order to transubstantiate the people and punish those who opposed it. It killed tens of thousands of people in the inquisition courts it established. It also executed the punishment of the people, who were punished by death, by burning them alive. It was thought that the burning of those who reject Christianity would protect them from the fire of hell.

The authorities of the church did not remain exclusive to religion. It was asserted that one of the two swords mentioned in the Bible that Jesus was given to indicates spiritual power, while the other one

indicates the earthly power. These swords were entrusted to the popes by God according to the Church. And they held the spiritual sword inside their own hands, while they started giving the material sword to the emperors. This was perceived as a way of the pope's approval and blessing of the state. In other words, the kingdoms started to take their legitimacy from the church. As a result of this, the kings were forced to recognize the authority of the pope and submit to his wishes and orders.

Moreover, Christianity, which stands on the distinction between the soul and body, stated that the divine power representing the soul is superior to the earthly power representing the body, just like the soul is superior to the body. And this naturally revealed the belief that the church was actually superior to the state and put the state under the church's order. All of these show that the church did not only have the keys to the heavens but also held the earthly power. And all of these gave rise to the dominance of theocracy.

Dawn of Secular State

As it can be understood from the short explanations made so far; theocracy is nothing more than a form of totalitarianism wearing the cloak of religion. As a matter of fact, it was much easier for the leaders, who grounded their legitimacy and legality on a divine source and put themselves under a sacred and untouchable armor, to exploit and dominate their communities. In other words, in theocratic regimes, the rulers made religion a very useful tool in order to cover up their cruelty and injustice and to avoid responsibility. Because the power and authority derived from religion are far beyond material power and also the state power. Although it is possible to force the people into certain actions with material force; it is not possible to convince them and dominate their conscience. This can only be achieved with religion.

The fundamental reason for the Western world rightfully opposing theocracy instead of embracing a secular and laical state structure is the painful experiences they had throughout centuries. Indeed, there is no way for this political regime, where there are no transparency and control mechanisms, rulers do not answer to anybody, and dogmas rule instead of reason and science, can neither provide justice nor protect people's fundamental rights and freedoms. For this reason, the fight against theocracy is justified. It should not be forgotten that this fight is not against religion but against the church.

However, this secular state is reactive because of the fact that it emerged as a result of an uprising. Therefore, the balance could not be maintained here just like in all movements of reaction. Extremism at one point gave birth to another, and religion was pushed to be removed from the political and even public fields altogether. Some countries perceived secularism as anti-religious and the political elites turned to a totalitarian perception in order to establish a secular regime and exerted serious pressure on their communities. Thus, this time the freedom of religion and conscience was threatened in the name of secularism; human rights were violated and the feelings and thoughts of the members of the society were ignored.

Is Islamic Theocracy Possible?

In the first place, it should be stated that it is wrong to judge that theology has a similar understanding based on only religion and the relevance with God. On the contrary, theocracy emerged when the true religious tradition was receded, and the revelation sustained a pause.

Islamic principles do not make way for theocracy by no means. For once, it is impossible for any head of state to act in the name of Allah, claim holiness, and avoid responsibility in Islam.

Abu Bakr strongly objected being called “caliph of Allah”. If some sultans used this name in the later periods and aimed to justify all their actions with this name; this is undoubtedly an expression of a deviation from Islamic principles.

Islam did not make anyone superior to another including the rulers and religious functionaries. There is no privilege and immunity for any individual or group in Islam. On the contrary, since all citizens are equal before the law; everyone is questioned for their actions, taken into account and punished when they are found guilty. In Islamic history, it is possible to encounter many events in which heads of state appeared before the judge with an ordinary citizen and lost the case.

There is no absolute obedience to any person and no other coterie in Islam except Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (PBUH). Obedience is required only in what is good (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 91, Number 363) Because no ruler in Islam, including the head of state, is innocent. They can also make errors and mistakes, and they can resort to cruelty and injustice. They can attach priority to their own interests before the people’s affairs. In all these cases they lose their right to be obeyed.

Aside from obedience, the people who saw that their rulers deviated from rights and justice were advised not to remain silent and fulfill their responsibilities according to the circumstances. This responsibility is fulfilled sometimes with advice, sometimes with warning and injunction, sometimes with civil disobedience, sometimes with opposition and resistance. Because the rulers are required to be treated with “emr-i bi'l-ma'ruf nehy-i ani'l-munker” which is clearly stated in the Quran. In fact, our Prophet (PBUH) considered **the greatest jihad is telling the truth alongside the cruel sultan.** (Al-Tirmidhi, fiten 13)

According to Islam, rulership is not a sacred right that is in the hands of a certain dynasty. On the contrary, rulers are determined on the basis of election, council and bay'ah (homage). Political participation is essential in Islam. Therefore, the head of state receives his legitimacy not from God but from the people. He rules with the authority of the people in the name of the people, not in the name of God. In cases where he loses his competency and abandons the law, he is dismissed by the committee called ahl al-hall wal-aqd which is formed by the prominent ones among the people.

In Islam, there is no church or clergy as in Christianity, which had privileged rights and claims on material authority as well as spiritual authority. Scholars are civilians. They cannot intervene in the government. When they take a public duty in the state like other citizens, their rights and responsibilities are limited only to the duty they assume. They have the authority of judicial opinion. But the judicial opinion only binds the interpreter of Islamic law. There is no obligation of others to take action according to this judicial opinion.

The theocratic system is a kind of dictation regime. Therefore, freedoms cannot be mentioned in a place where theocracy exists. However, the most important objective of sending the prophets is to make the people free and independent and prevent them from being slaves. Indeed, there can be no genuine religiosity in a place where people cannot freely use their will and preferences as free individuals.

One should avoid being the slave of all kinds of tyrants and dictators in order to be a servant of Allah (SWT). According to Islam, Allah is the only entity that a human can salute and submit to.

In addition to all these, it is a fact that the most fundamental principles such as committee, justice, rule of law, and merit which are put forth by Islam about rulership will be violated in a theocracy-dominated state. It is unthinkable for a leader who claims to rule in the name of God would value the ideas of others and adhere strictly to the rules of law. Similarly, in such a state, public duties will not be given to the competent, but to those who obey unconditionally. After all, there will be nothing left off justice.

It may be argued by some that the application of Islamic law will limit freedoms, cause certain rights violations, and thus result in a theocracy. However, this is not true. As we have already mentioned, the provisions of Islam regarding public law are very limited and these are universal and human principles in general. The detailed provisions on this matter are left to the judicial opinion.

In addition, Islamic provisions are only applicable to Muslims. Non-Muslim citizens live according to their own beliefs and laws and are judged accordingly. Indeed, this is clearly stated in the Medina Constitution. Likewise, it is a historical fact that minorities are granted freedom of religion and conscience in Islamic states. The reason why Muslims are held responsible according to Islamic law is not the demands and pressures of the state and the rulers in this direction, but the demands and desires of Muslims in the direction of living according to the religion they believe. Being a Muslim is completely left to the independent choices of individuals. At the point of converting into the religion, such compulsion like the church asserts is out of the question. The people who are forced to convert into a religion without their consent will only become a factious and not a Muslim.

Consequently, theocracy is by no means a form of government that conforms to the fundamental principles of Islam. If religion becomes a means of oppression, it will be the religion that will suffer first and foremost. From this point of view, it can be understood how the political Islamists, who aim to make the people religious with the state apparatus they have seized, are in the wrong way. Some states that emerged with the claim of Islamic governance, the more they approach theocracy in terms of their management style, the more they will be away from Islam.

