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**MIDDLE CLASS, ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY AND BOSNIA-
HERZEGOVINA: Is Democratization in the Muslim World Dependent on the
Rise of an Islamic Middle Class?**

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Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	6
1. Theoretical Issues.....	7
Modernization theory.....	7
Middle classes, Islam and democratization in the work of modernization theorists.....	9
A brief critique of these approaches.....	
11	
Islam and Islamism: Beyond culturalist conceptualizations.....	12
2. Sunni Islamism in Turkey.....	16
The emergence of the Islamic bourgeoisie.....	16
The AKP years: 2002 – 2016.....	19
Explaining the authoritarian shift.....	21
3. Alevi Islam in Turkey.....	25
Traditional communities and the first years in the Republic.....	25
Urbanization and politicization from 1950 to 1990.....	26
The revitalizing of Alevi culture after 1990.....	28
4. Bosnian Islam.....	32
Introduction.....	32
The Muslim intellectual elites.....	33
The IC and Muslim culture.....	34
Conclusions.....	38
Bibliography.....	39

Abstract:

This paper investigates the relation between political Islam, middle classes and democratization in the cases of Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina. By examining the effects urbanization and economic development had in the sociopolitical sphere in these two cases, it seeks to determine if there is indeed a positive correlation between the emergence of an Islamic middle class and the democratization of Muslim societies, as has been suggested by a number of scholars.

Key words: Islam, Middle Class, Democratization

Introduction

If the 1990s were a period of turbulence, to say the very least, for Turkey and the states of Southeastern Europe, the decade that followed was largely an era of stabilization, democratization and development for the region. The prospect of joining the EU, which materialized for Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and for Croatia in 2013, the high rates of growth experienced during this time and the decline in ethnic tensions were decisive not simply in reversing the adverse political climate in the area, but in actually improving the lives of the peoples that inhabit it.

The optimism of the '00s came to be replaced in turn by the more sober climate of the new decade. The financial calamity, the introversion of the EU, the chaos in the Middle east and the expansion of international terrorism and the onset of the refugee crisis that ensued, as well as the rise of reactionary movements and the deterioration of democracy in many countries of the region, all these factors changed the previous mood and question were raised regarding the prospects of democracy in the area. The role of religion in a democratic setting persists as one of the issues that troubles policy-makers, scholars and the general public.

Although religion, and more specifically Islam, had begun being more visible in public life as early as the '70s and the '80s, it was during the first decade of the new millennium that Islam entered the spotlight for good. Propelled by the the ascension of AKP to power in 2002 on the one hand and the rise of international Islamist extremism on the other, public and academic discourse regarding the relationship between Islam and democracy covered an entire spectrum of possibilities, with some viewing Islam as a vehicle for democratization on the one end and others as a Trojan horse which threatened even the most fundamental liberties on the other.

The topic of this study is the investigation of the relationship between Islam, democracy and middle class in the cases of Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Three different Muslim traditions will be analyzed: That of conservative Sunni Muslims in Turkey, that of the Alevi community in the same country, and that of Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The objective is to identify whether there is indeed a positive connection between democratization and the emergence of a specifically Islamic middle class, or whether the shaping of democratic traditions within the Muslim world is a more complicated process that involves, and demands, more than economic development.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Issues

The topic of this study is the triadic relationship between political Islam, democracy and middle classes in the Muslim world. More specifically, I wish to study the impact the emergence of middle classes which support political Islam and the process of urbanization have in the development of democracy and the articulation of pluralistic public spheres in Turkey and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

A critical stance toward a rather popular strand of modernization theory will be adopted.

In the first section of this chapter a brief overview of modernization theory will be presented and an exposition of some objections raised by its critics. Then, in the second part, a number of new approaches which fall under the rubric of the school of modernization and deal specifically with the issue which is of interest in this study will be put forward. In the third part these new approaches will be briefly examined in order to reveal some of their shortcomings. Finally, a section regarding the relationship between Islam and democracy will follow. This is deemed necessary not only because the relation between ideas and politics is as important as that between material conditions and politics, but because the sensitivity of the issue is such that it demands to be grappled with in a straightforward manner.

Modernization Theory

It is difficult to agree on a general definition of the term 'modernization'. Here, there are two aspects of early modernization theory that are of interest to us. The first was the belief that development is more or less linear and that every country in the world would eventually become similar in its social and economic structure with the West after establishing links with it. The second was the view that there was a very strong correlation between the level of economic development and democratization, and that as a matter of fact “there is one general process of which democratization is but the final stage”¹. It is impossible to do justice to such a complex issue here, so we will very briefly occupy ourselves with these two aspects simply in order to see how later theorists used and misused certain concepts.

Considering development, one of the most popular accounts is that of Rostow. Rostow argued that each society goes through specific stages of growth. These are the traditional phase, the phase where the preconditions for take-off appear (externally for the non-western societies), the take-off phase, the drive to maturity – where every sector of society transforms – and finally the age of mass consumption. Less developed countries need an external stimulus to enter the take-off phase, and

1 Adam Przeworski & Fernando Limongi, “Modernization, Theories and Facts”, *World Politics*, Vol 49, No. 2 (Jan., 1997), 157 – 158.

they should continuously reinvest surpluses in order to secure their path to progress².

In his work, Rostow does notice that different social actors may pursue different strategies, that the social environment in each country establishing contacts with the West may differ, and that reactionary ideologies may appear. As in other theoretical models, a certain degree of tension seems to exist between a set of axioms that guide research, and another set of ad hoc positions which are used in order to counterbalance the more deterministic tendencies of the theory. Overall though, the process he describes seems to be irreversible once initiated.³

Moreover, not only the categories employed by modernization theorists were taken from their immediate, western experience, but the content of development was also understood to be a process of Europeanization for non-European societies. Hence, less developed countries were “provided a glimpse of their future” by the experience of the West, and it could be argued that every subsystem – economic, political, cultural – of these societies would emulate that of the latter.⁴

The literature concerning the link between economic development and the existence of a middle class on the one hand and the establishment and preservation of a democratic regime on the other is vast.⁵ Although this view was already a common observation by the 1950's, one of the most coherent and persuasive accounts arguing for a positive link was put forward by Lipset in 1960. Lipset held that “the average wealth, degree of industrialization and urbanization, and level of education is much higher for the more democratic countries”⁶. This happens because on the one hand, lower classes adopt more moderate political beliefs when economic conditions are favorable and they are exposed to a broader education. On the other hand, economic development is beneficial for the empowerment of the middle class, which in turn rewards moderate policies and disassociates itself from extremist ideologies.⁷

It should be noted however that Lipset does not argue for a simple causal relationship between economic development and democracy, but considers the former to be one of the conditions for the emergence and preservation of the latter. Not only this is a point he clearly makes, he also goes on to show that in some historical cases middle classes supported authoritarian and even totalitarian political orders when they felt threatened by the rise of both big businesses and trade unions.⁸

2 Rostow, Walt W., *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) 4 – 11.

3 Rostow, Walt W., *Politics and the Stages of Growth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 21 – 25.

4 Dean C. Tipps, Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective in (ed. Black, E. Curil) *Comparative Modernization: A Reader*, (New York: The Free Press, 1976), 70.

5 For a short presentation see: Özbudun, Ergun, “The Role of the Middle Class in the Emergence and Consolidation of a Democratic Civil Society”, *Ankara Law Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter 2005), 96 – 100.

6 Lipset, Martin S., *Political Man, The Social Bases of Politics*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1960), 50.

7 *Ibid.*, 61 – 66.

8 *Ibid.*, 46, 134 – 137.

The several forms of modernization theory were very much criticized though and the theory as a whole underwent a deep crisis after the '70s. The historical record did not match the claims of thinkers such as Rostow: it was shown that the transition from traditional to modern society could take very different routes and produce divergent outcomes, depending on the class structure of each society, and that in some cases detraditionalization even led to chaos and disorganization.⁹

Furthermore, and against the predictions made by the theory, the political and economic order in many developing countries deteriorated. What is even more interesting is that in some cases it could be argued that economic growth was in fact made easier by the 'reversal' of the political order.¹⁰

In many cases, what was called “traditional” was actually the product of modernization. And, concerning the future prospects of developing countries, it was pointed out that in fact the very *rise* of the West had a profound effect on their course, since the latter would have to deal with a world that was already shaped by the former.¹¹

As for Lipset's claims, it has been forcefully argued that while democracies are much more likely to survive once a country has become affluent, economic development by itself does not seem to be capable of breeding democracies¹². On the other hand, a middle class does seem to be a necessary prerequisite for a democratic regime to emerge. As Moore has aptly put it: “No bourgeois, no democracy”¹³. As we shall see later on though, other actors may push for democratization once the social setting is already quite modernized.

Middle classes, Islam and democratization in the work of modernization theorists

In the specific context that is of interest here, a number of scholars have argued in favor of a positive link between the emergence of a Muslim middle class and the development of democracy, pluralism and civil society. The most straightforward model is that presented by Nasr. According to him, a “whole new economy is rising” in the Middle East, one that is connected to the rest of the world and rests firmly on consumerism, but relies on Islamic piety nonetheless. This new economy which is driven by a dynamic Muslim middle class is the answer to the problem of extremism and authoritarianism that has ravaged the region. Nasr takes an essentially functionalist approach: The

9 Moore, Barrington, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), xvii – xxv. & Eisenstadt, S. N., *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), 58 – 59.

10 *Ibid.*, 47 – 49.

