MUSLIM STUDIES NETWORK
http://www.muslimstudies.net/show.asp?p=67&i=27

"Moderation in Islam" a Colloquium, organized by The Middle East Center, University of Utah, 21-22 February, 2004

WHO NEEDS A MODERATE ISLAM?[1]

YASIN AKTAY,

The Problem and its Origins

The discourse of moderate Islam, by its very nature is not an indigenous product of Muslim societies. As indicated in Bernard Weiss's statement (Weiss, 2004), it implies an outsider's expectation of Islam. It involves the project of changing Muslim societies or Islam according to the wishers of the Other.. It is also, even in its simplest versions, entangled with the global discourse of Islamophobia. The term moderate Islam invokes, at a political level, an instrumental form of Islam, which can help rule Muslim societies, apart from fulfilling a short-term and secondary function in drawing a clear line between itself and more 'extreme' forms of Islam.. At the social and cultural levels, which result mainly from political investments at the first level, it functions in some relatively complicated ways to feed cultural identities along a liberal, Christian, Western, American, and European framework.

At first sight it looks like a positive gesture to distinguish good Muslims from "bad Islamists", to restore the intercultural or interfaith peace. I think this would be a very simple gesture without any luck of empathic insight. At an academic or scientific level, however, the conception of a moderate Islam has not set a sufficient reason for its existence. It is needless to say, of course that the moderate version of all ideologies, political ideas or religions is possible. But this version, theoretically, has equal possibility alongside with other interpretations. At the theoretical level the radical or many other versions of any religion are possible. But what should be understood from this possibility? What is the significance of being aware of the possibility of moderate Islam? By itself does it suffice eliminating the threat of the radical or other versions of Islam which causes disturbances in the West?

I do not think so. And I think the academic conceptions of moderate Islam being determined by such an interest, above all should think of the sociological conditions of the possibility of radical or extreme versions of a religion, of course of Islam, in particular. It would then become evident that there is always an oscillation between extremism and moderation, whose speed or preference depends not only on it is internal and spontaneous physical routine, but is somehow also determined by some external factors and physical interventions. While this movement of flux and reflux, too, can not be reduced to these external factors, the extremist wave is usually caused by some social and political factors. On the other hand, in some cases, what is conceived as extremism or radicalism may be the natural political reflex of a political movement to any socio-political developments.. For example the increase in the degree of corruption at the administrative level has usually stimulated civil-political reactions (often led by the ulema) which would in turn be labeled as

[1] Presented at Utah University, The Middle East Centre; February 21-22 2004, for the colloquium of "Moderation in Islam".

religious extremism by the ruling authorities (1). Many rebellions in the history of Islamic societies have been caused by increasing inequalities and the corresponding popular sense of injustice. And most historical decisions or the application of labels as extremism to these movements have been made as a result of the historiography emerging from the existing powers. As might be expected all these labels also were associated with the discourse of the "good citizen" (good subjects, of course) such as "moderate (or obedient) muslimhood".

It is therefore not so surprising that, in our time, the discourse of moderate Islam is abused by many anti-democratic countries with some Muslim minorities or Islamist movements. It is employed by these kind of regimes as a reason to oppress their own "radical", "political", "extremist" or "terrorist" versions of Islamists", with even more extreme, radical and immoderate appeals to violence. The threat of radical, extremist, fundamentalist or militant Islam looks like a very available justification of postponing the process of democratization. Thus moderate Islam becomes the ideological discursive apparatus of the most anti-democratic regimes. Now many regimes dominating the Islamic countries now compete with each other to develop the ideal model of a moderate Islam, whose only customer is the Bush administration, which declared the standard of the moderation in terms of "being with us or against us", no matter what the nature of the regime that is with us is. The only condition for a regime to be accepted is its very straight attitude within this specific struggle. Then, the corresponding logic of the binary opposition begins to work between moderation and extremism.