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A grayscale photograph of a person holding a white sign. The sign features a crescent moon at the top, followed by the text 'KEEP CALM I'M MUSLIM NOT A TERRORIST' in a bold, sans-serif font. The background is blurred, showing other people and signs, suggesting a public demonstration or protest.

KEEP
CALM
I'M MUSLIM
NOT A
TERRORIST

THE RISE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA AND POLITICAL ISLAM

Dr.Mahmut AKPINAR

We are witnessing the rise of the extreme right and fascistic disposition once again in the western world. Are Europe and the West which produced Hitler and Mussolini, and spread the racial ideas throughout the world returning back to their old codes?

Will the system of the western countries manage to continue, which was built among themselves based on justice, human rights, rule of law, and equality after World War II, specifically not to live through once again the war's destruction, havoc, and the bloody events, or the turnabout is about to start?

There has been a significant increase with the votes of the extreme right-winger parties for a while now. The racial discourses and the exclusionist language which alienates the foreign immigrants are being accepted at a concerning level in the western countries. And the politicians who oversee the acceptance of this language in the community, tend to use it for populist reasons. In fact, some of the liberal parties tend to give nationalist statements by solidifying their attitude, just not to lose votes to the right-wing parties.

So, why there is an increase with the hostility towards the foreigners, especially towards the Muslim immigrants, and Islamophobia?

Significant Increase with the Hostility towards Muslim Immigrants

After the fall of the USSR and the Warsaw Treaty Organization, NATO and the West left without any enemies and needed a new one. The September 11 attacks indicated the West that the enemy they needed for was the "Muslims" and "Islam". Huntington's Clash of Civilizations, and the thesis which was a resource to the book identified the Islam and the Muslims as a community who are not capable of building a relationship, integrating, and furthermore stated as "an obstacle to the western civilization", and as "an enemy". Together with the September 11 attacks, which harbored many question marks and many points

which needed clarification, the new enemy was made clear, and new strategies were activated according to this new enemy. Fukuyama's The End of History virtually made the West speak about their ego. Their biggest enemy Communism, and the country representing the ideology had fallen. The western civilization saw themselves as a power to last forever without enemies and had reached perfectness. The then allies such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and the groups originated from the Saudis, were provoked towards the new enemy. **Should there be a date for the modern Islamophobia, September 11th could be accepted as the milestone.**

After September 11th, Islamist radical groups were held responsible for the attacks happened in London, Madrid, and Paris, and the insecurity spread through the communities allowed them to be concerned about and fear Islam and the Muslims. The persistent instillation of the "Islamic terror" anxiety in the community legitimized the occupation of the Middle East by the western countries in the public eye. They were quite successful with this. But the rising generation who witnessed the deaths and the pains followed by the occupation forced immigration in the communities of the deteriorated beyond recovery Middle Eastern communities, head towards radicalism. Furthermore, the provocation of some of the politicians and religious functionaries, the hatred, revulsion, and the anger exploded among the young Muslims. This anger returned back to the extremist groups as a resource of men and armed militia. **The occupation of the West and the resulting hatred induced the rise of the Islamist radicalism. The occupation generated terror, while the terror generated Islamophobia in the western communities. These two factors fed each other as a negative spiral, just like a vicious circle.**

• ***This vicious circle has two visible results. First, the rise of the Islamophobia in the western communities, and second, the welcomed support of the Muslims towards radicalism and extremism.***

Western media played and still playing a principal role for the rise of Islamophobia

On the other hand, the western media played and still playing a principal role for the rise of Islamophobia. **While even the organized incidents created by the people from other religions are not individualized, and not published together by focusing on religion, culture, and belief, the individual crimes committed by an ordinary Muslim were published directly citing “Islam”, “jihad”, and “religion”, allowing the western population to shape their conscious and mention Islam with terrorism in their minds.**

The extreme right wing and racist parties and their leaders who lost their influence after World War II, and couldn't get a response from the community, and were widely marginal in 2000s, used the atmosphere very effective after September 11. The extreme right winger parties consolidated their voters by Islam hatred, and terror victimization, and spread their mandate even more by every terror attack.

The relative loss of economic power within the European countries and the West, declining of the welfare level and the increase of the unemployment, and the economic factors caused hostility towards the foreigners in general, and hostility towards the Muslims in private within the west, especially the middle-class communities. The citizens who lost their jobs and become uncomfortable blamed the immigrants for this. The terror attacks, casualties, and the pain reinforced the prejudice towards the Muslims.

The effects of Political Islamism and Erdogan's Rhetoric

The traumatic behaviors of its population is visible after the fall of a big power, and it is observable in the European and American communities as well. When the longing for the old magnificent days of the people merges with the political interests of the politicians, the discourses and the policies towards the fear of the foreigners and hatred towards Islam started to sell.

Similarly in Turkey, when Erdogan presented the powerful era of the Ottomans as a target to the public and carrying out Neo-Ottomanism policies such as the phrase “let's get back the old lands from the enemy” in the Janissary Band, Trump won the elections with a similar phrase of his which was “make America great again”. The longing for the empire where the sun shined upon without setting off brought Brexit to the British. Throughout all these downfalls, all of the blame, responsibility, and the sin are put not upon the cyclical changes, or the failures of the management, but to the “others”, the immigrants, and the foreigners. For the Islamist politicians, while the “others” are the

“West”, “Europe”, “infidels”, and “crusaders”, for the western politicians, the “others” are the immigrants who were the reason to alienate Islam and Islamophobia. Should the intellectuals and the intelligent ones not clarify these populist discourses and their dangers to the public, and stop the politicians to feed the public with hostility for the sake of their political ambitions, the blame will always be on the “others” and the world will not be a place to live on.

- ***One of the most important reasons feeding the***
- ***Islamophobia and the extremism is the***
- ***uncertain and the indecisive behavior of the***
- ***public and the intelligent people of the Muslim***
- ***communities towards the accusation of Islam***
- ***with terror and violence.***

Unfortunately, we are unable to see any rebuttals from the religious scholars, opinion leaders, and the intellectuals who are respected widely in the Muslim communities, even though in Islam, it is rejected and is a huge sin to kill somebody, especially the civilians, and even in war, there are strict rules to take a human life. Piece by piece, alongside the individual condemnations, there weren't any global protests with decisive steps towards these terror attacks where Islam was blamed.