11 So, Alvin, *Social Change and Development, Modernization, Dependency, and World-System Theories*, (California: Sage Publications, 1990), 53 – 59. & Peet, Richard & Hartwick, Elaine, *Theories of Development, Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), 131 – 134.

12 Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, *ibid.*, 155 – 167.

13 Moore, Barrington, *ibid.*, 418.

more free and connected to the global economy markets become, the more likely it becomes that bureaucracies will be forced to start implementing political reforms with an emphasis on human rights and democracy – effectively democratization is a spillover effect of economic liberalization.¹⁴ But why would middle classes in Muslim countries take a religious stance, however moderate that is? Nasr offers two answers. The first is that throughout the region, and unlike what happened in the West, modernization for the most part of the 20th century was a top-down process enforced by big, secular states that stifled political and economic plurality. No independent middle classes were able to push forward with a liberal agenda of some sort. As soon as those secular states started becoming inefficient and corrupt, Islamic organizations managed to step forward and alleviate to some extent the problems of the disgruntled masses, taking the credit in the process.¹⁵ The second is that the very forces of globalization applied pressure to the newly emergent bourgeoisie in those countries to find a stable guiding force in the whirlwind of the modern world, hence the increasing interest in tradition and religion.¹⁶

Nasr makes comparisons between the period of Reformation in Europe and the turmoil in the world of Islam today, suggesting that the latter is undergoing a similar transformation as the former did centuries ago¹⁷. Hashemi expands on this theme and challenges mainstream conceptions about democracy and religion. While it is broadly accepted that both historically and logically religion and democracy are antithetical and mutually exclusive forces, Hashemi argues that in fact the development of liberal democracy in the west took place within a religious framework, and that what is happening today in the Muslim world is a process similar to that of 16th - 17th century Europe.¹⁸

Hashemi criticizes the culturally essentialist arguments of early modernization theory, which held that liberal democracy cannot be achieved in non-Western countries within a local cultural framework, and argues instead for a more structural approach in the intellectual tradition of modernization¹⁹. He contends that “the actual content of Islamic fundamentalist thought is less important than the social conditions that give rise to it”²⁰ and that religious fundamentalism is “an integral yet temporary phase in the long-term process of political development”²¹ in the Muslim world.

14 Nasr, Vali, *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism*, (New York: Free Press, 2010), 12 – 26.

15 *Ibid.*, 113, 169.

16 *Ibid.*, 184.

17 *Ibid.*, 185.

18 Hashemi, Nader, *Islam Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24, 37.

19 *Ibid.*, 8, 27.

20 *Ibid.*, 30.

21 *Ibid.*, 24.

As the traditional order of society breaks down during the modernization process and people are insecure about the direction of things, religious movements which have a rigid worldview that provides a stable framework to the people make their appearance and seek to take power²². That is what happened in Europe a few centuries ago and that is what may be happening in the world of Islam right now, therefore Islamism “is a much more complicated social phenomenon than is generally realized, which may carry latent development benefits[...]”²³. In any case, according to Hashemi it is up to Muslims to find a way to accommodate Islam with secularism, the latter being a prerequisite for a democratic regime.

Returning to a more class oriented approach, Yavuz applies in the case of Turkey the model Nasr uses to talk about the world of Islam in general, only he makes use of a somewhat different theoretical framework. He argues that new public spheres emerged in the country and in them, “Islam was reconstituted to meet the needs of a free-market economy, democracy, globalization, and the discourse of human rights”.²⁴ This doesn't mean that the process was automatic, although Yavuz seems in general to subscribe to a variant of modernization theory. Rather, once neo-liberal reforms were implemented and the welfare state started receding from certain sectors, Islamic entrepreneurs stepped in, providing funds in areas such as education, health-care and programs for the poor.²⁵

However, the emergence of this class of Islamic bourgeoisie is not a process that takes place without resistance. As they demand “a smaller government, larger political space, and freedom for civil society”, inevitably they clash with the old, state-nurtured, secular bourgeoisie. As a consequence we see conflict not only between lower and upper social strata, but also among the secular and the religious segments of the Turkish bourgeoisie, a very popular theme in studies on Turkish society and politics of the last decades.²⁶

A brief critique of these approaches

At first sight, what these new approaches seem to claim is that the critics of old modernization theory were partially right. The Muslim world did in fact follow a different road from the West because of the social conditions prevalent at the time modernization and industrialization started having an impact on it. But still, they argue, an altered modernization theory may yet prove to be correct in the long run. Secular, top-down models may have failed in the Muslim world, but the

22 *Ibid.*, 41, 50 – 52.

23 *Ibid.*, 16.

24 Yavuz, Hakan, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 57.

25 *Ibid.*, 59.

26 Yavuz, Hakan, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 88.

spread of market relations and the emergence of an Islamic middle class will produce a kind of society much more similar to those of the West.

Interestingly however, even though they take into consideration some critical approaches toward the modernization paradigm, they end up reproducing some of the most problematic aspects of it.

Since their argument involves a specifically *Muslim* middle class, it is important to see the problems in the theorizing of the two terms. In both of them the initial cautiousness of early modernization theory seems to be abandoned in favor of much tighter causal links between economic development, religion and democracy.

On the one hand, by conceptualizing religion, culture and ideology as merely dependent on other social factors and the content the former take as corresponding to that of the West (e.g. the upheaval in the world of Islam as the equivalent of the Protestant reformation), they end up constructing a model at least as deterministic as that of the early modernization theorists. In order for that to happen, any indications that point to the opposite direction are either quietly left out of the picture, or dismissed as counter-tendencies that will eventually be overwhelmed by modernization. Nasr for example, when grappling with issues of non-democratic behavior in the Middle East, somewhat reluctantly claims that “at least in the short run” Middle Eastern societies that are being reshaped by middle classes will be exhibiting characteristics that are far from those of the western world. But eventually, the political culture and institutions of the latter just have to prevail in the former as well.²⁷

On the other hand, when considering the material forces at work in the Muslim world, these scholars don't treat the emergence of a middle class and economic development in general as some conditions among others for the emergence of democracy, but as the causal factors that will necessarily bring about democratization – or at least the factors that are of overwhelming importance in the process. Cultural factors, counter-effects or alternative courses of urbanization, and the effects of the experience of Muslim countries in dealing with the West are largely left out of the picture.

Islam and Islamism: beyond culturalist conceptualizations

Even though this study criticizes the optimistic liberal positions presented above, it doesn't do so from a culturalist perspective according to which Islam is incompatible with democracy. It is important to take a look at theories that argue for and against this perspective in order to have a better understanding of this part of the triadic relationship between political Islam, middle classes

²⁷ Nasr, Vali, *ibid.*, 259 – 260.

and democracy.

Renowned scholar Bernard Lewis presented a straightforward analysis on why Islam is less compatible than Christianity with democracy. According to him, Islam – in general, not just political Islam – does not recognize any sphere of human activity as independent from it; rather, it encompasses all sectors of society, guides all human action and shapes all institutions according to its blueprint of a good community.²⁸ The “radical Islamic movements” of the last few decades are in fact the outcome of a “strong reaction” of Muslim societies against the implementation of secularist policies by the elites that ruled them²⁹. The choice of words is not incidental. Unlike approaches that treat Islam as an ideological tool used by specific social actors in their fight against a specific enemy, Lewis considers it as the resurgence of a traditional mode of thinking, albeit in modern form, by an entire society. However, even though he presents a rather bleak picture of the prospects for democratization in the world of Islam, he does accept that Muslim societies *can* democratize if they manage to find a proper path of reformation toward that direction, without going into any details on how that may happen.³⁰

Another world-famous scholar that has provided us with a theory about change in Islam is Ernest Gellner. Roughly, his model goes as follows. Traditional Islamic societies were divided in two parts, the organization of which was the opposite of that found in Christendom. On the one side there was Islam as it was practiced in the cities by the *ulama*, which was egalitarian, non-hierarchical and puritanical, and on the other side there was the heterodox Islam of the periphery which was organized hierarchically and oriented toward mysticism³¹. As the process of modernization – which consisted mostly of rapid urbanization and the creation of state mechanisms of unprecedented power and intrusiveness – took place, the new conditions favored the dissemination of the puritanical high Islam to the masses and caused the dismantling of local religious sects. The result of modernization was thus the opposite of that in the West, and a homogenized religion, instead of secular ideologies, became the dominant intellectual force.³² Lewis does stress out that treating Islam as the sole explanatory factor when treating Muslim societies is wrong.³³ But his theoretical model leaves little room for maneuvering, since the distance between the religion of Islam and Islamist movements becomes very short. The latter are inevitably seen as expressing the inner political logic of Islam. As Linjakumpu notes, “in this normative-

28 Lewis, Bernard, *Islam and the West*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 136.

29 *Ibid.*, 184.

30 Lewis, Bernard, “Islam and Liberal Democracy, A Historical Overview”, *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 7, No. 2, (1996): 62 – 63.

31 Gellner, Ernest, *Muslim Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 54.

32 Gellner, Ernest, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 15.

33 Lewis, Bernard, *Islam and the West*, *ibid.*, 135.

classic interpretation of Islam, the relationship is understood as unambiguous”, something that leads to an over-politicization of Islam.³⁴

Gellner has also been attacked on similar grounds. He employs categories, e.g. that of the *ulama*, as sociological constants, but in fact they show variance in different times and places.³⁵ And even though he grounds his argument on the functional needs of modern societies, he fails to differentiate between Islam as a traditional religion and Islamism as a modern ideology. Basing their approaches on sweeping generalizations, it seems to be no coincidence that both Gellner and Lewis seem unable to forge a link between Islamic beliefs and democratic practices.