As may be expected all these regimes employ the discourse of moderation versus extremism to maintain their dictatorship. And in one sense the very existence of these radical or militant groups is very essential in order to be able to process such a reason. Then, needless to say, this is also by its very essence, is likely to reproduce, or increase in the long-term, the potential of the resentment of the Muslims, which will feed the ground and the possibility of extremism of which everybody is afraid.

The Relevance of the Moderate Character of the Islamic Community

While within the horizons of Islamic ways of life or thought there may be oscillations between various tendencies; the actual discourse of "moderate Islam" has nothing to do with the Islamic discourse of being a moderate ummah. The conceptual framework of this moderation is put in radically different context. The good Muslim society, in Qor'an and in many Islamic scriptures is defined by moderation, by its distance from any form of extremism. But one should not expect so much from this conception of the range between moderation and extremism. This range is located within the paradigmatic integrity of the Islamic world view. Moderation within an Islamic conception may sound very instrumental in this regard, but within an Islamic context this may not always correspond to the expectations of the outsiders. As it is well-known most verses depicting the moderate character of the Islamic ummah are complemented by the parallel insistence upon enjoining the maruf (the right) and forbidding the munkar (the wrong) (2). In the political sphere, as a political subject, as a political body, an Islamic community has to seek its well-being and struggle for political and social rights, which may, however, require being in conflict with other actors. in That is what makes the political possible. This is also what makes social existence possible. Can you expect a community as broad and varied as the Islamic ummah to give up its all interests within the international, intercultural political sphere?

Indeed the moderate Islam project seems to usher in an Islamic society which maintains silence towards its political interests and rights. Looking at the political manifestations of Islamic groups in many parts of the world can provide us with good examples of the origin of

the political discourse of Islamism. In many places the so-called political Islam is not but the search for political representation. In many Islamic countries the discourses of Islamist movements have nothing to do with trying to abolish the system and replace it completely with the so-called Shariah system whose content seems to be very ambiguous. Often, what is sought for is nothing but the demand for a just order, taking care of the poor, allowing religious education, the performance of the religious rituals, more religious freedom in daily life, and even democracy against their oppressive regimes.

Actually, the Islamism of today's world reflects a wide range of varieties. Of course, with all these varieties it can not be reduced to only one interpretation of Islam. Of course the discourse of moderate Islam, too, has many audiences. Not to disappoint the quest for a moderate version, however, I have to say that to address to all these audiences exclusively, or to favor those over others will not reduce the potential emergence of a radical, political, or militant Islam unless the real conditions of the emergence of such interpretations are eliminated. The most important condition of the possibility of the existence of such radical discourses is the social and political conditions of the Muslim world that should be dealt with in more detail since a radical interpretation of Islam, or of any other religion, does not occur in a vacuum. If the likelihood of a religion to produce resentment and violence is to be understood properly, it should,, of course be understood initially in its social and political context. Now I want to indicate two important sociological features of the contemporary Islamic societies which constitute their conditions of incompatibility with the modern world. First is related to the problem of political representation of the Islamic ummah, which is not a spontaneous outcome of the history of Islamic societies but something that was destined by colonial processes, which I will prefer to conceptualize as "post-caliphate condition" or "decaliphatization" process. Undoubtedly the nature of these processes is the most important source of the resentment that brings about the emergence of political Islamism. And the second is related to the way secularism was introduced into Islamic countries as a political model. Of course, the uniqueness of Islamic societies can not be reduced to these two aspects. These are only the two which should be indicated as the internal-sociological grounds making the emergence of political Islamism or its being laid down to radicalism, violence or extremism possible. In this context I would like to indicate a short analysis of the Turkish case, focusing particularly on the Justice and Development Party (JDP). In advance I should point out that Turkey in some academic or political contexts is supposed to represent an available model for Muslim societies to emulate in combining Islamic norms with western, democratic, global and modern values –a presumption which needs to be examined. In particular, the story of the triumph of JDP deserves further analysis as the assumed exemplar of the Turkish-islamic political synthesis.