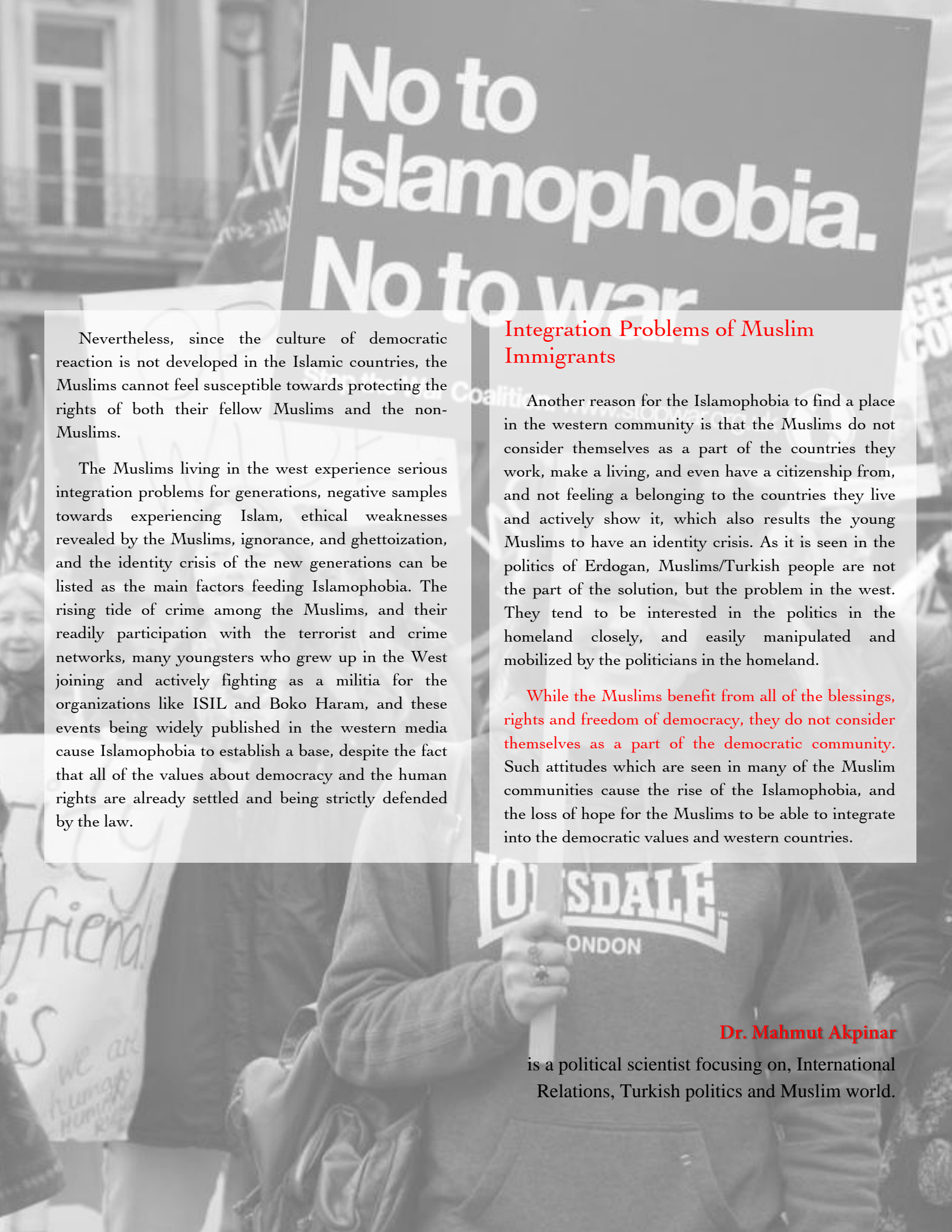
Just on the contrary, the members of the ulama class like Yusuf El Kardavi tried to justify the suicide attacks, which cannot find a place in any way in Islam, with invalid arguments such as “obligation”, “unable to find any other way”. Since there wasn’t any decisive and strong rejection and the rejections made were not published by the media, and sometimes were ignored, the words “terror and Islam” were started to be used together, Islamophobia becomes even stronger in the west.

Because of the approach of the political Islam’s dominant role among the Muslim communities within the last century, the Muslims are acting rather reactionist, exclusionist, and factionalized instead of actionist, constructive, and conciliator. In fact, Islam is actionist, not reactionist, and its purpose is not to destruct the other. It has its own thesis, civilization criteria, and system of values. The Muslims adopted a manner where they were reactionist, harsh and incomprehensible instead of trying to build upon these values, and convince other people, and give confidence. Even though there were many attempts to improve the dialogue and reconcile, to point out the common truth

and values, and to live together with peace, these attempts were ineffective towards the discourses of political Islam and propaganda. Furthermore, the political Islamist intellectuals opposed and demonized these attempts, and even sometimes declared the people behind the attempts as an unbeliever.

On the other hand, the Muslims living in the west together with other religions and beliefs couldn’t convince their entourage and neighbors and manage to eliminate their concerns towards Islamophobia. There were no studies and efforts towards this issue. And the ones which were done was weak and ineffective. The people in the west started to justify the Islamophobic discourses since they witnessed the lack of educational level, lack of professional ethics, and the integration problems of the Muslims they personally know around them, and they chose not to oppose Islamophobia. In the scope of the human rights and freedom, even though the poor representation of the Muslims, and the inciting of Islamophobia by the media and the politicians, we can say that the public opinion in the west effectively protected the rights of the Muslims by taking initiative and action.





Nevertheless, since the culture of democratic reaction is not developed in the Islamic countries, the Muslims cannot feel susceptible towards protecting the rights of both their fellow Muslims and the non-Muslims.

The Muslims living in the west experience serious integration problems for generations, negative samples towards experiencing Islam, ethical weaknesses revealed by the Muslims, ignorance, and ghettoization, and the identity crisis of the new generations can be listed as the main factors feeding Islamophobia. The rising tide of crime among the Muslims, and their readily participation with the terrorist and crime networks, many youngsters who grew up in the West joining and actively fighting as a militia for the organizations like ISIL and Boko Haram, and these events being widely published in the western media cause Islamophobia to establish a base, despite the fact that all of the values about democracy and the human rights are already settled and being strictly defended by the law.

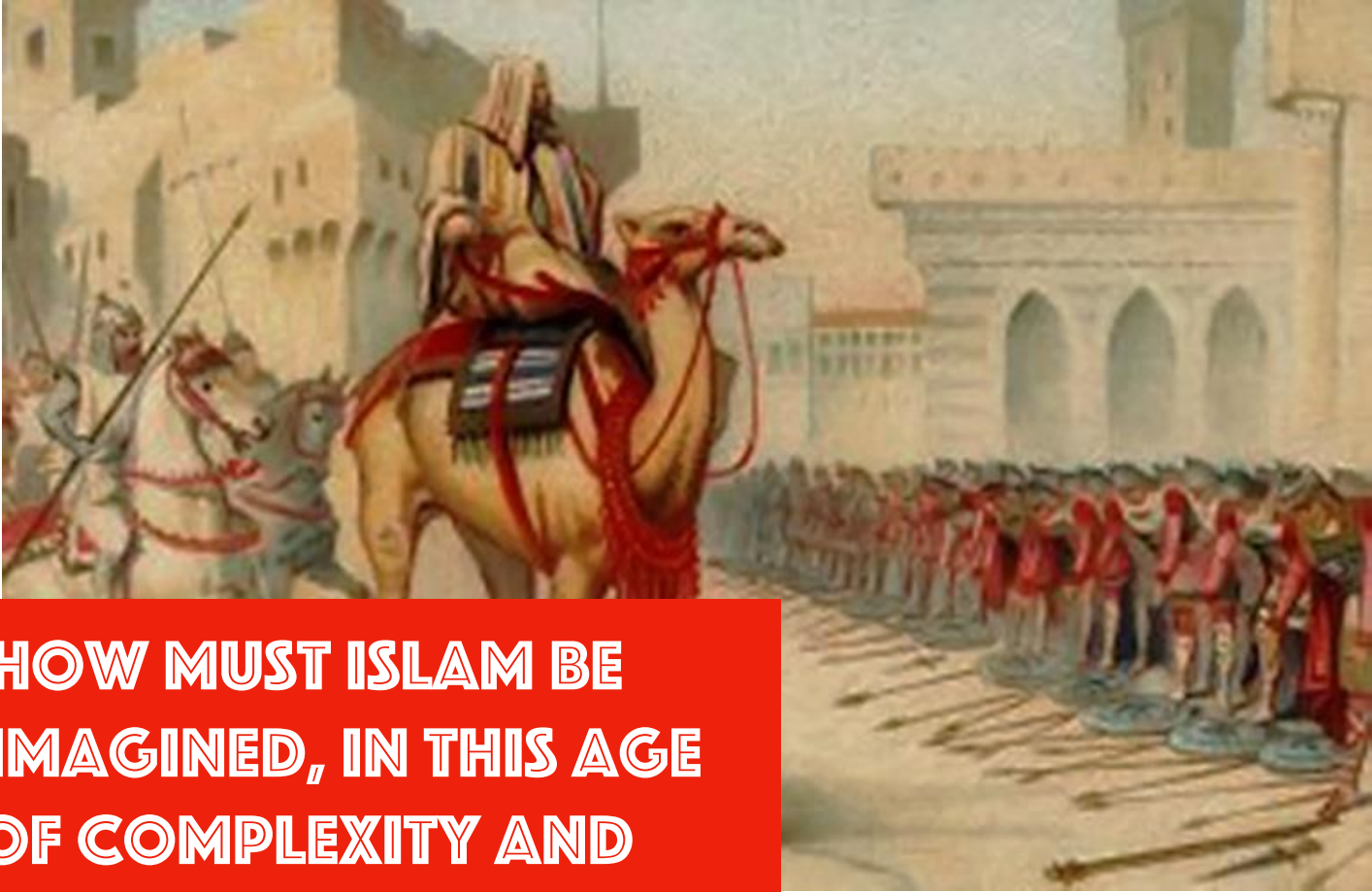
Integration Problems of Muslim Immigrants