A number of alternative approaches that criticize such essentialist views exist. A lot of them however go to the other extreme in terms of theoretical abstraction and argue that Islamism is simply any political manifestation of Islam. Denoëux for example calls Islamism “a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives. It provides political responses to today's societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on reappropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition”³⁶. Likewise, Fuller considers an Islamist “one who believes *that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim World and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion.*”³⁷ Although correct in underlining the distance between Islam and Islamism, as well as their non-essentialist character, such conceptualizations fail to provide us with a useful framework.

Here, we will draw from the insights of Tibi to get a clearer, and very critical, understanding of political Islam. In his work, Tibi argues that we should make a sharp distinction between the religion of Islam and the political ideology of Islamism. The relation of the latter to the former resembles that of the totalitarian ideologies in Europe to the Enlightenment. While Islam is a religious system that provides its followers with a moral code, it is Islamism that conflates religion and politics and wants to establish a new order based on Shari'a, something that is not to be found in Islam. It is also important to note that according to Tibi, and in contrast with most theorists, not every movement that makes use of Islam is necessarily an Islamist one.³⁸ Only those which demand that religion and politics be merged are to be called Islamist.

Tibi tirelessly repeats that Islam is compatible with democracy if it is reformed, and that movements

34 Linjakumpu, Aini, *Political Islam in the Global World*, (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2008), 8 - 10.

35 Zubaida, Sami, Is there a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner's Sociology of Islam, in (Ed. Bryan S. Turner), *Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 37 – 44.

36 Denoëux, Guilian, “The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam”, *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 2, (2002): 61.

37 Fuller, Graham, *The Future of Political Islam*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xi, emphasis in the original.

38 Tibi, Bassam, *Islamism and Islam*, (London: Yale University Press, 2012), 2 – 3, 120.

of civil Islam – not Islamism – are working just fine in the context of democratic politics³⁹. But the movements of political Islam that have been active in the last ninety years are inherently undemocratic. He dismisses the distinction between moderate and radical Islamism, and contends that since both share the same goal it would be better if we termed them “institutional Islamism” and “jihadism” instead. Hence, even though critical of political Islam, he recognizes that it is not inherently violent and may take a peaceful road to power.⁴⁰

Even though Tibi follows the majority of scholars – mostly liberals and Marxists – when he claims that “Islamism is a cultural-political response to a crisis of failed post-colonial development in Islamic societies under conditions of globalization”⁴¹ he explicitly rejects explanations that reduce political Islam to economic, social or other factors and insists that political phenomena such as Islamism “matter on their own terms”⁴². Coupled with his distancing both from the essentialist camp and the theories that simply consider Islamism to be any form of Islam in politics, this approach presents a balanced view of political Islam and its relation to democracy.

Attempts to answer the question raised at the very beginning of this chapter can take many different routes. The answers this study will try to provide are based on the following three approaches.

- I. The impact economic development (or decline) has on class structure and the financial condition of different strata of society, and the struggle between and among social classes and ethnic and religious groups for political power and ideological hegemony.
- II. The effects urbanization had on different social strata and religious groups, and how they responded to the challenges presented to them. Insights from the work of Gellner, without its essentialist presuppositions, as well as studies carried out by scholars such as Shankland and Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu will be used.
- III. The domain of ideology, and more specifically Tibi's distinction between Islamism and civil Islam and their respective logic. The underlying assumption is that in order for any political order that deserves the adjective “democratic” to exist, a distinction between a secularized public sphere and religion has to be established, a distinction Islamism is not willing to make.
- IV. The effects of the EU ascension process in the two countries.

39 *Ibid.*, 20, 97, 105, 109, 114, 118, 120.

40 Tibi, Bassam, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 10 – 11.

41 Tibi, Bassam, *Islamism and Islam*, 2-3.

42 *Ibid.*, 42 – 43.

Chapter 2: Sunni Islamism in Turkey

In order to make sense of the developments in Turkey regarding the relationship between the Islamic middle class, political Islam and democracy, it is necessary to identify the several different processes that took place from the 1950s onward. In chronological order, these are the use of Islam by the state as an ideological barrier against communism since the 1950s, the entrance of parties with a more explicit Islamist discourse in the political arena in the 1970s, the effects urbanization had on ideology roughly since the 1980s and finally the emergence of an Islamic middle class at about the same time. The exposition of these processes however will not follow a chronological pattern so that the argument unfolds in a more understandable way.

The emergence of the Islamic bourgeoisie

The increasingly globalized and liberalized international economy started exercising powerful forces on the Turkish economy from the 1980's onward. Responding to the challenges of globalization, Turkey took steps to move away from the statist economic model that prevailed up until then and pursue a more liberal one instead. Thus, progressively more emphasis was placed on free trade, privatization and the reorientation of the economy toward productive activity for exports in the international market. This last measure proved to be a catalyst for the emergence of the Anatolian bourgeoisie⁴³.

The expansion of firms in the less developed parts of Turkey was also fueled by credit from Gulf countries during the Özal years. Considering the fact that real wages plummeted during the transition to a more liberal economic model and that new markets opened up in the Middle East, it's not difficult to understand how the "Anatolian tigers", as these new strata became known, managed to catapult themselves forward in a short period of time.⁴⁴

This new social class developed its own business groups to voice its demands, the most important of which is MÜSİAD which was established in 1990. MÜSİAD's membership quickly soared and

43 Sebnem Gumuscu, "Economic Liberalization, Devout Bourgeoisie, and Change in Political Islam: Comparing Turkey and Egypt", EUI Working Papers RCSAS 2008/19, 3 – 4.

44 Sungur Savran, *İslamcılık, AKP, Burjuvazinin İç Savaşı*, in (eds. Neşecan Balkan, Erol Balkan / Ahmet Öncü), *Neoliberalizm, İslamcı Sermayenin Yükselişi ve AKP*, (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2013), 79 – 80.

from 12 members in 1990 it reached a few thousand a decade and a half later, most of which are small and medium sized. Its primary goals are providing assistance to firms that need information concerning the international economic environment and the advancement of competitiveness through joint venture investments⁴⁵.

This Anatolian bourgeoisie managed to emerge without being dependent on state policies. On the contrary, they were from the start dynamic, export-oriented and favored the liberalization of the Turkish economy. For this purpose, the new Islamic middle class supported political parties that aimed at transforming the economy and the society of the country.

The first Islamist party in Turkey, MNP (Milli Nizam Partisi – National Order Party), was founded in 1970, but was shut down only a year later as it was accused of anti-secular activities by the authorities during the 1971 military coup. In 1972 its successor party, MSP (Milli Selamet Partisi – National Salvation Party), was founded and lasted until the coup of 1980. The leader of MSP was Necmettin Erbakan throughout the '70s (with the exception of a short period after the 1971 coup), a seminal figure of Turkish political Islam.

The ideology of MSP, and of RP later on, was called by its own members as “*Milli Görüş*”, (National Outlook). It can be best described as a mixture of anti-western ideas, hostility toward Israel that often slipped into antisemitism, Turkish nationalism and a rather outspoken opposition to secularism, considering the influence the military still exercised over political life. It also advocated the need for an Anatolian industrial base that would turn Turkey into the leader of the Muslim world.⁴⁶

The party's electoral base was split almost evenly between urban and rural areas, but in cities located in the underdeveloped part of the country it managed to get disproportionately high percentages of votes. Thus, it can be argued that a significant part of the party's voters was made up of traditional middle class elements that were alarmed of the effects of industrialization as it was taking place – a plausible hypothesis considering the negative stance of MSP toward westernization in general.⁴⁷

MSP not only managed to perform relatively well in the elections of 1973 and 1977, but it also participated in coalition governments during the '70s. It was the first time that a party with an

45 Atasoy, Yildiz, *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism, State Transformation in Turkey*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 117 – 118 & Filiz Başkan, “The Rising Business Elite and Democratization in Turkey”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 12:4, 404 – 405.

46 Rabasa, Angel and Larrabee, F. Stephen, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008), 40 – 41. & Özbundun, Ergun and Hale, William, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The case of the AKP*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 5 – 10.

47 Özbundun, Ergun & Hale, William, *ibid.*, 6 – 12.

explicitly Islamist rhetoric managed to become part of a government in Turkey.⁴⁸

The Islamist party that really managed to make a breakthrough though was RP (Refah Partisi – Welfare Party). Established in 1983 and headed by Erbakan, it had moderate success during the 80's, but in the local elections of 1994 it captured some of Turkey's major cities (including Ankara and Istanbul) and in the general elections of 1995 it managed to come first with 21.4% of the votes. Erbakan became Prime Minister in 1996 but was forced to step down after yet another intervention of the military in politics in 1997. RP's positions were close to that of its predecessor parties, but it seems like Erbakan was willing to take the edge off of the party's rhetoric to some extent. Thus, even though comments which showed an instrumentalist view of democracy, antisemitic attitudes etc. were still made by party members, Erbakan also claimed that his party stood for pluralism and made an opening to the Kurds of Turkey.⁴⁹

The intervention of the military in 1997 acted like a catalyst in bringing to the surface the schism between the moderates and the traditionalists within the Islamist camp. It was also condemned by a large part of the citizens, who demanded less intervention of the military in public affairs. RP was replaced by FP (Fazilet Partisi – Virtue Party) in 1998, which was deemed unconstitutional in 2001, only to be replaced immediately afterwards itself by the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party) which was founded by the moderate wing of the Islamist movement, and SP (Saadet Partisi – Felicity Party) by the traditionalist one⁵⁰.