1. The post-caliphate condition of the Muslim World

In this context one point about the Muslim world should be made referring to its lacking political representation since the early twentieth century. I called it post-caliphate condition. Afterr the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 the possibility of any kind of political, even social, representation of the Muslim community disappeared from the world, and the Muslims became like organs without a body, or a body without organs. The political disembodiment of the Muslim world, however, did not mean the actual disappearance of Muslims from the world (Aktay, 1997). Still the community, consisting of about a billion people, is alive and by the very nature of such a population it creates many social and political positions all over the world. These positions necessarily required, and still require, some political representation of

their subjects which was not supplied by any authority taking on itself the responsibility of the actual existence of the Islamic ummah.

To compare the Islamic case with other religions, one can think of Catholics who are represented by the Vatican. If any social, religious and cultural problem arises for a Catholic individual, the Catholic Church can reach and help him. The same example can be extended to a Protestant person who feels himself as belonging to the general Protestant community in the World. One can think also about the Jews who are represented by Israel, a political body, and the Mormons who are represented by their prophet and a central Church organization that seems politically very strong to hold the entire Mormons of the world feeling themselves as one community. In any case the members of all these communities are more likely to feel themselves safe and protected against possible threats. As for the Muslims, however, what we see is completely different. Since the operation of decalipatization has been realized, there has not remained any authority to represent or to control the contingencies of the Muslim world. This large community was deprived of its representation within the political context of the world, which would cause the constitution of a very complicated state of consciousness. This deprivation was a consequence of a series of wars out of which the Muslim world was tragically defeated at every front and was forced to accept an inferior position within the international power structures so that the level of the tragedy would always spontaneously or deliberately stimulate a claim for revenge. The increasing waves of modernization or globalization are no more likely to diminish the weight of these claims.

Most Islamic countries experienced long periods of colonial rule, and even in the post-colonial periods the rule of the colonial power was usually entrusted to some local governors who were supposed to keep loyal to and maintain their interests. In such cases the priority of these entrusted governors was to rule in concert with their predecessors rather than to represent their own societies. When they did undertake to represent their societies they first attempted some modernization policies which aimed at transforming their societies from the top. This transformation process was modeled upon the West, where the enemies of their society were located. The modernization policies, then, took place under very strong pressures of legitimation. It was considered for an important part a case of treachery of the insiders. As a matter of fact, the successors of the colonial powers did not rule with the aim of strengthening their societies politically, socially, or economically. They had nothing to do with the democratization of their societies. They even ruled with high levels of corruption. They behaved as aliens within their societies, and they maintained the conditions making the countries dependent on their former colonizers. The emergence of Islamism first should be understood as a reaction to this condition defined by the survival of colonization. It demanded a redress of the historical defeat, which took place out of a very unfair battle. Therefore it is not surprising that the content of the Islamic movements is mostly dominated by a claim for decolonization. All these movements also took place under the post-caliphate condition, which is characterized by the global deprivation of leadership, and local searches for reorganization. Given the similar political conditions of the Islamic societies all over the world, the discourses of Islamic movements employed correspondingly similar discourses.

Since my aim is to highlight some factors of the development of extremist interpretations, I will not to try here give a detailed profile of these discourses. I will, therefore, continue to make some more remarks on the denial of political representation.

This deprivation has two important disadvantages, from the point of view of both Muslims and those who caused this situation. But alongside with the disadvantages this situation also carries certain advantages, again from both points of view.

From the Islamic point of view, the disadvantage came to be experienced like a tragedy. When any attack on Muslims in any part of the world occurs, there is no politically responsible subject who can be questioned about. In other words the Muslims of the world in

many cases feel themselves neglected and wronged because of their religion, especially when they are encountered with constraints on their religious freedoms, or when they feel themselves helpless in conditions of war, mainly caused by some invasions, colonization, external political interventions on their own countries etc.

Just to illustrate, one may be very inclined to think or hope there would be no prohibition of the headscarf in France or in any other part of the world if the Muslims had political representation. Now in many countries where Muslims are minorities, they experience higher levels of discrimination which goes unnoticed by any political authority. They are left to their own fate, and they feel themselves as the only subjects to self-determination. What we may witness from this point on is the resentment for the Muslims beginning from their closest social environments.