Another reason for the Islamophobia to find a place in the western community is that the Muslims do not consider themselves as a part of the countries they work, make a living, and even have a citizenship from, and not feeling a belonging to the countries they live and actively show it, which also results the young Muslims to have an identity crisis. As it is seen in the politics of Erdogan, Muslims/Turkish people are not the part of the solution, but the problem in the west. They tend to be interested in the politics in the homeland closely, and easily manipulated and mobilized by the politicians in the homeland.

While the Muslims benefit from all of the blessings, rights and freedom of democracy, they do not consider themselves as a part of the democratic community. Such attitudes which are seen in many of the Muslim communities cause the rise of the Islamophobia, and the loss of hope for the Muslims to be able to integrate into the democratic values and western countries.

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HOW MUST ISLAM BE REIMAGINED, IN THIS AGE OF COMPLEXITY AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFUSION?

Dr. Azly Rahman

I am interested in grounding my proposition, that philosophical inquiry, within the framework of a worldview I am most familiar with: Islam. The question is: **how rigid is this cultural philosophy and how has the spectrum of its conservatism been a cognitive-political-social challenge to the evolution of the Muslim mind of the 21st. century?** Framed Socratically, I will have no answers to offer but from a phenomenological perspective will hope that we will produce some perspectives closer to our hearts and minds. **Complexity Theory** (the “butterfly effects of Islamism”) will be alluded to in the foregoing discussion; one that will look at the intricate and daunting task of conceptualizing the religion itself as both a personal as well as a public discourse of knowledge and power.

The ongoing struggle between the idea that Islam is a belief system immutable and one that is open to innovations, between its certitudinal and fluidity, its

rock –hard foundationalism and water-logic-ness, its Imam Al-Ghazali-ness and Ibnu’ Al-Arabi-ness – ideas that are today manifesting in the external and internal conflict in Islam itself.

Privatizing Islam

I am beginning to believe that the private and personal aspect of belief is more important to be nurtured than to be engaged in the act of making religion public and having an agenda for promoting it, leading to the ugly word called ‘proselytizing’.

Religious wars are fought not only out of the need for more land, wealth, and control over human and material resources but also the belief that one’s religion need to be ‘spread’ and an ‘empire of faith’ created. This is the main feature of history of social evolution: conquest in the name of this or that god.

How do we bring back the idea that we have probably made a wrong historical turn and that religion need to again be kept private and faith need to be nurtured only on the inside and not to be made public as a process of expanding institutions? In the case of Islam for example, how do we save it from further damage from all these sectoral violent conflicts and keep it private, as in the idea of separation of religion and the state.

Saving 'private' Islam comes to my mind. Re-imagining Islam comes as a theme of inquiry of this age of "post-Post humanism" some might call it.

Here are my random thoughts. It is about making Islam private again and having the believers think about the most fundamental and foundational inner thought that will guide action: Tawhid or the Quantum Physics idea of Singularity.

One of the realities about Islam as it is represented today is that very few understand its meaning in a contemporary social context, let alone be able to apply it to the world that is organic, emotionally unstable, and constantly evolving as patterned by organized chaos and complexity.

What is missing in the discourse of contemporary Islam is the idea of the fluidity of One-ness and the bounded-ness of Multiplicity as twin paradoxes of what philosophy in this age of cybernetics, terrorism, and 'neo-frankensteinism' means.

In other words, what Muslims of today need is not about debate, dialogue, and discourse in 'what is the correct ideology that constitutes Islam', but a radical rephrasing of the question itself: what is this notion of peace within the self, as it interacts with the outer boundaries of the self and how must the "self" behave in a world of complexity of beings without losing the fundamental belief in the holistic and philosophic-ness of the self itself.

This is the notion of 'tawhid' in traditional Islamic discourse Islamic scholars of today need to explore.

What Muslims need to develop is a version of reconstructed 'Tawhidism'; one that is not about the Islamic concept of it, with the cultural baggage of Arabism; rather, it is about the interplay between Singularity and Multiplicity we frame using some version of Complexity Theory.

Scholars need to look at the Islamic notion of the 'knowledge of the One-ness of god', from the philological and philosophical perspective and see how this idea can move nations, especially as we see the relevance to the Muslims in Malaysia, in Turkey, in Pakistan, and even in Saudi Arabia.

Complexity Theory and Islam

The world of today continues to evolve in all its complexity. Advanced digital communication technologies, high speed informational flow that instantaneously send images and ideas of change, the process of globalization itself that alter and compress time and space and even decide the course of human and social events – all these continue to fragment the human self.

• **Religion, such as Islam which**
• **claims to be adaptable to changing**
• **times is also affected by the**
• **destruction of the 'singularity of**
• **the selfhood of the Muslim'. New**
• **ideas and inventions challenge**
• **Islamic orthodoxy and open up**
• **new debates that demand new**
• **perspectives, or edicts, or "fatwas"**
• **to be written to safeguard the**
• **'fragmentation of Islam'.**
•

In short, the Muslim of today lives in a spiritual world of deconstructionism; ideas bombard the self into multiplicity rather than hold it as a 'Singularity', as how promoters of Islam orthodoxy would demand.

Complex systems require a complex view of looking at phenomena. The idea of complexity brought about by the post-Industrial world and as it impacts the mind, body, and soul of the Muslim individually and collectively as an 'ummah' (a millinearistic supra-nation of Oneness before Allah,) has brought fragmentation amongst the believers of this religion.

From the historical conflicts of the major schools of thought, to the violent departure of ideological Islam in the Shia-Sunni schism, to the 'crisis of identity' plaguing Muslims of today especially post-9/11 – these characterize fragmentation that have led to never-ending violent conflicts in the Islamic world. Muslims are living in a world of Islamic chaos, so to speak.

If we take the idea of Chaos Theory as one that tries to explain small changes leading to larger systemic changes over a long period of time (the 'Butterfly Effect'.) and apply it to the phenomena of Islam's evolution as an institutionalized religious ideology, we could see that there is the need to look the core issue of the loss of 'the principle of Singularity' or 'One-ness' or 'Unity' brought about by Muhammad.