Before we start going over the AKP years and the impact urbanization had on the characteristics of political Islam, let us provide with a short account of how Islam managed to re-enter the public sphere after the one-party period, and how Islamism managed to become a powerful force in public life from the 1990s onward. On the one hand, the state itself found in religion a useful weapon to fight socialism since as early as the 1950s. The two primary mechanisms the state has used to achieve that are the Imam Hatip schools – which train the preachers and imams employed by the state – and the DİB (Diyanet , of Religious Affairs), the basic objective of which is to administer work in the field of Islamic faith in the country.⁵¹

After the coup of 1980, the “Turkish Islamic Synthesis” became the official ideology of the state and Turgut Özal went as far as annulling the law of the penal code that prohibited the use of

48 Zürcher, Erik J., *Turkey, A Modern History*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 261.

49 Yavuz, Hakan, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, *ibid.*, 218 – 227.

50 Moudouros, Nikos, *Ο μετασχηματισμός της Τουρκίας, από την Κεμαλική κυριαρχία στον “Ισλαμικό” νεοφιλελευθερισμό [The transformation Turkey, from Kemalist supremacy to “Islamic” neoliberalism]*, (Athens: Alexandria, 2012), 229 – 239.

51 İba, Şaban, AKP nasıl iktidar olmuştu? In (ed. Başkaya, Fikret), *AKP, İlimli İslam, Neoliberalizm* (Ankara: Ütopya, 2013), 97 – 106. For the role of DİB in Turkey see <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr/en/category/basic-principles-and-objectives/23>

religion in politics in 1991⁵². The diffusion of Islam among the masses became even easier during the 1990s when the power of the centrist parties eroded because of their inability to properly take care of the economy and their involvement in numerous cases of corruption⁵³. It should be noted that even though Islamism became the hegemonic ideology in Turkey, this was not intended by the state. Rather, it unintentionally played its part in shifting the balance of power toward the Islamists. The latter have used the media and have channeled vast amounts of resources in their attempt to construct a supra-class coalition based on the cultural hegemony of their ideology. This process, which has been aptly compared to right-wing Gramscism, allowed them to firmly establish themselves in society before they monopolized political power.⁵⁴

On the other hand, the emergence of the Islamic middle class in the 1980's – '90's played its part in reshaping the orientation of Islamist parties in Turkey. This class sought to influence politics to best serve its economic needs and ideological aspiration, and for this reason it could not be content with the traditionalist, populist, anti-western, Islamist worldview of Milli Görüş. Rather, it started supporting a moderate, market-friendly political Islam that would not only restructure the economy to its benefit, but would also establish a new moral order.⁵⁵ Whether these changes would be enough to counter the tendencies mentioned above and turn the period of AKP rule in a triumph of democracy is going to be the subject of the rest of the chapter.

The AKP years: 2002 – 2016

The social base of the AKP was from the beginning larger and more diverse than that of previous Islamist parties. Its more moderate tone appealed to a wider audience, and it was supported by both urban and rural populations, and both lower and upper strata. Even though – understandably – the majority of the voters were to be found among the former, the new Islamic middle class was the 'driving force' of the AKP.⁵⁶

During its first period of governance, the AKP showed signs that it embarked on a project to democratize Turkey in a way unseen before. In the international arena, the AKP set membership in the EU as a strategic goal and pursued a policy of “zero problems” with neighboring countries.

52 Shankland notes that although the constitutional ban on the use of religion in politics remained, the fact that Islamists did not have to fear penal consequences for their actions gave a significant thrust to the Islamist movement
Shankland, David, *İslâm ve toplum in Türkiye* [Islam and Society in Turkey], (Athens: Kritiki, 2003), 80 – 81.

53 Çarkoğlu, Ali & Kalaycıoğlu, Ersin, *The Rising Tide of Conservatism in Turkey*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 148.

54 Evren Hoşgör, AKP'nin Hegemonya Sorunsalı: Uzlaşmasız Mutabakat in (eds. Neşecan Balkan, Erol Balkan / Ahmet Öncü), *ibid.*, 308 – 309.

55 Mender Çınar & Burhanettin Duran, The specific evolution of contemporary Political Islam in Turkey and its “difference”, in (ed. Cizre, Ümit), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The making of the Justice and Development Party*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 32.

56 Özbundun, Ergun & Hale, William, *ibid.*, 38.

Domestically, the AKP pushed for a number of reforms during its first years when harmonization with EU legislation was at the forefront of its agenda, an effort which included a constitutional amendment in 2004. Thus, the rights of non-Muslim communities were extended, freedom of association and expression as well as the right to demonstration were significantly expanded and a number of improvements were made regarding the respect for human rights and the prosecution of crimes related to honor killings, torture by state officers etc.⁵⁷

The first AKP government also broke new ground with respect to the Kurdish issue, going as far as granting partial amnesty to PKK members that were incarcerated⁵⁸, and dealt a serious blow to the military in 2008 with the uncovering of the Ergenekon case, when “for the first time in the republic's history, four-star generals were brought to justice for alleged coup plots”⁵⁹. Removing the military from its privileged position vis-a-vis the democratically elected government is a necessary condition for a meaningful democratization of any country.

These developments led several commentators, like the ones mentioned in Chapter 1, to claim that a fundamental shift had taken place in Turkish politics in regards to democratization and the alignment of Turkey with the West in general. The AKP was seen as expressing social forces, mainly the new Islamic middle class, that would finally transform Turkey into a modern democracy. Developments in the last few years however should force us to rethink this approach and question its theoretical preconditions. Negotiations with the EU stagnated since as early as 2007. The behavior of Turkey as a regional player can hardly be described anymore as one of “zero problems”, especially after the Arab Spring re-shaped the political map of the region.⁶⁰ But the domestic front is more important for our study, and it is there that the policies of the AKP diverged more sharply from those of the past.

What had began as an inclusive political project has turned into a majoritarian democracy where the ruling party claimed that it represented the largest segment of society and as such had the right to ignore demands by minority groups that challenged its worldview⁶¹. It is perhaps ironic that modern political Islam in Turkey seems to be following on Atatürk's footsteps in opposing any viewpoint that is seen as undermining the unity of the country. Furthermore, the AKP government has started

57 Usul, Ali Resul, *Democracy in Turkey, The impact of EU political conditionality*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 129 – 140.

58 Tozun Bahcheli & Sid Noel, The Justice and Development Party and the Kurdish Question, in (eds. Casier, Marlies & Jondergen, Joost), *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey, Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 105 – 107.

59 Söyler Mehtap, *The Turkish Deep State, State Consolidation, Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 167.

60 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/22/how-turkey-went-from-zero-problems-to-zero-friends/> Web. 10 Jul. 2016.

61 Ergun Özbudun, “AKP at the Crossroads: Erdoğan's Majoritarian Drift”, *South European Society and Politics*, 19:2, (2014), 157.

a war on press freedom and the academic world that is without a doubt beyond any variant of democratic politics. Journalists and academics are being harassed and even prosecuted if they publicly oppose the government, and social media users face prison sentences simply for posting “defamatory” comments for President Erdoğan. The government's control of the judiciary results in impartial treatment of those whose cases end in court.⁶²

On top of that, officials of the governing party started being more vocal about the Islamic character of their policies. Indeed, not only the selling of alcohol was restricted, the number of Imam Hatip students increased, non-compulsory religious classes were introduced into the school curricula, but negative remarks concerning people drinking, women having abortions and generally life choices that were considered to be 'un-Islamic' became common, even by the Prime Minister.⁶³

The moment of rupture however, after which nothing was the same for Turkish politics, was the Gezi protests in 2013. As is well known, the project to reshape Gezi park and build a mall there was met with resistance from a small group of locals. The environmentalist movement, which was initially limited in scope and size spread like wildfire throughout the country and turned into something much bigger. Millions of protesters in 67 cities took to the streets to demonstrate against the increasingly authoritarian behavior of the government.⁶⁴

The state responded with disproportionate violence to the protesters: 150.000 gas bombs were fired, tents were set on fire, thousands of people were injured, and three died.⁶⁵ Considering the class composition – mostly working class, but also a disproportionately high number of middle and upper class protesters –, the educational level – support climbed in the most educated strata – and the ideological preferences – much more to the left and much more secularist than the average Turkish citizen – of those who took part in the Gezi protests, it is easy to see that the simplistic dichotomy that juxtaposes an elitist, secular order with a modern and democratic Muslim one fails to grasp the dynamics of the Turkish model.⁶⁶

Explaining the authoritarian shift

A number of factors at play during the early AKP years can explain the profile the party kept in the first years of its governance and the shift toward more authoritarian policies later on. First of all, the

62 www.freedomhouse.org Freedom House, 2016. Web. 10 Jul. 2016.

63 Ergun Özbudun, *ibid.*, 157.

64 Umut Özkırıklı, Introduction in (ed. Özkırıklı, Umut), *The making of a protest movement in Turkey: #occupygezi*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.

65 Efe Can Gürcan & Efe Peker, (2014), “Turkey's Gezi Park Demonstrations of 2013: A Marxian Analysis of the Political Moment”, *Socialism and Democracy*, 28:1, 71. The number of casualties increased as injured protesters succumbed to their wounds.