As for the advantage of the Muslim world caused by the deprivation of a political authority, one can think about the flexibility of developing a strong theology from the beginning. This can be understood in the face of the constraining capacity of an existing political or religious establishment which by its very nature does not allow any new interpretation of the religion to comprehend and cope with the contemporary issues. One can go on thinking, of course about the global possibilities opening up for Muslims unconstrained by an orthodox Islamic establishment guarded by a Caliph or something like that. In fact, many examples may be indicated here to show how a religious authority may constitute a strong obstacle against developing a convenient existential position. Just to illustrate, the criticisms of pro-Islamists about the legitimacy of the Caliphate just before its abolition constitute a large body of work. The critiques centered upon the distortion and employment of the Caliphate as an instrument for securing political advantages regardless of their compatibility with the authentic goals of the religion (3). Another illustration can be made by reference to the Christian context of the long history of Orthodox experiences of religion. Apart from the undeniable advantages that the Christian communities may have got, thanks to being organized around an ecumenical organization such as the Church, this also resulted in the production of a frozen body of religious knowledge which usually proved incapable of dealing with the dynamic truth -the truth that is flowing alongside with the dynamic course of life.

No doubt the disembodiment of the Muslims in the contemporary world provides the Western-global powers numerous advantages against the Islamic world. The Western world has sought advantages from the chaotic situation within the Islamic world. For many decades Western countries benefited from that situation which has given them easy access tothe resources of the Muslim world. But in the age of globalization this advantage is likely to bring a bill in front of these colonial powers. As a matter of fact, when any terrorist activity on the name of Islam happens there is no any political representation to take or, to be charged, responsibility about this. The political existence of the Muslim world, now, is not carried out at any institutional level. This creates a very interesting situation. There are many actions without responsible agents or subjects. The search for organization within a political body leads to the constitution of the plurality of Islamic communities, some of whom may choose various interest areas like violence. Some of these movements also become like “self-appointed” subjects, undertaking the responsibility of saving the Muslim ummah and forbidding, and punishing the wrong by this or another way. Then, one aspect of the Islamic political embodiment seems to be manifest in extreme augmentation, and the other aspect of the same community is its absence in concrete. It begins to work like a ghost. That is why the most widespread metaphor attached to this phenomenon is “revivalism” within a vocabulary of what I prefer to call hauntology since the return is conceived as the coming of a ghost. It was something that was supposed to be dead long time ago (4).

Moreover, some times we need to be careful for distinguishing the extremism as such. Because some forms of extremism take place as types of political estrangements which are rather related to what is called cynicism. Cynicism appears in some Islamic groups as an estrangement to the public or political sphere. In some cases by this or another way the political process already excludes them from this sphere since the democratic regime has not yet managed to include many contingencies within the system. On this point I agree with Sayyid's point about cynicism where he approaches it as "a product of political dis-empowerment";

"[Cynicism] arises when one cannot imagine a future that is better for all, so one tries to work only for oneself and one's families. This retreat from public participation in society, to private concerns is what breeds cynicism. Social problems are de-politicized and presented as ethnical challenges. The search for "a good society" is sacrificed for the cultivation of "good Muslims" who can do without society. This ethnical replacement of politics leads to the emergence of Muslim monks who find the Ummah irredeemably corrupt. This monasticism is strange considering that Muslims tend to proclaim that "Islam is a total way of life"- but the life that is envisioned seems hollow: full of rituals, empty of ideals and often cut-off from reality. A total way of life that does not have room for public participation and contestation and that does not recognize the rich tapestry of its own past, neither total nor even a way of life. Rather than railing against post-modernism, it maybe more useful to invest our energies in reclaiming the Islamicate history. It is knowledge of the past that allows you to build hopes for the future, and the only antidote to cynicism is the idea of a hopeful future" (Sayyid, 2001)

Therefore it is not so surprising that the more the democratic political processes become accessible, the more an anti-democratic or anti-political attitudes diminishes. When people believe that the game has been set fairly they begin to participate increasingly in the political process, and then, more democratic or worldly interpretations of Islam become possible. But we should be really honest about who wants democracy in Islamic societies when it could lead to a completely independent policy stance. You know, when the Turkish parliament decided against the order to allow the USA's troops to Iraq to be stationed on Turkish lands; somebody very sincerely began to think about the appropriate amount of democracy in Islamic countries. "Less democracy in Turkey and more democracy in Iraq" was not just a joke.