There is a loss of the sense of and the understanding of 'Tawhid' or the deep understanding of the knowledge and application of the principles of the oneness of god or Allah that not only should unify the self but society.

Tawhidic knowledge can perhaps de-fragment the self, bring it to holism and create an understanding that man is the vicegerent of Allah on Earth, as how the

early teachings of Islam and the 'early Tawhidists' at the time of Muhammad would enjoy.

Today's Islam is a manifestation of deep-rooted fragmentation and even destruction of the self as can be seen in the conduct of nations calling themselves Islamic. Whether the blame is put on geopolitical, political-economic, or post-industrial complexities of a multipolar world of today, or even the power play amongst empires such as Russia or the United States, the issue in the world of Islam is chaos and the multitudinality of conflicts as opposed to unity and strength of the self and society as taught by Islam.

So how does Tawhidism interpret problems and offer solutions to major issues of today?

An Interesting Case Study

Malaysia is an interesting case study because of its interesting evolution not only as a plural society but also one impacted by contemporary advances in globalised technologies and ideologies.

In the Malaysian scenario, a 'version' of Islam began being imposed upon the rakyat (people) since the 1980s during a first phase of 'Islamisation'. The reign of Mahathir Mohamad brought mega-changes such as the imposition of Malaysia Incorporated, the Privatisation Policy, and The Look East policy.



It also brought the push to 'Islamise society', through the work of Mahathir's deputy, Anwar Ibrahim.

Educational, cultural, and governmental institutions were made to be more 'Islamic', and the nation was hegemonised by this idea of moral and intellectual leadership.

As this idea evolved and permeated through the system, this 'Islamic version of Malaysia's developmentalist paradigm' became one that couldn't be questioned as to its singularity, where any person even hinting of deviating from the official view would face authoritarian consequences through the 'Sharia police'.

There is a transculturalist and revisionist perspective on the Islamic scriptures. Scholars have begun to acknowledge the fact that the Islamic text or the Quran is 'cultural-bound' and speaks of the time and place unique to the people of the Middle East. The stories in the Quran are essentially about prophets and messengers of the land of Arabia.

There is then the problem of universalizing the experience of reading the text without 'transferring the culture embedded in the language itself'. This has led to immense disagreement and conflict in how to approach the text of the Muslims without a culture subjecting itself to the process or even the onslaught of Arabization.

In addition, centuries old Islam-predated cultural ideas such as animism in parts of South-East Asia included have been planted their roost in the psyche of the peoples, giving the unique identity such as those manifested in the idea of Javanese syncretism.

Especially in South-East Asia, Hindu-Buddhist philosophy was already in vogue in the early kingdoms such as those in Srivijaya, Mataram, Singhasari, Majapahit in Java and in the kingdoms in Champa and Siam. Islam came at a later stage through the work of Arab traders and also those deliberately trying to

spread this new religion from Arabia.

The triumph of Islam is clear today: the Muslim man is becoming the Arabian man. How is this possible in relation to the idea of Islam as a private affair for the soul of the believer?

Marriage of Liberalism and Islamism

Is such an ideological marriage possible? Will it be compatible? Or has it always been there awaiting divorce?

We live at a time of ideological, philological, and semantic confusion, I feel, because we have trapped ourselves in words; because we use elusive concepts to define words we employ, to argue, to clarify, to elaborate, to extrapolate, to state our point of view, to deduce, to induce, and to conclude and to lock ourselves in this prison-house of language and we swallow the keys. I am still trying to grasp the meaning of the ongoing, futile debate between, especially the "liberals" and the "Islamists" of Malaysia and to discern not the dichotomies and the seemingly irreconcilable worldviews that see to clash with each other ala' that Samuel Huntington thesis produced some time ago.

There is now a "liberal" camp and an "Islamist" camp. We must look into the mind of these campers, some happy and some unhappy, and see what the neural network of complexities look like, what concepts gets link from one another as the sub-concepts of the definitions try to find way to connect to what is meaningful as if they are creepers in my Walden II, some sweet smelling some not.

Somewhat in the tradition of "stream of consciousness" (as James Joyce -long-sentence-lamentation-styled of musings) I wrote the piece below when I saw a photo of a top-ranking officer of Malaysia's Islamic party talking about Islam his wrist showing a thousand-dollar Omega watch, and while the image of Al Rush in Raphael's painting "School of Athens:" came my mind:

Al Rushd, or Averroes as the Greeks Hellenized him, sits by the steps watching the liberals and the Islamist in New York City debating the nature of reality, the structure of truth and whether 9/11 was an inside job. The Islamist speaker in the Malaysian forum, holding a Japanese-LIBERAL-made microphone, occasionally checking time on his Swiss-LIBERAL-made Omega SA watch he got from his wife who works in that Big-Four neo-LIBERAL accounting firm, wearing a new retro Travolta-styled haircut he got the week before from a UNISEX hair salon housed in that LIBERAL-Kuala Lumpur mall build by ultra-neo-LIBERALS schooled in post-post Friedmanian economics while his head contemplates the perfect Islamic society ruled by the Khalifah whose early appearance is in the form of an Imam Al Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS ...

Connections in the brain are made; none of the speakers debating which is better and more moral — Islam or Liberalism — while thinking about what is for lunch.

Averrosian Dilemma

We must journey into each other's minds and speak of this prison-house of language. We could find a way to resolve contradictions, if we believe that "philosophy can clip the wings of angels" and see, as the German poet Rainer Rilke once said, how "angels can be terrifying."

As Al Rushd, or again, Averroes, in the great Renaissance master-painter Raphael's work, The School of Athens, glanced upwards waiting for Plato and Aristotle to come down the steps of the Academy, hoping that the philosophers par excellence of the Hellenistic period would say "Hi" to him and thank him for doing those Arabic translated work to add to the corpus of the body of knowledge of the ars liberalis, or the arts of the free Man that will eventually become building blocks to the Enlightenment period first, Renaissance next, Age of Discovery and

Exploration, Age of Science, to Age of the Application of Scientific Principles, and next Age of Industrialization to Age of Machines, to Age of Thinking Machines to Spiritual Machines to Machines installed in Gardens of Eden, to Age of Neural Networks to Computing to High-Speed Computing, to the Age of post-Humanism-Cyberneticism and Bio-chip Implantation — this evolutionary period of paradigmatic changes in human consciousness as technology, culture, and human genomics come into play, Al Rushd/Averroes asked: **what must people argue if these exist in oppositional nature of ideas as in this raging yet useless debate between "Islam" and "liberalism,"**

And thus, Averroes sat on the steps wandering, those great thinkers of the Age of Philosophy, that Axial Age of Spirituality, that Athens of the 5th. century BC, now long gone passed the spot where he sat, like the great beggar Diogenes; Averroes still wonder till late that night. **Where did Islam go wrong in thinking that 5000 years of globalization of ideas of Man has ended up in the impossibility of a marriage between the LIBERALS and the RELIGIONISTAS.**

Shall I unleash more questions on the nature of Man, Matter, God and the Universe and all then, so that not only Descartes can benefit from my musings but the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria will not come into being in the early 21st. Century? So that the idea of the Mutazillahs will reign supreme over pre-Wahabbi and Salafi notion of what must a human being be, and how must society look like, and what will be the nature of the State as it tries to define itself in the framework of this idea of the Ummah?

And isn't Philosophy more superior than Religion and Spirituality? I don't know, as Socrates would say.