66 For a detailed presentation of the profile of Gezi protesters based on quantitative evidence, see Erdem Yörük & Murat Yüksel, *Class and Politics in Turkey's Gezi Protests*, *New Left Review* 89, Sept/Oct 2014, 111 – 121.

party itself was not that coherent in its organization in the first years after its formation, something that changed as time went by. Secondly, initially it didn't enjoy very broad support from the public. The AKP gained 10.808.229 votes in the national elections of 2002, 16.327.291 in 2007 and 21.399.082 in 2011 – an increase of almost 100% that greatly shielded the party against accusations that it lacks legitimacy to implement policies it wished⁶⁷. Thirdly, the secular establishment was still able to greatly influence the political process through the armed forces and as long as a staunchly secular President – Ahmet Necdet Sezer – was in power. This changed once Abdullah Gül became President in 2007 and the AKP government managed to bend the will of the armed forces to an extent unseen before. Finally, the international and regional order was such that an Islamist government pursuing moderate policies and an EU candidacy was seen as an important partner in the Middle East by western powers. The growing enlargement fatigue in the EU, the state of introversion it found itself in after the onset of the financial crisis and the events of the Arab Spring altered the context within which the AKP functioned.⁶⁸

All this does not necessarily mean that the AKP had a secret agenda all along, as its most extreme accusers say or imply. It merely shows that the party elites were, and still are, pragmatic in setting and attaining their goals. As long as domestic and international factors set certain limitations. Once the political environment was altered – in ways that no actor could have foreseen – the AKP again reoriented its political goals and attitudes. According to Çınar & Duran, a characteristic of Turkish political Islam is that it has internalized a specific approach toward politics. As long as the political climate is hostile and secular forces apply too much pressure, Islamist movements recede from the public sphere without resorting to violence. When conditions improve, Islamists tend to increase their activity.⁶⁹

But the question persists: Why did the AKP choose *this* particular course in the last few years? If we are to believe the accounts provided by many intellectuals and commentators both on the left and the right, the answer is to be found in the unchanging character of Islam or the unchecked power of an economic elite imposing a neoliberal agenda. Although it would be legitimate to assume that Tibi is correct in pointing out that the AKP remains an Islamist party, that still doesn't account for the social underpinnings which would make the realization of the party's course possible.

Notwithstanding the tense relations between democracy and capitalism, in order to understand the

67 www.electionresources.org Web. 11 Jul. 2016.

68 Çarkoğlu, Ali & Kalayıcıoğlu, Ersin, *Turkish Democracy Today: Elections, Protest and Stability in an Islamic Society*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 40, 219 & Eksi, Muharrem, *The Rise and Fall of Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy During JDP*, (Saarbrücken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2016), 13 – 16.

69 Çınar Menderes & Duran Burhanettin Evolution of Contemporary Political Islam (Ed. Ümit Cizre), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The making of the Justice and Development Party*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 24.

politics of the AKP one has to move beyond class politics and take in to account the development of Turkish society in the last few decades. As noted earlier on, Turkey witnessed a major restructuring of its economy and social formation since the 1980's. According to Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu, the characteristics of industrialization and liberalization during these years, as well as the sheer speed of the urbanization process, played a major part in the emergence of conservatism and religiosity in Turkey. Conservatism in general can take of course many forms, but in the Turkish context it is found to be positively correlated with intolerant and authoritarian attitudes.

More specifically, even though the liberalization of the economy was seen as necessary in Turkey by most people and the establishment of new media in the 1990's was fundamental in promoting pluralization in the public sphere, the new order that had emerged was widely perceived to be immoral and unjust. Even though people did not want to return to the statist policies of the earlier decades, they were longing for the re-institution of the moral code of an era that had passed.

On the other hand, the rapid flow of population from the periphery to the cities didn't lead to the emergence of a new bourgeois culture, but rather to a multitude of rural cultures which did not manage to establish a coherent normative framework for the residents. This condition of *anomie* increased the perception that there was no moral order in the country and proved to be fertile ground for Islamic networks. The latter found it easier to expand their activities both because the post-1980's regime was much more lenient toward religious activity and because the dismantling of the left during the same time created a large ideological vacuum they could exploit.⁷⁰

The effects this deep penetration of conservative beliefs have on Turkish politics can be seen in the results of the latest elections, after the authoritarian shift of the AKP. Özbudun argued in 2014 that the latter was likely to lead to a decline in the party's electoral base, since the majority of them were not hardliners but liberals that had allied themselves with more hardcore Islamists.⁷¹ Later the same year, Erdoğan was elected President with 51,79% of the votes in the first round of the presidential elections. A year later the AKP's share of votes slightly receded in the parliamentary elections of June, but after a short period of intense polarization, it won the elections of November 2015 with an unprecedented 23,681,926 votes⁷². The prediction according to which moderates would distance themselves from the AKP failed, and that is because in a regionally unstable and domestically polarized environment, Turkish voters do not have to subscribe to a hardcore Islamist ideology to support the AKP. Rather, the authoritarian policies of the new political order are acting like a beacon to conservative voters who value stability and security.

70 Çarkoğlu, Ali & Kalaycıoğlu, Ersin, *The Rising Tide of Conservatism in Turkey*, *ibid.*, 8, 20, 58, 118, 141.

71 Ergun Özbudun, *ibid.*, 160.

72 <http://www.electionresources.org/tr/assembly.php?election=2015> Web. 10 Jul. 2016.

Thus, even though an Islamic middle class arose and there seemed in fact to be an abandonment of hardline views in favor of less uncompromising policies, the end result was not the long-awaited democratization of Turkey. That is because countervailing forces that resulted from specific state policies, and the effects of urbanization and industrialization did not allow for the development of a pluralistic public sphere or a liberalized political Islam. Nasr's position that we saw in the previous chapter, of a spillover effect taking place after economic liberalization, seems to completely miss many important factors at play in the democratization process.

As this chapter was being written, the failed coup of July 15 took place in Turkey. Although this study does not focus in the intricate relations between the military and political Islam, or the internal split of the latter after 2013, when the Gülenist movement and the AKP parted ways, and both the forces behind the coup and the effects it will have are still unclear, it seems that the latest developments confirm the trends that have been unfolding in the last years. It is perhaps the first time that a country's political order that just survived a military coup is itself seen as a threat to democracy by domestic and international actors.

We shall now turn our attention to the Alevis of Turkey, among which a more liberal interpretation of Islam arose in the last few decades.

Chapter 3: Alevi Islam in Turkey

In this chapter, we will follow the development of the Alevi community in Turkey from one with traditional beliefs and practices to the “emergence of a secular Islamic tradition” as one scholar put it. First, a brief exposition of some characteristics of the Alevi religion will be presented. Next, as in the previous chapter, attention will be paid to different social processes. These are the impact urbanization had on the Alevi communities, the challenges posed to them by the state and radical Islamists and the way the Alevis responded to them, and the developments from 1990 onward when a shift toward identity politics took place. Finally,

Traditional communities and the first years in the Republic

Alevi religion is generally considered to belong to Islam, and more specifically it is regarded as connected to Shiism. The Turkish state does not recognize Alevis as a minority, thus there are no official data regarding their number or their ethnicity. However, according to estimates by various authors, they make up 15 – 20% of the population in Turkey and the large majority is Turkish, with the rest being Kurdish.⁷³

Traditionally, Alevis inhabited rural areas in Anatolia and were in tense relations with the Ottoman state, since their belief system was considered to be heretical. Alevi communities are composed of two kinds of lineages. The majority are called “talip” and their members do not have any special religious status. But the rest, the “dede” lineages, are different. The men who are the heads of those

⁷³ Shankland, David, *The Alevis in Turkey*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2003), 20.

families are themselves called “dede” and they provide spiritual guidance to talip families under their protection. They also perform certain religious duties.⁷⁴

In general, Alevi do not go to mosques to fulfill their religious duties. Rather, they perform their own ceremonies, called “Cem”, in simple houses. These ceremonies are headed by a dede, and in order for them to take place all members of the community have to be present and need to have worked out their differences. In case some members come to the Cem with a quarrel, the dede mediates so that the two sides are reconciled. Thus the ceremony has another side apart from the religious one. It also functions as a space where conflicts are resolved and the cohesion of the community is reinforced.⁷⁵

Alevi Islam has other differences from Sunni (and Shia, for that matter) Islam as well. Women are not performing their religious duties separate from men, but they fully participate in the Cem ceremony instead.⁷⁶ The five pillars of Islam that guide the life of the faithful are considered to be only the first step in a longer course toward God. There are three more steps to be taken which lead the faithful in union with God. In the center of their worldview lies the concept of love for other people and God, and a simple set of moral guidelines: “Eline, diline, beline sahip olmak” which translates as “be a master of your hands, tongue and genitals”, that is, do not act in an unethical manner, do not lie or curse, and do not engage in immoral sexual acts.⁷⁷

The identity of this “heterodox” religious group has developed in a contradictory way during the era of the Republic. The Kemalist project downplayed the Ottoman legacy in favor of an imagined, pre-Islamic past, one which the Alevi proudly consider to be embodying, and proceeded with the secularization of the public sphere by restricting Sunni Islam to a private affair.⁷⁸ One would thus expect that Alevism would enjoy a privileged connection to the state. It doesn't however, and the context forged in the early years of the Republic concerning the relationship between secularism and religion gave rise to a major contradiction of society and politics of modern Turkey.