In this entire context, moderate Islam is more likely to look as a colonialist discourse, and therefore it is not a proper candidate for bringing about a peace that would be expected to reduce what upsets the Western world about Islam. There are many cases where such discourses were understood as cooperation with colonialism, and therefore rejected by Muslim people. In that case the very existence of such discourses may be the main cause working against moderation. Given the unjust political and economical condition of the world one can not expect Muslims to be content with their conditions, especially if the gates of participating in the political sphere in just conditions are closed, leading to further resentment.

2. The Routes to Secularization and the Hermeneutical Possibility of Moderate Islam

Of course an investment in any kind of Islamic interpretation can help produce a moderate version of Islam, depending on the strength of the instruments used to produce such an Islam, or on the strength of the discourse which is set up to appeal to popular clients etc. And it was possible in the traditional world, too. There appeared a variety of interpretations and practices of Islam. So it is possible in today's world also. Any interpretation of Islam can produce its own mass of customers. This is even more likely to be the nature of the modern world (5). The artists of the modern world create their own circles of aesthetic admirers.. The religious

leaders with their unique interpretations create their own followers. No body finds his own mass of believers, or community as ready to obey himself. But also nobody can claim a monopoly over the market of the clients. So, to be honest, the possibility of creating an Islamic interpretation never means that any kind of interpretation can eliminate others. And if this, which is indeed the expectation of all the investment in the "moderate Islam", is not likely to happen, then what should we expect? To put my conclusion in advance, if one interpretation will not be able to eliminate all other interpretations, or in other words, if such a monopoly of religious interpretation is not possible in our world, then, whatever we expect from any such religious investment would only increase the variety of religious interpretations. And in the particular case of the intention of such an investment it is even more likely to increase the tension and break the peaceful conditions within or between religions.

In the Turkish case, for example, for many years this issue has been a matter of other kind of investment. Apart from the searches for an Islam to cope with the actual problem of political Islamism, Turkish Islam is considered to be like an export-model. It is supposed to be a model for all Islamic countries. Just a short glance at what is happening in the Turkish case, however, can help us see how superficial is this ideology (I do not call this even an idea; it is more likely to be an ideology, a false consciousness in Marxist sense). In Turkey religion and secularism have not been set up yet in a peaceful way to compromise their goals. The secularist political practice or ideology is not compatible with the religious institutions or popular-religious demands. Following the French variant of secularism,, Turkish secularism tries to exile all religious signs from the "apparent sphere" (not to say public sphere). Secularism is not yet a means to set a peace between religion and society, but rather it functions as the main cause of tension and conflict.

The way secularism is understood in Turkey, is not like an instrument to make the religious or non-religious happy, but to conceive it like a religion. Instead of being a moderator or arbitrator among different religious positions, secularism itself became a religious position fighting with various religions, particularly with Islam. We know from various experiences that secularization had not to follow a single route. In United Kingdom it is only a social development, but still the state has an official religion. In Netherlands the boundaries of secularism are rarely drawn to put limitations on the everyday lives of a pious guy. In Germany the Church and the state are recognizing mutually their spheres with esteem and they cooperate for a good and happy society in such a way which may appear from the French perspective as a violation of secularism. In any way, in all European cases, the development of secularism has always taken care of the everyday life o the religious people. Apart from some moments of tense discussions or struggles, after a historical compromise they often began to coordinate with one another for a good and strong nation. Religion respected the idea of a nation state, and even mostly became one of the major elements of this state. It was perhaps the recurrence of the historical division of labor between Caesar and the God. Then the key issue, to repeat, is the pursuing of the secularist policies to avoid disturbing the Church, or the everyday life o a Christian.