And Averroes could not sleep that night. Under the stars, under the clear blue sky painted by the Italian master Raphael, he wondered: have we, from the fall of the Empire of Uthmaniyah right up till the 21st. century taken the wrong semiotic turn?

I invite you to participate in this dialogue with this question as a recap: How must Islam be re-imagined, in an age of increasing certitude and global dominance of Islamism, especially in the ever-growing call by zealots of the Salafi and Wahabbi-type to establish the (elusively framed) idea of the "Islamic State"?

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ERDOGAN'S AMBITION FOR THE CALIPHATE AND THE FAILURE OF TURKISH DEMOCRACY

Aydogan Vatandas

When the AK Party took office in 2002, many intellectuals in Turkey and abroad were convinced that the party's commitment to democratization was promising. The first term of the AK Party rule, which is considered as a golden era, broadly extended from 2002 to 2007. This era was characterized by high, inclusive economic growth, coupled with significant democratic reforms, ranging from a radical reordering of civil-military relations to the recognition of minority rights, including language and cultural rights for Kurdish citizens. (1)

This initial high performance created a certain level of trust in the AK Party rule among Turkish intellectuals, including the Gulen Movement, that in time the AK Party would eliminate all the undemocratic aspects of the Turkish governmental system. (2) Between 2009 and 2011, the AK Party

government successfully managed to create a legal framework that precluded Turkish military involvement in politics, which would prevent military interventions of the kind Turkey had suffered from in the past. The end result, however, was not a consolidated democracy as expected, (3) but a highly personalized autocracy embodied in the figure of Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

What went wrong with the AK Party and its leadership during the democratization of Turkey remains an important question. Was the performance of the party between 2002 and 2007 mere window dressing, with Erdogan and his close, oligarchic circle waiting for a convenient time to apply their secret, true agenda? Were they never democratic at all? Or was Erdogan obsessed with the idea that he had a messianic mission like being the 'Caliph' of the Muslim

world? In this article, I will try to answer these questions.

Resilience of Kemalist Institutions

It is argued that the failure of the AK Party rule to develop a consolidated democracy is deeply rooted in the traditional tutelage of Kemalist institutions over the Turkish political system. Accordingly, regardless of their willingness or unwillingness to further democratize the country, the leadership of the AK Party was thwarted by the resistance of the Kemalist institutions to change. A proponent of this theory is İhsan Dagı, a liberal who gave support to the AK Party-led reforms in its golden era. Dagı notes that many people expected the defeat of the Kemalist state establishment by a broad coalition of liberals, democrats and conservatives under the political leadership of the AK Party which would lead to the creation of a democratic regime with a liberal constitution. But today he observes that, “Kemalism is dead, but its state-centric, Jacobin and illiberal spirit has been reincarnated in the AKP.” (4)

Strong State and Weak Society

The strong state and weak society dichotomy is also considered an important obstacle towards establishing a consolidated democracy. It is argued that Turkey followed the path of secular modernization by prioritizing the creation of a strong homogenized nation led by the ruling political elite. (5) According to this argument, **the Turkish system of governance has been formulated upon the framework of a strong state and a weak society, which poses a major obstacle to the creation of a consolidated democracy. The governors and the governed had a one-dimensional relationship that oppressed the governed.** As a result of this historical practice, Turkish society has never been able to establish an autonomous sphere free from state control. (6)

• In sum, since the assertive secular modernization never prioritized the empowerment of civil rights or civil society, the Turkish political system has always remained illiberal and undemocratic even after the advent of a multi-party system in 1946.

Erdogan Fallacy

Many academics have suggested that what Turkey gets from AK Party rule is exactly what it should have expected. Accordingly, it was a fundamental mistake to expect that the AK Party would promote Turkish democracy. Ozkan argues that the AK Party is a far-right party according to political science literature and that “assuming that the AKP would take Turkey forward was no different than thinking that Le Pen in France would advance democracy. When placed in the right-left spectrum, the AKP believes that it has a sacred mission and will remain in power forever. None of these are compatible with democracy. This extremism would emerge as racism in Europe, while it would become sectarianism in Turkey and would not consider other parties as representatives of the nation. The AKP is a model not for the Middle East but for the far right in Europe on how to instrumentalize democracy.” (7)

The main reason that liberal intellectuals failed to see Erdogan’s real ambitions was the very belief that the elimination of the military tutelage and other secular institutions such as the judiciary would be sufficient to secure a democracy. It was not. It was correct that these institutions failed to create a functional democracy in the past, but it was wrong to believe that weakening these institutions would lead to the emergence of a democracy.

It has to be stressed that it was not only the Turkish liberals and religious democrats that were prey to the Erdogan fallacy. Even some leading international

think-tank organizations failed to forecast the future of Turkish democracy. For instance, Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee produced for Rand Corporation in 2008 four possible scenarios. In order from most to least likely, they were: 1) AKP pursues a moderate, EU-oriented path; 2) AKP pursues a more aggressive Islamist agenda; 3) judicial closing of the AKP; and 4) military intervention. For the authors, a regression of Turkish democracy was not likely, even under the second scenario, in which “the reelected AKP government pursues a more aggressive Islamist agenda. With full control of the executive and legislative branches of government, the AKP is able to appoint administrators, judges, and university rectors and even to influence personnel decisions in the military.” (8) The authors concluded that this scenario is less likely because it would lead to greater political polarization and would probably provoke an intervention by the military. Most Turks support a secular state and oppose a state based on the shari’a. In addition, EU membership is a key element of the AKP’s foreign policy. (9)

Andrew Arato suggests that the liberal intellectuals understandably failed to see the logic of Erdogan’s actions, because of their own conflict with the military tutelage. They saw the Constitutional Court as merely an instrument of that tutelage, despite the fact that the Court had its battles with the military-bureaucratic structures as far back as the 1970s. The Court took several decisions supporting AK Party positions (e.g. in 2007, the quorum decision was soon balanced by one permitting a referendum on the presidency) and refused to dissolve the party in 2008, admittedly in a very close vote. They failed to understand that in the Turkish system, especially with the existence of a hegemonic party, the court and the judiciary were important counter-weights. (10)

Clifford Anderson emphasized that Erdogan’s main goal was to establish an executive power over the judiciary in a move that would violate the separation of powers. He further elaborated that the AK Party had

subjugated the state without oversight from other parties or branches of government. He suggested that as constitutional talks have broken down and no new draft is scheduled, any attempt to institutionalize a new system of government will meet with failure. He added that executive decrees and legislation indicate this regime’s authoritarian proclivities, which have precluded progress towards EU membership, despite the party’s initial efforts to the contrary. (11)

According to Arato, while the leaders of the AK Party, along with many liberal intellectuals, continued to see the Constitutional Court as an enemy, the 2010 referendum represented an attempt to conquer one branch in the separation of powers, namely the judiciary. Arato contends that some of the more attractive provisions of the package served as window dressing for a monolithic project that actually aimed at creating a type of hyper-presidentialism. It sought to remove all impediments to this new system, especially the judiciary which had established its jurisdiction over constitutional amendments. It is now evident that further attempts have been made to realize the same project, either by constitutional change or by the establishment of a de facto hyper-presidential system. (12)

Erdogan’s charisma and the re-construction of the political system through the caliphate and Ottomanism

Besides all the systemic obstacles to a consolidated democracy in Turkey, I would strongly suggest that Erdogan’s personality traits and leadership style have also played a crucial role in the transformation of the political system in Turkey. Aylin Gorener and Meltem Ucal, using the Leadership Trait Analysis designed by Margaret Hermann as a research tool, examined Erdogan’s rhetoric to analyze his leadership style. Their research concluded that Erdogan’s convictions “are so tightly held and preferences fixed, and that he tends to see only what he wants to see, [which] renders him incapable of deciphering the nuances of diplomacy

and successfully navigating the tricky waters of international affairs.”