Sunni Islam, although banned from public life to an extreme extent, still remained a foundation of Turkish identity. One could not be a Turk without being a Sunni Muslim, and the state would not tolerate any kind of belief or activity that undermined the unity of the nation, as understood by the Kemalist elite.⁷⁹ This created a paradoxical environment for the Alevi. On the one hand, they found themselves in a secular state that did not treat them as heretics like the Ottoman state did. On

74 Shankland, David, *Ισλάμ και κοινωνία στην Τουρκία*, [Islam and Society in Turkey], *ibid.*, 250.

75 Shankland, David, *The Alevi in Turkey*, *ibid.*, 7.

76 *Ibid.*, 97 - 98

77 Shankland, David, *Ισλάμ και κοινωνία στην Τουρκία*, [Islam and Society in Turkey], *ibid.*, 243

78 Niyazi Kızılyürek, *Κεμαλισμός [Kemalism]*, (Athens: Mesogeios, 2010), 68.

79 Tanıl Bora, *Στρατός και εθνικισμός [Army and Nationalism]*, in (eds. Ahmet İnsel, Ali Bayramoğlu), *Ο Τουρκικός Στρατός, ένα πολιτικό κόμμα, μια κοινωνική τάξη*, [The Turkish Army, A political party, a social class], (Athens: Bibliorama, 2007), 163.

the other hand though, they were still considered to be lying at the periphery of the official Turkish identity.

Urbanization & politicization from 1950 to 1990

Alevis started migrating to urban centers only after 1950, and the process didn't really start taking off until the 1960s. Almost immediately though, this transition to the cities affected their communities deeply and the Alevis had to respond to a number of challenges.⁸⁰ Some of the effects of this transition can be understood within a framework inspired by Gellner's observations, stripped of their essentialist presuppositions.

First of all, unlike the Sunni Muslims of Turkey who only had to deal with the effects of urbanization as discussed in the previous chapter, the Alevis found it much more difficult to replicate the very basic functions of their traditional way of living in the city environment. The Cem ceremony made much less sense in an urban setting where people didn't necessarily know each other and even were of different faith, since Alevis had to live now close to Sunnis. Furthermore, the Alevis found themselves within a social setting dominated by a modern state apparatus. In that setting, the Alevis could, and had to, turn to the authorities in case some serious problem arose. The modern judicial system rendered the traditional system of conflict resolution of the Cem ceremony obsolete.⁸¹ This is a typical case of the foundations of a traditional society being undermined by modernization.⁸²

Moreover, the Turkish state promotes a specific view of Islam through the education system, and the exercise of a certain degree of control of the content of public discourse. The carriers of “heterodox” beliefs are constantly exposed to an official ideology that undermines their traditional beliefs. Especially for the young, literate generation of Alevis, the exposure to all kinds of modern discourses inevitably weakened their belief in the authority of dedes.⁸³ Because of the corrosive effects of this new urban environment, the core organizational network that bounded Alevi communities together started withering away. Since material practices are an integral part of the reproduction of cultural and ideological beliefs, this also affected the power Alevi beliefs exercised over the member of their communities.

Secondly, in order to better comprehend the ideological shifts of Alevis during those years, it is important to look at the challenges they encountered and the new ideas they could use in the

80 Yavuz, Hakan, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, *ibid.*, 67.

81 Shankland, David, *The Alevis in Turkey*, *ibid.*, 5.

82 Gellner, Ernest, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, *ibid.*, 15.

83 Shankland, David, *The Alevis in Turkey*, *ibid.*, 13 & *Ισλάμ και κοινωνία στην Τουρκία*, [*Islam and Society in Turkey*], *ibid.*, 136.

polemics of the era – which would soon spiral out of control and plunge the country into violence. Unlike the decreasing effectiveness and popularity of the Alevi organizational networks, other ones were flourishing. Political parties of all orientations, trade unions, Islamist networks, they were all on the rise, especially after the liberalizing effects of the 1961 constitution.

The Alevis who moved to the cities became by and large members of the lower strata.⁸⁴ For some of them, this meant that they were exposed to leftist ideologies that were growing in popularity during the 1960s and 1970s. The same era was one of repression by right-wing Islamist radicals, starting with their attacks in an Alevi festival in Elbistan in 1967⁸⁵. Such encounters were another factor in their shift toward the left⁸⁶. The same era was also one of the rediscovery and reinterpretation of Kemalism by many groups, one of which was the Alevis. For a part of them, Kemalism in general and secularism in particular were seen as their guiding ideologies, and they themselves as the guardians of those ideologies against the Islamists who sought to undermine them. Some Alevi intellectuals went as far as claiming that Alevi Islam was the “true” Islam of Turkey that could better work with the secularist order of the country.⁸⁷

Hence, the Alevi religion did not produce its own political ideology like Sunni or Shia Islam, but the Alevis turned to socialism and Kemalism instead. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, this politicization was reflected in a political party called BP (Birlik Partisi – Unity Party). Founded in 1966, BP can be termed an Alevi party even though it didn't explicitly state so itself. Its image though was that of a lion and twelve stars around it, which symbolize Ali and the twelve Imams, and the party stood for “human rights, democracy, social state and the rule of law” as well as the right of individuals not to reveal their beliefs and worship in any way they best consider appropriate⁸⁸.

The reason behind the unwillingness to self-identify as Alevi was not only the prohibition of the use of religion in politics, but also the fear that this would make the party seem as divisive in its politics. This is also the reason the party changed its name to TBP (Türkiye Birlik Partisi – Unity Party of Turkey) in 1971. BP experienced an internal conflict between a leftist faction which wanted a more radical political program, and a moderate one which was Kemalist in orientation. Eventually the party adopted a more leftist stance.⁸⁹

These conflicts are important mainly in highlighting the tensions within the urban Alevis of the era.

84 Ayşe Ayata, *The Emergence of Identity Politics in Turkey*, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 17, (Sept., 1997), 67.

85 Yavuz, Hakan, *ibid.*, 67.

86 Bozarlsan, Hamit, *Ιστορία της Σύγχρονης Τουρκίας*, [*History of Modern Turkey*], (Athens:Savvalas, 2004), 80.

87 Azak, Umut, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010), 139.

88 Elise Massicard, “Alevism in the 1960s: Social Change and Mobilisation” in (ed. Hege Irene Markussen), *Alevis and Alevism, Transformed Identities*, (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2005), 128 – 129. and Güler, Sabır, *Aleviliğin Siyasal Örgütlenmesi*, (Istanbul: Dipnot, 2008), 77.

89 *Ibid.*, 139.

BP did not fare well in the elections, managing to win a meager 1,6% in the municipal elections of 1968, and 2,8% in the general elections of 1969. Its share of the vote in peripheries with a large percentage of Alevi population was far higher though, surpassing 15% and even 20% in some cases.

90

The revitalizing of Alevi culture after 1990

By the 1980's the interest in Alevism had subsided considerably and it was even argued that it would disappear as a distinct religion or culture.⁹¹ It seemed as if it would eclipse in the presence of modern ideologies. But then, starting in 1990, Alevism unexpectedly underwent a resurgence. The reasons behind it were the decline of existing grand narratives at the time, especially socialism, and the emergence of identity politics, or politics that engaged with particular issues.⁹²

The first sign was the publishing of the “Alevi manifesto” in Cumhuriyet in 1990 which voiced the demand for policies inclusive toward the Alevis from the part of the state, and wished to “inform the public with the demands of Alevis”.⁹³ What followed was the emergence of a large body of literature on Alevism and, perhaps more importantly, the flourishing of activities in the public sphere like the setting up of associations and organizations which pushed for reforms and increased the visibility of Alevism.⁹⁴

In this context, the Cem ceremony too was reinvented into a – sometimes open to the public – ceremony that took place in a space specifically used for that function, and with a more standardized set of rituals. This led to some, especially older, members of Alevi communities to question the religious character of this transformed Cem.⁹⁵

Alevism after 1990 may have resurfaced as a cultural and religious movement, but that does not mean that it doesn't carry political demands, nor that Alevis and their organizations are not carrying the legacy of the '60s and '70s. The social and political environment of these years drastically altered the self-understanding of the Alevis and imbued their community with a political outlook that is overwhelmingly secularist and markedly more tolerant than its Sunni counterpart⁹⁶. The fact that the Alevi communities lacked a central authority or a hierarchical body which could take

90 *Ibid.*, 89 – 92.

91 Reha Çamuroğlu, Alevi revivalism in Turkey, in (Eds. Tord Olsson, Elizabeth Özdalga & Catharina Raudvere), *Alevi Identity*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 79.

92 Massicard, Elise, *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe: Identity and Managing Territorial Diversity*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 37 – 38.

93 Tahire Emran & Emrah Göker, “Alevi Politics in Contemporary Turkey”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Oct., 2000), 102.

94 *Ibid.*, 102.

95 Massicard, Elise, *ibid.*, 130.

96 Çarkoğlu, Ali & Kalayıcıoğlu, Ersin, *The Rising Tide of Conservatism in Turkey*, *ibid.*, 33 – 34.

binding decisions for all members, stifle dialogue and promote a particular political ideology played its part too in this process.