In the case of Islam, however, secularism, or modernization in general, have not yet produced the compatible versions. When Microsoft firm produces any one of its software products it searches for its versions to be used in other countries. Then it pays attention to the language, cultural and geographical differences. But secularism and modernism do not prove to be so sensitive to different cultures. Indeed one can very hardly choose to be optimistic about the good will of the European experiences of secularism to search for an "Islam-compatible" version. If it really sought for a minimum compatibility it would have tried to understand the importance of one's following God's command in one's life. Even if did not leave all the space for a single religion it would at least sincerely seek a better way making the

believers and non-believers live happily in co-existence in society. Then, the European case of headscarf, for example, proves that secularism, at least in major parts of Europe, is applicable only to Christian societies. When it is faced with other religions, particularly with Islam, it fails to work. It becomes a laicite in the French sense, where secularism is more prone to be felt like a kind of religion. Perhaps now another kind of regulation is needed to judge between "secularism as religion" and "other religions". Or let me apply the motto of secularism in my way of rephrasing it: It has happened so that, now we need the separation of state and secularism, just as the European societies once strongly needed the separation of church and state out of the long-standing history of bloody religious struggles. Indeed the Muslim world has never witnessed such kinds of religious struggles. And if we have to think secularism as requested by the possibility of the recurrence of such experiences, it is not fair to apply this idea to the Muslim world (6).

Since French secularism, in its laic form is so exaggerated, it reaches at its extremes which constitutes the base for a fundamentalist secularism. Indeed the word befits the situation better and better. Before thinking about moderate Islam we should overcome the problem of extremist secularism which is not less dangerous than religious extremism. It is mostly the major source of political resentment, which is supposed to be producing terrorism.

Secular Support of Political Islamism: The Case of JDP and Turkish Islam

As a matter of fact, extremist secularism is the main reason that has fed the body of so-called Political Islamism. Of course it is not to put all in the same category, but the rise of Islamism in general, and the triumph of the JDP, in particular, owes much to this hostile secularism. If we are to seek a model of the Turkish case it would not be as an attribute of the political approach to religion, nor of the traditional policies of secularism; perhaps it would be a reflection of the success of Islamist groups in achieving a form of politics that compromised their Islamic expectations in line with the realities of the local or global context.. It might be considered, of course a dynamic, perhaps radical, hermeneutic of their religious texts that made it possible for them to set out on such a journey within the political sphere. In one sense the proceeding of the JDP in the political sphere of Turkey has occurred at the expense of its withdrawal from Islamic demands. The Islamist demands concerning religious freedom are still postponed as the price of the Islamist cadres for maintaining their power. This still is a very strong source of tension, which is only postponed, not completely eliminated. The resentment of the religious people is reduced because of the ambiguity of the address of whom to be seen as responsible of the constraints on the religious freedom. Given all these conditions, I think one can not claim a model capacity for Turkish political/secular model, unless some advances regarding religious freedom happen.

To have a closer look at JDP, one more point should be made. In spite of its well-known traditional Islamist background, the leaders of this party insist on separating themselves from Islamist identity. The leader of the party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, insistently repeated that he (or his party) is not Islamist. Instead he defined the political identity of his party as a Conservative Democracy. Conservatism seems to appear as a "possible and legitimate politics" of Islamism. If political Islamism is not to be reduced to a totalitarian will to transform society into an imagined Islamic one, conservative discourse of the Muslims always contains some elements of Islamism. In the wider sense political Islamism means the political representation of Muslim interests, and at this level it can not be expected to get over. Erdoğan's conservatism, of course can not be equated with what is usually understood as Islamism, but it is still Islamism, even if he does not accept it. What should be noticed in his

definition of his identity, however, is his being forced to withdraw to such a discursive pronunciation.