The research also reveals that, “his dichotomizing tendency predisposes him to view politics as a struggle between right and wrong, just and unjust, villains and victims.” (13) The research points out that Erdogan’s pattern of scores indicated that, “he has an “evangelist” orientation to politics which is the leadership style that results from a combination of the tendency to challenge constraints in the environment, closedness to information and having a relationship focus.” (14)

Irfan Arik and Cevit Yavuz state that Erdogan has the qualities of a charismatic leader. (15) However, this is not necessarily good news for Turkish democracy. **Historical data shows that authoritarian tendencies coupled with a charismatic personality most likely give way to dictatorial rule. Lewis, for example, shows how charismatic leaders frequently aggravate their followers’ frustrations and prejudices through the use of “polarized aggression. (16) ”** António Costa Pinto, Roger Eatwell, and Stein Ugelvik Larsen contend that every fascist dictator has to possess some individual abilities that made them ‘extraordinary’: “They need followers to ‘understand’ or ‘appreciate’ and connect their qualities and there must be a situation or an event that which required these unusual abilities, or which could ‘call’ for the reconstruction of the regime in such a way as to allow the application of new solutions to problems.” (17)

Idealization of The 2023 Target and the Caliphate

In several articles and speeches of Erdogan and Ahmet Davutoglu, both leaders seem convinced that AKP’s initiatives would make Turkey a global actor by the year 2023, the one-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Having considered the AKP’s opposition to the founding symbols of the Republic, the goal and the vision of 2023 is related to the re-production of the new identity



of the state and the nation. Since the process of state building refers to the development of a political entity with rulers, institutions and citizens, the AKP’s 2023 vision is an important indicator to see how an ‘imagined future projection’ is being used to mobilize the nation and to recreate the Grand Turkey that lost its grandeur a hundred years ago. This should be considered not only a journey to an imagined future, but also a journey to the past where the grandiose Turkish collective identity was lost. Examining this vision, it is quite clear that its intention is to reconstruct a Grand Turkey, while promising nothing about a strong society, civil rights or a consolidated democracy.

The leader-follower relationship is not ‘a one-way relation’ and both agents define each other. In other words, leaders cannot operate without followers. As for Erdogan’s followers, it is evident that many of them see him as a ‘caliph.’

According to Maria Chang, malignant narcissism begins with a collective trauma, such as a national defeat, an economic crisis, or subjugation by

another—often more powerful—group. This defeat leads the nation to question itself and its history, “resulting in a pervasive sense of insecurity and an uncertain and weak collective identity.” Chang argues that narcissistic nationalism “functions as ‘a leap into collective fantasy’ that enables threatened or anxious individuals to avoid the burden of thinking for themselves. (18)” For example, the humiliating results of the Treaty of Sevres, the abolition of the Caliphate and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire left a broken and wounded Turkish nation in its wake. This painful history is recalled and used by the AKP leadership as both a rhetorical factor and a tool as compensation device over the last decade.

For instance, **Turkish writer Abdurahman Dilipak, who is close to Erdogan, said that the caliphate will return again with Erdogan’s reelection victory in 2018.**

During his participation in a conference in Canada, Dilipak said that “if Erdogan wins the presidency next year, he will become the Caliph and that the [Islamic] caliphate will have commissioners working from the rooms of the presidential palace that has 1,000 rooms.” He added that the caliphate has moved to the Turkish parliament, stressing that if Erdogan wins re-election to the presidency, it means that he will appoint advisers from all Muslim regions of the caliphate from various Islamic countries. These will commission the Islamic Union to have representatives of the areas of the caliphate in the thousand rooms.

And it is not only Dilipak; Suat Onal, a member of the Governing Council of the Ruling Justice and Development Party, has already mentioned on his Facebook account that “Erdogan will become the Caliph in 2023 and Allah will shed his light upon him.”

Similarly, in 2013, Atılgan Bayar, a former advisor to the pro-government news station A Haber, wrote that he recognized Erdogan as the caliph of the Muslim world and expressed his allegiance to him. In one of her recent tweets, Beyhan Demirci, a writer and follower of Erdogan, also wrote that Erdogan is the

caliph and the shadow of God on Earth. Some of his followers have gone even further and said things like, “Since Erdogan is the caliph, he has the right to use money earned through corruption for his political goals.” (19)

In her dissertation entitled *Loss of the caliphate: The trauma and aftermath of 1258 and 1924*, Assistant Professor Mona F. Hassan of Duke University notes that many Muslim rulers have aspired to augment their prestige with the supreme title of caliph. As I wrote previously, “In addition to the claims of the deposed Ottoman caliph, Abdulmecid and the apparent ambitions of Sharif Husayn of Makkah, the names of King Fu’ad of Egypt, Amir Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan, Imam Yahya of Yemen, the Sultan ibn Sa’ud of Najd, the Sultan Yusuf bin Hasan of Morocco, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Shaykh Ahmad al-Sanusi of Libya, the Amir Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi of the Moroccan Rif, and even that of Mustafa Kemal were all claimed to have ambitions for the position of caliph.” (20)

It is also worth mentioning that Erdogan stated in February 2018 that, “The Republic of Turkey is a continuation of the Ottoman Empire.” (21) He continued, stating that, “The Republic of Turkey, just like our previous states that are a continuation of one another, is also a continuation of the Ottomans.” Erdogan explained that, “Of course, the borders have changed. Forms of government have changed... But the essence is the same, soul is the same, even many institutions are the same.” (22)

Kadir Misiroglu, who has worked with Erdogan since the 1980s, remains staunchly anti-secularist. He has claimed that **Turkey’s incursions into Syria and Iraq will empower Erdogan to resurrect the Ottoman Empire and declare himself caliph.**

The obsession with the caliphate is not limited to political Islamists. For example, the number of recruits to ISIS increased enormously after its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed himself caliph. **“Regardless of**

ideology, individuals from around the world who felt repressed by their own governments, most of which were unable to guaranty their personal safety or sustainable infrastructure, rushed to join his army. The bottom line is that the concept of a caliphate is not a hard sell, whether in an authoritative state, in underdeveloped Muslim countries or in developed countries where Muslims are more often than not stigmatized.” (23)

A caliphate is a state ruled by an Islamic steward known as a caliph —a person considered a successor to the Islamic Prophet, Muhammad (Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh), the Prophet of the entire Muslim community. The word caliph actually refers to the ruler of the global community of Muslims, or ummah. During the centuries following the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, the rulers of the Muslim world were called caliph, which means “successor” in Arabic. In 1924, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the new Turkish Republic, abolished the caliphate.

The caliph has long been viewed by many Muslims as the legitimate representative of God on earth, heir to a chain of uninterrupted succession reaching back to Prophet Muhammad.