Concerning their own status in society, Alevi demands revolve around three main issues:

Recognition of Cemevis as places of religious activity, participation in the DİB and inclusion of Alevism in the school curriculum.⁹⁷ As for their stance on more general issues, they tend to place themselves to the left of the political spectrum, exhibiting higher levels of liberal attitudes as well. It is no coincidence that Alevi support for the CHP, the social-democratic, pro-secular party of Turkey reaches almost 70%.⁹⁸

It is noteworthy that, according to a report by Turkish authorities, 78% of those detained during the Gezi protests were Alevis.⁹⁹ This shows that the number of Alevis involved in the most important episode in the struggle for democracy in Turkey in the last years was disproportionately high compared to their relative size in society – something not surprising since they fit the profile of the protester as was described in the previous chapter. The perception of many Alevis that the AKP governments were pursuing sectarian policies alarmed them even further.¹⁰⁰

Even though the first AKP government had used inclusive language toward the Alevis, the state still does not recognize them as a separate religious group, nor does it recognize Cemevis as places of worship.¹⁰¹ As such, the latter are not receiving any funding from the DİB. As noted before, the education system is also promoting only the Sunni interpretation of Islam. It is easy to see that Alevis are being discriminated against, since they are not fully enjoying the freedom of religious expression even though they carry the same obligations that Sunni citizens do.

But, apart from the constant repression of the state, what are equally important in their repercussions on the development of modern Alevism are the periodic outbursts of violence against them from Islamist extremists. Attacks that costed the lives of dozens of people took place not only in the turbulent 1960's and '70s, but also in the 1990's. The most notable took place in Sivas and Gazi in 1993 and 1995, when dozens of people lost their lives.¹⁰²

Although nowadays Alevis can be found in all social strata of Turkey, there has been no coherent social force like that of the “Anatolian tigers” that not only shares a common social position but pursues a religiously inspired political agenda as well. Rather, they generally tend to showcase a

97 Massicard, Elise, *ibid.*, 52.

98 KONDA 30 Mart Yerel Seçimler Sonrası Sandık ve Seçmen Analizi, 16 Apr. 2014, 24. www.konda.com.tr Web. 08 Jul. 2016.

99 “78 Percent of Gezi Park Protest Detainees Were Alevis: Report”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, Hürriyet Daily News, 25 Nov. 2013 Web. 09 Jul. 2016.

100 Erdem Yörük & Murat Yüksel, *ibid.*, 110.

101 Hallam, Mark, “Turkey discriminates against Alevi faith, ECHR rules”, Deutsche Welle, 26 Apr. 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/turkey-discriminates-against-alevi-faith-echr-rules/a-19214883> Web. 20 Jul. 2016.

102 M. Irat, Ali, *Aleviliğin ABC'si*, (Istanbul: Profil, 2012), 176 – 199.

more secular view of politics and if there is a class element to be found, it may actually be that of Alevis from the lower strata, which had found themselves worse off in the '80s and the '90s.¹⁰³ This should not be understood as an implication that the Alevis are by definition progressive as well. According to Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu they are fairly conservative, albeit less so than their Sunni counterparts¹⁰⁴. It simply means that a Muslim tradition has been consolidated which sees the state and the sphere of religion as separate and which is exhibiting higher levels of tolerance – both necessary ingredients for democratic politics.

A point that cannot be overemphasized is that the different courses taken by sections of Sunni and Alevi Muslims in Turkey do not reflect an unchangeable essence of their respective religious beliefs. Instead, they are the outcome of different social conditions and the innovative responses of social actors to them. We will now turn our attention to the Bosnian Muslims and the development of an Islamic tradition that is very much nationalized and secularized.

103 Ayşe Ayata, *ibid.*, 67.

104 Çarkoğlu, Ali & Kalaycıoğlu, Ersin, *ibid.*, 34.

Chapter 4: Bosnian Islam

In this chapter we are going to follow the process of reappearance of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the last few decades. First, a short overview of the social and historical context will be provided. Then, we will look at the course of the Muslim intellectual elites that came to dominate Bosnia in the post-Yugoslav period, and in the third part we will see the factors which lead to the emergence of a secular national identity, as well as whether economic development had a role in this course of events.

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia) is a country which is composed of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, following the signature of the Dayton Agreement in 1995. Bosnian Muslims, nowadays also known as Bosniaks, make up almost half of the country's population, but their overwhelming majority is to be found in the first of the two entities since the war of 1992 – 1995 intensified the preexisting tendencies of territorial homogenization along ethnoreligious lines.¹⁰⁵

Bosnia underwent a process of Islamization in the first two centuries of Ottoman domination that

105 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013 Final Results, Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, June 2016, 54.
<http://www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvoIzdanie.pdf> Web. 02 Aug. 2016.

far surpassed that of other Balkan countries, with the exception of Albania.¹⁰⁶ However, the peculiarities concerning Islam in Bosnia are not relevant to the size and speed of this transformation. Rather, the country's Muslims found themselves in a multi-ethnic and multi-faith environment which was undergoing rapid change in the 20th century in all areas of life, including that of collective identities. During the Yugoslav years the other two main groups that are to be found in Bosnia, the Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs, occupied well-defined positions in the social system. They composed separate ethnoreligious *narods* (*nations*). Bosnian Muslims however were denied up until the '60s the right to constitute a distinctive nation, and usually they had to self-identify in official documents as Serbs, Croats, Yugoslavs or “Muslims of Undeclared Nationality”.¹⁰⁷

As will become evident later on, this was not only because of the regime's policy toward them. It also reflected a deep ambivalence on the part of Bosnian Muslims themselves regarding their identity.

The Muslim intellectual elites

During the communist period, Islam in general was not persecuted by the Yugoslav state (although Sufi orders had been banned by the regime)¹⁰⁸, and the Islamic Community (IC) actively supported the status quo and promoted solidarity among the peoples of the country. In fact, compared to other groups in Yugoslavia, Islam was the least nationalistic of all. The IC expanded its activities during this era, and the Muslim community even enjoyed the highest cleric-per-believer ratio in Yugoslavia at 1:1,250.¹⁰⁹

In the course of the '60s and the '70s, nationalist groups became more vocal in Yugoslavia, and that included the Bosnian peoples as well. This rise of nationalism did not leave the Muslims of Bosnia unaffected. That is why eventually, in 1968, the Yugoslav authorities recognized Bosnian Muslims as a separate ethnic, and not religious, group.¹¹⁰ Indeed, there appeared a few factions regarding the question of Bosnian Muslim identity, some of which had their roots in previous decades. Of the two most important currents, the first sought to promote a national identity of Bosnian Muslims which would stress its secular character and at the same time stay faithful to the official doctrine and Yugoslavia.

106 Asceric-Todd, Ines, *Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 11.

107 Bringa, Tone, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a central Bosnian Village*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 25 – 27.

108 Harun Karcic, “Islamic Revival in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992 – 2010”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 30, No.4, (Dec. 2010),13.

109 Perica, Vjekoslav, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 74 – 78.

110 *Ibid.*, 75 – 77.

The second, which involved anticommunist elements as well, opted for an identity in which Islam would be of primary importance and had pan-Islamist tendencies. This group had its roots in the Young Muslims (Mladi Muslimani), a pan-Islamist group which was formed in 1941 and dissolved after 1949, when the heads of the organization were arrested and condemned to death because of the subversive ideology of the group. Central to the Young Muslims' worldview was the need to “re-Islamize” Bosnian Muslims, the sociopolitical life of which was deemed insufficiently Islamic. From the '70s onward, the leading figure in the circle of Muslim intellectuals who pursued a policy oriented toward Islam was Alija Izetbegovic (1925 – 2003). A member of Young Muslims in his twenties, after a short period in the early '80s when he had problems with the law because of his religious activities, Izetbegovic saw his popularity increase. Finally, when Yugoslavia was at its death throes, several Muslim intellectuals and politicians (including figures that had been active in the Young Muslims) and himself founded the SDA (Stranka Demokratske Akcije – Party of Democratic Action) in 1990.¹¹¹

An inspection of Izetbegovic's works, especially the Islamic Declaration which circulated unofficially during the later years of Yugoslavia, could make one raise doubts about how solid Izetbegovic's belief in democracy was. Although he explicitly denounced dictatorship, his understanding of a just political order was not entirely clear, and he went as far as rejecting the liberal model of party organization. This ambivalent stance toward democracy was also reflected in the SDA as well. The party delivered mixed signals to its audience – those “belonging to the Muslim historico-cultural sphere” in the words of the party's program – defending democracy, human rights, religious liberties etc on the one hand, and promoting the shaping of significant aspects of public life according to Islamic moral principles on the other.¹¹²

The SDA won the general elections of 1990 and 1996. Considering the fact that Islam was becoming more and more visible as the Yugoslav state was approaching its demise, that the SDA was founded by individuals with Pan-Islamist tendencies, that a brutal war which shattered interethnic trust, displaced thousands of people and severely damaged the economy took place from 1992 to 1995, and that foreign fighters with radical beliefs entered the country to help the Bosniaks, one could argue that the latter would most definitely show a hardening of their religious beliefs and that Islam would dominate their political outlook.

But in fact this did not happen. In what has been termed a “paradox” of Bosnian political life, the Pan-Islamist minority of SDA came to power thanks to a greatly secularized public that was hostile

111 Xavier Bougarel & Asma Rashid, “From Young Muslims to Party of Democratic Action: The Emergence of a Pan-Islamist Trend in Bosnia-Herzegovina”, *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2/3 (1997), 532 – 546.

112 *Ibid.*, 544 – 547.

to any re-Islamization policies.¹¹³ The outcome was that the SDA ended up consolidating the secular character of Bosnian Islam and the nationalization of religious identity, instead of the other way around. In 1993, the ethnonym “Muslim” was officially replaced by the word “Bosniak”¹¹⁴, and in the same year new, national religious institutions were created, contrary to what most religious heads wished.¹¹⁵

How is such an outcome to be explained? The answer lies in the slow process of transformation Bosnian Islam underwent during the years of communist rule because of the framework within which Muslim institutions functioned, the ideological specificities of a mostly rural culture as it developed during the same era and the international environment as it developed after 1990.