Indeed, the explanation of his reason for not founding an Islamist party lies in the political interest of Islam. Referring to the Islamic quality of the overwhelming majority of Turkish population, he obviously implies the ultimate potential of Islamism in Turkey. That means, the best Islamist policy of a party that would watch the political interest of Islam in a society with an Islamic majority like Turkey, is not to appropriate the symbolic capital of Islam in an exclusive way. By this way Islam is expected to be kept immune to the political mistakes that the party may does. Otherwise the identification of Islam with any party may result in diminishing the symbolic capital of Islam, which in turn would work against the political interest of Islam. This is indeed what has happened in many Islamic countries like Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood), Pakistan (Jamaat-i Islami), and Lebanon (Hizbullah) etc. Thus, while the preference of conservative democracy as a component of a political identity was mainly caused by the search for a "legitimate and possible policy" of the Islamist subjects against the constraining conditions of Turkish politics, this became an appropriate way to accelerate the position of Islam and to make it more popular. And this was achieved not by the Turkish official paradigm of secularism, but by the political initiative of the, so to say, Islamist political subject.

The basic component of JDP, and the fundamental element that makes it what it is, rely on the evaluation and combination of the political and economic benefits with its Islamic ideals. This requires making politics on a pragmatic base rather than on theological base, though the former does not necessitate giving up being inspired by some theological ideals. Instead it is a paradigmatic shifting of the political approach from the realization of the untouchable theological doctrine to the pragmatic politics of the community (7). And the political benefit of the community is conceived as the ultimate goal of this kind of Islamic politics. Of course parts of the discourses which constitute Turkish Islam as a good and low-cost product to be sold to all Muslim countries emerges from nationalist points of view. It naively presumes that Islamic countries are waiting for a model to be followed. This view seems to be unaware of the parallel or similar trends of nationalistic ideas within other Islamic countries. Especially when Turkey follows this way of a fundamentalist secularism it is hardly to constitute a model for the peoples of Islamic countries. As far as I know from these countries' public opinions, Turkey is not respected for being closer to secularism, but it is located within a rather negative position. The position was underlined in an ironic way during the Turkish Assembly's voting against the transferring of the American troops from Turkish lands. The refusal of the Assembly was celebrated by the peoples of Islamic countries which restored in one sense the position of Turkey. This case showed that Turkey's leadership role is acknowledged only when it proves to follow an independent politics in international affairs. If the Turkish Islam is to be copied and reproduced to be imposed, this may end up stimulating nationalist resentment in other Muslim societies.

A final remark that may clarify what I have said here on the definition of Islamism. Islamism is rightfully treated as a phenomenon of the last two centuries. But it is reduced by this right always to a revolutionary will to change the world and replace it by a package of Shari'ah law, which is supposed to be closed and, codified once and for all. Then, the terms Islamism, or political Islamism, extremist Islamism etc., begin to be employed to reproduce this image to be distinguished from the authentic one which has nothing to do with any moment of political. The first mistake to be underlined in these presumptions is the despising of the political. The political is not such a moment to be easily separated from other moments of life. Nobody can expect any religious man not to remember his religion in his political references. That is the minimum point. Second mistake is the ignorance of the proliferation of Islamism. Indeed, Islamism is only very rarely seeking for a complete change. In most cases it

just seeks a negotiation within the political sphere. In all its kinds it includes a higher level of appeal to ijtihad, which is an attempt to interpret and sometimes to find a way to their own reality.

Islamism at a minimum level is to participate in the political process, whatever its content may be, being inspired by Islamic morality and principles, and seeking the benefit of the religion and the community of the religion, which is indeed not unacceptable within the western context of democracy and secularism. The tension that this phrase carries on is probably a result of the fundamentalist interpretations of secularism.

Endnotes:

1) For the role of the ulema in the formation of the ground for a civil society in Islamic world see Mardin, 1991; 2000. Mardin claims that there has always been a very strong potential of opposition led by the Ulema towards the unjust behaviors of state throughout Ottoman history. For more historical data on the formation Islamic cities and the role of ulema and madrasas within these cities see, Söylemez, 2001; Aycan and Söylemez, 1999.