Professor Zeki Saritoprak emphasizes that ISIS and some political Islamists use eschatological themes and ‘caliphate’ extensively in their ideology, especially certain narratives found in the hadiths, the collection of reports of sayings and teachings of the Prophet. “Nowhere in the Qur’an or hadith does it say that the duty of Muslims is to establish a caliphate, and in fact, the idea of an Islamic state did not exist prior to middle of the 19th century. I think that they are so obsessed with a state because they have forgotten how to apply the rules to themselves, and so they have a desire to impose the rules on others. ISIS is thus a version of political Islam, which as a governing philosophy holds that Islam can be imposed on a population from the top down. This actually goes against Quranic principles, which focus on the individual as a universe in and of her or himself. (24)” He continued, “One thing that

followers of political Islam are generally not aware of is that time is an interpreter of the Quran. Some Quranic verses should be interpreted under the conditions of our time and not under the conditions of the Middle Ages. Therefore, I do not think that a caliphate or an Islamic state is necessary for Islam to flourish in the 21st century. It seems the future of Islam is in cooperation with the West and with Christianity. There is no imperative in the Quran to destroy the West or Christians. Quite the opposite; Islam should be built upon Western civilization, not seek to destroy it. Those who see problems in the West should take solace in the words of Said Nursi, who said that eventually the negative aspects of the West will dissipate and there can be a coming together of Western and Islamic civilizations.” (25)

• **According to Ali Vyacheslav Polosin, Deputy Director of the Fund for Support of Islamic Culture, Science and Education, “Erdogan used the image of the caliphate and traditional Islamic values to gain popularity in the Middle East, expecting to gain it all over the world.” (26)**

He explained that, “After Erdogan became president, he started positioning himself in image ads not only as the president of the Turkish Republic, but as a reader of the Quran, as though he radiates some nur, light. It is more an image of a caliph, a ruler of true believers, than the president of a republic, especially considering that Turkey has very great experience in this aspect. So, the claims are not that groundless.”

Methodologically speaking, establishing an Islamic state may sound very attractive to many Muslims, but in reality, it may not solve the problems of human beings.

If you provide the best rules and put them in the hands of corrupt people, those rules will be used for corruption as well. The attraction of the caliphate blinds many Muslims to the reality of their situation and morality.

Erdogan did not declare himself as the new caliph of the Muslim world. But his actions may be a harbinger of what may come.

It is important to keep in mind that establishment of the Turkish state always played a crucial role in shaping the society as a constituting agent. While the constituting role of the state was performed in the past with a secular world view, today this constituting role seems to have passed to the AKP leadership and particularly to Erdogan himself, suggesting that the mission of the state is now to bring up a religious generation. This indicates that the “social engineering” aspect of a “constituting state” is not ruled out as Erdogan clearly said: “the new constitution will be in harmony with the values of our nation.” (27)

While Ataturk saw himself as the savior of the nation—a kind of demigod—the secular state establishment acted accordingly. Erdogan and his bureaucracy seem convinced that they also have the ability to construct their own state, society and even myths. Erdogan’s authoritarian charisma and narcissistic personality provide evidence that he would be willing to rule Turkey as the ‘undisputable sole leader,’ but not as a democratic leader. Readily available data demonstrates that authoritarian charismatic leaders with narcissistic personalities tend to be dictators.

I would strongly argue that Erdogan’s 2023 target and his ambition to resurrect the caliphate was not formulated only to idealize his rule, but also to serve as the ‘call’ for this reconstruction of the regime.



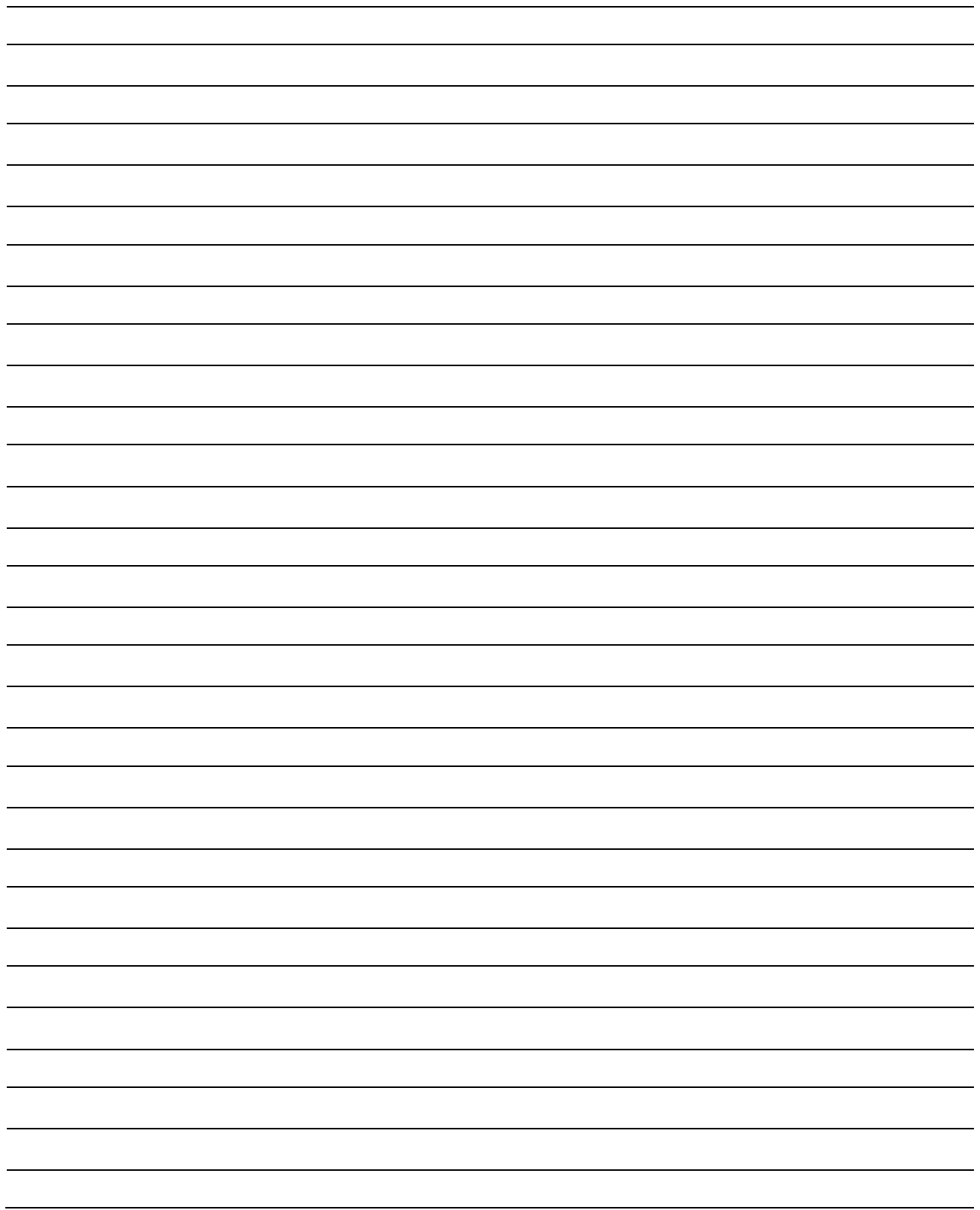
Conclusion

Despite elimination of the military tutelage from the political system during the AK Party era, Turkey has had several historical and structural shortcomings that have prevented it from becoming a democratic state. Erdogan's efforts to exclude the Turkish military from the political system did not aim to consolidate democracy, but rather to create an autocratic system according to his wishes. What Turkey has therefore been experiencing for years has been the 'charismatisation/Erdoganization' of Turkish political institutions through the idealization of the 2023 target and an imagined future of the caliphate which damaged not only democratic institutions, but also led to radical shifts in Turkish domestic and foreign policy. Due to the systemic obstacles to democracy, whatever emerges in Turkey in the near future, will not be a consolidated democracy, but rather an exchange of power between elites.

Aydogan Vatandas

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