The IC and Muslim culture

As noted before, the IC supported the Yugoslavian state. Its existence however predated the communist regime: The IC was founded in 1882 and has a long history of peaceful coexistence with other cultural and political forces within a secular framework.¹¹⁶ Its main objectives are the oversight of all the mosques in the country, the training of imams, and the organization of religious pilgrimage, *hajj*. Moreover, internally the IC is also an organization which functions rather democratically. Its leader and its assembly are elected and it does not depend upon third parties for its funding.¹¹⁷ As for the way it views the relation between religion and the state, both actions and statements from officials of the IC have shown that the two are regarded as clearly separate.¹¹⁸ Secondly, Bosnia remained a rural country to a very large extent during this era. In the years just before the war only one fifth of Bosnians lived in city centres, and it has been argued that the lower strata which inhabited these cities were still reproducing mentalities and practices that were prevalent in rural areas. There did exist a significant gap though between the modern urban elites and the more traditional rural majority.¹¹⁹

It would be wrong to assume however that the traditionally minded majority would necessarily support radical Islamist or undemocratic policies— although, understandably, Bosniaks were caught in the nationalist fervor that overwhelmed the country before and during the war. In a way

113 Xavier Bougarel, “The Role of Balkan Muslims in Building a European Islam” *EPC Issue Paper* No. 43, European Policy Centre. (2005), 15 – 16.

114 Merdjanova, Ina, *Rediscovering the Umma*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2013), 37.

115 Xavier Bougarel, “Islam and Politics in the Post-Communist Balkans” in Dimitris Keridis & Charles Perry (eds.), *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, (Dules: Brassey’s, 2003), 6.

116 <http://english.islamskazajednica.ba/modules-menu/history> Web. 12 Aug. 2016

117 Ahmet Alibasic, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Challenges of our Times, Paper Presented at the conference “The Islamic Factor in the New Political and Security Strategy in the Balkans and Southern Caucasus” of the Institute of Turkish and Central Asian Studies of Bebeş-Bolayi University, Cluj-Napoca, Rumunija, 2011, 8.

118 *Ibid.*, 5.

119 Friedman, Francine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Polity on the Brink*, (London, Routledge: 2004), 102 – 103.

reminiscent of the Alevis seen in the previous chapter, conservatism and traditionalism do not necessarily imply undemocratic, intolerant or even radical political outlooks. As has been forcefully demonstrated, life in ethnically mixed villages in the countryside was one where different communities had learned to coexist – admittedly not without the occasional tension or a certain degree of prejudice, but exhibiting a modest level of liberal attitude toward the Other.¹²⁰

On the other hand, it should also be noted that the Islamist current headed by Izetbegovic initially consisted to a considerable extent of members of urban strata.¹²¹ Thus, although a distinction among traditional and modern segments of society is valid, a simplistic dichotomy between a rural population oriented toward Islamist policies and an urban one with a pro-democratic mentality does not seem to stand in the case of Bosnia. As a matter of fact, the more militant version of Islam in the '90s was to be found among urban strata.¹²²

Even though the war was – wrongly – understood as an inevitable clash of civilizations by some observers, in fact not only peaceful cohabitation among religious groups was the norm in Bosnia, the proximity of Muslims and Christians for so many decades also resulted in the “softening of ethnic boundaries, the adoption of practices contrary to the Islamic rules and the private character of Islam”¹²³. This lived culture served as the pillar on which a secular understanding of politics has been articulated in post-war Bosnia for the Muslim community.

Finally, another significant factor in the establishment of a democratic order in Bosnia is the EU ascension process and the involvement of the EU in the post-conflict politics of the country. As we saw in the second chapter, EU conditionality played an important part in the adoption of more liberal policies in Turkey. In the case of Bosnia this influence is even more pronounced, since the country is part of the state-building project the EU undertook in the Balkans.¹²⁴

Post-war developments regarding democratization however have not met the expectations of the parties involved. The country's political system is based on the Dayton Agreement signed in 1995, and although Bosnia has certainly progressed since 1992 in that it is now a parliamentary democracy with political parties freely competing for power and the country's media are – in theory – free of censorship, democratization is widely considered to have come to a standstill.

The state-building project has been only partially successful, mostly because power has not been fully transferred over to the Bosnian state, thus limiting its independence, the two entities that make

120 Bringa, Tone, *ibid.*, 4 – 5.

121 Armin Beinsen, ““MusHmanstvo” and “Bosniakdom”: Islam in the discourse of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina”, *SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (May 2002), 22.

122 Xavier Bougarel & Asma Rashid, *ibid.*, 548.

123 Xavier Bougarel, “The Role of Balkan Muslims in Building a European Islam”, *ibid.*, 11.

124 Florian Bieber, “Building Impossible State? State-Building Strategies and EU Membership in the Western Balkans”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63:10, 1783.

up Bosnia are still finding it difficult to cooperate, something that undermines the legitimacy of the state, and civil society is still underdeveloped, which means that political life is to a large extent dominated by nationalist actors.¹²⁵ Furthermore, according to the Dayton Agreement individuals who are not members of one of the three constituent nations of the state, namely Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, “are not eligible to stand for election to the tripartite State presidency and the second chamber of the State parliament”, something that the European Court of Human Rights considered a violation of human rights in its ruling.¹²⁶

The share of responsibility for the shortcomings of Bosnia's semi-democratic regime between local elite actors and international institutions is debatable and will not trouble us here. What is of interest to this study is the impact, whether it's positive or negative, that Islam and economic development have on democracy, and it can be argued that, unlike nationalism, religion has not been a significant factor in the low degree of democratization in Bosnia.

But what about the level of economic development? As we saw in the first chapter, Nasr argued that trade and a strong middle class would act like the catalyst for democracy. In the case of Bosnia however we see that the country is still predominantly rural¹²⁷ and the volume of trade as a percentage of gdp has not significantly changed in the period from 1994 to 2014.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the war devastated the middle class that had existed during the Yugoslavian period, and persistent income inequality has troubled the country ever since – it should also be noted that inequality in the Federation is slightly higher than in Republika Srpska.¹²⁹

Democratization has taken a road full of twists and turns since 1990, and it will surely take a lot of effort in many areas of public life – not least the sector of the economy – to reach a level of maturity. It is not however the product of an Islamic middle class. On the other hand, Islam can't be blamed for the shortcomings of democracy in Bosnia. It is easily understandable that coexistence between the different ethnicities after the war is difficult, and that nationalist tensions can prove to be a big obstacle toward democratization. But the issue that is of interest to us here, namely the fusion of the religious and the political, does not seem to be manifest in the case of Bosnia

125 *Ibid.*, 1797 & Bieber, Florian, *Post-War Bosnia: Ethnicity, Inequality and Public Sector Governance*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 103 – 107 & David Chandler “Democratization in Bosnia: The limits of Civil Society Building Strategies”, *Democratization*, 5:4, (1998), 96 - 97

126 www.echr.coe.int European Court of Human Rights, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Country Profile (Jul. 2016), Web. 18 Aug. 2016.

127 World Bank national accounts data and OECD national accounts data files, retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=BA> Web. 19 Aug. 2016.

128 *Ibid.*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS?locations=BA> Web. 19 Aug. 2016.

129 Bieber, Florian, *Post-War Bosnia: Ethnicity, Inequality and Public Sector Governance*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 34 – 35 & World Bank. 2015. *Poverty and inequality in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2007-2011*. Washington, D.C. : World Bank, 24.

Conclusions

The three Muslim groups which we dealt with make up but a fraction of the world's Muslim population. Even when dealing with such a small proportion though, it becomes evident that differentiation within the world of Islam is so big that any generalizing claims about it should be viewed with caution, to say the least; and more specifically, that attempts to link economic development and the emergence of an Islamic variant of democracy, or draw parallels between a “Western” historical trajectory and a supposed Islamic one, are at best resting on shaky ground. The degree of secularization, which is a necessary precondition for a democratic order, does not necessarily directly reflect the level of economic development.

In the case of political Islam in Turkey, we saw that the emergence of a middle class and the solid economic development after 2001 did not lead to the much-talked about democratization through Islam. Rather, the persistence of Islamism, as portrayed by Tibi, the effects of rapid urbanization and certain state policies led to the consolidation of a semi-authoritarian model under AKP.

On the other hand, the Alevi community has managed to a larger extent to articulate a secular version of Islam, more compatible with modern democratic politics. Exact data concerning their social status are hard to come by, but it seems that the roots of this secular tradition are to be found

in the environment in which the Alevis found themselves in the multiparty era and the ways they responded to the challenges they encountered, and are largely disconnected from economic development.

And finally, the specific conditions which were prevalent in Bosnia throughout the communist period and the international environment in which the country found itself after the war aided in the emergence of a nationalized and secularized brand of Islam, one which is to a considerable extent hostile toward the principles of Islamism.

In conclusion, it can be argued that democratization is of course possible in Muslim societies, but one should not expect a path of ideological development similar to that observed in Western societies, nor should the sphere of culture be underestimated in favor of economic approaches. The emergence of secular, democratic political traditions is a complex process that involves the embedding of specific values in a particular cultural context, and not simply a product of economic development.

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