2) See for example and compare the verses, 3: 114; 22: 41; 9: 61, 71. In any way, such definition of the task of a "good society" seems to be difficult to compromise with a model of moderate Islam.

3) For the detailed discussions about the Caliphate before being abolished see, Sayyid, 1997, Aktay, 1997, Kara, 2003.

4) For a good employment of the word in the context of neo-Ottomanism, see also Çalış, 2001.

5) For a critical approach to the idea of "Turkish Islam" and the examination of the hermeneutical possibility of the Turkish Islam se Aktay, 1999; 2002. For more analysis on Turkish Islam see Aydın, 1998; Subaşı, 2002; Yavuz 2003.

6) Apart from various examples in Islamic history from Umayyad to Ottoman Period which assured the religious freedom with religious plurality, I propose to look more carefully on the history of Jerusalem as a model. What is important in Jerusalem is that, the only periods when all religious groups have enjoyed peace and religious freedom is when the Muslims ruled the city. Under the Omar regulations the Muslims have arbitrated among all religions. And when the Crusaders came and invaded the city they massacred the Muslims, the Jews, and even the Eastern Christians alike. When the Muslims took the city back under the leadership of Saladin, the Omar Regulations were set again and the Jewish community was allowed to come back to the city and enjoy freedom of religious observance. It is also a well-known fact that the Jews in Diaspora has always found it easier and safer to live under Muslim rule. For detailed historical comparisons between the Jewish Diaspora under European conditions and under the Muslim hinterlands see. Ben-Sasson, 1999.

7) Indeed such a theological approach which promote the goodness of the society, or the benefit (pragma) of the society is not foreigner to the Islamic jurisprudential and political tradition. The notion of the Maslaha (the goodness of the society) has always played a central role within the Hanefi jurisprudential tradition of ijtihad. The Hanefi school is perhaps playing the central role in the political style of the AKP.

REFERENCES

Aktay, Yasin, Body*, Text, Identity: Islamist Discourse of Authenticity in Modern Turkey*, Unpublished PhD thesis, ODTÜ, Ankara, 1997.

Aktay, Yasin, 1999, *Türk Dininin Sosyolojik İmkanı*, İstanbul: İletişim.

Aktay, Yasin, 2002, Farklılık Politikaları ve Türk Müslümanlığı, *İslamiyat*, vol 5, number 4.

Aycan, İrfan & Söylemez, Mahfuz, *İdeolojik Tarih Okumaları*, Ankara 1998, İkinci baskı 1999).

Aydın, Mustafa, 1998, Kategori Oyunları ve Kültürel İslam, *Tezkire*, vol: 14-15.

Ben-Sasson, H.H., 1999*, A History of the Jewish People*, Cambridge: Harvard University Pres.

Çalış, Saban H., 2001, *Hayaletbilimi ve Hayalî Kimlikler: Neo-Osmanlicilik, Özal ve Balkanlar*, Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi Yayınları.

Kara, İsmail, 2004 *Hilafet Risaleleri, 3* volumes, İstanbul: Küre.

Mardin, Şerif, 1991, "The Just and the Unjust," *Daedalus* 120, no. 3.

Mardin, Şerif, 2000, *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset.* Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari.

Sayyid, Bobby, S., 1997, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, London: Zed Boks.

Sayyid, S, 2001, Islam & the Shadow of Postmodernism, *Association of Muslim Social Scientests, Newsletter*, number 4.
Söylemez, Mahfuz, 2001, *Bedevîlikten Hadarîliğe Kûfe,* Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları.
Subaşı, Necdet, 2002, Türk(iye) Dindarlığı: Yeni Tipoloji Denemeleri, *İslamiyat*, vol 5, number 4
Weiss, Bernard, 2004, A Statement for Introducing the Conference on Moderation in Islam, Salt Lake City: University of Utah.
Yavuz, M. Hakan, 2003, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.